

A MODEL FOR PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION
IN THE KINDERGARTEN YEAR

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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A MODEL FOR PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION
IN THE KINDERGARTEN YEAR

by



Jeanette Marie Newhook, B.A.(Ed.)

A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

This project was undertaken to devise a two-way system of communications for parents and teachers, specifically for use in the kindergarten year. Current practices tend to consist of contact initiated by the school, and less frequently include a partnership approach to education by the home and school. In keeping with modern philosophies, this study assumes the young child will be offered a more beneficial education if parents and teachers develop co-operative attitudes.

The research for this project was carried out in Newfoundland, in schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. Initial contacts were made through interviews with principals of elementary schools and parents of the 1982-83 kindergarten children, and through questionnaires mailed to kindergarten teachers. The information so gathered provided an outline of current practices in parent-teacher communications and the degree of satisfaction with these practices. Based on this research, and on a survey of the literature, a model for communications including a progress reporting instrument, was devised and redistributed to principals, teachers and parents for their evaluation.

The two major needs were identified by this project:
(1) educator's need a standardized guideline for communications

with parents to ensure consistent and efficient communications, and (2) increased parental awareness of school programs is desired by both parents and teachers.

There were two major conclusions to this study. First, parents and teachers indicated willingness to make additional contacts and desired a partnership type of relation for the benefit of the child. Secondly, the model that was developed was judged by principals, teachers and parents to be feasible and adaptable for practical use in schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much gratitude is extended to Dr. H. Kitchen, Dr. L. Parsons, and Dr. E. Janes for their assistance in completing this project. Research for the purposes of devising a model would have been impossible without the co-operation and aid of Mr. N. Kelland, Mr. W. Oakley, and the educational staff of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. This report is dedicated to my parents, Gerald and Marie, and to N. Franklin Dawe, a very special friend, who have provided the encouragement and constant support necessary to complete the project.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The kindergarten year should provide valuable experiences for the child, the parent and the teacher. The progress report of the primary school should be a tool for improving and individualizing education. This project is an attempt to improve the quality of progress reporting during the kindergarten year. The approach taken is the development of a program of communication between parents and teachers, designed to focus upon enrichment of the kindergarten child's education through mutual co-operation and understanding.

Inherent in this study is the belief that a partnership between home and school is important for the development and growth of each child. This point is stressed by the Manitoba Department of Education in a publication designed for use by kindergarten teachers:

The child needs to feel accepted [in school] while continuing to retain that sense of personal worth which should have been developed in an accepting home environment. Learning flourishes where the individual is respected; a confident sense of self is basic to the motivation to achieve!¹

¹Betty Gibson, Early Childhood: A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy (Winnipeg: Department of Education, Province of Manitoba, 1979), p. 7.

Some of the communication procedures developed during this project were aimed toward increased parental involvement in the formal education of the child through planned orientation programs and discussions arranged by the school. Such programs should serve to make the progress report a valuable tool for use in enriching the educational process.

At present, methods of progress reporting at the kindergarten level are numerous and very diverse. While no rigid programs of any kind can be utilized in the kindergarten year, it is hoped this project will produce guidelines which may be adapted to any public school.

Statement of the Problem

The problem examined in this study is communication between school and home during the kindergarten year. The literature suggests this should be continuous and two-way. More often, however, contact is initiated by the school at kindergarten registration, at designated reporting periods in November, March, and June, but rarely, if at all, by parents.

The most tangible element of communication for which the teacher is accountable to the parent is the document used in progress reporting - the report card. Report cards vary from school to school and are often laden with educational jargon.

The problem can be summarized by the following points:

1. Parents have a limited knowledge of the kindergarten program.
2. Teachers have a limited knowledge about the child's out-of-school environment, particularly the educational environment in the home.
3. Teachers often tend to "tell" parents about their children rather than "discuss" the child's progress in school.
4. Principals and teachers have insufficient operational guidelines for preparation of information for distribution to parents.
5. In many schools, parents and teachers operate independently of each other rather than as a team. Where this problem exists, insufficient measures are taken to rectify the situation.

Rationale

Primary education should be based on a foundation of co-operation and understanding. The National Education Association Code of Ethics makes the construction of this foundation a basic responsibility of teachers:

4

Members of the teaching profession share with parents the task of shaping each student's purposes and acts toward socially acceptable ends. The effectiveness of many methods of teaching is dependent upon co-operative relationships with the home. In fulfilling the obligations of this principle the teacher will-

Respect the basic responsibility of parents for their children. Seek to establish friendly and cooperative relationship with the home. Help to increase the students confidence in his own home and avoid disparaging remarks which might undermine that confidence. Provide parents with information that will serve the best interests of their children, and be discreet with information received from parents.²

This holds implications for the child, the parent and the teacher, in that it creates a pattern of communication that can only be successful when a working partnership has been established. Strang states: "...regardless of what reporting procedures are used, it is extremely important that teachers and parents mutually understand their purpose."³ Figure 1 illustrates this point:

²Gordon McCloskey, Education and Public Understanding (2nd ed., New York: Harper, Row Publishers, 1967), p. 324.

³Ruth Strang, Reporting to Parents (New York: Teachers College Press, 1965), cited by McCloskey, op. cit., p. 325.

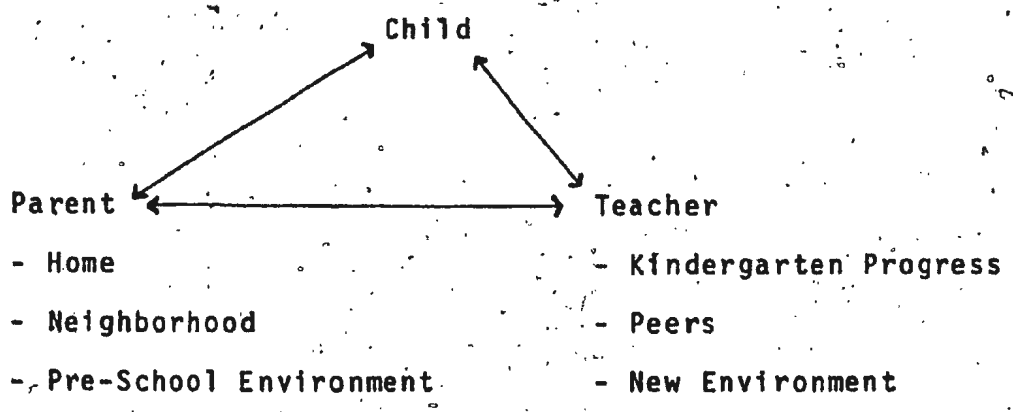


Figure 1. The Child as the Central Figure in Parent-Teacher Communication

The absence of any one of the connecting arrows in the preceding diagram would cause a breakdown in the system. The child, because he is the central figure, suffers the consequences of a poor information system.

For the five-year old, kindergarten provides a transition from preschooler to student - a change which can be very traumatic. During this year, says Gibson, children,

...emerge from a state of total dependence on family and home and become involved with a much larger world which includes many children of their own age group. The new relationship to this extended peer group, as well as to adults outside the family sphere, will influence and possibly threaten the child's self concept.

⁴Gibson, p. 7.

The kindergarten child should be given the opportunity to discover his own potential. His learning should be consistent so that knowledge he brings from school is enhanced at home, while that which he brings from home is respected in the school. The reporting process should not be a threat to the children, who should feel that any communication between parent and teacher is in their own best interest. Implications for parents within the school's communication system are summarized by the following:

Parents are the child's first teachers and have the responsibility of guiding and teaching the child during the most formative years. Parents, therefore, need help and support as they become aware for the first time that knowledge and skill are necessary for good parenting, and that being "just a parent" is a cause for pride.⁵

The help and support indicated above should be offered through the school, as the teacher is in a position to observe growth and changes in the child and relate these to the parent.

The initiative to involve parents must lie with the school's administrators and teachers. Parents are the outsiders of the school system and they need both to feel welcome, and to be encouraged to participate in the educational process. Involvement is particularly important

⁵Gibson, p. 136

"...so that they can reinforce those desirable habits and attitudes encouraged at school and help the teacher to understand what they consider important for their particular child".⁶ It is important that the goals of education are the same for both parents and teacher;

The task of the parent and the teacher is to be sensitive to the right moment for a particular learning. Skills are most likely to develop when physical and psychological growth has assured that they can be used. Instruction is most effective when it is begun at the stage of readiness.⁷

If the basic goal of reporting is communication, with the child's best interest in mind, the purpose of reporting can be outlined as recommended by the Toronto Board of Education:

- (1) To inform parents of their child's progress at school.
- (2) To provide parents with an understanding and appreciation of the school's goals and program.
- (3) To provide a means of exchange of useful information between the home and the school.
- (4) To suggest ways in which parents can encourage and guide their children.⁸

⁶Marguerita Rudolph and Dorothy H. Cohen, Kindergarten - A Year of Learning (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1964), p. 355.

⁷Gibson, p. 10.

⁸Board of Education for the City of Toronto, Reporting to Parents, 1966, p. 1.

The teacher must assume the role of observer, be prepared to interpret behavior, and inform the parent about the strengths and deficiencies in the child's learning in an objective manner. At the same time the teacher must be a skilled listener, for she may learn a great deal about the child through conversation with the parent. Coates says:

Kindergarten teachers are the bridge builders of the public school system. They support children in their early transitions between home and school with bridges of trust built by... information exchanges with parents that replace or augment written reports.⁹

The kindergarten year should consist of guided play, challenge, continuous observation, and, most of all, consistency of lifestyle between home and school. The first three elements are skills the teacher developed during teacher training; the last can only be achieved when the teacher approaches the parent. A point of particular importance is explained by Rudolph and Cohen:

...a teacher's first response, and correctly so, is to the child himself as she sees him. She works for the establishment of their special relationship, and for the integration of this little individual into the new and unfamiliar world of school. Only in time as a teacher wants to know a child better still...¹⁰

⁹ Coates, Dona. "Some Basic Facts about the Transition between Pre-School and School", Prime Areas, 23 (Fall, 1980), p. 32.

¹⁰ Rudolph and Cohen, p. 355.

It is the teacher who must implement the curriculum, and follow school board policy. She has taken time to learn what needs to be, and what must be presented to the child. This places the parent, for a time, in the position of listener - but only to the point where he or she can be an effective participant in the child's education. The responsibility for planning parent education programs must also lie with the teacher and school administrators.

The relationships outlined above should be realistic in every school. This does, however, take a great deal of initial planning, especially where both parents are employed, or where parents have little formal education. The degree of success with which these problems are overcome, lies in the willingness of the school's administrators to make alternate arrangements so the needs of all parents can be met.

It is possible that the kindergarten year may, at some point, pose a threat to parents in that they will be competing for their child's respect for the first time. It is essential that the teacher stress to the parent the importance of support for the child's education from home. This parental input should be based upon familiarity with the kindergarten program, and an open relationship with the teacher. The Manitoba Department of Education further explains:

The parents may feel inclined to leave the responsibility for intellectual growth with the teacher, but they are becoming increasingly aware of the important part they play in stimulating a child's thinking and in creating a healthy attitude toward learning. Many parents are actively seeking help in providing the environment their growing child needs.¹¹

The Project

Outline of the Project

This project was to produce a model, or set of recommended procedures for home-school communications including progress reporting with respect to kindergarten pupils.

The project had six stages:

- (i) Determining the procedures presently used in the schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board.

This involved obtaining from all primary principals, a copy of their kindergarten report cards, and other information about communication procedures. An interview schedule was used.

- (ii) Reviewing the literature concerning home-school communication models with respect to kindergarten children. Included were orientation procedures,

¹¹Gibson, p. 134

progress reports, parent teacher conferences, kindergarten registration, home visitations, spontaneous consultations, the subject matter of communications, the time and frequency, the location, and the people to be involved.

- (iii) Determining the views of parents and teachers with respect to school communication procedures for their kindergarten children.

This involved interviewing a random sample of parents, as well as all kindergarten teachers of the Avalon Consolidated School Board during 1983-84. Interview schedules were used to gather information concerning:

- (a) the adequacy of current communication procedures including report cards
- (b) how current procedures might be improved
- (c) possible new procedures mentioned to them by the researcher (derived from the literature on innovations in education)
- (d) the problem areas to be provided for in the procedures - academic, social, financial...

- (iv) Developing from the data gathered, a model, or set of recommended procedures for home-school communications, including orientation procedures, interviewing arrangements and a report card.

- (v) Having the model assessed by the previous respondents, namely, the kindergarten teachers, the elementary school principals and the parents.
- (vi) Revising the model in light of the assessment.

Duration

The literature review was carried out and interview schedules for stages one and three designed during the months of July and August 1982. Some report cards were collected and some pilot interviews conducted during the summer, with actual interviews conducted during the fall. The questionnaires were distributed in the fall of 1982.

Delimitations

The following are delimitations of this study:

- (1) The project, particularly the aspects dealing with progress reporting, was based upon the curriculum as presently prescribed. No attempt was made to change, revise or criticize the Program of Studies followed in Newfoundland schools.
- (2) There was no intent to deal separately with the needs of any particular religion, social class, or other social sub-grouping but rather to establish a general reporting system adaptable to any school.

Limitations

The following are limitations to this study:

- (1) Any references to curriculum are based upon the Program of Studies issued by the Newfoundland Department of Education, and the policies of the Avalon Consolidated School Board, thereby limiting this study to schools under the jurisdiction of this board.
- (2) The study was limited by the skill of the interviewer in establishing rapport and illiciting worthwhile responses from respondents.
- (3) The study was limited by the willingness of respondents to truthfully respond to the questionnaire distributed as part of the study.
- (4) The study was limited by researcher bias.

Definitions

The terms defined in this section are essential to the understanding of this project.

Kindergarten Child: a child who will be five years of age on or before, December 31 of the year for which he is registered for kindergarten.

Orientation: a session, or sessions, which take place in the school for the purpose of familiarizing the child and parent with the school.

Reporting Periods: specific times designated by individual school boards in which to conduct parent interviews or distribute written progress reports. For the Avalon Consolidated School Board, these periods are after 60 school days, after 120 school days, and the last school day of the year.

Parent-Teacher Conferences: private interviews between a parent and a particular child's teacher, during a reporting period in lieu of, or complementary to a written report. Where there is a specific problem, the principal, guidance counsellor, nurse, or other persons may also be involved.

