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THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS REGARDING
HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS
REGARDING HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

by

David L. Townsend

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor F. William Sesow

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 1985

TITLE

THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS

REGARDING HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS
REGARDING HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

David L. Townsend, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 1985

Advisor: F. William Sesow

The purpose of this study was to identify parent perceptions of written and verbal communication methods used between home and school concerning student academic progress, social behavior, school policies, school activities, and school curriculum.

Through the use of a parent interview schedule, parents indicated the written and verbal methods and frequencies of communication they received and preferred to receive from their child's school. In addition, parents indicated the methods and topics of communication they originated with their child's school. The sample of elementary parents from the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska was selected through a stratified-random sampling technique.

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of this study.

1. Parents perceived the school as doing a good job communicating about academic progress and social behavior. Suggestions for improvement included the use of more written comments from teachers and greater use of the telephone as a means of communication.
2. Parents perceived the schools as doing a good job communicating through written methods about school policies and activities. Monthly newsletters, in addition to handbooks, were perceived

as preferred methods for communicating about school activities and policies. Verbal methods were perceived to be unnecessary in the communication of school policies and activities.

3. Parents perceived the schools as doing an average job when communicating about the school curriculum. Increased written communication in this area was desired by the parents.

4. Parent-initiated communications were perceived by parents as positive and primarily concerned with academic progress.

5. Parents perceived existing standards of communications as necessary and indicated that supplemental methods at more frequent intervals would be desirable in all areas with the exception of verbal communication concerning school policies and activities.

. . . I dedicate this dissertation
in remembrance of my grandparents,
Charles and Amanda Spiehs and
Harold and Persus Townsend, who
instilled a confidence and sense
of pride in me to work hard and to
be the best I could be. God bless
them.

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I thank my parents, Lloyd and Aldean Townsend, for bringing me into this world and for always trying to do their best for me. In addition, I extend a special thanks to my mother-in-law, Jean Beck, for expressing her confidence in me and always caring.

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D.L.T.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an ultimate experience that every man, woman, and child has in life. Being able to give meaning to symbols, actions, and words that are present in everyone's life is to communicate.

Among the few universals that apply to man is this: That all men--no matter of what time or place, of what talent or temperament, of what race or rank--are continually engaged in making sense out of the world about them. Although men may tolerate doubt, few can tolerate meaninglessness. (Mortensen, 1979, p. 5)

The dimensions of communication are broad and all encompassing. Dimensions of communication are not limited to spoken and written words, but are inclusive of all that is unspoken as well. Communication occurs the moment an individual receives a stimulus from another, whether it be an intentional one as with words or unintentional through the mere presence of another person (Eisenberg, 1983).

Realizing that communication is all encompassing, it is imperative to understand exactly how communication occurs. Basically, the components of communication are (1) a source, (2) a message, (3) a channel, (4) a receiver, and (5) feedback (Forsdale, 1981). It is important to realize that the process is not linear but circular when feedback is part of the communication process. The concept is diagrammed in Figure 1.

During the process of communication, the opportunity for feedback exists once the sender has sent the message to a receiver and then is available for the receiver to redirect the message. Once this occurs,



Figure 1

Circular Communication Model
(Strain & Wysong, 1979, p. 6)

the process becomes circular, and the original source or sender becomes a receiver. Interpretation of messages for meaning will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Should the process be linear, such as shown in Figure 2, true communication would not occur.



Figure 2

Linear Communication Model
(Ruben, 1984, p. 59)

True communication involves an exchange between two participants. "Limiting communication to the sending of messages impoverishes the process and renders at least one participant impotent" (Mortensen, 1979, p. 12). Only when an exchange takes place can an understanding be reached, thus completing the communication process. If the process is not completed with feedback, many assumptions and misunderstandings may occur. The receiver must be given an opportunity to understand the meaning and respond.

At this point it is not the intent to establish two-way

communication as the only process; however, one-way communication has been exposed as an incomplete cycle with reference to communication concepts. According to Sumption and Engstrom (1966), the elements of one-way communication are: (1) a source from which information emanates, (2) a message to be transmitted, (3) a medium of transmission, (4) a receiver who picks up the message, and (5) a reactor who accepts or rejects the message. One-way communication has a functional purpose; however, it must be remembered that it does not provide an opportunity for an individual to indicate reception or understanding of a message through feedback.

Communication is regarded at times by educators in a very general or nebulous manner. In effect, communication deserves more careful attention as it essentially is what school is all about. It is present when a teacher attempts to communicate an objective to his or her students, a principal establishes a procedure with his or her staff, and a principal or teacher informs parents of an activity or pupil progress. Communication could be associated with the nervous system of a person that sends and receives impulses to the body. If the system breaks down at any point, the whole body suffers.

Sumption and Engstrom (1966) stated that communication within the school-community is important and should serve ten objectives:

- 1) To provide the people with information about their schools
- 2) To provide the school with information about the community
- 3) To establish and maintain public confidence in the schools
- 4) To secure community support for the school and its programs
- 5) To develop a commonality of purpose, effort and achievement

- 6) To develop in the community a recognition of the vital importance of education in our social and economic life
- 7) To keep the people informed of new developments and trends in education
- 8) To develop an atmosphere of cooperation between the school and other social institutions of the community
- 9) To secure an unofficial but frank evaluation of the school in terms of educational needs as the community sees them
- 10) To develop a public goodwill toward the school (pp. 105-107)

In terms of school-community communications, the school has the burden to organize and initiate the process as it is not realistic or wise to assume the community will do so. Teachers and administrators are trained professionals in the home-school relationship. It should be their responsibility to do everything within their power to promote the success of school and the children who attend.

Parents are probably the single most important element in the school-community population. Cronin and Hailer (1973) suggested that many of the problems schools have confronted in the past few years are based partly on the failure of school personnel and parents to listen to one another. School personnel, especially school principals, should realize the extreme importance of communication with parents and assume the role that is most certainly their responsibility. Principals are in leadership positions and should establish the climate needed for parents to feel welcome. They should influence the general attitudes of their staff members and maintain an open-door policy. In addition, principals should schedule open-houses, parent meetings, and teacher inservice activities necessary to create positive school-parent communications (Berger, 1981).

Parents have gained new levels of importance as granted and assigned to them by legislative bodies and addressed in national reports such as A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The involvement of parents in the educational process has been stressed and mandated by Public Law 94-142 and E.C.I.A. Chapter I. Effective involvement on the part of parents depends on effective and meaningful communication from the school. Principals especially need to communicate to parents and be ready, willing, and able to do so.

Whether communication is voluntary or involuntary, there are many facts of the home-school environment the principal needs to be familiar with and to consider. The principal must initially consider three basic factors--who is communicating to who, how the message is communicated, and what the topic of the message is. "Critical to any communication event is the receiver's perception of those who originate the message, the messages themselves, the method of delivery . . ." (McCain & Wall, 1976, p. 2).

The question of who receives the communication must first be considered. Many parents have unpleasant memories of their childhood schools; these memories may weaken their enthusiasm to work with teachers today (Nedler & McAfee, 1979). Careful consideration should be given by teachers and principals to the fact that all parents do not feel comfortable with the school as an institution. In addition, the influence of the role of the sender cannot be overlooked.

There is evidence that people who control the destiny of others, such as parents, teachers, supervisors, provoke ego defensive reactions, quite apart from what they may

say The presence of threat, of course, affects the depth and accuracy of communication. (Mortensen, 1979, p. 10)

Principals must take into account all the possible audiences and the perceptions they may have of school. Berger (1981) cited five parent types that are recipients of home-school communication:

- 1) Parents who avoid schools at all times
- 2) Parents who need encouragement to come to school
- 3) Parents who readily respond when invited
- 4) Parents who are comfortable about coming to school
- 5) Parents who are overactive and enjoy their power (pp. 92-93)

Secondly, the question of how the message is communicated to parents must be considered. Many methods of communication exist, as will be discussed in Chapter 2; the principal must select the one appropriate to the audience. Methods or means of communication range from the quite common one-way modes, such as newsletters and notes that may be formal or informal, to the highly touted two-way communication method of the parent-teacher conference. As stated earlier, two-way communications are representative of a total communication model; however, the one-way modes also have established their place in home-school communications. The audience and the intent of messages are key factors in determining the method of communication. "The type of information parents want sometimes determines the method used to convey it" (Rutherford & Edgar, 1979, p. 3). This comment serves to tie all components together--audience, method, and message; the means may be determined by the subject about which the audiences wishes to hear.

The content of the message is the final point that should be considered by the principal. Rutherford and Edgar (1979) stated:

The most common teacher-parent interaction is an exchange of information about the child's performance in school. Parents want to know what skills their children are learning, how well they are doing, what activities they are engaged in, who the teacher is and what the general policies of the school are. (p. 3)

In any case, the content of the message, whether it is basically a negative or a supportive one, must reflect that the administrator is sensitive to people and understands the relationships in the home-school environment.

Parents love their children, and if the teacher feels the same love, then parents are your friends. Show your interest in a child and parents are on your side. Be casual, be off-handed, be cold toward the child and parents can never work closely with you. . . . To touch the child is to praise the parent. To criticize the child is to hit the parent. The two are two, but the two are one. (Hymes, 1974, pp. 8-9)

Communication represents a very vast and abstract concept, present every moment of the human experience. It is an elusive task to give the concrete boundaries within this study or in the voluminous stacks of literature already published. However, communication has been shown to have key elements such as the sender, message, and receiver. Factors that influence these three elements are infinite and based strongly on the make-up of each individual. What a sender sends and a receiver receives is influenced by the total of their experiences.

An awareness of this fact on behalf of both the sender and the receiver will enhance the chances for successful and meaningful communication. Increased knowledge of the sender regarding methods, ways, or channels available to send messages as well as increased knowledge of the topics about which the receiver wishes to hear are two significant understandings worth investigation.

Schools are the primary source of communication in the home-school environment and it is the building principal's responsibility to oversee the process. Given this situation, it is imperative to study the methods (channels) and topics most commonly considered to be involved in home-school communication.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of elementary school parents regarding written and verbal methods of home-school communication concerning five major topics, inclusive of student academic progress, student social behavior, school policies, school activities, and school curriculum. An analysis of the data provided an assessment of the effectiveness of the communication system used by the elementary schools in the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in the investigation of elementary school parent perceptions regarding the written and verbal methods of communication used by Kearney public school teachers and principals.

1. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's academic progress?
2. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's social behavior?

3. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding the policies of their child's school?

4. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding activities of their child's school?

5. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding the curriculum of their child's school?

6. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually use when they initiate communication with their child's school?

Definition of Terms

For clarification purposes, certain terms were defined for use in this study. Definitions given for the following terms were expressly used in this study.

Communication. The transmittal of messages from a sender to a receiver through a channel that may be either accepted or rejected and may or may not include feedback to the sender; to make sense of symbols, actions, and words.

Written communication. Messages that are sent and received by use of written symbols between a sender and a receiver; may be one-way or two-way in nature and may be initiated by parents, teachers, or principals.

Verbal communication. Messages that are sent and received by the use of oral means between a sender and receiver; two-way communication that may be initiated by parents, teachers, or principals.

Home-school communication. Written or verbal communication that may be initiated by either parents or school personnel.

Topics of home-school communication. The major theme of a message involved in the communication process; the subject intended to be the main idea or theme in a message sent to a receiver by a sender in the communication process, which includes academic process, social behavior, school activities, curricular activities, and policies.

Student academic progress. Information pertaining to the academic achievement of students; specifically to growth measurable in the areas of math, reading, science, social studies, spelling, English, handwriting, art, music, physical education.

Student social behavior. Information pertaining to social development and behavior of a student, inclusive of discipline.

School activities. Information pertaining to events taking place at school such as open-house, carnivals, bake sales, book fairs, play day, etc.

School curriculum. Information concerning the scope and sequence of major educational and instructional programs offered by the school district.

School policies . Information pertaining to the rules, regulations, and policies set by school officials for the governance of students, inclusive of information concerning student health, welfare, and safety.

Communication method. The channel or mode of communication a sender chooses to use to send a message to a receiver; the specific written or verbal means by which a sender sends a message to a receiver.

Communication frequency. The rate at which communication is made between home and school; measurement of how often communications are sent and received between home and school.

Assumptions

For purposes of the study the following assumptions were made:

1. Parents did answer the questions accurately.
2. Parents did give honest responses to the interviewer concerning home-school communication.
3. The data collected in the study provided an accurate assessment of the home-school communications used by the elementary school parents, teachers, and principals in the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The population of this study was confined to elementary school parents in the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska and their experiences with home-school communications between August 27, 1984 and

March 15, 1985.

Implications from this study do not necessarily extend to all Nebraska public elementary schools. The study was designed to provide data for the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska regarding written and verbal methods of home-school communication used by parents, teachers, and principals. Interpretation of the data was limited to application in the Kearney elementary schools.

Importance of the Study

Communication is a process that actively or passively occupies the majority of every day.

Most of us spend up to 70% of our waking hours engaged in some form of communication. . . . All together, the stream of verbal and nonverbal information that bombards our senses is composed of as many as 2,000 distinguishable units of interaction in a single day. (Mortensen, 1979, pp. vii-viii)

Parents and school administrators are no exception. In order to succeed with an effective home-school communication system, the parameters of home-school communication must be defined. The needs of parents and schools are important and both must be considered. Schools, serving as the chief initiator of communication, must act to build meaningful programs to meet those needs.

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, parents are becoming more active in school life, whether by voluntary actions or through federal and state laws such as Public Law 94-142 and E.C.I.A. Chapter I programs. Because of parent roles such as these, parents stand as logical targets for increased and improved home-school communication. "The most essential ingredient to the success of parent-teacher

interaction is effective communication" (Berger, 1979).

Based on the assumption that schools do have existing home-school communication systems, it becomes critical to assess them. This study provides an assesment of home-school communication systems in terms of written and verbal methods of communications used by parents, teachers, and principals to send messages to each other concerning student academic progress, student social behavior, school policies, school activities, and school curriculum. It is important to discover the written and verbal communication methods that parents prefer school personnel to use and to incorporate those methods as general school practices. When this happens, better understanding will result between home and school and an increased meaning will result in improved communications between home and school.

Design of the Study

Review of the Literature

Selected literature was reviewed for the purpose of identifying the written and verbal methods most often suggested by authorities and to identify topics of communication most often mentioned. A discussion of the findings has been presented to familiarize readers with those topics of communication considered to be most common as well as the written and verbal methods most commonly used by school personnel and parents to communicate with each other. The discussion was not limited to one-way or two-way communication but explored communication in general to expose communication that is practiced across the nation and is representative of the whole.

Finally, the review of literature was used to construct elements of the interview schedule for the elementary school parents involved in the study.

Methodology

Step 1. An interview schedule based on a review of the literature was constructed for the purpose of identifying the perceptions elementary school parents had of actual and ideal home-school communication (see Appendix G). Specific attention was given to the topics of communication and the methods of communication. Appropriate demographics were included for analysis and interpretation of the data.

Step 2. The parent interview schedule was trial tested for accuracy and understandability by giving pilot interviews to a group of elementary parents whose children attended Glenwood Elementary School, Kearney, Nebraska. (Glenwood Elementary School was similar in size to one of the elementary attendance centers of the Kearney Public Schools and contiguous to the Kearney Public School District.)

Step 3. Elementary school parents were selected using a stratified random sampling design. It was necessary to select one parent per classroom for each elementary classroom in the Kearney elementary schools. All classrooms were identified and assigned a set of numbers from one to thirty, the maximum number of students per class in the Kearney Public Schools. A table of random numbers was used to identify participants. Specifically, four numbers were selected for each classroom and placed in the order they were selected. Each random number was matched with the corresponding student name and

number located in the teacher's attendance book. The first parent chosen for each classroom was contacted by letter seven to ten days prior to the actual interview asking him or her to participate in the study. The second, third, and fourth parents on the list were used only if the first parent declined to participate. The names, addresses, and phone numbers were attained for all participants from the elementary school principals.

Step 4. All participants were interviewed by telephone between February 1 and March 15, 1985 (see Appendix C).

Step 5. Data were recorded, displayed, and interpreted. Conclusions and recommendations were made concerning the actual and preferred written and verbal methods of communication.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

As presented in Chapter 1, the stated purpose of this study was to identify parent perceptions of written and verbal methods of communication used between home and school concerning selected topics. Chapter 2 is organized to provide a literary background for the investigation of the problem. The first section of this review of literature provides an overview of communication and serves as a basis for understanding the concept. Section two of this chapter serves as a focus on the values of school-community communication, with emphasis on parents, teachers, and principals as primary communication participants. The final section of the review of literature presents a discussion of selected written and verbal methods of home-school communication with specific reference to the topics they usually address--academic progress, social behavior, school policies, school activities, and curriculum.

An Overview of Communication

Communication is a word that is often used and in turn quite often abused by society as a catch word (Wood, 1982). As such, the true nature and value of communication can be lost. In order to proceed in a discussion relating to communication, it is valuable to put the concept into perspective. What is communication? How does

one communicate? Who communicates? When does one know if communication has been successful?

Communication can be best described as an inexact science. By that statement, it is meant that the essence of communication is always dependent upon the situation and the characters it involves (Johnson, 1977). It is important to understand that the formation of thoughts about another individual and their ideas or actions occurs whenever two individuals are in the presence of one another (Blaine, 1983).

Models of communication attempt to bring the concept of communication to a concrete level. In communication theory and research, models are numerous but follow a basic design. Lasswell (1948) provided an old but classic checklist approach in his model (see Figure 3).

Who?
Says What?
In Which Way?
To Whom?
With What Effect?

Figure 3
Lasswell's Model of Communication
(Lasswell, 1948, p. 37)

This model is very basic in that it is one of the first to suggest a two-way system of communication and an exchange of information between two people. Prior to Lasswell's work, the "hypodermic model" (Forsdale, 1981, p. 19) specified a rather limited perspective in that

it entertained the idea that one individual could simply inject ideas into the mind and thoughts of another. The major notion was that if one were persistent enough the message would be driven home.

More realistically and practically, models of communication consist of three parts: (1) the sender, (2) the message, and (3) the receiver (Strain & Wysong, 1979). Communication travels in a directional pattern (see Figure 4).

