

The Effects of Implementing a Communication Journal as a Communication Tool
Between Parents and Providers

by

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Abstract

"Does He Eat the Peel? You Might Try This as Well."

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Communication Tool Between Parents and Providers

Research has documented the importance of establishing a home/school connection and its positive influence on a child's development. The literature points to communication as the key to establishing this partnership with parents. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effects of implementing a communication journal as a vehicle for communication between the parents and providers at a day care centre. Over a six week period participants maintained a communication journal exchanging daily communication using the format provided. Data gathering procedures included in-depth interviews before and after the implementation of the journal, maintenance of the journal, and written reflections during the process of using the journal. Analysis of the data revealed that there were two distinct categories of communication: communication about the care (physical health and well being), and communication about the growth and development of the child. Within the communication an implied purpose or intent of the entries emerged. These were identified as being characteristics of effective communication. The study concluded that, in this particular case, and for these participants, journals were an effective communication vehicle. Providers and parents perceived that

there were several benefits emerging from the use of the journal and several ways that the journal facilitated communication. One compelling question became apparent in pursuing further understanding of the role communication plays in establishing the home/school connection and partnership in working for the optimal development of children. The question that remains for future research is: What purpose does communication serve in the respective roles of parents and providers, and in their perception of each other's roles?

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Preschool Child to Her Mother and Teacher:

"How Can You Both Teach Me Unless You Know One Another?"

Dr. Margie Southall (cited in Yawkey & Bakawa-Evenson, 1975)

Currently in British Columbia more than 59% of women with children under school age are in the work force and an estimated 347,000, or 67% of children age zero to twelve years, require some type of non-parental child care (Statistics Canada, 1996; Canadian National Child Care Study, 1992). The children in licensed care spend part of their day in the care of a provider; either in a family day home (a private home with up to 7 children and 1 provider), or in a day care centre (a larger centre with staffing based on provider/child ratios, and with a supervisor). Younger children spend as much as twenty-eight hours per week in care (Canadian National Child Care Study, 1992).

Throughout history the importance of the parent's role in a child's development has been recognized. Newman (1995) notes that the importance of family as a key to education dates back to 1897. Throughout the period of 1960 to 1970, the importance of establishing a partnership with parents and a connection between home and school was emphasized in the transition between home and early schooling through initiation of such pre-school programs as Head Start and Home Start. Head Start intervention programs involved parents

through participation. These programs were found to have increased, and to have helped maintain, the child's educational achievement in such areas as reading readiness and in motivation to achieve (Grotberg 1969, cited in Winkelstein, 1981; Willmon, 1969). Throughout this period of time, growing bodies of research and literature have pointed to the value of linking the home and school as a means of increasing the developmental potential of the child in their academic achievement, motivation, and in enhancing their self-esteem (Willmon 1969; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 1979; Fullan, 1982). The message that emerges from the literature on this topic, over the past twenty years, as Fullan (1982) indicates, is a consistent one: "... the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child's development and educational achievement" (p.193).

In light of past findings, it becomes important to find a means of involving parents in the care and education of their children. Furthermore, involvement in care as Clarke-Stewart (cited in Horowitz, 1984) points out, refers specifically to the need for parents and providers to collaborate in order to coordinate the child's care through shared responsibility. Effective parent/care giver relationships are required for such collaboration and as Powell (1988) points out, there is a need to identify and study the determinants of effective parent/care giver relationships.

When reviewing the factors, identified in the

literature, that positively affect parent and teacher or parent and provider relationships, a key factor emerged: the importance of finding a means of developing 'meaningful' communication. Communication is an element identified repeatedly as an important foundation for establishing the home/school (centre) connection (Sharrock, 1970; McAfee, 1987; Moles, 1987; Storey, 1989; Newman, 1995). Furthermore, Atkin, Bastiani, and Goode (1988) define good communication as two way, as both seeking and giving information and, as attending to what is said. Until there is communication important elements of the parent and provider relationship, trust, mutual respect and understanding cannot develop (Newman, 1995).

The importance of communication is further supported by Powell (cited in Kontos, 1981) as a component of staff/parent relationships that enhances both continuity and the child's development. Ideal staff-parent relationships, Powell (cited in Kontos, Raikes and Woods, 1983) suggests are composed of cooperation, trust, information-sharing and open and honest communication (p.44). Effective relationships support the continuity in the child's care, affect the quality of their socialization process and enhance the developmental potential of the child (Kontos et al., 1983). The need to identify a means of communicating that has the potential to establish effective relationships, and provide a link between the settings, and the parents and providers is apparent.

Mayall and Petrie (1983) point out that parents often feel disconnected from the care setting and dis-empowered in

making decisions regarding their childrens' daily care and their daily development. A British study by Mayall and Petrie (1983), comparing 'child minding' and 'nursery care', revealed the mothers' need to be well informed about how their children spend the day and the need to establish consistency in care. Responses from mothers interviewed during the study illuminate these feelings of disconnection: "You never know how he's being looked after... You just have to hope "(p.175). "They don't tell me things. (p.175)." The message that emerges is that parents don't feel informed.

Decisions about children's development are of particular importance given the ages of children in day care. These are the ages at which developmental milestones such as teething, walking, and talking are achieved. Santrock (1996) points out that parents are concerned about the effects of day care on their child's development, and that the quality of care affects the children's experience and development. Helling (1993) reveals that there is a relationship among the information that parents receive from school, parents' knowledge and behaviors, and childrens' development. Parents' concerns about their childrens' development and the importance of information parents receive supports the need for finding a method of connecting the home and the centre.

Methods of establishing communication and a connection between parents and early childhood settings has historically centred on providing parent education programs and on involving parents through direct participation in the programs. Today, parents who are less able to be involved

directly in their child's education through traditional means, require other means of forming connections with their child's care giver. In fact, Powell (1989) suggests that the theoretical grounds are far stronger than the empirical grounds in providing a rationale for establishing relationships between families and early childhood programs. He further suggests that the combination of the theoretical and empirical work, provides a strong argument for increasing the level of experimentation with strategies for strengthening relations between families and early childhood programs.

Statement of the Problem

Could a communication method be implemented that would facilitate communication between parents and providers, help to involve parents, and establish a connection between the two settings?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to: (a) identify a communication method or tool that would facilitate communication between parents and providers and a connection between home and the day care setting; (b) investigate the effects that use of a communication journal has on communication between parents and providers in one type of day care setting; and (c) to examine the nature and content of the communication that evolves between the parents and providers.

Through the implementation of communication journals, this study will explore the following research questions:

1. What recording procedures are employed by the parents and the providers/educators?
2. What types of information or topics do providers and parents record?
 - Are there any differences between parents' and providers' focus or emphasis (frequency of topics, identifiable categories, etc.)?
 - Are any changes evident in the content of responses over the course of the implementation period?
3. Are there ways the communication journal served to facilitate and/or enhance communication between the parents and providers, the home and the centre, and if so what are these?
4. Do parents and/or providers identify any problems or difficulties with this form of communication and if so, what are they?
5. Do parents and providers benefit from this form of communication? If so, how?

Definition of Terms

Communication

Communication refers to a regular two-way form of dialogue that focuses on the child and has the potential to build an informed relationship between the parent and the provider, and serve as a means of parent involvement.

Parent Participation

For the purposes of this study parent participation is the use of the communication journal for the purposes of building an informed relationship between the parent and the

provider.

Home/Centre Connection (Parent/Provider Partnership)

Home /school connection, and parent/provider partnership/link refer to the establishment of a connection between the home and day care setting/ the parent and provider through regular two-way communication that helps each to know more about the child in each of the two settings.

Communication Journals

The communication journal is in the form of a bound booklet that travels, with the child, between the centre and home on a daily basis. The journal consists of pages formatted for the purposes of this study and used by the providers and parents for recording entries as a means of communication (See Appendix A).

Comment Leaders

Comment leaders are beginnings of statements that provide a lead in to a comment or question to assist parents and/or providers, if needed, in recording their journal entry (See Appendix E).

Providers

This is the term used, in this study, to refer to Early Childhood trained employees in the centre who are are charged with the responsibility of looking after the children. Please see recommendations on page 132.

Day Care Centre

Day Care Centres are provincially licensed care facilities for children from infancy to preschool. Provinces

set the regulations outlining standards for licensing and for maintaining quality care.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were imposed by the researcher:

1. This study focuses on the use of communication journals by parents and providers at one day care centre.
2. The data collection period was limited to the period between July, 1996 and Mid-December, 1996.
3. The study focused on thirteen participants who maintained the journals on a daily basis for a period of six weeks.
4. The study was limited to children selected from what was previously an employer sponsored day care, therefore demographic similarities of the parent participants are recognized. The group of parents participating are a homogeneous group of married, middle-class professionals who work in similar professions.
5. The study is an exploratory inquiry that looks in-depth for the meaning and knowledge constructed by the participants: by this researcher, by these participants, at this site, and during this time. Caution must be considered regarding the generalizability beyond this specific site.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One has outlined the problem to be explored and the general purpose of the inquiry. Chapter Two includes: a brief historical perspective on parent involvement in education, an examination of the communication that exists

between parents and providers, what the literature reveals about the importance of communication, and what is known about the use of journals as a means of communication and parent involvement. In Chapter Three the research methodology employed by the researcher for this study is presented. Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data and the findings of the study, followed by conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Five.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This study explores communication between parents and providers. More specifically it examines the effects of using one method for communicating between the two settings, home and the day care, and between the child's two main care givers, the parent and the provider. This chapter presents a review of the literature and research pertinent to this study. The review of the literature and research is presented in six main parts:

- 1) The first part of the review looks at the history of parent involvement.

- 2) The second part looks at the importance of parent involvement in establishing a connection between the two social settings in which a child participates.

- 3) The third part reviews the move toward parent partnership.

- 4) The fourth part looks at the role of communication in establishing a connection and the factors that create effective communication.

- 5) The fifth part reviews current methods of communication advocated in practice.

- 6) The next part of the chapter presents a review of the process of journalling.

- 7) A review of the use of journals and or two-way communication between the home and school/centre completes

the review.

History of Parent Involvement

The early educational philosophers such as Rousseau, Froebel, and Pestalozzi recognized the significant role that parents had in the development and education of their child. Powell (1989) in establishing the importance of the parents' roles in the growth and development of their children refers to Pestalozzi's eighteenth century reference in which he identifies the parent's role as providing the core and the educator's as providing the shell that surrounds the core. Probst, (1986) makes reference to Rousseau's likening of a child to a young plant to be watered by the mother, and to Froebel's recognition of mothers as educators of their children through his publication of a book of nursery songs and finger plays for mothers to use with their children.

Although parent involvement has seemingly always had a place in the education and development of children, Edwards and Redfern (1988) point out that, during the nineteenth and twentieth century, education of children gradually shifted away from the home and into schools that have distanced themselves from the home. They note that school became a means of compensating for the perceived deficiencies of the home and that parents were totally excluded from their children's education. Bronfenbrenner (1979) warned that over the past decades the school had become isolated from the family.

With these warnings in mind, early childhood programs throughout the sixties and seventies set about reaffirming

the importance of the parent in the development and education of children. Programs such as Head Start, Home Start, The Perry Pre-School Project, etc. implemented programs that encouraged parent involvement. Probst (1976) indicates that the recognition of the importance of parent involvement affected early education programs in United States, Great Britain and in Canada. In British Columbia, she notes that parent-teacher partnership was identified as being rewarding for all and that cooperative preschools' parents were involved in the selections of the teacher and in the development of the program. Similarly, in Alberta, parent involvement included parent administrated early childhood programs funded by the provincial government. Important parts of many of these programs were components that encouraged parent involvement at an early age and provided opportunities for parent education.

