PARENT-STAFF COMMUNICATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

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IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

by

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on communication between the parents and the staffs of early childhood centers. It examined: directors', teachers', and parents' attitudes towards parent-staff communication; the procedures and practices used by directors and teachers to facilitate communication between parents and staff; and the methods used by parents to communicate with the staff of centers.

Sixteen centers on the Avalon Peninsula were randomly selected. All the directors were interviewed; all the teachers (52) and one-half of the parents (317) received a questionnaire. The return rates were 96 and 74 percent for teachers and parents, respectively.

The results suggest that generally, a positive attitude exists towards parent-teacher communication. Most centers employ a variety of communication practices with varying success, despite the lack of formal attention to this area. Only a few centers enforce specific policies that give parent-staff communication the importance that the literature suggests it warrants. The results of this study suggest that in most cases, parents and teachers have not yet attained a 'partnership approach' to the care and education of young children.

Recommendations are made to licencing bodies and to the instructors of early childhood training programs. Suggestions for further research in the area of parent-staff communications are included.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is the concern of both educators and parents to provide the highest quality care and education to children in early childhood programs. Several sources cite the partnership approach as the most beneficial to children, parents, and educators. Such an approach is characterized by a system of open, regular communication between parents and staff. Through communication, important information pertaining to the child's experiences at home and in the center are shared. This results in less discontinuity for the child and greater support for educators and parents in their respective child care roles.

For most early childhood educators and parents, the school system is their only reference point for parent-staff relations. However, the needs of the child, parents, and teachers are significantly different in the preschool years than they are once the child has reached school age. These differences require methods and attitudes towards communication that meet the unique needs of the preschool situation.

In Newfoundland, The Day Care and Homemaker Services Act (1975) and The Regulations (1982) legislate the requirements for the licensing of early childhood centers. The importance of parent-educator relations is recognized, (Regulations 13, 34) and the social workers who inspect

centers are instructed to be aware of the following with respect to parent-teacher relations:

> Parents should be well informed about the program and welcomed as observers and contributors to the program. In terms of teacher-parent interaction, the Social Worker will be concerned with information for new parents, parent and child orientation, parent communication. (p. 32)

However, the Department of Social Services has provided few resource materials or in-service sessions on how to foster parent-teacher relations. Only recently the Newfoundland Department of Education issued a draft version of a curriculum guide entitled Early Childhood Program Guide (November, 1988), which was "prepared to help coordinate the efforts of all those involved in the field of early childhood education in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador" (p. v). It contains an informative section entitled, Program Focus: Parents, which provides a rationale for parent-teacher communication, along with practical suggestions.

Even in the absence of formal attention to this specific area, attitudes have been formed and methods of parent-staff communication have developed. The present study was designed to shed light on such attitudes and practices.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

The study sought to examine the patterns of communication which exist between parents and staff members

of licensed early childhood centers on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland. It took the form of a field survey which included scheduled interviews with directors of 16 centers, and questionnaires which were administered to early childhood teachers and to parents of children registered in these centers.

The interviews and questionnaires attempted to:

1. Determine the attitudes of directors, early childhood teachers, and parents toward parent-staff communication.
2. Determine the level of satisfaction with respect to parent-staff communication experienced by directors, early childhood teachers, and parents.
3. Ascertain the methods and procedures used by directors and early childhood teachers to inform parents about: the program, the day-to-day activities, the children's progress and experiences at the center.
4. Ascertain the methods used by parents to inform the staff of their children's development and experiences in the home.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the general knowledge of existing early childhood education services for those children (and their parents) who attend licensed centers on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland. It indicates existing attitudes

towards parent-educator communication, and patterns of parent-educator communication that have developed in the absence of guidelines or recommended procedures. The data provide a basis for making informed recommendations to those who can influence patterns of communication between parents and early childhood educators. These include directors of early childhood centers, instructors of early childhood education at pre-service and in-service levels, and policy-makers within the division of Day Care and Homemaker Services of the Provincial Department of Social Services.

Limitations

1. Given the limited size and geographic representation of the sample, it will not be possible to make generalizations from the findings of this survey.
2. The accuracy and validity of the information obtained are dependent on the ability and willingness of the respondents to complete the interview and survey questions truthfully.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, a number of terms will be used, as follows:

1. Early childhood is defined as the period from conception to eight years of age. For the purposes of

this study, it refers to children who are between the ages of two and five years.

2. Early childhood education refers to programs designed to cater to the needs of the child from infancy to eight years of age. For the purposes of this study, programs for children aged two to five years will be considered. It includes programs that are called preschool, play group, day care, head start, nursery school, child care, day nursery, and parent-preschool cooperative. Such programs are offered on half-day and full-day bases and for full-time or part-time attendance.

3. Early childhood center is the physical plant where early childhood education programs for young children take place. Such centers are called day care centers, nursery schools, and children's centers. However, in order to facilitate communication in the questionnaires and interview schedule, the terms center, day care, and, preschool center will also be used.

4. Early childhood educator refers to personnel employed in licensed early childhood centers to care for and teach children who are aged two to five-and-one-half years. Various terms are used for early childhood educator, such as, teacher, early educator, day care worker, preschool teacher, caregiver and nursery school teacher. Although the term early childhood educator is most accurate, the term teacher will be used to

facilitate communication in the questionnaires and interview schedules .

5. Director of an early childhood center refers to the person on the staff of an early childhood center who is responsible for the administration of the center. The exact job description for this position depends on the type and policy of the specific center.
6. Director-Teacher refers to the person on the staff of an early childhood center who plays the dual role of administrator for the center and regular teacher for a group of children.
7. A privately owned center refers to an early childhood center that is owned and operated as a business by an individual or individuals.
8. A non-privately owned center refers to an early childhood center that is formed and administered by a board (parent or community), or is a demonstration component of an early childhood education training program.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

A significant amount of research in the field of early childhood education at the preschool level has been conducted in the past twenty-five years. Research studies of the 1960's and early 1970's dealt specifically with the effects of day care on the development of children--emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. There was a special concern for determining whether daily long-term separation of young children from their parents would harm children's development. Belsky (1978) maintained that although an abundant amount of research had been conducted, the actual knowledge of effects was relatively limited due to: (1) the almost exclusive use of high-quality centers possessing characteristics not representative of most early childhood environments, such as, university-based centers with low child-staff ratios and well designed programs directed at fostering emotional, cognitive and social development; (2) the fact that most empirical work on day care had been conducted from the narrowest of perspectives, that is, the immediate effects on the child experiencing day care, as seen through a limited range of outcome behaviors; and (3) the lack of consideration of features of the setting that have been identified as influencing behavior.

Current researchers in the field of early childhood education (Belsky, 1980; Atkinson, 1987; Goelman and Pence, 1985) claim that the use of the ecological model of human development proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977 and 1979) could lead to a richer body of knowledge. This model provides a framework from which research in early childhood education could explore the complexities of day care at different levels and from different perspectives. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) human development is defined as "the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content" (p. 27). Bronfenbrenner (1979) claimed that the development of an individual could be conceived of as though that person were embedded within several nested layers of context; progressing outward from the center are the layers of the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The microsystem represents any immediate setting containing the developing individual. For the child, this means the day care center, the family and perhaps the baby-sitter's home. The mesosystem contains the interrelationships among the microsystems. This would mean the influence of the day care environment on the home and the home upon the day care environment. The exosystem is the formal and informal

social structure that does not necessarily itself contain the developing person but influences what goes on in the microsystem. For the child in day care, this might be the relationship between the availability of transportation or the amount of part-time work available to the parent and the amount of time the child spends in day care. The macrosystem comprises the overarching patterns of ideology and organization that characterize a particular culture or subculture. For example, in the United States and Canada the parent is seen to be responsible for the upbringing of the young child; therefore government involvement in child care is restricted in both these countries. Research of the later 1970's and the 1980's has begun to address day care from this ecological framework; attention is now focused on the fact that there are significant variations among centers and that the experience of participating in an early childhood program can have an effect beyond the immediate child to the parents, the family, the community and society at large and vice-versa.

Within the ecological viewpoint, according to the Bronfenbrenner model, the young child who is experiencing multiple-system child-rearing is participating in a number of separate systems, each of which possesses its own system of social rules and organization. In order to understand the impact of the day care experience there should be investigation at the mesosystem level to consider the interrelation of child-rearing environments. Bronfenbrenner

(1979) and Belsky (1980) argue that the quality of linkage between two of these systems, home and center, may have significant immediate and long-term consequences for the child and the family; it may be as important as the quality of the primary child care itself. The ecological viewpoint maintains that the developmental potential of the early childhood center and the home setting is increased as a function of the number of supportive links existing between home and center. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states this concept in another way, "The least favorable condition for development is one in which supplementary links are either nonsupportive or completely absent" (p. 215). In the case of a young child who attends an early childhood center, the major linkage is comprised of the relationship between the child's parents and the early childhood personnel. An examination of the literature, with an emphasis on the parent-educator relationship and communication system, will focus on the following: Definition of a Supportive Link; Definition of Communication; Overview of the Parent-Educator Relationship; The Potential Impact of Parent-Educator Communication on The Issue of Continuity-Discontinuity, and on Members of the Child Care Relationship; Parent-Educator Communication in the Early Childhood Center; and Current Attitudes Towards the Parent-Educator Communication.

Definition of a Supportive Link Between Home and Center

To develop the Bronfenbrenner model further, the supportive link possesses certain qualities which include reciprocity, balance of power and affective relations between the members (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In terms of the early childhood setting, this means parents and early childhood educators working together to educate and care for young children. It implies a sense of equality, respect, understanding, and warmth between parents and educators. Communication between these two groups is vital to the development of this type of parent-educator relationship. Sharrock (1980) identified communication with parents as "one of the most crucial aspects of home-school relations" (p. 100). According to Green (1968), the ways that teachers choose to communicate with parents and the ways that they reject, reveal fundamental attitudes to education.

Definition of Communication

Communication is defined as the process of creating a meaning between two or more people (Tubbs and Moss, 1978). Schramm (1960) defines it as an effort to establish a commonness with another person or group by sharing information, ideas or attitudes. Two distinct types of communication have the potential to create meaning between parents and educators: one-way and two-way. The process of one-way communication involves a linear direction. The

sender encodes a message (using words or pictures) and transmits the message (newsletter, a letter, a notice, brochure, video, questionnaire, and so on). The receiver notices, pays attention and decodes the message. In the case of early childhood education, if decoded in the way the sender intends, one-way communication can provide educators and parents with information which can result in greater understanding of the center's procedures, the program goals, or the progress of the child. The one-way type of communication does not provide the receiver with the opportunity to ask questions and denies the sender the opportunity to clarify meaning. It therefore "represents only part of a complete communication process" (McCloskey, 1967).

Two-way communication endeavors to emphasize open communication strategies that depend on feedback to arrive at mutual understanding. Explanations of the communication process from the "transactional viewpoint" are currently considered to encompass the complex and dynamic qualities of this process. In this view, "communication is characterized less by the actions of a sender and the subsequent reactions of a receiver than by the simultaneity of their reciprocal responses" (Myers and Myers, 1980, p.15). The transactional model demonstrates the openness of communication when the participants in the process are receivers and senders simultaneously. In the early childhood setting, two-way communication such as telephone conversations, parent-

educator conferences, home visits by the educator, chats upon the child's arrival at or departure from the center, would allow parents and educators together to offer their knowledge, concerns and desires. It is clear that both forms of communication are necessary in acquiring and sharing information about the center, the child, the educator and the family. However, two-way communication has the greater potential for developing the personal relationship that is essential to providing the supportive links.

The Parent-Early Childhood Educator Relationship

In a classical study of the school as an organization, Waller (1932) examined the parent-teacher relationship and concluded:

> From the ideal point of view, parents and teachers have much in common, in that both, supposedly, wish things to occur for the best interest of the child; but in fact, parents and teachers usually live in a condition of mutual distrust and enmity. Both wish the child well, but it is such a different kind of well that conflict must inevitably arrive over it... The fact seems to be that parents and teachers are natural enemies, predestined each for the discomfiture of the other. (p. 68)

According to the literature, strained and somewhat negative relationships between parents and teachers at the preschool level tend to be a common occurrence (Law and Mincey, 1983; Katz, 1980; and Lightfoot, 1978). Innes and Innes (1984) claimed that anecdotal information indicated that caregivers

and parents actively avoided each other. Galinsky (1988) and Innes and Innes (1984) claimed there was tension between parent and early childhood educators which was based on possessive feelings towards the child on the part of both parents and educators. They explained that, just as parents were attached to their children, educators developed attachments, which could result in rivalry for the child's affections.

Kontos, Raikes and Woods (1983) attempted to document staff attitudes towards parents in the parenting role, and to relate this aspect of parent-staff relations to staff and center characteristics. The major finding showed that staff viewed both their center's parents and most parents as significantly different in their childrearing practices from what they themselves viewed as good parenting. Demographic differences were found between staff members and their attitudes towards parents of children in their care. Educators with the most positive perceptions of parents were likely to have more education, likely to be more experienced, and more likely to have children themselves. Kontos and Wells (1986) studied the attitudes of caregivers and the day care experiences of families and found also that demographic differences of the parents were significant. Parents held in the lowest esteem by the staff were more likely to be low-income, members of minority groups, single, having problems, more authoritarian with their children, and

limiting their conversation with staff to obtaining information about their children.

For many reasons early childhood educators and parents can feel threatened by each other in their respective relationships with young children. This can be compounded when models from the public school system are used. Given the unique nature of young children and of the parent-child relationship, many practices implemented by the public school system in relations with parents would be inappropriate for developing communication between early childhood educators and parents. Formal teacher training generally provides the teacher with little information about working with parents (Evans and Bass, 1982). The opportunity to see and experience two-way and informal communication is limited in the public school model for many reasons. Lortie (1975) concluded from a sociological study of the teacher, that teachers desire both independence of and support from parents. They want more contact with parents, but only when the parent's child is having a problem. The public school system, in general, has created a clear separation between home and school that is not appropriate when working with very young children and their families.

It would seem that positive parent-early childhood educator relations do not occur automatically. Considerable insight and effort are required to establish a beneficial relationship.

Benefits of Parent-Educator Communication

The value of establishing positive relations between home and school, at all grade levels, has been a popular notion in education throughout the past twenty-five years. Research in the 1960's focused on the relationship between the student's home background and academic attainment. Upon completion of a longitudinal study based on 5.000 British children, Douglas (1964) concluded that a child's capacity to prosper academically depended to a considerable extent on the amount of parental support and interest. He also determined that very interested parents could enable their children to overcome the disadvantage of a lower ability level by their help and support. Another significant study which emphasized the importance of the link between home and school was undertaken by the Plowden Commission in England. The report of that committee, Children and their Primary Schools (1967), concluded that there was an association between parental encouragement, interest, and attitudes and educational performance by children. It went on to recommend that positive action be taken to encourage a more fruitful partnership between home and school. Research efforts in the United States at the same time reached similar conclusions. Several American intervention programs were developed that included much parent-educator contact, for example the work of Ira Gordon (Olmsted, Rubin, True, and Revicki, 1980).

Indelicato (1980) has summarized the benefits that result when families and educators work together. Students do better in school; teachers have fewer problems with students and report greater satisfaction with their work; parents have more positive feelings about the school and about themselves; and parents are more likely to support school programs. A recent review of long-term gains from twelve programs again confirmed the significance of the parent-educator contact and the involvement of parents in their children's programs (Consortium, 1982). Positive relations between parent and educator have special significance for the preschool child and her family because it has the potential to relieve the strain that is peculiar to early childhood education.

The benefits of parent-early educator communication are next discussed by considering the issue of continuity/discontinuity and the experience of early childhood education from a range of different perspectives--the child, the early childhood educator, and the parent.

The Issue of Continuity/Discontinuity

In this context, the term 'continuity' refers to a state of unbroken or logical sequence between the home and the early childhood environments; whereas 'discontinuity' indicates a state characterized by abrupt change between the two settings. The family and early childhood educators

serve as key socialization agents for the young child and at the same time are two separate social systems which maintain their own norms and values. A stable environment where each of these agents contributes to the child's growth in a continuous and integrated way is desirable. Major areas where the potential for the discontinuity between home and center exists have been identified by Powell (1980) and Hess et al. (1981). They include, for example, child management techniques, the physical environment, the scope and affect of interpersonal relationships, and social class differences in language and in values.

Tizard and Hughes (1984), in a study of children's behavior at school and home, demonstrated the discontinuity that can exist for the low income child in the British nursery school. The two settings were found to make different demands on 4-year-old children and therefore they behaved differently in the two settings. Skills and knowledge which were used at home by the children did not appear in the nursery school setting. Communication attempts between the children and teachers often failed, due to unfamiliar styles of conversation and lack of familiarity on the part of the adult with the child's home environment.

Another area to be considered is the level of agreement that exists between the parent and educator on particular issues. Differences may indicate discontinuities of experience for the child. Elardo and Caldwell (1973) investigated the degree to which parents and educators

shared the same goals for young children participating in early intervention programs. They determined that a high level of agreement existed between these groups and that they shared the same goals for their children. However, Joffe (1977) found racial differences in preferences for program goals: black mothers tended to agree with staff preferences for cognitively-oriented programs; whereas white mothers preferred social and emotional program goals.

Winetsky (1978) investigated the differences between parents and teachers of preschool-aged children on their behavioral expectations for children participating in group settings. For a number of children in Winetsky's study, particularly those of non-Anglo and/or working class families, the expectations at the center and home were significantly different, particularly on the measure of self-direction. The non-Anglo and working-class children were expected to conform at home and to initiate at the center. Teachers, as a whole, were homogeneous in their preferences; even teachers who were categorized as 'working class' by virtue of their husbands' occupations were similar to middle class teachers on all measures.

Hess et al. (1981) compared mothers and center staff with respect to their goals, socialization pressures, control strategies and interactions with young children. The socioeconomic status (SES factor) was controlled through analysis. These authors found that mothers and educators held similar general goals for children, but differences in

views about child development resulted in different ways of handling children. In contrasting mothers to early childhood educators, Hess and colleagues found that mothers tend to emphasize prosocial skills more; tend to emphasize independence less; press for mastery of developmental tasks at an earlier age; teach in a style that is more direct, demanding, and explicit; appeal to their own authority in obtaining compliance; and tend to be stricter in implementing their requests for compliance.

In a similar vein, Atkinson (1987) considered the continuity factor in a study of five American high-quality day care centers, in which she compared the mothers' and the educators' preferences and evaluations of day care services. As in the study by Hess and colleagues (1981), there was a high level of consensus for program goals and teacher qualifications. The largest number of differences were found between mothers' and educators' valuative ratings of items describing actual day care services: quality of food, general resources, discussion with staff, and hours center is open.

Such findings as these demonstrate that the young child's potential for experiencing discontinuity of experience is high and it is likely that the degree of adaptation required by children in two different settings can be considerable. It is generally agreed that in the early years, the experience of early childhood education will be of greatest value to the child if it relates to what

happens at home and can complement it (Pugh, 1985). It would seem that communication between parents and early childhood educators would assist in mutual understanding of the child's experience at home and the center. The informed parent and educator would be better able to interpret the child's behavior. This would likely result in a smoother transition from home to center, center to home, and a program at the center that is better matched to the child's needs and interests.

The Members of the Child Care Relationship

Due to several factors, many parents of the 1980's lead a considerably different life from that of their own parents. These factors include a dramatic increase in maternal employment, the increase in single parenthood due to separation, divorce and raising children outside of marriage, the decline of support from the extended family due to high rates of mobility, and the increased use of supplementary and non-familial child care. This break from tradition has left parents and the educators of young children without the benefits of models and past experience.

According to Ade and Hoot (1976), many of today's parents are having difficulties coping with a rapidly changing society. The stresses of coping with raising children, along with the growing demands of complex parental lifestyles, can often be greatly eased when parents are

supported by third parties, in this case early childhood educators. It is argued that parents who are supported in their child-rearing roles can become more effective in these roles. For each member of the child care relationship--parent, educator, and child, there is potential for considerable stress, which could be alleviated through the mutual support that a combination of one- and two-way communication offers.

Parents of Preschool Children

It is reasonable to assume that working parents experience considerable stress in balancing their responsibilities of family and job. Recent studies (Piotrkowski and Crits-Christoph, 1982; and Crouter, 1984) have indicated high percentages of workers who admitted to daily experiencing a high level of conflict between their family responsibilities and their job duties. For parents of preschool children, this period of their lives is characterized by peak years of job demands and low job and financial security (Moen, 1982). It is clear, on the basis of national and provincial surveys, that the major source of stress for working parents of preschool children is the difficulty of locating accessible and affordable quality child care (McKay, 1988). When such services are found, parents must then mesh the scheduling of these arrangements with not only their own work schedules, but also the

schedules of other children in the family. Emergencies such as a child's illness and center closure, that force parents to resort to their own makeshift solutions, are particularly stressful to the working parents of preschool children.

The effect of supplementary care on the parent-child relationship is of concern to parents of young children, just as it has been to psychologists, psychiatrists and child development specialists. Freud (1938); Yarrow, Rubenstein, and Pederson (1975); and Fraiberg (1977) emphasized the persistent and critical effects of the mother-child interaction on subsequent relationships. John Bowlby (1966) proposed a theory of two-way attachment between the infant and mother. He viewed the relationship as a reciprocal and biological-psychological relationship that, if not established in the first five years, would probably result in not only emotional, but intellectual problems for the child. Selma Fraiberg (1977) warned that children of working mothers who are cared for by numerous caretakers might fail to form the attachment bonds necessary for healthy emotional and cognitive development. In another study, Webb (1984) explored and discussed the quality of child-parent attachment patterns of nineteen families that used supplementary care on a regular and full-time basis. This in-depth study, although including only a small sample of families, found that primary relationships did not diminish with repeated work-related separations. In fact, multiple caretaking was found to add to the child's network

of relationships, without eroding the primary attachment bond between parents and their children.