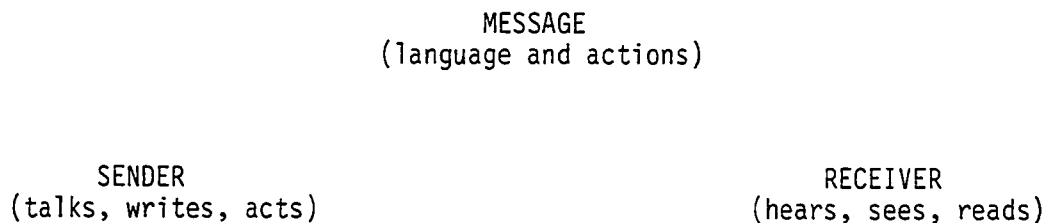


Figure 4

A Communication Model
(Strain & Wysong, 1979, p. 2)

A more complex model of communication adds the dimension of circularity to communication concepts (see Figure 5).

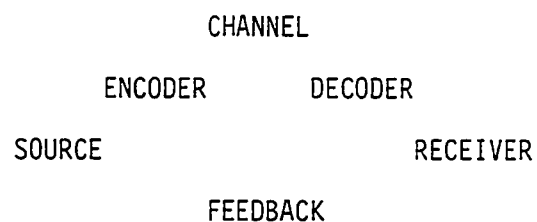


Figure 5

Common Communication Model
(Kindred, Bagin, & Gallagher, 1984, p. 79)

The model of Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1984) adds the feedback feature to the concept of communication. Through the model, it is suggested there is not only the origination, sending, and receiving of a message, but a return of the message to the sender and, thus, a circular dimension of communication. With this increased aspect of communication, it becomes difficult to depict a beginning and an end to the process of communication.

The fact that the receiver returns the message in the form of feedback to the sender represents a very significant transaction. The receiver not only receives the message but gives it meaning through interpretation and sends an appropriate message in response to the sender. With this phenomenon, the meaning the receiver attaches to the message of the sender becomes of prime importance (Ostrom, 1972). At this point, the experiences individuals bring to the setting tend to influence the interpretations they give to the messages being sent and received. The origination and intent of a message sent by an individual may be different than that perceived by the receiver because of the different experiences they have and use in exchange of information.

Salomon (1981) noted the relationship of experiences between people during communication exchange:

. . . personal dispositions, attributions of intent and meaning, communicational behaviors and educational outcomes are reciprocally related to each other. We are influenced by others' messages, but it is our interpretation of the messages that influence the way we are influenced. (p. 211)

According to communication theorists, success of communication is directly dependent upon the degree of understanding that occurs in the exchange of messages between individuals and the experiences they bring to a situation. As with any major societal institutions, schools rely on communication to achieve their purpose. The remainder of this chapter provides a consideration of communication process and procedures used by schools.

School-Community Communication

Communication theory applied to schools and their communities typically places the school as the sender and the community as the receiver. As such, it is necessary for schools to perceive that basic role and to focus on achieving maximum understanding for needed public support. This section of Chapter 2 presents the school's responsibility to communicate with the community.

Public schools are obligated and expected to communicate with their community. Parents and community patrons continually state they have a desire for information concerning public schools in America (Auten, 1982). Gallup (1982) confirmed the above statement by stating:

Every survey we have taken during the past 25 years has shown that the public would like more information about the schools and the educational system. (p. vii)

The school's obligation to communicate with the community is increasing rapidly. In the past, communication from schools was achieved with less effort because a greater proportion (50%) of the public had a direct line with the school by having a child enrolled

in school. Today, however, less than 25 percent of the United States households have direct communication linkages with schools through their children (Kinder, 1982). Because of this fact, school personnel need to begin planning a deliberate and effective community relations program.

Schools stand to benefit from the public relation programs they create and implement within their communities. In particular, educational programs can be designed efficiently to serve needs of students if the school solicits the input from the community. The act of soliciting public input can serve to facilitate public support and to minimize criticisms of school activities (McCain & Wall, 1976).

Matters of great importance, such as getting school buildings built, providing funds for education plans, and staffing patterns, can be more attainable through increased public awareness. If a community awareness program is planned in advance of such issues, the chances of success are increased (Kinder, 1984). With decreasing enrollments and a corresponding decrease in the parent population of school-age children, a well-planned and far-reaching community public relations program should be designed and implemented by schools (McCain & Wall, 1976).

Parents as Targets of School Communication

Parents represent one of the most important subsets of community for schools to target as the recipients of their communication. When the school communicates with the home a very nurturing climate is established that will achieve a more responsible and stable student

in regard to social, emotional, and physical development (Nedler & McAfee, 1979). Parents have indicated that communication in the areas of academic achievement and curriculum is of importance to them (Criscuolo, 1982). Situations where active parent communication and involvement have been noted indicate positive gains for students regarding achievement (Boe, 1983; Chapman, 1982; Iverson et al., 1981).

Parents are usually influential and successful with their children when good communication exists with the school (Iverson et al., 1981). Therefore, the establishment of good communication should be of high priority for schools. However, it is essential to know the demographic nature of parents before success can be achieved. A reference to discussion concerning effective communication is critical at this point. It must be remembered that "senders" and "receivers" bring their own experiences to the setting. In so doing, the make-up of the parent audience must be considered when creating and sending a message by school teachers and principals (Bortner, 1972).

Parents represent a very diverse group. It is significant to note that parents basically perceive the school based on their experiences as a student (Nedler & McAfee, 1979). It would be erroneous to assume that parents share the same attitude their child has toward school and even more of an error to think they understand and share the school's point of view.

Once teachers and principals are aware of the parent audience in terms of their perceived attitudes toward school and their perceived parent roles, they can begin to pursue effective methods of

communication. Goodson and Hess (1975) suggested that parents may be engaged at four different levels: (1) policy makers, (2) effective teachers of their own children, (3) supporting resources for the school, and (4) informed persons in general regarding school matters. In any case, the perceived role of the parent must be strongly considered by teachers and principals for successful communication with parents. Methods of communicating with parents is discussed later in the chapter.

Teachers as Communicators

Teachers represent the first line of communication with parents (Bortner, 1972). It is essential teachers realize communications are their responsibility and plan for the fulfillment of that responsibility. Parents often do not take time to initiate contact with the school and expect teachers to keep them informed of day-to-day happenings (Barnds, 1985). Since most activities that generate communication happen at school, it is only logical to place the responsibility on teachers.

Teachers may often be faced with the dilemma of deciding what is significant or noteworthy and should be reported to the home. They do not want to report trivia but at the same time want to keep the parents informed. On the other hand, parents may feel teachers over-communicate and devote too much of their time in communication that would be better spent on teaching in the classroom. In either situation, the teacher must decide what is to be communicated to parents.

As a topic of communication, teachers should inform parents

about the curriculum of the school (Iverson et al., 1981). Today, many parents wish to become involved with the happenings at school and want to help their child with school work (Hunt, 1982). As a result, many parents express a desire to know more than is being communicated to them (Criscuolo, 1982). A parent who knows more of what the school expects is in a better position to help. Teachers who recognize this basic fact have answered the key question about what to communicate in their messages to parents. If the school and child are to benefit from parent assistance, it is the responsibility of the teacher to nurture carefully and encourage actively the parents (Johnston & Slotnik, 1985).

The ability to serve as a listener is included in the teacher's role of communicator (Fredericks et al., 1983). The interpersonal skill of listening is often overlooked as a component of good home-school communication. In order for meaningful communication to occur, messages must be fully understood. Teachers who demonstrate skill in listening to parents serve as good communicators because they obtain the facts before making responses (Barron & Colvin, 1984). The fact that teachers overlook the listening skill can lead to a very limited and meaningless exchange with parents. To fulfill the responsibility of effective communicator, listening must become a viable part of the communication process. To do less would be to believe one individual could "inject" information into the mind of another without the need of a return stimulus to verify accurate reception or to rephrase a message for better meaning.

In summary, it is basically the teacher who is perceived as

the first line communicator to parents. It is the teacher who must continually assess the nature of messages sent to parents. In turn, successful communication will become a reality when teachers recognize and accept that responsibility--to initiate communication and to become active listeners.

Principals as Communicators

Principals are people in the middle. As such, they are committed to the continuous challenge of communication with individuals above and below them in authority, as well as persons who are outside their authority. They spend approximately 90 percent of their day in face-to-face interchanges with people in ever-changing situations. Communication responsibilities place the principal in the key position of influencing the effectiveness of schools (Strother, 1983).

Community and particularly parents represent one of the audiences principals stand to influence the most. Armistead (1982) placed the principal's role into perspective when he stated:

No one has greater chance to build public understanding of schools than the principal, headmaster, or assistant principal. (p. ix)

It is the principal who must serve as a catalyst with parents and teachers to get a program of active communication established between home and school (Walker, 1983). The principal must provide leadership and support to staff members and parents if an effective communication program is to become a reality (Knox & Stellar, 1981).

The principal's leadership in communication involves perception and the ability to organize. Issues that are pertinent to education and people who are in positions to affect those issues

must be recognized by the principal. However, the principal's ability to recognize is not enough to assure good communication. The ability to organize a sensible plan of action must follow recognition (Criscuolo, 1985).

Organization of parent communication becomes an important responsibility of the principal as an educational leader (Barron & Colvin, 1984). The ability to sense the needs of the parent populous will serve to move communication in a positive direction (Goldenstein & DeVita, 1977). The organization of public relations activities, such as newsletters, parent conferences, and parent groups, can pave the way to successful home-school relations (Long, 1985). Bortner (1972) summarized the principal's key responsibilities for communication as "1) organizing the school for public relations . . . 2) working with staff . . . and 3) working with the school's community . . ." (pp. 87-89). Major emphasis to educate staff members and to develop programs that require staff members to come in contact with parents as well as the community in visible ways must be given emphasis by the principal. Modeling of good public relations practices can and does serve the function of leadership in communication (Strother, 1983).

In summary, the principal's role in the establishment of the program requires an awareness of communication methods and of the audiences to which they are directed. Such methods are discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

Methods/Topics of Home-School Communication

Two basic methods of communication exist as options to school teachers and principals to use in the communications that are directed toward the parent audience--written or verbal. Each method has its purpose in terms of the message it will convey to a specified audience. More clearly, a specific written or verbal method of communication may be selected for use because of the topic (message) it is to relate to an audience. The remainder of the chapter presents a discussion of written and verbal communication methods. Specific methods of written and verbal communications are presented in light of the topical messages they usually convey to parents, which include academic progress, social behavior, school policies, school activities, and curriculum.

Written Communication

Written communications involve the use of symbols to relay meaning to those who read them. As with any communication process, the meaning of symbols is left to an individual's interpretation. Letters and words in themselves do not provide meaning but rather serve as stimuli for interpretation (Taylor et al., 1983).

At times, written communications can be confusing because of double meanings or because of "hidden" meanings that individuals may attach to written words (Ruben, 1984). It becomes necessary for individuals to devote considerable energy to clarify messages in written communications. Primary considerations should be given to the nature of the message and the audience who will read and in turn

interpret the written message.

Written communication is not to be considered as a disadvantageous method of communication. It also has its advantages. In fact, it is considered by many to be one of man's greatest achievements (Bending, 1970) and as an instrument of great power in the development of Western culture. In addition, written communications serve important functions in that they create a lasting means of intellectual and educational references and record social, political, and cultural events (Forsdale, 1981).

Written communications serve a definite function in the school environment. Parents, teachers, and principals use a variety of written tools to achieve basic understandings among themselves inclusive of newsletters, news releases, and questionnaires (Long, 1985). The success of messages sent by way of written communications is subject to the sender's adherence to basic guidelines and purpose (Bortner, 1972).

Written communications between home and school are used for many reasons. Three of the most common reasons are that they (1) take less time and energy, (2) offer a more expressive medium to senders, and (3) are more understandable to the receiver (Henninger, 1977).

The specific written method used by the writer is dependent upon the nature of the message to be sent. Three popular methods of written communication used by school teachers and principals are progress reports, newsletters, and handbooks. The messages (topics) generally related to parents are included as part of the discussion.

Progress reports. Report cards represent one of the most valuable links between home and school (Leary, 1975). In many cases, it is oftentimes not the most valuable but the only visible communication between home and school (Milas, 1977). As such, the report card must be a constructive, useful, and meaningful tool. In a majority of instances the report card is regarded by parents as an important tool. A positive aspect of the written report card is that it provides a fast and accurate picture of the student (Reid, 1984).

Because of the perceived importance parents give to the report card, its purpose, format, and usage need to be given careful consideration. Report cards not only report to parents the academic progress and social behavior, but also make a statement about the school's view of both key areas (Kohl, 1982). Serving such a role, the design of the report card should be given top priority. In the development of report cards, the parent audience should be a key consideration. It is easy to forget this primary idea in development and it is not uncommon to discover report cards that serve only the needs and teachers and administrators (Bippus, 1981). Also, when considering the parent audience, consideration should be given to the meaning parents give to the report card. Parent reaction and treatment of information included in report cards can be less than positive. Austin (1965) stated:

In the hands of well meaning parents, report cards could become lethal weapons to be used for bribery, cajolery, and to promote competition among children.
(p. 661)

When this type of parent reaction occurs, the report card becomes less than effective and would serve a better purpose if it were never sent to parents.

Schools can best construct effective written reports if they focus on the purposes of the report card and the meaning of the messages contained in the report itself. Emphasis on the three major intentions of the report card, (1) to inform the pupil, (2) to guide the pupil, and (3) to inform parents of academic and social growth of the child (Giannangelo, 1975), will serve as guidelines in constructing written reports to parents.

Newsletters. Newsletters provide a very important means of communicating from school to home. Teachers and principals can use the newsletter as an expedient but complete tool to inform parents on many key topics concerning school (Long, 1985). School newsletters have served viable purposes for informing all parents of school activities such as parent meetings, special days, and assemblies. At the classroom level, the newsletter can serve to inform parents of classroom activities such as plays, skits, and special needs for activities (e.g., picnics, field trips) (Parker, 1985). Some experts have suggested the inclusion of calendars as a viable ingredient of the newsletter (Goldstein & Devita, 1977). Communications about school activities, in the form of a calendar sent home regularly on a monthly basis, can be worthwhile (Rich & Jones, 1977). A more general use of the newsletter involves communicating with parents concerning curriculum matters. Ideas pertaining to what the child is

studying as well as suggestions for parent help are definite advantages of the newsletter (Criscuolo, 1985).

Principals have found newsletters to be an excellent means to communicate with parents concerning other key topics such as school policy, building rules, and student behavior (Hamilton, 1981; Rich, 1984). In a majority of buildings where the newsletter is utilized by principals, it is rated third in importance behind the verbal methods of parent-teacher conferences and open-houses as a key means to communicate with parents (Walker, 1983).

Regularity is important to the effectiveness of newsletters. It has been found to be most effective if parents can expect to receive a newsletter on certain dates or days (Parker, 1985). When parents expect such newsletters, they begin to ask the child about them and tend to avoid lost information in book bags and other areas. Newsletters are advantageous in that they allow time for teachers to think about the message they are attempting to communicate and they give parents time to do the same (Roberts, 1983).

It is important to use language that is clear and understandable in the construction of newsletters (Goldstein, 1982). Correct spelling, punctuation, and verbage and the use of proofreading can prove valuable; the meaning of the message can be obscured if proper attention is not given to these factors.

The school newsletter is a powerful tool for teachers and administrators in communications with the home. It can be narrowly constructed to reach individual needs of classrooms or broadly written to encompass the entire parent populous of a school building.

Handbooks. Handbooks represent a very specific and important means of communicating with parents (Kindred, Bagin, & Gallagher, 1984). The basic purpose of handbooks is to inform parents and students of the school building and school district philosophy, goals, and objectives (Henniger, 1977).

The challenge in producing handbooks is to make them interesting and readable. Usually the handbook is a communication tool sent to parents at the beginning of a school year. This fact is noteworthy, for many parents who have read them once tend to assume they know the contents and lay the book aside. In addition, future editions may not even be read by the parents. Considering the investment of the administrators' time when composing the handbook and the nature of the content of the handbooks (Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher, 1984), it becomes an exercise in futility if the handbook is never read by parents.

In order to increase the effectiveness of handbooks and to make them a practical and usable source of school information for parents (Walker, 1983), school administrators should incorporate some basic strategies in their development. Printing the books professionally as well as keeping them relatively "lean" will make the books more appealing to parents. The use of clear and concise language and the avoidance of rhetoric will increase the ease with which parents can read the contents. Finally, the contents should include current, practical, and usable data about the school. Annual reviews should be given by administrators for that purpose (Goldenstein & DeVita, 1977).

In general, handbooks are a good reference for parents concerning school policies, regulations, and common building procedures. As such, they should be carefully planned so their implementation and use will be more effective.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication involves the use of symbols as with written communication; however, the use of speech and oral skills are involved in the verbal process of communication. Written and verbal communication methods share the common element of language; thus verbal communication methods reflect some of the similar problems stated in the written communication section of the chapter.

Verbal communication, by the fact it involves oral speaking, is separated from written communication in terms of language usage. Generally, verbal methods of communication are considered to be simpler in the sense that the words are shorter, delivered more rapidly, expressed in incomplete sentences, and inclusive of slang.

Although verbal communication is simpler in one sense, it is more difficult in other ways. It allows less time to compose whole thoughts and to express the most meaningful words. Semantics (Eisenberg, 1983) can result in the problem of interpreting spoken words for meaning. Because of the complexity of the English language, several different meanings can be conveyed with the use of one word or phrase.

Perhaps two of the most distinguishing differences between written and verbal communications are the qualities of personalness

and immediacy (Wood, 1982). Verbal methods usually require face-to-face interaction between individuals with the outcome being an informal language exchange involving the induction of nonverbal communication factors. Verbal communication should never be dismissed as the mere speaking of the written word. Verbal communication expands to include interpersonal skills of listening and attending. In so doing it becomes as important to listen as it does to initiate the original message (Taylor et al., 1983).

Communication between home and school is inclusive of verbal methods which are often frequently used by administrators (Walker, 1983) and preferred by parents (Bosco, 1982). Parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and telephone calls represent three of the most popular methods used between home and school and are presented below.