Spontaneous Consultation: an unscheduled meeting, or telephone conversation, initiated by either parent or teacher to make inquiries or convey information about behaviour or progress of a particular student.

Significance

This project was intended to produce recommendations and documents which may be used to promote parent-teacher communication and co-operation during the kindergarten year. The problem upon which the project was based was generally experienced in public schools, therefore, the procedures that emerge will hopefully be for kindergarten teachers in

any public school. This study is of particular significance to:

- (1) Kindergarten teachers of the Avalon Consolidated School Board.
- (2) Parents who have children of kindergarten age, or who will be eligible for kindergarten registration in the near future.
- (3) Elementary principals and primary co-ordinators who are presently searching for a model which may be used in their own schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Parent-teacher communication including progress reporting, with specific reference to the kindergarten program has received limited attention in educational research. Much of the available recent material outlines current and relatively new trends in developing parental attitudes and co-operative relationships.

The review of the literature which follows is divided into six sections. Firstly, to ensure the relevance of the literature to this project, a number of terms used in this report are defined. Secondly, the need for parent-teacher communication is explored and the research outlined briefly. The third section deals with information sharing between teacher and parent. Several studies regarding developing an approach to communications are presented in section four. The fifth section deals with providing meaning to program content and process. The final section reviews the research dealing specifically with kindergarten reporting in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The literature review concludes with a summary of the major points.

Definitions

The definitions which follow are presented in an attempt to clarify the purpose of this report, namely, to develop a model for parent-teacher communication.

Kindergarten

Today's kindergarten had its beginnings in Germany with educators who were followers of Freidrich Froebel.¹ The evolution of kindergarten programs also owes much to Maria Montessori² and to John Dewey³ both of whom believed in active, experiential learning for very young children.

The most modern theories portray the kindergarten as an immersion into a school environment integrated with home life, and designed to aid the whole child with regard to "physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development".⁴ Kindergarten programs modelled in this fashion are based on theories of continuous and

¹Freidrich Froebel, The Education of Man, trans. M.W. Hailman (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1887).

²Maria Montessori, The Montessori Method (New York: Stokes Publishing Co., 1912).

³John Dewey, The Child and the Curriculum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899).

⁴Provincial Kindergarten Committee, Kindergarten Education (St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1981), p. 2.

developmental learning wherein integration of subject areas provides a curriculum core.⁵ In further exploration of primary school development, Blenkin and Kelly⁶ outline the theories and practices which have led to the current school situation.

Communication

Communication between parents and teachers is one dimension, but an important one, of the public school system. Theorists advocate honesty and continuity in informing the public about all aspects of the school.⁷ Communication, specifically dual-directional communication, as shown in McCloskey's model in Figure 2, remains an effective tool in linking the home and school for the child.⁸

⁵Fairfax County Schools, Program of Studies. Early Childhood Education: Kindergarten Section. U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 111 526, 1976.

⁶Geva M. Blenkin and A.V. Kelly, The Primary Curriculum (London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), pp. 15-62.

⁷Leslie W. Kindred et al., The School and Community Relations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1976).

⁸Gordon McCloskey, Education and Public Understanding (2nd ed.; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 72.

The figure below shows the communication process as it applies to the teacher-parent relationship.

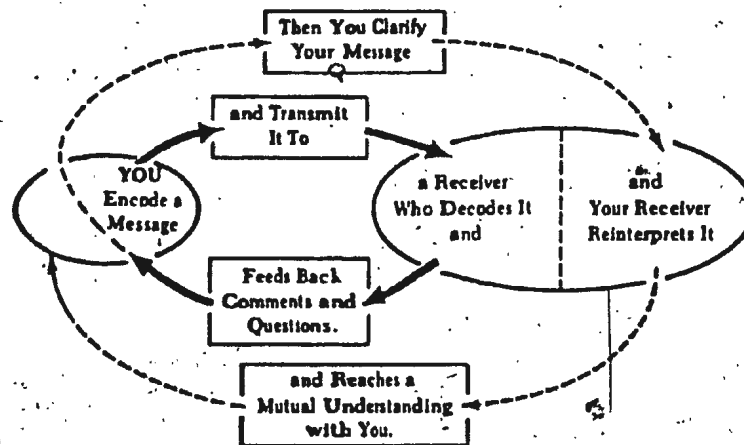


Figure 2. Dual-Directional Communication
 (From Gordon McCloskey, Education and Public Understanding,
 op. cit., p. 72.)

Progress Reporting

Progress reporting from the traditional point of view, entails informing parents of achievement measured within the school by teachers.⁹ Favor has fallen on the

⁹Board of Education for the City of Toronto,
Reporting to Parents, 1966, p.2.

parent-teacher interview method of reporting,¹⁰ but the report card document is a required component in most schools. It must, as a professional document, present a concise, accurate synopsis in an appropriate manner.¹¹

The goals of reporting to parents have been outlined for kindergarten teachers in a thematically-based teaching resource book which has been circulated to all Newfoundland kindergarten classrooms. Listed among these goals are co-operative assistance from teacher and parent toward the child, assessing and realizing realistic objectives, and a healthy exchange of information between the home and school.¹²

Nash¹³ suggests that ~~teachers~~ can become skilled diagnosticians, and proposes that for reporting purposes they carry out the assessment of children within the

¹⁰Provincial Kindergarten Committee, Beginnings: A Guide for Kindergarten Teachers (St. John's: Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1983), Chapter 6, p. 3.

¹¹Board of Education for the City of Toronto, op. cit., p. 8.

¹²Susanne Eden, Early Experiences: Resource Guide for Developmental Programs in Early Childhood Education (Toronto: Nelson, Canada, 1982), p. 59.

¹³Chris Nash, "Early Identification or Early Childhood Education - A Matter of Choice", Newsletter - Canadian Association for Young Children, (May, 1981), p.42.

kindergarten classroom. The Newfoundland and Provincial Kindergarten Committee has adopted much the same view. The use of standardized tests for assessment of children is not encouraged and is viewed merely as reinforcement of the conclusions drawn and expressed through anecdotal reporting.¹⁴

The Need for Parent-Teacher Communication

The benefit to the child of frequent, positive parent-teacher communication has been widely researched and advocated. A frequently quoted work in this area is the Plowden Report, which found that most parent-teacher relations were of a social nature rather than co-operative involvement in school programs.¹⁵

A study carried out in Israel¹⁶ outlines curriculum, evaluation and parent-participation. More familiar in North America are Headstart programs¹⁷ designed for

¹⁴Provincial Kindergarten Committee, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁵The Central Advisory Council for Education (England) Children and Their Primary Schools (The Plowden Report) (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967), V. 2, p. 146.

¹⁶Elinor Schulman Kolumbus, Is It Tomorrow Yet? Handbook for Educators of the Very Young, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 205 262, 1981.

¹⁷Melvin E. Allerhand, Headstart Operational Field Analysis, Progress Report II, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 015 775, 1966.

economically and socially disadvantaged children and their parents. Many research studies about kindergarten deal with children from disadvantaged and minority families, their pre-school experiences, parental involvement and subsequent achievement. Cosgrove¹⁸ evaluated a program designed to help such parents refine their home teaching skills. Diaz¹⁹ related learning problems to a home environment process measure. Howell²⁰ found that parental involvement in conferences and similar activities was related neither to kindergarten achievement nor to pre-school attendance. Kendrick²¹ found no relationship between kindergarten pupils' behavior and whether the family was nuclear, single-parent, or remarried.

That appropriate parental attitudes can positively affect learning has been demonstrated by

¹⁸Gregory T. Cosgrove, "Home Training of Parents of Culturally Different Junior Kindergarten Children" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1982).

¹⁹Martha Yolanda Valdez Diaz, "Home Environmental Factors on Indicators of Learning Problems among Hispanic Kindergarten Children" Dissertation Abstracts International, 44 (September, 1983), p. 734-A.

²⁰John F. Howell, A Follow-Up Evaluation of A Pre-school Program, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 115 669, 1975.

²¹Martha L. Kendrick, "The Relationship between Kindergarten Children's Classroom Behavior and Family Unit Type", Dissertation Abstracts International, 44 (February, 1984), p. 2353-A.

Hines²², Macleod²³, and Honig²⁴. Honig²⁵ indicates parental involvement is critical to the success of a program. Robison and Spodek²⁶ expound the importance of consistency in the home and school, and feel this should be initiated by the school. Parents often feel they are outsiders of the educational environment. Peine has discovered lack of school support to the parent could be detrimental to the child's achievement.²⁷ Moles²⁸ as well as Law and Mincey²⁹ show

²²Burnett A. Hines, "Concomitant Effects of Parental Involvement in Federally Supported Early Childhood Programs", Dissertation Abstracts International, 44 (July, 1983), p. 66-A.

²³Flora Macleod, "Home Based Early Learning Project", Early Child Development and Care, 12 (1983), pp. 111-118.

²⁴A.S. Honig and J.R. Lally, "Family Development Research Program: Retrospective Review", Early Child Development and Care, 10 (1982), pp. 41-62.

²⁵Alice S. Honig, Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education (Washington, D.C.: National Association for Education of Young Children, 1976), p. 81.

²⁶Heleen F. Robison and Bernard Spodek, New Directions in the Kindergarten (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1965), pp. 142-3.

²⁷Hermann A. Peine and Roy Howarth, Children and Parents (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 107.

²⁸Oliver C. Moles, "Synthesis of Recent Research on Parent Participation in Children's Education", Educational Leadership 40 (November, 1982), pp. 44-47.

²⁹Naomi A. Law and Ethel Berry Mincey, "Parents vs. Teachers or Parents and Teachers: What Shall It Be?", Early Child Development and Care, 11 (1983), pp. 123-30.

that often, communication between home and school begins on a negative note if the parents feel the school is competing for the child's attention. Plowden attributes this reaction to the growth of professional education.³⁰

Contrary to the research presented above, two recent studies by Howell³¹ and by Lopez and Holmes³² show that parental involvement does not appear to influence particular types of achievement in the kindergarten.

Information Sharing

Information sharing is inherent in dual-directional communication. When viewed in a home and school context, the information is very often of a personal nature, requiring trust and respect. Murton, as quoted by Sharp, suggested that the move from home to school can be the occasion for strong teacher-parent relationships to be built.³³

³⁰The Central Advisory Committee for Education (England), op. cit., V. 2, p. 147.

³¹John F. Howell, op. cit.

³²Linda C. Lopez and William M. Holmes, "Maternal Involvement and Academic Success for Kindergarten Pupils", Reading Improvement, 20 (Winter, 1983), pp. 248-51.

³³Alice Murton, From Home to School (Toronto: MacMillan Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 11. cited by Dorothy C. Sharp, "Early Childhood Programs: A Study of Provision for Kindergarten and Preschool Programs in Newfoundland" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1976), p.30.

By age five, the child has been exposed to five entire years of his home learning environment. The flow of information to the school from the home, becomes essential as parents make use of these five years in many various ways. Lillie contends this flow of communication is essential for home-training and teacher's insight into the individual child.³⁴

Developing a Co-operative Approach

The responsibility for developing a co-operative approach to a child's education lies with the kindergarten teacher.³⁵ The main elements of such an approach, according to Lillie, must be respect, honesty and teamwork.³⁶ As outlined previously the parent must not feel as though he or she is an outsider.

School handbooks and group meetings with parents of older children have become fairly common tools for developing parental co-operation with the school. These help alleviate

³⁴ David L. Lillie, Early Childhood Education: An Individual Approach to Developmental Instruction (Palo Alto Science Research Associates, 1975), p. 192.

³⁵ Provincial Kindergarten Committee, Beginnings; op. cit., chapter 6, p. 1.

³⁶ Lillie, op. cit., p. 192.

some tension on the part of the parent, and are advocated by many educators including Dobbin.³⁷

Honig³⁸ has presented data outlining the success of parent-involvers visiting the homes of kindergarten children. Becker and Epstein³⁹ present the general approach to parental co-operation as involving the parents in the home, for example, with homework. An alternative presented is to bring parents into the classroom, or into school, decision-making.

Some excellent communications proposals have been published and some examples are outlined in McInerney⁴⁰, Kolombus⁴¹, and locally by Buffett⁴².

³⁷Provincial Kindergarten Committee, op. cit., Ch. 6, p. 1.

³⁸Honig, Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education, op. cit., p. 81.

³⁹Henry Jay Becker and Joyce L. Epstein, "Parent Involvement: A Survey of Teacher Practices", The Elementary School Journal, 83 (November, 1982), pp. 85-102.

⁴⁰Beatrice L. McInerney et al., Preschool and Primary Education Project. 1967-68 Annual Progress Report to the Ford Foundation, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 027 936, 1969.

⁴¹Kolombus, op. cit.

⁴²Fred Buffett, ed., Developing a School-Community Communications Program (St. John's, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1981).

Providing Meaning to Program
Content and Process

In order for the parent to support the school, he must fully understand the program and the methods by which the school operates. The teacher must be prepared for many varying parental attitudes: the pre-school home environment and experiences have a direct influence on parental expectations.⁴³ To overcome what could be a dramatic change in the child's habits and lifestyle, the teacher must extend herself to personal contact with parents, preferably, according to Eden, within the direct environment of the school building.⁴⁴ She continues to say that explanations of school programs presented to parents before the child enters school are most effective in fostering positive attitudes. Discovering the why and how of a teacher's methodology can be as important to the development of positive parental attitudes as being included in the program itself. Parents, upon understanding the school will, in turn, begin to understand their children better and observe their growth more effectively.⁴⁵

⁴³ Dona Coates, "Some Basic Facts about the Transition between Pre-School and School", Prime Areas, 23 (Fall, 1980), p. 33.

⁴⁴ Eden, op. cit., p. 241.

⁴⁵ Department of Education, Division of Curriculum, A Kindergarten Handbook: A Guide for Teachers, Parents, and Others. Bulletin No. S-22 (St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, undated), p. 41.