Today's parents refer often to suffering from guilt (Gestwicki, 1987). The parent most susceptible to guilt is the mother, since it is she who is most likely breaking traditional family patterns. Only one in five Canadian households has the traditional working dad and stay-at-home mother, and 52% of mothers in Canada with children under the age of three years work outside of the home (Report of the Task Force on Child Care, 1986). This can result in parents who lack confidence that they can be significant contributors to their own child's education. It is also clear that parents of the 1980's have a new role that is quite different from parents of the past. Powell (1980) labelled it "the coordinative role" (p. 205). Parents must identify, select and coordinate the experts and institutions who help rear their children. To the extent that child care is largely a matter of private arrangement, the parent becomes a key figure in the enterprise. Fein (1980) claimed this involves adopting two new roles: consumer and monitor. To function effectively in both of these roles there is a need to be informed. Two-way communication with early childhood educators is absolutely necessary for parents to maintain their authority and also to maintain a sense of closeness, sharing and pleasure in their child's development.

Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators are prone to suffer from stress in their work with young children, for reasons that can be placed in two categories--attitudes, and job related factors. Although educators of young children perform a major role in society, they often feel that their job is undervalued and possesses a relatively low status in society. Joffe (1977) claimed the reason that early educators have trouble being taken seriously as professionals is that their work is so familiar and ordinary to everyone, most particularly to the parents who are using their services. Low salaries, long hours, physical demands, and role ambiguity (Galinsky, 1988) contribute to the stress of working in the early childhood education field. A positive parent-educator relationship that is based on open communication offers educators the opportunity to be reinforced, encouraged, and assisted by parental comments and suggestions.

Enlightened early childhood educators of the 1980's have accepted findings that demonstrate the significance of the effects of early development on all aspects of later development (Bloom, 1964; Pringle, 1975; Bonnell, 1984; and Weikart, 1988). The National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC, (1986), has identified quality care as that which provides developmentally appropriate curriculum consisting of two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. To meet

this mandate the educator must come to know the child within the context of the child's individual family through open and complete communication.

Preschool Children

The potential for stress in the life of the preschooler who attends an early childhood center is high. Her life is characterized by a busy routine which often includes a daily commute to an early childhood center and additional hours spent with relatives, neighbors, and other sitters who fill in for the parents before and after day care hours. Webb (1984) refers to it as "the daily grind" (p. 3). Such a schedule can be in conflict with the developmental tasks of the preschooler, who needs time to make sense of her world through active exploration and experimentation (Piaget, 1969). Struggles to experience and demonstrate autonomy and initiative are significant to this age (Erikson, 1963) and can be thwarted by a life that is overly rushed and routinized. Elkind (1981) has expressed his concern for this situation in what he refers to as 'the hurried child syndrome'.

Children who are moving from one situation to another--home to center, center to baby-sitter and so on--are required to make many adaptations. Tizard and Hughes (1984) observed the attempts made by preschool children to bridge this gap themselves by bringing items from home and

communicating with the staff. Communication of home ideas proved difficult, even for children who conversed fluently with parents. A number of reasons accounted for this: the child's inexperience with communicating with someone who has not shared the experience, that is not knowing how much background information to provide, not knowing how to begin the conversation; and the child's lack of a complete understanding of a concept she was using, which made it difficult for her to elaborate. The staff's lack of knowledge of the children's homes and families and the families' lack of knowledge of the child's day-to-day experiences in the early childhood setting make the communication process very difficult for young children. This emphasizes the important role that parent-educator communication can play in bridging the gap that would enable the child to be better understood in both settings.

Parent-Educator Communication in Centers

Although parent-early childhood educator communication has the potential for significant impact on the parent, the educator, and the child, few empirical studies have been undertaken in this area. Anne Sharrock (1980) reviewed a range of significant research and development studies focusing on home and school relations in Britain and the United States for the period from the 1960's to the early 1980's. In her recommendations for further research she

states, "One area that surely merits further attention is that of the forms of communication between home and school..." (p. 104).

Powell (1977, 1978 a and b), who described communication, and Smith and Hubbard (1988), who investigated the implications of communications, have shed some light on the patterns of communication between parents and educators in early childhood centers. Research by Powell (1977, 1978 a, 1978 b) focused on determining the nature of the interpersonal relationship between parents and early childhood educators in day care centers, that is, the day-to-day exchanges. He examined four dimensions: communication frequency and diversity; communication systems; communicative attitudes; and communication mode preferences. The sample consisted of half the parent population (212) and all the early childhood educators (89), who worked more than twenty hours per week in twelve Detroit, Michigan licensed day care centers offering full-day care. Data were collected by means of a structured interview conducted by trained and experienced interviewers. The findings indicated that: (1) The highest frequency of communication occurred at the pick-up and drop-off times, with 70% of the parent group and 66% of the educator group reporting weekly or more frequent discussion at that time. (2) Other than the moderate use of the telephone for communication, virtually no other mode was frequently used. (3) For one-third of the parent sample there was not a

specific staff member with whom they communicated, while only 29% communicated consistently with a particular educator and 32% chose the director. (4) The parents rated their primary sources of information about the center as follows: 35% their own children, 16% the educator, 14% the director and 12% teacher aides.

There were indicators that the frequency of communication influenced communication patterns. As frequency increased, the following occurred, (1) parents tended to focus on one educator; (2) the educator became the parents' primary source of information; (3) for both parents and educators, communicative attitudes became more positive; (4) for both parents and educators the preference for two-way communication increased; and (5) the complexity of the communication increased, in that the content boundaries broadened to incorporate family-related topics. It would seem that as frequency of communication increases between parent and educator, so does the potential for a consistent, stable and information-sharing relationship.

In a sub-study, Powell (1978 b) examined "the correlates of parent-educator communication frequency and diversity". Lists were developed of parent and teacher variables that appeared to have an impact on the dependent variables of parent-educator communication and diversity. Sixteen variables were considered (seven parent and nine educator). Some of the findings for educators indicated that frequency and diversity of communication were

positively related to (1) the position held on the staff (director or teacher); (2) friendship relations with parents; (3) a child-centered role concept; (4) the attitude that childrearing values should be discussed; and (5) one or two years of formal experience with young children in licensed day care centers. Some of the findings for parents indicated that frequency and diversity of communication were positively related to (1) the attitude that parents and staff should discuss family information; (2) friendships within the parent group; (3) use of the center for six months or less; and (4) being a parent in a two-parent family.

A large number of the parents and educators in this sample, approximately 50% of parents and 70% of educators, indicated dissatisfaction with the frequency and content of communication. This may be due to the fact that most of the communication that took place at transition time did not move beyond the surface level of general greetings and comments. Powell (1978 a) concluded that the parent-caregiver relationship was 'detached', resulting in a lack of coordination between the two groups responsible for promoting the development of young children. He presented a rather pessimistic picture of the state of day care and families today. Powell argued that the boundaries between the settings are solid and far apart, with little room for interaction. He maintained that the family and day care center operate virtually independently of one another,

creating a disjointed world within which the child must live. Although the size of the sample mitigates against broad generalization, it appears that fragmentation and discontinuity are likely unless both parents and educators appreciate the significance of effective communication, and take steps to ensure that such communication takes place.

Smith and Hubbard (1988) expanded on the work of Powell (1977 1978 a and b) by using the ecological framework provided by Bronfenbrenner (1979). They examined the relationship between parent-educator communication and child behavior/adjustment in the early childhood center. The sample consisted of the parents and educators of sixty preschool and kindergarten children and the children themselves who attended a variety of early childhood programs in South Island, New Zealand. Data were collected through the use of interviews and observation. Structured interviews with parents and educators ascertained both their attitudes about staff-parent communication and their perceptions of staff-parent relationships. Observations of children in the early childhood settings determined specific developmental levels.

The results indicated that when parents related well to staff, the children of those parents had more conversations and physical contact with staff. These children also interacted less frequently in a negative way with other children. The authors maintained that the findings of this study provided support for the concept that positive parent-

educator relationships promote positive child development.

This study demonstrates the potential value of parent-educator communication, an attribute that has been assumed for many years without support from research. It represents also the beginning of understanding the significant effects of strong links between the home and the center.

Current Attitudes Towards Parent-Educator Communication

In considering parent-educator communication as a component of early childhood education, it is important to look to sources that base their policies on research. These include government, national organizations, and educator training. During the past three years, the Canadian federal government has been working to develop a national child care strategy (The Task Force on Child Care, 1986; and The Special Committee on Child Care, 1987). In the most recent publication aimed at articulating a Canadian federal policy on child care, Sharing the Responsibility (1987), there is a clear statement of parental role, "Parents have the primary responsibility and can decide how best to care for their children" (p. 1). "Parents are and will remain the principal givers of care" (p. 9). Similarly, the Newfoundland provincial Report to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Early Childhood and Family Education (1983) focused on services working to strengthen the role of the family as the primary influence on the development of the

child and to complement the resources of the family.

The role of early childhood education in relation to the parental role has also been clearly stated at the federal (Lero and Kyle, 1985 and Berger, 1987) and provincial levels (Tudiver, 1984). All have maintained that early childhood programs exist for the support of both children and their parents. In a paper submitted to the Canadian Federal Task Force on Child Care (1984), significant emphasis was placed on the parent-educator relationship by Lero and Kyle (1985):

> Quality child care is care provided by knowledgeable, committed and sensitive caregivers in a milieu that supports their efforts to provide an optimal environment designed to foster children's well-being, development and competence. Care provided in this manner explicitly recognizes the needs of parents for caregiving that supports and strengthens their child-rearing efforts through effective and informative communication and mutual respect. (p. 89)

Recent efforts to identify the components of quality child care have shown the parent-educator relationship to be a significant factor. The position paper, Developmentally Appropriate Practice, issued by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the United States (1986), refers to this relationship as "Relations Between Home and Center" (p. 15). This document clearly outlines the responsibilities of parents and educators to share information with each other and to become knowledgeable about home and center.

The concept of parent involvement has been expanded to include a partnership between parents and early childhood

educators, where the emphasis is on the shared care of young children. Bates (1984) recommended that professionals and caregivers seek a closer alliance with parents in order to gain a better perspective. Both parental involvement and a closer alliance are inextricably linked to an open communication system. Winklestein (1981) concluded: "that informal day care/family interaction is a viable alternative approach to family support when formal parent participation in the day care program is not possible, not practical, or not attractive" (p. 340).

An examination of the early childhood education program recently designed for Newfoundland students enrolled in a two-year program at The Cabot Institute of Applied Arts and Technology indicates the priority given to parent-early childhood educator relationships. According to the Prospectus for Cabot Institute (1988-1990) and discussion with instructors in the early childhood program, students in the program complete four courses that especially focus on family. The decision to involve students in a family studies course each semester of the program is an indication of the importance placed on developing the early childhood educator's concepts and skills in the area of parent-educator relationships. The focus throughout all courses is on developing empathy with and respect for parents. This is done through a variety of approaches that involve students in theoretical work, observation of parents and, most importantly, involvement with parents and other family

members. The goal of practical involvement is to build students' confidence and to develop positive attitudes towards interacting with parents. It is hoped that students will realize that the role of an early childhood educator includes working with children and families.

Summary

The literature seems to confirm the belief that parent-educator relationships can benefit educators, parents, and children when the parents and educators participate in two-way communication. Many early childhood specialists, psychologists, parents, and instructors of early childhood education are currently recommending a relationship that is best described as a partnership in caring for children. Communication between parent and educator is viewed as vital to an effective relationship. Although an effective system of communication is seen as particularly important in providing quality early childhood education, it is not necessarily a process that occurs easily or naturally. The attitude towards communication is of utmost importance, for it seems that effective communication takes place when there is an awareness of the need and a willingness on the part of both parents and early childhood educators to share knowledge and experiences that will contribute to the care of their children. Therefore, the procedures and policies

that directors establish to enable and encourage parents and early childhood educators to communicate on a formal, informal, and day-to-day basis are of significant importance.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain information pertaining to parent-staff communication in licensed early childhood centers on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, a field survey was conducted by means of structured interviews and questionnaires. A population sample of 16 early childhood centers, offering programs primarily focusing on preschool-aged children, was randomly selected from licensed centers on the Avalon Peninsula. This number represented 25 percent of the total number of such licensed centers on the Avalon Peninsula (63). Eighty-five percent of these centers (53) are privately owned and the remaining 15 percent (10) are non-privately owned. The sample of 16 centers was selected to reflect these percentages, with 14 from privately owned and 2 from non-privately owned centers.

An interview was conducted with the director of each of the centers in the sample (See Appendix A for the Interview Schedule). All early childhood teachers on staff were asked to complete a questionnaire, and 50 percent of the parent group from each center were asked to complete mailed questionnaires. The interview schedule for directors and the questionnaires for teachers and parents, in addition to seeking biographical and professional data, contained items that focused on (a) attitudes towards communication between parents and staff, (b) levels of satisfaction with parent-

staff communication (c) practices used for communication between parents and staff.

Procedure

In mid-December 1988, a group of directors, early childhood teachers, and parents, none of whom were directly involved in the field survey, were asked to critically examine the items intended for the relevant instruments. Based on their responses some modifications were made.

The sample of early childhood centers was randomly selected by assigning a number to each center on the listing of licensed centers for the Avalon Peninsula (Department of Social Services, September, 1988). A table of random numbers (Borg and Gall, 1983, Appendix C) was then used to select 16 centers. In mid December, directors of those early childhood centers were contacted by telephone to explain the purpose of the study and to request their participation. All directors agreed to take part and were sent an explanatory letter and a copy of the interview schedule (See Appendix A for letter and interview schedule for director). During the period of January 12 to March 3, 1989 each director participated in a taped interview that lasted a minimum of one hour.

At the time of each interview a covering letter and questionnaire were distributed to all teachers on the center staff, requesting them to return the completed questionnaire

in an enclosed stamped envelope within a ten-day period . This resulted in a total of 52 teachers receiving questionnaires (See Appendix B for letter and questionnaire for teachers). Also, at the time of the interview the directors were asked to distribute a notice to every parent explaining the purpose of the study and giving the parent an option to withdraw from the potential group of parents who would receive a mailed questionnaire (See Appendix C for notice to parents). Five parents, from a total of 639, requested that they not receive a questionnaire. Five days after the interview with a director, fifty percent of the sample of parents was randomly selected from each center. This was done by listing the surnames alphabetically according to the enrollment list of those parents who had not withdrawn and selecting every second name, beginning with the first name on each list. Each of these 317 parents was mailed a covering letter and questionnaire, with a request to return the completed questionnaire in the stamped envelope within a two-week period. The closing date for the last parent questionnaires was March 23, 1989 (See Appendix C for the letter and questionnaire to parents).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data from the field study were obtained by the means of taped interviews, teacher questionnaires, and parent questionnaires. Taped interviews were conducted with each of the directors of 16 licensed early childhood centers that had been randomly selected from centers located on the Avalon Peninsula (See Appendix A for interview schedule for directors). A teacher questionnaire was distributed to all members of the staff of each center, for a total of 52 (See Appendix B for teacher questionnaire). Fifty, or 96 percent, were completed and returned to the examiner. In each of the centers approximately 50 percent of the families, randomly selected, received a questionnaire (See Appendix C for the parent questionnaire). Of three hundred and seventeen questionnaires sent out, 234 were received, for a return of 74 percent.

The analysis and discussion of data are presented as follows: initially a profile is presented for each of the centers, directors and staff of centers, and the parents who have children registered in those centers; following this, an examination is made of the responses of each of the groups (directors, teachers, and parents) to items which focus on parent-staff communication.

Section 1

An Overall Profile of Early Childhood Provision in Sixteen Centers on the Avalon Peninsula

A Profile of the Centers in the Study

With respect to the centers, certain data from the scheduled interviews with the directors are examined. Data from items 1, 2, 3, 10(a), 10(b) and 40 are discussed and presented as a profile of the centers in Table 1.

Item 1

How long has this center been in operation?

Item 2

How many children are registered in this center?

Item 3

How many families are registered with this center?

Item 10(a)

How would you classify your position at this center?

Item 10(b)

Is this center privately or non-privately owned?

Item 40

Do you have a place in the center where parents and a teacher can talk privately?

Information with respect to staff numbers was obtained in consultation with directors. Each staff total includes the director.

Table 1

Profile of the Centers in the Sample

Center	Length of Operation	Total Staff	Children Currently Enrolled	Families Currently Enrolled	Director's Status	Ownership Type
A	2.5 yr.	4	30	27	O-D-T	Private
B	13 yr.	4	32	28	O-D	Private
C	1 yr.	6	55	49	D-T	Private
D	6 yr.	4	53	51	O-D-T	Private
E	3.5 yr.	4	30	26	D-T	Private
F	3.5 yr.	3	45	44	O-D-T	Private
G	9.5 yr.	3	16	13	D-T	Private
H	2.5 yr.	3	40	35	D-T	Private
I	1.5 yr.	8	54	50	D	Non-private
J	6.5 yr.	3	38	36	O-D-T	Private
K	1 yr.	5	23	23	D-T	Private
L	1.5 yr.	3	27	27	O-D-T	Private
M	4 yr.	2	40	35	O-D-T	Private
N	1.5 yr.	3	30	22	D-T	Private
O	21 yr.	5	36	33	D	Private
P	13 yr.	7	65	62	D	Non-private

Note. With respect to the status of the director the following key applies:
D represents director; O-D owner-director;
D-T director-teacher; O-D-T owner-director-teacher

As Table 1 indicates, there is a variation in years of operation from one to 21 years, with an average of five and one-half. About two-thirds of these centers have been established during the past five years, with five of those during the last 18 months. This reflects the general upward trend in the growth of early childhood centers that is occurring on national and provincial levels. According to the Annual Report 1987-88 (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Social Services) and The Compilation of Statistics and Information for the Year 1977-78 (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Social Services), there are presently 90 licensed centers in contrast to 31 in 1976, when licensing with the provincial Department of Social Services first became obligatory. Staff numbers, which include one director, range from two to eight with and an average of four. An examination of the table with respect to ratio indicates wide variation in the teacher-child ratio ranging from 4.6 in Center K to 10 in Center M. However this is not the actual daily ratio as The Day Care and Homemaker Services Act (1975) and Regulations (1982) stipulate that the ratio be as follows: a minimum of one staff member to six children who are aged two years and one staff to eight children who are ages three to six years (Regulation 49.1A and B). The Act also states the maximum number of children who can be accommodated at any one time in a day care center is 50 (Regulation 14). The total number of children and the total number of families in each

center were much the same, indicating that only a small percentage of families have more than one child registered in the center. The centers represent a range in total enrollment from 16 to 65 children, with nine centers having 25 to 40, and four centers having more than 49 children enrolled. On average the centers in the sample seem to work with an average of 30 children at one time. However, as an analysis of the data with respect to enrollment patterns will show (Table 8), there is no uniformity with respect to attendance. More than one-half of parents in the sample use the center five times per week and another 25 percent two days per week, 15 percent three and four times per week and only a small proportion one day. Given these attendance patterns, one can readily appreciate the fact that teachers of the centers are daily interacting with high numbers of parents. Parents whose children are in the center today may not be the same parents whose children were in the center yesterday, again increasing over the weekly pattern the number of parents with whom teachers must interact. Hence the staff of centers interact with a considerably larger number of parents than the daily enrollment would indicate.

Of the 16 centers, 14 are privately owned and 2 are non-privately owned, reflecting the pattern of ownership on the Avalon Peninsula. Of the 14 privately owned centers, one-half have owners who are also the director or director-teacher; in other words, the owners play a significant role in the daily operation of the center. The remaining seven

in this group have directors who have been employed by the owner to take the role of either director or director-teacher. This latter situation is indicative of a recent trend for individuals to establish early childhood centers as small businesses, where the owners are not actively involved in the day-to-day operation. For the most part, directors play the dual role of teacher and administrator, completing much of the adminstration when there is a lull in center activity or after center hours. In the case of the non-privately owned centers, both directors have been employed as director with primarily administrative responsibilities but of necessity include some regular contact with children. It should be noted that the two non-privately owned centers have a governing board that relieves the director of some of the responsibility for operation of the center.

All centers in the sample have a space available for private conversation. However this space serves other functions such as director's office, staff room, kitchen, the owner's living room, or sick room; nevertheless, a private space can be made available for discussion between parents and staff.

A Profile of Directors in the Study

Items 6 and 7 focus on personal information. Findings from these items are discussed and presented in Table 2.

Item 6

In which of the following age categories are you?

Item 7

Are you a parent?

Item 12

What formal training have you had in early childhood education (E.C.E.)?

Item 13(a)
Did you attend university or a post-secondary institution?

Item 13(b)

What degree, certificate, or diploma did you receive other than in early childhood education?

Item 11

How many years have you worked in a licensed early childhood center?

Item 9

How many years have you been director of a licensed center?

Item 8

How many years have you been director of this licensed center?

Table 2 indicates that, at least with respect to the sample included in the survey, directors of centers represent a wide age range, with more than one-half being 35 years or older and about one-third in the 21-25 year old range. Ten of the directors have children of their own, which might contribute to their understanding of the significance of the communication process from both the parental and staff points of view.