Parent-teacher conferences. Parent-teacher conferences are an extremely valuable communication tool between home and school (Nedler & McAfee, 1979). Principals who carry out effective communication programs rate parent-teacher conferences as the most important verbal method used by their school staff to communicate with parents (Walker, 1983). Parents and teachers also agree that the face-to-face communication they have is probably the most significant link between them (Bosco, 1982).

What makes the parent-teacher conference such an important instrument is fascinating and somewhat paradoxical. Parents and teachers rate the conference as their first choice as a means to communicate in a direct and effective manner; however, at the same

time they also list it as the one method of communication with which they are the most uncomfortable (Barron & Colvin, 1984; Bosco, 1982). There can be many reasons for this paradox concerning parent and teacher attitudes toward the conference. Two of the more notable reasons are (1) poor parent self-esteem, attributable to negative school experiences in their past (Nedler & McAfee, 1979) and (2) the lack of organization and interpersonal skills needed by teachers to carry out the task (Barron & Colvin, 1984; Rotter & Robinson, 1982).

The primary purpose of the parent-teacher conference is to build, maintain, and strengthen relationships with parents that will result in the bettering of the child (Barron & Colvin, 1984). It has been proven many times that a close bond created between school and home results in better student behavior, achievement, and overall performance (Evans, 1975; Iverson, 1981; Rebman, 1983). With the purpose and value of the conference in mind, the focus is returned to the considerations that must be given to parent-teacher conferences to alleviate the less than exciting attitude that both groups have of the conference.

Berclay (1977) gave some clues as to why parents typically lack communication with schools. Included are (1) the parents' fear of the school situation due to childhood experiences with the school, (2) the belief that it is the school's job to educate children, and (3) disagreement with school programs. These clues should provide insight into the teacher's effective planning of the conference.

Effective parent-teacher conferences result when teachers plan the conference in an organized and purposeful manner (Davis &

Davis, 1981). Fredericks et al. (1983) suggested six key elements to include in the sequential planning of effective parent-teacher conferences: (1) beginning the conference on a positive note, (2) making the conference area comfortable, (3) maintaining eye contact, (4) providing examples of student work with the use of student folders, (5) allowing the parents time to talk, and (6) ending the conference on a positive note. The use of the conference outline suggested by Fredericks et al. is helpful in developing a plan for conferences; however, the use of interpersonal skills during the conference itself is critical.

Rotter and Robinson (1982) suggested that interpersonal skills of listening, attending, perceiving, responding, and initiating are important skills that teachers must employ throughout the conference. Proper use of gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact become large differences in the outcomes of parent-teacher conferences. Unless the teacher creates the setting of warmth and genuineness through the use of such skills, the value of the conference is placed at unnecessary risk.

Just as the "do's" of a conference have been stated, it is also important for teachers to be conscious of the "don'ts." Ostrom (1972) referred to them as the "dirty dozen":

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Commanding | 7. Praising |
| 2. Threatening | 8. Name-calling |
| 3. Lecturing | 9. Interpreting |
| 4. Preaching | 10. Consoling |
| 5. Advising | 11. Probing |
| 6. Judging | 12. Diverting (pp. 12-13) |

Use of such tactics identified by Ostrom can serve to unravel a meaningful conference and should be avoided by teachers. The traps for teachers are numerous and it takes a knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced teacher to avoid them.

In summary, parent-teacher conferences are a powerful tool to link the home with the school. Parent-teacher conferences should be well-planned and designed for the improved welfare of the student. Awareness of interpersonal communication skills and the basic communication "do's" and "don'ts" can make a difference in creating a partnership with parents that will serve to better the child.

Home visits. Home visits represent another form of parent-teacher conference with the main difference the shift of the site from school to home. The purpose of the conference occurring in a child's home serves basically to place the parent in a more natural setting and to increase a teacher's awareness of the impacting physical factors of the child's home. In addition, home visits serve to increase a parent's respect for the teacher; the teacher is making a special effort to become familiar with the home and thus shows an increased care toward the child (Wirt, 1979).

The success of home visits depends on several factors. The first factor is the approach that is used by teachers to set up the visit (Goldenstein & DeVita, 1977). Making the experience optional for parents, informing parents of the teacher's desire and willingness to make the home visit, and being open to parent invitation seem to result in more positive visitations (Wirt, 1979). Once a home visit

is established positively, the teacher is free to visit the home and to begin building an increased awareness of school programs, school staff, and students (Raskas, 1977).

The format of the home visit is the responsibility of the teacher, regardless of the setting (Boe, 1983). Discussions of the child's social, emotional, and educational development serve as a primary focus of the home conference (Faison, 1984).

In most instances it is of primary importance to be the listener rather than the talker. Some of the most important benefits can come from the teacher listening to what parents have to say (Raskas, 1977).

Timing is one of the most significant factors to be considered in home visits. Timing in respect to the time of day and length of time for the visit is of prime importance. Late afternoons and evenings have proven most effective as parents are usually home and are not exceedingly busy as those times. In any case the conference should not last more than 30-45 minutes or the risk of wearing out one's welcome becomes greater (Boe, 1983; Faison, 1984).

In summary, the home visit is a valuable parent teacher communication vehicle. The value comes from the closeness and caring created by the careful planning of teachers to keep the child in focus and by using timing as an important consideration.

Telephone Calls. The use of the telephone in communications between home and school can and does serve a vital purpose. Immediacy is perhaps one of the biggest assets of the telephone (Kirsh, 1973). Students' knowledge that teachers have such immediate access to parents

can influence their behavior, attendance, and accuracy of school work (Chapman & Heward, 1982). In addition, it makes a two-way exchange of ideas more appealing to parents who might not otherwise be in touch with the school regarding homework, discipline, school activities, and school policies (Bittle, 1975).

For teachers, the telephone also serves as a method to arrange conferences and to inform parents of special room activities (Hubbell, 1981; Roberts, 1983). In so doing, teachers and parents get to know each other in more personal ways before actual face-to-face encounters are experienced. Fredericks et al. (1983) claimed that the telephone provides a means that is not only immediate but easy to use on a regular basis. The telephone can prove to be an efficient vehicle for reporting good news about the child and should be used often.

Fuery (1985) offered some pointers on making telephone calls to parents, including (1) call parents at appropriate hours for matters of less than immediate concern, with 6:00 p.m. being noted as a time many parents are home; (2) creating a complete and accurate list of parent telephone numbers for quick and easy use; and (3) keeping the conversation short, with two to three minutes being the most appropriate. In addition, Henniger (1981) suggested calling often concerning positive news, keeping the content light, and putting the parent at ease early by using words that clearly establish the purpose of the call.

In summary, the telephone can be an extremely viable method of communication when it is used in an appropriate manner. It serves as an immediate and pleasant way to develop a strong link

between home and school.

Summary

Communication is a process involving sending and receiving messages. Understanding between individuals is an outcome that can result. Both parties involved in the process must realize the need to send messages that will be interpreted by an individual based on his or her experiences.

Communication between school and community is an area where effective application of the process can make a difference. Student achievement, behavior, school curriculum, and facilities stand to be key benefactors. Parents as a major audience of school communications must be recognized and understood by teachers and principals.

Teachers in general represent the first line communicators between home and school. As such, they need to realize that responsibility and create a plan to fulfill it. Principals on the other hand are essential to the process; they serve as catalysts and must work with parents and staff in that capacity.

Methods of home-school communications can be divided into two main categories--written and verbal. Each type of communication serves specific needs in regard to tailoring a communication vehicle to the topic and parent audience. The value of each vehicle should be considered by school teachers and principals when building the home-school link concerning major topics. Five significant topics of concern noted in the review of literature were: (1) student academic progress, (2) student social behavior, (3) school policies, (4) school

activities, and (5) school curriculum. It is important for schools to include information in their communications to parents that will enlighten them about their child as well as the problems affecting him or her.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology utilized in this study was designed to identify the major methods and topics of communication used between elementary school principals/teachers and parents. Secondly, it was designed to secure the perceptions of elementary school parents in the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska regarding selected written and verbal methods and topics of home-school communications.

Methods and topics and home-school communications were identified through a review of pertinent literature and the communication policies and regulations of the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska. Descriptive research data were gathered through the development and use of a parent interview schedule (see Appendix G) involving the elementary school parents of the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska.

The parent schedule was structured to attain parent perceptions about the major methods and topics of communication as revealed in the review of literature and Kearney Public School policies and regulations. Deliberate attempts were made to acquire information beyond the methods and topics prescribed for usage district-wide for all elementary school teachers and principals. Where no methods or topics were discovered beyond the district minimums, the district's standard methods and topics were investigated.

Setting

The Kearney Public Schools comprise the major public K-12 education system in the town of Kearney, Nebraska. The town of Kearney is located along the Platte River in South-Central Nebraska and in 1984 had an estimated population of 21,658 people. At the time of the study the Kearney Public Schools were approved and accredited by the Nebraska Department of Education. Beyond the minimum standards, Kearney was accredited by the North Central Association of School Accreditation and had earned the AA classification, from the Nebraska Department of Education, which was shared by only 38 of the remaining K-12 school districts in Nebraska.

Organization of the schools was on a K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 basis. The elementary school enrollment of 2,092 was housed in seven neighborhood schools (Bryant, Central, Emerson, Kenwood, Northeast, Park, and Windy Hills). The junior high school enrollment of 972 students and the senior high school enrollment of 807 students were housed in two separate but adjacent complexes. Governance of the Kearney Public Schools was provided by a six-member board of education whose members were elected at large by voters of the district.

Administration of the Kearney Public Schools was based on a central office concept and consisted of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, business manager, and director of student services. Administrative assistants were employed to administer food service, buildings/grounds, and transportation. Building administration consisted of a building principal in each of the elementary school

attendance centers and a head principal and assistant principal in the junior and senior high schools.

There were 235 instructional staff members in the Kearney Public Schools at the time of the study. Curriculum services were extended to students in the areas of mathematics, science, social studies, English/language arts, foreign language, physical education, vocal music, instrumental music, and art. Special services were provided by the district in the areas of speech/language, guidance, special education, Chapter I, audio and visually handicapped, vocational education, and adaptive physical education.

Elementary School Setting

The seven elementary schools were established in the "neighborhood schools" concept. Basically, each school was allowed to deviate in operation from the district norm by varying degrees to accommodate its student and parent populous.

Communication with parents was an area that allowed for some basic district standards while also permitting some building autonomy. All buildings were required to use three basic methods of written communication: (1) the report card for reporting student progress at the end of each nine-week quarter in the areas of academic progress and social behavior, (2) the school handbook for reporting district elementary school regulations/policies at the beginning of the school year, and (3) a yearly calendar stating the major activities in the district, which was organized and published jointly by the Kearney Public Schools and the Kearney Education Association at the beginning of the school year.

The Kearney Public Schools provided standards for verbal communication with parents. All elementary schools were required to devote the equivalent of two school days at the end of the first nine-week quarter to parent-teacher conferences. The structure of the conference in terms of setting and time was left to the discretion of each individual school; however, the dates of the conferences were uniform district-wide.

Communication efforts beyond district standards were matters of concern for each school. This study was not only designed to assess mandatory district communications but also those beyond district requirements as perceived by parents.

A complete description of each of the elementary schools in the Kearney Public School District, Kearney, Nebraska may be found in Appendix I.

Procedures

Selection of Methods and Topics

Pertinent literature and Kearney Public School policy and regulation manuals were used to identify the major written and verbal methods and topics of communication. In order to ensure that required communications were assessed, the prescribed communications in the elementary schools of the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska were identified first.

Written communication methods and topics consisted of (1) the student report card, concerning the topics of academic progress and social behavior, (2) the yearly school calendar to inform parents

of school activities for the school year, and (3) student handbooks to inform parents concerning school regulations and policies. A review of literature revealed one other pertinent topic usually included as part of home-school communications was school curriculum. Another communication method consistently mentioned in the literature was newsletters.

Parent-teacher conferences for the purpose of communicating student academic progress and social behavior were identified as the only required verbal method of home-school communications in the elementary-schools of the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska. Additional verbal methods documented regularly in the literature review were telephone calls and home visits.

In summary, written and verbal methods and topics most often suggested in the literature are presented in Figures 6 and 7.

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Associated Topics</u>
Report cards	Academic progress Social behavior
Newsletters/calendars	School activities School curriculum Policies/regulations
Handbooks	School regulations/policies

Figure 6

Written Communications: Methods and Topics

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Associated Topics</u>
Parent-teacher conferences	Academic progress Social behavior School curriculum School policies/regulations
Telephone calls	Academic progress Social behavior School curriculum School activities School regulations/policies
Home visits	Academic progress Social behavior Student-home information

Figure 7

Verbal Communications: Methods and Topics

Development of the Parent Interview Schedule

A parent interview schedule was developed based on a review of literature related to school-home communication (see Appendix G). The schedule was also developed based on current school-home communication standards of the Kearney Public Schools. The intent of the design was to assess parent perceptions of all home-school communication between the Kearney elementary school parents and the Kearney elementary school teachers and principals. Open-ended questions were structured to elicit parental responses to written and verbal communications that parents received from elementary school teachers and principals regarding five basic topics of student academic progress, student social behavior, school regulations/policies, school activities, and school curriculum. Questions were structured to acquire perceptions of communications beyond methods specified by

district policy. If the district-required communications were all that were received, the questions pertained to these methods. In cases where there were no district requirements, the question was left open. The purpose of this question structure was to avoid limited response to the district requirements.

Parent responses were computer coded (see Appendix H). Parent comments were not coded but recorded in writing directly from the parent interview schedule.

Parent initiated communication with the school was attained through the development of a clear, concise, and consequential set of open-ended questions. No attempt was made to categorize the parent-initiated communications per topic because of the cumbersome design that was indicated in the pilot test of the schedule by the parents of Glenwood School District, Kearney, Nebraska. However, the items were computer coded in terms of method, topic, and frequency to assist in analysis. Comment responses were recorded directly from the parent interview schedule.

Pilot Testing of the Parent Interview Schedule

The parent interview schedule (see Appendix G) was tested for clarity and understandability with Glenwood Elementary School parents, Buffalo County School District, Kearney, Nebraska. Mrs. Alice Heckman, Buffalo County School Superintendent, was contacted to gain permission for a test of the schedule (see Appendix B) and to acquire a list of parent names for the study.

One parent per grade was selected at random from the list

submitted by Mrs. Heckman. Each parent was contacted by letter (see Appendix C), explaining his or her selection and participation as well as the purpose of the study.

Each parent interview was followed by questions that provided input for revision of the schedule: Did you understand the questions? Were you able to follow the interview? Did you feel it was too long? Are there areas of home-school communication that were left out? What would you suggest to improve the instrument in terms of clarity and understandability?

All parents responded that the interview lasted too long (35 to 45 minutes) and that some of the questions were repetitive. Specific suggestions were made to reorganize the schedule so that all of the parent-initiated questions were in an individual section rather than at the end of the written and verbal sections.

All parents in the pilot group agreed it was a very thorough interview and could not provide any substantive changes or additions beyond those mentioned. The schedule was revised and given to another set of randomly selected parents from Glenwood Elementary School excluding those previously interviewed. Follow-up questions revealed the parents perceived the interview to be consistent, "thorough," and "exhaustive." The time of the interview was reduced to an average of 20 to 25 minutes; all but one respondent felt comfortable with this amount of time.

A conference was arranged with Dr. James O. Howard, Superintendent of the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska, for the purpose of obtaining permission to conduct the study in the Kearney

Public Schools (see Appendix A) and to arrange a critical review of the parent interview schedule by the Kearney elementary school principals. The Kearney elementary school principals found the parent interview schedule to be consistent and compatible with elementary school procedures.

Sampling of the Population

Stratified random-sampling was selected for use in the study to ensure district-wide parent perceptions and to provide essential and uniform communication data concerning school attendance centers and grade levels of students.

All of the elementary school classrooms in the Kearney Public Schools were identified. A list of the numbers of parents in each classroom was attained from the principals of the Kearney Public Schools. A table of random numbers (see Appendix C1) was used to identify four numbers in each classroom. Four parents were identified in each classroom to allow for random parent participants without telephones and parents who would choose not to participate in the study. After the assignment of random numbers to each classroom, the elementary school principals of the Kearney Public Schools were asked to assign the student name, address, and phone found next to those numbers in their attendance rosters (see Table 1).

Administration of the Parent Interview Schedule

A letter was forwarded to the first randomly selected parent on each classroom list (see Appendix D) announcing the selection as a study participant, the purpose of the study, and the basic outline

TABLE 1
Sample of the Study

School	Grade Level							Total
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Bryant	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	12
Central	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Emerson	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Kenwood	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Northeast	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21
Park	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Windy Hills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Total	13	13	13	13	13	12	12	89

(see Appendix E). If the first parent on the list did not have a phone number or refused to participate, the second, third, and fourth randomly selected parent respectively was to be contacted until a respondent was found; in all cases the first parent contacted participated.

Principals at Northeast Elementary School and Kearney Junior High School were trained to give the interview to Emerson Elementary School parents. The purpose was to avoid experimenter bias since the investigator was the principal of Emerson Elementary School.

The parent interview schedule was administered to Kearney elementary school parents beginning the week of February 11, 1985 and ending the week of March 25, 1985. A minimum of three days and a maximum of seven days was allowed to transpire between the letter and

actual telephone contact. All parents were contacted by telephone between the evening hours of 6:30 and 9:00 p.m. Reference was made to the introductory and explanatory letter received by them from Dr. Howard concerning the study. Following that statement, parents were asked if they were willing to participate in the study.

Questions on the parent interview schedule were read verbatim and prompts were used as needed to help respondents focus their thoughts. Many respondents had the aforementioned letter and outline in their hands as the interview took place. Responses regarding method, topic, and frequency were recorded in writing by the interviewer as well as general and explanatory comments directly from the telephone discussion.

Analysis of Data

Each parent interview schedule was coded for data tabulation on the Apple IIe computer. Data were entered into the computer according to a code regarding written and verbal methods, topics, and frequencies (see Appendix H). Parent comments were written verbatim during the parent interview.

All data were compiled into descriptive statistics using the PFS: Write, PFS: File, and PFS: Report programs. Specific descriptive statistical breakdowns were used to report the actual and preferred parent response patterns for written and verbal communications regarding all five topics and for parent-initiated communication. Parent comments were recorded and reported directly from the parent schedules in the appropriate areas.