Parent Involvement and the Home/School Connection

The literature strongly supports the importance of the establishment of a connection between home and school (Sharrock, 1970; Epstein, 1979; Epstein, 1987; Atkin, Basitani & Goode; 1988; Storey, 1989; Katz, 1992; Swap, 1993; Kasting, 1994; Manning, Manning & Morrison, 1995). The National Committee for Citizens in Education research findings conclude that parent involvement produces measurable gains (Storey, 1989). The importance of establishing communication with parents, and a connection between home and school has been emphasized both in the transition between home and school (kindergarten), and in the school system

overall (Zinnick & Blakey, 1995). A growing body of literature and research supports the value of this connection in increasing student achievement and enhancing their self-esteem (Willmon, 1969; Fullan, 1982; McAfee, 1987; Swap 1993; Brooks, 1994; Fagan, 1994). The following excerpt from Epstein's work (1987) further emphasizes the importance of creating this link with parents:

The recent acknowledgements of the importance of parent involvement are built on research findings accumulated over two decades that show that children have an advantage in school when their parents encourage and support their school activities...The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, interest and activities at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account (p.119).

Swap, (1993) in an extensive review of the literature indicates that parental involvement is a positive factor in student achievement: "...the evidence is now beyond dispute: parent involvement improves student achievement"(p.3). Sattes' (1985) review of the research on parent involvement also revealed findings that indicate a strong positive link between parent involvement and student achievement. As well, Sattes reported that parent involvement correlated positively with children's increased self-esteem, improved attendance and with fewer occurrences of behavior problems. Of particular interest is Sattes' note that parent involvement

through informing parents regularly about their child's progress, produced measurable gains in achievement.

These findings are further reinforced by Swap's (1993) summary of a study of elementary school aged children by Trovato and Bucher, in 1980. The teacher, participating in the study, made contact with the parents in letters or by phone, to inform them of their child's reading progress. Over the fifteen week study, average contact was one hour per family. The students, in the experimental group, whose parents were regularly contacted by the teacher, performed better on the reading achievement test administered than either the control group, or the group that had peer tutoring intervention but no parent contact.

It would seem that with such emphasis on the importance of the home/school partnership/connection and the positive effects on children in the elementary school, that there are implications for children enrolled in day care settings. Powell (1989) indicates that a child's competence is enhanced when the adults responsible for the care of the child are consistent and agree on the goals and the ways they deal with children. Furthermore, Powell (1989) and Bronfenbrenner (1970) suggest that parent self-development is also supported by educators working together with families. As a result, parents become more empowered and more capable of parenting and supporting their child's development.

Although the literature provides much less evidence of the direct impact partnership has on the child in day care situations, the importance of the relationship between the

school and the parents of the children in pre-school and beyond has been recognized as a positive factor in the child's success in learning and education (Willmon, 1969; Lally, Mangione & Honig, 1988; Bacon, 1990; Helling, 1993).

The Move Toward Partnership

Parents are the child's first and most significant teacher. This primary role continues during the child's early educational years. It must, however, be recognized that day care has become a basic need of the family in today's society (Powell, 1989). The establishment of a strong, positive relationship between the parents and educators/care givers in the early years is of fundamental importance in this significant relationship (Leeper, Skipper & Witherspoon, 1979; Whitehead, 1988).

Powell (1989) suggests that importance has been placed on establishing close working relationships between families and early childhood programs for several reasons: a) U.S. legislation has been passed to protect family structures, to ensure parents' rights and to ensure mutual involvement; b) there is recognition of the positive influences of the family on the child's development and education; and finally, c) there is recognition that family and school involvement is in keeping with the democratic process. Our schools today reflect this move toward parental rights and the acknowledgement of the positive influences on the child. Parents in British Columbia have greater access to information at both the local and provincial level and to opportunities for greater input into the educational process

through parent advisory councils. Inclusion of parents in the educational decision making processes at the provincial and school level, in such ways has been mandated through the School Act (School Amendment Act, 1992). School Districts have implemented policies that provide for parent participation in school planning. Professional awareness of educators has been heightened through professional development and the academic literature, such as texts written by Storey (1989) and Swap (1993) presenting models for implementation of parent partnership in schools.

Partnerships are relationships that develop and change and therefore require the flexibility to change and meet the needs of the participants in the relationship. In seeking to establish partnerships it becomes important to consider a means of involvement that allows for construction of a relationship between the teacher and the parent. As Schockley, Michalove and Allen (1995) emphasize, "Programs are adopted; partnerships are constructed" (p.91). Programs, as a means of establishing partnership, are systematic and therefore risk becoming static. Unlike the construction of partnerships, programs tend not to vary in response to the needs of individual schools, classrooms, or teacher-child-family relationships. Schockley et al. (1995) notes "In other words ...the more respectful and knowledgeable we as teachers are about family attitudes and beliefs (and vice versa), the more effective our efforts on behalf of children are likely to be." (p.93). They also note the inappropriateness of most parents involvement programs in

achieving collaboration due to their generalized nature. In moving toward partnership, Schockley et al. (1995) reveal that the means requires more than what previous programs have offered. Establishing partnerships that are collaborative requires provision for flexibility and joint input, and some means for providing for the differences in each set of relationships. Horowitz, (1984), further supports the need for collaborative partnerships between parents and care givers/educators in caring for the child and suggests that communication is the means of providing continuous care for the child.

The Role of Communication

Out of this body of research and literature on the value of parent/school partnership emerges the literature that addresses how to achieve partnership. Storey (1989) suggests that programs that build partnership are vital and that communication is the first step. The first step in building a parent-school relationship is establishing a liaison between the school and the home settings, and it is liaison that establishes the connection and lays the foundation for building a more direct parent partnership; communication, information and relation-ship building through dialogue are the focus (Storey, 1989, p.44). A study by Winkelstein (1981) supports the role of communication as a means of participation. Lack of communication is a concern for both parents and teachers and more opportunities for harmonious communication between them would be beneficial (Sharrock, 1970; Shimoni and Baxter, 1996).

Whitehead (1988), using a model for determining the importance of communication and cohesion between family systems, and applying it to day care and family systems, reveals that cohesiveness and communication have the greatest importance for younger children. She further suggests that communication continues to be of importance as the child grows older and identifies communication as central to the effectiveness of systems such as the one that exists between day care and families. Furthermore, optimal communication, Whitehead (1988) states, is clear, open, and caring (p.261).

Atkin, Bastiani and Goode, (1988), identify elements of communication parents prefer as including the following: written communication that is clear, direct, economical, honest, reassuring, informal, friendly, and personal, and they indicate that types of written communication are treated differently. Content should respond to the anxieties and concerns of parents by: telling parents what they want to know, inviting parents to respond, having a personal touch and a positive tone. Sharrock, (1970) supports the importance of establishing two way communication, "The school not only needs to give information but to receive it" (p.43). Atkin, Bastiani and Goode (1988) point out that the form of communication and contact is central to establishing good communication with parents. Different types of communication are treated differently and emphasis is placed on the importance of two-way communication that both seeks and gives information and attends to what each says.

According to Swap (1993) there are certain things that

parents need to know. Parents want to know that their child is appreciated, that his/her uniqueness is recognized, and that the teacher or care giver has knowledge of their child's interests. A study by Mayall et al. (1983) revealed that mothers with young children in care settings want to be informed about how their child spends the day. Effective communication connects this gap between the home and school/centre by providing a means for parents and providers to learn more about the child in the different settings.

Methods of Communication Advocated in Practice

Prevalent in the journals and newsletters written for those who provide care and education for young children are articles on forms of communication. Texts written for educators of young children contain a section that addresses various methods of communicating with parents. Methods commonly suggested include: newsletters, policy manuals, conferences, parent bulletin boards, parent orientation sessions, home visits, and parent participation programs. Many of the articles reviewed specifically address the importance of establishing communication and offer guidance for practitioners on how to conference more effectively, publish manuals of information, involve parents, or reaffirm the need to establish and maintain effective communication.

Although a variety of forms of communication are prescribed in the literature, less evident is the identification of a method of communication that, in the perception of parents and providers, meets their needs and establishes greater continuity and connection between home

and school. Powell, (1989) indicates that programs and methods of involving parents are based on outdated practices. Horowitz (1984) reminds us of the importance of communication between parents and care givers and the interrelationship between the two settings, and reveals in her findings that this day care/home relationship is unclear. Although the literature has identified factors that influence the effectiveness and the value of communication in establishing parent partnership, this researcher's review of the literature and research uncovered an absence of documentation that had examined the effects of any specific method of communication. It is recognized that parent involvement and participation have a positive affect on the child, but as Kontos et al. (1983) point out, the details for establishing an optimal coordination between parents and teachers (providers) of young children have not been established.

Use of Communication Journals

Classroom teachers have used communication books, in various ways as a form of communication between the classroom and home, between the teacher and the student, and between the teacher and the parents. Information sent home, via the communication books, included important general information regarding the class, and individual communication regarding expectations, successes, and needs of the child.

As part of the Florida Quality Improvement Study, completed by the Families and Work Institute, a survey of parents indicated that communication was second only to safety in a list of 21 determinants of quality in child care

that parents identified as important. (Status of Children, 1993).

Mayall and Petrie (1983) found that mothers of children in nursery centres felt dis-empowered and responded that they felt they had no input into what their child did during the day.

The use of a journal provides a natural extension of the required daily communication that is already established in many day care settings, (i.e. daily records of diet intake, medical information, schedule of feeding, sleeping, etc.). Day care centres and licensed family day home providers use various charts and checklists to record daily care related information for each child. Some of these records are required under the Community Care Facility Act. Additional records and items of information that are maintained vary with individual centres and day homes. Because providers are already required to record certain child related information, a journal is a means of communication that can become an extension of these records and provide a vehicle for parent input as well.

Thus journals are a relatively informal method of communicating that allow for different levels of skills and comfort in written communication. A study, by Schockley et al. (1995), involving the use of journals as a means of sharing and communicating about the child in terms of their literacy, found that journals offered families a meaningful role in their child's development regardless of how comfortable the parents were with their own literacy.

Journals also provide a means of communicating that, although personal, is also less direct than person to person communication, and potentially more comfortable.

The literature strongly supports the value of finding an effective means of establishing two-way communication and a partnership with parents. Shockley, Michalove, and Allen (1995), researchers and teachers of young children, found, after establishing communication with the parents through literacy journals, that they were able to see the child through the families' eyes, as well as their own, and that the children were at the forefront of their thoughts and therefore more visible.

Journal Use: The Author's Experience

To further support this informal method of communication the author cites her own use of journals first as a parent and later as a classroom teacher.

From the time of infancy until the preschool years the author maintained journals as a memory device and as a record of active involvement in her children's development. As the children gained in their ability to speak and draw, the entries in their journals entries were dictated by the children and later written by the children themselves. These journals have served as a means of revisiting their early thoughts, interests, and early language: "I could go down the slide with the girl catching me. I can spell 'yes' and 'no' and 'Matthew' and 'Dad' and 'Aaron'. I am 4." (Matthew Levere, age 4, March 17, 1984).

Simple entries of something a child did in a day, over

time, served as memories as well as reflections of their growth, their interests, and their individual uniqueness. One of the children, now much older reflects on what it is like to read his journal: "You see patterns and continuity in your personality and where certain parts of you have developed from. I feel good when I read it. It makes me laugh."

(Aaron Levere, age 19). For the parent, too, the experience provided an opportunity to see the patterns in each child's development, interests, and personality.