Table 2

Profile of Directors

Center	Age	Parental Status	ECE Training	Post-Secondary Education	Other Qualifications	Years Working in a Center	Years as Director of a Center	Years as Director of This Center
A	21-25	No	1 yr. Cert.	Yes	None	4-8	1-3	1-3
B	> 35	Yes	Wkshp/Evg C	Yes	Nursing	9-15	9-15	9-15
C	21-25	No	2 yr. Dip.	Yes	None	< 1	< 1	< 1
D	26-30	No	Workshops	Yes	B.A.(Ed)	4-8	4-8	4-8
E	> 35	Yes	Workshops	Yes	Teacher College	4-8	< 1	< 1
F	> 35	Yes	1 yr. Cert.	Yes	None	4-8	4-8	4-8
G	26-30	Yes	Wkshp/Evg C	No	None	9-15	1-3	1-3
H	21-25	No	Workshops	Yes	B.A.(Ed)	1-3	< 1	< 1
I	21-25	Yes	1 yr. Cert.	Yes	None	1-3	< 1	< 1
J	> 35	No	Wkshp/Evg C	Yes	None	4-8	4-8	4-8
K	> 35	Yes	Evg Courses	Yes	None	1-3	1-3	1-3
L	> 35	Yes	Evg Courses	Yes	Nursing	1-3	1-3	1-3
M	> 35	Yes	1 yr. Cert.	Yes	None	9-15	9-15	4-8
N	21-25	No	1 yr. Cert.	Yes	None	1-3	1-3	1-3
O	> 35	Yes	Workshops	No	None	16-20	1-3	1-3
P	> 35	Yes	Wkshp/Evg C	Yes	None	9-15	9-15	9-15

Fourteen of the directors reported participating in some form of post-secondary education. Since 1984, it has been possible for a limited number of candidates to complete a one-year certificate in early childhood education on a full-time basis. This has been offered through a federally funded program which is delivered by the Community Services Council in St. John's. Indeed, four of the directors have this particular qualification. In 1988, Cabot Institute of Applied Arts and Technology granted the first two-year diplomas in early childhood education in Newfoundland. One of the respondents has such a qualification. Slightly more than one-third of the directors have acquired in-service training through evening courses. This could well be in reference to the series of courses offered by Community Services Council in St. John's since 1984, or by Extension Services at Memorial University from 1971 to 1978. One-quarter of the directors indicated workshops as their primary source of training in early childhood education. This leads to questions, since the number of workshops offered in early childhood education in this province has been relatively few. Under the Day Care and Homemaker Services Act (1975), and Regulations (1982) the Day Care Licensing Board has the authority to attach terms and conditions to the issuing of licenses (Section 21. 1A). This is reflected in current day care regulations stipulating that participation in on-going training of staff be a condition of renewal of licence. It would seem that

this requirement is not being met. However, as previously mentioned, it is just within the past five years that a program of evening courses has been available to early childhood staff, particularly those who are working in the field. To date no evening courses have been taught at Cabot Institute as credits toward the diploma in early childhood education.

Five of the directors have related qualifications: two have a B.A. (Ed.) Primary, two others a nursing credential, and one has a certificate from a teacher training college. This, together with previously mentioned data, reflects the diversity of training among directors. It is only since 1986 that licensing regulations for new centers require one staff member, with appropriate authority, to have minimally one year of supervised work experience or training that is related to preschool children (Day Care and Licensing Requirements, Newfoundland and Labrador, 1986-87, p. 36A). Prior to that, any person who was approved by the licensing board could become director of a center.

It is worth noting that three of the five directors who have related qualifications, identified their main source of training in early childhood education as primarily workshops and not early childhood education courses. This is disturbing, since the knowledge required for offering a developmentally appropriate program for preschool children would necessitate sustained periods of study in programs specifically designed for that purpose and cannot,

therefore, be acquired through workshops only. Even allowing for the fact that directors who have training in other fields can be competent in their role, the programs offered could be that much richer and more appropriate if they had specialized training. Some directors reported feeling that the in-service training presently available does not match their more advanced academic backgrounds and higher levels of experience.

Considered together, the data indicate that about two-thirds of the directors have held their present position for three years or less. This again is a reflection of the recent mushrooming of licensed early childhood centers, as are the findings with respect to the experience of directors. Most of them have had no experience as director other than in their current center, and for about nine of them it represents their only experience of working in a licensed early childhood center. Once again, this underlines the relative newness of early childhood centers in our province and hence the lack of opportunity to have acquired experience before becoming director of a center. It also reflects the fact that experience in the early childhood field has not been a prerequisite for becoming a director of a center in this province. Furthermore, it could indicate high teacher turn-over related to working conditions and low salary incentives attached to this work.

A Profile of the Teachers in the Study

The analysis now focuses on a profile of teachers who work in those centers. Part I, items 1 and 2 on the questionnaire for the teachers deal with personal information. Data are discussed and presented in Table 3.

Part I, Item 1

What was your age at your last birthday?

Part I, Item 2

Are you a parent?

Table 3

Teachers: Age and Parental Status

Age	N	(%)	Parental Status	N	(%)
Under 20 years	3	(6.0)	Yes	24	(50.0)
21-25 years	17	(34.0)	No	24	(50.0)
26-30 years	10	(20.0)			
31-35 years	5	(10.0)			
Over 35 years	15	(30.0)			

The data in Table 3 indicate that about one-half of the teachers on the staffs of early childhood centers in the survey are between the ages of 20-30 years. Another 40 percent of teachers are in the "over 31 years" category, with the majority of that group over the age of 36 years.

The moderately high proportion of young women is perhaps a reflection of the current interest in the field of early childhood education as a career path. It is interesting, but not surprising to note that no men were employed in the early childhood centers included in the sample. However, child development specialists indicate that preschool children are developing gender identity and appropriate sex-typed behaviour through a process of identification (Shaffer, 1985) and it is therefore appropriate that young children have opportunities to interact with males. Research focusing particularly on the relationship between fathers and young children indicates that they have the capability to be as nurturant as mothers, while at the same time interacting with children in ways that are different from women but that promote development (Parke, R. and Sawin, D., 1977). This understanding is recognized in the Act: "efforts shall be made to provide the children with male identification figures while in the day care centre. These efforts may include providing...employment of male personnel" (Regulation 30). Fifty percent of the teachers are parents, a factor which should serve them well in relating to parents of the children attending the center.

Items 4, 5, 6, and 7 deal with the teachers' qualifications. The findings are discussed and presented in Table 4.

Part I, Item 4

What formal training have you had in early childhood education (ECE)?

1. none
2. mainly provincial workshops
3. evening courses in ECE
4. one-year certificate in ECE
5. two-year diploma in ECE
6. university degree in ECE
7. other, please specify

Part I, Item 5

Did you attend university?

Part I, Items 6

Did you receive a degree?

Part I, Item 7

If yes, what degree(s) did you receive?
1. Bachelor of Arts (Education) Primary
2. Bachelor of Arts (Education) Elementary
3. Other, please specify
   Additional information was obtained as to high school graduation and the post-secondary education of the teachers.

As indicated in Table 4, approximately 20 percent of the teachers indicated no formal training in early childhood education, and 4.0% indicated "mainly workshops". These would also have to be considered as having no formal training since the number of workshops provided has been limited. It is only since autumn 1984, that evening courses such as those offered by Community Services Council have been available. Some had been offered earlier by Extension Services at Memorial University, beginning in 1971, but these were discontinued in 1978. Slightly more than 25 percent of the teachers in this sample indicated

Table 4

Teachers: Qualifications

ECE Training	N	(%)	Post-Secondary Experience	N	(%)	Other Qualifications	N	(%)
Mainly workshops	2	(4.0)	Yes	34	(68.0)	None	43	(86.0)
Evening courses	13	(26.0)	No	16	(32.0)	B.A.(Ed.)	3	(6.0)
One-year certificate	10	(20.0)				B.A.	1	(2.0)
Two-year diploma	4	(8.0)				Nursing	3	(6.0)
University degree	0	(0.0)						
Workshops and evening courses	11	(22.0)						
None	10	(20.0)						

participation in evening courses as their main source of training, and another 19.0% included courses as a component of their training in the "other" category. It is encouraging to find that almost 50 percent of the teachers have participated in evening courses in early childhood education. It should be pointed out that from 1984 to 1987, support was offered by the provincial Department of Social Services, through a policy of subsidizing a limited number of teachers per center to take evening courses. Two directors indicated that they were subsidizing the cost of their teachers' attending in-service through evening classes, a policy to be commended. About 30 percent of teachers have completed a formal certificate or diploma in early childhood education. Of those, four have completed the two-year diploma offered by Cabot Institute and the others have completed the one-year program offered by the Community Services Council in St. John's. As is the case with the directors, graduates of these programs are readily finding employment in licensed centers.

The diversity of qualifications among early childhood teachers is again apparent, as it was for the directors. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers have attended a post-secondary institution. Seven of those teachers have a degree, three of which are in education, one is an arts degree, and three are graduated from a school of nursing.

Items 3, 8, and 9 on the teacher questionnaire focus on the work experience of teachers in early childhood centers.

The data are discussed and presented in Table 5.

Part I, Item 3

How many years have you worked in a licensed early childhood center?

Part I, Item 9

How many hours per week do you work in the center?

Part I, Item 8

Are you responsible for supervising other members of the early childhood center's staff?

Table 5

Teachers: Work Experience

Years Working in a Center	N	(%)	Supervisory Responsibilities	N	(%)	Hours per Day in the Center	N	(%)
< 1	15	(30.0)	Yes	15	(30.0)	< 20	5	(10.2)
1-3	21	(42.0)	No	35	(70.0)	21-30	7	(13.2)
4-8	10	(20.0)				> 30	37	(75.5)
9-15	4	(8.0)						
16-20	0	(0.0)						
> 20	0	(0.0)						

Table 5 shows that the largest proportion of teachers, 72.0%, have worked in a center for three years or less, which includes 30.0% who have been working for less than one year. This is once again a reflection of the recent dramatic increase in the number of centers. Three-quarters

of the teachers work more than thirty hours per week, while 14.2% work thirty hours or less, and 10.2% twenty hours or less. Such a variety of employment schedules is necessary for several reasons: it makes the operation of a center more viable financially; it helps meet the needs of different families; it helps to meet the required ratio of adults to children set forth in the provincial day care regulations; and it provides breaks in the work day for staff. Within this sample, 30.0% of teachers have supervisory responsibilities, and the remainder are primarily responsible for working with children.

A Profile of the Parents in the Study

The analysis now focuses on those parents of children registered in the centers, who took part in the study. It will be recalled that one-half of the parents whose children attend the 16 centers were asked to participate in the study.

Part I, Items 1-4 on the questionnaire for parents focus on personal data. The findings are discussed and presented in Table 6.

Part I, Item 1

Which of the child's parents or guardians are you?

Part I, Item 2

What was your age at your last birthday?

Part I, Item 3

What is your marital status?

Part I, Item 4

How many children do you have?

Table 6

Parents: Age, Marital Status, and Number of Children

Respondent's Age			Marital Status of Respondent			Number of Children in the Family		
	N	(%)		N	(%)		N	(%)
< 20	1	(0.4)	Married	193	(83.2)	1	79	(34.0)
21-25	20	(8.5)	Single	15	(6.5)	2	115	(49.4)
26-30	67	(28.6)	Divorced	23	(9.9)	3	28	(12.0)
31-35	88	(37.6)	Widowed	1	(0.4)	> 3	11	(4.7)
> 35	58	(24.8)						

It was requested that the parent having most frequent contact with the center complete the questionnaire. The result was that about 90 percent of the sample were mothers. As shown in Table 6, two-fifths of the parents were in the 31 to 35 year range, with another one-quarter of them in the over 36 year range. Most parents are married, with about one-half having two children.

Items 5-10 deal with the parents' experience of early childhood centers. The data are discussed and presented in Table 7.

Part I, Item 5

How many children do you have attending this center?

Part I, Item 8

How long have you had a child attending this center?

Part I, Item 9

Have any of your other children attended this center?

Part I, Item 10

Have you used any other licenced center for the care of your child or children?

Table 7

Parents: Experience with Licensed Early Childhood Centers

Children per Family Presently in Center	N	(%)	Length of Time at Current Center	N	(%)
1	203	(86.8)	< 1 month	2	(0.8)
2	30	(12.8)	1-4 months	30	(12.8)
> 2	1	(0.4)	5-8 months	98	(41.9)
			9-12 months	23	(9 8)
			1-2 years	58	(24.8)
			> 2 years	23	(9.8)

According to data in Table 7, about 85 percent of the parents have one child attending the center. Nearly one-half of them have been registered with their current center for a 5-8 month period and an almost equal proportion for a longer period of time. In fact, approximately 20 percent of

parents have used their present center for the care of other children in the family and about 30 percent of them reported using other early childhood centers. Hence most parents in the sample have had sufficient time to become familiar with the communication procedures used in their center.

Items 6 and 7 on the questionnaire for parents focus on the attendance pattern arranged by each family in the sample. The results are discussed and presented in Table 8.

Part I, Items 6

How many days per week does your child attend the center? (If you have more than one child registered, please answer this question for the child who attends the most often)

Part I, Item 7

Are these half days or full days?

A picture of attendance patterns is provided by Table 8. It indicates the diversity of child care scheduling both needed and preferred by parents. About one-half of the parents use the center five days per week, including 38.0% whose children are registered for full-day attendance and 15.4% for half-days. The second most popular registration is that of two days per week (23.1%), for either half-day or full-day attendance. Another 11 percent of the children attend for three days a week for either full or half-days. A very small percentage (3.4%) of parents send their child for one day per week. Although it is sensitive to the needs of families, directors indicated this option tends to be

difficult for the children and staff. Twelve families (5.1%) have registered their child for a varying number of days per week and a varying number of hours per day. This arrangement meets the needs of parents who work shifts, attend classes, or are involved in temporary work.

Table 8

Parents: Enrollment Patterns

Number of Days	Full Days N	Full Days (%)	Half Days N	Half Days (%)	Totals N	Totals (%)
5 days per week	89	38.0	36	15.4	125	53.4
4 days per week	4	1.7	4	1.7	8	3.4
3 days per week	14	6.0	13	5.6	27	11.6
2 days per week	18	7.7	36	15.4	54	23.1
1 day per week	2	0.9	6	2.6	8	3.4
Column Totals	127	54.3	95	40.7		
Combinations +			12	5.1		
Grand Total					234	100.0

+ Note. These include children for whom both the number of days per week and the number of hours per day varied.

Part I, Items 14, 15, and 16 deal with the educational backgrounds of the parents in the sample. The findings are discussed and displayed in Table 9.

Part I, Item 14

Did you graduate from high school?

Part I, Item 15

How many years of post-secondary education did you complete?

Part I, Item 16

Are you presently a student?

Table 9

Parents: Educational Background

High School Graduation			Post-Secondary Education			Currently Enrolled as Student		
	N	(%)		N	(%)		N	(%)
Yes	218	(93.6)	None	40	(17.3)	No	198	(84.6)
No	15	(6.4)	1 yr.	62	(26.8)	Part-time	20	(8.5)
			2 yr.	49	(29.2)	Full-time	16	(6.8)
			4 yr.	18	(7.8)			
			> 4 yr.	62	(26.8)			

Data in Table 9 reveal that most parents graduated from high school. About 85 percent indicated that they had participated in post-secondary education, with approximately one-half completing one or two years of post-secondary training. Approximately one-third of the sample have

completed the equivalent of at least a first degree (four years in Newfoundland); in fact a little more than one-quarter have completed five or more years of post-secondary education. One could speculate that more educated parents might be more likely to place their children in early childhood centers. At the same time, it is likely that their educational level would increase their earning power and hence their ability to pay child care fees.

Summary

Tables 10-13 show comparative data with respect to directors, teachers, and parents participating in the study.

Table 10 provides a summary of the age distributions for the three groups. As previously noted, all groups present a wide variation in age; however, there is a higher proportion of parents (62.4%) in the "over thirty year" bracket than teachers (40.0%) and directors (56.3%). This means that parents are frequently interacting with a staff member who is considerably younger than they are.

Table 10

Age Distribution of Groups

Age	Directors N	(%)	Teachers N	(%)	Parents N	(%)
<20 years	0	0.0	3	6.0	1	0.4
21-25 years	5	31.2	17	34.0	20	8.5
26-30 years	2	12.5	10	20.0	67	28.6
31-35 years	0	0.0	5	10.0	88	37.6
>35 years	9	56.3	15	30.0	58	24.8

Table 11

Post-Secondary Education of Groups

Years	Directors N	(%)	Teachers N	(%)	Parents N	(%)
None	2	12.5	16	32.0	40	17.3
1 year	6	37.5	16	32.0	62	26.8
2 years	6	37.5	14	28.0	49	21.2
4 years	2	12.5	3	6.0	18	7.8
> 4 years	0	0.0	1	2.0	62	26.8
Total	16	100.0	50	100.0	231	100.0

The data in Table 11 show that a similar and high proportion of each group graduated from high school. The outstanding difference is with respect to the post-secondary education of the three groups, with a little more than one-

third of parents having attained the equivalent number of years for a first degree and beyond, whereas very small numbers of directors and teachers have such advanced levels of education. It should be noted that one-third of the teachers have no post-secondary education, as is true for 12.5% of directors, and 17.3% of parents. Hence many parents are communicating with staff who are not only younger but also less educated than they themselves are.

Table 12

Directors and Teachers: Training in Early Childhood Education

Training	Directors N	Directors (%)	Teachers N	Teachers (%)
None	0	(0.0)	10	(20.0)
Mainly workshops	5	(31.2)	2	(4.0)
Mainly evening courses	2	(12.5)	13	(26.0)
One-year certificate	4	(25.0)	10	(20.0)
Two-year diploma	1	(6.2)	4	(8.0)
University degree	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)
Workshops and evening courses	4	(25.0)	11	(22.0)

Table 12 shows that very few teachers and directors have completed formal qualifications in early childhood education. Despite the policy of the Department of Social

Services to attach the condition of license to active participation of staff in in-service training throughout the year for which a licence applies, a considerably larger proportion of teachers than directors have taken evening courses. In general, directors perceive these courses to be of much less benefit to themselves--given their experience and/or qualifications--than to their staff members.

Table 13

Directors and Teachers: Work Experience in Early Childhood Centers

Years	Directors N	Directors (%)	Teachers N	Teachers (%)
< 1	1	(6.2)	15	(30.0)
1-3	5	(31.2)	21	(42.0)
4-8	5	(31.2)	10	(20.0)
9-15	4	(25.0)	4	(8.0)
16-20	1	(6.2)	0	(0.0)
> 20	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)

As shown in Table 13, directors tend to have more experience than the teachers. Similar proportions of each group have between one and eight years of experience, whereas a higher proportion of directors have been working in a center for more than nine years.

Part I, Item 10 on the teachers' questionnaire, Part I, Items 11-13(c) on the parents' questionnaire, and items 10 and 11 on the interview schedule for directors focus on the level of friendship between staff and parents and among parents.

Part I, Item 10 on the questionnaire for teachers

Do you have any social contacts with any of the parents of the children in your center? (for example: neighborhood groups, at church, at parties)
yes_____ no_____
If yes, how many parents? ..... _____

Part I, Item 11 on the questionnaire for parents

Before using this center, did you have social contacts (for example, at work, or in the neighborhood) with any of the other parents using this center? .....yes no
If yes, how many parents? .....

Part I, Item 12 on the questionnaire for parents

Before using this center, did you have social contacts, as mentioned in item 11, with any of the teachers at this center? ...yes no
If yes, how many teachers? .....

Part I, Items 13 (a)-(c)

Do you now have social contacts with any of the following:
1. teachers at this center .....yes no
   If yes, how many? .....

2. parents from this center .....yes no
   If yes, how many? .....

3. the director of this center .....yes no

Item 4 on the interview schedule for directors

With how many parents did you have social contacts before their child came to your center?

Item 5 on the interview schedule for directors

With how many parents that use your center do you now have social contacts?

In an extensive study of parent-caregiver relationships in Detroit Michigan, Powell (1977 and 1978) found that 30.6% parents and staff knew each other prior to the child's enrollment, which he considered to be a high proportion. In this current study a slightly higher percentage (36.3%) of parents reported such acquaintance. Approximately one-third of parents reported social contacts with other parents before beginning the center, which substantiates the directors' observation that parents often choose a center where a friend's child is in attendance. Bradbard and Endsley (1980) found this to be among the most common methods used by parents in selecting a day care center. However, taken together, the proportions of directors, teachers, and parents who indicated socialization after enrollment were low. This was particularly true of parents and teachers: 87.9% of parents and 70.0% of teachers indicated no social contact.

Typical Member of Each Group

Based on the data, it is possible to present a profile of a typical member of each group in the sample as follows: The typical director is a woman who is in the under 30 years or over 35 age group and is likely to be a parent herself. She has graduated from high school and has an average of one and-one-half years of post-secondary education. She is not likely to have a qualification in early childhood education,

but probably has attended workshops and some evening courses. She has been involved in early childhood education for about six years. The center of which she is presently director is probably the only center in which she has held that position and she is not likely to have had much experience working in a center before becoming a director. She is most likely to work in a privately owned center where she plays the dual role of director and teacher. The typical early childhood teacher in this sample is between 20 and 30 years of age. She is probably a high school graduate and has about one-and-one-half years of post-secondary education. She is not likely to have a qualification in early childhood education but has probably taken evening courses. She has been working for about three years and is likely to be working for more than 30 hours per week, without supervisory responsibilities. The typical parent in this sample is a mother over 30 years of age who is married and has two children. She graduated from high school and has an average of about two and one-half years of post-secondary education and is not currently a student. She has had one child attending the present center at least three times per week for a minimum of five months.

Section 2

Analysis and Discussion of Attitudes

The attitudes of the population sample toward communication with respect to the early childhood centers are next addressed. Twelve items on the interview schedule for directors were included also in the questionnaires to early childhood teachers and to parents. Eight additional items were common to the questionnaire for teachers and parents. Additional information from directors is included and analyzed where appropriate.

General Attitudes: Parent-Staff Communication

Items 1, 3, 7, 17, and 20 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents and items 29, 31, 27, 43, and 37 on the interview schedule for directors focus on the attitudes of members of each group toward communication between parents and staff. Data are presented in Tables 14-18 with discussion following each table.