Summary

The setting for this study included all seven elementary schools in the Kearney Public Schools, Kearney, Nebraska. Selection of written and verbal communication methods and topics were described. Specific home-school topics of communication revealed in the review of literature were (1) student academic progress, (2) student social behavior, (3) school regulations/policies, (4) school activities, and (5) school curriculum. Major methods of written and verbal communications used by the Kearney Public Schools were identified as (1) the report card, (2) yearly calendar, (3) school handbook, and (4) parent-teacher conferences.

A parent interview schedule was developed to assess parent perceptions of the written and verbal communications used by the Kearney Public Schools regarding five major topics. A review of literature and Kearney Public School policies provided the information for the structure and development of the parent interview schedule.

The parent interview schedule was tested for clarity and understandability by Glenwood Elementary School parents, Buffalo County Schools, Kearney, Nebraska. In turn, the schedule was revised and submitted for a review by Kearney elementary school principals to check for accuracy and consistency with Kearney Public School policies.

The sample was selected using a stratified-random sampling design (see Appendix C1) to ensure an even representation throughout the Kearney Public School District according to elementary school attendance center and grade levels of students.

The parent interview schedule was administered to 89 participants by telephone. A one hundred percent response rate was attained between February 11, 1985 and March 28, 1985.

All data regarding communication methods, topics, and frequencies were computer coded and entered into an Apple IIe computer. Direct parent responses in the form of comments were written verbatim and recorded in the appropriate areas of the parent interview schedule.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to identify parent perceptions of written and verbal communication methods used between home and school concerning the five topics of student academic progress, student social behavior, school policies, school activities, and school curriculum. A parent interview schedule was designed and administered to obtain the necessary data to answer six research questions related to the problem. The six questions were:

1. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's academic progress?

2. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's social behavior?

3. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding the policies of their child's school?

4. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding activities of their child's school?

5. What methods of written and oral communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from

the Kearney Public Schools regarding the curriculum of their child's school?

6. What methods of written and oral communication do elementary school parents actually use when they initiate communication with their child's school?

The remainder of this chapter includes data related to the sample of the study and the six research questions.

The Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 89 elementary school parents of the Kearney Public Schools who were selected according to a stratified random-sampling design. There were 89 elementary school classrooms (K-6) in the Kearney Public Schools and all were represented by the sampling design used in the study. As shown in Table 2, one parent of a child in every elementary school classroom in the Kearney Public schools participated.

The parent interview schedule (see Appendix G) was administered to all parent participants between February 15 and March 15, 1985. All parents were interviewed by telephone during the evening hours of 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., with 100 percent of the parents participating.

As shown in Table 3, concerning parent ratings of their child's educational program, 97 percent of the parents indicated they felt the educational program of their child's school was good or excellent.

TABLE 2
Parent Sample of the Study by
School and Grade Level

School	Grade Level							Total Parents
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Bryant	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	12
Central	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Emerson	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Kenwood	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
North- east	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21
Park	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Windy Hills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Total	13	13	13	13	13	12	12	89

TABLE 3
Parent Ratings of the Educational Program
Provided to Their Child by the School

	Parent Ratings					No Opinion
	A Excellent	B Good	C Average	D Below Average	F Poor	
Number of par- ents respond- ing	50	36	2	1	0	0
Percent of par- ents respond- ing	56.2	40.5	2.2	1.1	0.0	0.0

N = 89

The sample included 78 (87.6%) mothers and 11 (12.3%) fathers. The educational level of the parent participants was divided into four categories: one parent (1.1%) had only an elementary education; 32 (35.9%) had a high school degree; 12 (13.5%) had vocational post-high school education and no college degree; and 44 (49.4%) had a college degree.

Twelve or 13.5 percent of the parents represented single-parent households and 77 or 86.5 percent represented two-parent households. One parent was employed in 32 (36.0%) of the households while both parents worked outside the home in 55 (61.8%) of the households; in two households (2.2%) neither parent worked.

In terms of involvement with the child's school, five parents (5.6%) said they were "very involved"; 39 (43.8%) felt they were "fairly involved"; 31 (34.8%) felt they were "not too involved"; and 14 (15.7%) said they were "not involved at all." In addition, 76 (85.4%) of the respondents said the mother was the person who usually handled communications with the school. Only one parent (1.1%) indicated communications were handled by the father and 12 (13.5%) said communications with their child's school was a joint task.

Research Questions

Written communication was mentioned by slightly less than one-half of the parents (42 or 47.2%) as their preferred method of communication from teachers and principals, regardless of the topic. Verbal communication was indicated by 38 parents (42.6%) as a preferred method of communication, which would indicate there was almost

an even division among the parents with respect to a single method of communication. No preference was indicated by nine (10.1%) of the participants.

With regard to the topic to be communicated by the school, 66 (74.2%) of the parents stated that information concerning their child's academic progress was most important. Other topics, in order of their preference, were student social behavior (20.2%), school curriculum (3.4%), and school activities (2.3%). School policies were not mentioned by any of the parents as their first choice of topical information to receive from the school.

Data were collected to answer the six research questions stated earlier. The data are presented according to (1) the ratings parents gave to the actual written and verbal methods, (2) the actual and preferred written and verbal methods, and (3) the actual and preferred written and verbal frequency for each topic of communication.

Research Question 1

What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's academic progress?

The data relating to written and verbal communication methods used by the Kearney Public Schools to communicate student academic progress are presented in Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Data concerning parent ratings of written and verbal communication are presented in Table 4 and are followed by typical parent comments. The quality of written and verbal communication

TABLE 4
Parent Ratings of Written and Verbal Communication
Regarding Their Child's Academic Progress

	Parent Ratings					No Opinion
	A Excellent	B Good	C Average	D Below Average	F Poor	
Written com- munication						
Number	37	33	15	3	0	0
Percent	41.6	37.1	16.8	3.4	0.0	0.0
Verbal communi- cation						
Number	33	30	18	6	0	2
Percent	37.1	33.7	20.2	6.7	0.0	2.3

N = 89

was rated nearly equally by parents. Both methods of communication were perceived by over 70 percent of the parents as good to excellent. The ratings for written communication were slightly higher than the ratings for verbal communication. Less than one-third of the parents felt the school did an average or below average job in written and verbal communications regarding their child's academic progress.

When parents were asked to state their preference between written and verbal methods of communication regarding the academic progress of their child, verbal methods were preferred by 49 (55.1%) of the parents in the study. Only 16 (18.0%) of the parents

preferred written communication as a means used by the schools to inform them of their child's academic progress. However, slightly more than one-fourth of the parents in the study stated neither method was preferable over the other and that both methods were important.

Parent comments reflected that verbal communication was immediate and offered an opportunity for them to understand the messages better. Some typical parent comments were:

I like verbal because I can reply on the spot.

I prefer verbal because it is immediate.

I like verbal--I get more out of it--understanding and personalness.

I'm more secure hearing a message and it's a more meaningful contact.

Data reflecting specific written and verbal methods of communication utilized by the school district to communicate with parents concerning academic progress are presented in Tables 5 and 6. As can be seen by the data in Table 5, concerning parent responses for actual and preferred methods of written communication regarding information they received related to their child's academic progress, all parents indicated they received the district standard method of the report card. Over one-half of the parents (56.2%) indicated the report card was the only written communication they received from the school regarding their child's academic progress. Almost one-third (28.1%) of the parents stated they received teacher notes in addition to the report card, with the remaining parent responses (16.7%) listing up-slips, student papers, and happy grams.

TABLE 5

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Written
Methods of Communication Utilized by the School
to Communicate Their Child's Academic Progress

Written Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard report card	89	100.0	--	--
Report card only	50	56.2	51	57.3
District standard and teacher notes	25	28.1	27	30.5
District standard and up-slips	2	2.2	6	6.8
District standard and student papers	7	7.8	2	3.2
District standard and happy grams	5	5.6	2	2.2
No comment	1	1.1	--	--

N = 89

Slightly over one-half of the parents (57.3%) indicated the report card was sufficient and was all they needed as a written method of communication to inform them of their child's academic progress. The remaining 42.7 percent of the parents indicated they would like to have the school send more than just the report card. Approximately one-third of the parents (30.5%) stated that teacher notes would be appreciated and helpful and a small percentage of parents indicated a desire for the school to utilize up-slips, student papers, and happy grams.

Parent comments indicated the report card and other written methods of communication could be more explanatory. Also, parents reflected an inherent trust in their child's school to communicate with them about their child's academic progress. Typical parent comments were as follows:

Written comments are valuable--they explain the marks on the report card.

Report cards could include more comments. They're more meaningful.

I'd like to see written comments after each major section.

Comments seem to sum up the entire report card.

The report card is sufficient. If there were another problem, I feel the teacher would contact me.

As shown by the data presented in Table 6, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred methods of verbal communication with respect to their child's academic progress, all parents indicated they had experienced the parent-teacher conference, which was the district standard. Approximately three-fourths (75.4%) of the parents stated the parent-teacher conference was the only verbal communication they had with their child's school concerning academic progress. Unplanned parent-teacher conferences and telephone calls were equally mentioned as the second method of verbal communication parents received. A small percentage of parents indicated they had experienced home visits and principal conferences in addition to the parent-teacher conference. Only one person made no comments.

TABLE 6
 Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Methods
 of Communication Utilized by the School to Communicate
 Their Child's Academic Progress

Verbal Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard parent-teacher conference	89	100.0	--	--
District standard parent-teacher conference only	67	75.4	53	59.5
District standard and a planned but not regular parent-teacher conference	--	--	1	1.1
District standard and an unplanned parent-teacher conference	9	10.1	7	7.9
District standard and telephone calls	10	11.2	28	31.5
District standard and home visits	2	2.1	--	--
No comment	1	1.	--	--

N = 89

Slightly over one-half of the parents (59.5%) indicated the parent-teacher conference was the only verbal method of communication they would like to have concerning their child's academic progress. Slightly less than one-third of the parents (31.5%) mentioned telephone calls as the verbal method of choice beyond the parent-teacher conference.

Comments from parents indicate they had some concerns regarding parent-teacher conferences, which included their feelings of inadequacy to ask questions and the general organization of the parent-teachers conferences. Typical parent comments were as follows:

Parents need to know what to ask.

I suppose a lot of the responsibility about academics is mine, but I don't really know what to ask the teacher or the principal.

Too many people are around when I visit with the teacher at conferences. Confidentiality is not the best to discuss such important matters.

Conferences are crowded--specifics are hard to remember at conferences in such an atmosphere.

At conferences I wait forever and then I feel rushed when I get in.

More time should be allotted for conferences.

I felt I had to pull everything out of the teacher and that if I hadn't asked, I don't think I would have gained anything. I think teachers need to organize themselves.

Teachers shouldn't wait until a downward pattern is in place before calling.

The telephone should be used more often if there is a specific problem.

If my child is failing, I'd like to have a telephone call when it is noticed.

I assume the school will call if there is a problem in regard to my child's academic performance.

As shown by the data presented in Table 7 concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of written communication they had with respect to their child's academic progress, all parents indicated they received written communications according to the district standard of once every nine weeks. A total of 54 (60.7%)

TABLE 7
 Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Frequency
 of Written Communication Utilized by the School to
 Communicate Their Child's Academic Progress

Written Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard every nine weeks	89	100.00	--	--
District standard every nine weeks only	54	60.7	39	43.8
District standard and daily	2	2.2	--	--
District standard and two times per week	2	2.2	--	--
District standard and weekly	7	7.9	9	10.1
District standard and two times per month	2	2.2	2	2.2
District standard and monthly	5	5.6	13	14.6
District standard and four to six weeks	9	10.2	19	21.4
District standard and yearly	6	6.8	--	--
District standard and as problems occur	2	2.2	7	7.9

N = 89

of the parents said they were only informed as prescribed by the district, which represented slightly less than two-thirds of all parents in the study. Written communication every four to six weeks

was indicated by nine (10.2%) of the parents and 26 (29.1%) parents mentioned six other frequencies in addition to the district standard.

Almost one-half of the parents in the study said written communication once every nine weeks was enough. Slightly over one-third of the parents indicated they would like contact every month or four to six weeks in addition to the district standard of once every nine weeks. Parents apparently would have liked more frequent written contact, as 50 (56.2%) indicated a desire to have more communication than what had been set as the district standard.

As shown by the data in Table 8, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of verbal communication with respect to their child's academic progress, all parents said they experienced the district standard of a parent-teacher conference once per year. The majority of parents (85.5%) indicated all the verbal communication they received regarding their child's academic progress was once a year, the district minimum. A small percentage of parents (14.5%) said they received verbal communication regarding their child's academic progress more often than what was required by the school district.

Only nine (10.1%) of the parents said they would be satisfied receiving verbal communication only once a year concerning their child's academic progress. Nearly six of every ten parents said they would like to have verbal communication at least twice a year and the remaining 20 parents said they would like it more often than twice per year. There was a major discrepancy between what the parents received and what they would liked to have received in the

frequency of verbal communication regarding their child's academic progress.

TABLE 8
Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Frequency
of Communication Utilized by the School to Communicate
Their Child's Academic Progress

Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard once per year	90	100.0	--	--
District standard and once per year only	76	85.5	9	10.1
District standard and two times per month	1	1.2	2	2.2
District standard and once per month	1	1.2	5	5.6
District standard and every four to six weeks	3	3.3	1	1.2
District standard and every nine weeks	3	3.3	12	13.5
District standard and every 18 weeks	3	3.3	51	57.4
District standard and if there is a problem	2	2.2	8	9.0

N = 89

In summary of research question one, concerning written and verbal methods and frequency of communication for student academic progress, the following findings were revealed by the data.

Almost three-fourths of the parents rated the school's job as good to excellent in regard to written and verbal communication of their child's academic progress. Verbal communication methods were preferred by slightly more than one-half of the parents when they were asked to state their preference between written and verbal communication. Slightly less than one-fifth preferred written communication.

Over one-half of the parents indicated the report card was the only written method of communication they received. Almost 60 percent of the parents felt the report card was all that was needed in terms of written reports regarding academic progress. Nearly one-third of the parents indicated they would like teacher notes in addition to the report card. Some parents indicated the report card could be more explanatory by the use of teacher comments.

More than three-fourths of the parents stated the parent-teacher conference was the only verbal communication they received concerning their child's academic progress. Almost 60 percent of the parents felt the parent-teacher conference was the only verbal communication they needed to keep them informed concerning academic progress. Increased use of the telephone as a means to inform parents was desired by almost one-third of the sample. Parent comments seemed to reveal they felt inadequate to ask questions at conferences and that the general organization of parent-teacher conferences could be improved.

A total of 60 percent of the parents received written communication only once each quarter concerning academic progress of

their child. However, 60 percent of the parents indicated they would like to receive written communication more often than once each nine weeks.

Almost 90 percent of the parents said they were only involved in verbal communication once per year with their child's teacher concerning academic progress. In direct contrast, more than 90 percent of the parents indicated they would like verbal communication at least twice a year.

Research Question 2

What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's social behavior?

The data relating to written and verbal communication methods used by the Kearney Public Schools to communicate student social behavior to parents are presented in Tables 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Data concerning parent ratings of written and verbal communication are presented in Table 9 and are followed by typical parent comments. Written and verbal communication received about equal ratings by parents regarding the school's responsibility to communicate with them about their child's social behavior. Over 70 percent of the parents rated written and verbal methods of communication as good to excellent.

When parents were asked to state their preference between written and verbal methods of communication regarding the social behavior of their child, verbal methods were mentioned by 65 (73.0%)

TABLE 9
Parent Ratings of Written and Verbal Communication
Regarding their Child's Social Behavior

	Parent Ratings					No Opinion
	A Excellent	B Good	C Average	D Below Average	F Poor	
Written communi- cation						
Number	33	31	14	7	1	3
Percent	37.1	34.8	15.7	7.9	1.1	3.4
Verbal communi- cation						
Number	35	33	10	7	--	4
Percent	39.3	37.1	11.2	7.9	--	4.5

N = 89

of the parents in the study. Verbal communication methods were clearly preferred by the parents when compared to the 12 (13.5%) parents who preferred written and 12 (13.5%) parents who had no preference.

Parents commented verbal communications were helpful for understanding, immediacy, informality and giving parents feelings that problems were more likely to be resolved. Some typical parent comments were as follows:

Verbal makes it possible for better explanation.

Verbal allows for better rapport--I can get feedback on my thoughts.

Verbal provides a better chance to explore what is going on.

Verbal is immediate. It allows us to get it over and done.

Verbal seems more informal and I can express myself better.

Verbal so we can reach a resolution and both sides can be heard.

Data reflecting specific written and verbal methods of communication utilized by the school district to communicate with parents concerning social behavior are displayed in Tables 10 and 11. As can be seen by the data displayed in Table 10, concerning parent responses for actual and preferred methods of written communication regarding information received about their child's social behavior, all 89 parents in the study indicated they had received the report card which was the school district standard. The majority of the parents, 75 (84.3%), stated the report card was the only written communication they received and a small percentage of the parents (15.7%) stated they received either a teacher note or a happy gram in addition to the report card.

When parents were asked to identify the written method they would prefer to receive from their child's school concerning social behavior, slightly over one-half (51.7%) of them stated the report card was all that was needed. Teacher notes were mentioned by almost one-half of the parents as a written method they would like to see used in addition to the report card. Parents clearly desired to see increased emphasis placed on sending written notes by teachers for the purpose of communicating their child's social behavior.

TABLE 10
 Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Written Methods
 of Communication Utilized by the School to Communicate
 About Their Child's Social Behavior

Written Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard report card	89	100.0	--	--
District standard report card only	75	84.3	46	51.7
District standard and teacher notes	10	11.2	41	46.1
District standard and happy gram	4	4.5	2	2.2

N = 89

Parent comments concerning written methods of communication for social behavior focused on ways to improve or strengthen them. Three specific suggestions were to explain situations with more teacher comments, to send written notices when incidents occurred and to explain more about how students got along with each other. Based on the comments received, it can be generalized that some parents felt report cards were not adequate by themselves to relay whole messages about social behavior. Parents comments that reflected these findings were as follows:

Not much detail was given on the report card.

I appreciate teacher comments--they make the report meaningful.

Comments are not very deep or explanatory.

Immediate contact would help.

They don't write soon enough. It's too far from the incident by the time I receive information from them about the problem.

Interaction with others would be nice to know about my child.