A classroom study of grade one students, by Manning, Manning and Morrison (1995) documented similar findings in a child's growth as well as other values that were a result of two-way letter writing between the classroom and home. The teacher and child wrote letters home to the parents on a weekly basis with a space and an invitation for parents to write a letter in response to their child. Manning et al (1995) found that the use of this newsbook letter writing resulted in families being more informed about what their children were doing at school; the teachers were able to help the child more effectively due to having a glimpse of the child's homelife; parents were more aware of curriculum; teachers received positive feedback and appreciation from parents; lines of communication between the teacher and parents were kept open; and the accumulated letters served as documentation of the child's growth.

A two year study by Shockley et al. (1995) using journals exchanged between home and school, further supports use of a journal as a form of written two-way dialogue. A

literacy journal was used to establish parallel practices, at school and at home, that connected the family, the student and the teacher. The teachers conducting the study had set out to establish a partnership with parents. Over a two year period literacy journals were used with students in grade one and two. The teachers would send home a book and a journal with the child. The book was shared with parents and comments were recorded in the journal. The teacher would respond to these comments. At the end of the two years parents identified the journal as an avenue of communication and the communication channel as having made a difference. They indicated that they felt closer to the teacher and that the journal provided an immediate form of communication and a source of information about their child's progress. The teacher-researchers saw the communication as an opportunity to know more about the child and as a way to keep each child in mind each day. The study noted changes in the parents, teachers and children as a direct result of use of literacy journals. Included in their discussion was the identification of three types of relationship connections that resulted from the implementation of literacy journals: family-teacher connections, family-child connections, and child-teacher connections. The journals were credited with providing a means of establishing mutual trust between the parents and the teacher. Through access to knowledge of the child's life outside of school the teacher-researchers felt that they were able to develop long-term relationships with the families. The journal writing activities provided

opportunities for family and child connections through the time and experiences spent together sharing the books and writing responses. Child-teacher connections were identified as one of the strongest features of the day to day communication through the journals. Use of the journal writing provided increased visibility of shy, less noticeable children and provided the teachers and students an opportunity to respond to each other on an individual basis. The relationships that developed as a result of use of the literacy journals indicated that teachers and families created bonds that supported the teaching of the child both at home and at school. The literacy journals in this study were seen as a means of establishing a partnership that allowed for the flexibility that these researchers identify as setting partnership apart from programs.

Summary

Chapter Two has provided an overview of the literature and research that has implications for this study. The research and literature has shown that partnership between parents and educators is important; parent involvement has historically been proven as having a positive effect on the child; communication is a key factor in parent involvement and partnership; and the connection between home and the school is important. The journal was cited as being successful in meeting some of the key elements of effective communication and finally, it was suggested that more empirical work is needed in this area. Chapter Three sets out the methodology for the inquiry.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The intent of this study is to investigate the communication between the home and day care centre from the perspective of parents and providers, before and after the implementation of a communication journal. The inquiry is a qualitatively oriented study reflecting a constructivist approach.

Chapter Three includes definition and discussion of the qualitative and constructivist approach to research, and discussion on the integrity of a qualitative approach. Also included in this chapter is an outline and discussion of the methodology which includes:

- a) site and participant selection,
- b) the intervention,
- c) methods of gathering data,
- d) methods of data analysis and
- e) issues of rigour and study credibility.

Principles of Qualitative Research and The Constructivist Approach

This inquiry is an indepth study of the effects of using a communication journal from the perspective of the participants. The methods used in the inquiry are characteristic of qualitative research, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen, (1982) in that the study: a) is of a social and

descriptive nature, b) is concerned with process rather than isolating outcomes, c) uses inductive analysis and, d) is essentially a search for 'meaning'. Of paramount interest to the researcher is to gain insight into the perspective of the participants, their understanding of the experience and how they have made sense of it (constructed meaning). Such an approach, in which the participants begin from a place of understanding and proceed to another, is based on a constructivist approach to human inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Approaching the study from a constructivist orientation means that the emphasis of the inquiry is to seek and describe the meaning created by the experience and reflected in the perspective of the participants. Such an inquiry attempts to bring meaning and description to the conceptualization that may occur in going from what is currently adopted, through a process of integration and organization to a construction of something that works cognitively (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Lythcott and Duschl, (1990), refer to constructivism as a world view that guides our arguments and our interpretation of the data in reaching conclusions and is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed not received. The researcher's own construction of knowledge is therefore considered a part of the process and interpretation.

Although guided by boundaries, a constructivist approach is not bound by prespecified elements of design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further guiding the design of the study is the

choice of setting. A detailed study of one site was chosen for the inquiry setting. It is therefore to be considered case sensitive research that may or may not have implications for other settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Pilot Study

A pilot study three weeks in duration was conducted prior to the study. One day home provider and one parent with two children in the care of the provider participated. All parents with children in care in the day home were approached by the provider as possible participants. Of the three parents approached, one parent agreed to participate. The pilot study identified several areas that required consideration in the design of the study:

1. The interviews were lengthy and the parent tired by the end. She found some of the questions redundant which caused confusion.

2. The interview revealed that more clarity was needed in the questions asked about the child.

3. Originally the study was intended to include all of the parents of the children under each provider's care. Difficulty obtaining participants in the pilot study revealed this to be an unrealistic expectation.

4. It was recognized that the questions in the interview often limited the response. It became apparent that certain questions needed to provide an opportunity for participants to more openly express their thoughts. These questions were identified and reworded as open ended questions.

5. The pilot study also brought attention to the

importance of the reflections. Neither the provider nor the parent filled in the reflections in the pilot study. Both mentioned in the final interview that they wished they could remember or that they had kept track. A point was made to emphasize to participants in the study the importance of recording their reflections regardless of how insignificant what they record might seem.

6. The format of the journal was used as intended. The description, comments and questions were filled in and the tone remained positive. The provider indicated that the parent had forgotten the book on several occasions and she had used extra pages provided to continue to make entries for days the journal was forgotten. Extra pages were made available for the study and participants were encouraged to continue entries even if the journal was forgotten in the instructions for journal use. The format of the journal pages was maintained.

Procedure

Selection of Site

Initially several centres were approached. These were selected randomly. Two centres indicated an interest in participating. In following up the initial contacts one of the centres was difficult to reach. The director was often inaccessible. The other centre was accessible. It was decided that the inquiry would focus on the one setting in greater depth.

The Setting

The study was carried out in one site, a day care

centre located in an urban area. The centre was originally an employer sponsored child care centre, but had since become a public centre, no longer connected to the employer. However, the majority of the parents using the centre are employed by the original sponsor of the centre, and preference continues to be given to these employees when filling available spaces in the centre. The centre is located adjacent to the building in which most parents of these children work which makes the centre unique in comparison to most centres. The close proximity to the parents' place of employment allows opportunities for parents to visit their children at the centre during breaks and lunchtime. This would not be the case in most centres.

The centre is made up of three care groupings: the infant room, the toddler room and the preschool room. Each group has a separate physical space, both inside and outside. The kitchen area is shared by all of the programs.

The centre is managed by one director/coordinator who oversees the operations. Each care grouping size is in accordance with mandated government child/provider ratios. Ratios change according to ages of the children.

The centre is bright and modern. A large foyer contains parent information on bulletin boards. Signs above each area indicate the program room and the provider/educators designated for that area. All providers' certificates are displayed.

Selection of Participants

Participants for the study were all parents or providers

attached to the one centre. Initial contact was made with the director. The director arranged for the researcher to meet with each of the providers in the centre on an individual basis to explain the project and ask for their participation. The providers were given an overview of the purpose of the study and an explanation of what participation would involve. An introductory package was left with each provider for their further review and consideration. These packages included a letter of introduction giving information about the researcher and the research project, a sample journal page, and a consent to participate form (see Appendix F). Five of the eight providers responded that they were interested in participating.

Selection of the parent participants was made through the director of the centre and the primary care givers (providers/educators). The director of the facility recommended that the providers approach the parents and ask them if they would be willing to participate. She also indicated that she was willing to ask them to find one or two parents to participate. There was a need to respect the confidentiality of parents and therefore it was considered best if the initial contact was made through the centre staff. Parents approached to participate were also provided with an introductory package to review and return. Three of the providers selected two sets of parents to participate. The other two providers each selected the parents of one child in their care to participate. Providers indicated that they selected parents with whom they were most comfortable

and had the most frequent communication. One parent who was approached by the provider did not feel he/she had the time to participate, and so another was approached as a replacement. One parent who had originally agreed to participate decided at one point that due to external events participation might not be possible. The provider/educator indicated that she did not wish to approach any other parent as an alternative. The provider spoke of one child that she had concerns about and thought tracking her through the journal would be beneficial, but felt she did not have particularly good communication with this child's parent and therefore did not feel comfortable asking her to participate. The parent, who had been selected originally, agreed to participate after all.

The Participants

Providers are attached to a specific care area, (infant, toddler, or preschool), and to certain children as their "primary care giver". Although they are responsible for watching over the other children as well, the children for whom they are the 'primary care giver' are the children for whom they are most responsible and for whom they provide specific elements of care.

The parent participants are all married and have one child, with the exception of one couple who have two children, one school-aged child and one child in the centre. For all parents, except one, this is the first experience with having a child in day care. One of the parents had previously had her child in care at a different centre before

enrolling her at this centre. The parent sample selected was a homogeneous group of middle-class professionals who work in similar jobs. The majority of the parents participating work in the building adjacent to the centre.

The children participating ranged in age from ten months to three years of age. Two of the children were enrolled in the infant program, four in the toddler program and two in the preschool program. All of the participating children were enrolled at the centre on a full time basis.

The Inquiry Process

Each participating parent and provider was interviewed prior to implementation of the use of journals. Participants were met at a convenient time and in a place of their choosing. Journals were then introduced and procedures for use were explained.

The journals were introduced to parents and providers on an individual basis. At this time each participant was given an explanation of how the journals would be implemented and used. Examples were provided and the procedure was demonstrated. Sample response sheets containing examples of comments and questions, and suggestions for possible leads into a comment or questions, were supplied to both the parent and provider. These were placed in the journal folder for use on an 'as needed' basis. Instructions for the providers and the parents were attached to the inside pockets of the journal folder. Three envelopes were provided in the journal folder for the return of parents' reflection sheets after each of the three, two-week periods of journal use.

Once both the provider and parent had been interviewed, they began using the journals for the six week period. The journals were used on a daily basis. Providers recorded a description of the child's day, comments and a question. The description might include activities in which the child engaged, something the child said, recording something the child dictated about his/her day, or the child's own attempt to write something in the space provided. Parents were asked to write comments and a question. Participants were instructed that positive communication was the focus. The journal was pre-formatted in order to provide the participants with a communication format that would be less time consuming, would promote positive comments, would encourage a two-way exchange, and would allow an opportunity for parents to be provided with comments they could share with their child. The journals were intended to be taken home each day, read, a response recorded, and then returned the next morning. However, the option was open to parents to read and record in the journal on site, or to read and record in the journal at home.

Parents were also asked to record written reflections on their thoughts about the journal and the communication after each two week period of use. Providers were asked to keep a daily record of their reflections on communication and the use of the journal.

Four to six weeks after the completion of the journal, the final interview with participating parents and providers took place. Had the journals been used over the period of a

year, there would have been more time for participants to reflect on the changes that may have occurred over time. Due to this shorter, more intense period of journal use in this study, any changes would likely be less apparent. A time lapse between completion of the journal implementation period and the final interview was a means of providing opportunity for the participants to compare the communication experience before and after use of the journal. This time lapse provided an opportunity for participants to reflect back on the child and the communication before implementation, and during the implementation period, and make a comparison to the present, at which time the journal was no longer in use.

Interviews were again scheduled at the convenience of the participants. The pre-implementation and post-implementation interviews were recorded through note-taking and on tape. The interviews were in-depth and ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour and ten minutes in length. Due to the number of interviews (twenty-four), the length of the interviews, and the fact that part of each interview included procedural information and information that was pertinent to parents depending on the age of their child, only the parts of the recorded transcripts that were considered to be most significant in analyzing the data were transcribed. The recorded tapes from both interviews were labelled and filed for reference and will be destroyed.