Item 1 on the questionnaire for teachers

Parent(s) of the children in my group should keep me informed about important happenings in their child's home life.

Item 1 on the questionnaire for parents

Parents should keep teachers at the center informed about important happenings in the child's home life.

Item 29 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you think that parents should keep teachers informed of important happenings in the child's home?
If yes, please explain why.
If yes, what arrangements, if any, do you make so that this can happen?

Table 14

Information About the Child's Home Life

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	36	72.0	13	26.0	1	2.0	0	0.0
Parents	132	56.5	88	37.6	11	4.7	3	1.3

Table 14 indicates that most teachers and parents consider the sharing of information about the child's home life to be of importance. This supports the earlier findings of Powell (1978). Where there is a difference, it is with respect to the perceived degree of importance. Approximately three-quarters of teachers and only about one-half of parents 'strongly agree'. All directors interviewed indicated a strong 'yes'. It is encouraging to see the level of general agreement on this matter, for it is only with this information that the teacher can obtain a whole picture of the young child. Twelve directors felt that information about the child's home life helped to explain the child's behavior at the center while the others

indicated that knowledge of home life helped them to more effectively solve problems they were experiencing with children. Tizard and Hughes (1984) cite knowledge of home as the key to providing a more developmentally appropriate and relevant program for the individual young child. Although all directors indicated strong agreement for having parents share home information with teachers, they found it difficult to isolate specific arrangements they planned to facilitate this. The majority of responses from directors can be categorized as follows: one-half said they approach the parent when there is a problem or when they are concerned about a child's behavior; about one-third feel they work to create a friendly atmosphere; two directors plan family-staff events to facilitate a more informal relationship between staff and parents, which they in turn hope will encourage parents to confide in staff; and one director indicated that she sees the ability to communicate with adults as an important criterion when hiring new staff members.

Item 3 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents

It is important for teachers to visit children in their homes.

Item 31 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you think that early childhood teachers should make home visits to the children who are in their group? (yes, no) Please comment on your view.

Table 15

Importance of Home Visits

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	3	6.0	6	12.0	28	56.0	13	26.0
Parents	4	1.7	27	11.8	142	62.0	56	24.5

Table 15 indicates a strong negative attitude towards teachers visiting children in their homes, with over 80 percent of teachers and parents disagreeing with this practice and some of these strongly disagreeing. Twelve of the directors said 'no' and, judging from their comments this can be taken as a strong disagreement. Six indicated that it would be an invasion of a family's privacy, as suggested in the following comments: "It's only social workers that go into homes here. It would be very difficult." and "Even the public health nurse can't get in, so why would we?". Another director identified the public's perception of the early childhood teacher as a problem, "Parents don't trust us that far. Early childhood education has not reached that consultative position--parents don't take preschool that seriously". Most directors simply stated, "It is not necessary." Another six indicated that it would be too uncomfortable for staff and parents. Four directors felt that the staff of centers are too tired at

the end of the day to take on further work. However, three of the directors who disagreed with the idea said they would consider doing a home visit if there was a severe problem. Even though the importance of having information about the child's home life (Table 14) was recognized, it appears that a large proportion of the three groups have failed to recognize the advantages of the occasional home visit in building parent-teacher-child relationships. Research throughout the past twenty years indicates that the home visit has the potential to add a dimension that is not possible through other methods of communication. It can build greater feelings of trust and intimacy for all parties--most particularly the young child. Bromberg (1968) concluded the home visit should be chiefly for the child and should convey to parents the interest that the teacher has in their child. When teachers have a feel for what parents are doing with their children at home and why they are doing it, their own strategies can complement and supplement the home efforts (Gordon and Breivogel, 1976). The home visit is a component that is emphasized in the early childhood education diploma program that was recently developed for Cabot Institute. It would seem that graduates of early childhood education will have to extend much effort in convincing center staff and parents of the values and purposes of home visits. The role of home visits by staff will be discussed further when current practices are considered.

Item 7 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents

It is important that parents know what their child does at this center.

Item 27 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you think it is important for staff to share information with parents about the center's program and the child's progress and interests?

Table 16

Importance of Parents Knowing of Center Activities

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	44	88.0	5	10.0	0	0.0	1	2.0
Parents	215	92.3	17	7.3	0	0.0	1	0.4

It is not surprising that there is strong agreement between the two groups that parents should know what their child does at the center (Table 16). All directors indicated absolute agreement that staff should share information about all aspects of the child's experience at the center.

Item 17 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents

Parents should observe their child at the center while the program is in progress.

Item 43 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you think that parents should visit the center while the program is in progress? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain what procedures if any that you have in place to encourage this to happen.

Table 17

Importance of Parental Observation

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	27	55.1	19	38.8	2	4.1	1	2.0
Parents	87	37.7	120	51.9	18	7.8	6	2.6

According to Table 17, about 90 percent of both groups agree that parents should observe at the center while the program is in progress, and teachers tend to feel more strongly about this than do parents. The majority of directors said 'yes', but about one-quarter did not agree with parental observation. Of the 12 directors in agreement, three make no special arrangements to encourage it to happen. A little more than one-half reported having an open door policy, that is, parents can drop in whenever they wish. One director said, "It just happens--it's not planned". Others reported, "It's in our policy--but it's not encouraged because you can lose control of the child." and "I have mixed feelings about it, but I think it's a good idea." On a more positive note, two directors indicated that they put forth special invitations such as encouraging parents to come for lunch whenever they are free to do so and two others reported having special open house days during the year when parents are invited to visit the

program in action. It seems as though observation in the center is left to chance for the most part, and although it is recognized as important by staff and parents, some directors feel uncomfortable with it. The Early Childhood Program Guide, Draft Copy (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1988) cites center visits as valuable, for "parents will gain a new perspective on how their children learn and how they interact with the people and things around them" (p. 85). It is also clear that observation by parents communicates much to them about their child's program and daily activities. The role of parental observation will be discussed further when current practices are considered.

Item 20 on the questionnaires for parents and teachers.

Most teachers are willing to meet with parents after center hours to discuss their child's progress.

Item 37 on the interview schedule for directors

Are teachers at your center willing to spend time after work talking with parents about their child's progress and the program? (yes, no)
If yes, what measures, if any , do you take to facilitate this?

Table 18

Teachers' Willingness to Meet With Parents
After Center Hours

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	20	40.0	18	36.0	9	18.0	3	6.0
Parents +	35	17.1	113	55.1	41	20.0	16	7.8

+ Note. 29 of the parents did not respond to this question.

As indicated in Table 18, a majority of teachers and parents agree that teachers would be willing to meet after center hours. The teachers appear to be the most positive with 40.0% strongly agreeing as compared with a small percentage of parents. It should be noted that 29 parents (12.3%) did not respond to this question, whereas a 'no response' of 3-4 parents per item was more typical throughout the questionnaire. It would seem that a large number of parents did not know the answer to this item, probably because a stated policy does not exist. Parents appear to be unaware of the strong positive attitude that teachers possess in reference to meeting after center hours, or else teachers do not convey their willingness to meet with parents. Perhaps there is no precedent in most centers for this to take place. Eleven directors agreed that teachers would be willing to meet with parents after hours.

However, their comments indicated that they are reluctant to ask teachers to do so. None have specific measures in place that would encourage this type of contact. Remarks by two parents indicated their views on this issue along with a solution: "No. It's their time off" and "No underpaid, hard working teacher should have to do this. But regularly scheduled, one-to-one conferences for which the teachers get paid would be ideal." They view parent-teacher meetings as a measure to be taken mainly if there is a problem, as is reflected in the following comments by a parent, "A willingness is not apparent, but I have never needed to make an appointment." and "It's not necessary!"

Summary of Attitudes Toward Parent-Staff Communication

In general, it can be said that a positive attitude toward parent-teacher communication prevails among directors, teachers, and parents. All groups recognize that parents should be informed about their child's experiences in an early childhood program. A majority of parents and teachers indicate agreement for this being accomplished in part by parental observation in the center. Although a majority of directors agree, they show a reluctance to plan measures that would encourage this to occur. As a result, opportunities for parental observation are mainly left to chance.

All groups definitely recognize the importance of parents providing information about the child's home life. The majority of directors link this type of information with assisting staff to work more effectively with children. Yet, once again, in most cases they have not developed specific measures that would ensure sharing of home information on a regular basis. It was the opinion of most directors that this kind of communication is necessary when children are experiencing or causing problems.

Teachers, directors, and parents are strongly opposed to teachers making home visits to children and families. Directors' responses indicated that few had thought of the home visit as a beneficial or pleasurable experience, but rather as a measure to be taken in the case of severe problems or where parents lacked telephone and transportation services. A majority of all groups feel that teachers would meet after hours to discuss children's progress, although there are no policies in place to ensure that this would happen.

Attitudes: Value Placed on Parent-Staff Communication

Items 2, 8, 9, 11, and 16 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents and items 30 and 32 on the interview schedule for directors focus on the value that each group places on parent-teacher communication, and the degree to which teachers and parents of young children rely on each

other as resources in their respective child care roles. Data are discussed and presented in Tables 19-23.

Item 2 on the questionnaire for teachers

When I have experienced problems with a child, talking with that child's parents has been helpful.

Item 2 on the questionnaire for parents

When I have experienced problems with my child at home talking my child's teacher was helpful.

Item 30 on the interview schedule for director

Do parents and teachers at your center generally consult with each other when experiencing problems in the care of their children? (yes, no)

Table 19

Communication: When Problems Occur

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	28	56.0	22	44.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Parents +	64	29.2	115	52.5	34	15.6	6	2.7

+ Note. 15 parents did not respond to this question.

According to the data in Table 19, all teachers and many parents have found the other party helpful when experiencing problems related to a child. On the whole, however, teachers tend to express this more strongly, with one-half of them, as compared with one-third of the parents, strongly agreeing. In fact almost 20 percent of parents

disagree that talking with their child's teacher has been helpful in dealing with a child-related problem. Many parents did not respond to this item, with some of them writing comments such as "I don't know because I haven't had any problems." Fifteen directors definitely feel that consultation is frequently initiated by teachers with parents, whereas fewer of them feel parents seek such consultation with teachers.

Item 16 on the questionnaire for teachers
My relationship with the child's parent(s) has an effect on the way I interact with the child.

Item 16 on the questionnaire for parents
The relationship I have with my child's teacher affects the way the teacher interacts with my child.

Item 32 on the interview schedule with directors

Do you feel the relationship between the parent and teacher has an effect on the way the early childhood staff interacts with the child? (yes, no)
Please comment further.

Table 20

Perceived Effect on Child of the Parent-Teacher Relationship

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	4	8.0	13	26.0	13	26.0	20	40.0
Parents	42	18.5	69	30.4	79	34.8	37	16.3

Data in Table 20 indicates that about one-third of teachers and one-half of parents think the parent-teacher relationship has an effect on the way teachers interact with children. A total of 10 directors agree, two of whom said, "it's only human nature". Seven of these directors claimed that unconsciously this relationship does influence teacher-child interactions and another two claimed that it takes a more concentrated effort to work well with children when there is an unpleasant relationship between staff and parent. These opinions tend to concur with the recent work of Smith and Hubbard (1988) who found that where there was more parent-staff communication, and it was more balanced, warm and reciprocal, preschool children were more likely to be close to teachers and were perceived by staff to be better adjusted.

Two-thirds of teachers and one-half of parents disagree. Six directors feel it does not affect the staff interactions with children because it is a policy that all children be treated the same at the center. The fact that such a high percentage of teachers see the parent-teacher relationship as having little effect might be a cause for concern.

Item 8 on the questionnaires for both teachers and parents.

The children who receive better child care are those whose teachers and parents communicate regularly.

Table 21

Perceived Effect of Parent-Teacher Communication on the Quality of Child Care

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	14	28.0	13	26.0	10	20.0	13	26.0
Parents	113	49.3	60	26.2	35	15.3	21	9.2

The data in Table 21 indicate that while about one-half of teachers agree that the children who receive better child care are those whose teachers and parents communicate regularly, three-quarters of the parents agree. In fact, close to one-half of the parents strongly agree, in contrast to slightly more than one-quarter of teachers. It seems that parents more clearly perceive a link between parent-teacher communication and quality child care than do the teachers. According to the Position Statements on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (NAEYC, 1986), High Quality Child Care Statement issued by the Association of Early Childhood Education for Ontario (AECEO), 1988, and Early Childhood Program Guide (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1988), parent-teacher communication has been identified as a significant factor in quality child care.

Item 9 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents.

Most teachers know more about how children develop than most parents do.

Table 22

Perception of Teachers' Knowledge of Child Development

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	3	6.0	27	54.0	18	36.0	2	4.0
Parents	12	5.2	69	29.7	93	40.0	58	25.0

Parents and teachers differ in their opinions about how knowledgeable the latter are with respect to child development (Table 22). Sixty percent of teachers believe they know more about how children develop than parents do. Only one-third of parents agree. In fact one-quarter of parents strongly disagree that this is the case. The parents' assessment of the teachers' level of knowledge of child development is less than the teachers' self-assessment. Once again, this might be associated with age and education differences among the two groups (Tables 10 and 11). But it may also be linked to the methods by which teachers demonstrate to parents that they are knowledgeable about child development. This underlines once again the importance of methods of parent-staff communication which are practised in an early childhood center.

Item 11 on the questionnaire for teachers

Parents of the children in my group can provide me with helpful hints on how to work with their children.

Item 11 on the questionnaire for parents

My child's teacher(s) can provide me with helpful hints on what to do with my child at home.

Table 23

Parents' and Teachers' Perception of Each Other as Resource Persons

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	26	52.0	21	42.0	3	6.0	0	0.0
Parents	38	16.6	122	53.3	57	24.9	12	5.2

As indicated in Table 23, most teachers feel that parents can help them in child care, whereas only 70 percent of parents feel that is the case with teachers. In fact, of those who agree, 52.0% of teachers and only 16.6% of parents 'strongly agree'. It would suggest that teachers place greater value on parents as resource persons than parents place on teachers.

Summary of Value Placed on Parent-Staff Communication

The data related to the perception that parents and teachers have with respect to their mutual helpfulness in

child care show that: A majority of teachers have found parents helpful when experiencing problems with a child, whereas the reverse is true for parents. A considerably larger proportion of teachers than parents feel strongly that this is the case. A majority of parents, and an even higher proportion of teachers, feel the parent-teacher relationship does not have an influence on interactions between teachers and children. However, most directors hold the opposite view. A much higher proportion of parents than teachers perceive a positive relationship between parent-teacher communication and quality child care. Parents and teachers do not agree on the teachers' knowledge of child development; a majority of teachers feel they know more about child development than do parents, while the reverse is true for parents. These findings indicate that parents and teachers have not yet formed the ideal 'supportive link' as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Attitudes: Perception of Responsibility for Communication

Items 6, 13, 10, and 19 on the questionnaires for both teachers and parents and items 26, 41, 25 and, 28 (a) (b) on the interview schedule for directors focus on the perceived responsibility that each group accepts in the area of communication. The data are discussed and presented in Tables 24-27.

Item 6 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents

It is primarily the teacher's job and not the director's, to explain the center's program to parents.

Item 26 on the interview schedule for directors

With whom should the parents primarily talk about the center's program? (the director or the child's teacher)

Table 24

Perceived Responsibility of Teachers to Explain the Center's Program

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	5	10.4	8	16.7	26	54.1	9	18.9
Parents	24	10.4	83	35.9	82	35.5	42	18.2

It can be seen from Table 24 that a small percentage of the teachers believe it their responsibility to explain the center's program to parents compared to almost one-half of the parents. When the directors were asked to decide who should be primarily responsible, six directors selected the teachers, while another eight indicated this should be an equally shared responsibility, since teachers and directors work so closely in all aspects of child care. Although the term 'program' can be interpreted in many ways, any definition would include explanation of the philosophy and activities and so should logically be viewed as the

teachers' responsibility, since it is they who deliver the program.

Item 13 of the questionnaires for teachers and parents

It is mainly the teacher's job and not the director's to keep parents of the children in her group informed about their child's progress.

Item 41

Do you feel that teachers should consider communicating with parents about their child's progress as part of the job of an early childhood teacher? (yes, no)

Item 25 on the interview schedule for directors

With whom should the parents primarily talk about the child's progress? (the director or the child's teacher)

Table 25

Perceived Responsibility to Discuss the Child's Progress

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	25	51.0	16	32.7	5	10.2	3	6.1
Parents	75	32.6	115	50.0	29	12.6	11	4.8

When it came to talking with parents about the child's progress, however, as Table 25 shows, a high percentage of teachers and parents agree that it should primarily be the responsibility of teachers. One-half of the directors felt that it should be a shared responsibility. Two of the directors indicated that staff should only be responsible

for either explaining the program or discussing progress, if they have training and experience. It seems that teachers view communicating about the child's progress as a more significant part of their responsibility than explaining the program, and they view this more within their domain than that of the director's. One might argue that discussion of program and progress are interrelated.

Item 10 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents

Parents should tell their child's teacher the expectations they have for their child in the center.

Table 26

Perceived Responsibility of Parents to Explain Their Expectations for Their Child

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	14	28.0	21	42.0	10	20.0	5	10.0
Parents	59	25.3	126	54.1	44	18.9	4	1.7

The majority of teachers and a high percentage of parents agree that parents should express the expectations they have for their child in the center. The parents' response matches well current recommendations in the literature that parents take an active role in developing quality child care through monitoring and influencing the

program for their own child (Fein, 1980; Lero and Kyle, 1984; Elkind, 1986; and Fenn, 1987).

Item 19 on the questionnaires for teachers.

Parents should explain to me how they are raising their child.

Item 19 on the questionnaires for parents.

Parents should explain to their child's teacher(s) how they are raising their child.

Table 27

Perceived Responsibility of Parents to Explain Their Child Rearing Techniques

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	20	40.0	18	36.0	9	18.0	3	6.0
Parents	28	12.3	93	41.0	74	32.6	32	14.0

Table 27 indicates that a majority of parents and a higher proportion of teachers agree with this statement; teachers tend to feel more strongly about this than do the parents. Yet one-quarter of teachers and almost one-half of parents disagree that parents should explain their child rearing strategies. This is unfortunate, for the sharing of such information by parents works to minimize potential conflicts and confusion for children, or as Powell (1977 and 1978) has termed it, "discontinuity". It might be that the

statement was interpreted to convey the belief that parents should explain literally everything they do as part of raising their children. Perhaps the statement ought to have referred to significant child raising practices.

Summary of Perceived Responsibility to Communicate

The data suggest that a high proportion of teachers and parents view discussing the child's progress as primarily the teachers' responsibility and not that of the director. Most directors indicated that the staff members who know the child best should take that responsibility, whether it be director or teacher. Responsibility for discussion of the program is less clear. A high proportion (46.3%) of parents feel it should be the teacher's responsibility, whereas only a small percentage of teachers agree. Directors voiced the opinion again that it should be primarily a shared responsibility. A high percentage of parents feel that the teacher should be able to answer all their questions whether related to progress or program. Teachers, for the most part, do not agree. This has the potential to cause considerable confusion for parents, particularly if it is a large center where parents mainly have contact with the teacher. Teachers and parents feel that the latter should take the responsibility to explain the expectations they have for their child in the center. At the same time, a significant proportion (46.6%) of parents do not feel that

they should explain their child rearing strategies to teachers.

Attitudes: Satisfaction with Parent-Staff Communication

Items 5, 12, 14, 18, and 21 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents and items 38, 39, and 28 (a) (b) on the interview schedule for directors address the measure of satisfaction which the three groups experience with both the quantity and quality of current communication practices. The data are discussed and appear in Tables 28-32.

Item 5 on the questionnaire for teachers

Parents give me sufficient information about their child's home life.

Item 5 on the questionnaire for parents

Teachers give me sufficient information about my child's program at the center.

Table 28

Degree of Satisfaction with Supplied Information

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	3	6.0	30	60.0	14	28.0	3	6.0
Parents	90	38.8	114	49.1	27	11.6	1	0.4

From Table 28 it can be seen that two-thirds of the teachers agree that parents provide sufficient information

about the child's home life. It should be recalled that in Table 14, about 90 percent of parents agree that they should keep teachers informed about the child's home life but it is the opinion of about one-third of teachers that parents are not doing so. A high percentage of parents believe they receive sufficient information about the child's program at the center. This is a most positive finding, because sufficient information has the potential to not only decrease stress but also contribute to developmentally appropriate child care, whether at home or in a center (Position Statements on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, NAEYC, 1986).

Item 18 on the questionnaire for teachers.

I feel that parents and I talk enough about their child's home life.

Item 18 on the questionnaire for parents

I feel that my child's teacher(s) and I talk enough about my child's home life.

Table 29

Satisfaction with Time Spent in Discussion of the Child's Home Life

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	4	8.2	24	49.0	18	36.7	3	6.1
Parents	64	27.7	118	51.1	36	15.6	13	5.6

The data in Table 29 show that the majority of teachers and a high proportion of parents agree that they talk enough about the child's home life. Parents are definitely more satisfied than are teachers. In fact, 42.8% of the teachers are dissatisfied with the amount of time that is spent in discussing the child's home life, whereas only 21.2% of parents show dissatisfaction. This serves to reinforce the data in Table 28--in general teachers appear to be less satisfied with the quantity and quality of information supplied by parents about the child's home life than are the parents. As one director commented, "Sometimes you're working with a child and you don't know anything about the home." This was particularly highlighted in the interviews with directors. Six of them spontaneously commented on the difficulties they experience in obtaining information about the home life and background of children whose attendance at the center is subsidized by the Department of Social Services. The following statements made by two of the directors serve to represent part of the problem as they saw it, "Parents of subsidized children are often hard to reach--often no phone. They don't seem to want to talk, I think they feel they're below us" and "We don't have enough information on subsidized children. I know parents are not comfortable talking to us but I think where we are caretakers of that child we do have a right to know". A second aspect of the problem seems to center around a lack of in-depth communication with social workers and parents of

children who are subsidized to attend centers for specific reasons other than poverty. One director commented, with reference to her dealings with social workers from The Department of Social Services, "It's like there is a secrecy. I think they question our ability to care for these children--but we <u>are</u> asked to do it!", and another director said, "We don't get information on these children. There have been things that concern us, but had we known there was abuse we would have paid more attention. We need to know the problems." Still another director added, "No information of the special circumstances and background is provided and this causes a lot of difficulties for us."