The Provincial Situation

Traditionally in Newfoundland, kindergarten teachers, in consultation with their principals, have been responsible for contacting and reporting to parents and for distributing information to them. This has led to a variety of school-home communications procedures. In 1980, the Department of Education appointed a Provincial Kindergarten Committee, chaired by Dr. Teresita Dobbin. After consulting kindergarten teachers the Committee made a series of recommendations designed to improve kindergarten programs throughout the province.⁴⁶

Little research related to the present study has been carried out in this province. The most closely related, discovered by the researcher, was a master's thesis by Dorothy Candlish Sharp entitled "Early Childhood Programs: A Study of Provision for Kindergarten and Pre-School Programs in Newfoundland". While Sharp's study dealt only marginally with parent-teacher communication in kindergarten, she did find, from over 400 responding kindergarten teachers that parent participation in the classroom was relatively uncommon, although parents did participate in other school activities. Most teachers held interviews with parents once a term, and informally at the wish of parents.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Provincial Kindergarten Committee, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Sharp, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

The remaining sources of provincial literature were handbooks and report cards obtained from elementary school principals in the Avalon Consolidated School Board. These are listed in the Bibliography.

Summary

The survey of the literature revealed that research into the reporting process in kindergarten was quite limited. The major terms used in the study were discussed, namely kindergarten, communications, and reporting.

The need for parent involvement in kindergarten education was advocated by most writers and researchers. Several studies dealt with the positive effects of parental involvement on pupil achievement and pupil attitudes, as well as on parental attitudes. Two studies found no such relationship.

Information sharing is essential to the parent-teacher relationship. The parent must trust the teacher's observations and opinions to be in the best interest of the child. At the same time, the teacher is new to the child, who has had five years of learning by this time, and must rely on the parent for accounts of the past.

The development of a co-operative approach to a child's education must be initiated by the school. Parents must feel welcome and important in this strange environment.

Various media, including kindergarten handbooks, have been used to facilitate the teacher's task. Some consideration is given to the teacher making home visits.

The parent must understand the program content, and school procedures in order for the co-operative relationship to be effective. Parental attitudes are an important consideration at this stage, as the school should be seen in as positive a light as possible.

The provincial situation regarding kindergarten reporting is improving. Though few academic studies dealing with this have been undertaken, teachers are becoming more vocal in their search for better methods of reporting. The work of the Provincial Kindergarten Committee, though incomplete to date, has helped to give kindergarten teachers new direction.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The final product of this project was highly dependent on current practices in communications and the degree of satisfaction with these. Therefore, three sources were necessarily contacted in order to gather data: elementary school principals, teachers of kindergarten students, and parents of kindergarten students. Each of these groups has a particular input within the communication system to be studied, and each has a very different function. The interest in communications for all three sources is providing the best possible education for each individual child enrolled in the kindergarten program.

Interviews with Principals

The administrative content and input into communication with parents of kindergarten was studied through interviewing elementary principals. To ensure the inclusion in this study of all variations in communicating with parents, all principals of elementary schools were interviewed. There were, at the time of the project, eighteen schools operated by the Avalon Consolidated School Board which had kindergarten classes.

An interview schedule was devised, based on the administrative operations, and viewpoints of communicating with parents. The central topics were: initial contact, maintaining parental contact and support, and progress reporting methods. The interview schedule was drawn up by the researcher in consultation with her supervisory committee and piloted with four principals. Necessary revisions for clarity were consequently made. A copy of the interview schedule is found in Appendix A.

Interviews were approximately twenty minutes each in duration, and, where possible, tape recordings were made to facilitate the transcription of information. In all cases notes were made during the interview and transcribed as soon as possible thereafter. Interviews were held in the Spring of 1984. When possible, they took place in the principal's office. Six principals were contacted by telephone.

Data from each question asked of principals is presented in Chapter IV.

Teacher Survey

The reaction of teachers to home and school communications methods was considered to be an essential element to this study. In most schools the teacher is responsible for initiating and maintaining contact with the home.

For the purpose of gathering data a questionnaire was devised by the researcher in consultation with the supervisory committee, to gather information on current parent-teacher communications and reporting practices and the teacher's satisfaction with these. Questions were designed so as to require marking a chosen response or noting a short comment. The questionnaire was piloted by eight teachers before being distributed to all thirty-two kindergarten teachers of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. Copies of the questionnaire were mailed to teachers with a letter of explanation, guarantee of confidentiality and a stamped return envelope.

After a two-week period, efforts were made to gather questionnaires which had not been returned. At six weeks a request was made of a number of principals to remind their teachers to return the questionnaires as soon as possible. In several schools with more than one stream of students, teachers collaborated. A total of twenty responses was received, representing 14 of the 18 schools.

The results are presented in Chapter IV.

Parent Interviews

A third set of data, parental reaction to the communications system in the school, was gathered by interviewing twenty sets of parents. The criterion for

choosing parents was that their child must have attended kindergarten from September 1982 to June 1983 at a school under the jurisdiction of the Avalon Consolidated School Board.

In order to obtain a random sample, numbers were chosen from the total kindergarten enrolment of the Avalon Consolidated School Board for 1982-83, by using a table of random numbers. It was then determined, through ordering schools alphabetically by name, and counting enrolment cumulatively, which schools would be assigned chosen numbers. In order to select parents, kindergarten registers were ordered alphabetically by teachers' last names where more than one kindergarten class existed. Principals were then asked to number children as they appeared in the register and release the names which corresponded with particular numbers.

When all names required were obtained, parents were interviewed individually by telephone. An interview schedule was designed for parents and tested by the interviewer in consultation with the supervisor and piloted on four parents. The emphasis of the questions asked of parents was awareness of the kindergarten program, amount of involvement, contact with the school, degree of satisfaction with the above, and desired changes. Four of the original twenty sets of parents were unavailable. As additional sets of parents had been chosen randomly the

first four of these were contacted by the interviewer. The interview schedule is found in Appendix C. Responses by parents are presented in Chapter V.

Development of the Model

The purpose of this project was to develop a communications and reporting system for use by parents and teachers in the kindergarten year. The model was developed by the researcher based on the literature review, information drawn from the three research sources, and the researcher's personal experience as a kindergarten teacher. The completed communications model includes recommendations for initial contact through to the final report card used in the kindergarten year.

The model was distributed for evaluation, with an accompanying questionnaire, to all eighteen of the elementary principals of the Avalon Consolidated School Board, thirty-two kindergarten teachers, and a group of twenty parents of children who attended kindergarten in 1982-83. As in the parent interviews, this group was selected randomly from kindergarten enrolment records.

Based on questionnaire responses, the model was revised. A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix D and a copy of the model in Appendix F.

CHAPTER IV

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS OF KINDERGARTEN
CHILDREN - CURRENT PRACTICES AS VIEWED
BY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

Critical to this project, was the examination of present practices employed by educators in communicating with parents of kindergarten children. Data was gathered through a series of interviews of elementary school principals and through a mailed survey of kindergarten teachers. In this chapter, an effort has been made to report on information gathered by these methods. As might be expected within a large school board, many administrative procedures for communicating with parents are standardized among schools. Variations do occur in actual practice, however, depending on the size of each school, its location, and the teaching style of kindergarten teachers. The schools involved vary in size from one to three streams, that is, having one to three kindergarten teachers, each having responsibility for her own group of students. Class groups are heterogeneous, and generally divided equally among teachers. Two schools have classes in French Immersion for kindergarten.

School populations are drawn from a variety of environments including rural, suburban and inner city homes.

Teachers, being granted a certain amount of autonomy in planning kindergarten programs, aim to suit the program to their class groups, and as much as possible to individuals.

On the pages following, the researcher has made an attempt to define those practices which are indeed standard, and outline variations which occur in communicating program information and children's progress to parents.

Results of Interviews Held with Elementary School Principals

Personal contact was made by the researcher with all eighteen principals having kindergarten classes in schools of the Avalon Consolidated board. Following is an account of the data gathered for each question of an interview schedule planned by the researcher. The interview schedule is found in its entirety in Appendix A.

Initial Home-School Contacts

As shown in Table 1, the initial contact, with parents of kindergarten age children is, in each school, made during kindergarten registration. Notification to the general public regarding school registration is made through an advertisement placed in the classified section of local newspapers by the school board. Principals of each school make an effort to publicize kindergarten registration through their school newsletters, memos, and public events such as parent-teacher association meetings.

Table 1
Kindergarten Registration Procedures

Question: What are the kindergarten registration procedures in your school?

Response:	initial contacts	18
	through local newspaper	18
	through school memos	18
	persons present	
	Principal/School Secretary	18
	Public Health Nurse	18
	Kindergarten Teacher	6
	assessment of children	
	yes	6
	no	12

Registration is held at each school in February or March for kindergarten classes beginning in September of the same year. Each school has defined territorial boundaries, and students are accepted for attendance based on the location of their homes. In twelve schools, registering a new pupil is strictly an administrative operation. The principal and/or the school secretary meet parents at the school and help to complete registration forms. A public health nurse from the provincial Department of Health is also present to verify medical information and to begin a school medical record for each child.

Though it is not required in most schools, children often accompany their parents on registration day. A number

of principals indicated the child might be invited to view the kindergarten classroom, or other areas of the school. In many cases this day is the first visit to the school by the child and the parent.

Six schools have made provisions for the kindergarten teachers to be free from teaching regular classes at registration time. In these cases, the teacher meets each child individually and may request the child to perform a variety of tasks. These might include counting, reciting the alphabet, or categorizing shapes. This interview between teacher and child is not intended as a formal assessment of the child, but rather a positive initial contact. Any information gathered by the teacher is useful in measuring progress only when combined with school assessments which occur much later in the year. The parent is usually welcome to stay with the child during this meeting, and along with the child has the opportunity to become familiar with the teacher and the classroom.

Kindergarten Orientation

Each principal interviewed indicated that an orientation for new students is held toward the latter part of May each year, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Kindergarten Orientation

Question: Does orientation for children or parents follow registration?

Response: orientation
for children 18
for parents 15

The orientation program is planned by the principal and kindergarten teachers and therefore varies from school to school. Sessions extend for sixty to ninety minutes and usually involve only ten to twelve children at one time.

Most commonly, children attend a "class" session with their kindergarten teacher where they are permitted a short play time, and then may learn a song, make a small craft item and perhaps discuss some school rules. In one school, new children visit the classroom while current-year students are in attendance. Children interact, and those attending orientation experience what is to them, a "real" school situation.

Parent orientation sessions are far more diverse. Of the fifteen schools which offer parent orientation, twelve have sessions in late spring, one in early fall and one in both spring and fall. From year to year principals, in consultation with their teachers, may elect to change

times and format of orientation programs. Sessions may take place in the evening or concurrently with child orientation sessions in the morning and afternoon.

The general procedure for parent orientation is for the principal to welcome parents and discuss important general information. The teacher then explains her program and classroom procedure. Several schools offer a narrated slide presentation to more clearly illustrate their procedures. Classroom displays are common, along with a tour of the library, gymnasium, and other areas kindergarten children will frequent.

Guest speakers are often invited to parent orientation session, quite frequently in the person of Miss E. Strong, the Primary Co-ordinator, and, where French is taught, Mr. C. Warren, the French Co-ordinator, both of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. Where available, school reading specialists or primary special education teachers might also attend.

One school in this system has experimented with parents of current-year students informally meeting parents of newly registered students. The relay of information has been found to be extremely effective and more relaxed than in a lecture situation.

Family Preparation for Kindergarten

Each of the eighteen schools makes additional attempts to prepare the family for kindergarten, as indicated in Table 3. The schools supply parents with printed matter pertaining to kindergarten. The Newfoundland Teachers Association has prepared, for all schools, a booklet entitled, Those First School Days. Therein are listed necessary school materials, good nutritional and health care practices, and general, introductory rules which would be of benefit to any parent. Not all schools have elected to circulate this publication, favouring instead a school-produced booklet. These are usually colorful, very specific and extremely informative to people who may not have recent experience dealing with public schools.

Table 3

Family Preparation for Kindergarten

Question: Are additional attempts made to prepare the family for kindergarten?		
Response:	yes	18
	no	0

Several schools circulate copies of a handbook prepared by the Avalon Consolidated School Board. Also supplied by the school board are leaflets with recommended book and record lists for preschoolers.

As yet another method of preparing the family, parents are encouraged to contact the principal or teacher should questions arise.

Continued Contact with the Home

Once children begin school, contact with the parent tends to be by letter or telephone, and sometimes through parent-teacher meetings but rarely by personal visits to the home. Table 4 indicates that principals report that parents are contacted by teachers to confirm the time and date the child will begin kindergarten, at three prescribed times for reporting purposes, as dictated by student need, as necessary for volunteer purposes, and at times when changes or variations in programming occur.

Table 4
Formal Contacts

Question: How, and how often, are parents formally contacted by teachers?

Response: methods	
letters	18
telephone	18
teacher visits to home	0
frequency	
frequent intervals	18
infrequently	0
varies from parent to parent	18

The confirmation of dates and each student's schedule is generally transmitted to the home by letter or booklet, as are progress reports in February and June. The report given to parents in November takes interview form and is usually prearranged by school memo or telephone.

When the school detects special needs for any student formal contact is increased to the extent possible for teacher and parent. Also, the school encourages parents to initiate contact if they feel it will be beneficial to their child.

School volunteer programs vary greatly. In some suburban and rural areas parents are able to give freely of their time in many capacities. However, at a time when many families need more than one income, it is often

difficult to find volunteers for schools. One school contacts an estimated fifty parents per year for volunteer work, others require a similar number, while others seek a much smaller number, depending on the location and size of the school.

Other formal contacts are frequently carried out by telephone or memo and are spontaneous in nature, dealing with such matters as changed plans, or a teacher workshop.

Principals were asked about the frequency of home visits. It is very unusual for the teacher to visit the home of a pupil unless the teacher has an established friendship with a parent. If a teacher becomes aware of any difficulty or abnormality in a child's lifestyle, the principal is usually notified immediately. Together, principal and teacher will contact the school guidance counsellor, and if necessary the public health nurse or Department of Social Services. If contact with the home is deemed necessary, it becomes the business of the area social worker. It was generally agreed by principals that parents would be surprised and most probably offended should a teacher make a visit to their homes on school business.

As Table 5 indicates the principals' responses to parents entering the kindergarten classroom at any time were unanimously negative. Each principal stressed, however, that parents of kindergarten children are frequent and welcome visitors both before classes begin and at dismissal

time. The positive, informal contact established at these times is seen as an important link to parental understanding of the school program. Principals claim that the parent who visits regularly in this manner is well-informed about the kindergarten and usually very aware of the classroom environment.