Data Collection

In summary, the sources of data were: the initial and final interview notes and tapes, parents' and providers'

reflections on journal use, the journals, partial transcriptions, and the researcher's informal observations at the centre (recorded in field notes). A variety of methods for data collection were employed; journals, semi-structured pre-implementation and post-implementation interviews, and written reflections were included in the design of the study for the purpose of data triangulation. Informal field notes were also maintained. Burgess (1984) indicates that triangulation can refer to a number of data sources that are used in relation to the same study as a means of checking the hypothesis. The most common reference to the term, Burgess (1984) notes is in reference to using complementary methods to confront a hypothesis.

The journals, interviews, and reflections were used as a means of validating the findings and checking for reliability. It was found that the journals were the core of the research as they formed the experience in which the participants were engaged. The data collected from the participants' reflections provided a view of the participants' perceptions about communication and the use of the journal throughout the process. Interviews provided a method of examining the participants' perceptions before and after engaging in the experience. All three methods were important as a means of interpreting the impact of the experience and seeking the meaning the participants constructed.

The Journals.

The communication journal consisted of pre-formatted pages (See Appendix A) which were bound into a booklet and

placed in a journal folder. The folder also contained instructions for parents, an instruction sheet for providers/educators, parent reflection sheets, envelopes for enclosing and returning parent reflection sheets, and a sample sheet for journal entries which included suggestions for possible beginnings for questions and comment entries (comment leaders). Reflection books were supplied for each provider/educator and were to be kept separate from the journal folder in order to ensure confidentiality. Reminder sheets were bound into the journal to remind parents to complete the reflection sheet after each two week period of journal use.

Reflections

Providers and parents were both asked to reflect on the use of the journals over the time period of journal use. Providers were asked to keep a daily journal in which they were asked to record their thoughts each day as they reflected on the use of the journal. Parents were asked to reflect on the use of the journal after each of the two-week periods of use.

The providers were asked to reflect daily for two main reasons. First, most of the providers were responsible for writing in more than one child's journal each day, and for reading the responses from more than one parent. With multiple responses being written and read daily, and other children in care during the day, providers had much more information on which to reflect. A second consideration was that the daily reflections would be more likely to allow a

pattern or progression to develop that could provide further insight into the data. The pilot study had revealed that the provider did not record any reflections and was unable to recall some of the things she had thought about the journal use and the communication with the parent. She commented that at the time she thought she didn't have anything to say. Looking back she said she wished she had written it down.

The parents were asked to write their reflections on the use of the journal after each two-week period and on the sheet provided. Because parents would most likely be writing and reading responses for only one child, daily responses did not seem necessary. Parents would be more likely to have more meaningful insights as they recalled comments and thoughts about the use of the journal over a two-week period. A two-week period was selected in order to gain enough data on how the progressive use was perceived by the parents and to highlight any differences or changes that may have occurred through accumulated use. The data from the reflections were triangulated with the data gained from the interviews and from the data in the journals. Once the journals were analyzed for the actual communication that took place, the reflections were used to substantiate the participants' view of the communication.

The Interviews

Semi-structured pre-implementation and post interviews were used to examine how parents and providers viewed and used communication, before and after implementation of the communication journals. The interview questions were also

used as a means of establishing information about the participants and the conditions that may influence their data (e.g., how busy a parent is at pick-up time, the procedures that are consistent for all parents or a requirement of the centre, one or two parents picking up or dropping off the child, etc.). The questions in the first section were asked only at the initial interview. The questions in the second section were asked at the pre-implementation interview and again at the post-implementation interview. This section focused on questions about the child in the home and at the centre. This repeated section was intended to focus on the awareness of the child and what effect communicating through the journal had on this awareness. The questions in the third section were asked only at the post-implementation interview (See Appendix D). When the questions were not applicable, due to the age of the child, they were not asked. For example: A question about the topics the child would talk about at home and at the centre was not applicable to children who had not yet developed speech. This was indicated in the interview notes.

At the end of the initial interview, an opportunity was given to each participant to add any additional thoughts they had on communication between themselves and the centre. Prompting during the interview was used to encourage more depth and description in responses. Prompting included statements that encouraged more of a response such as a repeating of the last part of their answer, "You said, "...."?"; or through asking the participant: "Can you

say more about that?" General prompts were listed on the interview question sheet. Additional prompts used were recorded in the interview notes.

The Time

Although a time frame was originally outlined, the reality is that in qualitative research the actual timeline often far extends the proposed one (Lincoln & Gube, 1985). Time in this study was affected by holidays, availability of participants, and availability of the researcher. The data collection period extended from mid-July to mid-December. The intervention was implemented for a six week period that in some cases, extended to ten weeks due to holiday periods by participants and/or providers. Starting and completion dates were staggered with the final participants completing the journal by late October.

Approximately six weeks after the period of journal use was completed the final interviews took place. Parents were given copies of the journal to revisit before meeting for the final interview. This became an important inclusion in the procedure. It was recognized that one of the important aspects of using the journal communication is that it becomes a record of the child's activities over a time period. Revisiting the journal after a time period had elapsed allowed the parents to read the journal as a record of past events. It also allowed parents and providers to reflect back on their communication during the implementation period and compare it to their present communication without it.

Data Analysis

The data compiled for this study were composed of 23 taped interviews (varying in length from 30 minutes to 1 hour and ten minutes), notes from each of the pre-implementation and post-implementation interviews taken at the time of the interview by the researcher, field notes written by the researcher throughout the study, contents of the eight communication journals maintained five days per week for a period of six weeks, six sets of parents reflection notes (three reflection pages each), and daily reflection journals of the five providers participating in the study (varying in amount from 1 steno notebook page to 15 pages). Each piece was read several times and tapes were listened to for clarification. As Lythcott and Duschl (1990) point out, when a researcher is working alone, without secretarial support, the task of transcribing all of the tapes can be onerous and therefore it is more feasible to transcribe the portions most relevant to the topics, themes and categories that emerge from the data. Portions of the tapes were transcribed.

The analysis began with an overall examination of the data sources for the recurring ideas, statements, and emerging themes that were most evident. Once these began to emerge, codes were assigned and the journal entries were broken down, examined, and categorized according to the codes. Once all of the recorded entries were categorized, the other sources of data were analyzed using these codes and categories as guides. Frequencies of types of responses were determined and charted from the break down of the entries.

Looking at the emerging categories of communication entered in the journals raised the question, "Why? What purpose did the comments and questions serve?" Each journal entry was examined with a focus on the meaning and intent, then the entries were read for an overall sense of the meaning within the context. Interviews and reflections, particularly, were looked at for evidence of how the parents and providers were thinking about the communication and how they might be thinking about it differently. The entries were once again analyzed, this time for what was being implied in the communication. The themes that had emerged were found to be some of the characteristics of 'good' communication identified in the literature. These characteristics were used as categories and the entries, reflections, and interviews were analyzed again for evidence of these as being the writer's intent. Each entry was then analyzed for what was being implied: What purpose did the entry serve?; What role was the journal playing for the participants? A numerical coding system was then used to categorize the themes and purposes of intent that lay within the communication. To validate the coding and interpretation, the journals were read independently by a colleague in the field of day care in order to compare and reach consensus. The interviews and reflections played a supportive role in confirming the meaning extracted from the journal. Sources of data were triangulated for evidence in support of the analysis.

Once all of the data had been examined in these ways,

they were once again looked at from a holistic view with further questions that probed for the meaning of the discrepancies that had appeared. This final review approached the data by standing back and asking, "What does this mean?" "Why, for example, do the parents indicate that the journal was a burden, yet indicate that it took only a few minutes to record their entries, was enjoyable to read and that it was valuable to have this information about their child?" This analysis took a more holistic approach. The discrepancies were pulled out, compared and examined from a cause and effect perspective in search of the meaning.

The point of this study was to determine the effects of the use of a communication journal as a means of communication between home and the day care setting, parents and providers. A communication journal was implemented in order to examine how it affected communication between parents and providers. The inquiry examined how the journals were used, the perceptions of the parents and the providers in ascertaining whether the journal facilitated their communication needs and, if so, how, and whether such a communication method was seen as beneficial? It also looked at what this experience in communication meant to the participants and the researcher.

Summary

Chapter Three has outlined the methodology and the approach that was employed in this inquiry. In selecting a design and method for this inquiry, a return to the characteristics of qualitative research is a reminder that

what was most essential, was to uncover the meaning in this experience. Chapter Four presents the findings of this inquiry.

Chapter Four

Findings

Chapter Four focuses on the analysis of the data collected and a discussion of the findings. The purpose of the study is to examine the following questions:

1. What recording procedures are used by the parents and the providers/educators?

2. What types of information or topics do providers and parents record in the communication entries?

- Are there any differences between parents and providers' purposes or emphasis (frequency of topics, identifiable categories, etc.)?

- Are any changes evident in the content of entries over the course of the implementation period?

3. Are there ways the communication journal served to facilitate and/or enhance communication between the parents and provider, the home and the centre and if so, what are these?

4. Do parents and/or providers identify any problems or difficulties with this form of communication and if so, what are these?

5. Do parents and/or providers identify any benefits derived from this form of communication and if so, what are these?

The findings have been presented descriptively and from a constructivist orientation. To address the research

questions and the recurring themes that emerged from the data analysis the findings are organized and presented in the following sections:

Section 1: Recording procedures/habits of the parents and providers

Section 2: Types/purpose of topics recorded by parents and providers

Section 3: The ways in which communication between the home and centre, parent and provider, was enhanced and/or facilitated by the communication journal

Section 4: Problems and difficulties with this form of communication

Section 5: Benefits derived from this communication

Section 6: A discussion of the parents' and providers' perceptions of: communication, the use of the journal, and its effect on communication.

Recording Procedures

In this section, the findings related to the habits and procedures in the parents' and providers' use of the communication journal are presented and discussed. The habits and procedures examined include: identification of those who participated in the use of the journals, the frequency (regularity) of journal use, the frequency with which the different types (comments, questions, descriptions) of communication were recorded, and the routines for where and when recording took place.

Participants in Journal Use

Use of the journal mainly involved one parent, the

mother. In two cases fathers participated by writing an occasional journal entry. In all cases the fathers participated through reading all or parts of the journal. The extent of the fathers' participation varied from reading the occasional entry to reading the journal on a regular basis. The following accounts taken from the post-implementation interviews in response to the question "Did you share the journal with others?", illustrate the fathers' involvement in the journal use: "Ya, my husband or tell him what was in it."; "(My husband) would take a look at what I was writing. If something was interesting I would show it to him... My husband saw it as my project therefore he didn't get involved much."; "We'd read it in the car out loud. ... We both liked reading what (the provider) had written."

The mother was the main participant in all aspects of the study. All recording of the reflections was done by the mother of the child. With the exception of the few journal entries made by two of the fathers, all entries in the journal were made by the mother. The mother was the sole participant in both interviews, except in one case in which the father and mother participated in both interviews.

Providers who participated in the study represented each of the three areas of the program: infant, toddler and pre-schooler. All providers participated in all aspects of the study by recording in the daily journal, keeping a reflection diary and participating in the two interviews.

Frequency of Use

Journal use was set up for a period of six weeks, five

days per week (a total of 30 days use). However, several unforeseen events affected the total number of days the journal was used by the participants. These events included: absenteeism, vacations, forgetting the journal at home, and the child leaving the care of the provider. Child absences affected the total number of days the journal was used in two cases. In neither case was anything recorded by the parent or the provider during the child's absence. Absenteeism of the provider affected the total of days use in one case, as no entries were recorded during the period of the absence. The providers did make note in the journal when the child or the provider, herself, was away.