It is obvious that significant problems of communication exist among centers, parents, and social workers. This is leading to frustration for the staff of centers and must of necessity influence the quality of education and care that some children are experiencing. While confidentiality is a special concern in these cases, social workers must approach centers where they know this will be respected, and the staff of centers must learn to handle such information in a professional manner. Special efforts need to be made by directors and social workers to involve parents of these children in an initial orientation program that begins parent-staff communication. At the same time, directors must determine and enforce orientation policies, which will ensure they have adequate information before accepting a child into their center.

Item 28 (a) and (b) on the interview schedule for directors.

In your experience do parents share with teachers on your staff information about: (a) their child (b) their family situation?

Fifteen directors indicated that parents generally share information with teachers about their child, while thirteen said that parents discuss matters relating to the family with teachers. Four directors felt this type of sharing of information varies considerably each year according to the personalities of parents and staff.

Item 21 on the questionnaire for teachers

The parents of the children in my group and I talk enough about their children's progress at the center.

Item 21 on the questionnaire for parents

My child's teacher(s) and I talk enough about my child's progress at the center.

Item 39 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you think that parents and teachers talk enough about their children's progress at your center? (yes, no)

Table 30

Satisfaction With Amount of Discussion About Child's Progress

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	12	24.0	27	54.0	9	18.0	2	4.0
Parents	72	31.4	116	50.6	32	14.0	9	4.0

The findings in Table 30 show that about 80 percent of teachers and parents agree that they talk enough about the child's progress at the center. It is also the opinion of the same percentage of directors that sufficient time is spent in this area. A parent volunteered the following positive opinion: "Staff are always concerned and available," while two others indicated a positive but reluctant attitude in these statements: "Teachers generally need to be approached first--parents must ask first!" and "When the teacher is approached on the subject". There were some negative comments, such as: "I am very dissatisfied with communication between parents and teachers for I feel that they do not really even know my child", and, "I found that when I do inquire about how my child is doing they just say, 'oh, fine'. Nothing is volunteered from the teacher."

Item 12 on the questionnaire for teachers

I have sufficient opportunities to talk with parents of the children in my group.

Item 12 on the questionnaire for parents

I have sufficient opportunities to talk with my child's teacher(s).

Item 38 on the interview schedule for directors

Are you satisfied with the number of opportunities that exist for communication between parents and your staff? (yes, no)

Table 31

Satisfaction With Opportunities for Parent-Staff Communication

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	16	32.0	26	52.0	6	12.0	2	4.0
Parents	91	39.2	117	50.4	19	8.2	5	2.2

It can be seen from Table 31 that high percentages of teachers and parents agree there is sufficient opportunity for parent-teacher communication. Still, a slightly higher proportion of parents than teachers are very satisfied. Thirteen directors responded 'yes' to this question. Parents and staff seem to be saying for the most part there are enough opportunities for the two groups to communicate. One parent commented, "I am grateful that when I initiate conversations, the teachers do take time to pause from work and talk; however, one does tend to feel one is taking their time".

Item 14 on the questionnaire for teachers

It is possible to keep in touch regularly with parents of the children in my group.

Item 14 on the questionnaire for parents

It is possible to keep in touch regularly with my child's teacher(s) at the center.

Table 32

Satisfaction With Opportunities for Regular Parent-Teacher Communication

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	18	36.0	27	54.0	5	10.0	0	0.0
Parents	129	56.3	90	39.3	7	3.1	3	1.3

A high proportion of teachers and parents in this sample agree that it is possible to keep in regular contact with each other (Table 32). However, when the 'strongly agree' category is examined, parents are more satisfied than are teachers in this respect.

Summary of Satisfaction with Parent-Staff Communication

The data focusing on the degree of satisfaction with parent-teacher communication as experienced primarily by teachers and parents are summarized as follows: The majority of teachers and parents are satisfied with both the quantity and quality of parent-teacher communication. However, there are more teachers than parents who are dissatisfied. In general, a higher percentage of parents are more satisfied than are teachers.

Attitudes: Satisfaction as Experienced by Centers with More Parental Respondents

In order to further examine satisfaction levels, centers having a minimum of ten parental respondents were compared. Fewer than ten respondents could produce unreliable results for the comparison of centers. This resulted in eleven centers undergoing further examination. The average score on items relating to satisfaction (Items: 12, 14, 18, 5, 21) was calculated for teachers and parents at each center. These scores were then ranked from the most satisfied to the least satisfied. The overall average ranking on the five items was determined for teachers and parents in each center (See Appendix D, Tables 45 and 46 for the satisfaction of both teachers and parents). A combined satisfaction rating for each center in the sub-sample was found by averaging the ranks for the teachers' and the parents' satisfaction. The data are presented in Table 33. In all cases, the letter identifying each center was omitted to ensure the confidentiality of teachers' and parents' responses. This sub-sample will be used later in the study when further inter-center comparisons are made.

Of the 11 centers included in this sub-sample, nine show very similar rankings for parents' and teachers' satisfaction. In other words, in the top ranking centers parents and teachers show similar and higher levels of satisfaction with communication, and centers in the lower rankings tend to have parents and teachers who show similar

Table 33

Parents and Teachers: Combined Satisfaction with Communication, for Centers with More Parental Respondents

Center's Overall Rank	Satisfaction		Overall Average
	Teacher	Parents	
1	1	2	1.5
2	4	1	2.5
3	4	2	3.0
4	3	4	3.5
5	2	6	4.0
6	4	5	4.5
7	7	8	7.5
8	9	7	8 0
9	8	9	8.5
10	10	10	10.0
11	11	10	10.5

and lower levels of satisfaction. These data will be referred to later in the study.

Attitudes: Arrival and Departure Times

Items 4 and 15 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents and items 34, 33, 36, and 35 on the interview schedule for directors deal with the two occasions when parents have the opportunity for daily contact, that is the time when parents are dropping off and picking up their child at the center. The data are presented in Tables 34 and 35 with discussion following.

Item 4 on the questionnaire for teachers

Generally, a good time to talk with parents about their child's progress is when they drop off their child at the center.

Item 4 on the questionnaire for parents

An appropriate time for me to talk with my child's teacher(s) is when I drop off my child at the center.

Item 34 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you feel that the time when parents drop off their child at the center is a good time for staff to talk with parents about the child's progress and program? (yes, no)
If yes, what arrangement do you make, if any, so that this can happen?

Table 34

Perceived Appropriateness of Drop-off Time for Parent-Staff Communication

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	5	10.2	20	40.8	17	34.7	7	14.3
Parents	41	17.7	116	50.2	44	19.0	30	13.0

Table 34 reveals that about one-half of teachers and two-thirds of parents consider drop-off time to be a good time to talk with each other, and four directors agree. Neither teachers nor parents tend to 'strongly agree' with this statement. Since the word 'progress' was inadvertently omitted from the item for the parents, they were responding to a different item. However, there are some differences between directors and teachers on this issue. Of the 12 directors who disagree, five said that parents are in too much of a rush to talk, five indicated that the staff are too busy in the morning with setting up activities and supervising children. In two cases the directors said that they do not have a full complement of teachers until all of the children are present, which means staff are available to talk. Four directors feel that drop-off time is only appropriate for a brief passing comment.

Of the four directors who said 'yes', two feel that drop-off is a good time since it is a time when arrangements

are being made for the day and it is a natural time for parents and staff to talk about the interests of the child. These directors also see it as a logical time for parents to offer staff suggestions for the care of their child that day. Another director said that children tend to run off to play and are not as anxious to be with the parent as they tend to be at departure time. Ten of the directors said that no special arrangements are in place to facilitate discussion or contact between parents and staff at drop-off time, while in three of the centers a definite arrangement is made to have the director present at drop-off time so that she is available to talk with parents. One director indicated that the program is set up so that children are involved in free play which, she said, allows the staff greater freedom to chat if necessary, and in two centers a specific staff member is assigned to greet parents and children during the arrival time in the morning. It seems, then, that drop-off time in the morning is a time in the majority of centers for which there is no special planning. In order to gain further insight into drop-off time, the following question was asked of the directors.

Item 33 on interview schedule for directors

Describe generally what happens during the time when parents are dropping their child off at your center.
What do you expect of parents?
What do you expect of teachers?
What do you expect of yourself, as director?

All directors identified the same events and activities. They all expect parents to come into the

center, help the child undress, and talk briefly to staff. Unlike Powell (1978), who found that 30 percent of the parents dropped off children and did not enter the center with the child, in this study all directors stated it is an absolute policy that parents come into the center when leaving a child. Four centers include a sign-in book as part of the arrival procedure. All directors expect staff to greet the child and parents as they arrive and to engage in informal conversation while helping the child get started. These expectations demonstrate an awareness of drop-off as a time for parent-teacher communication, but it can be seen from the previous discussion that in only six of the centers is there a formal plan in place for drop-off time. This is not entirely surprising, as data reported earlier demonstrated that a high percentage of directors do not view drop-off as a good time to communicate with parents (Table 34). Arrival time will be the focus of further discussion when current practices are considered.

Item 15 on the questionnaire for teachers

A good time for me to talk with parents about their child's progress is when they pick up their child from the center.

Item 15 on the questionnaire for parents

A good time for me to talk with the teacher(s) about my child's progress is when I pick up my child from the center.

Item 36 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you think that the time when parents pick up their child from the center is a good time for staff and parents to talk about their child's progress and program? (yes, no)
If yes, what arrangements, if any, do you make to encourage this?

Table 35

Perceived Appropriateness of Pick-up Time for Parent-Staff Communication

	Strongly Agree		Mostly Agree		Mostly Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teachers	7	14.0	33	66.0	6	12.0	4	8.0
Parents	70	30.6	93	40.6	49	21.4	17	7.4

Table 35 shows that 80.0% of teachers and 71.2% of parents consider pick-up time to be a good time to discuss the child's progress. Almost one-third of parents 'strongly agree', which is about twice the proportion of teachers in that category. Eleven directors responded 'yes'. It would seem that the majority of directors and teachers identify departure time as considerably better than arrival time to communicate with parents. However, parents seem not to differentiate greatly between the two times. The directors feel that most parents are too rushed at arrival time to communicate with teachers. Perhaps it is really the staff who are too rushed, due to multiple duties, and in some cases under-staffing.

Of the directors who agree that pick-up time is a good time for discussion, six reported that parents have more time to talk, four said it is more logical to talk at the end of the day because the day's activities provide a good basis for conversation, while two directors indicated that

children are occupied and it is easy to have a conversation with parents. In the case of the group of directors who disagree that pick-up is a good time for talking, two said the staff are too busy clearing up and supervising children. Other reasons given included: the children are anxious to leave; everyone is too tired; and it is not possible to discuss progress or the program in-depth with the children present. However, there does appear to be more specific arrangements in place to facilitate conversation between parents and staff at pick-up time than were apparent at drop-off time. Ten directors indicated that they are present at that time of the day either to substitute for staff or to interact with parents, and six of them arrange the program so that children are involved in activities that do not require a great deal of supervision by staff. In two cases a specific staff member has the responsibility for seeing children and parents leave. One director indicated that the arrangement of her room is set up with seating near the door to encourage parents and staff to talk, and another indicated that she attempts to arrange to have her volunteers come at the end of the day. Three directors indicated that no special arrangements are in place to facilitate communication at pick-up time. In order to gain further insight into departure time the directors were asked the following question:

Item 35 on interview schedule for directors

Describe generally what happens when parents are picking up their
child from the center.
What do you expect of parents?
What do you expect of teachers?
What do you expect of yourself as director?

For the most part, directors expect parents to come into the building and help their child dress to go home. In four cases parents are also expected to sign the child out. Twelve of the directors expected teachers on their staff to help the child prepare to go home and to chat informally with parents, while four of them feel that teachers should mainly supervise the children who are remaining. Ten of the directors feel that they themselves should assist the child at departure time and also be available to talk with parents, whereas three of them see their role as identical to that of the teachers. One director definitely sees her role as one of relieving teachers so that the latter can have a talk with parents, if necessary. Discussion will again focus on departure time when practices are considered.

Directors' Approaches to Parents who Do Not Accompany Their Children to the Center

Items 18 and 19 on the interview schedule for directors focused on those parents who do not pick up and drop off their child and therefore do not have the opportunity to make daily contact with the staff of the center. The data are presented in Table 36 and discussion follows.

Item 18 on the interview schedule for directors

Are any of the children attending your center transported by a taxi or bus service? (yes, no)
If yes, to what percentage of your children does this apply? (about 10%, about 25%, about 50%, and about 75%)
Do you have regular contact with parents of those children? (yes, no)
If yes, how do you accomplish this?
If yes, during a one-month period how many times would contact occur with parents of these children?

Item 19 on the interview schedule for directors

Are any of the children attending your center transported regularly by someone other than the parent, for example a baby-sitter?
If yes, to what percentage of your children does this apply? (about 10%, about 25%, about 50%, about 75%)
Do you have regular contact with parents of those children? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain the method(s) used.
If yes, during a one-month period how many times would contact occur with parents of these children?

Table 36

Children Who Are Transported Daily by Taxi or Bus Service

Status	Number of Respondents	Percent
None	4	25.0
About 10%	7	43.8
About 25%	4	25.0
About 50%	0	00.0
About 75%	1	6.2
Total	16	100.0

The data in Table 36 indicate that 12 of the 16 centers have some children who are transported daily by a hired taxi

or bus service. Six directors said that contact is mainly initiated and maintained by the staff making telephone calls and writing notes, while four suggested it is basically the parents who call and write short notes that are delivered by the child or driver. Two directors said it is initiated by parents and teachers, and one said no means of regular contact had been established. One-half of the directors reported having contact with these parents at least four times per month, and five others indicated less contact time. One director reported no regular contact with these parents. A high proportion of the directors indicated that the parents who use a transportation service and also do not have a telephone pose the most difficult problem in terms of communication. It is obvious that this particular group of parents and their children are a real cause for concern when it comes to communication, and only a concerted effort on the part of the directors leads to regular contact. There do not appear to be policies in place that would ensure regular contact.

In response to item 19, no directors reported having children who were regularly transported by someone other than the parent or a hired transportation service.

Summary of Attitudes Towards Arrival and Departure Times

Although it is obvious that directors expect communication to take place at these two times during the day, both directors and teachers identify departure time as

considerably better than arrival time to communicate with parents about their child's program and progress. Directors feel that parents are in too much of a rush at that time of the day. However, about 70 percent of parents selected both times as good--they seem not to differentiate greatly between arrival and departure for communication. Most directors indicated that they have plans in place to facilitate parent-staff communication at pick-up time but did not indicate the same planning for drop-off-time.

The majority of centers have children who are transported by a paid service. All directors indicated a concern for regular contact with the parents of these children and indicated that it would take a special effort to do so. However there does not appear to be a procedure that would facilitate this in most centers. Of the 12 directors who have children who are transported, only one-half reported having staff who initiate contact by telephone and notes.

Section 3

Analysis and Discussion of Current Practices with Reference to Communication Between Parents and Staff

The directors, teachers, and parents were asked to indicate from an identical list the practices that are being used in their center for parent-staff communication. All respondents were offered an 'other' category and, again, the directors were invited to add more information. Additional information from directors will be included and analyzed where appropriate. These data are presented in Table 37 and discussed.

Item 20 (1-21) on the interview schedule for directors

Part III Item 1 (1-21) on the questionnaires for teachers and parents

Please circle yes or no.

1. Are any of the following methods of parent-teacher communication used at your center?

<u>Written information:</u>

1. booklet about program .....yes no
2. notices on the wall .....yes no
3. monthly program calendars .....yes no
4. newsletters .....yes no
5. notes from staff .....yes no
6. developmental records .....yes no

<u>Spoken Information:</u>

7. telephone calls .....yes no
8. chats with staff at drop-off .....yes no
9. chats with staff at pick-up .....yes no
10. night meetings .....yes no
11. parent-teacher conferences .....yes no
12. home visits by staff .....yes no
13. observation in the center by parent.....yes no
14. participation in program by parent.....yes no

<u>Social Situations:</u>

15. open house .....yes no
16. parties or family gatherings .....yes no

Special Methods:

17. video tapes of your center .....yes no
18. slides of your center .....yes no
19. photographs of your program .....yes no
20. other .....yes no
21. If other, please specify _____.

Table 37 shows considerable variation among the responding groups with reference to the use of program information booklets. About 60 percent of the parents indicated use of a program booklet by their center, while slightly more than one-third of teachers and two directors indicated such a use. This discrepancy may be caused in part by different ways of defining a booklet. Information from directors and the materials collected by the researcher indicated that three centers provide a flyer or brochure, two directors have developed a formal booklet, ten centers distribute a number of individual sheets on various aspects of the program, and two directors do not provide information of any type on the program.

As expected, a large percentage of each group indicated posted notices as a commonly used means of communication from staff to parents. Although it was decided not to use a formal observational checklist during the interviews with directors, it was noted that most centers showed no evidence of a clearly designated area of wall space or an identified bulletin board for communication with parents. The notices tended to be placed on doors leading into the center or playroom and were often shabby and out of date. High Quality Child Care Statement (AECEO, 1988) identifies

Table 37

Current Communication Practices in Centers as Perceived by Groups

	Directors		Teachers		Parents	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
booklet	2	12.5	37	34.0	133	58.1
posted notices	14	87.5	47	94.0	200	87.3
calendars	4	25.0	21	42.0	58	25.4
newsletters	9	56.2	28	56.0	110	48.2
staff notes	11	68.8	43	86.0	153	66.8
report cards	5	31.2	18	36.0	6	2.6
phone calls	16	100.0	50	100.0	154	66.7
chats, drop-off	15	93.8	49	98.0	218	94.8
chats, pick-up	16	100.0	50	100.0	221	96.1
night meetings	10	62.5	26	52.0	72	31.3
conferences	11	68.8	24	48.0	43	18.8
home visits	4	25.0	4	8.0	2	0.9
observation	8	50.0	39	78.0	135	59.2
participation	8	50.0	32	64.0	102	44.7
open house	7	43.8	41	82.0	136	60.1
family events	7	43.8	32	64.0	119	52.2
video tapes	2	12.5	7	14.0	9	3.9
slides	2	12.5	5	10.0	7	3.1
photographs	14	87.5	43	86.0	111	48.2
other	4	25.0	0	0.0	8	3.5

bulletin boards for parents as a requirement of quality early childhood education. Bulletin boards offer another form of not only keeping parents informed but of reaching out to parents with a variety of information. Powell (1978) found in his study of day care parents that there was a group of parents who, although they had a low frequency of communication with staff, used written sources of information. This underlines the value of posting written information in the center. Only one-quarter of directors and parents indicated the use of program calendars, in contrast to 42.0% of teachers. This discrepancy is puzzling. It was surprising that four of the directors were unfamiliar with such a method of communication. Program calendars can be used as an effective means of indicating to parents what plans are ahead for the month by highlighting planned activities. It helps the parent to be informed and to communicate not only with staff but most importantly with their child about their daily activities at the center. Such a device has the potential to create a link between home and center for both child and parent.

Newsletters were indicated as being used by about one-half of each of the groups. Of the nine directors who indicated 'yes', only two produce newsletters on a monthly basis, while six indicated once per term, and one director annually. This means that few directors actually use the newsletter as a regular means of parent-staff communication. The Early Childhood Program Guide (Newfoundland and Labrador

Department of Education, 1988) recommends "that a newsletter should be issued to parents monthly or bimonthly" (p. 88). It would seem that the following benefits of regular newsletters, as cited by Harms and Cryer (1978), are not recognized by directors within this sample: (1) keeping parents informed of classroom activities and plans; (2) giving parents insight into the educational purposes underlying classroom activities; (3) enhancing children's and parent's abilities to communicate with each other; and (4) reinforcing and extending learning from school into the home (p. 29). Several of the directors indicated an interest in producing a regular newsletter but felt they lacked the time to take on additional work. The lack of access to photocopying services was also cited as a problem, as was the additional expense. One director said, "Newsletters are the kind of thing everyone likes to read but nobody wants to write." It seemed that directors were unsure of what would be contained in a regular newsletter--they appeared to think it had to be long and more sophisticated than is really necessary. The draft of Early Childhood Program Guide (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1988) contains a space for a sample newsletter in the final version. This is exactly the type of guidance that is needed by center staff.

Approximately two-thirds of directors and parents indicated that notes from staff are used to communicate, while 86.0% of teachers cited the same. It would seem that

teachers write a number of notes to certain parents, which results in some parents receiving more notes than others. There might have been greater agreement on the responses to this item had the researcher used two categories, general letters to parents and personal notes to parents. Frequent notes from staff are indicated as a characteristic of a high quality program (AECEO, 1988).

Approximately one-third of both directors and teachers reported using developmental records as a means of communication, whereas only a few parents indicated the use of report cards. (It was felt that the term 'report card' would be understood by more parents than developmental record.) This discrepancy between staff and parents is understandable when the data from the interviews with directors is considered. Three directors indicated that developmental records were compiled only for children who were seen to be having problems, or for children who had been referred to the center by the Department of Social Services. Such records were kept for the information of staff and social workers--not parents. Likewise, another director compiled regular anecdotal records on all children, and had never shared these with parents. However, one director shared with parents a developmental checklist completed on all children who were proceeding to kindergarten the following year. Thus, while some staff are compiling records on particular children, for the great majority of children developmental records are not kept.