Table 5
Parental Visits to Classrooms

Question: Are parents encouraged to "drop in" to the classroom at any time during class?

Response:

yes
no

0
18

Principals report that they encourage parents, through memos and PTA meetings to always show interest in the kindergarten by reinforcing and enriching what the teacher has introduced to the child. Library books, and sometimes even short worksheets are brought home by children in an effort to bring parent, child and school together.

As shown in Table 6, according to principals' responses, kindergarten teachers make every effort to know a child's background. The seventeen principals who

responded that the teachers knew parents very well, attributed much of the familiarity to having taught older siblings of the kindergarten child, or from information transmitted by other teachers in the school staffroom. The one principal who responded his teacher knew parents well, stated that she was teaching her first year in that school, and was indeed making every possible effort toward knowing each child's background; the benefit of her being familiar with older children will be missed only for a short time.

Table 6

Teacher's Familiarity with the Home

Question A: How well do teachers know a pupil's parents?
(Specifically with regard to home environment,
academic press, child care)

Response:	very well	17
	well	1
	not well	0

Question B: Do teachers take it upon themselves to advise
parents on these matters?

Response:	academic advice	18
	non-academic advice	0

All principals felt their teachers would freely offer advice regarding home practice or recommended books and games, but not on home care or social environment. Teachers keep largely to the curriculum and their classrooms, and though they may feel strongly about home environmental matters related to academic achievement, they channel their concerns through the schools' public health nurse and social services personnel.

As Table 7 indicates, the majority of schools have an active Parent-Teacher Association.

Table 7

Parent-Teacher Associations

Question: Is there a Parent-Teacher Association in your school? Please outline its function.

Response: active P.T.A.

yes	16
no	2

Both principals who currently have inactive parent-teacher groups intend to hold regular meetings during the next school year. Of the sixteen schools which do have parent-teacher groups, one was described by the principal as provisional, that is, its function is to keep the school from closing due to low enrolments. The majority of the

parent-teacher groups are fund-raisers and promoters with programming discussed rarely. Through their P.T.A. meetings and activities some schools have earned money for televisions, audiometers, computers and video cassette recorders. Many schools do offer guest speakers at meetings, usually involving all levels of elementary education.

Several principals stated that most members of the parent-teacher association at any given time are kindergarten parents. Also stated was the unfortunate fact that parent-teacher association meetings usually suffer from very poor attendance. This is largely attributed to current lifestyle and to both parents being employed.

Progress Reporting to Parents

Table 8 indicates the appointments for the first term report of the Avalon Consolidated School Board are made most frequently by the teacher.

Table 8

Progress Reporting - November Interviews

Question: How is contact made with the home for progress reporting purposes in November?

Response: telephone	1
appointment made by teacher	16
appointment made by parent	1

This interview is held in the school during the month of November. In one school, with a small enrolment, parents are contacted by telephone. In another, parents telephone the school secretary who then makes appointments at the parents' convenience.

The most common method of arranging parent-teacher interviews is to send a note to the parent with a specific date and time written in by the teacher. Generally, teachers plan these co-operatively so the parent with more than one child will see all of their children's teachers on the same day.

The school makes every effort to contact the home, for a personal interview at this time. If a parent does not attend the interview, a second appointment is arranged by telephone. Where absolutely necessary the report is given over the telephone or sent in letter form by mail to the parent. This occurs at almost every school, but usually involves only four to six students per year.

Several schools have tried to overcome low parental attendance while increasing accurate record-keeping by having a form for parents to sign. Several schools use a guidesheet - a one page, itemized report - designed to stress the most important details of a child's progress. Some principals and teachers have provided on the report card an area designated for the November report. Due to large classes, most interviews are restricted to fifteen

minutes; the use of guidesheets or report cards can be crucial to a successful interview.

There does not exist, at this time, a kindergarten report card developed at the school board level. Because kindergarten programs are so diverse, teachers and principals have designed or adapted their own school reports as shown in Table 9.

Table 9
Report Cards for Kindergarten

Question: Are report cards used for kindergarten children in your school? Was it designed within the school?	
Response: report cards in use	
yes	18
no	0
designed within school	16
used by teacher in other schools	2
borrowed design	0

One school, in presenting a newly designed report to parents, followed it with a short survey to determine parental satisfaction. The response was very favorable and now in its second year, this report card, as reported by the principal, appears to be a very effective communication tool.

Teachers constantly strive to send to the home accurate and useful report cards. Many schools change certain aspects of their report cards yearly. No principals indicated recurring difficulties with their reports.

The format of report cards varies from comments itemized in point form to booklets containing samples of the pupil's work. The design of the report card depends on the teacher's style and the relevance to the children and parents of the report.

None of the schools in this system have a set policy for dealing with parents in special circumstances as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Progress Reporting - Special Cases

Question: Are there special procedures for dealing with single/working parents and those with limited formal education?

Response:	special provisions	
	school policy	
	yes	0
	no	18
	dependent on parent	
	yes	18
	no	0

However, adjustments are made on a needs basis. Where parents have difficulty arranging afternoon appointments, evenings are made available. Should a parent have difficulty interpreting report cards, personal interviews are arranged at convenient times.

Principals' Assessment of Present Procedures

Principals were asked to assess the current state of parent-teacher communications and the procedure used to convey student progress reports to the home.

As indicated in Table 11, while none of the eighteen principals were totally satisfied, all spoke favorably of the level of home and school communications they perceived within their schools. Without exception, teachers were highly commended for their efforts. Several principals commented on occasional difficulties with jargon and methods of grading, but also stated that these were corrected as soon as they caused problems for parents or teachers.

Table 11
Principals' Assessment of Communications

Question: What is your assessment of the present home/school communications procedures? Please indicate strong points and desired improvements.

Response: assessment of communications	
excellent	0
good	18
fair	0
poor	0

A number of principals stated that neither the teachers, nor themselves were totally satisfied, as education and methods of communicating constantly change. Some principals expressed a desire for a standardized report card, if that were indeed possible considering the various philosophies held by teachers.

One principal expressed a desire for much earlier contact with the home; beginning as early as age three. Regrettably, he stated, schools are limited as to pre-school contacts because of staffing and other costs. Another principal expressed desire for more personal contacts - extended and frequent interviews. Directly related to this is one principal's comment regarding parents who do not make an effort to visit the school for progress reports. It appears that many parents do not attach any great

importance to the kindergarten year. This opinion was in fact expressed by a number of parents interviewed as shown in Chapter V.

Summary

Home-school communications for kindergarten children are remarkably similar throughout the district. Initial contacts are made with the principal or secretary at registration, sometimes with the teacher. Orientation procedures for pupils, and to a lesser degree for parents, have been established. All schools used written reports, usually designed by the school. All follow the board's policy of twice yearly parent-teacher interviews which usually last up to fifteen minutes. Although parents may visit the school they do not visit the classroom while class is in session, unless they are volunteer helpers; neither do principals and teachers visit the homes of pupils. The two solitudes of home and classroom are breached through indirect, often formal means -- report cards, scheduled interviews, parent-teacher association meetings, orientation meetings, and where necessary by home visits by a social worker.

Principals express general satisfaction with current procedures and are highly supportive of the efforts of their teachers in home-school communications. However, some reservations were expressed about the lack of effort of some parents.

Results of Teacher Surveys

The data gathered from the kindergarten teachers of the Avalon Consolidated School Board proved to be essential to this project. The teacher is the most direct and the closest link between home and school. All thirty-two kindergarten teachers were surveyed and twenty responses were received by the researcher. In three schools, one with three kindergarten teachers and the remaining two with two kindergarten teachers, one questionnaire was returned in a collaborative effort. In fact, the questionnaires returned represented twenty-four teachers. The non-respondents' questionnaires would, the researcher feels, not have greatly altered the results tabulated below.

The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Initial Parent-Teacher Contacts

As indicated in Table 12, four teachers stated they met parents of new students on registration day. Within the present organization of public schools this is the earliest possible contact. The majority of teachers have opportunity to meet with parents in late spring during parent orientation. This meeting is usually very informative for the parent, and offers the first real opportunity for worthwhile communication.

Table 12
First Contact with Parents

Question: When do you make the first contact with parents of new kindergarten students?

Response: Registration Day	4
Parent Orientation	12
First Day of School	0
Other	4

All teachers have some form of meeting with the parent before the child actually begins school. Each of the teachers who responded in the "other" category indicated a first meeting during the children's kindergarten orientation session in late spring.

Children's Desired Progress

Parent orientation is the first available opportunity for teachers to explain to parents what will be expected of the child in class. As indicated in Table 13, five teachers responded that they include this information in their parent orientation programme. This is a general indication of expectations as the teacher does not yet know individual abilities of children.

Table 13
Children's Desired Progress

Question: When do you first explain the child's expected/
desired progress to the parents?

Response: Parent Orientation	5
November Interview (or report)	10
Other	6

The ten teachers who indicated they discuss their expectations with parents in November, are able to give more personal and detailed information to parents. In private interviews the parent would feel more comfortable about questioning the teacher, providing two-way communication channels.

Of the six teachers who chose "other" as their response, three spoke to parents about children's progress both at parent orientation and during the November interview. The remaining three used earlier contacts though no specific time was indicated.

Parental Involvement

As illustrated in Table 14, in the majority of schools, parents are encouraged to reinforce learning from the home. Classroom help from parents is restricted to relatively few schools.

Table 14
Parental Involvement

Question: To what extent are parents involved in your kindergarten program? (Check as many as necessary.)

1. Teacher Aides
2. Occasional Assistance
3. Helping Child at Home with Special Projects
4. Helping Child at Home in Areas of Weakness

Response:	all of the above	6
	2, 3 and 4	7
	2 and 4	4
	1, 2 and 4	2
	2 only	1

Occasional assistance is required of parents for concerts, supervision on field trips, organization of sports days, and many other events. Teachers endeavour to include parents in the classroom at these times so experiences can be shared by the child and parent.

Children's Home Experiences

As indicated in Table 15, all teachers consider the home environment important to the child's success in kindergarten. Four teachers commented in the 'other' category indicating additional factors they felt were important to the child's success. These included the positive feeling of parents toward the kindergarten program,

the degree to which parents felt they could contact the teacher, and the child's pre-school experiences. Comments were made on the final point above regarding the enrichment obtained by such experiences as travel, restaurant outings and movies.

Table 15
Child's Home Environment

Question: Which components of the home environment do you feel are important to a child's success in kindergarten? (Check as many as necessary.)

Books and Educational Materials
Parental Attitude towards child's success in school
Parent/Child Relationships
Other

Response:	all of the above	15
	all of the above and parental attitude to program	2
	all of the above and teacher accessibility	1
	all of the above and child's background experience	1
	books and educational materials only	1

Home Enrichment

Table 16 shows teacher preference for parent orientation and booklets sent to the home as methods of assuring each child has good educational materials in the home.

Table 16

School Assistance in Home Enrichment

Question: In which way(s) might the school assist in assuring these components are present in the home? (Please comment.)

Response: These are listed by choice of preference as indicated by teachers.

Parent Orientation	8
Booklets from the School	7
Library Materials from School	5
Home and School Meetings	4
Parent-Teacher Interviews	3
Letters or Telephone Calls	2
Contact by Nurse or Social Worker	2
Close Contact with Parents	2
Parent Visits during Class Time	1

Library materials from schools have been carefully chosen by teachers, and provide yet another source of enrichment for children. Four teachers selected home and school association meetings as an opportune time to make suggestions to parents. The difficulty here, as pointed out

by principals, is the generally poor attendance at parent-teacher association meetings. Indirect contact, either by telephone or through a school associated agency, was a far less favored method of relaying educationally oriented information. Only one teacher mentioned parent visits during class time, none mentioned home visits by the teacher.

Reporting Progress to Parents

Table 17 indicates that most teachers report pupil progress by interviews in November and by written reports in February and June. There are, however, alternate methods used when dictated by individual needs. Where a student is functioning at a distinctively individual level - whether extreme weakness or at an advanced stage - teachers may elect to interview parents instead of, or along with the written report.

An alternate method of reporting - a written report in December, April and June - is employed by a teacher who reports as themes or units of learning are completed.

Table 17
Progress Reporting

Question: What type of progress report is offered to parents in each of the three reporting periods?

Response:	November - interview	12
	written	2
	combination	6
	February - interview	0
	interview where necessary	5
	written	13
	combination	3
	combination where necessary	4
	June - interview	0
	interview where necessary	2
	written	13
	combination	1
	combination where necessary	6
	Alternate - written report in December April and June	1

Format of Report Cards

As indicated in Table 18, the anecdotal report card is the most popular among kindergarten teachers. This is the most detailed, and accurate way of communicating to the parent without an interview. Anecdotal reports are based on anecdotal records kept by the teacher for each child.

Table 18
Format of Report Cards

Question: The format of your kindergarten report card is:

Response: work samples	5
anecdotal	8
check marks	0
graded	2
combination of above	5
other	0
none	1

Five teachers elect to send home a carefully selected set of work samples. These are based on current classroom activity and are intended to illustrate the child's progress to the parent.

Five teachers have combined anecdotal, graded and work sample elements in their reports. The intention is to clearly illustrate the child's present work habits and at the same time to include teacher assessments.

One teacher indicated that she used no report card, but rather a letter-form report.

Teacher Assessment of Report Card

The responses in Table 19 indicate that most teachers are satisfied with the report card they presently use. These reports are teacher-designed and altered as necessary, therefore making them acceptable to teachers.

Table 19
Teacher Assessment of Report Card

Question: What is your feeling toward your present report card?

Response:	Satisfactory	11
	Could be improved	6
	Changing next year	1
	No ideal	1
	No report	1

Of the six teachers who responded that their present report could be improved, two commented they would prefer a standard report card used by all kindergarten teachers within the school board. One teacher indicated a change in report cards for the coming year, and another commented she had used many reports and had found none truly satisfactory.

Problems Encountered When Reporting to Parents

When asked about problems encountered at reporting time, six teachers expressed no difficulty as indicated in Table 20. The remainder of responses indicated many and varied problems, mostly with the attitudes and expectations of parents. The most common difficulty is with parents who expect more than their child is able to accomplish, who have negative attitudes or who lack understanding. One teacher expressed a desire for more parental contact, and another for a more effective system of assessment.