How does my child relate to others?

I was misled. The report card made me think that there were no problems. All of a sudden I started to receive notes telling me of problems from way back that were never mentioned anywhere on the report card.

The report card is fine unless there are more immediate problems and then I need more sooner.

The report card was very impersonal. It was just a meter or checklist and didn't get the message across.

The report card is not enough--but I feel I will fill in the gaps.

As presented by the data in Table 11, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred methods of verbal communication parents received from school with respect to their child's social behavior, all parents indicated they had experienced the regularly planned parent-teacher conference which was the district standard. More than three-fourths of the parents (69 or 77.6%) stated the regular parent-teacher conference was the only verbal method they had experienced with the school concerning their child's social behavior. Beyond the conference, telephone calls were received by 12 (13.5%) of the parents.

When parents were asked to identify their preference of a verbal method for the school to use to communicate social behavior, slightly over one-half of the parents said they were satisfied with the

TABLE 11

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Methods of
Communication Utilized by the School to Communicate
About Their Child's Social Behavior

Verbal Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard parent-teacher conference	89	100.0	--	--
District standard parent-teacher conference only	69	77.6	45	50.6
District standard and planned but not regular parent- teacher conference	--	--	2	2.2
District standard and unplanned parent- teacher conference	6	6.7	4	4.5
District standard and telephone calls	12	13.5	37	41.6
District standard and home visits	1	1.1	--	--
No comment	1	1.1	1	1.1

N = 89

regular parent-teacher conference. In addition to the conference, the telephone was mentioned by 37 (41.6%) of the parents as a method to be used. This represents a desire for an increase in the use of the telephone by teachers of the school district.

Comments from parents seem to indicate that verbal communications for the purpose of informing them about their child's social behavior could be improved. Negative contacts, passive treatment, and infrequency of contact headed the list of criticisms. Some typical parent comments were as follows:

My only verbal communication from school was negative.

They don't call to let me know if he has to stay after school or for discipline instances.

Behavior was treated very passively at the parent-teacher conference.

I expected to learn more about her behavior at the conference. I expected more out of a parent-teacher conference.

Sometimes the contacts are insensitive.

Quality of verbal communication is fine, but the frequency is terrible.

Positive comments credited teachers with doing a good job of letting parents know and also expressed faith that teachers would communicate if a problem occurred. Some typical comments were as follows:

I don't think teachers pull punches. They are good at telling it like it is.

The parent-teacher conference sets me straight and gives the school a picture of home.

I really liked it when the teacher called about a behavior incident. She took the time and I appreciated it.

Teachers are good about asking questions of me about her behavior.

I assume no news is good news.

As displayed by the data presented in Table 12, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of written communication they had with respect to their child's social behavior, all parents indicated they received written communications according to the district standard of once every nine weeks. Among the parents, 77 (86.6%) mentioned they received written communication once every nine weeks only, with the remaining 12 (13.4%) indicating other frequencies in addition to the nine-week period.

Slightly more than two-thirds of the parents stated that written communication every nine weeks concerning their child's social behavior was all that was necessary. The most desired frequency in addition to the nine-week district standard was to let parents know about social behavior problems as they occurred.

The data presented in Table 13 display parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of verbal communication with respect to their child's social behavior. All parents said they experienced the district standard of once per year. The majority of parents (78 or 87.8%) indicated they only received verbal communication about their child's social behavior once per year. Beyond the yearly standard, one additional contact was the most common practice.

When parents were asked to indicate their preference of verbal frequency concerning their child's social behavior, only 10 (11.2%) said they were satisfied with communication as prescribed by the district standard of once per year. Slightly more than three-

TABLE 12

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Frequency of
Written Communication Utilized by the School to Com-
municate About Their Child's Social Behavior

Written Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard every nine weeks	89	100.0	--	--
District standard every nine weeks only	77	86.6	62	69.8
District standard and weekly	2	2.2	2	2.2
District standard and two times per week	1	1.1	2	2.2
District standard and monthly	3	3.4	4	4.5
District standard and every four to six weeks	--	--	6	6.8
District standard and every 18 weeks	1	1.1	2	2.2
District standard and three times per year	1	1.1	--	--
District standard and once per year	3	3.4	--	--
District standard and as problems occur	1	1.1	11	12.4

N = 89

TABLE 13
 Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Frequency
 of Communication Utilized by the School to Communicate
 About Their Child's Social Behavior

Verbal Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard once per year	89	100.0	--	--
District standard once per year only	78	87.8	10	11.2
District standard and two times per month	--	--	1	1.1
District standard and monthly	2	2.3	6	6.8
District standard and every nine weeks	1	1.1	10	11.2
District standard and one additional contact	6	6.7	51	57.3
District standard and only as problems occur	2	2.3	11	12.4

N = 89

fourths of the parents interviewed indicated they would have liked verbal communication at least two times per year. The remaining 11 parents (12.4%) stated they would be satisfied with contact only as problems developed.

In summary of research question two, concerning written and verbal methods and frequency of communication for student social behavior, the following findings were revealed by the data.

Written and verbal methods of communication were perceived by parents to be good to excellent by over 70 percent of the parents. Verbal methods were preferred by 65 (73.0%) of the parents concerning their child's social behavior.

For 75 (84.3%) of the parents, the only written method of communication used by the school to communicate with them about their child's social behavior was the report card. Slightly over one-half of the parents stated that the report card was all that was needed. Teacher notes were mentioned by almost one-half of the parents as a written method they would like to see used in addition to the report card.

More than three-fourths of the parents (69 or 77.6%) stated the regular parent-teacher conference was the only verbal method they had experienced with the school concerning their child's social behavior. Slightly over one-half of the parents said they were satisfied with the regular parent-teacher conference as the only means of communicating their child's social behavior. The telephone was mentioned by 37 (41.6%) of the parents as a method that should be used in addition to the parent-teacher conference.

A total of 77 (86.6%) of the parents indicated they received written communication only once every nine weeks. Slightly more than two-thirds of the parents stated that written communication every nine weeks concerning their child's social behavior was all that was necessary.

There were 78 (87.8%) of the parents who indicated they only received verbal communication about their child's social

behavior once per year. Slightly more than three-fourths of the parents interviewed said they would like to have verbal communication at least two times per year.

Research Question 3

What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding the policies of their child's school?

The data relating to written and verbal communication methods used by the Kearney Public Schools to communicate school policies are presented in Tables 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. As reflected by the data presented in Table 14, written communication methods were perceived by 82 (92.2%) of the parents in the study as good to excellent. Only 12 (13.5%) of the parents viewed verbal communication methods as good to excellent, with a majority (75 or 84.3%) having no opinion.

When parents were asked to state their preference between written and verbal methods of communication regarding the school policies of their child's school, 88.8 percent indicated a preference for written methods. Only 4.5 percent of the parents favored verbal methods and 6.7 percent had no opinion. Parent comments reflected that written communications for school policies could be utilized as references and for better understanding of school policies. Typical comments were as follows:

TABLE 14
Parent Ratings of Written and Verbal Communication
Regarding the Policies of Their Child's School

		Parent Ratings					No Opinion
		A	B	C	D	F	
		Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	
<hr/>							
Written communication							
Number		67	15	5	--	--	2
Percent		75.3	16.9	5.6	--	--	2.2
Verbal communication							
Number		9	3	1	1	--	75
Percent		10.1	3.4	1.1	1.1	--	84.3

N = 89

Written is best because you can go back and look the policy up.

Written statements on paper are best because I can argue the points better if necessary.

Written because it's always there in front of me.

Written because I can just put it on the "FRIG."

Data reflecting specific written and verbal methods of communication utilized by the school district to communicate with parents concerning school policies are displayed in Tables 15 and 16. As shown by the data presented in Table 15, concerning parent responses for actual and preferred methods of written communication regarding information they received about their child's school policies, all

89 parents stated they received the district standard method which was the handbook. Almost two-thirds of the parents indicated they had received a newsletter in addition to the handbook, with only 15 (16.9%) of the parents stating the handbook was all the written communication they received concerning school policies.

When parents were asked to identify the written method they would prefer to receive from their child's school in addition to the handbook, slightly less than one-half of the parents said they preferred the newsletter. Almost one-third of the parents said the handbook was the only written communication needed for school policies.

Parent comments, concerning written methods reflected their trust in the schools to originate communication about school policies and also a few shortcomings of the parent handbook. Some typical parent comments were as follows:

I would assume the school would let us know if a change at school took place.

I operate under the assumption that the school would let us know.

The handbook can be too drawn out.

A lot of times the school doesn't follow the handbook.

The handbook is too much at one time. I quit reading it after a time.

As displayed by the data presented in Table 16, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred methods of verbal communication parents received from school with respect to school policies, the Kearney Public Schools did not have a district standard

TABLE 15

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Written
Methods of Communication Utilized to Communicate
the Policies of Their Child's School

Written Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard handbook	89	100.0	--	--
District standard handbook only	15	16.9	29	32.6
District standard and teacher notes	14	15.7	12	13.5
District standard and report card	2	2.2	4	4.5
District standard and newsletter	54	60.7	42	47.2
No comment	4	4.5	2	2.2

N = 89

in this area. As a result, 79 (88.8%) of the parents indicated they had not received a verbal communication. A small percentage of parents (11.2%) said they had received one of four types of verbal communications.

When parents were asked to identify their preference of a verbal method for the school to use to communicate school policies, three-fourths said they did not have a preference. The telephone was mentioned by 14 (15.7%) of the parents as a means to communicate verbally about school policies.

TABLE 16

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Methods
of Communication Utilized to Communicate the
Policies of Their Child's School

Verbal Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Regular parent- teacher conference	2	2.2	1	1.1
Unplanned parent- teacher conference	3	3.4	7	7.9
Telephone	2	2.2	14	15.7
Registration	3	3.4	--	--
None or no preference	79	88.8	67	75.3

N = 89

Parent comments seemed to reflect they did not feel a need for schools to verbally communicate with them concerning policies. Most comments indicated parents would call if they had a question about school policies. Some of the typical parent comments were as follows:

No need to verbally tell me unless there's an emergency.

No need for them to verbally tell me. If I have a question, I'll call.

There's no reason for them to communicate with me verbally about school policies that I can think of.

As displayed by the data presented in Table 17 concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of written communication parents had with respect to school policies, all 89 parents indicated they received at least one yearly contact, which

was the district standard. Slightly over one-third (34.8%) of the parents indicated they received only the district minimum of one yearly contact through the handbook. The remaining 65.2 percent of the parents stated they had received more than one contact per year, with slightly over one-fourth stating they received a monthly written communication. Other frequencies mentioned in order of occurrence were once every 18 weeks, only if there were a problem, once per week, once every nine weeks, and two times per month.

Almost 40 percent of the parents indicated it was only necessary to contact them once per year regarding school policies. However, nearly six of every ten parents stated they would like more than one written communication per year; almost one-fourth of the parents in the study (23.6%) stated they would like to have a monthly contact.

As displayed by the data presented in Table 18, concerning frequency of verbal communication regarding school policies, it can be seen the Kearney Public Schools did not have a district standard. As a result, nearly nine of every ten parents indicated they had never experienced a verbal communication from their child's school concerning policies. A total of nine parents stated they received a verbal communication and seven of those parents said they received it only once per year.

When parents were asked to indicate their preference of verbal frequency, concerning the policies of their child's school, slightly over three-fourths of the parents said there was no need for the school to initiate such communication. The most commonly mentioned frequency of communication identified by parents was

TABLE 17

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Frequency of
Written Communication Utilized to Communicate the
Policies of Their Child's School

Written Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard once per year	89	100.0	--	--
District standard and once per year only	31	34.8	34	38.2
District standard and weekly	8	9.0	5	5.6
District standard and two times per month	1	1.1	2	2.3
District standard and monthly	24	27.0	21	23.6
District standard and every four to six weeks	--	--	2	2.3
District standard and every nine weeks	7	7.9	6	6.7
District standard and every eighteen weeks	9	10.1	5	5.6
Only if there is a problem	9	10.1	14	15.7

N = 89

TABLE 18
 Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Frequency
 of Communication Utilized to Communicate the
 Policies of Their Child's School

Verbal Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Every 18 weeks	2	2.3	3	3.3
Once per year	7	7.9	7	7.9
As changes occur	--	--	11	12.4
Never/no need	80	89.8	68	76.4

N = 89

"as changes occur," with other parents indicating yearly contacts or once every 18 weeks were sufficient.

In summary of research question three concerning written and verbal methods and frequency of communication for school policies, the following findings were revealed by the data.

Written communication methods were perceived by 82 (92.2%) of the parents in the study as good to excellent. Over 80 percent of the parents indicated they had no opinion regarding verbal communication. Regarding the school policies of their child's school, 88.8 percent of the parents indicated a preference for written methods.

Almost two-thirds of the parents indicated they had received a newsletter in addition to the handbook as a communication vehicle for school policies. Slightly less than one-half of the parents

said they preferred the newsletter in addition to the handbook. Almost one-third of the parents indicated the handbook was all they needed as a written method for communication of school policies.

The majority of the parents (79 or 88.8%) indicated they had not received a verbal communication with regard to the policies of their child's school. Approximately three-fourths of the parents said they did not have a preference regarding verbal communication of school policies.

Regarding the frequency of written communication concerning school policies, 65.2 percent of the parents stated they had received more than one contact per year. Approximately 60 percent of the parents stated they would like more than one written communication per year. Almost 90 percent of the parents in the study indicated they had not experienced a verbal communication from their child's school concerning school policies. Slightly over three-fourths of the parents stated they did not feel a need for the school to initiate verbal communication concerning school policies.

Research Question 4

What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding activities of their child's school?

Data relating to written and verbal communication methods used by the Kearney Public Schools to communicate with parents concerning school activities are presented in Tables 19, 20, 21, 22, and

23.

As displayed by the data presented in Table 19, concerning parent ratings of written and verbal communication, written communications were perceived by 81 (91.0%) of the parents as being good to excellent. Only seven (7.9%) of the parents viewed verbal communication methods as good to excellent; the majority of the parents (89.9%) had no opinion.

TABLE 19

Parent Ratings of Written and Verbal Communication
Regarding Activities of Their Child's School

	Parent Ratings					
	A	B	C	D	F	
	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	No Opinion
Written communication						
Number	73	8	6	1	1	--
Percent	82.0	9.0	6.8	1.1	1.1	--
Verbal communication						
Number	6	1	1	--	1	80
Percent	6.8	1.1	1.1	--	1.1	89.9

N = 89

When parents were asked to state their preference between written and verbal methods of communication regarding the school activities of their child's school, 95.5 percent of the parents indicated a preference for written methods of communication. Only

3.4 percent of the parents preferred verbal communication methods and 1.1 percent had no preference. Parent comments seemed to reveal many good reasons for preferring written communications concerning school activities. Typical parent comments were as follows:

I do better if I can pin it up.

Written because I can see the activities in print.

Verbal takes too much time and I don't think it's a wise use of teacher time.

I don't have time to listen.

Written is best--then I have it.

Written because I have a houseful of kids and I can keep track.

Written because I can refer to it.

Data reflecting specific written and verbal methods of communication utilized by the school district to communicate with parents concerning school activities are displayed in Tables 20 and 21. As shown by the data presented in Table 20, concerning parent responses for actual and preferred methods of written communication regarding information received about school activities, all 89 of the parents indicated they received the yearly calendar which was the school district standard method. Slightly over three-fourths of the parents stated they had received a newsletter in addition to the yearly calendar; an additional 13 (14.6%) of the parents indicated they had received teacher notes. A small percentage of the parents stated they received school activities information through four other written methods; one parent had no comment.

TABLE 20

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Written Methods
of Communication Utilized to Communicate
Activities of Their Child's School

Written Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard calendar	89	100.0	--	--
District standard calendar only	--	--	--	--
District standard and teacher notes	13	14.6	15	16.9
District standard and report card	1	1.1	--	--
District standard and handbook	1	1.1	2	2.2
District standard and building calendar	3	3.4	5	5.6
District standard and newsletter	69	77.6	66	74.2
District standard and Tuesday letter	1	1.1	--	--
No comment/no preference	1	1.1	1	1.1

N = 89

When parents were asked to identify the written method they preferred to receive from their child's school concerning school activities, nearly three-fourths (74.2%) of the parents said they preferred the newsletter in addition to the yearly calendar. A total of 15 (16.9%) of the parents indicated teacher notes were a preferred

method in addition to the yearly calendar. The handbook and monthly calendar were mentioned as other preferable written methods; one parent had no preference.

Parent comments reflected emphasis on the newsletter, as well as some suggestions for improving written communications concerning school activities. Some typical parent comments regarding written communication concerning school activities were as follows:

The yearly calendar just tells yearly events. I depend on monthly newsletters for details and it serves as a reminder.

The newsletter does a good job.

Whenever there are situations like divorce, it would be nice to send one to each parent.

Kearney Public Schools needs to coordinate calendars with Kearney State College.

Sometimes the newsletter dates don't jive with the yearly calendar and it's confusing.

Delivery is a problem.

The data presented in Table 21, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred methods of verbal communication concerning school activities, show the majority of parents (91.0%) did not receive such type of communication. The eight (9.0%) parents who said they experienced verbal communication concerning school activities listed the telephone as the method used for such communication.

When parents were asked to indicate their preference of a verbal method to be used by the school to communicate concerning school activities, four-fifths of the parents did not have a preference; 17 (19.1%) of the parents who did have a preference mentioned

the telephone as their method of choice. There did not appear to be a difference between the methods used and preferred by parents.

TABLE 21
Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Methods
of Communication Utilized to Communicate
Activities of Their Child's School

Verbal Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Telephone	8	9.0	17	19.1
No comment/no preference	81	91.0	72	80.9

N = 89

Parent comments seemed to reflect a lack of concern for verbal communications regarding school activities.

There's no need at all to call me about school activities.

Parents can fill in the gaps themselves if they have a question about activities.