This probably accounts for such a small percentage of parents indicating the use of report cards for communication. The Early Childhood Program Guide (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1988) strongly recommends the use of a growth profile for each child "that gives a full and accurate picture of each child and how s/he responds to people and materials...In order to reflect the fact that children are constantly changing it must be updated frequently" (p. 30). It is this type of information that should be shared and discussed with parents at regular parent-teacher conferences.

All staff and two-thirds of parents indicated the use of the telephone for parent-staff communication. The difference between staff and parents indicates that although staff are using this method they are not using it with all parents. All directors indicated that telephone calls are made and received throughout the day concerning the care and arrangements for specific children. Seven of the directors indicated that parents call after hours to discuss specific problems involving the child and family. Problems are usually the reason for an extended telephone call, although one director uses the telephone as a method of maintaining contact with parents. Swap (1984) included the establishment of a telephone hour once per week as a means of increasing communication opportunities. These took the form of prearranged calls made by the teachers or by the parents at a specific time and for a set duration, either

during center hours or after hours. This would seem to be a relatively easy and effective method of sharing information and maintaining communication between parents and staff.

A high percentage of all groups confirm the use of chats both at arrival and departure times as a means of communication between parents and staff. Studies indicate that these conversations may be the most frequent form of parent involvement (Powell, 1978). Reference will again be made to chats at pick-up and drop-off times later in the study.

Almost one-half of the teachers and directors indicate the use of night meetings, whereas about one-third of the parents said 'yes'. Most directors who had held night meetings, appeared to be disappointed by low parental attendance. It might be that the time, frequency, or format of the meetings have not been appropriate for those groups of parents. Two directors indicated they are hoping to begin parent meetings in the near future.

Approximately two-thirds of directors, about one-half of the teachers, and a very small percentage of parents reported that parent-teacher conferences are used at their center. It is discouraging to realize that such little use is made of conferences to discuss the child's progress and interests at home and the center. Directors indicated that conferences basically take place when there is a problem, thus accounting for the low positive parent response. It seems that most directors and teachers do not realize fully

the potential benefits of holding parent-teacher conferences. Gestwicki (1987) has identified the following reasons for planning regular conferences between parents and staff: to facilitate a balanced examination of all aspects of child development, to provide uninterrupted time and privacy for conversation, to facilitate a free-flowing exchange of questions and information, to increase mutual knowledge and respect, and to provide the opportunity to formulate and coordinate goals and plans (p. 164-165). The High Quality Child Care Statement (AECEO, 1988) and Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (NAEYC, 1986) recommend that conferences to discuss children's progress, accomplishments, and difficulties at home and in the program should be held at least once a year and at other times as needed. Two parents in the sample indicated their understanding and desire for such conferences. One mother wrote "The one-to-one conferences perhaps once every few months which I would welcome seem utopian given the staff's overtaxed energies and responsibilities." and a father commented, "If appointments sheets were readily available for such meetings then I would take advantage of this, especially if routinely available -- and not something special or unusual."

It is agreed by all groups that home visits are not used in the centers in this sample. Reference was made to home visits previously when it was noted that all groups responded negatively towards the use of home visits as a

method of communication.

The findings reveal that one-half of directors, about 80 percent of teachers, and 60 percent of parents use parental observation of the program while it is in progress as a means of becoming more informed. Earlier in the analysis it was noted that a high proportion of all groups indicated strong agreement with parental observation. However, all groups actually use parental observation less frequently than their attitudes would suggest. It is disappointing that observation is not more widely used, since such first-hand knowledge provides a ready basis for discussion between teachers and parents. It should also be recalled that few centers have a formal plan to facilitate observation by parents. A majority of directors voiced uneasy feelings about observation. The importance of observation and ways of implementing it must be given increased attention in pre-service and in-service training programs for early childhood educators.

One-half of directors, 64.0% of teachers, and 44.7% of parents indicated that parents participate in their center's program. The variation in these responses may be due to varying interpretations of participation. Participation is further explored with directors in Item 44.

Item 44 on interview schedule for directors

Do you think that parents should participate in their child's program? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain what procedures, if any, that you have in place to encourage this to happen.

Seven directors felt that parents should participate in the program, one that they should not, and the remaining seven directors indicated they should participate but not directly in the program. This latter group of directors felt children were more difficult to manage when parents were present, as shown in the following statements "Children are different--it changes the child's behaviour" and "It's in our policy but no--we lose control when the parents are in the center." The responses of 14 of the directors in reference to methods used to encourage parental participation were categorized as follows: encouraging parents to drive for field trips and weekly outings, encouraging parents to contribute junk materials for drawing and gluing, inviting parents to share special interests or skills with the children, and inviting parents to contribute special snacks. Three of the directors said they conduct a survey each autumn to determine what the parents are willing to offer the center's program. One director indicated a strong interest in setting up a parent association, while another center has such an organization in place. All directors viewed parental participation in terms of its being a resource to the program, but only one envisioned the involvement of parents in the administration of the center. This latter view of parent participation is currently recommended. Hess (1971), Schickedanz (1977), Gordon (1977), and Smith (1980), among others, argue that parents know their own children and their own situation best, and

therefore must be involved in planning and making decisions about their child's education. While it is encouraging to see that ways of involving parents are attempted by some, it is the general consensus of the directors that most parents are extremely busy and are therefore unable and unwilling to become involved. This may be true, but there does not appear to be a policy that encourages parents and other family members (grandparents, siblings) to be involved in the program, as recommended in recent documents that aim at defining quality child care (Department of Education 1988, p. 91; AECEO, 1988, p. 7; NAEYC, 1986).

Open house was cited as a means of communication by fewer than half of directors, a high proportion of teachers and 60 percent of parents. It seems odd that there is such discrepancy among the groups, especially between the directors and teachers. Yet there may be different interpretations of the term, 'open house'. Likewise family gatherings were reported to be used by varying percentages of the groups. Both open house and family events have the potential to create friendly relations between staff and parents and among parents. One parent wrote, "I think nursery school teachers and directors should take the fact that two parents work into consideration when designing their programs. I know this would probably affect the rates (child care fees) if activities had to be outside normal working hours--but I would certainly pay a little extra to be able to participate in activities with my child."

The use of video tapes and slides to communicate were indicated by a only a small percentage of each group, whereas a large percentage of staff indicated the use of photographs. However only one half of the parents reported such use. It would seem that either the staff are not displaying the photos or they are not posting them where parents can easily see them. This again confirms the need for a designated and labelled parent bulletin board where such material would be seen by parents. One-quarter of the directors, no teachers and a few parents selected the 'other' category to indicate communication methods used by centers. These responses included: children's work that is brought home, children's work that is posted in the center, the orientation procedures, and guest speakers.

Orientation Practices

Items 14-17 on the interview schedule for directors deal specifically with the orientation procedures that are practised in the centers. There follows a discussion of the findings.

Item 14 on the interview schedule for directors

If I were a parent who wanted to enroll my child in your center, are there specific steps that I would have to follow? (yes, no) If yes, please explain. If I was unable to follow those procedures could my child begin your center immediately?
(yes, no) Please comment.

Item 15 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you provide information for parents who are registering their child for the first time in your center? (yes, no)
If so, what type?
If written, may I please have a copy?

Item 16 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you obtain information about the child before he/she attends your center? (yes, no)
If yes, what type?
If it is written, may I please have a copy?

Item 17 on the interview schedule for directors

Do you have specific steps that you request a parent to follow for the child's first day at your center? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain.

All directors identified the following procedures for the enrollment of a child in their center: provide information over the telephone, conduct a parent-director interview, and have the parent visit the center with the child, preferably while the center is in operation. The rationale for such a procedure was generally explained as a way of helping the child to adapt to a new situation with as little stress as possible. It was surprising, then, to realize that while six directors have this as a mandatory procedure, ten reported it to be a recommended or preferred procedure that is not enforced. One director commented, "It's completely up to the parent." and "We have parents here that have never even walked in the center before--just sent them (their children) on paid transportation." Another said, "Many parents just <u>do</u> begin their children" while another stated "Yes the child can start, as long as I have a telephone number." Of the directors who do not have a

mandatory policy, two stressed the need to be flexible if one is to meet the varying needs of families. However, the following statements were typical of the directors who insisted that their orientation policy be followed, "I want the parent in the center so I can see them and they can see the center" and "They must come in to observe to see if it is the kind of environment that they want." It seems that while all the directors are aware of appropriate orientation practices, most find them difficult to enforce. According to literature sources, quality early childhood education is characterized by well developed orientation programs that view initial contacts as a very important time for the parents, staff, and child. It is seen to be the ideal time to receive information about the child and parents and also to inform parents about the program and center policies (Tizard, Mortimer and Burchall, 1981). The Early Childhood Program Guide (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1988) has stressed the significance of such procedures and has included fairly detailed information (p. 81-85). It is hoped that with appropriate guidance and in-service, directors may begin to implement the orientation steps that they have readily identified.

Fourteen of the directors provide parents with written information about the program. The format used by ten of them is a series of papers with information about various program policies. Other methods include a flyer or brochure and formal handbook or booklet. Of those directors who

provide information, nine provide a description of the program's philosophy and policies, whereas five provide operating policies only. In order to develop a constructive parent-staff relationship, a clear understanding and knowledge of the program is absolutely essential. Decker and Decker (1984) recommend that this be accomplished through a handbook that defines the general philosophy, services, and roles. It is encouraging to note that two of the directors have developed very informative and attractive handbooks, and two others indicated they are in the process of designing such material.

All directors reported obtaining written information about the child. Examination of the forms used revealed that: two directors obtain medical information only, ten medical and family data, while four obtain medical and family data and information relating to the child's personal habits. Hence only 25.0% of the directors gather comprehensive information. During the interviews, many directors reported that much of the information pertaining to the child's habits and family data arose during talks with the parent and they remembered it without recording. When directors attempted to provide the names and addresses of consenting parents for this study it was also noted that in many cases records were not complete. Yet it is all too obvious that in order to provide quality care for children, the director must not only obtain relevant information, but make it available to the appropriate staff members.

Ten directors indicated they have specific steps which they recommend for the child's first day at the center, but these are not mandatory . Half of them prefer parents to stay until the child is happy. One of them commented, "I like parents to stay so the child can see that his parents and the new teacher get along." However, the other directors felt strongly that parents should not stay beyond a few minutes. This is reflected in the following statements, "We don't recommend staying around. We recommend talking a lot before and then dropping off the youngster and leaving." and "I would say get the separation over with as soon as possible." On the other hand, three directors follow a procedure which is highly recommended: insistence that the parent or a substitute parent stay with the child until he is happy.

None of the directors identified the use of a staggered start, where the parent and child visit the center a number of times for short stays before the child attends on a full-time basis. This is the most highly recommended measure because it has the potential to build the child's sense of security before being left in an unfamiliar environment. Three directors stated they had no policy and left it totally to the individual parents to decide what is best for them and their child. It would seem that five directors recognize the importance of the first days but are reluctant to enforce a policy that would reflect this, while eight directors, judging from their responses, have failed to

recognize the importance of the child's early days in a new center. Gestwicki (1988) considers it to be an important time to set the pattern of staff and parents working together for the benefit of the child.

Communication Practices: General Summary

In summary, a range of communication methods was reported to be in use. The most popular methods reported by all groups include posted notices and chats at arrival and departure times. Considerably more staff than parents indicated the use of parental observation, developmental records, telephone calls, night meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and photographs. Only about half of each group reported participation by parents. The following practices are not used by any group: video tapes or slides and home visits. Developmental records are used only in cases where there are problems with the child. It was also evident that parent-teacher conferences are used primarily in the cases where staff or parents are experiencing problems. All directors have a knowledge of effective orientation practices; but a majority of directors do not enforce these steps for a variety of reasons. Few gathered comprehensive written information about the child, that include the child's personality and habits. There is a lack of mandatory procedures for the child's first day.

Most Frequently Used Practices

Items 21, 22, and 23 on the interview schedule for directors, and Part III, items 2-4 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents focus on the most frequently used methods of communication. It was decided to rank the three most commonly cited methods by the directors, teachers, and parents for communicating about the child's progress and program at the center. Similarly the three most frequently cited methods by directors, teachers, and parents to communicate about the child and family were ranked.

Communication Practices: Child's Progress

Item 21 on the interview schedule for directors

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about their child's progress in your center's program?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Part III, item 2 on the questionnaires for teachers

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about their child's progress in your center's program?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Part III, item 2 on the questionnaires for parents

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform you about how your child is doing at the center?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Table 38

Ranked Choices by Groups to Communicate About the Child's Progress in the Center

	Directors		Teachers		Parents	
	N	Rank	N	Rank	N	Rank
chats, pick-up	13	(1)	36	(1)	192	(1)
chats, drop-off	12	(2)	25	(3)	189	(2)
telephone calls	6	(3)	32	(2)	72	(3)

Table 38 shows that all groups selected the same cluster of methods--chats and telephone calls, with chats at pick-up time as their most frequent method of providing and receiving information about the child's progress at the center. For directors and parents, chats at drop-off time were second, whereas teachers indicated telephone calls. Overall, two-way communication, in the form of chats at pick-up and drop-off, and through telephone calls, is the most frequently used method of communicating about the child's progress in the center. These findings tend to underline the importance of communication at arrival and departure times. These particular times become important not only for sharing information about the child and program, but also so that parents might gain insight into the knowledge and competence of the staff and thus acquire confidence in them. However, as data in Table 34 indicated, all three groups gave fairly low endorsement to drop-off

time as a good time to communicate and only moderate endorsement to pick-up time (Table 35). As far as the parents are concerned, these responses are surprising, given that earlier (items 4 and 15), they saw drop-off and pick-up times as being equally appropriate for communicating with staff. It was also shown in previous data that there is little formal planning for communication at drop-off time and a moderate amount of planning for communication at pick-up time. It appears that centers use most frequently methods deemed to be less than ideal for exchange of information about the children attending these centers. Given the frequency of use, and the perceived importance of arrival and departure times, it would seem that centers should work towards strategies that facilitate communication at those particular times.

Communication Practices: Center Activities

Item 22 on the interview schedule for the directors

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about activities at your center?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Part III, item 3 on the questionnaires for teachers

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about activities at your center?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Part III, item 3 on the questionnaires for parents

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform you about activities at the center?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Table 39

Ranked Choices by Groups to Communicate About the Child's Activities in the Center

	Directors		Teachers		Parents	
	N	Rank	N	Rank	N	Rank
wall notices	6	(2)	31	(1)	131	(1)
chats, drop-off	9	(1)			112	(3)
chats, pick-up	6	(2)			116	(2)
staff notes			27	(2)		
phone calls			21	(3)		
newsletters	4	(3)				

As shown in Table 39, parents and directors agreed on three methods most frequently used to communicate about the center's activities (wall notices, chats at drop-off and pick-up). Teachers, while including wall notices, cited staff notes and phone calls. Once again, the importance of the posted notice in a center is apparent. Teachers did not place chats high on their list as a means of informing parents about the program. This supports a previous finding

that a high proportion of teachers felt they should not take primary responsibility for explaining the program to parents.

Communication Practices: Child's Home Environment

Item 23 on the interview schedule for the directors

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used by parents to inform you about their child and their family?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Part III, item 4 on the questionnaires for teachers

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used by parents to inform you about their child and their family?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Part III, item 4 on the questionnaires for teachers

Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used by you to inform your teacher's child about your child and your family?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

Table 40 shows that all three groups indicated the practices most frequently used by parents to talk about their child and family as: chats at drop-off time, pick-up time and on the telephone.

Table 40

Ranked Choices by Groups for Parents to Communicate About the Child and Family

	Directors		Teachers		Parents	
	N	Rank	N	Rank	N	Rank
chats, pick-up	17	(1)	42	(1)	194	(2)
chats, drop-off	8	(3)	42	(1)	195	(1)
phone calls	9	(2)	41	(2)	126	(3)
conferences			5	(3)		

Frequency of Use of Particular Practices

Item 24 on the interview schedule for directors, and Part III, item 5 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents asks the respondents to estimate the frequency of use, as they perceived it, of certain two-way communication practices. Data appear in Table 41 and discussion follows.

Item 24 on the director's interview schedule

Using the scale below, choose the number that best identifies how often teachers at your center use each of the following methods to talk with parents of the children in their group.

Part III, item 5 on the questionnaires for teachers

Using the scale below, choose the number that best identifies how often teachers at your center use each of the following methods to talk with parents of the children in their group.

Part III, item 5 on the questionnaires for parents

Using the scale below, choose the number that best identifies how often you use each of the following methods to talk with your child's teacher at the center.

Table 41 shows that all directors and most teachers reported face-to-face contact daily with parents at pick-up time; about 70 percent of parents indicated such daily contact. With reference to drop-off time, 93.7% of directors, 77.6% of teachers and 63.4% of parents indicated daily face-to-face communication. Such frequency is similar to the findings of Powell (1977 and 1978). It does appear that the most popular time for daily contact is pick-up time. This supports earlier findings. While staff are making contact with parents at these times, it should be realized that this does not involve all parents. Herwig (1982) recommends devising an informal tally of frequency and quality of daily contacts with parents in order to identify a parent who is slipping in and out of the center unnoticed.

Once again, the telephone is a method of communication which directors and teachers indicated is used frequently. However, 20.0% of parents say they never communicate with teachers on the telephone and almost 60 percent of them indicate that they do so infrequently. These data indicate that while staff could easily feel they have frequent two-way communication with parents, it may be confined to special cases.

Table 41

Groups' Perception of the Frequency of Particular Methods for Two-way Communication

Communication Practice	Percentages						
	Never	Once	Less than Monthly	Monthly	Bi-weekly	Weekly	Daily
at pick-up (D)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
at pick-up (T)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.1	93.9
at pick-up (P)	3.9	0.4	2.6	4.3	4.8	12.1	71.7
at drop-off (D)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.3	93.7
at drop-off (T)	8.2	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	10.2	77.6
at drop-off (P)	5.2	1.7	5.2	3.4	3.0	18.1	63.4
telephone (D)	0.0	0.0	12.5	12.5	31.2	43.8	0.0
telephone (T)	6.1	2.0	6.1	18.4	6.1	38.8	22.4
telephone (P)	20.0	8.7	29.1	17.8	8.2	10.9	5.2
center conference (D)	31.2	18.7	43.8	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
center conference (T)	65.3	8.2	18.4	4.1	0.0	0.0	4.1
center conference (P)	80.0	10.9	4.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.9
home conference (D)	93.8	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
home conference (T)	96.0	4.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
home conference (P)	99.1	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note. (D), (T), and (P) represent director, teacher and parent responses, respectively.

The last two segments of this item focused on the use of parent-staff conferences as a means of communication at the center or in the home. Almost one-third of directors, two-thirds of teachers, and 80 percent of parents, indicated that they never use parent-teacher conferences. Hence this important method of communication is used very infrequently, particularly as perceived by parents. The differences between parent and staff responses once again might be explained by the fact that the staff may be having frequent conferences with relatively few parents. As previously discussed, many directors indicated that they would initiate contact with parents when they noticed a problem with a child. Perhaps that accounts for the difference in response between directors and teachers.

Frequency of Daily Communication

Part III, item 6 on the questionnaires for teachers and parents focuses on the amount of time that teachers and parents communicate daily with each other. Data are discussed and appear in Table 42.

Part III, item 6 on the questionnaires for teachers

During a normal week, what is the average number of minutes each day you spend in conversation with parents of the children in your group?

Part III, item 6 on the questionnaire for parents

During a normal week, what is the average number of minutes each day you spend in conversation with your child's teacher?

Table 42 shows that slightly more than one-third of the teachers spend about ten minutes each day in conversation with parents, while almost half of the parents estimated about five minutes with teachers. The average estimated time for teachers is about 20 minutes (allowing more than 30 minutes to be 35) while the average for parents is about 10 minutes (allowing more than 20 minutes to be 25). This indicates a considerable discrepancy between the perception of the two groups. Given that teachers spend those twenty minutes talking with parents overall, it seems that parents perceive themselves to be talking much more with teachers than teachers are reporting. This might suggest why parents are satisfied with the time available for discussion.

Table 42

Teachers and Parents: Daily Conversation

Time	Teachers N	Teachers %	Parents N	Parents %
None	0	0.0	10	4.3
About 5 min.	-	-	104	45.2
About 10 min.	19	39.6	59	25.6
About 15 min.	8	16.7	28	12.2
About 20 min.	6	12.5	-	-
> 20 min.	-	-	29	12.6
About 30 min.	2	4.2	-	-
> 30 min.	13	27.1	-	-
Total	48	100.0	230	100.0

Parents' Most Valuable Source of Information

Part III, item 7 on the questionnaire for parents focuses on the best source of information about the child's activity at the center. Data are discussed and appear in Table 43.

Part III, item 7 on the questionnaire for parents

My most valuable source of finding out about my child's activity at the center is:

Table 43

The Most Valuable Sources of Information as Cited by Parents

Source	Number of Respondents	Percent
My child	87	37.6
My child's teacher	70	30.3
The director	21	9.1
Written information	10	4.3
Other Sources	1	0.4
Combination of above	42	18.2
Total	231	100.0

Table 43 shows that about one-third of the parents consider the child to be their most valuable source of information about activity at the center while another third indicated the child's teacher as the best source. These findings are similar to those of Powell (1977). This, once again, underlines the importance that some parents place on

communication with the child's teacher as opposed to director or other sources. Approximately 18 percent indicated a combination of the methods that had been listed, of which the most popular was teacher and child.