Increased parental contact and their clearer understanding of educational goals seem to be the major elements in improving reporting methods. In teachers' views, positive development of parental attitudes must begin early in the child's school life.

Table 20
Problems Encountered When Reporting to Parents

Question: What types of problems do you encounter at reporting time? (Please comment.)

Response: none	6
parental expectations and interest	4
parental attitudes	3
evaluation of children	1
lack of parental contact	1
parental understanding	1
no response	3

Priority Topics for Report Cards

Each teacher was asked to indicate priority topics of her written report. As indicated in Table 21, each teacher who responded showed language arts as at least one of her priorities in reporting. This would include the child's abilities in reading, comprehension, oral expression and printing.

Table 21
Priority Topics for Report Cards

Question: What are the priority topics in your written report?

Response: Language	2
Math	0
Social Development	0
Whole Child Development	7
Language and Social Development	6
Language and Math	1
Language/Math/Social Development	2
Various Topics	2

Social development is second to language arts in teacher's priorities. Much of the kindergarten year is devoted to developing social skills such as sharing, co-operation in group activities and communication skills. The seven teachers who indicated that the whole child development was a priority, would necessarily include both language arts and social skills in their responses.

It seems, from answers indicated, that most teachers are reluctant to isolate elements of the kindergarten experience. Rather, the child's entire learning process is assessed along with achievements in particular learning elements.

Progress Records

Cumulative progress reports, beginning in September and continuing through June are currently the most common method of assessment of children's progress as shown in Table 22.

Table 22
Progress Records

Question: Please explain briefly how records of each student's progress are kept throughout the year.

Response: Continuous evaluation, three written reports	3
Continuous evaluation, four written reports	1
Periodic testing	3
Cumulative evaluation	6
Cumulative evaluation, scrapbook/file	7

Teachers have various record-keeping methods such as itemized record sheets, notebooks and check lists. Many teachers also keep a file or scrapbook of selected work samples by each child. In this way, visual comparisons of a child's progress can be made, and are clearly illustrated for the parent during the November interview as well.

Other teachers indicated somewhat-differing methods of assessment, but all are carried out frequently so that progress is continuously monitored.

Summary

Twenty-four of the thirty-two teachers responded. Most of the respondents met parents for the first time during parent orientation meetings held during the spring prior to the child's entering kindergarten. Most explain the child's desired progress at the November interview.

Most parents are involved in the kindergarten program only through the help they give their child at home, although some act as teacher aides or render assistance to the school on sports day or field trips. Teachers feel that books and additional materials in the home and positive attitudes towards the child's success are important.

Progress reports are made to parents at least three times a year, through parent-teacher interviews in November, and by means of written reports in February and June supplemented by interviews when necessary. Written reports tend to be anecdotal and deal with social as well as academic development. When asked about problems at reporting time, teachers mentioned the unrealistic expectations and negative attitudes of some parents.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS

The final source of data for this project was a set of interviews held with parents whose children attended kindergarten in schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. These parents have had one complete year of contact with the kindergarten teacher, and recently enough that details would be recalled. The sample of parents was a random one as described in Chapter III of this report.

The initial reaction of all parents toward being interviewed was very positive. The pages following detail questions asked of parents and their responses. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix C.

Parental Awareness of the Kindergarten Program

The questions of this section deal with the degree of awareness parents felt at the beginning and throughout the school year.

As shown in Table 23, a majority of parents interviewed indicated they had a vague idea of the content of the kindergarten program. Concepts such as rote counting and knowledge of the alphabet were quoted by parents as basic to the kindergarten year. Many of these parents have had no previous experience in dealing with the school system.

Table 23
Awareness of Curriculum

Question: Did you know what would be taught in kindergarten before your child started school last September?	
Response: yes	4
some idea	10
no	6

Those who indicated they were aware of what would be taught have older children, or had had their child in pre-schools. These parents indicated awareness of the social exchange offered in the kindergarten year.

Those who responded that they had no idea of program content, did not have older children, and the child who attended kindergarten did not attend a preschool.

As shown in Table 24, parents who indicated they knew what would be expected of their child in kindergarten had previous experience with schools, or early contact with the teacher. Through early meetings and distribution of pamphlets most expectations of the teacher were outlined.

Table 24
Teachers' Expectations

Question A: Did you know what would be expected of your child during the kindergarten year?

Response:	yes	9
	some idea	4
	no	7

Question B: How did you find out?

Response:	pamphlets/parent orientation	12
	have older children	4
	child's work and reaction	2
	spouse	1
	did not find out	1

Those who indicated they had no knowledge of expectations, had little contact with the school throughout the year. These parents relied on their child's reactions to school experiences, or on information from a spouse who met with the teacher. One parent indicated she is still not aware of the kindergarten teacher's expectations, though her child now attends grade one.

Fewer parents indicated they had some idea of what would be expected of their child. These parents did receive school pamphlets.

Table 25 shows that the majority of parents interviewed were employed on a part- or full-time basis and were

unable to participate in activities during the regular school day. In the case of working parents, the child was given assistance at home - in some homes on a regular basis and in others when the child's school-work indicated weakness in a particular area.

Table 25
Parental Involvement in Kindergarten

Question: To what extent were you involved in the kindergarten program during your child's year in kindergarten?	
Response: Teacher Aide	4
Assisting with home assigned tasks only	11
Special Projects, field trips	4
Other	0
None	1

Four mothers participated in special school projects, and four as teacher aides. These parents all had very positive impressions of the kindergarten year. In none of the twenty families were fathers involved as aides or in special projects.

The majority of parents interviewed, as shown in Table 26, viewed the kindergarten year as very important to their child's education. Most parents regard the program as preparation for grade one and further education.

Table 26
Importance of Kindergarten

Question: How important do you feel kindergarten was to your child's education?

Response: very important	12
somewhat important	3
socially important only	4
not important	1

A number of parents, some of whose children attended preschool classes, felt kindergarten was somewhat important, but lacked academic challenge. The children were not able to function in a grade one class due to their maturity level, parents indicated, however the children had learned many of the skills taught in kindergarten before they began school.

Four parents indicated the program was only important in that children were afforded the opportunity to socialize with peers.

Parental Attitudes toward Progress Reporting

The following questions and comments were designed to reveal parental attitudes toward progress reporting. Included is the degree of effectiveness these parents judged reporting systems to possess.

The Avalón Consolidated School Board policy states that progress reports to the parents shall occur at sixty, one hundred and twenty and the last day of school. As shown in Table 27, all parents received the regulation number of reports, but four parents neglected to consider the November interview as an actual progress report.

Table 27

Frequency of Progress Reports

Question A: How often did you receive progress reports concerning your child?

Response:	one report received	0
	two reports received	5
	three reports received	14
	more than three reports received	1

Question B: Did you seek additional reports?

Response:	yes	11
	no	9

Half of the parents interviewed sought additional reports on either a regular or spontaneous basis. The frequency was determined in each case by individual child needs.

The remainder of those interviewed were satisfied with their children's progress and sought no further reports. All parents did indicate frequent visits to the school while transporting children to and from class. Parents whose children were bussed made visits when possible also. The opportunity arose almost daily to speak with the kindergarten teacher. Parents indicated much information was gathered through these meetings.

The parents interviewed, as shown in Table 28, indicated current progress of their children in relationship to skills currently being taught should be the main aim of reporting.

Table 28

Parental Expectations of Progress Reporting

Question: What do you feel should be the purpose of progress reporting?

Response: to explain current progress	13
identify weaknesses	2
progress in comparison to classmates	1
offer suggestions for home help	2
don't know	2

Question: Are these purposes being met?

Response: yes	7
somewhat	8
no	2
don't know	3

There were a variety of individual ideas about the purposes of reporting. Two parents felt the report should include ways in which they could help their children achieve more. The report card should offer suggestions for enrichment in academic areas, and also for social adjustment.

One parent felt children should be compared to classmates for more accurate reports. Grading and standard achievement scales would be included. Two parents responded that they did not have enough information about the program of the reporting process to make a judgement.

As to the level of satisfaction with present reporting procedures, seven parents, representing one-third of the total, felt their desired purposes were being met. Eight others indicated the purposes were not totally achieved, and expressed desire for an increased number of interviews. Two parents responded negatively and three were uncertain as to whether the goals of reporting were presently achieved in kindergarten. Thus, only a minority felt the purposes were being achieved.

It has been established through interviews with principals and teachers, that all schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board do have a form of written report in kindergarten. As shown in Table 29, the negative responses to this question indicate parents do not perceive the written communication as a true report card. The various forms of reports are reasonably well accepted by

parents with a third of those interviewed fully satisfied with the report received, and eight more indicating that some of the requirements were met. Five parents were unsatisfied with the report, and sought interviews with the teacher for further explanation. Again, only a minority were satisfied that the report card met the specific requirements.

The difficulties experienced by parents include imprecise grading, too few formal interviews and being misled with regards to progress. The parents who felt misled might have also benefited from a different method of grading or increased interviews to dispel misunderstandings.

Table 29
Report Cards

Question: Did you at any time receive a report card?	
Response: yes	17
no (not traditional)	3
Question: Was it: easily understood? relevant? inclusive of all areas of development?	
Response: met all of these requirements	7
met some requirements	8
met no requirements	5
Question: What do you feel was the most important problem?	
Response: report is satisfactory	7
methods of grading (poor now)	3
visits more effective	2
mised regarding progress	3
don't know	- 5

Progress and Assessment of Children

The following indicate the parents' awareness of, and involvement in assessment of children. Parental opinions are also included in responses.

As indicated in Table 30, the fifteen parents who responded positively to this question, received suggestions

for helping their children as dictated by child need. Booklets, home-made games and library materials were, in many cases, sent to the home by the teacher.

The five negative responses came from parents whose children excelled or progressed at a satisfactory level in kindergarten.

Table 30

Teachers' Suggestions for Assistance

Question: On the report card or during the interview, were suggestions offered by the teacher as to how you might assist your child to do well in kindergarten?

Response: yes	15
no	5

In the present system, as responses to this question indicate, and as shown in Table 31, the teacher is the advice-giver. Unless asked specifically, usually when difficulty arises, parents do not generally offer suggestions to the teacher.

Table 31
Teachers' Requests for Assistance

Question: Were you asked by the teacher for suggestions as to how she might effectively teach your child?	
Response: yes	2
no	18

The present school system is quite separate from the home, and this is even more obvious where both parents are employed. Many parents do not have the opportunities, or the materials the kindergarten teacher has access to for enriching the child's education. The flow of information and advice is generally unidirectional from teacher to parent.

The responses offered by parents regarding their awareness of the use of anecdotal records illustrates a further discrepancy between practice and parents' knowledge, as shown in Table 32. The majority of parents either did not know, or felt the teacher did not keep anecdotal records. All kindergarten teachers indicated they did, in fact, keep a file or booklet outlining each child's progress.

Table 32

Anecdotal Records of Progress

Question: Do you know if the kindergarten teacher kept anecdotal records about your child?

Response:	definitely did	7
	did not	3
	don't know	10

Question: How useful do you feel this practice is when in use?

Response:	very useful	14
	not useful	1
	dependent on use	3
	don't know	2

Parental reaction as to the usefulness of anecdotal records was widely varied. Many parents felt the keeping of records is, or would be very useful. One response indicated the child should not know of this for fear of inhibiting the child's relationship with the teacher.

One parent responded this would be far too time-consuming for teachers, while two others felt it might be useful, but could also be a virtual waste of teaching time. Two parents had never considered the possibility of a teacher keeping such records, and could not comment on usefulness.

As indicated in Table 33, though parents indicated through previous responses that they in fact were misinformed or uninformed about reporting, eight indicated satisfaction with present assessments. Several parents did recognize their lack of information and responded in like.

Two parents felt kindergarten programs, and assessments should be more academically challenging to children. The remainder of those interviewed desire more precise grading categories. These parents did not find accuracy in scales ranging from U - unsatisfactory to S - satisfactory as appear on many reports. A desire for letter grades A, B, C, D and E was expressed.

Table 33

Changes Desired by Parents

Question: What, if any, changes would you like to see in the way kindergarten children are assessed - or in the way reporting is carried out?

Response:	no changes	8
	don't have enough information	4
	make program more challenging	2
	more precise assessment	2
	more grading categories	1
	don't know	3

As shown in Table 34, eighteen parents felt the parent-teacher relationship was very important in the kindergarten year. The parents who chose to respond that this relationship should be dependent on the child's needs had children who excelled in the kindergarten program. One parent expressed a desire for a closer working relationship than presently exists.

Most parents indicated they made frequent, if not daily, visits to the school - usually to deliver or pick-up the child. This is a desirable practice as spontaneous meetings with the teacher are possible.

The reaction to teachers visiting the home was somewhat different. Nine parents responded with an unconditionally negative reaction. Several parents indicated some reservations depending on the purpose of the visit. One parent expressed the fear that teachers could easily gather false impressions in a limited number of visits.

The parents who indicated willingness to have the teacher visit their homes responded positively to all previous questions. These parents regarded such visits as having a purely social nature, appropriate for example, if the child was ill and could not attend classes for a long period of time.

Table 34

Relationship of Teachers and Parents

Question: Do you feel kindergarten teachers and parents should work closely together?

Response: yes	18
no	0
dependent on child's needs	2

Question: How often should parents visit teachers in school, and should teachers visit the home?

Response: parents visiting school:	
frequently	18
sometimes	2
infrequently	0
teachers visiting home:	
yes	5
no	9
maybe	6

Summary

A great number of parents are unaware of the program and procedures in local schools. Satisfaction with these procedures appears to be based on the accuracy of reports on academic areas of the program.

Parents expressed a consistent desire throughout the interviews for increased personal contact with the teacher

for reporting purposes. Progress interviews are favored far more than written reports by parents.

The flow of communication between teachers and parents is generally unidirectional from school to home. Parents realize the importance of a firm working relationship with the teacher, but the majority of those parents interviewed prefer to restrict their relationship to school visits rather than teacher visits to the home.

CHAPTER VI

A MODEL FOR PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

The culmination of this project was the development of a model for communication acceptable to both parents and teachers for use during the kindergarten year. This project is based on data gathered from those employed in or having children enrolled in kindergarten classes of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. The model has been evaluated and appears feasible, with some adaptation, to most schools.