As shown by the data presented in Table 22 concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of written communication parents received concerning school activities, all 89 parents said they received a yearly communication according to the district standard of once per year. Slightly over one-half of the parents (57.3%) said they received a monthly written communication concerning school activities in addition to the yearly contact. Other

TABLE 22
Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Frequency of
Written Communication Utilized to Communicate
Activities of Their Child's School

Written Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District standard once per year	89	100.0	--	--
District standard once per year only	3	3.4	2	2.2
District standard and weekly	11	12.4	16	18.0
District standard and two times per month	8	9.0	7	7.9
District standard and monthly	51	57.3	48	54.0
District standard and every four to six weeks	3	3.3	2	2.2
District standard and once every nine weeks	9	10.1	2	2.2
Only if there is a problem	4	4.5	12	13.5

N = 89

frequencies mentioned by parents (22.5%) in addition to the yearly contact included once every week and once every nine weeks. Only three parents indicated a yearly written communication was all they received from school.

Slightly more than one-half (54.0%) of the parents indicated they would prefer for their child's school to communicate with them

by written methods once a month in addition to the yearly contact specified by the school district. Weekly communications concerning activities were noted as preferable by 16 (18.0%) of the parents; 12 (13.5%) of the parents indicated they would like such communication only if there were a problem. Two parents (2.2%) felt the district standard communication of once per year was sufficient.

As shown by the data presented in Table 23, concerning actual and preferred frequency of verbal communication about school activities, it can be seen that nine of every ten parents indicated they had not experienced such communication. A small percentage of the parents said they received verbal contacts of four to six weeks, once every nine weeks, or once per year.

When parents were asked to indicate their preferred verbal frequency about the activities of their child's school, over four-fifths said they did not have a preference. The frequency mentioned most often (10 or 11.2%) by the parents was "only if there is a problem." It appears that what the parents wanted with regard to verbal communication about school activities was closely aligned to what the school was doing.

In summary of research question four, concerning written and verbal methods and frequency of communication concerning school activities, the following findings were revealed by the data.

Written communications were perceived by 81 (91.0%) of the parents as being good to excellent. Nearly 90 percent of the parents did not have an opinion concerning verbal communication. Eighty-five parents (95.5%) indicated a preference for written methods.

TABLE 23
 Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Frequency
 of Communication Utilized to Communicate Activities of
 Their Child's School

Verbal Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Two times per month	--	--	1	1.1
Monthly	--	--	2	2.3
Every four to six weeks	2	2.3	1	1.1
Every nine weeks	1	1.1	--	--
Once per year	5	5.6	1	1.1
If there is a problem	--	--	10	11.2
None/no comment	81	91.0	74	83.2

N = 89

Slightly over three-fourths of the parents stated they received a newsletter in addition to the yearly calendar, and nearly three-fourths (74.2%) of the parents said they preferred the newsletter in addition to the yearly calendar.

The majority of parents (91.0%) had not received any verbal communication regarding school activities. Four-fifths of the parents did not have a preference for a method of verbal communication.

Slightly over one-half of the parents (57.3%) said they received a monthly written communication concerning school activities in

addition to the yearly contact. More than one-half of the parents (54.0%) indicated they preferred a written communication from the school about school activities once a month in addition to the district standard of one yearly contact.

More than nine of every ten parents indicated they had not experienced verbal communication concerning school activities. Over four-fifths of the parents said they did not have a preference for the frequency of verbal communication.

Research Question 5

What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding the curriculum of their child's school?

The data relating to written and verbal communication methods used by the Kearney Public Schools to communicate about the school curriculum are presented in Tables 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. The data shown in Table 24, concerning parent ratings of written and verbal communication about the school curriculum, indicate that over one-half of the parents rated written communication as good to excellent; the school was rated as average to poor in its efforts to provide written information by one-fourth of the parents. Slightly more than one-fifth of the parents said they did not have an opinion about the written communications regarding school curriculum.

The ratings of verbal communication reflected uncertainty on the part of parents; 51 (57.3%) did not give an opinion. In

addition, diverse levels of satisfaction were reflected by parents who gave an opinion; parental ratings were equally distributed between excellent, good, and average.

TABLE 24
Parent Ratings of Written and Verbal Communication
Regarding the Curriculum of Their Child's School

	A Excellent	B Good	C Average	D Below Average	F Poor	No Opinion
Written com- munication						
Number	26	23	12	7	3	18
Percent	29.2	25.8	13.5	7.9	3.4	20.2
Verbal com- munication						
Number	11	12	12	3	--	51
Percent	12.3	13.5	13.5	3.4	--	57.3

N = 89

When parents were asked to state their preference between written and verbal communication methods regarding school curriculum, nearly six of every ten parents indicated they preferred written methods. This compared to 23.6 percent of the parents who favored verbal methods and 16.8 percent of the parents who did not have a preference. Parents commented they preferred written communications because they could be used as a reference, made better use of teacher time, and accommodated parent mobility. Typical parent comments were

as follows:

Written is preferable because I can refer back to it.

Written is a more efficient use of teacher time.

Written--teachers have plenty to do without calling everyone to tell them what they are studying in class.

Written because I travel and I am not home for verbal contact.

Written because I'm not home during the day.

Written because I watch a lot of kids and I don't have time to talk on the phone.

Data reflecting written and verbal methods of communication utilized by the school district to communicate with parents concerning school curriculum are shown in Tables 25 and 26. The Kearney Public Schools did not have a district standard for reporting to parents about the curriculum of the school. As shown by the data in Table 26, slightly under one-half of the parents indicated they had never received written communications. However, one-third of the parents received teacher notes and an additional 18.0 percent said they received curriculum information through the school newsletter.

When parents were asked to identify the written method they would prefer to receive from their child's school concerning school curriculum, slightly over one-half of the parents said they would like to receive teacher notes. Twenty-four (27.0%) parents stated the newsletter would be their preferred written communication method. A small percentage of the parents (13.5%) did not have an opinion and four parents preferred the handbook, happy grams, and parent curriculum guide.

TABLE 25

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Written Methods
of Communication Utilized to Communicate About
the Curriculum of Their Child's School

Written Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Teacher note	30	33.7	49	55.1
Handbook	--	--	1	1.1
Newsletter	16	18.0	24	27.0
Happy grams	--	--	1	1.1
Parent curriculum guide	--	--	2	2.2
No comment/no preference	43	48.3	12	13.5

N = 89

Parent comments offer an indication as to why parents had mixed feelings toward written communications for school curriculum. Parents seemed to want to know more about curriculum in specific ways so they can help at home. Several comments seemed to suggest a completed curriculum syllabus for parents. Typical parent comments were as follows:

The parent doesn't know. I have no idea what my daughter is doing or is supposed to be doing.

Suggestions where parents could help would be appreciated.

I'd like to know what they study when they're studying it so I can help.

Notes I get about curriculum are too wordy and out of focus. They could be more concise.

Could be more specific about what is going on and how I should help.

It would be nice to have a parent syllabus of all the studies.

The Kearney Public Schools did not have a district standard for verbal communication about the curriculum of the school. Data presented in Table 25, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred methods of verbal communication with respect to the curriculum of their child's school, show almost two-thirds of the parents had not received a verbal communication. Regular parent-teacher conferences were cited by 19 (21.3%) of the parents, and unplanned parent-teacher conferences and telephone calls were stated as the only other verbal communications the parents received.

When parents were asked to state a preference for verbal communication about the curriculum of their child's school, slightly over one-half of the parents stated they did not have a preference; the number of parents citing parent-teacher conferences did not change. Unplanned conferences and telephone calls were mentioned second and third, respectively. Home visits and teacher lunches were cited by two parents. Apparently the parents did not desire more than what the school was currently doing; however, curriculum may have been a more conscious topic during parent-teacher conferences.

Parent comments indicated a mixture of perceptions concerning verbal communication about the school curriculum. Some parents felt the teacher should not take the time and others felt it top priority.

TABLE 26

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Methods
of Communication Utilized to Communicate About
the Curriculum of Their Child's School

Verbal Methods	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Regular parent-teacher conference	19	21.3	19	21.4
Unplanned parent-teacher conference	9	10.1	13	14.6
Telephone	6	6.7	9	10.1
Home visit	--	--	1	1.1
Brown bag lunch	--	--	1	1.1
No comments/no preference	55	61.9	46	51.7

N = 89

Parents suggested they should be the primary party to initiate communication regarding curriculum; however, some parents expressed the problem of not knowing what questions to ask or when to ask them.

Typical parent comments were:

I don't think teachers should obligate their time for this.

Parents should seek answers themselves and not just expect the school to send them information all of the time.

If parents want to know, they can go find out.

I was not aware of what to ask during the teacher conference. She should tell me.

I am most interested in this area and feel the school should keep me informed.

Most of the time I get a call after the fact, concerning what she's studied. It's not before or during the unit.

As shown in Table 27, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of written communication with respect to the curriculum of their child's school, nearly one-half of the parents indicated they had not been contacted. A total of nine frequencies were mentioned by parents. Monthly contacts were cited most often by parents (15.7%); a small percentage of parents indicated one of the remaining eight frequencies.

Slightly less than 20 percent of the parents did not have a preference for frequency of written communications concerning the school curriculum. Monthly contacts were mentioned by 25 (28.0%) of the parents and slightly over 10 percent of the parents cited once a year and "only if there is a problem." A total of 82 percent of the parents did have a preference for written communication frequency; this represents a difference of slightly over 30 percent between what parents experienced and what they preferred.

The Kearney Public Schools did not have a standard for communicating about the school curriculum. As shown in Table 28, concerning parent responses for the actual and preferred frequency of verbal communication with respect to the curriculum of their child's school, almost two-thirds of the parents indicated they had not experienced a contact. Nearly one-third of the parents stated the verbal contact they received was once during the year. A total of

TABLE 27

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Frequency of
Written Communication Utilized to Communicate About
the Curriculum of Their Child's School

Written Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Weekly	1	1.1	4	4.5
Two times per month	4	4.5	1	1.1
Monthly	14	15.7	25	28.0
Every four to six weeks	6	6.7	8	9.0
Once every nine weeks	3	3.4	7	7.9
Once every 18 weeks	4	4.5	7	7.9
Once per year	4	4.5	9	10.1
Only if there is a problem	4	4.5	9	10.1
As units change	5	5.6	3	3.4
No comment/no preference	44	49.5	16	18.0

N = 89

six parents said they received a verbal communication as often as once a month or once every 18 weeks.

When parents were asked to indicate a preferred verbal frequency for the school to use to inform them about the school curriculum, slightly over one-half of them indicated they did not have a preference. Six other frequencies were mentioned; contacts

once every 18 weeks and once per year represented almost one-third of the parent preferences.

TABLE 28

Parent Responses for Actual and Preferred Verbal Frequency
of Communication Utilized to Communicate About
the Curriculum of Their Child's School

Verbal Frequency	Actual		Preferred	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No district standard	--	--	--	--
Monthly	1	1.1	4	4.5
Every four to six weeks	--	--	2	2.2
Once every nine weeks	--	--	6	6.7
Once every 18 weeks	5	5.6	17	19.1
Once per year	26	29.3	12	13.5
Only if there is a problem	--	--	2	2.2
As units change	1	1.1	--	--
No comment/no preference	56	62.9	46	51.8

N = 89

In summary of research question five, concerning written and verbal methods of communication regarding the school curriculum, the following findings were revealed by the data.

Written communications were perceived by slightly more than one-half of the parents as good to excellent. Ratings from parents

revealed they were uncertain in their perceptions of verbal communication; 51 (57.3%) of the parents did not give an opinion. Almost 60 percent of the parents indicated they preferred written methods.

Slightly under one-half of the parents indicated they had not received written methods of communication concerning the curriculum of their child's school. Slightly over one-half of the parents said they would like to receive teacher notes.

Almost two-thirds of the parents had not received verbal methods of communication concerning the curriculum of their child's school. Slightly over one-half of the parents did not have a preference concerning a verbal method of communication regarding school curriculum.

Nearly one-half of the parents indicated they had not been contacted by written communications with regard to school curriculum. A total of 82 percent of the parents did have a preference for the frequency of written communication concerning school curriculum; these preferences ranged from "as units change" to yearly.

Over two-thirds of the parents indicated they had not been contacted by verbal communications dealing with school curriculum. More than one-half of the parents indicated they did not have a preference regarding the frequency of verbal communications about school curriculum.

Research Question 6

What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually use when they initiate communication with their child's school?

A total of 57 parents in the study (64.0%) indicated they had initiated communication with their child's school. One parent stated she wanted to communicate with the child's school and failed to follow-through; the reason given was she "worked during the day and never got the time."

The data relating to parent-initiated communication are presented in Tables 29 and 30; parent comments are included in the text. Data reflecting parent feelings toward the communication initiated with school teachers and principals are shown in Table 29. The majority of the parents interviewed (94.7%) did not hesitate to contact the school.

Comments from parents who did not hesitate to communicate with the school reflected the confidence and positiveness of the parents. Some typical comments were:

No hesitation at all.

No, I feel real good about being able to stop in.

I have no hesitation. If I have a need I call.

The parents who hesitated to communicate with the school commented it was because of a previous bad experience or a conflict of interests:

Yes, I hesitate because I was given a real cool reception the last time.

Yes, I have some hesitation because of church and state matters.

Yes, but I know who to talk to now.

Five (8.8%) of the parents stated they were dissatisfied with the communications they originated with their child's school. Parents

TABLE 29
Parent Feelings Related to Parent-Initiated
Communication with Teachers and Principals

Parent Feelings	Yes		No	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hesitation to contact the school	3	5.3	54	94.7
Satisfaction with the school's response to the contact	52	91.2	5	8.8
Comfort during the contact with the school	56	98.2	1	1.8
Being well received by the school	56	98.2	1	1.8

N = 57

who were satisfied tended to feel the school and parents worked well together toward the solution of problems. Some typical comments were as follows:

Yes, I felt we were both working for one goal--our children.

Yes, they are always super.

I was very satisfied with the school's action to my request.

Parents who were dissatisfied relayed the message that school personnel were less than accommodating. Some typical responses were:

All I got was--this is the way it is and that's the way it will stay. No, I wasn't satisfied at all.

No, because they never come to agree with me. They always win.

Seems like the principal pats me on the head and doesn't take me seriously.

Fifty-six parents expressed favorable levels of comfort during their contact with the school. Typical supportive parent comments were:

Yes, I was extremely comfortable.

Yes, I was comfortable. The teacher helped me to relax.

Yes, once I got started talking.

One parent was basically ill at ease with the face-to-face situation experienced when contacting the school.

I was uneasy--but I'm generally not comfortable talking to anyone.

All but one parent expressed a positive reception of their parent-initiated communication with the school. They expressed such comments as:

They are always kind and helpful.

The teacher always responds well.

Yes, I think there is always an open door.

They're always polite.

The one person who did not receive a positive reception stated, "I don't feel I was given a reception at all."

Data concerning the topics and methods of written and verbal communication that parents used when they initiated communication with the school are shown in Table 30. A total of 55 (96.6%) of the parents indicated verbal communication was the most utilized

method of communication.

TABLE 30
Methods Used by Parents to Communicate with Their
Child's School Concerning Topics of Importance

Methods	Academic Progress	Social Behav.	School Policy	School Activ.	School Curric.	Student Illness
<u>Written Methods</u>						
Notes to the teacher						
Number	1	--	--	--	1	--
Percent	1.7	--	--	--	1.7	--
<u>Verbal Methods</u>						
Telephone						
Number	14	6	--	1	3	5
Percent	24.6	10.5	--	1.7	5.3	5.8
Planned conference with the teacher						
Number	1	1	--	--	--	--
Percent	1.7	1.7	--	--	--	--
Stop-in conference with the teacher						
Number	16	4	--	--	--	4
Percent	28.1	7.1	--	--	--	7.1

N = 57

The telephone and informal "stop-in" parent-teacher conferences were mentioned most often as verbal methods of communication parents chose to use. Almost 60 percent of the parents indicated academic progress was most often the topic of concern in the communication they originated.

In summary of parent-initiated communication with teachers and principals, the following findings were revealed by the data.

Among the 89 parents interviewed, 57 parents initiated communication with their child's school. Parents felt the experiences they had when initiating communication with the school were positive with regard to comfort levels and the reception they received from the school. The majority of the parents (91.2%) who initiated communication felt satisfied with the school's response to their concern. Of the 57 parents who initiated communication with their child's school, 96.6 percent utilized a verbal method of communication. Telephone calls and "stop-in" conferences represented 52.2 percent of the verbal methods used by parents. Among the 57 parents initiating communication, 57.6 percent were primarily concerned with academic progress.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to present data related to the six research questions of the study. Through the use of a parent interview schedule, 89 parents of elementary school children enrolled in the Kearney Public Schools were interviewed to determine their perceptions regarding home-school communication. Their perceptions

concerning written and verbal methods as well as frequency of communication related to the topics of academic progress, social behavior, school policy, school activities, and school curriculum were measured. Also, data related to communication which parents initiated with the school were collected and analyzed.

Over 70 percent of the parents felt the school did a good to excellent job in their communications regarding academic progress. Verbal communication was preferred by more than one-half of the parents; 18 percent preferred written communication.

Report cards were the preferred method of written communication regarding academic progress; almost one-third of the parents felt they should be supplemented with teacher notes. Over 60 percent of the parents received a written report on their child's academic progress every nine weeks, and over 50 percent felt the nine-week period should be supplemented with other time periods ranging from "as problems occur" to every four to six weeks.

Over 75 percent of the parents indicated the parent-teacher conference was the only verbal method utilized to report the child's academic progress. However, almost one-third of the parents felt the conference should be supplemented with telephone calls. Over 85 percent of the parents experienced parent-teacher conferences once per year. More than 50 percent of the parents felt verbal communication regarding their child's academic progress should occur semi-annually.

In the area of social behavior, more than 70 percent of the parents felt the schools did a good to excellent job in both written

and verbal methods of communication. Approximately 75 percent of the parents preferred verbal methods as a means of reporting the social behavior of their child.

Eighty percent of the parents stated the only written form of communication regarding social behavior was the report card and 46 percent indicated they wanted to receive notes from the teacher in addition to the report card. The nine-week period was the only time 87 percent of the parents received written reports regarding their child's social behavior. Approximately 30 percent of the parents indicated they would like to receive written reports during different time frequencies in addition to the nine-week reporting period.

More than 75 percent of the parents indicated they had been involved in a parent-teacher conference as the only method of verbal communication concerning the social behavior of their child; slightly over one-half of the parents stated they were satisfied with the parent-teacher conference as the only method. Over 40 percent of the parents felt they would like to receive telephone calls from teachers to supplement the regular parent-teacher conference. Almost 90 percent of the parents indicated they received verbal communication concerning their child's social behavior only once per year; slightly more than three-fourths said they would like to receive this type of communication two or more times per year.