Priority Given to Communication by Directors

Item 45 on the interview schedule for directors focuses on the importance that directors give to parent-staff contact and communication, as they rank goals of an early childhood program. For the purposes of this study, the ranking of goal (b), which is related to parent-staff communication, was determined for each director to be in either the top or bottom half of the six goals. The findings are discussed.

Item 45 on the interview schedule for directors

A list of goals for early childhood teachers follows. Please number them from 1-6 in the order which represents for you their order of importance, beginning with the most important.

(a) to provide developmentally appropriate activities for children
(b) to establish and maintain frequent contact with families
(c) to prepare children for kindergarten work with numbers and letters
(d) to provide opportunities for children to learn how to get along with other children
(e) to have children develop self-help skills
(f) to have children express their feelings and ideas

Eleven directors placed the parent-staff communication item in the bottom half of the list of goals. In fact no director gave top priority to parent contact, only two gave

it second place, four third place, and three directors placed it in the last position. It seems that the majority of directors view linking up with parents as less important than other goals related directly to the child. This view is reflected by one director in the following comments: "I can see what you are getting at and I wish families could be higher but children come first." In total, five directors placed the parent-teacher item in the top half of the listing. Literature sources suggest that the stronger the parent-staff connection the more able the staff will be to offer a developmentally appropriate program to the child. Therefore, proponents of that position see all other child-related goals as flowing from close contact with parents (Crowe, 1983; Tizard, B., Mortimer, J., and Burchell, B., 1981; and Tizard, B. and Hughes, M., 1984). It is worth noting that of the centers ranking in the top half for satisfaction (Table 33), two-thirds of those directors placed the parent-contact goal in positions two and three, whereas only one director in the lower half for satisfaction gave it such priority. This would seem logical, since the success of parent-staff communication hinges on the director, for it is he or she who sets not only the policies pertaining to communication but also the support or enthusiasm for efforts in this direction.

Communication Practices of Centers with More Parental Respondents

In considering various practices occurring in early childhood centers, what is important is not only the variety of practices reported in use by the staff, but also the proportion of parents who recognize such methods to be in use. For a practice to make a successful contribution towards creating a link between the home and center it must reach the parent. For the 11 centers having a minimum of ten parental respondents, the level of parental awareness of practices reported by the staff was determined. This was accomplished by crediting the center with the percentage of parental response for each practice that the staff indicated was in place. (The response of the director was accepted as representing the staff, except in cases where the director said 'no' and more than two-thirds of the teachers of that center said 'yes'. In such cases the teachers' responses were taken to represent the staff.) The points for all practices were totalled and the centers were then ranked by their scores. To maintain confidentiality, the centers are ranked without the use of the original letter labels.

As shown in Table 44, the centers ranking at the top have not only a higher parental awareness of communication, but also use a wider selection of practices. In fact the parents in the center ranking first, when compared with those from the lowest ranked center, have twice the awareness of communication methods that are reported to be

Table 44

Parents: Percent Response to Use of Communication Practices in Their Center

Rank	Items on Parent Questionnaire															
	#1 (%)	#2 (%)	#3 (%)	#4 (%)	#5 (%)	#7 (%)	#8 (%)	#9 (%)	#10 (%)	#11 (%)	#13 (%)	#14 (%)	#15 (%)	#16 (%)	#19 (%)	Total (%)
1	76.2	100	45.5	100	77.3	90.9	100	100	59.1	22.7	95.5	86.4	81.8	86.4	65.2	1,187.0
2	100	93.8	20.0	80.0	93.3	62.5	93.8	100	68.8	31.3	66.7	26.7	80.0	80.0	40.0	1,036.9
3	80.8	96.3	19.2	26.9	81.5	46.1	92.6	96.3	61.5	30.8	66.7	70.4	60.0	16.0	81.5	926.6
4	70.8	82.6	N/A	54.2	N/A	75.0	91.7	91.7	62.5	45.8	62.5	45.8	50.0	95.8	41.7	870.1
5	78.9	88.9	100	61.1	88.9	77.8	94.4	94.4	N/A	5.6	52.9	41.2	57.9	N/A	22.2	864.2
6	50.0	91.7	N/A	N/A	50.0	80.0	95.8	87.5	N/A	N/A	62.5	58.3	75.0	83.3	44.0	778.1
7	30.8	53.8	N/A	38.5	92.3	38.5	92.3	100	7.8	N/A	53.8	46.2	84.6	64.6	69.2	772.4
8	38.9	66.7	N/A	72.2	50.0	72.2	94.4	94.4	N/A	N/A	35.3	47.1	N/A	55.6	66.6	693.4
9	40.0	90.0	N/A	20.0	90.0	60.0	90.0	100	10.0	N/A	50.0	20.0	N/A	60.0	50.0	680.0
10	N/A	92.3	N/A	N/A	53.8	61.5	100	100	30.8	15.9	61.5	23.1	53.8	38.5	38.5	669.7
11	40.0	100	N/A	13.3	46.7	53.3	92.9	100	20.0	26.7	N/A	N/A	33.3	20.0	26.7	572.9

#1 - Booklet
#2 - Wall Notices
#3 - Program Calendar
#4 - Newsletter
#5 - Notes
#7 - Telephone Calls
#8 - Chats, Drop-off
#9 - Chats, Pick-up
#10 - Night Meetings
#11 - Parent-Teacher Conferences
#13 - Parental Observation
#14 - Parental Participation
#15 - Open House
#16 - Family Gatherings
#19 - Photographs

in place. The staff of the highest ranked center is definitely more successful in connecting with parents. The variation that exists among the respondents for practices reported in place is striking. For example, all but one center reported the use of a booklet about the program, with a variation in parental awareness ranging from 30 to 100 percent, and also for photographs, in which the range is 20 to 80 percent.

An examination of the center ranked first for parental awareness shows chat it is ranked third for overall satisfaction with communication, and has a high ranking (second place) for the priority given by the director to parent contact. All members of the staff of this center hold formal qualifications in early childhood education and have worked in the field for an average of eighteen months. This center provides a model for parent-staff communication in that it has a high number of practices in place, of which on average 80 percent of the parents are aware. In addition, a high percentage of teachers and parents are satisfied with communication. The director of this center focuses on parent-teacher contact as important and has developed a number of policies and procedures that provide for establishing and maintaining connections with parents. These include mandatory orientation policies for new parents and children, which means that parents must meet with the director in the center before their child can attend; parents receive extensive written information with a

thorough explanation of the program, philosophy, and policies and the staff receive written information about the child which includes information about the child's behavior and habits; and a familiar adult must accompany the child during the first few visits to the center. Parents can be involved in many facets of the center. There is a high level of contact by telephone and a number of family-staff gatherings which are of an informal nature (sledding on a Saturday morning and parental visits to have lunch). Provision for observation of the program while it is in progress is available. This center has a parent area which provides seating, a parent bulletin board and a wide selection of reading materials for parents. One has the feeling that parents are welcome and expected to be informed about their child's life at the center. It should be noted that even in this center where a high level of effective parent-staff communication exists, developmental records and parent-staff conferences are not used on a regular basis with all parents. These are areas that must be developed through carefully planned in-service training, such as workshops.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

The main focus of the study was to examine parent-staff communication as practised in licensed early childhood centers on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland. An examination of the literature revealed that an open system of parent-staff communication is an important element of quality care and appropriate education for young children. Such communication expects and encourages parents and teachers to share important information about children's experiences in the home and center. The potential of communication to offer benefits to all those concerned is recognized; it not only lessens the level of discontinuity experienced by the child but provides the supportive links that assist parents and teachers in their respective child care roles. It is important, therefore, that directors and teachers working in early childhood centers, and parents of young children attending such centers, recognize the value of communication and strive to develop practices which will facilitate it. To examine the attitudes towards and to determine the practices relating to parent-staff communication in early childhood centers on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, a field survey was conducted, involving 16 randomly selected centers. The survey included scheduled interviews with each director, questionnaires to

all early childhood teachers (52) on the staffs of those centers, and to one-half of the parents (317) of children registered in the centers. The interview schedule for directors and the questionnaires for teachers and parents, in addition to seeking biographical and professional data, were designed to provide responses which would indicate (i) attitudes towards communication between parents and staff, (ii) levels of satisfaction with parent-staff communication, and (iii) practices used for communication between parents and staff.

All directors (16) of the centers participated in a taped interview. Ninety-six percent of teachers and 74 percent of parents returned the mailed questionnaires.

Of the 16 centers, 14 are privately owned and two are administered by boards consisting of parents and members of the community. The owners of one-half of the privately owned centers are directly involved in the daily operation of the center, and the others have a director who has been hired to carry out those duties. There was a variation in years of operation from one to 21 years, with a majority having been established in the past five years. In fact, five of them were established in the last 18 months, indicating the recent upward trend of establishing early childhood centers in this province. On average, 30 children attend a center at one time, with four members of staff. The attendance patterns are extremely varied, which means that in many cases the staff of centers interact with

considerably larger numbers of parents than the daily enrollment would indicate.

More than one-half of the directors are in the 'over 35 year' range and one-third in the 'under 25 year', while the majority of teachers are under 30 years of age. The qualifications of directors and teachers are similar, with approximately 30 percent having completed a formal qualification in early childhood education and another one-third have qualifications in education or nursing. For both groups, approximately one-third reported having attended night courses in early childhood education. The average post-secondary educational level is one and one-half years. On average, the directors have worked in a center for a longer period of time (six years) than have teachers (three years). In the case of directors, a high percentage of their experience in early childhood education coincides with their role of director and often is limited to the center that they presently manage.

Parents in the study are primarily mothers who represent a wide age range with almost two-thirds in the 'over thirty' bracket. About one-third have attained the equivalent of at least a first degree, with an average of two-and-one-half years of post-secondary education for the group. The majority are married with two children, one of whom has been attending the center on average for 11 months. About one half of the parents use the center five times per week, (including full-day and half-day attendance). The

enrollment pattern for the remaining half is quite varied.

In general, the findings indicate that directors, teachers, and parents have positive attitudes towards parent-teacher communication. In fact, a high percentage of each group agree that possessing knowledge of the child's life at home and in the center is important to both staff and parents. At the same time, three-quarters of parents and only one-half of the teachers report a connection between parent-teacher communication and quality child care. This relationship is one that needs to be promoted by agencies, groups, and institutions that are working for a high standard of early childhood education.

The view of teachers and parents working together to care for and educate the young child is presented frequently in the literature as the best approach. While parents and early childhood staff in this study generally agree with that position, the findings suggest that there are, nevertheless, areas of disagreement between teachers and parents. Teachers tend to see parents in the role of resource person; parents do not see teachers in that role. More teachers feel that parents have assisted them effectively when they have experienced problems with a child than is true for parents. In fact, parents and teachers differ in their opinions about how knowledgeable the latter are with respect to child development. Teachers report greater confidence in their own knowledge of child development than do parents of teachers. Since the age and

educational background of many of the parents and staff are considerably different, it is not surprising that differences of opinion exist in this area.

A majority of all groups indicate a willingness to take responsibility for communication, and likewise they see the other groups as having a responsibility to do so. A high percentage of parents feel that the teacher should discuss issues relating to their child's progress and the center's program. While teachers agree that it should be they who discuss the child's progress, they do not feel the same responsibility to discuss the program. On this particular issue, there is in the minds of the teachers a sharp division between the roles of teacher and director. One would hope that this pertains to administrative details such as fee schedules, and not the philosophy, child guidance techniques, and day-to-day program as these relate directly to the child's progress.

The majority of teachers and parents are satisfied with both the quantity and quality of parent-teacher communication. The level of satisfaction reported by parents is higher than those found by Powell (1978). There are more teachers than parents who are dissatisfied, and the teachers indicate a lower level of satisfaction with communication than do parents. Teachers tend to want parents to provide them with more information about the child's home life, the parents' child rearing techniques, and parental expectations than the parents wish to supply.

These findings tend to support those of Kontos, Raikes, and Woods (1983). Providing for the preschool child is a particularly demanding task, and it is therefore understandable that teachers would feel the need for as much information as possible about the children in their groups. In many centers, there is a lack of specific procedures that ensure sharing of such information.

A majority of directors indicate that orientation steps are optional, which means that teachers in those centers might be expected to work with children, having had little or no parental contact prior to the child's attendance. This is reason for concern since orientation procedures are the first step in avoiding 'discontinuity' between home and center.It was noted that only a few directors request in writing information that relates to the child's habits and personality. Directors also indicate that in many cases parents relay information to them, but in the hectic pace of a normal day it does not always filter through to the teachers. Each director needs to develop a method of recording such information in order to avoid lack of communication at that level.

Most parents indicate a high level of satisfaction with information given them about their child's progress and the program. While it is not surprising that parents might not know what communication measures to expect in an early childhood program, it is difficult to understand their satisfaction when they appear to have so little opportunity

to meet teachers on a one-to-one basis to discuss their own child's progress. This seems to occur seldom, and only when there is a problem. Although the one-to-one conference between parent and teacher can be difficult to arrange, parents should expect that kind of interaction and directors should consider it a priority. Directors need to consider a number of different ways that would encourage and provide the opportunities for teachers and parent to communicate. Incentives might include additional salary or time off to teachers who meet after hours with parents, or employing a substitute teacher to allow conference times during the day, or establishing telephone conference times either during the day or evening. A high percentage of teachers indicate that they would be willing to meet with parents after hours.

In order to share information with parents, it is important that teachers are able to discuss the child's interests and progress. It is this type of discussion that helps parents and teachers to understand the needs of the individual child. This was reported for just a few centers and only for special cases. While it might be that staff feel unprepared to do developmental reporting, directors should seek assistance from the early childhood consultants for the province to select a method of recording that is appropriate to their teachers and parents. The topics of charting children's progress and participating in parent-teacher conferences should be the focus of future in-service education and workshops.

In most centers there are few opportunities to have parent-teacher contact, other than at the arrival and departure times. It is therefore important that directors establish procedures at these two critical times of the day which would allow for a high level of parent-teacher communication. Only a small percentage of directors have specific procedures in place at drop-off time, but a majority indicated such was the case for pick-up time.

Directors are particularly concerned about an inadequate level of information and contact with families of children who are, for social and economic reasons, subsidized by the Department of Social Services. This is a problem that would be remedied if each director had mandatory orientation steps in place to ensure the type of parental contact that teachers of young children need in order to offer the best program to the individual child. In the absence of the establishment of such a policy by the Department of Social Services, directors should take the initiative for their own centers. All parties, especially in the case of those with special problems, would do better by meeting and sharing important information before the child begins to attend the center. Social workers often have information about certain children and families which needs to be used judiciously. They, therefore, must choose directors who can be relied upon to maintain confidentiality. If the social worker lacks the confidence in the staff to share significant information, then that

center should not be involved in the care of that child.

In addition to those mentioned, a variety of practices relating to parent-staff communication were found to be in place throughout the centers. All groups identified chats at arrival and departure as very important but, as previously indicated, not all directors have specific plans in place to encourage or facilitate communication at those times. Telephone calls followed by wall notices, are used frequently and are judged to be important by all groups. A designated parent bulletin board would be a measure that all centers should adopt in order that a variety of information be shared. It was noted that many of the notices on the walls in centers tend to be instructions to parents; while these are necessary, so, too, are friendly and informative blocks of information on the activities at the center. Most centers provide new parents with some type of written information about the center, which includes a general description of the program. Orientation procedures for new parents and their children are understood to be important by all directors but for the most part are not enforced. Since this is a critical time to establish the link between the center and home, it should not be optional.

Home visits are not used, and are definitely not favored by any group in the study. Only a few centers use program calendars or regular newsletters to inform parents of current and future happenings. A majority of parents reported observing, despite a generally apprehensive

attitude on the part of the directors and a lack of procedures that would facilitate it. For the most part, participation by parents in an active way (either in the program or its administration) is not favored by directors.

Within a sub-sample of 11 centers which had a minimum of ten parental respondents, it was possible to identify the center which could be termed a model of parent-teacher communication for that group. It has a high number of parent-teacher communication practices in place which are recognized by most parents, a high level of overall satisfaction with communication, and a director who gives parent-staff contact priority. This center has developed a number of procedures and policies that focus on communication, and is effectively implementing them. It seems that while a generally positive attitude towards parent-teacher communication exists, and a number of communication practices are in place in most centers, there are few directors who have policies which actually address the issue of communication between parents and staff. In most cases, it seems that parent-staff communication is not receiving the attention that it warrants. These findings tend to suggest that many parents and teachers have yet to attain a partnership approach to the care of young children and to establish the 'supporting links' which open communication and reduce discontinuities between the home and center. While it is not reasonable to expect that every center can or should adopt all the practices that have been

described and discussed, it is recommended that each staff select a plan of communication measures that matches their skills and needs. This would mean that the plan from center to center would vary but parent-teacher communication would be considered to be part of the program. This would result in greater continuity for the children and more support for parents and staff.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study certain recommendations can be made:

1. The licensing board for early childhood centers should make implementation of practices as recommended and outlined in the Early Childhood Program Guide (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1988) a requirement of licensing and license renewal for all centers. Therefore, in-service programs based on the tenets of the Early Childhood Program Guide should be jointly sponsored and conducted by the early childhood consultants for the Departments of Social Services and Education.
2. Procedures and policies should be developed by the Department of Social Services to ensure that directors of centers which accept a child who, for social or economic reasons, is subsidized to attend a center, be

well informed of the special problems that pertain to the child and the family before the child attends.

3. In the case of a child who has been placed by the Department of Social Services in an early childhood center for special reasons, a social worker should be assigned to support and assist communication, and help to maintain contact between the parents of that child and the staff.

4. A parent of a child who is subsidized to attend a center for special reasons should be required to visit the center with his/her child at least once a month. The Department of Social Services should make provision for the parent to travel with the child on those days. Attendance should be recorded and reported to the Department by the director of the center.

5. In all early childhood training programs there should be a strong parent communication component, which presents a sound theoretical base for practice, and an emphasis on <u>how</u> to work in partnership with parents. Such programs would include contact with parents of preschool children. Special attention would be given to experience in compiling profiles on children's progress and learning how to discuss such information with parents.

6. In the future, early childhood workshops and conferences should include sessions on parent-teacher communication with an emphasis on the value of parent-

staff communication, and practical instructions on how to implement a number of desirable practices. Special attention should be given to showing the staff of centers how to keep developmental records for individual children and how to conduct effective parent-teacher conferences.

7. Since this study was limited to the Avalon Peninsula, a province-wide study relating to parent-staff communication in early childhood centers should be undertaken.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Directors: Correspondence and Interview Schedule

Dear X,

I am a graduate student in Early Childhood Education at Memorial University. For my thesis, I am undertaking a study with respect to communication between parents and the staff of early childhood centers. I would appreciate your help.

In view of your position as director of X center, I would like the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your views and policies pertaining to communication with parents. I shall need your cooperation and assistance also in order that I might administer a questionnaire to each member of your staff and to one-half of the families whose children are enrolled at your center.

I have enclosed a list of questions to be asked at the interview.

Please be assured that all your responses will be kept in strictest confidence. Names of people or centers will not be used in the study itself.

I hope that when I call, you will be able to arrange an hour in your busy schedule to talk with me.

If you should have any questions about the project you can reach me at work, (778-2209) or at home, 754-0017. Thankyou for your time and effort. Your assistance is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Margaret Copeman,
Graduate Student
Early Childhood Education

Interview Schedule for Directors of Early Childhood Centers

1. How long has this center been in operation?

2. How many children are registered in this center?

3. How many families are registered with this center?

4. With how many parents did you have social contacts before their child came to your center?

5. With how many parents that use your center do you now have social contacts?

6. In which age category are you? (under 20 years, 21-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years, or 36 years or over)

7. Are you a parent? (yes, no)

8. How many years have you been director of this center? (less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-8 years, 9-15 years, 16-20 years, or 21 years or over)

9. How many years have you been director of a licensed center?
(less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-8 years, 9-15 years, 16-20 years, or 21 years or over)

10 a How would you classify your position at this center? (director, primarily administrative with only a little time spent in working with groups of children on a regular and daily basis, or director-teacher, a combination of administrative duties and working daily for long periods of time with groups of children)

b Is this center privately or non-privately owned?

11. How many years have you worked in a licensed early childhood center? (less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-8 years, 9-15 years, 16-20 years, or 21 years or over)

12. What formal training have you had in early childhood education (ECE)? (none, mainly provincial workshops, evening courses in ECE, one-year certificate in ECE, two-year diploma in ECE, or a degree in ECE)
If other, please specify.

13 a Did you attend university or a post-secondary institution to take other than early childhood education? (yes, no)

b What degree, certificate, or diploma did you receive other than in early childhood education?

1. None
2. Bachelor of Arts (Education) Primary ....._____
3. Bachelor of Arts (Education) Elementary ....._____
4. Conjoint Degree of Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts Degree ....._____
5. Other _____. If other, please indicate _____.

14. If I were a parent who wanted to enroll my child in your center, are there specific steps that I would have to follow? (yes, no) If yes, please explain.

15. Do you provide information for parents who are registering their child for the first time in your center? (yes, no) If so, what type?
If written, may I please have a copy?

16. Do you obtain information about the child before he/she attends your center? (yes, no)
If yes, what type?
If it is written, may I please have a copy?

17. Do you have specific steps that you request a parent to follow for the child's first day at your center? (yes, no) If yes, please explain.

18. Are any of the children attending your center transported by a taxi or bus service? (yes, no)
If yes, to what percentage of your children does this apply? (about 10%, about 25%, about 50%, about 75%)
Do you have regular contact with parents of those children? (yes, no)
If yes, how do you accomplish this?
If yes, during a one-month period how many times would contact occur with parents of these children?