It should be emphasized that a model for kindergarten cannot be prescribed and adhered to rigidly. Rather, a set of guidelines should be set forth in order to standardize procedures while allowing for teachers' and parents' personal preferences and individual circumstances. It is hoped this model will meet these requirements and be of use to kindergarten teachers in the province of Newfoundland.

In the remaining pages of this chapter the model will be presented in detail (Figures 3-15) and discussed.

As indicated in Figure 3, the model of parent-teacher communication developed by this project comprises six major components - registration, orientation for child

and parents, the introduction of parents to progress reporting procedures, report cards, parent-teacher interviews, and additional contacts.

-
- Kindergarten Registration - registering the child
 - initial parents-teacher meeting
 - agenda for initial meeting
 - Orientation - orientation for children
 - orientation for parents
 - agenda for parents' orientation meeting
 - outline for orientation handbook
 - Information about Reporting Procedures - meeting for parents
 - agenda for parents meeting
 - Report Cards
 - Parent-Teacher Interviews
 - Additional Contacts - kindergarten newsletter
 - parent volunteers
-

Figure 3. Components of the Model for Parent-Teacher Communication in the Kindergarten Year.

Kindergarten Registration

Registration is the first major component of the parent-teacher communication model. It comprises registering or enrolling the child in kindergarten, and an initial meeting of parents with the teacher and other school personnel.

Registering the Child

TIME: January (as defined by School Board)

PURPOSE: To enroll the child for kindergarten.
To furnish information for school medical records.
To introduce the child to the teacher on an individual basis.

ATTENDED BY: Principal and/or Secretary
Public Health Nurse
Kindergarten Teacher(s)
Parent(s) and Child

LOCATION: Any convenient location in the school which will afford privacy to the teacher, parent and child.

PROCEDURE: Parent(s) with the child present complete registration forms with school principal or secretary, then go to the school nurse to provide medical information. Parent(s) and child visit the kindergarten teacher.

The teacher will interview the child about family members, likes/dislikes, and may request that the child complete a sequence of tasks such as rote counting. This will not serve as any type of evaluation, but will foster a positive attitude toward the teacher.

The parent will be present during this interview, and should inform the teacher of medical disabilities or handicaps at this time.

Figure 4. Recommended Procedures for Registering the Kindergarten Child

Figure 4 displays the detailed procedures recommended by the model for registering the child in kindergarten. The time of registration is advertised in local newspapers, school newsletters and memos. Traditionally, registration for kindergarten in schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board is held in late February or early March. The change of time to January as recommended here is precipitated by teacher requests for earlier registration. As indicated in previous chapters, pre-school contact with the home helps to establish better parental attitudes and to prepare the child for kindergarten.

The addition of a teacher-child meeting during registration is relatively uncommon. The philosophy behind such a meeting is not intended to be one of advocating early assessments. Rather, the child is given the opportunity to meet the teacher in a relaxed atmosphere, and on a one-to-one basis. At the same time, the child is afforded the security of a parent being present.

In schools where a teacher-child interview is conducted at registration the next contact, usually orientation, where the parent is not present, tends not to be traumatic for the child. A further advantage may be to the parent, who may be less anxious. Due to meeting the teacher previously, the parent is aware of the teacher's manner and attitudes.

Initial Parent-Teacher Meeting

TIME: An evening as soon as possible after registration.

PURPOSE: To introduce parent(s) to the teacher, principal.
To inform parents as to how they can prepare their child for the kindergarten year.

ATTENDED BY: Principal
Teacher(s)
Parents
Primary Co-ordinator/Guest Speaker

LOCATION: A room in the school which will accommodate all attending, and will house a display of suitable materials.

PROCEDURE: A short talk by teacher/co-ordinator/guest. Suggested topics include: the benefit to the child of outings, store visits, vacations, restaurant visits, story reading, etc.
An informal discussion session.
A display of educational toys, books, and records suitable for pre-schoolers.

Figure 5. Recommended Initial Parent-Teacher Meeting

The inclusion of the meeting recommended in Figure 5 is a result of educators requesting earlier contact with the home, and of parents desiring to better prepare their children for kindergarten. An evening time slot has been chosen for this meeting for two reasons: first the majority of parents work during the day, and secondly the actual registration, which would be the most logical alternate time, is a time for the child to experience, whereas this meeting is held for the purposes of discussing children and their development.

The rationale for conducting this meeting is that many parents have a real desire to help prepare their children for school but may not know where to begin. The teacher, however, has been trained in this area, and it is to the advantage of teacher, parent and child, for her to share her knowledge of child development.

A recommended agenda for this meeting is displayed in Figure 6.

Topic: Preparing Your Child for School

- importance of early experiences and early learning
- the child's natural curiosity and desire to learn
- advantages of "experiences"
 - travel
 - animal parks/zoo's
 - museums
 - library visits
 - restaurant meals
 - shopping trips
- importance of good language habits, encourage use of full sentences, use of storybooks
- importance of praise, tapping child's interests
- recommended books, games, television shows

Display of Materials

- selected primary games and toys
 - picture and story books
 - school-distributed pamphlets of related material
 - records and cassettes
-

Figure 6. Recommended Agenda for Initial Meeting

Orientation for Children and Parents

The second major component of the proposed model of parent-teacher communication is the orientation of children and their parents to kindergarten. Separate orientation sessions are recommended for children and their parents, along with distribution to parents of a school orientation handbook.

Orientation for Children

Figure 7 displays the proposed orientation for children.

TIME:	Late May/early June, a one hour session
PURPOSE:	To introduce children to classmates. To allow children to become familiar with school environment.
ATTENDED BY:	Teacher A group of ten to fifteen children.
LOCATION:	The kindergarten classroom.
PROCEDURE:	The teacher will provide a short lesson plan of her choice. Parents should be accommodated in a waiting area outside the classroom.

Figure 7. Orientation for Children

Orientation is designed to be a special time for the preschooler to experience "real school" for the first time and to develop a positive attitude toward a totally new environment. A short, small group session is recommended

to help keep the child at ease:

The parent is excluded from this session; the child gains some confidence by being alone with the teacher and classmates. This makes the separation of parent and child much easier on the first day of school in September.

Orientation for Parents

The model recommends that orientation for parents consist of attendance at a carefully planned orientation meeting, and the distribution to parents of an appropriate handbook. Figure 8 displays the details of the meeting, Figure 9 highlights the agenda, and Figure 10 outlines suitable items for inclusion in the handbook.

TIME:	An evening as soon as possible following children's orientation. Approximately 90 minutes.
PURPOSE:	To familiarize parents with the content of the kindergarten program, and stress its importance. To introduce parents to various facilities of the school.
ATTENDED BY:	Principal Teacher(s) Parents Primary co-ordinator/guest speaker A selected number of parents of grade one students.
LOCATION:	A room in the school suitable for slide presentation and display.
PROCEDURE:	Talk: The importance of kindergarten Talk: The components of the program/thematic approach Slide presentation Informal discussion with parents of last year's kindergarten student/question and answer session Display of teaching materials: DUSO, Family Life posters, etc. Take-home materials: school handbook, N.T.A. handbook, other suitable materials.

Figure 8. Orientation Meeting for Parents

This orientation meeting is the second of three group meetings recommended for parents and teachers. As the agenda deals with curriculum and programming, the teacher should be present. In some schools parent orientation coincides with child orientation. However, an evening meeting is suggested here to accommodate working parents.

An uncommon practice to date is to involve parents of grade one students. The intention is to involve selected parents as hosts or hostesses who may impart a great deal of information to newly involved parents. These people are familiar with the school and program, and are able to relate directly to the questions of parents of newly registered children. In schools where this practice is employed, it has proven to be successful.

The slide show recommended should be no longer than fifteen minutes and kept to a maximum of forty to forty-five slides. A video film may better serve the purposes of orientation, if available.

The information to be shared with parents during this meeting is essential to their understanding of the kindergarten program. The agenda displayed in Figure 9 outlines in point form, the basis for the philosophy of the teachers and the school. An outline for a school handbook is contained in Figure 10.

Topic: Importance of Kindergarten

Introduction

- working with others
- learning through play
- individual experiences are designed to benefit the "whole" child
- personal worth
- parents are partners

Slide Presentation

- curriculum areas
- learning centers
- class groups
- enrichment:
 - library
 - field trips if available
 - music
 - physical education
- support staff
 - nurse
 - librarian
- grouping, ie.
 - rotation of classes
 - when
 - why
- recess
 - nutritious snacks
 - free play

Display of Teaching Aids:

Curriculum Kits

- ie. DUSO
 - Family Life
 - Language Arts
-

Figure 9. Agenda for Parent Orientation Meeting

Decorative Cover

Lists of teaching and support staff

- secretary
- nurse
- principal
- music and physical education teachers
- prefects (if known)

Greetings from the principal

List of materials required to buy

- checklist of school supplies

Recommended recess snacks, lunches

- canteen services

Schedule of attendance

- should include at least all of September
-

Figure 10. Suggested Outline for Kindergarten Orientation Handbook

Introducing Parents to Progress Reporting Procedures

TIME: Evening session - October

PURPOSE: To explain to parents assessment procedures.
To express generally desired goals for children.
To illustrate reporting purposes, methods.

ATTENDED BY: Principal
Teacher(s)
Parents

LOCATION: A room in the school which will accommodate all attending.

PROCEDURE: Talk: The Purpose and Importance of Progress Reporting
Talk: Methods of Assessment Used in the Classroom. Desirable Goals for Kindergarten Children
Samples of Progress Reports for Review
Discussion Period.

Figure 11. Meeting to Introduce Progress Reporting Procedures

As indicated in Figure 11, an important component of the parent-teacher communication model is a meeting of parents with the teacher and the principal, to introduce parents to methods of assessment and progress reporting. Discussion of specific children should be completely avoided during this session. Parents should be made aware of the need for privacy for progress reporting. The need for such a meeting was indicated through discussion with parents and teachers. Misconceptions about assessment are abundant and

must be dispelled if schools are to change parental attitudes toward kindergarten. As indicated in Chapter 11, teacher-conducted assessments are professional activities. As such, procedures should be documented and shared with the parent.

The agenda offered in Figure 12 is an attempt to assure parents their child is learning with a purpose in mind, and that there are goals the parent can share in achieving.

Introduction - Importance of Reporting

Assessment

The Developmental Review

- observation of children

Anecdotal Records

- sample record
- methods of completing record
- frequency of recording
- files of work samples

Assessing to find strengths as well as weaknesses

Reporting

Interviews with teacher

- how to make appointments
- convenient appointment times

Information Sharing

- parental involvement

The Report Card

- sample report
- explanation of grading

Discussion Period

Figure 12. Suggested Agenda for Meeting to Introduce Progress Reporting Procedures to Parents

Report Cards

The design of an appropriate report card suitable for use in all schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board was a major goal of this project. Information was gathered from literature, educators and parents while this report card was being drafted. When completed, copies were circulated for evaluation, as described in Chapter VII.

To facilitate inclusion of the report card in this study, it has been printed to conform with thesis regulations. However, the intended form consists of three sheets of colored legal size (8½ x 14) paper printed on both sides and folded in half to make a document 8½ inches high and 5½ inches in width, consisting of a cover and four pages. The cover page should bear the name of the school, student and teacher and possibly a school crest or some other suitable sketch.

☞ The recommended report card is displayed as Figure 13 in the eight pages following.

This report, presented to you at the end of each school term, is a summary of your child's progress and activities in kindergarten. We encourage you to review the report, and to contact your child's teacher if you wish to discuss any aspect of the kindergarten program.

Terms used in this report are as follows:

E - Excellent

S - Satisfactory

N - Needs Improvement

N/A - Not Applicable at this time

When you have examined this report to your satisfaction, if you do not require an interview with the teacher, please sign in the appropriate space on the final page and return to the school.

Figure 13: Recommended Report Card (continued next page)

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. ALPHABET

- says alphabet from memory
- recognizes capital letters
- recognizes lower case letters
- matches capital and lower case letters

TERM 1 TERM 2 TERM 3

2. READING READINESS

- understands rhyme
- understands opposites
- recognizes colors
- prints own name
- sees likenesses and differences
- sequence (first, next, last)

TERM 1 TERM 2 TERM 3

3. READING

- recognizes color words
(red, blue, yellow, green
orange, white, brown, black)
- recognizes initial consonant sounds
- word recognition
- comprehension

TERM 1 TERM 2 TERM 3

Figure 13 (continued)

LANGUAGE ARTS - COMMENTS

TERM 1

TERM 2

TERM 3

Figure 13 (continued)

MATHEMATICS

1. SHAPES and SETS

identifies four basic shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle)

comparison of shape and size

comparison of sets:

- one-to-one matching
- more and less

TERM 1 TERM 2 TERM 3

2. NUMERALS

rote counting (0 - __)

recognizes numerals (0 - __)

numerical order

matches numerals and quantities.

prints numerals (0 - __)

understands simple addition

TERM 1 TERM 2 TERM 3

Figure 13 (continued)

MATHEMATICS - COMMENTS

TERM 1

TERM 2

TERM 3

Figure 13 (continued)

FINE-MOTOR CO-ORDINATION		TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3
Printing				
Coloring				
Cutting				
<u>COMMENTS</u>				
TERM 1	_____			
TERM 2	_____			
TERM 3	_____			

MUSIC		TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3
Interest and Participation				
<u>COMMENTS</u>				
TERM 1	_____			
TERM 2	_____			
TERM 3	_____			

PHYSICAL EDUCATION		TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3
Interest and Participation				
<u>COMMENTS</u>				
TERM 1	_____			
TERM 2	_____			
TERM 3	_____			

Figure 13 (continued)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT / WORK SKILLS

TERM 1

Social Development

Listening / Work Skills

TERM 2

Social Development

Listening / Work Skills

TERM 3

Social Development

Listening / Work Skills

Placement for September 198_

Teacher's Signature

Figure 13 (continued)

TERM 1

Conference Held _____

Parent's Signature

TERM 2

Conference Held _____

Parent's Signature

TERM 3

Conference Held _____

Parent's Signature

Figure 13 (concluded)

Parent-Teacher Interviews

As indicated in Figure 14, the model of parent-teacher communication developed in this project recommends several parent-teacher interviews during the year -- preferably in November, in February, and subsequently as necessary.