One incidence of forgetting the journal, which had resulted in no entry by either parent or provider for that day, was noted. This affected the total number of days of journal use as the data collection period was not extended to accommodate for the missed day.

In two cases the total number of days of use was affected by the child no longer being in the care of the provider: one child left the centre before the six week period had elapsed, while another child moved into an older group and under the care of a provider who was not participating in the study.

Vacation periods also affected the use of the journal. In two cases the vacation period of the provider was included as a part of the six weeks of use, and no entries were made for those days. One of the providers, however, was unable to extend the use after the vacation period due to the time line

of the study. In two other cases the providers discontinued use of the journal for the duration of the vacation, but did, upon their return, extend the use of the journal to complete the six week period.

The frequency of journal use by parents and providers, as displayed in Table 1, shows the total number of days entries were recorded by parents and by providers out of the total number of days the journal was in use. Forgetting the log and not recording entries were considered as having an effect on the frequency. Vacation times, during the time frame of the journal use, which were not compensated for by extending use of the journal, were also considered to have had an effect on the frequency of use. These were considered times the journal could have been used, but was not. The lowest frequency of use by parents was recorded by the parent who makes daily visits to the centre and spends time with her child over lunch hour. The one other low frequency of use was a parent who appeared to be a reluctant participant. She did not participate in the interviews and indicated in her reflections that there had been a family loss creating a difficult time for the family. The highest frequencies were from the parents of toddlers. Both of the providers responsible for toddler care wrote extensively in the journals. It was noted that the frequency, consistency and quantity of parent and provider responses were similar. This was particularly evident in one specific case where, although it is the same provider recording, there is a discrepancy in the frequency and quantity of the provider's

Table 1 - Frequency of Journal Use

Percent shown in parentheses

	Journal Parent Entries	Provider Entries	Possible Entries
A	21 (91%)	21 (91%)	23
B	8 (44%)	16 (89%)	18
C	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	30
D	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	30
E	22 (91%)	22 (91%)	24
F	25 (100%)	25 (100%)	25
G	28 (93%)	28 (93%)	30
H	18 (60%)	24 (80%)	30

communication with two parents (See Table 1, G & H).

Analysis of the journal entries showed that the different types of responses had a different response frequency. Table 2.1 indicates the number of days a description, comment and/or a question was recorded by the providers, out of the total number of days the journal was in use. Table 2.2 indicates the number of days a comment and/or a question was recorded by the parents out of the total number of days the journal was in use. Parents and providers wrote responses daily in the journal. However, the recorded responses did not always include entries in both the comment and question section.

It was evident that questions were the responses recorded least frequently by both parents and providers. In one case, the frequency with which the parent responded with a question was extremely low. The provider, in one journal entry, invited this parent to ask her questions, and later commented in the post-implementation interview that this parent didn't ask her questions. This particular parent visits the centre on a daily basis and spends time with her child. The parent indicated in her interview that she found any questions she may have had at pick up time were covered in the journal. Previous to using the journal, she relayed that she would ask questions when she was visiting at the centre if the provider didn't volunteer information about her child. The parent with the greatest frequency of question responses was a parent that indicated she did not spend time at the centre during the day. From the interviews, journals,

Table 2.1Frequency of Type of Responses Recorded by Providers

N = Number of days response type was recorded/total number of days of use (Shown in totals and percent)

Journal	No. Days Recorded	Description of Day	Comments	Questions
A	23	18 (78%)	20 (86%)	8 (35%)
B	20	16 (80%)	12 (66%)	8 (44%)
C	30	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	23 (76%)
D	30	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	21 (70%)
E	23	22 (96%)	17 (73%)	15 (65%)
F	25	24 (96%)	22 (88%)	17 (68%)
G	30	28 (93%)	27 (90%)	13 (46%)
H	27	22 (81%)	21 (77%)	13 (59%)
Average	26	90.50%	85.00%	57.80%

Table 2.2Frequency of Type of Responses Recorded by Parents

N = Number of days response type was recorded/total number of days of use (Shown in totals and percent)

Journal	No. Days Recorded	Comments	Questions
A	23	22 (96%)	7 (30%)
B	20	7 (35%)	5 (25%)
C	30	30 (100%)	1 (3%)
D	29	29 (100%)	27 (93%)
E	23	21 (91%)	15 (65%)
F	25	25 (100%)	13 (52%)
G	29	28 (96%)	13 (45%)
H	27	19 (70%)	12 (44%)
Average	25 days	86.00%	44.60%

and reflections, it was ascertained that many of her questions were related to activities her child did at home, and to make inquiries about her child's activities at the centre. This parent was also very diligent about filling in all parts of the journal on a consistent basis. In her reflections, she referred to writing questions in the journal as provoking careful thought about her child, whereas most other parents made reference to questions as being difficult to write.

Data from the interviews and reflections identified questions as being difficult to think of for recording in the daily responses. A provider comments, "I find thinking of a question to ask a bit tricky. I have good verbal communication skills with these parents and when I have something to ask, I ask." The provider later comments that she observed a parent recording in the journal one morning and noticed she also had a little difficulty thinking of a question: "I also saw that she had a bit of a hard time thinking of a question. Validation because I have the same problem." One parent shed some light on why questions may have been the least regular of the entries. She comments: "I'm finding it hard thinking up questions to ask ... any important questions I would ask in person because I can get an immediate response and have a discussion." The same parent, however, later reflects that the journal provides an opportunity to write a question down so that she does not forget to ask it. A provider indicated frustration in reading a question that she could not respond to until a full

day later. During a post-use interview a parent comments: "Toward the end some of our questions got a little - like we were making it up." One provider, referring to writing questions to ask the parent states in her reflections, "I found the questions hard."

Overall the frequency of the journal use was high and showed regularity in use by both parents and providers. In all cases but two, the frequency of use was equal for parents and providers suggesting a consistent two-way communication took place in the journal.

Analysis showed that all questions recorded were addressed through a response in the journal. In two instances the question was not responded to immediately, but a response was recorded later on in the journal.

Recording Procedures

All of the providers indicated that they completed the journals during the day, usually, whenever they found a break in the program that enabled them to write in the journals. One provider indicated that she remained after her shift on occasion to complete her entries.

All of the parents chose to take the journals home daily to read and write in them. Most parents gave some indication, either in their reflections, or in the post-implementation interview, that they read and completed the journal entries in the evening: "I could read it in the evening when I had a quiet moment. "One parent commented that she, or her husband, would read the journal out loud to one another during the drive home from the centre.

Analysis of the journals, reflections, and the interviews revealed that the journal had been forgotten at the centre, or at home, on a few occasions. On these occasions the entry was usually written on a separate paper and later attached to the journal. One reference was made to the parent recording entries at the centre, upon arrival, because she had forgotten the journal. Another parent indicated, in the interview, that the providers were very good about reminding them to take the book home.

Overall, the analysis of recording procedures showed a consistency between parents and providers in the frequency of use and in the types of entries (e.g. questions were recorded least frequently by both parents and providers). In one situation there was irregular journal use. Recording was affected mainly by vacations and absences.

Mothers tended to be the main participant in use of the journals, although two fathers did record one or two entries, and all fathers shared in reading parts or all of the journal's contents.

Topics of the Communication

In this section the themes that emerged as the topics of the communication between the providers and the parents are presented. Topics of communication examined included those topics the parents and providers identified, in the initial interview, as the topics most often discussed, and the topics that were the focus of the journal communication.

Pre-Implementation Topics

During the pre-implementation interview, parents and

providers were asked what they most often spoke about during daily contact at drop off and pick up times. Responses indicated that topics would focus on pertinent information about the child that would affect care that day, such as special instructions about the child's health needs, or schedule changes for pick up time. Social exchanges, such as asking about the weekend, were also topics of communication between the parent and the provider at these times. Responses in the interviews, and in the reflections, also indicated that this communication was brief as, "... there wasn't much time." All parents indicated that information was shared with the provider about anything significant about the child since the previous day. Responses indicated that this would include how the child slept the night before, and any special instructions related to physical care (health, diapering, medication, etc.), or schedule changes. All parents also indicated that social topics would be included in conversations both at drop off and pick up time. On the topic of the child's day, most parents indicated that the provider would usually mention something about what the child did during the day, or what kind of day the child had (good, difficult, etc.) at pick up time. Less emphasis, responses indicated, was given to the topics related to the child's growth and development (physical, social-emotional and/or cognitive), unless there was a specific concern that the parents asked about. One parent specifically commented that she wished they could tell her about the skills her child is learning.

Topics related to the child's growth and development varied according to responses from the parents and providers. One parent indicated that the child's growth and development, if discussed, was a topic they would discuss during drop off times. Another parent indicated that they would discuss their child's eating as a follow up on the previous day, but that development was not a topic of discussion: "Not a lot. Mostly because of, I guess, I imagine because of the books and them, we've been conditioned not to ask. There's no point. Their progress is their progress..." This seemed to imply that these parents either do not understand developmental topics as being something more than day to day accomplishments, or that providers do not bring up developmental concerns or accomplishments. One father comments: "He's seventeen months old and he hasn't said his first words yet. Those things don't come up... They do comment if he happens to do something well, or if he does something for the first time." The child's mother indicates that her son's comprehension is good, and that she wants to know about his communication so the providers tell her any new word he has said or attempted. She agreed with the father's comments, however, that they do not talk about growth and development. Most providers responded that at some point during the day they did talk about or mention something about the child's growth and development. Responses in the initial interview showed that this topic, when addressed, was a topic addressed at pick-up time. All providers also gave indications that this was on an 'as it

came up' basis, or when the topic was related to a specific task the child was working on accomplishing. Providers all indicated that social exchanges were a part of the daily communication, and that information of significance to the care of the child was either asked about by the provider, or mentioned by the parent at drop off times.

Parents identified special instructions, child related information, and social conversation as the most frequent topics during daily contact times. According to providers, the topics most frequent in daily conversations included: giving or receiving of special instructions about the child or information about the child's night (sleeping, if tired, etc.), social conversation, and child growth and development topics if of a specific concern or focus. Pick -up time conversations centred around whether the child had had a good day, the provider mentioning something about the child's day, and information on care (whether the child went to the toilet, how the child ate, etc.).

The Journal Communication

This section looks at the topics that received the greatest emphasis in the communication recorded by the providers and by the parents in the journals. The entries were analyzed for the types of topics that providers and parents recorded; first with a view to topics related to the child, and second any other topics of communication that were evident. The parents and providers participating were writing about children, varying in age, from infancy to four years of age. Analysis of the pre-implementation interviews

and a review of the literature had given some indication of topics that parents and providers communicated in daily conversations. These topics were used as a basis for the initial analysis. The analysis revealed that topics related to the growth and development of the child, and the care (physical/health) of the child dominated the communication in the journal. Further analysis revealed more specific themes related to the child's growth and development: the child's physical growth and development, the child's social and emotional growth and development, and the child's cognitive growth and development. Physical/health care topics were another category identified. This category included information on the daily routines necessary to meet the physical and health needs of the child: nutritional needs, diapering, medication, safety needs, naps, etc. Another category of communication included topics of a social nature such as greetings and polite informal exchanges: "Have a good night."; "Hope you had a safe trip."; "Sorry to hear about..."; "What do you plan to do on your holidays?" In one case social exchanges were to arrange personal plans. Social communication was recorded with much less frequency and in less detail than the other communication.

The format of the journal set an expectation that some description of the child's day would be recorded by the provider, daily, and conveyed to the parent along with daily comments and a question. For optional use was a chart on which to record basic care information about the child's day (nap time, snack, diaper changes, etc.). For parents, the

format encouraged daily comments and a question.