More than 90 percent of the parents rated written communications as good to excellent in the area of school policies; 80 percent of the parents chose not to rate verbal methods. Nearly 90 percent indicated a preference for written methods.

All the parents in the study said they received a handbook as prescribed by the school district, and nearly two-thirds also received communication about school policies by way of a newsletter in addition to the handbook. Almost one-third of the parents indicated the handbook was sufficient; one-third indicated the newsletter was needed as a supplement. Nearly 60 percent of the parents said they received written communication regarding school policies more than once a year which was also the preference of the parents in the study.

Verbal communication methods concerning school policies were not experienced by almost 90 percent of the sample and three-fourths of the parents stated they did not prefer such communication.

Over 90 percent of the parents rated written communications concerning school activities as excellent or good, and nearly 90 percent did not have an opinion about verbal communication. Slightly more than 95 percent of the parents indicated written communications as their method of choice.

In addition to the yearly school calendar, slightly over 75 percent of the sample had experienced a newsletter and over three-fourths felt the newsletter was needed to supplement the yearly calendar to communicate school activities. Fifty-seven percent of the parents received written communications every month; over one-half of the parents indicated the monthly frequency was needed in addition to the yearly contact prescribed by the school district.

Verbal communications regarding school activities of any type were not mentioned by over 90 percent of the parents in the

study and more than four-fifths indicated they did not have a preference or need for a verbal method.

Slightly over one-half of the parents perceived communications concerning the school curriculum as good to excellent. In comparison to other topics of communication, parent ratings of school curriculum appeared to be the weakest, with almost one-half of the parents rating the methods as average or less. Slightly under 60 percent of the parents indicated written methods regarding school curriculum were preferred to verbal methods.

The absence of a district method and frequency standard for written communication was apparent; more than one-half of the parents indicated they had not received a written communication at any time. Slightly more than one-half of the parents said they wished to receive written communication concerning curriculum; however, over 82 percent of the parents did not have a preference for the frequency of such communication.

Over 60 percent of the parents had not experienced a verbal method of communication related to the curriculum, and slightly over one-half did not prefer a verbal method or frequency.

Fifty-seven of the 89 parents in the study initiated communication with their child's school; of these 57 parents, 96.6 percent initiated communication using a verbal method. Academic progress was cited as the primary topic of parent-initiated contacts; 57.6 percent of the parents stated it as the reason for their communication with the school. Over 90 percent of the parents expressed positive feelings about the communications they initiated with the school.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to identify parent perceptions of written and verbal communication methods used between home and school concerning five major topics of student academic progress, student social behavior, school policies, school activities, and school curriculum. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following six research questions:

1. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's academic progress?

2. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding their child's social behavior?

3. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding policies of their child's school?

4. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding activities of their child's school?

5. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually receive and prefer to receive from the Kearney Public Schools regarding the curriculum of their child's school?

6. What methods of written and verbal communication do elementary school parents actually use when they initiate communication with their child's school?

Review of the Setting

The city of Kearney is located in South-Central Nebraska and had, during 1984, an estimated population of 21,658 people. The Kearney Public Schools represented the public K-12 education system in the town of Kearney, Nebraska and were accredited by the North Central Association of School Accreditation in addition to being approved and accredited by the Nebraska Department of Education.

The Kearney Public Schools were organized according to a K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 arrangement with the elementary schools representing a "neighborhood school" concept. The total student enrollment was 3,871; a total of 2,092 students were housed in the seven elementary attendance centers, 972 in the junior high school, and 807 in the senior high school.

The Kearney Public Schools were governed by a six-member school board and the members were elected at large. A central office concept was represented by a superintendent, assistant superintendent, business manager, and director of student services. Building principals were assigned to all elementary and secondary attendance

centers with assistant principals in addition to the building principal at the junior and senior high schools.

Procedures

To complete the study, the following steps were followed.

1. A review of literature was conducted to identify the written and verbal methods of communication most often suggested by authorities and to identify the topics most often included in home-school communications.
2. Research questions were developed for each of the major topics of home-school communication revealed by the review of literature.
3. A parent interview schedule (see Appendix G) was developed based on the review of literature for the purpose of identifying the perceptions of elementary school parents concerning actual and preferred methods and frequencies of home-school communication.
4. The parent interview schedule was trial-tested for understandability by pilot interviews conducted with elementary school parents in the Glenwood Elementary School District, Kearney, Nebraska. In addition, the parent interview schedule was submitted to the elementary principals of the Kearney Public Schools for their review and suggestions.
5. The sample population was selected using a stratified-random sampling design of elementary school parents from all seven elementary schools in the Kearney Public Schools. One parent per classroom was selected from each elementary school classroom.

6. A total of 89 telephone interviews were conducted between February 1, 1985 and March 15, 1985; the participation rate was 100 percent.

7. Data from the parent interview schedule were recorded, tabulated, displayed, and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Conclusions

As presented in Chapter 2, literature related to communication theory seemed to suggest circular models to be the most desirable. Specifically, receivers of messages should be given an opportunity to react to the sender's message. The findings of this study seem to suggest that the topic communicated to parents by the school relates to their preference for a circular or linear type of communication process.

Verbal communication seems to enhance the use of a circular model of communication since the receiver can immediately react to the message. The parents included in the study indicated a preference for verbal communication when the school reported about their child's academic progress and social behavior.

Written communication is often linear in nature unless the message sent solicits a response by the receiver. In the area of school policies and school activities, parents seemed to prefer a linear type of communication process.

Circular and linear processes of communication were not clearly indicated by parents with respect to the curriculum of the school. There appeared to be diverse opinions among parents regarding

the communication process that would be most effective or desirable when receiving reports about the school's curriculum.

Based on the findings presented by the data in Chapter 4, the following conclusions are presented.

1. Elementary school parents perceived the Kearney Public Schools were doing a good job of reporting their child's academic progress through written and verbal methods of communication; a preference for verbal communication methods was indicated. Parents also perceived the Kearney Public Schools could improve the methods of communication by using more teacher comments on report cards, supplementing the report card between nine-week quarters with teacher notes, and increasing the frequency of verbal communications to two conferences per year and the additional use of the telephone.

2. Elementary school parents perceived the Kearney Public Schools were doing a good job of using written and verbal methods of communication to inform them regarding their child's social behavior and indicated a preference for verbal methods. However, it appeared the parents felt the elementary schools could increase the usage of teacher notes in addition to the report card between the nine-week reporting periods and increase the number of verbal communications to at least two per year with added emphasis on the use of the telephone.

3. Elementary school parents perceived the schools were doing a good job of communicating through written and verbal methods concerning school policies; however, parents did not perceive verbal communication as a meaningful method of communication. Parents felt

the district handbook should be supplemented with the use of methods such as a newsletter more than once per year.

4. Elementary school parents perceived the Kearney Public Schools were doing a good job communicating through written methods concerning school activities; the parents stated verbal methods were not used nor desired. However, they also felt the use of a newsletter on a monthly basis was needed in addition to the district standard of the yearly calendar.

5. Elementary school parents perceived the Kearney Public Schools were doing an average job of informing them about school curriculum through written and verbal communication methods. Parents indicated a desire for increased use of written communications regarding the curriculum.

6. Parent-initiated communications with the school, through verbal methods, were perceived by the sample as positive and concerned primarily with the academic progress of their child.

7. Elementary school parents perceived the Kearney Public School District standards of communication to be necessary and helpful. However, parents felt district standards could be supplemented in all areas by additional written and verbal methods at more frequent intervals with the exception of verbal communications for school policies and school activities.

8. Elementary school parents perceived informal written and verbal methods of communication, including the use of teacher notes, telephone calls, and newsletters, as desirable approaches in addition to current school district standards.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were formulated:

1. It is recommended that teachers in the Kearney Public Schools be encouraged to increase their use of written comments on report cards and to send informal notes to parents between nine-week quarters which address academic progress and social behavior. In addition, personnel in the Kearney Public Schools should increase verbal methods of communication, primarily the parent-teacher conference, to occur at least two times per year and request teachers to make at least one telephone call for every student in class.

2. It is recommended that the staff of the Kearney Public Schools continue the use of the handbook as a method of communication concerning school policies and be required to use newsletters on a monthly basis in order to increase parent awareness.

3. It is recommended that personnel in the Kearney Public Schools continue the yearly calendar as a written method of communication to inform parents about school activities; however, monthly newsletters should also be required as a means of informing parents.

4. It is recommended that officials of the Kearney Public Schools study further the needs of elementary school parents with respect to written and verbal communications in the area of school curriculum.

5. It is recommended that Kearney Public School personnel assist parents to communicate with the schools by informing them of

key areas of educational concern and provide them with a list of typical questions to use when making inquiries of the school. It is further recommended elementary school teachers be provided with the skills necessary to answer questions parents may have about the schools.

6. It is recommended that officials of the Kearney Public Schools provide inservice programs for classroom teachers to develop skills necessary for effective interpersonal communications with parents during teacher conferences.

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APPENDIX A

Permission for Kearney Public School Study



KEARNEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATION BLDG
310 WEST 24TH
TELEPHONE 237-2278

KEARNEY, NEBRASKA 68847

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DR. JAMES O HOWARD
SUPERINTENDENT

JERRY A. BARABAS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
FOR INSTRUCTION

ROBERT E. BRAGG
DIRECTOR OF
BUSINESS AFFAIRS

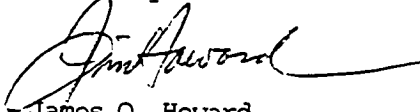
January 8, 1985

David Townsend, Principal
Emerson Elementary School
2705 Ave. E
Kearney, Nebraska 68847

Dear Mr. Townsend:

The Kearney Public School District Board of Education has granted you permission to complete a study concerning home-school communication using the elementary school population. It is expected that a report complete with recommendations will be made to the Board of Education upon its completion. I have included a letter that will be sent to the parents that are to participate in the study. Please submit the letters as appropriate for the timeline of the study to me for my signature.

Sincerely,


James O. Howard
Superintendent

JH/dl

cc

APPENDIX B

Permission for Glenwood Pilot Test

Office of
County Superintendent of Schools

Buffalo County Courthouse
Kearney, Nebraska 68847
Tel. 308-237-5981 Ext. 249

Alice Heckman - Superintendent

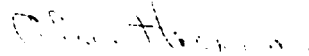
Helen Anderson - Deputy Supt.

David L. Townsend
Emerson Elementary School
2705 Avenue E.
Kearney, Nebraska 68847
January 10, 1985

Dear Mr. Townsend:

This letter is to verify my permission for you to test an interview instrument at Glenwood school. Attached you will find a complete roster of parents at the school by grade that may be used to select the random participants. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Alice Heckman, Co. Supt.
Buffalo County Schools

AH:ha
encl.

APPENDIX C

Glenwood Parent Letter

KEARNEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DAVE TOWNSEND
PRINCIPAL

KEARNEY, NEBRASKA 68847

EMERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2705 AVENUE E
TELEPHONE 237-3467

January 11, 1985

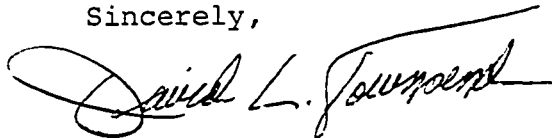
Dear Glenwood Parent,

You have been selected at random to participate in a pilot test of a research instrument that will be used with Kearney Public School elementary school parents. The purpose of the Kearney instrument will be to acquire parent perceptions of written and verbal home-school communications. However, the purpose of your participation will be to provide input as to the clarity and understandability of the interview schedule itself as well as to provide an estimate of the time needed for the telephone interview. Having not given the instrument to any parents at this point, I would guess that it would take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

A brief outline of the interview format has been enclosed for your increased awareness. I will call during the week of January 14th to obtain your input between the evening hours of 6:30 and 9:00 p.m.

Please feel free to call me at home (236-7561) or at school (237-3467) if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



David L. Townsend, Principal
Emerson Elementary School

APPENDIX C1

Random Numbers of Parents in the Study

	Bryant		Central		Emerson		Kenwood	Northeast			Park		W. Hills
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	A	B	C	A	B	A
Kdg.	04	11	10	09	18	09	21	26	24	20	26	22	22
	05	07	29	01	07	21	29	24	13	14	08	10	27
	10	14	28	06	15	10	27	18	01	09	04	19	23
	12	15	09	24	28	30	06	07	08	26	02	08	14
First	13	25	22	19	19	27	26	19	01	11	10	20	28
	12	16	27	08	20	04	16	14	21	27	09	06	03
	02	02	05	11	03	14	10	05	17	06	14	01	22
	29	21	13	14	07	29	02	28	22	05	18	02	19
Second	03	15	09	13	04	05	19	15	09	23	02	22	02
	11	12	16	18	27	02	22	21	23	14	25	27	01
	15	13	13	10	24	24	27	25	10	16	14	23	20
	09	19	06	23	05	09	10	17	17	04	10	14	07
Third	12	14	04	02	24	17	21	08	18	06	25	28	09
	27	09	02	05	29	13	27	25	21	05	21	03	27
	18	22	01	07	05	09	28	10	15	20	09	22	11
	22	02	23	28	19	12	06	04	20	04	11	19	19
Fourth	01	05	19	15	16	30	01	09	28	07	09	02	02
	30	23	16	05	12	25	26	20	21	02	26	01	03
	08	14	18	22	08	04	02	12	22	26	16	20	20
	14	24	25	03	02	12	27	24	09	04	05	07	21
Fifth	07	05	05	25	04	01	09	20	01	14	22	22	13
	21	08	16	10	15	28	21	22	22	15	18	10	09
	03	16	03	16	09	10	10	24	06	25	24	19	29
	01	07	13	30	19	09	30	15	02	28	10	08	19
Sixth	11	10	23	08	03	14	27	21	19	21	11	20	07
	09	26	25	30	02	24	04	04	14	25	17	06	08
	18	09	12	02	17	05	14	29	05	08	05	01	15
	16	25	14	20	20	27	29	19	15	01	22	02	19

Please list four students, their parents' address and phone number for each teacher on the list according to the student number in the attendance book. If you do not have a student for the number given, please leave it blank and move on to the next number.

In cases where there is "no phone" please list the appropriate names and addresses. I would appreciate this information returned by Friday, February 1.

Source: A million random digits with 100,000 normal deviates. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955, 99-100.

APPENDIX D

Parent Notification Letter



KEARNEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATION BLDG
310 WEST 24TH
TELEPHONE 237-2278

KEARNEY, NEBRASKA 68847

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DR. JAMES O HOWARD
SUPERINTENDENT

JERRY A BARABAS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
FOR INSTRUCTION

ROBERT E BRAGG
DIRECTOR OF
BUSINESS AFFAIRS

February 15, 1985

Dear Parent,

In the next few days, the Kearney Public Schools will be undertaking a study to determine our success in home and school communication. As part of the study we are seeking comments from elementary school parents regarding the communications they send and receive from their child's school.

You have been selected to talk with us about the communication regarding your child's experience at school.

Dave Townsend, principal at Emerson School, will be calling you on a weekday within the next two weeks to ask you some basic questions concerning communication. He would like to take approximately 20 minutes of your time between 6:30 and 9:00 P.M. to complete the interview.

Enclosed you will find an outline of the interview Mr. Townsend will be conducting with you. We hope it will give you an opportunity to become familiar with the nature of his questions and allow you the chance to feel more comfortable during the telephone conversation.

In conclusion, I want to stress that the information that Mr. Townsend collects from you will be held in absolute confidence. Once your comments have been totalled with those from other parents in the study, they will be destroyed. In no case will your name appear or be associated with any of your responses.

A special thanks in advance for your cooperation. If for any reason you do not wish to participate, please call me at my office at 237-2278 or Dave Townsend at 237-3467.

Sincerely,

James O. Howard, Superintendent
Kearney Public Schools

Children Are Really Everything

APPENDIX E

Outline of Parent Interview

Outline of Parent Interview

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION - What written methods does your child's school use to communicate with you about:

- 1) academic progress
- 2) social behavior (includes discipline)
- 3) school regulations and policies
(includes information about
schedules, daily routine, health,
safety, and welfare)
- 4) school activities
- 5) curriculum (information about
what programs your child studies at
school such as textbooks, tests,
computers, etc.)

VERBAL COMMUNICATION - What verbal methods does your child's school use to communicate with you about:

- 1) academic progress
- 2) social behavior (includes discipline)
- 3) school regulations and policies
(includes information about
schedules, daily routine, health,
safety, and welfare)
- 4) school activities
- 5) curriculum (information about
what programs your child studies at
school such as textbooks, tests,
computers, etc.)

PARENT-INITIATED COMMUNICATION - Written and verbal communication that parents use to communicate with the school. Topics involved in those communications and frequency.

APPENDIX F

Instructions for Parent Interview

Instructions for Parent Interview

- ITEMS: 1) WRITTEN: Academic Progress - report card
 2) VERBAL: Academic Progress - parent-teacher conference
 3) WRITTEN: Social Behavior - report card
 4) VERBAL: Social Behavior - parent-teacher conference
 5) WRITTEN: Regulations/Policies - handbook
 7) WRITTEN: School Activities - calendar

The initial question for each item should be read as it is written.

YES responses are to be pursued using sub-questions A through G or A through AA depending on the item.

NO responses are to be pursued by circling the standard district-wide method in question A. Questions B through G or B through AA are to be pursued then according to the standard district-wide method circled in A.

- ITEMS: 6) VERBAL: Regulations/Policies
 8) VERBAL: School Activities
 9) WRITTEN: Curriculum
 10) VERBAL: Curriculum

The initial question for each item should be read as it is written.

YES responses are to be pursued using sub-questions A through G or A through AA depending on the item.

No responses to the initial question should have the interviewer move to D1.

If the answer to D1 is YES, then the remainder of the questions through G or AA are to be asked.

If the response to D1 is NO, questions D through G are to be left blank with the exception of item AA. It is to be marked accordingly.

PROBING QUESTIONS are listed beneath each sub-question and are to be used to stimulate comments from participants regarding the corresponding sub-question.