TIME:	November February subsequently as needed
PURPOSE:	For teacher and parent to share information about the child.
ATTENDED BY:	Teacher Parent(s) - preferably both Guidance Counsellor - if involved in assessment.
LOCATION:	Preferably the classroom if total privacy is available.
PROCEDURE:	Parent should be presented with a completed report card. Discussion should center around report and anecdotal records.

Figure 14. Parent-Teacher Interviews

Interviews have been proven to be the most successful form of reporting. The number of interviews conducted should be determined by need and on a co-operative basis.

Time limits generally dictate a fifteen to twenty minute interview during reporting periods. Subsequent meetings should be set in a time period allowing for a

relaxed, unpressured discussion.

Work samples from individual children's files may be distributed to parents during the interview. In areas where parental response is low, this practice often improves attendance.

Additional Contacts

Additional contacts are recommended by the model, including a kindergarten newsletter, and the involvement of parents as volunteer workers in the school and on field trips.

Kindergarten Newsletter

Completely separate from the school newsletter, a kindergarten newsletter, really should be sent to the home on a monthly or thematic basis. Included may be an outline for learning of the current theme along with booklists and related games or experiences which may be shared by parent and child.

Other items would include: a calendar of the current month for parent and child to complete by marking off each date; a suggested list of "home work" items such as learning to tie, or naming letters of the alphabet; and, finally, summaries of field trips or other class activities.

Parent Volunteers

Parents are often invaluable resources. The teacher would be wise to poll parents in September and keep a list of names and talents on file. In this way, the teacher is

able to choose parents who will best enhance a particular activity. Figure 15 recommends a format for the note to parents.

Dear Parent:

From time to time the kindergarten class will require parent volunteers for many different activities. If you are able to give of your time please complete and return the form below.

I am able to: supervise field trips _____
provide transportation _____
help in the classroom _____
demonstrate a craft _____
other _____

Weekdays available: _____

parent's signature

Figure 15. Suggested Format for Letter to Parents regarding Volunteer Activities

CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION OF THE MODEL

The communications model as presented in Chapter VI of this report, was condensed to a form found in Appendix F, and distributed to a number of educators and parents for their evaluation. Two questionnaires were devised (as found in Appendices D and E), one for educators and the second for parents, and distributed in the following manner:

one copy for each of the eighteen elementary principals of the Avalon Consolidated School Board.

one copy per school for kindergarten teachers (eighteen schools for thirty-two teachers)

one copy per household for fourteen of the twenty parents previously contacted for survey purposes

The total number of questionnaires distributed was thus fixed at fifty. Sixty-four people were actually polled. Forty-nine responded.

The results of this survey are condensed and presented on the pages following, along with comments by principals, teachers and parents. The responses did not indicate a need for major changes in the model as presented. Alterations to the model as required have been completed.

Results of Questionnaires Distributed to
Principals and Kindergarten Teachers

9. The combined data from principals' and kindergarten teachers' returned forms is presented in table form in this section. The total number of questionnaires and models distributed was thirty-six; nineteen responses were received representing ten principals, and seventeen teachers, from ten of the eighteen schools.

Registration Procedures

As shown in Table 35, with the exception of one teacher, all responses indicate the proposed method of registration for children would be suitable for use in schools of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. Further details regarding this question are presented in the comments offered in response to question 2.

Table 35

Feasibility of Registration Process

Question: Would the method of registration as outlined here be feasible in your school?

Response:	yes	18
	no	1

As indicated in Table 36, the comments offered in part one of the question served to confirm the appropriateness of this method of registration for most schools. The exclusion of the parent from the child's initial meeting was not recommended in the model as the child would feel very uncomfortable if suddenly left alone with a stranger. This point has been further explained in Chapter VI of this report.

Table 36

Requested Changes in Procedure

Question: If yes (to question 1) would you like to see additions or changes?

Responses: no comment	12
quite adequate	2
exclude parent	1
have registration earlier	2
child should observe present kindergarten in progress	1

Unsuitability of Registration Procedure

Question: If no (to question 1) what would be the cause of difficulty?

Response: too many children to interview	1
--	---

Child observation of a class in progress may indeed prove productive, but would not fulfill the purpose of the meeting of child and teacher as outlined previously.

The difficulty which may be encountered by long line ups as indicated in part two is reasonably infrequent in local schools. Registration is generally an "all day" event, and as completion of forms by the secretary and nurse are done individually, children are delayed by five to ten minutes each.

As shown in Table 37 the majority of respondents felt the registration procedure as presented would be beneficial for parent, teacher and child.

Table 37

Benefits of Initial Meeting

Question: Do you feel the initial meeting of parents and teachers outlined here would be beneficial to:

The child
The teacher
The parent

Response:	Yes	No
The child	17	2
The teacher	17	2
The parent	17	2

The negative responses to this question appear to have been the result of misunderstanding the question as shown below in Table 38.

Table 38
Least Benefited by Meeting

Question: If your response to question 3 was negative, who do you feel would benefit least and why?

Response: the child should not be required to complete tasks

The assumed misunderstanding by the respondents is that question three was misread as actual registration procedures. The question is, in fact, based on the initial parent-teacher meeting, and children do not attend.

The concern about children completing tasks during their first meeting with the teacher has been explained in Chapter VI, page 90. The tasks are not a form of assessment, but rather a starting point for relaxed conversation and positive attitudes toward school.

Orientation Procedures

The proposed method of orientation appears to be satisfactory based on the data received and presented in Table 39.

Table 39

Feasibility of Orientation Procedures

Question: Would the orientation procedures, as outlined, be feasible in your school?

Response:	yes	19
	no	0

As shown in Table 40, eleven respondents offered no further suggestions for change in the orientation process. Four respondents questioned the involvement of grade one parents. These parents are involved only to promote a relaxed atmosphere for newly involved parents. Parent volunteers are actually on hand.

Table 40

Recommended Additions or Deletions

Question: If yes (to question 1) would you recommend additions or deletions?

Response:	no. comment	10
	very important process	1
	question attendance of grade	
	one parents	4
	a question and answer session	
	should be provided	1
	conduct in the fall	1
	co-ordinate with child	
	orientation in afternoon	2

The addition of a question and answer session to the parent orientation meeting outlined in the model has been completed as recommended.

The time change to fall or to afternoon session has not precipitated change in the model. Many parents would be unable to attend such a meeting during regular working hours. A fall session would not provide sufficient notice for purchase of materials, babysitting arrangements for working parents or preparation time in general.

Progress Reporting Information

As indicated in Table 41, the majority of respondents would be willing to plan and host a meeting to specifically

discuss assessment and reports. The five negative responses were accompanied by the request for inclusion of this material in the parent orientation or private interview.

Table 41
Willingness to Conduct Meeting

Question: Would you be willing to conduct such a meeting for parents?	
Response: yes	14
no	5

The inclusion of this material in other meetings would make sessions much longer, and take valuable time from parent interviews. The meeting to discuss assessment has been included in the model as originally presented.

As Table 42 illustrates, the majority of respondents indicated this meeting would be of benefit to teacher-parent relationships. Two respondents did not answer this question.

Table 42

Benefit of Meeting about Progress Reporting

Question: Do you feel this meeting would be beneficial to parents and/or teachers?

Response: yes 17
no comment 2

Table 43 shows that fourteen respondents offered no comments or suggestions indicating approval of this form of meeting. One teacher would prefer smaller group sessions - a change easily made within the individual school based on teacher preference. This is one of many adaptations which can be introduced to this model.

The combination of this and other meetings has been discussed in the question dealing with willingness to conduct the meeting.

Table 43

Recommended Changes

Question: Would you recommend a change of scheduling or of content?

Response: no 11
no response 3
smaller group 1
combine with other meetings 5

Reporting Instrument

As Table 44 shows, the report card presented is apparently satisfactory to all respondents.

Table 44
Suitability of Report Card

Question: Do you feel this report card would be easily completed, and at the same time inclusive of all important details?

Response: yes	19
no	0.

All respondents indicated they felt this report card would be suitable for distribution to parents, as shown in Table 45 below.

Table 45
Evaluation of Parental Understanding

Question: Do you feel parents would find this report easy to understand?

Response: yes	19
no	0

The nature of the responses to the question presented in Table 46 do not lend themselves to tabulation. These comments are discussed on the pages following.

Table 46

Format and Potential for Use

Question: Please comment on the format of this report in general and its potential for use in your school.

Response:

Seven respondents offered no comment. The great majority of the comments were very positive. Portions of these comments follow:

this report is in good taste

this proposed report is more precise than the one we presently use

very applicable. It would achieve understanding and positive attitudes.

comprehensive - quite feasible

lots of space for comments - clear and concise - all excellent features

similar to our own. We would like to use a cross between the two.

excellent - but I need it in French.

The above comments indicate complete satisfaction with the reporting document by a number of principals and teachers. Some respondents did offer suggestions for alteration:

more space is needed for children with exceptional needs

more space is desirable

there is no need for a report in November

I like it but it could follow the curriculum guide more closely.

These comments indicate the need for a report card which is not rigid but rather adaptable to individual needs. The inclusion of a November report is, however, an important component of this model. The purpose of a written report is to record progress for future reference and to avoid misunderstanding during the parent-teacher interview.

The final comment listed suggests co-ordinating the report with a curriculum guide. This "guide" is a teacher's resource book entitled Early Experiences and is published by Nelson-Canada. The book is very detailed and must be condensed before interpreting for parents.

All comments were very constructive and proved to be very important to this project.

Results of Parent Surveys

Questionnaires were distributed to fourteen parents. Five responses were received.

As shown in Table 47, all respondents indicated willingness to attend the three meetings suggested in the model. It has been generally found that parents of kindergarten children do attend scheduled meetings at the request of the school.

Table 47

Willingness to Attend Meetings

Question: Would you be willing to attend the three meetings outlined here if your child was registered for kindergarten?

Response:	yes	5
	no	0

Table 48 indicates that none of the parents who responded indicated they would not seek changes in these meetings.

Table 48

Suggested Changes

Question: Would you as a parent like to see deletions or changes in these meetings?

Response:	yes	0
	no	5

When parents were asked if they felt the contact outlined in the model would be beneficial to them and their child, they all responded in the affirmative. As shown in Table 49, comments which accompanied the response to this question were very positive. Some of these were:

this would help the parent to understand in more detail the kindergarten program.

especially important for parents who have not had previous contact with the school

One parent indicated that meeting number three, dealing with progress reporting procedures may not be completely necessary, but that she would attend.

Table 49

Benefits of Contact

Question: Do you feel contact with the school as outlined here would be of benefit to you and your child?

Response: yes	5
no	0

Comments indicated in Table 50 show respondents felt that this report is quite detailed. One parent suggested two of the four grading terms (excellent and satisfactory) be

deleted. This contrasts with parental requests in the original interviews for more precise grading. (See page 83.)

Table 50

Suitability of Report Card

Question: Do you feel the enclosed report card includes everything you would like to know about your child's school work?

Response:	yes	5
	no	0

The respondents indicated, as shown in Table 51, that they were satisfied with the report card as presented with four parents rating it "very good" and one rating it "excellent".

Table 51
Rating of Report Card

Question: Would you rate this report card as:

Excellent
Very Good
Adequate
Needs Revision
Poor

Response: Excellent	1
Very Good	4
Adequate	0
Needs Revision	0
Poor	0

When asked to note their reaction to the type of contacts indicated in the model, as shown in Table 52, responses were quite detailed. Some of the major points are noted below.

There are not enough contacts at present ... there seems to be a rushed attitude ... the "orientation of parents" appears to be a good idea.

The first year is most important ... a positive reaction is important ... if a parent can help in any way the responsibility should be taken.

This parent teacher contact should be encouraged beyond kindergarten level.

These contacts will affect parents a great deal ... kindergarten consists of a team - the child, the teacher and you, the parent.

Table 52
Parental Opinion of Model

Question: Please note your reaction to the type of contacts listed on the attached pages as they might affect the parents of kindergarten students.

Summary

The communications model as presented in Appendix F was distributed to principals, teachers and parents. Responses were received from ten principals, seventeen teachers and five parents.

It is noted with much appreciation that all respondents took time to make a critical review of the model. The great majority of responses supported the model in its original form. Legitimate criticisms were noted and subsequent alterations were made in the format of the model where required.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONSSummary

The purpose of this project was to determine need and subsequently design a communications model for use by parents and teachers during the kindergarten year.

Interviews were conducted with the eighteen elementary school principals and questionnaires distributed to the kindergarten teachers of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. The purpose was to determine current communication practices and the level of satisfaction with these. Following the gathering of this data, twenty parents whose children had completed kindergarten were interviewed. The interview was designed to gather information about parents' awareness and satisfaction with the kindergarten program. The parents interviewed were chosen by a method of random sampling.

Following a literature search and tabulation of data gathered from educators and parents, a model for communications was devised. The model includes recommendations for initial and subsequent parent-teacher meetings and a report card for use by kindergarten teachers. The intention is for this model to be used specifically in the kindergarten year with adaptations made for individual need.

The completed model was distributed to principals, teachers and parents for their evaluation. When responses were gathered, data was compiled, considered and necessary revisions subsequently made.

Findings

The interviews and surveys conducted demonstrated two major needs. Firstly, educators indicated a need for some standardized guidelines for communicating with and reporting to parents. The point most emphasized was the wide variety of report cards used by kindergarten teachers.

The second major requirement for parent-teacher communications was found to be increased parental awareness. Teachers indicated poor parental attitudes to be an obstacle to communications, and parents indicated that even after their child had completed the program there were many unanswered questions. Several parents discounted the importance of academic and guided learning in kindergarten and also showed some dissatisfaction with reporting procedures. All parents advocated increased parental contact and involvement in the school.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the model developed herein be considered for adoption within this district and perhaps elsewhere in the province. The guidelines are flexible enough to allow for deletions or insertions as individually needed while affording some standardization in parental contact.

The limited research on home-school communications suggests the need for further research. Studies might profitably be directed at the relationship between parental involvement in kindergarten programs and their attitudes towards them, and at parental concerns about being misled by reporting procedures.