At least one half of the daily communication entered by providers were entries that served to describe the child's day. This was expected due to the format of the journal. Recorded in the descriptions were accounts that included one or any of: the activities the child engaged in during the day, who the child played with during the day, the child's routine, a description of care related activities (had a nap, what the child ate for lunch, etc.), and observations of the child. Analysis revealed that the descriptions frequently contained communication about the child's development as well.

The findings revealed that topics related to the child's social and emotional growth and development received the greatest emphasis in the entries recorded by the providers and in the entries recorded by most of the parents, regardless of the child's age. Specific topics within the area of social and emotional development included: how the child was adjusting to new routines and activities; relationships with peers, and younger or older children; social behaviors in toileting; playing; dealing with conflicts; and behaviors of an affective nature around eating habits (throwing food, interest in food of others, etc.). Analysis of the parents' comments and questions revealed that the main topic of their communication concurred with the providers' focus on social and emotional development.

The second most frequent topic recorded by providers appeared to be influenced by the age of the child. Topics

recorded for infants focused on physical development and physical care. For the toddlers, the focus was on cognitive development, with specific emphasis on speech and language development, physical care (specifically napping and toileting), and for one of the youngest of the toddlers the focus was on physical development as well. For the preschool children, the focus was on physical care with indications that cognitive development was a focus as age increased, in all but one case. Topics related to physical development appeared to decrease with age, with no entries on the topic of physical development for the two oldest children participating in the study.

The Implied Communication

Analysis of the communication revealed not only explicit discussion of specific topics, but also implicit communication suggesting purpose; an implied intent of the communication. The analysis included examination of the communication recorded in the journal entries for the parents' and providers' intent. In analyzing the purpose or intent of the providers' communication the following themes became apparent:

- I. Description of the child's day - a descriptive account of how the child spent the day, routines, care, activities.
- II. Knowledge of the child - shows knowledge of the child's interests, personality and abilities, shows a desire to know more about the child, the child's family, interests, etc.

- III. Appreciation of the child - a recognition of the child as unique, having a bond with the provider, the provider recognizes the child's uniqueness and appreciation for the child is communicated.
- IV. Response to concerns - responding to parent's concerns, both outward concerns expressed about their child, and those expressed implicitly through the implied intention of the communication.
- V. Reassurance - communication that provided reassurance to the parent.
- VI. Partnership and inclusion - invitations for partnership, inclusion in developing program or care routines for the child. The communication invites parent input or, in the case of parents makes an attempt through the communication to provide input into the program or care routines for the child.
- VII. Continuity of care between settings - communication that acknowledges a desire to maintain similar routines or consistency between the settings in caring for the child, or in furthering the child's growth and development.
- VIII. The provider as a resource - communication in which the provider gives information about processes and procedures used in caring for the child, and in supporting the child's development, offers advice, acts as a resource by providing resources or referral to sources of information, or where the provider is accessed for guidance in support of the child's

development or parental concerns.

- IX. Recognition of the parent or provider - appreciation, acknowledgement, personal/informal interest expressed.
- X. Concern - communication that explicitly or implicitly places an emphasis on an aspect of: the child, the program, the care, the development (behaviors, growth, etc.) or suggests an issue has importance.

In analyzing the communication for the parents' intent or purpose many of the same themes were apparent. Parents' communication fell into the categories of sharing knowledge of their child, showing appreciation for their child, seeking reassurance, providing input, establishing continuity, accessing the provider as a resource, recognition of the provider and expressing a concern.

It was noticed that topics were often referred to repeatedly by providers in their descriptions of the child's day and this seemed to be conveying another message about the child. For example, one provider, in writing about the child, seemed to be writing descriptions that were explicit in conveying information about the child's activities during the day while implicitly addressing a concern about the child's language (cognitive development), and social/emotional development. In her descriptions she writes:

He wasn't all that happy when the lawn mower man left. He screeched and kept pointing to the infant yard. I think he was upset that I didn't get him back.

When ... comes in at break J runs to the books, sits on the pillow and yells until she acknowledges him.

This same topic later appears in the provider's comments:

J has been doing a lot of crying when he doesn't get what he wants.

Future descriptions continue to illuminate this concern:

...he did however join in on the screaming and fighting for toys.

Followed in the description by this statement:

He tries hard to get what he wants, but still doesn't use words only screeches.

The following day the provider enters this description:

...did a great job waiting for toys today. He whined a little and I'd explain ... So he would stand there and wait. Great job, ...

Again, the following day the provider writes in the description section:

...was so cute trying to use his words today.

The next day the provider again comments in the comment section:

He isn't screeching nearly as much these days.

He really seems to be trying to use words now - yeah!

Supporting this assumption that the provider is not only describing the child's day, but also is conveying a concern, is a comment made in the post-use interview. The provider indicates that she feels the parents tend to give in to the child and that she thinks he usually gets his way. Her entries indicate that she is conveying a concern about the child while also responding to a concern:

J usually takes a toy and makes a shrieking sound.

We tried to encourage him to say 'help'.

She comments several times in the pre and post-implementation interviews that they (the parents and providers) were working on his 'words':

J wasn't talking very much and we were trying to figure out what he was saying a lot of the times and when I say 'we' I mean his parents and I.

Another provider describes the child's day while also

acting as a resource by communicating information about the child's physical growth and development. She includes in her description that the child drank out of a cup, the procedure she used to help the child, and how the child did with this new task:

I gave ...some water in a cup at lunch today. I had to hold it, but she was very willing to drink.

In other descriptions of the child's day this provider focuses on a sequence of activities that emphasize the child's development of physical (motor) skills:

L decided to stand on the climber...:

She would stand on the climber and shout out commands;

She practiced standing on her own some more this afternoon....

These descriptions were followed by a related comment, from the provider, several days later:

She's still busy pulling herself up and practicing her standing. I love the look of accomplishment on her face as she's standing there.

A final description is entered related to this physical

growth and development:

She's been very busy practicing standing and taking steps.

followed by the comment:

In no time she'll be running.

The parent's comment responds to the descriptions and comments from the provider on the child's growth and development in this area.

... really enjoying her walking at home as well as at daycare. It's so neat!

Communication that was intended to describe the child's day at the centre was included consistently by all eight of the providers. Within these descriptions, the providers would often share information about the child's daily routines, program activities, the child's interaction with the provider, and the child's interaction with other children.

A...started off in the toddler room and he played there until 10:00...After he had snack the Infants and Toddlers went for a walk....

Because of his busy morning he didn't go down for a nap until 1:00ish.

With all the rain this morning, we stayed inside until after snack time....

A did some bingo dobbing and crayoning for art. At snack time A helped C sing songs to the other children. ...Outside A spent a lot of time playing in the rocks and with the balls

...At story time we read a variety of books...

He was very attentive this morning during the visit of Constable Huck of Saanich Police. He asked lots of questions, especially about the items that he uses in his job;

R and I had a great conversation concerning 'Rupert Bear'

At one point L was the only one awake and we had a nice play together. We rolled around on the floor and read books together. It's really nice to have time one on one.

J sat with A (a provider) this afternoon building with duplo;

He played with K in the housekeeping area, taking turns...

J was playing with Heidi, Robert, Michael and Evan on a big flat cardboard box...

Knowledge of the child is also communicated, by the providers, as a means of sharing with the parents their knowledge of the child's interests, development and personality at the centre. The providers comment:

I find it interesting to watch L play and observe her interacting with the others. Very independent!

She is much happier outside now and even crawls around the gazebo.

...she goes down well when she decides to sleep.

I have noticed a definite change in K's social skills...

K's verbal, social skills are definitely progressing.

Yes, he liked the pears especially.

He seems to enjoy a smaller group and enjoys expanding

ideas on subjects... He loves to share his knowledge concerning dragons and insects.

Good social play...listened well...

Great fine motor skills.

Communication through comments, descriptions and questions, with the intention of extending or sharing their knowledge of the child, received strong emphasis from all but one of the providers. The providers' entries indicated that communicating knowledge about the child, in some instances, is in response to parent questions. In response to a parent asking how her child is doing with the bike and if he still enjoys rollerblading, the provider responds:

A. does still ride the bikes a fair bit. He tried to peddle the bike once and then stopped. I haven't seen A. use the roller blades much lately.

One parent asks for the provider's knowledge of the child as information to assist her in making a decision about her child's readiness. She asks whether her child is ready to borrow books from the library. The provider's response demonstrates her knowledge of the child based on observations of the child at the centre:

Yes, I think K is ready to borrow books from the

library. She is quite gentle with the books here.

The provider then goes on to use the topic to extend her own knowledge about the child at home by asking the parent:

Are books a part of K's bedtime routine?

In other instances the impetus for the provider is for the purpose of learning more about the child's interests, personality, and development by asking the parents:

I was wondering what type of activities J enjoys at home? How is J feeling about moving up?

Has K been speaking of any preschool children in particular? How often does K play with other children in the neighbourhood? Have you noticed a change verbally?

Does Q ever tell you what he'd like to play with at night?; Does he ask for any special meals, snacks?; Does Q have any favourite books he likes to read before bed?; Is Q trying apple juice now?

Is R talking about using the toilet at Day Care?
Does he seem anxious?

Has she mastered any new tricks while being away on

holidays?

Receiving less emphasis, but recorded by all of the providers, was communication that recognized the parent, showed appreciation for the child, and communication in which the provider acted as a resource.

Most recognition for parents was demonstrated through informal, polite social conversation. Comments such as:

Have a great day, weekend, night, etc.

I hear you are having a busy family weekend. I hope you have a nice time.

Have a great night.

Have a great time on your holiday...

We will miss you all and wish you happiness in your new house.

were the most frequent type of socially-oriented comments showing appreciation, particularly at the beginning of the journal use. Later comments that thanked or showed appreciation emerged:

Thanks for sending the extra food in J's lunch. He was really excited about his choices today.

Thanks for the visit today, S. We enjoyed the juggling show.

Thanks for sharing info on your beach trip...

Thanks for the new slippers.

Thank you for the game we'll probably play it tomorrow.

I'm glad to hear you go outside with Q. often....

Yeah for you!

I think its great D has been to visit Q on a frequent basis.

I wanted to thank you for participating with this book.

...I feel I have learned a lot about all 3 of you.

Thanks for sharing.

Towards the end, of the study, comments that revealed a more specific knowledge of the parent or that were more familiar were noted:

Have a great dinner out tonight;

I'm glad to hear your dinner went well, Q was practicing

his high pitch squeals yesterday and I was worried for you.

We miss you K...

Have a great weekend.

Prepare yourself, S. I believe R has plans for your spare time.

It was evident that the journal communication served purposes other than addressing the topic in the entry. Based on the views parents and providers shared about the communication in the interviews and in their reflections, it was apparent, in both the parents' and providers' communication, that a reason beyond the obvious existed for the entries they chose to record. As the topics were analyzed patterns of intent emerged. Topics providers wrote about focused on themes that suggested the providers had broader purposes for making these entries. Topics of their communication shared knowledge of the child, seemed to respond to the implied or explicit concerns communicated by parents, acted as resource information for parents, and showed elements of communication intended to establish a relationship with the parents through informal comments that recognized and/or showed appreciation for the parent. This was illustrated clearly by one provider who suggests, through comments in her reflections, that addressing concerns was a

purpose of communication in the journal:

Today was a little easier and more natural feeling. We started to talk about some issues such as sleeping and eating which I'm very happy to see.

She reflects on this again the next day:

I am happy about the issues that are being discussed between the parents and myself.

In a later reflection she talks about her ideas for a form of communication with parents and comments:

The other idea I had for a form of communication with parents is a monthly feedback form about the child (development, likes, etc.), any concerns the parents might have...