APPENDIX G

Parent Interview Schedule

Parent Interview Schedule

Good Evening _____

This is Dave Townsend, principal of Emerson Elementary School. How are you this evening? I'm calling in reference to the letter you received from Dr. Howard informing you of the study Kearney Public Schools is doing regarding home-school communication. Would you have approximately 20 minutes to share your experiences regarding communication you have sent or received from (name of child's) school? THANK YOU.

Basically, I'll be asking you questions concerning written and verbal methods that you and the school use to communicate. Please feel free to be candid as your name will not appear at any place in the final report.

CHILD: _____ GRADE: K 1 2 3 4 5 6
 SCHOOL: B C E K NE P WH
 PARENT: _____ PHONE: _____
 ADDRESS: _____
 Education: Elem. _____ H.S. _____ Voc. _____ Coll. _____
 Family: a. Single parent _____ Two parent _____
 b. One works _____ Both work _____ No one works _____
 c. Father _____ Mother _____ Other _____

Written Methods: Academic Progress

1. Other than the report card, have you ever received any written communication from child's name school concerning academic progress? YES _____ NO _____

A. What written method was used other than the report card?

B. Was that method an effective way to communicate with you about child's name academic progress?

Were the messages clear?

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive written communication regarding
child's name academic progress?

Is that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less written communication about
 academic progress?

- D. How often would you prefer to receive written communication
 regarding child's name academic progress?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

Would you like it on another basis different than what you
 currently get?

- E. What written method would you prefer child's name school
 to use to communicate with you about academic progress?

Would you prefer something other than what is being done?

- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name academic progress
 through the written methods used by the school?

. Do you feel that you are up on this area as much as you care
 to be?

- G. Considering the report cards and other written forms of communica-
 tion that you have received, what grade would you give to
child's name school in this area?

A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

Verbal Methods: Academic Progress

2. Other than parent teacher conferences, have you ever received any
 verbal communication from child's name school regarding
 academic progress? YES ____ NO ____

- A. What verbal method is used other than the parent-teacher confer-
 ence?

- B. Was that an effective way to communicate with you about
child's name academic progress?

Were the messages clear

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive verbal communication regarding
child's name academic progress?

Is that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less verbal communication about
 academic progress?

- D. How often would you prefer to receive verbal communication
 about academic progress?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

Would you like it on another basis different than what you
 currently get?

- E. What verbal method would you prefer child's name school to
 use to communicate with you about academic progress?

Would you prefer something other than what is being done?

- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name academic
 progress through the verbal methods used by the school?

Do you feel that you are up on this area as much as you care
 to be?

- G. Considering the parent-teacher conferences and other verbal
 methods of communication that you have had, what grade would
 you give to child's school in this area?

A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ F ___ No Opinion ___

- AA. Would you prefer the school to use written or verbal methods
 of communicating with you about child's name academic
 progress?

Written Methods - Social Behavior

3. Other than the report card, have you ever received any written
 communication from child's name school concerning social
 behavior? YES ___ NO ___

- A. What written method was used other than the report card?

- B. Was that method an effective way to communicate with you about
child's name social behavior?

Were the messages clear

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive written communication regarding
child's name social behavior?

Is that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less written communication about
 social behavior?

- D. How often would you prefer to receive written communication
 about social behavior?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

Would you like it on another basis different than what you
 currently get?

- E. What written method would you prefer child's name school
 to use to communicate with you about social behavior?

Would you prefer something other than what is being done?

- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name social
 behavior through the written methods used by the school?

Do you feel that you are up on this area as much as you
 care to be?

- G. Considering the report cards and other written forms of
 communication that you have received, what grade would you give
 to child's name school in this area?

A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

Verbal Methods: Social Behavior

4. Other than parent-teacher conferences, have you ever received any
 verbal communications from child's name school regarding
 social behavior? YES ____ NO ____

- A. What verbal method is used other than the parent-teacher
 conference?

- B. Was that an effective way to communicate with you about
child's name social behavior?

Were the messages clear?

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive verbal communication regarding
child's name social behavior?

Is that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less verbal communication about social behavior?

- D. How often would you prefer to receive verbal communication about social behavior?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

Would you like it on another basis different than what you currently get?

- E. What verbal method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate with you about social behavior?

Would you prefer something other than what is being done?

- F. Do you feel well informed child's name social behavior through the verbal methods used by the school?

Do you feel that you are up on this area as much as you care to be?

- G. Considering the parent-teacher conferences and other verbal methods of communication that you have had, what grade would you give to child's school in this area?

A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

- AA. Would you prefer the school to use written or verbal methods of communication when communicating with you about child's name social behavior?

Written Methods: Policies

5. Other than the parent handbook, have you ever received any written communication from child's name school concerning regulations/policies? YES ____ NO ____

- A. What written method was used other than the handbook?

- B. Was that method an effective way to communicate with you about child's name school regulations/policies?

Were the messages clear?

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive written communication regarding child's name school regulations/policies?

If that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less written communication about school policies?

- D. How often would you prefer to receive written communication regarding child's name school regulations/policies?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

Would you like it on another basis different than what you currently get?

- E. What written method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate school regulations/policies?

Would you prefer something other than what is being done?

- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name school regulations/policies through the written methods used by the school?

Do you feel that you are up on this area as much as you care to be?

- G. Considering the handbook and other written forms of communication that you have received, what grade would you give to child's name school in this area?

A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

Verbal Methods: Policies

6. Have you ever received any verbal communications from child's name school regarding school regulations/policies? YES ____
NO ____

- A. What verbal method was used?

- B. Was that an effective way to communicate with you about child's name school regulations/policies?

Were the messages clear?

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive verbal communication regarding child's name school regulations/policies?

Is that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less verbal communication about school regulations/policies?

D1. Would you like to?

D. How often would you like verbal communication about school regulation/policies?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

E. What verbal method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate with you on regulations/policies?

F. Do you feel well informed about child's name school regulations/policies through verbal methods used by the school?

G. Considering the verbal methods of communication that you have had, what grade would you give to child's name in this area?

A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

AA. Would you prefer the school to use written or verbal methods of communication when communicating with you about child's name school regulations/policies?

Written Methods: School Activities

7. Other than the yearly activities calendar, have you ever received any written communication from child's name school concerning school activities? YES ____ NO ____

A. What written method was used other than the calendar?

B. Was that method an effective way to communicate with you about child's name school activities?

Were the messages clear?

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

C. How often do you receive written communication regarding child's name school activities?

Is this often enough?

Would you prefer more or less written communication about school activities?

D. How often would you prefer to receive written communication regarding child's name school activities?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

Would you like it on another basis different than what you currently get?

- E. What written method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate with you about school activities?

Would you prefer something other than what is being done?

- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name school activities through written methods used by the school?

Do you feel that you are up on this area as much as you care to be?

- G. Considering the yearly activities calendar and other written forms of communication that you have received, what grade would you give to child's name school in this area?

A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

Verbal Methods: School Activities

8. Have you ever received any verbal communications from child's name school regarding school activities? YES ____ NO ____

- A. What verbal method was used?

- B. Was that an effective way to communicate with you about child's name school activities?

Were the messages clear?

Were the messages understandable?

Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?

- C. How often do you receive verbal communication regarding child's name school activities?

Is that often enough?

Would you prefer more or less verbal communication about school activities?

- D1. Would you like to?

- D. How often would you like verbal communication about school activities?

Would you like it on a regular basis?

- E. What verbal method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate with you on school activities?

- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name school activities through verbal methods used by the school?
- G. Considering the verbal methods of communication that you have had, what grade would you give to child's name in this area?
- A ____ B ____ D ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____
- AA. Would you prefer the school to use written or verbal methods of communication when communicating with you about child's name school activities?

Written Methods: Curriculum

9. Have you ever received any written communications from child's name school regarding curriculum? YES ____ NO ____
- A. What written method was used?
- B. Was that an effective way to communicate with you about child's name curriculum?
- Were the messages clear?
- Were the messages understandable?
- Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?
- C. How often do you receive written communication regarding child's name curriculum?
- Is that often enough?
- Would you prefer more or less written communication about curriculum?
- D1. Would you like to?
- D. How often would you like written communication about curriculum?
- Would you like it on a regular basis?
- E. What written method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate with you on curriculum?
- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name curriculum through written methods used by the school?
- G. Considering the written methods of communication that you have had, what grade would you give to child's name in this area?
- A ____ B ____ D ____ D ____ F ____ No Opinion ____

Verbal Methods: Curriculum

10. Have you ever received any verbal communications from child's name school regarding curriculum? YES ☐ NO ☐
- A. What verbal method was used?
- B. Was that an effective way to communicate with you about child's name curriculum?
- Were the messages clear?
- Were the messages understandable?
- Did the messages tell you what you wanted to know?
- C. Often often do you receive verbal communication regarding child's name curriculum?
- Is that often enough?
- Would you prefer more or less verbal communication about curriculum?
- D1. Would you like to?
- D. How often would you like verbal communication about curriculum?
- Would you like it on a regular basis?
- E. What verbal method would you prefer child's name school to use to communicate with you on curriculum?
- F. Do you feel well informed about child's name curriculum through verbal methods used by the school?
- G. Considering the verbal methods of communication that you have had, what grade would you give to child's name in this area?
- A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ F ☐ No Opinion ☐
- AA. Would you prefer the school to use written or verbal methods of communication when communicating with you about child's name curriculum?

Parent-Initiated Communication

11. Have you ever contacted child's name teacher or principal concerning academic performance, social behavior, regulations/policies, school activities, curriculum? YES ☐ NO ☐

- If YES-- A. What was the situation?
- B. What method did you use?
- C. Did you have any hesitation? Is so, what?
- D. Were you satisfied with the school's response?
- E. Did you feel comfortable?
- F. Does the school welcome your contacts regarding _____?

General Communication Information

12. What topic would you like to have communicated to you most often?
_____ What method? _____ How often? _____
13. How would you rate yourself in terms of being involved at school?
____ (1) very involved
____ (2) fairly involved
____ (3) not too involved
____ (4) not involved at all
____ (5) no opinion
14. If you were to give the school a grade for the overall job it does serving _____ child's name _____ in the areas of academic performance, behavior and curriculum, what would you give it?
A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ F _____
15. Who usually handles the communication with the school in your family?

APPENDIX H

Computer Code--Parent Interview Schedule

Computer Code---Parent Communication Interview Instrument

Items A & E (Methods)

WRITTEN

- A Teacher/Personal Note
- B Report Card
- C Handbook
- D Calendar
- E Newsletter
- F Upslip
- G Downslip
- H Student Papers
- I Happy Grams

VERBAL

- J Phone Call
- K PTC - Regular
- L PTC - As arranged and planned
- M PTC - Unplanned and informal
(store, stop-in, open-house, PTO, parent day)
- R Home-visit
- O Registration

11A and 12 (Topics)

- A Academic Progress
- B Social Behavior
- C Regulation/Policies
- D School Activities
- E Curriculum
- F Illness/Make-up

Items C & D (Frequency)

- A Daily
- B Bi-weekly
- C Weekly
- D Bi-monthly
- E Monthly
- F 4-6 weeks
- G Qtrly/4 yearly
- H Sem/2 yearly
- I Yearly
- K Only if a problem/as needed
- S None

UNIVERSAL SYMBOLS

- P Other
- X No preference, no comment, no response

APPENDIX I

Description of Kearney, Nebraska Elementary Schools

Bryant Elementary School

Bryant Elementary is located in the southeast quadrant of Kearney at 1611 Avenue C. The current facility is single-story and was built in 1952. It consists of eleven classrooms capable of housing 360 students. Special service rooms include a media center, Chapter I room, a special education room, guidance office, and teachers' workroom (lounge), speech classroom, gymnasium with a stage. At Bryant, the gym also serves as a lunchroom. The Chapter I facility is located immediately outside the main building and represents the only detached classroom space.

Student enrollment at Bryant totals 247 and may be broken per grade as follows: K-44, first-44, second-38, third-32, fourth-38, fifth-20, and sixth-31. Ethnic make-up of students is 80 percent Caucasian and 20 percent Spanish.

The staff at Bryant is composed of 11 classroom teachers; one special education teacher; a Chapter I teacher, and four part-time teachers in the area of physical education, music, speech, and guidance; two full-time aides; one custodian; one secretary, and one building principal for a staff total of 18. Of the 18, three (17.0%) are men and 15 (83.0%) are women.

Central Elementary School

Central Elementary School is a two-story structure and was constructed in 1926. It was the original junior high school and was converted to the present facility in 1968. Central is located in the center of Kearney at 300 West 24 Street. It currently has 13 classrooms capable of holding 420 students. Also within the structure are ten additional rooms that are used as follows: two Chapter I rooms, one gymnasium, one music room, one special education room, an auditorium, a media center, a speech room, and two office rooms for the district's art coordinator and building counselor. In addition, Central is the only elementary school to have a kitchen that has a staff that actually prepares hot lunches at noon.

Student enrollment at Central totals 346 and may be broken per grade as follows: K-46, first-58, second-52, third-48, fourth-48, fifth-44, sixth-50. Ethnic composition of the student body is 95 percent Caucasian, three percent Spanish, one percent Oriental, and one percent Afro-American.

The staff at Central is composed of 13 classroom teachers; two special education teachers; 1.5 Chapter I teachers; four part-time teachers for physical education, music, speech, and guidance; five

full-time and two part-time aides; one custodian; one secretary; and one full-time building principal for a total of 32 staff members. Of the 32, four (12.0%) are men and 28 (88.0%) are women.

Emerson Elementary School

Emerson Elementary School is a single-story building built in 1952 and located in east-central Kearney at 2705 Avenue E. It has 13 classrooms capable of housing 420 students. Also within the structure are rooms for Chapter I, speech/guidance, physical education (gym), lunch, and library media services. Emerson is equipped and designated as the attendance center for the physically handicapped students in Kearney.

Currently the total enrollment is 306 and may be broken per grade as: K-59, first-45, second-53, third-37, fourth-37, fifth-42, sixth-33. Ethnic composition of the student body is 89 percent Caucasian, five percent Spanish, three percent Afro-American, two percent Oriental, and one percent Indian.

The staff at Emerson is made up of 13 classroom teachers; one Chapter I teacher; five part-time teachers in the areas of physical education, music, special education, speech, and guidance; four full-time and one part-time teacher aides; one custodian; one secretary; and one full-time building principal for a total of 27 staff members. Of the 27, two (11.0%) are men and 25 (89.0%) are women.

Kenwood Elementary School

Kenwood Elementary is located in the southwest quadrant of Kearney at 1511 5th Avenue. The facility is a two-story building that was built in 1934. It consists of eight classrooms capable of housing 210-270. Currently one of the classroom serves as a music room. In addition, special service rooms include a media center, gymnasium, a lunch room, speech/guidance room, a resource/orchestra room, and a Chapter I room.

Student enrollment at Kenwood totals 204 and may be broken down per grade as follows: K-40, first-29, second-30, third-30, fourth-27, fifth-19, and sixth-29. Traditionally Kenwood has been a single unit school; however, a move is underway to begin changing the facility to a two-unit school. Ethnic composition of students is 98 percent Caucasian and two percent Spanish.

The staff at Kenwood consists of six full-time and two part-time classroom teachers; six part-time teachers in the areas of speech, special education, Chapter I, physical education, music, and guidance; four teacher aides; one custodian; one secretary, and one part-time building principal for a total of 20 staff members. Of the 20, one (5.0%) are men and 19 (95.0%) are women. (It should be noted that the principal devotes one-half of his day to teaching and the other one-half to administrative duties.)

Northeast Elementary School

Northeast Elementary School is a single-story building and is located in the northeast quadrant of Kearney at 910 East 34th Street. The original facility was constructed in 1961, with an addition in 1969. It presently consists of 22 classrooms, capable of housing 720 students, a media center, and a gymnasium that also serves as a lunchroom. Three outdoor units are located to the west of the main structure and house special education, speech, guidance, and music programs.

Student enrollment at Northeast total 513 and may be broken down per grade as K-71, first-82, second-78, third-64, fourth-69, fifth-74, and sixth-75. Ethnic make-up of the student body is 98 percent Caucasian, one percent Spanish, 0.8 percent Oriental, 0.1 percent Afro-American, and 0.1 percent Indian.

The staff at Northeast is composed of 20 full-time and one part-time classroom teachers; two special education teachers; one music and one physical education teacher; two part-time teachers in the areas of speech and guidance; seven full-time and one part-time teacher aides; two custodians; one secretary; and one building principal, for a total staff of 39. Of the 39, eight (21.0%) are men and 31 (79.0%) are women.

Park Elementary

Park Elementary School is a single-story building located in west central Kearney at 3000 7th Avenue. The facility was built in 1952 and consists of 13 classrooms capable of housing 420 students. Special service rooms include a speech/music office, guidance office, media center, lunchroom, and a gymnasium.

Student enrollment at Park totals 320 and may be broken down per grade as follows: K-50, first-43, second-40, third-39, fourth-52, fifth-50, and sixth-47. Ethnic composition of students is 98.8 percent Caucasian, 0.6 percent Afro-American, and 0.6 percent Oriental.

Park staff is composed of 13 classroom teachers; five part-time teachers in the areas of special education, physical education, music, speech, and guidance; three teacher aides; one custodian; one secretary, and one full-time building principal for a total staff of 24. Of that 24, three (13.0%) are men and 21 (87.0%) are women.

Windy Hills Elementary

Windy Hills is located in the northwest quadrant of Kearney at 4211 20th Avenue. It is a modern single-story building and was built in 1981. The facility contains eight classrooms capable of handling 210-270 students. In addition to classroom space, Windy Hills provides areas such as a gymnasium, a lunchroom (commons area), resource/visual/audio handicapped room, and a library-media room. Presently the facility serves as a single unit school but was designed to be easily expanded into a two-unit school.

The student enrollment at Windy Hills totals 162 and may be broken down per grade as follows: K-26, first-23, second-17, third-23, fourth-23, fifth-21, and sixth-29. Ethnic composition is 97 percent Caucasian, two percent Iranian, and one percent Afro-American.

Staff at Windy Hills is composed of six full-time and two part-time classroom teachers; four part-time teachers in the areas of physical education, music, speech, and guidance; one special education teacher; two teacher aides; one custodian; one secretary; and a part-time building principal for a total staff of 17. Of the 17, three (18.0%) are men and 14 (82.0%) are women.