Concluding Statement

The data gathered during the course of this project points to the need for increased parental awareness and involvement in kindergarten. Those surveyed - parents as well as teachers and principals - indicated a willingness for greater contact and a desire for a partnership type of relationship between home and school. The evaluations for the communications model developed for the project were positive and supportive, suggesting that its adoption can contribute to that relationship, to the benefit of the kindergarten child.

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* This was an incomplete draft copy released to the school districts for critical appraisal during provincial inservice in 1982. The Advance Edition of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide was released during provincial inservice in 1984. In January 1985, the Department of Education's authorized copy of the Kindergarten Guide came off Confederation press.

SCHOOL HANDBOOKS

Avalon Consolidated School Board

Cowan Heights Elementary School

Goulds Elementary School

Morris Academy

Newtown Elementary School

Park Avenue Elementary School

St. Michael's Elementary School

Vanier Elementary School

Virginia Park Elementary School

APPENDICÉS

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
OF THE AVALON CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL BOARD

Interview Schedule.

Elementary Principals of the Avalon
Consolidated School Board

1. What are your kindergarten registration procedures?
 - the first contact with the home
 - who attends
 - assessment of children
2. Does orientation for children or parents follow orientation?
 - when
 - duration
 - number in attendance
 - adults involved
 - media
3. Are additional attempts made to prepare the family for kindergarten?
 - booklets
 - meetings
 - other
4. How, and how often, are parents formally contacted by teachers?
 - reporting periods
 - parent volunteers
 - home visits
 - letters to the home
5. Are parents encouraged to "drop in" at any time?
Are they encouraged to become involved in the kindergarten program?
6. How well do teachers know a pupil's parents with regard to:
 - home environment
 - academic press
 - books in the home
 - child care
 - family size

- B. Do teachers take it upon themselves to advise parents on these matters?
7. Is there a parent-teacher association at your school?
- is programming discussed?
 - to what extent is it geared to kindergarten?
 - what is the proportion of kindergarten parents who regularly attend?
8. How is contact made with the home for progress reporting purposes?
- telephone
 - memos
 - appointments
9. Are report cards or guidesheets used for reporting?
- A. Who designed the one presently in use?
- B. What were the most important considerations in design, and are there any particular recurring difficulties in usage?
10. Are there special procedures for dealing with single or working parents, and those with limited formal education?
11. In general what is your assessment of the present home/school communications procedures?
- what are the particular strong points?
 - what improvements would you like to see?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS.
OF THE AVALON CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL BOARD

2 Earle Street
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1E 3Z1
January 30, 1984

Kindergarten Teacher:

Presently, I am employed as a kindergarten teacher, and I realize that time is at a premium. It would be much appreciated, however, if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire at your earliest convenience, and return it to me in the envelope provided.

I am, at this time working on the development of a kindergarten home/school communication system as part of the requirement for the degree of Master of Educational Administration. The input from kindergarten teachers presently working in the Avalon Consolidated School Board is essential to make this report relevant, and therefore applicable to present school situations.

This study has the approval of the School Board and I have already held discussions with most of the principals.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette M. Newhook

Encl.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Please check (✓) appropriate answers.

1. When do you make first contact with parents of new kindergarten students?

Registration day _____
 Parent orientation _____
 First day of school _____
 Other (please explain) _____

2. When do you first explain the child's expected/desired progress to the parents?

Parent orientation _____
 November interview (or report) _____
 Other _____

3. To what extent are parents involved in your kindergarten program? (check as many as necessary)

Teacher aides _____
 Occasional assistance (e.g., field trips) _____
 Helping their child at home with special projects _____
 Helping their child at home in areas of weakness _____

4. Which components of the home environment do you feel are important to a child's success in kindergarten? (check as many as necessary)

Books and educational materials _____
 Parental attitude towards a child's success in school _____
 Parent/child relationships _____
 Other _____

5. In which way(s) might the school assist in assuring these components are present in the home? (please comment)

6. What type of progress report is offered to parents in:

November	interview	_____
	written	_____
	combination	_____
February	interview	_____
	written	_____
	combination	_____
June	interview	_____
	written	_____
	combination	_____

7. The format of your kindergarten report card is:

work samples _____

anecdotal _____

check marks _____

graded _____

combination of above _____

other _____

no report card _____

If none, alternative _____

8. What is your feeling toward your present report card?

Satisfactory _____

Could be improved _____ Please comment _____

9. What types of problems do you encounter at reporting time? (i.e., parental understanding, initiating contact) (please comment) _____

10. What are the priority topics in your written reports?

Language _____

Math _____

Social development _____

Other _____

11. Please explain briefly how records of each student's progress are kept throughout the year.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN
WHO ATTENDED KINDERGARTEN, SEPTEMBER
1982 TO JUNE 1983

Interview Schedule

Parents of Children Who Attended Kindergarten
September 1982 to June 1983

1. Did you know what would be taught in kindergarten before your child started school last September?

2. Did you know what would be expected of your child during the kindergarten year?

How did you find this out? (example: pamphlets, PTA)

3. To what extent were you involved in the kindergarten program during your child's year in kindergarten?

Teacher aide

Assisting with home-assigned tasks

Special projects

Field trips

Other

4. How important do you feel kindergarten was to your child's education?

5. How often did you receive progress reports concerning your child?

Did you seek additional reports?

6. What do you feel should be the purpose of progress reporting?

Are these purposes being met?

7. Did you at any time receive a report card?

Was it: easily understood,
relevant,
inclusive of all areas of development?

What do you feel was most important?

8. On the report card, or during the interview, were suggestions offered by the teacher as to how you might assist your child to do well in kindergarten?
9. Were you asked by the teacher for suggestions as to how she might effectively teach your child?
10. Do you know if the kindergarten teacher kept anecdotal records about your child?

How useful do you feel this practice is?

11. What, if any, changes would you like to see in the way kindergarten children are assessed - or in the way reporting is carried out?
12. Do you feel kindergarten teachers and parents should work closely together?

How often should parents visit with teachers in school?

Do you feel teachers should visit the home?

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED TO PRINCIPALS AND
GROUPS OF TEACHERS TO DETERMINE
ACCEPTABILITY OF MODEL

2 Earle Street
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1E 3Z1

June 1, 1984

Principals
Elementary Schools
Avalon Consolidated School Board
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dear Sir or Madam:

You may recall our contact earlier this year concerning your methods of communication between teachers and parents during the kindergarten year. This was in part, a requirement for the Degree of Master of Educational Administration. The final requirement of the study was to develop a model communications system, inclusive of a progress reporting instrument for use in kindergarten.

The model has been devised, and a condensed version of same is enclosed for your examination. Your reaction to this on the enclosed survey form would be very much appreciated at this time.

I realize the school year is drawing quickly to a close, and that time is at a premium for all principals. It is important to the study however, that the questionnaires be returned as quickly as possible. Please complete the form by June 15 if possible. A pre-addressed return envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

I thank you in advance for finding the time of offer your help, and I take this opportunity to thank you for your invaluable help during the early stages of this study.

Respectfully,

JN/mk

Jeanette M. Newhook

2 Earle Street
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1E 3Z1

June 1, 1984

Kindergarten Teacher:

Several months ago, a survey was sent to you regarding your methods and feelings toward communication with parents during kindergarten. The information gathered from these surveys was one source used to devise a model for communication between teachers and parents in order to further benefit the child.

The model described above has now been completed, and a condensed version is enclosed. I would appreciate your examination of this, and your completion of the enclosed survey form.

As a kindergarten teacher, I realize the pressure on all teachers at this time of year. Your co-operation would be invaluable, however, as it proved to be in the previous questionnaire. Please feel free to collaborate where there is more than one kindergarten teacher in the school. A copy of the model has been enclosed for each teacher, but only one survey form per school.

Please return the completed survey form in the envelope provided by June 15 if at all possible.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation, and wish to express my appreciation also for your past involvement in this study.

Thank you,

JMN/mk

Jeanette M. Newhook

QUESTIONNAIRE

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

1. Would the method of registration, as outlined here, be feasible in your school?

Yes _____
 No _____

2. If yes, would you like to see additions or any changes?

Please comment _____

If no, what would be the cause of difficulty?

Please comment _____

3. Do you feel the initial meeting of parents and teachers outlined here would be beneficial to:

The child Yes _____ No _____

Teacher Yes _____ No _____

Parent Yes _____ No _____

4. If your response to question 3 was negative, who do you feel would benefit least, and why?

Please comment _____

ORIENTATION PROCEDURES

- 1. Would the orientation procedures, as outlined, be feasible in your school?

Yes _____
No _____

- 2. If yes, would you recommend additions or deletions?

Please comment _____

If no, what would be an acceptable alternative?

Please comment _____

PROGRESS REPORTING INFORMATION

- 1. Would you be willing to conduct such a meeting for parents?

Yes _____
No _____

- 2. Do you feel this meeting would be beneficial to parents and/or teachers?

Please comment _____

3. Would you recommend a change of scheduling, or of content?

Yes _____
No _____

If yes, please comment _____

REPORTING INSTRUMENT

1. Do you feel this report card would be easily completed, and at the same time inclusive of all important details?

Yes _____
No _____

2. Do you feel parents would find this report easy to understand?

Yes _____
No _____

3. Please comment on the format of this report in general and its potential for use in your school.

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED TO PARENTS TO DETERMINE
ACCEPTABILITY OF MODEL

2 Earle Street
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1E 3Z1

June 6, 1984

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student at Memorial University working toward the completion of a Master's Degree in Educational Administration. You may recall our earlier contact where you were asked to express opinions about your child's year in kindergarten. The previous interview, and the enclosed materials are part of the design of a model for teacher-parent communications in kindergarten.

I ask for your co-operation in reviewing the enclosed, and responding to the attached questionnaire by June 22 if possible. Please regard the materials as to suitability for your own contact with the teacher.

I thank you for your response, and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your past involvement with this study.

A pre-addressed return envelope has been enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you,

Jeanette M. Newhook

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Would you be willing to attend the three meetings outlined here if your child was registered for kindergarten?

Yes _____
No _____

2. Would you, as a parent, like to see any additions, or deletions in any of these meetings?

Meeting 1. _____

Meeting 2. _____

Meeting 3. _____

3. Do you feel contact with the school as outlined here would be of benefit to you and your child?

Please comment _____

4. Do you feel the enclosed report card includes everything you would like to know about your child's school work?

Please comment _____

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE OF MODEL AS DISTRIBUTED TO
PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS AND
PARENTS FOR REVIEW

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

REGISTRATION

TIME: February/March (as defined by School Board)

PURPOSE: To enroll the child for kindergarten.
To furnish information for school medical records.
To introduce the child to the teacher on an individual basis.

ATTENDED BY: Principal and/or Secretary
Public Health Nurse
Kindergarten Teacher(s)
Parent(s) and Child

LOCATION: Any convenient location in the school which will afford privacy to the teacher, parent and child.

PROCEDURE: Parent(s) and child complete registration forms with school principal or secretary. Proceed to school nurse with medical information.
Parent(s) and child visit the kindergarten teacher.
The teacher will interview the child about family members, likes/dislikes, and may request that the child complete a sequence of tasks such as rote counting. This will not serve as any type of evaluation, but will foster a positive attitude toward the teacher.
The parent will be present during this interview, and should inform the teacher of medical disabilities or handicaps at this time.

INITIAL PARENT/TEACHER MEETING

- TIME:** An evening as soon as possible after Registration.
- PURPOSE:** To introduce parent(s) to the teacher, principal.
To inform parents as to how they can prepare their child for the kindergarten year.
- ATTENDED BY:** Principal
Teacher(s)
Parents
Primary Co-ordinator or Guest Speaker
- LOCATION:** A room in the school which will accommodate all attending, and will house a display of suitable materials.
- PROCEDURE:** A short talk by teacher/co-ordinator/guest. Suggested topics include: the benefit to the child of outings, store visits, vacations, restaurant visits, story reading, etc.
An informal discussion session.
A display of educational toys, books, and records suitable for pre-schoolers.

ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN
AND PARENTS

ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN

- TIME:** Late May/early June, a one hour session
- PURPOSE:** To introduce children to classmates.
To allow children to become familiar with school environment.
- ATTENDED BY:** Teacher
A group of ten to fifteen children.
- LOCATION:** The kindergarten classroom.
- PROCEDURE:** The teacher will provide a short lesson plan of her choice. Parents should be accommodated in a waiting area outside the classroom.

ORIENTATION FOR PARENTS

TIME: An evening as soon as possible following children's orientation. Approximately 90 minutes.

PURPOSE: To familiarize parents with the content of the kindergarten program, and stress its importance.
To introduce parents to various facilities of the school.

ATTENDED BY: Principal
Teacher(s)
Parents
Primary Co-ordinator/Guest Speaker
A selected number of Parents of grade one students.

LOCATION: A room in the school suitable for slide presentation and display.

PROCEDURE: Talk: The Importance of Kindergarten
Talk: The Components of the Program/Thematic Approach
Slide Presentation
Informal discussion with parents of last year's kindergarten students.
Display of teaching materials: DUSO, Family Life Posters, etc.
Take-home materials: School handbook, N.T.A. handbook, etc.

PARENT MEETING: PROGRESS REPORTS

PROGRESS REPORTING

TIME: Evening session - October

PURPOSE: To explain to parents assessment procedures.
To express generally desired goals for children.
To illustrate reporting purposes, methods.

ATTENDED BY: Principal
Teacher(s)
Parents

LOCATION: A room in the school which will accommodate all attending.

PROCEDURE: Talk: The Purpose and Importance of Progress Reporting.
Talk: Methods of Assessment Used in the Classroom.
Desirable Goals for Kindergarten Children.
Samples of Progress Reports for Review.
Discussion period.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

PARENT/TEACHER INTERVIEW

The report card will be made available to parents at the November interview as well as in February and June. Interviews beyond the initial progress report in November will be determined largely by need, but there would be at least one more scheduled interview at a time convenient for teacher and parent.

KINDERGARTEN NEWSLETTER

Completely separate from the school newsletter, an information sheet will be sent to the home on a monthly basis. This may include a ditto copy of a calendar for parent and child to complete, a list of suggested "home work" such as learning to tie, printing the child's name with an initial capital letter and all additional letters in lower case, etc. The teacher may choose to summarize field trip events, etc.