Although the parents' entries revealed many of the same implied purposes as providers, they differed from providers in that different purposes received emphasis. For parents the purpose behind the topics of their entries suggested a desire: to share knowledge about their child at home, to have input into the care their child received at the centre, and to maintain consistency of care between the home and the centre. These implied purposes were supported by the responses parents gave in the pre and post-implementation

interviews in discussing the importance of communication and in sharing their thoughts on the use of the communication journal. In the journals, one parent made clear requests of the provider regarding the care of her child. Another parent showed appreciation for the provider's consideration of her input by indicating to the provider, through the journal, what a positive difference they noted at home as a result. The purpose behind such comments is made apparent by responses such as this one: "You need to be a team...consistency is important.", made in the interview and directly indicating that continuity is considered to be important.

The Journal - Facilitating and Enhancing Communication

This section looks at how the communication in the journal served to enhance and/or facilitate communication between the parents and providers.

The providers in the study all concurred that good communication with the parents is important. During the pre-implementation interview providers' comments gave strong indications of their belief in the importance of good communication with the parents:

Definitely! Well, we have the children with us a good part of the day.

(Laughter) Oh, definitely!

Parents must find it difficult. I want them to

trust me. I want to be open and have them be open...

Very much so. ...If we have good communication it makes it so much easier;

Yes, because both have the main focus of the child. Both are interested in the same outcome - development of the whole child;

Crucial. The only way we can run.

Although the providers gave a variety of reasons for the value of good communication, they all agreed on its importance.

The parents also concurred on the importance of communication. Similar responses to those of the providers were recorded in the interview in response to being asked whether they thought communication was important?

Oh, ya, for sure! They're your main resource for what's going on with your child. You miss that 7 hours every day. It's important to work together.

Yes, because they spend 7 hours a day with my child. It's important to know what he's doing.

Yes, definitely. I think it's important...letting them know what he's like at home and what I'd expect. The

more we chat the more comfortable I would feel in asking them to try this...

Very important. These people spend 8 hours per day with your child. They know and see things we don't...

Oh, of course. Well it seems so obvious. They are spending a lot of their lives there. You need to be a team. Need to have consistency....

Definitely. Like most parents I'd like to be with my child. Problems can be prevented by communication. They might do it one way and you another...If you've made progress with your child's learning they can encourage it. Tell them your child's interests and they can encourage it.

More evident in the parents' responses was a similarity in why the communication was important. Parents highlighted three main concerns they wanted addressed through communication: a) They wanted to know what their child was doing, b) they wanted some indication that there was consistency in the child's care and behavior between home and the centre, and c) they wanted to have a say in their child's care.

Previous to the use of the journal most communication took place during daily contact times, during drop off and pick up times, and while visiting during the day. It was

indicated that if any special concerns or issues arose an interview could be arranged to discuss it. Other communication took place through a newsletter that gave general information from each of the care groups (Infants, Toddlers and Pre-school) and from the director. Included in the newsletter was information about the upcoming events, program reports and requests for items. Some parents indicated that they visit the centre during the day on a regular basis. A few indicated that they come for a visit occasionally. Others indicated that they are unable to get to the centre, but do phone. All of the children whose parents were participating in the study did have visits from one parent or the other during the day, at some time throughout the period of the study. Comparing the communication that existed prior to implementation of the communication journal, to the communication that was evident through use of the journal, findings revealed that the journal made communication easier (facilitated) and/or increased the communication, or added to the quality of the communication (enhanced) in the following ways:

1. Expansion of the communication
2. Focus on quality communication
3. Facilitation of transition times
4. Facilitation of drop off and pick up times

Looking at the parents' and providers' views of communication, through their responses in interviews before and after the implementation of the journals, it was evident that the journals facilitated and enhanced communication by

providing the parents and providers the opportunity to expand their usual communication.

In the pre-implementation interview parents and providers indicated that communication was largely informal with a social component that focused on personal exchanges. Communication about the child focused on special instructions, specific information about the child, and asking about the child's day. Special instructions from the parents included information such as medication and schedule changes. Specific information given by parents, and asked about by the providers, included health issues, information related to sleeping and eating, and information that would have an affect on the child's needs or mood (tired, happy, not feeling well, etc.). Asking about the child's day, from the parents' perspective, included wanting to know how the child enjoyed the day, if there were any difficulties or anything important that happened, functional information in providing physical care (naps, toileting, eating), and if there was a specific concern or focus at home on a developmental skill this might also be included.

From the providers' perspectives, giving information about the child's day included the tone of the day, general activities, a comment that showed appreciation of the child, something cute or funny that the child did, and providing information on the functions of physical care. Parents and providers also indicated that communication might include a comment about the child's day, such as a special activity, and that it might include information on a particular area of

the child's development if it were a particular concern or an unusual event. Parents indicated that they would most likely make special contact with the provider if there were health concerns, special concerns about their child, or scheduling concerns. Providers' responses indicated that special contact with the parent would be made if there were health concerns, or a special concern (usually negative) around the child.

Prior to using the journal parents spoke of important or 'significant' information as being communicated through the daily verbal communication. Looking at what they indicated was communicated about the child, in previous communication, four significant themes were apparent: mood related information, health related information, information about the routine functions (toileting, napping, etc.) and periodically, specific growth and development information. Most often topics related to the care of the child, the child's physical health and well being.

Providers were more individual in their responses about the communication shared through their daily contact. Most indicated that care related information was shared regularly and that the general tone (mood) of the child's day was communicated. One provider indicated that she would offer information on a topic she knew was a specific concern of the parent. Most providers also indicated that they would share something special about the child, and some responded that they would share a general overview of the activities. Providers also responded that they sporadically shared

information about the child's growth and development. Parents and providers concurred that social conversation was a regular part of the communication during all daily contacts.

These areas of communication represented what parents and providers gave as examples of the communication that would take place during daily contacts. When analyzing their comments, in response to the importance of communication, parents and providers concurred on the following points: that the drop off and pick up times did not provide enough time to communicate; that comfort in the relationship with each other was an important element in communication; and that working together was important. Not only did parents indicate that working together and comfort in the relationship was important, they stressed that in order to feel like they could give input into their child's care feeling comfortable with the provider was essential. Parents also indicated that they felt uninformed about their child's day (what really happened), that they want care consistent with the home, and that they are not told things unless they ask. In the pre-implementation interview, one parent describes the feeling she has about the provider's verbal description of her child's day in the following way:

...sometimes I think it's false, more good days than bad...sometimes they point out something but usually its general - the tone.

She addresses this again in her post-implementation interview in response to how the journal impacted her relationship with her child. She comments, "I got some more intuition into her day." She then refers back to her feelings about the provider's verbal comment about her child's day being a 'good day'.

I find too this is one sort of thing about the centre I always laugh about with my mom They always say, "Oh K had a good day." They never say, "Oh K had a lousy day." You know it's not that they are being dishonest it's just they measure on a different scale and it took me awhile to figure that out, so actually this probably helped in that.

Well I suppose 'cause I'd look at it and I'd question. We dropped her off and she was miserable for whatever reason and when I picked her up she was crying. How could that be a good day? But then, when we looked at what they had written down, the whole thing that we didn't see was that those were just temporary, or those were just a small part of it.

Another mother's response shows her desire to receive more information about how her child spent the day. During the initial interview, she comments:

I would like more detail about the day...don't know what

really happened

Another mother's comment supports the suggestion that few details are given during contact times. She comments:

At pick-up they tell us what happened - one sentence such as "R had a good day - went to toilet." If there is more time they tell about activities - It's so and so's last day...; We went to the library.

She appears to want to know about the day in relation to her child rather than the scheduled activities or general happenings.

Parents' comments also stressed the importance in feeling comfortable enough with the providers to have input into how their child is cared for and spends the day: "It's important...telling them what A's like at home and what I expect. "The more we chat the more comfortable I would feel in asking them to try this." Another parent comments: "You can't say exactly what you think." One mother supports the need for parents to build a rapport: "...to be comfortable you need to build a rapport with the care givers."

Comfort was also a theme in the providers' thoughts about communication with parents. Providers' responses indicated a sensitivity to parents, and a cautiousness in communicating, in order not to intrude on parents. Providers indicated in their responses that they would wait until parents asked, rather than infringe on parenting. "Parents

don't ask about growth and development"; "...It's easier when the parent approaches..."; "If the parent is comfortable, I am." Another provider sheds light on this comment in her thoughts about communication with parents: "Health is a ticklish subject - the parents' guard goes up around parenting skills and developmental issues." She too comments on the need to feel comfortable: "...sense of being liked affects communication...both need to feel comfortable." When asked to expand on 'comfort' the provider responded, "Parents feel they are the weaker of the partnership, they doubt their parenting skills. We don't want to be nosey." Another provider shared her perceptions of how parents must feel and the importance of communication: "Parents must find it difficult...trust is important" , and another provider noted: "more communication builds more friendship." All of the providers made references to comfort as being fundamental for establishing good communication. For parents the comfort to communicate was associated with wanting to establish a partnership with the provider. Parents' thoughts on communication included statements about the importance of working together and the need to be a team. For some, this was expressed through a desire to share what goes on at home in order to ensure there is consistency in the care of their child.

The theme of consistency, or continuity, between the settings emerged through such comments as: It's important to know how he's doing; skills, learning, moods, likes and dislikes. He can learn things we don't see....; ...how I do

things at home. I tell them what I tell him at home when someone takes his toys."

Another parent comments: "It's important letting them know what he's like at home and what I expect." The importance of knowing what they are working on at the centre, in order to see if there is consistency, is brought out by these parents' comments: "They know things you don't - child doesn't always behave the same way."; "New parents, it's possible, want to see things done as at home." One parent indicates that knowing what happens at the centre allows her to reinforce it at home, "...what we could reinforce at home."

Providers' comments supported the need for mutual interest in the child: "Both are interested in the same outcome, the development of the whole child...You have to work as a team or the child picks it up."; "Everyone who is involved with the child should be involved."; "Our job is to support the family - work together." All of the providers made some reference to the importance of working together, however, the parents also saw this partnership as a need to share what happens at home and a need to know what happens at the centre in order to check for and develop consistency. Prior to the use of the journal, consistency was not a theme that could be identified in the providers' thoughts on communication. A final aspect of communication that parents identified, in their communication with providers, was the feeling that unless they asked they were not told. "I can see there are some gaps...I forget to ask. They don't tell

me.”; “A lot is still driven by our questions.”; “Maybe I’m not asking enough or being told.” are some of the statements supporting parents’ perception that they are expected to ask.

In the post-implementation interview and in their reflections, parents and providers reflected on the use of the journal and the effect it had on communication. The finding that emerged indicated that communication focused more specifically on the child and addressed some of the communication needs parents and providers had identified prior to implementation.

Expanding Communication

The use of the journal expanded the communication that focused on the child. The analysis of the journal entries showed that communication was more regularly focused on the growth and development of the child than before the journal was implemented. While the pre-implementation interviews had indicated that growth and development was an area of communication addressed sporadically, the journals showed evidence of daily communication that focused on this topic. Most of the parents’ questions, recorded in the journal, were related to their child’s development. All parents made reference to aspects of their child’s growth and development. One parent comments on the focus the journal places on the child’s behaviors: “I feel that this project has put more focus on J’s behavior during the day (and evening) that might otherwise go unmentioned.” Another parent, in response to a question about what the journal addresses well, makes a specific reference to how the journal facilitated

communication on development: "Ya, the daily activities ... and developmental questions that I had of them and behavior questions." One parent comments on the exchange of developmental information that was facilitated through the journal: "It gave us information on how his vocabulary was developing. I would write down words he said at home and she would write words he said at the centre...." Another parent refers to the journal in providing communication that encourages consistency and working together toward a common goal in the child's development: "I have found the journal useful for having the care giver keep you informed of an area of development that you'd like to see changed. If both sides are aware and working on it then usually rewards come sooner."