19. Are any of the children attending your center transported regularly by someone other than the parent, for example a baby-sitter?
If yes, to what percentage of your children does this apply? (about 10%, about 25%, about 50%, about 75%)
Do you have regular contact with parents of those children? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain the method(s) used.
If yes, during a one-month period how many times would contact occur with parents of these children?

20. Are any of the following methods of parent-teacher communication used at your center?

Written information:

1. booklet about program .....yes no
2. notices on the wall .....yes no
3. monthly program calendars .....yes no
4. newsletters .....yes no
5. notes from staff .....yes no
6. developmental records .....yes no

Spoken Information:

7. telephone calls .....yes no
8. chats with staff at drop-off .....yes no
9. chats with staff at pick-up .....yes no
10. night meetings .....yes no
11. parent-teacher conferences .....yes no
12. home visits by staff .....yes no
13. observation in the center by parent.....yes no
14. participation in program by parent.....yes no

Social Situations:

15. open house .....yes no
16. parties or family gatherings .....yes no

Special Methods:

17. video tapes of your center .....yes no
18. slides of your center .....yes no
19. photographs of your program .....yes no
20. other .....yes no
21. If other, please specify _____.

21. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about their child's progress in your center's program?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

22. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about **activities** at your center?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

23. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used by parents to inform you about their child and their family?

a. most frequently used .....number _____
b. second most frequently used .....number _____
c. third most frequently used .....number _____

24. Using the scale below, choose the number that best identifies how often teachers at your center use each of the following methods to talk with parents of the children in their group.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Only once	Less than once per month	Once per month	Once every 2 weeks	Once a week	Almost every day

1. Talking with each other at pick-up time. _____
2. Talking with each other at drop-off time. _____
3. Talking with each other on the phone. _____
4. Talking with each other at planned parent-teacher meetings at the center _____
5. Talking with each other at planned parent-teacher meetings at the parents'home _____
6. Other, please explain. _____

25. With whom should the parents primarily talk about their child's progress ? (the director or the child's teacher)

26. With whom should the parents primarily talk about the center's program? (the director or the child's teacher)

27. Do you think it is important for staff to share information with parents about the center's program and the child's progress and interests? (yes, no)

28. In your experience, do parents share with teachers on your staff sufficient information about:
(a) their child (yes, no)
(b) their family situation? (yes, no)

29. Do you think that parents should keep teachers informed of important happenings in the child's home? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain why.
If yes, what arrangements, if any, do you make so that this can happen?

30. Do parents and teachers at your center generally consult with each other when experiencing problems in the care of their children? (yes, no)

31. Do you think that early childhood teachers should make home visits to the children who are in their group? (yes, no) Please comment on your view.

32. Do you feel the relationship between the parent and teacher has an effect on the way the early childhood staff interacts with the child? (yes, no)
Please comment further.

33. Describe generally what happens during the time when parents are dropping their child off at your center.
What do you expect of parents?
What do you expect of teachers?
What do you expect of yourself, as director?

34. Do you feel that the time when parents drop off their child at the center is a good time for staff to talk with parents about the child's progress and program? (yes, no)
If yes, what arrangements, if any, do you make so that this can happen?

35. Describe generally what happens when parents are picking up their child from the center.
What do you expect of parents?
What do you expect of teachers?
What do you expect of yourself as director?

36. Do you think that the time when parents pick up their child from the center is a good time for staff and parents to talk about their child's progress and program? (yes, no)
If yes, what arrangements, if any, do you make to encourage this?

37. Are teachers at your center willing to spend time after work talking with parents about their child's progress and the program? (yes, no)
If yes, what measures, if any, do you take to facilitate this?

38. Are you satisfied with the number of opportunities that exist for communication between parents and your staff? (yes, no)

39. Do you think that parents and teachers talk enough about their children's progress at your center? (yes, no)

40. Do you have a place in the center where parent(s) and a teacher can talk privately? (yes, no)

41. Do you feel that teachers should consider communicating with parents about their child's progress as part of the job of an early childhood teacher? (yes, no)

42. Do you feel it is important that early childhood teachers and parents get to know each other? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain why.
What special arrangements, if any, do you make to encourage early childhood teachers and parents to get to know each other?

43. Do you think that parents should visit the center while the program is in progress? (yes,no)
If yes, please explain what procedures, if any, you have in place to encourage this to happen?

44. Do you think that parents should participate in their child's program? (yes, no)
If yes, please explain what procedures, if any, you have in place to encourage this to happen?

45. A list of goals for early childhood teachers follows. Please number them from 1-6 in the order which represents for you their order of importance, beginning with the most important.

(a) to provide developmentally appropriate activities for children .....#_____

(b) to establish and maintain frequent contact with families .....#_____

(c) to prepare children for kindergarten work with numbers and letters .....#_____

(d) to provide opportunities for children to learn how to get along with other children .....#_____

(e) to have children develop self-help skills ..#_____

(f) to have children express their feelings and ideas .....#_____

APPENDIX B

Teachers: Correspondence and Questionnaire

Dear early childhood teacher,

I am a graduate student in Early Childhood Education at Memorial University. For my thesis, I am undertaking a study with respect to communication between parents and the staff of early childhood centers. I would appreciate your help.

In view of your position as a staff member of X center, I would like to include your views in my project. Would you please take 15-20 minutes to complete a short questionnaire about communication? I have also asked for some information about yourself, but I assure you that you will not be identified by your answers. No names of people or centers will be used on the form or in the study itself. There is a code number on each form which allows me to determine whether or not you have returned the questionnaire. It will not be used in any way to identify you in the coding or analysis of information.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the stamped envelope not later than XXX.

If you should have any questions about the project you can reach me at work, 778-2209 or at home 754-0017. Thankyou for your time and effort. Your assistance is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Margaret Copeman,
Graduate Student
Early Childhood Education

Part I I.D. #_____

Questionnaire to Early Childhood Teachers

Please place an (X) in the appropriate space.

1. Age at last birthday:
   1. under 20 years .....
   2. 21-25 years .....
   3. 26-30 years .....
   4. 31-35 years .....
   5. 36 years or over .....

2. Are you a parent? .....yes_____ no_____

3. How many years have you worked in a licensed early childhood center?
   1. less than one year .....
   2. one to three years .....
   3. four to eight years .....
   4. nine to fifteen years .....
   5. sixteen to twenty years .....
   6. twenty-one years or more .....

4. What formal training have you had in early childhood education (ECE)?
   1. none .....
   2. mainly provincial workshops .....
   3. evening courses in ECE .....
   4. one-year certificate in ECE .....
   5. two-year diploma in ECE .....
   6. university degree in ECE .....
   7. other, please specify .....

5. Did you attend university? .....yes_____ no_____

6. Did you receive a degree .....yes_____ no_____

7. If yes, what degree(s) did you receive?
   1. Bachelor of Arts (Education) Primary .....
   2. Bachelor of Arts (Education) Elementary .....
   3. Other, please specify .....

8. Are you responsible for supervising other members of The early childhood center's staff? ..yes_____ no_____

9. How many hours per week do you work in the center?
   1. twenty hours or less .....
   2. thirty hours or less .....
   3. more than thirty hours .....

10. Do you have any social contacts with any of the parents of the children in your center? (for example: neighborhood groups, at church, at parties)
    yes_____no_____
    If yes, how many parents? ..... _____

Part II Please indicate what best represents your opinion by circling the 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each item.

1 means I Strongly Agree
2 means I Mostly Agree
3 means I Mostly Disagree
4 means I Strongly Disagree

		STRONGLY AGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	MOSTLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1.	Parent(s) of the children in my group should keep me informed about important happenings in their child's home life.	1	2	3	4
2.	When I have experienced problems with a child, talking with that child's parents has been helpful.	1	2	3	4
3.	It is important for teachers to visit children in their homes.	1	2	3	4
4.	Generally, a good time to talk with parents about their child's progress is when they drop off their child at the center.	1	2	3	4
5.	Parents give me sufficient information about their child's home life.	1	2	3	4
6.	It is primarily the teacher's job and not the director's, to explain the center's program to parents.	1	2	3	4
7.	It is important that parents know what their child does at this center.	1	2	3	4
8.	The children who receive better child care are those whose teachers and parents communicate regularly.	1	2	3	4
9.	Teachers know more about how children develop than most parents do.	1	2	3	4

1 means I Strongly Agree		STRONGLY AGREE	MOSTLY	MOSTLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY
2 means I Mostly Agree					
3 means I Mostly Disagree					
4 means I Strongly Disagree					
10.	Parents should tell their child's teacher the expectations they have for their child in the center.	1	2	3	4
11.	Parents of the children in my group can provide me with helpful hints on how to work with their children.	1	2	3	4
12.	I have sufficient opportunities to talk with parents of the children in my group.	1	2	3	4
13.	It is mainly the teacher's job and not the director's to keep parents of the children in her group informed about their child's progress.	1	2	3	4
14.	It is possible to keep in touch regularly with parents of the children in my group.	1	2	3	4
15.	A good time for me to talk with parents about their child's progress is when they pick up their child from the center.	1	2	3	4
16.	My relationship with the child's parent(s) has an effect on the way I interact with the child.	1	2	3	4
17.	Parents should observe their child at the center while the program is in progress.	1	2	3	4
18.	I feel that parents and I talk enough about their child's home life.	1	2	3	4
19.	Parents should explain to me how they are raising their child.	1	2	3	4

1 means I Strongly Agree		S T R O N G L Y			S T R O N G L Y
2 means I Mostly Agree			M O S T L Y	M O S T L Y	
3 means I Strongly Disagree					
4 means I Strongly Disagree		AGREE		DISAGREE	
20.	Most teachers are willing to meet with parents after center hours to discuss their child's progress.	1	2	3	4
21.	The parents of the children in my group and I talk enough about their children's progress at the center.	1	2	3	4
22.	At the preschool level, parent-teacher communication is not absolutely essential for quality child care.	1	2	3	4

Part III **Please circle yes or no.**

1. Are any of the following methods of parent-teacher communication used at your center?

Written information:

1. booklet about program .....yes no
2. notices on the wall .....yes no
3. monthly program calendars .....yes no
4. newsletters .....yes no
5. notes from staff .....yes no
6. developmental records .....yes no

Spoken Information:

7. telephone calls .....yes no
8. chats with staff at drop-off .....yes no
9. chats with staff at pick-up .....yes no
10. night meetings .....yes no
11. parent-teacher conferences .....yes no
12. home visits by staff .....yes no
13. observation in the center by parent.....yes no
14. participation in program by parent.....yes no

Social Situations:

15. open house .....yes no
16. parties or family gatherings .....yes no

Special Methods:

17. video tapes of your center .....yes no
18. slides of your center .....yes no
19. photographs of your program .....yes no
20. other .....yes no
21. If other, please specify _____.

2. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about their child's progress in your center's program?
   a. most frequently used .....number _____
   b. second most frequently used .....number _____
   c. third most frequently used .....number _____

3. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform parents about activities at your center?
   a. most frequently used .....number _____
   b. second most frequently used .....number _____
   c. third most frequently used .....number _____

4. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used by parents to inform you about their child and their family?
   a. most frequently used .....number _____
   b. second most frequently used .....number _____
   c. third most frequently used .....number _____

5. Using the scale below, choose the number that best identifies how often you use each of the following methods to talk with parents of the children in your group.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Only once	Less than once per month	Once per month	Once every 2 weeks	Once a week	Almost every day

a. I talk with parents when they pick up their child. _____
b. I talk with parents when they drop off their child. _____
c. I talk on the phone with parents of the children. _____
d. I have an individual meeting with parents in the center _____
e. I have an individual meeting with parents in the parents' home. _____

6. Over the past five days, what was the average total time you spent talking with parents each day? (check the appropriate time)

a. none .....____
b. about ten minutes .....____
c. about fifteen minutes .....____
d. about twenty minutes .....____
e. about thirty minutes .....____
f. more than thirty minutes .....____

APPENDIX C

Parents: Correspondence and Questionnaire

Parents

This center is participating in a study that focuses on communication between parents and the staff of child care centers. The study is being conducted by Ms. Margaret Copeman, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University, as part of her work to complete a Master of Education degree. She is interested in the views of directors, teachers, and parents who are connected with child care programs. All responses will be kept in strictest confidence. Names of people or centers will not be used in the study itself.

Next week, Ms. Copeman will be mailing a survey to some of you who have children attending this center. She looks forward to including your views and would be most appreciative of your participation. However, should you not wish to receive a survey please inform the director within the next few days.

Dear Ms. X,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University where I am studying the area of Early Childhood Education. I want to learn more about communication between parents and teachers in preschools and day care centers. Knowing more about communication in preschool and day care will be helpful to everyone who works with young children.

To assist me in this study, I seek your cooperation and assistance. Would you please take 10-15 minutes to complete a short questionnaire about communication? I have also asked for some information about yourself, but I assure you that you will not be identified by your answers. No names of people or centers will be used on the form or in the study itself. There is a code number on each form which allows me to determine whether or not you have returned the questionnaire. It will not be used in any way to identify you in the coding or analysis of information.

In two-parent families I ask that only one parent fill out the form, preferably the parent who has most contact with the teachers at the day care or preschool center.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the stamped envelope not later than XXX

If you should have any questions about the project you can reach me at work, 778-2209 or at home 754-0017. Thankyou for your time and effort. Your assistance is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Margaret Copeman,
Graduate Student
Early Childhood Education

Part I I.D. _____

Questionnaire to Parents

Please place an (X) in the appropriate space.

1. Which of the child's parents or guardians are you?
   1. mother .....
   2. female guardian .....
   3. father .....
   4. male guardian .....

2. Age at last birthday:
   1. under 20 years .....
   2. 21-25 years .....
   3. 26-30 years .....
   4. 31-35 years .....
   5. 36 years or over .....

3. What is your marital status?
   1. married .....
   2. single .....
   3. divorced .....
   4. widowed .....

4. How many children do you have?
   1. one child .....
   2. two children .....
   3. three children or more .....
   4. more than three children .....

5. How many children do you have attending this center?
   1. one child .....
   2. two children .....
   3. more than two children .....

6. How many days per week does your child attend the center? (If you have more than one child registered, please answer this question for the child who attends the most often)
   1. five days per week .....
   2. four days per week .....
   3. three days per week .....
   4. two days per week .....
   5. one day per week .....

7. Are these half days or full days?
   1. half days .....
   2. full days .....

8. How long have you had a child attending this center?
   1. less than one month ....._____
   2. one to four months ....._____
   3. five to eight months ....._____
   4. nine to twelve months ....._____
   5. one to two years ....._____
   6. more than two years ....._____.

Please circle yes or no and fill in numbers as needed.

9. Have any of your other children attended this center? .....yes no

10. Have you used any other licensed center for the care of your child or children? ...yes no

11. Before using this center, did you have social contacts (for example, at work, or in the neighborhood) with any of the other parents using this center? .....yes no
    If yes, how many parents? ....._____

12. Before using this center, did you have social contacts, as mentioned in item 11, with any of the teachers at this center? ...yes no
    If yes, how many teachers? ....._____

13. Do you now have social contacts with any of the following:
    1. teachers at this center .....yes no
       If yes, how many? ....._____

    2. parents from this center .....yes no
       If yes, how many? ....._____

    3. the director of this center .....yes no

14. Did you graduate from high school? .....yes no

15. How many years of post secondary education did you complete?
    (Please place an X in the appropriate space.)
    1. none ....._____
    2. one year ....._____
    3. two years ....._____
    4. four years ....._____
    5. five or more years ....._____

16. Are you presently a student? .....yes no

    If yes, part-time studies .....yes no
    or full-time studies? .....yes no

Part II **Please indicate what best represents your opinion by circling the 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each item.**

1 means I Strongly Agree
2 means I Mostly Agree
3 means I Mostly Disagree
4 means I Strongly Disagree

		STRONGLY AGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	MOSTLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1.	Parents should keep teachers at the center informed about important happenings in the child's home life.	1	2	3	4
2.	When I have experienced problems with my child at home talking with my child's teacher(s) was helpful.	1	2	3	4
3.	It is important for teachers to visit children in their homes.	1	2	3	4
4.	An appropriate time for me to talk with my child's teacher(s) is when I drop off my child at the center.	1	2	3	4
5.	Teachers give me sufficient information about my child's program at the center.	1	2	3	4
6.	It is primarily the teacher's job, rather than the director's job, to explain the center's program to me.	1	2	3	4
7.	It is important for parents to know what their child does at the center.	1	2	3	4
8.	The children who receive better child care are those whose teachers and parents communicate regularly.	1	2	3	4
9.	Most teachers know more about how children grow and develop than most parents do.	1	2	3	4
10.	Parents should tell their child's teacher(s) the expectations they have for their child in the center.	1	2	3	4
11.	My child's teacher(s) can provide me with helpful hints on what to do with my child at home.	1	2	3	4

1 means I Strongly Agree
2 means I Mostly Agree
3 means I Mostly Disagree
4 means I Strongly Disagree

		STRONGLY AGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	MOSTLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
12.	I have sufficient opportunities to talk with my child's teacher(s).	1	2	3	4
13.	It is mainly the teacher's job and not the director's to keep parents of the children in her group informed about their child's progress.	1	2	3	4
14.	It is possible to keep in touch regularly with my child's teacher(s) at this center.	1	2	3	4
15.	A good time for me to talk with the teacher(s) about my child's progress is when I pick up my child from the center.	1	2	3	4
16.	The relationship I have with my child's teacher affects the way the teacher interacts with my child.	1	2	3	4
17.	Parents should observe their child at the center while the program is in progress.	1	2	3	4
18.	I feel that my child's teacher(s) and I talk enough about my child's home life.	1	2	3	4
19.	Parents should explain to their child's teacher(s) how they are raising their child.	1	2	3	4
20.	Most teachers are willing to meet with parents after center hours to discuss their child's progress.	1	2	3	4
21.	My child's teacher(s) and I talk enough about my child's progress at the center.	1	2	3	4

Part III

Please circle yes or no.

1. Are any of the following methods of communicataion used at your child's center?

Written information:

1. booklet about the program .....yes no
2. notices on the wall .....yes no
3. monthly program calendars .....yes no
4. newsletters .....yes no
5. notes from staff .....yes no
6. 'report cards'.....yes no

Spoken Information:

7. telephone calls .....yes no
8. chats with staff at drop-off .....yes no
9. chats with staff at pick-up .....yes no
10. night meetings .....yes no
11. parent-teacher conferences .....yes no
12. home visits by staff .....yes no
13. observation of the program by parents...yes no
14. participation in the program by parents.yes no

Social Situations:

15. open house .....yes no
16. parties or family gatherings .....yes no

Special Methods:

17. video tapes of your center .....yes no
18. slides of your center .....yes no
19. photographs of your program .....yes no
20. other .....yes no
21. If other, please specify _____.

2. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used to inform you about **how your child is doing at the center?**
   a. most frequently used .....number _____
   b. sccond most frequently used .....number _____
   c. third most frequently used .....number _____

3. Which of the methods listed above(items 1-21) are most often used to inform you about **activities at the center?**
   a. most frequently used .....number _____
   b. second most frequently used .....number _____
   c. third most frequently used .....number _____

4. Which of the methods listed above (items 1-21) are most frequently used by you to inform your child's teacher about your child and your family?
   a. most frequently used .....number _____
   b. second most frequently used .....number _____
   c. third most frequently used .....number _____

5. Using the scale below, choose the number that best identifies how often you use each of the following methods to talk with your child's teacher at the center.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Only once	Less than once per month	Once per month	Once every 2 weeks	Once a week	Almost every day

a. I talk with the teacher when I pick up my child. _____

b. I talk with the teacher when I drop off my child. _____

c. I talk on the phone with my child's teacher. _____

d. I have an individual meeting with the teacher at the center. _____

e. I have an individual meeting with the teacher in my home. _____

Please place an (X) in the appropriate space.

6. During a normal week, what is the average number of minutes each day you spend in conversation with your child's teacher?

   a. no time .....
   b. about five minutes .....
   c. about ten minutes .....
   d. about fifteen minutes .....
   e. twenty minutes or more .....

Please place an (X) in the appropriate space.

7. My <u>most valuable source</u> of finding out about my child's activity at the center is:

   a. from my child .....
   b. from my child's teacher .....
   c. from the director of the center .....
   d. from written information .....
   e. from other sources .....
   f. If other, please specify ... _____

APPENDIX D

Parents and Teachers: Satisfaction with Parent-Staff Communication for Centers with More Parental Respondents

Table 45

Teachers: Satisfaction with Parent-Staff Communication for Centers with More Parental Respondents

Center's Overall Rank	Rank for Questionnaire Item					Overall Average
	#12	#14	#18	#5	#21	
1	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.2
2	5.0	7.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	3.2
3	6.0	3.0	6.0	1.0	4.0	4.0
4	3.0	7.0	6.0	1.0	1.0	4.2
4	8.0	5.0	5.0	1.0	2.0	4.2
4	1.0	1.0	11.0	1.0	7.0	4.2
7	8.0	7.0	2.0	1.0	7.0	5.0
8	6.0	3.0	6.0	8.0	4.0	5.4
9	4.0	6.0	2.0	10.0	11.0	6.6
10	10.0	7.0	10.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
11	11.0	11.0	9.0	11.0	10.0	10.4

Table 46

Parents: Satisfaction with Parent-Staff Communication for Centers with More Parental Respondents

Center's Overall Rank	Rank for Questionnaire Item					Overall Average
	#12	#14	#18	#5	#21	
1	3	4	3	1	1	2.4
2	4	3	1	6	5	3.8
2	6	2	4	4	3	3.8
4	1	8	2	7	7	5.0
5	8	6	6	2	4	5.2
6	5	5	5	3	10	5.6
7	2	1	9	11	6	5.8
8	9	11	7	8	2	7.4
9	10	7	10	5	11	8.6
10	11	10	8	9	8	9.2
10	7	9	11	10	9	9.2

THE END