It was apparent that the journal served to expand communication about the child and provide the opportunity for a parent and providers to work consistently toward a common goal for the child. One parent responded to being asked if using the journal was different than when they would talk. Her response: "Oh ya! ...Pretty well everything was child related...developmental type questions...." One parent found herself asking, what she considered less valuable questions about her child such as, "about water play," because she didn't want to repeat questions about the more important concerns such as toileting. In examining what this parent recorded in the journal it was noticed that her questions focused on other developmental aspects of her child and on her child's program at the centre. For example the parent

notes: "K is really interested in letters and numbers. We have started playing with a deck of cards..." She then asks, "Do you have counting games or books that she has been playing with?" The parent is giving input on what her child's interests are, where her child is developmentally, and is implying that she would like to see it continued at the centre. While the parent comments that her questions are "less valuable" they are, in fact questions that ask more about her child's development and interests and give input into her child's program. The use of the journal appears to have expanded this parent's communication by prompting questions she may not otherwise have asked.

During the post-implementation interview one parent comments on the journal as facilitating questions: "You don't think it's important enough to talk to them, but it's easy to write down." One parent's comment in her reflections implied that most information shared about the child, previous to use of the journal, was in response to asking. Two other parents comment on the journal as facilitating communication through questions: "On the positive side the journal has made me think more about questions for the caregivers and this has been beneficial."; "The journal also challenges you to come up with questions that you may not think of on a regular basis." One of these parents also comments in the interview that the journal made her think, that she and her husband tried to make intelligent and relevant comments back, and that they tried to ask a related question "...things we wouldn't have asked if we didn't have the journal." Using the

journal as a reminder of questions to ask is also mentioned by a parent: "This journal is handy if I think of a question I want to ask. When I'm at home I just jot down the question otherwise I might forget to ask when I'm at the centre." In her reflections on her use of the journal she comments: "I discovered a couple of things about K's day that I hadn't thought to ask before.", indicating that the communication in the journal had introduced information about her child without her asking. In her post-implementation interview this parent indicates that the journal was a good supplement. She comments that her child had commented to her about something that had occurred at day care and, because her child mentioned the incident, she communicated with the provider about it in the journal. She indicated that if she hadn't had the journal she probably wouldn't have mentioned it. "I probably wouldn't have remembered something like that."

Several of the parents commented on the theme that the journal was a supplemental source of information. One parent reported that it brought up the "...nice to know stuff." The journal as a means of providing 'more specific' or supplemental communication was a theme throughout the parent interviews. One provider indicated how the journal expanded communication with this comment: "It encouraged conversation that wouldn't normally take place."

Parents and providers were more likely to address the topics considered significant during drop off, pick up or visit times. This was supported by the responses made in the

initial interview. The journal facilitated communication by expanding communication beyond the daily routine and care issues to include communication focused on the child's growth and development. Notably this expanded communication facilitated and enhanced communication by providing more opportunities for communication, and by increasing communication in areas that parents identified as important. The supplemental communication they referred to seemed, upon analysis, to include communication that parents and providers had expressed as important communication. It was also information that extended beyond knowledge of the care related routines that are important in the daily physical well being and health of the child. It became apparent that parents expected to be informed of the care related information, such as that they communicated verbally, but that the communication they had identified as being an important part of communication they did not consider necessary in their communication expectations. It appeared that parents wanted information directly related to the health and well being of their child. Information on topics such as development and how their child spent the day, they considered supplemental and therefore, either information they were not entitled to have, or didn't feel was necessary. As one parent describes it: "The nice to know not need to know."

Effective Communication

Good communication, between parents and providers, should contain the characteristics of 'quality communication'

defined in the literature as essential to effective communication between parents and educators. These elements include communication that lets the parents know how the child spends the day, shows knowledge of the child's interests, personality and uniqueness, shows appreciation of the child, establishes a relationship, and communication that establishes a continuity between the home and the centre. These characteristics concur with those identified by parents' and providers' in their thoughts on communication.

The communication examined in the journals showed that these characteristics were evident in the entries recorded in the journals. This was further supported by parents' and providers' comments in the post-implementation interview and in their reflections.

Parents identified 'knowing what their child was like at the centre' as one important purpose of the communication. One of the parents points out that the journal provided an opportunity to hear what her child had accomplished during the day. She also indicated that these were things she would not hear about when picking her child up after work. Along this same theme, another parent indicated that the communication in the journal gave her a better insight into her child's habits, likes, and dislikes in another environment. She indicates, later, that the journal communication gives her a chance to see his daily patterns: "When I read what he was doing on a certain day I could really picture him in my mind doing that activity (the provider) wrote about." She sums up the experience with this

comment: "I still think it's a valuable tool in learning things about your child in the day care environment that you may not have otherwise." The analysis of the topics revealed both explicit and implicit purposes for the communication. The communication between parents and providers, that was recorded, shared information about the child indicating a knowledge of the child as a unique individual. This was evident through shared information about the child's interests, interactions and development. Intent of the communication also conveyed messages of appreciation for the child and a sharing of information that provided an opportunity for facilitating continuity.

Although the invitation for parents to participate in partnership was not as evident in the providers' communication, the structure of the journal itself encouraged comments and questions from both parents and providers. The parents' questions and comments did indicate that giving input was a purpose in their communication. In response to the provider letting the parent know that the child tried drinking from a cup the parent responds: "Drinking from the cup is great! Please keep it up. We have been trying it at home sometimes too. Please continue to try to get L to learn to put herself to sleep. An eventual goal." Other parents gave input less directly: "Sure let's try him on one nap a day. We will start to get him ready for his eventual move to Toddlers."; "J is becoming fairly proficient drinking from a cup without a lid. We usually fill the cup half full."; "A is beginning to understand the clock and what it is for. Do

you discuss the ideas of time at all?" Establishing a relationship through the journal communication was not as evident in the providers' communication, although several comments in the post-implementation interview and in the reflections indicated that the journal may have played a role in facilitating communication that was relationship building. One provider notes in her reflections: "I also have a great relationship with both sets of parents." She also addresses this in the post-implementation interview by commenting on her relationship with those sets of parents. For one set of parents the provider found it easier to communicate with them through the journal: "It was more of an opening up. They don't really say much...always in a hurry. I found out a lot more on a more personal level." This provider also considers whether the journal may have had anything to do with a father coming to visit, "I noticed D was coming to visit more. I don't know if the journal had anything to do with that. We got to know him a bit better." Another provider commented on her relationship with the mother and the father. She indicated that it was more comfortable communicating with the mother, but that she knew the father read the journal. She indicated that the father had a difficult time communicating with her. When asked if this changed she replied, "Yes, he became more comfortable with me." The communication in the journal supported this relationship in the case of both providers. One provider used the journal as an opportunity to thank and show appreciation to the father for coming in for visits, and the other provider used the journal as a way

of addressing a comment to the father with whom she found it difficult to communicate.

Parents' entries showed that relationship building through recognition of the provider was frequently a purpose of their communication. Parents acknowledged the providers and showed appreciation for them by: thanking them for information or for responding to a request; including polite social exchanges; recognizing difficulties providers encounter; and, in one case, by direct acknowledgement of appreciation for the job they do. Frequently parents thanked providers: "Thank you for the suggestions."; "Thanks for using the ice bear." In two instances parents recognized the provider's birthday. Parents frequently recorded polite and personal social comments to the provider such as: "Glad you had a good holiday," and "What are you up to?" (referring to the long weekend). Personal exchanges were more frequent and more personal between certain parents and providers. In one instance, the parent devoted her comment to showing appreciation to the provider, "I hope all the caregivers know how much we appreciate all your hard work. I am constantly amazed at how well you handle all of the situations that arise."

Providers and parents acknowledged, through their comments in their reflections, the value of the journal in facilitating and enhancing communication through the sharing of information about the child in the respective settings. One provider responds in the post-implementation interview to a question about what the journal addresses well: "Activities

at home. You talk to parents but they don't always tell you what goes on unless it's a big thing. If they're in a rush they don't take time to tell you." Two providers indicated that they valued the feedback and questions from the parents that were recorded in the journal: "I also like getting the feedback from the parents to find out what they did the night before. It gives me a great opportunity to continue an activity or conversations they may have shared." Parents also commented on the value of the feedback they received through the journal communication. It appears that the journal provided an opportunity for a dialogue that was more continuous. The parents received a continuous account of their child's day over a period of time. Comments and questions were exchanged by parents and providers and were related to the child in both settings. This may represent what the parents and providers meant by the journal providing feedback.

Another aspect of quality communication expressed, both explicitly and implicitly, through the comments recorded in the journal was appreciation of the child. A range in the amount of appreciation comments was noted with two providers giving less focus to this area than the others. All providers conveyed appreciation of the child at some point in their communication. Appreciation was expressed through such comments as:

... and we (teachers) enjoy listening to him....

It was great to be able to stand and watch her interact
....

I think A's moving up is going to be difficult (for me).

I enjoy spending one on one

Providers' reflections supported this intent. One provider comments: "I really enjoy watching both these little guys, as they are growing up and going through many different changes in their development..."; "Both have been practicing language development which has been exciting for me and the parents." Another provider sums up the importance of showing interest in the child: "A very important thing for parents. Shows you are spending time and interested in their child" Parents' communication also showed appreciation for the child. In one case the parent points out to the provider a unique aspect of her child in asking, "Have you notices R's great imagination?" The provider responds in recognition of this attribute by giving an example of the child using his imagination and her appreciation of his ability.

Evident in the communication from parents was their use of the provider and information recorded as a resource to confirm, or to assist them in creating, consistency for their child between settings. This is the type of consistency that parents seemed to want to know existed. One parent comments in her reflections upon completion of the use of the journal: "It's neat to see that A enjoys the same things at daycare

that he does at home. I still think it's (the journal) a valuable tool in learning things about your child in the daycare environment... It gives me a better insight into A's habits/likes and dislikes in a different environment than home." Another parent comments on how having the information about her child at the centre allowed her to continue it at home: "If he was learning something new, I could carry that through."; "Its neat to see that A enjoys the same things at daycare that he does a home."; "We get different details on J's day that help us work on things at night such as his vocabulary." The analysis of the parents' questions showed that the questions were related to things the child did at home. Comments reinforced care or activities provided for the child at the centre and provided information about care of the child at home and/or activities in which the child engages. It was evident that parents wanted a view of their child in both settings, to have input into their child's care and, to a lesser extent, their activities.

Responding to parents' concerns was a high priority. This was evident in noting that all providers responded to each concern expressed by a parent. However, responding to concerns was only a moderate part of the overall communication entered. This directly relates to the parents' expressions of concern which were also moderate.

Child-related communication

Almost all of the communication recorded in the journals was focused on the child. Entries focused on the child's growth and development, care, and a sharing of knowledge

about the child. These were the three areas that received the most attention through the recorded entries. From the perspective of the parents it was a supplement of information about their child that they would not normally receive. This supplement included insights into their child in the setting where they spend their day without the parent: "You get a little of what appeals to her in my absence. Insight into what she enjoys."; "It just made it better. It gave us a more rounded picture of how he was doing."; "You could say, 'I didn't know that my child liked that.' and it was really quite illuminating."

Um ... (pause) well it sort of was reinforced what I sort of knew and understood about him like I mean if she was saying, "Oh he really likes to read this book, or he likes to really talk about Mickey," I think, "Oh O.K. he doesn't just talk about it at home he talks about it at the centre too so I mean he must be REALLY interested in this...", " So you know it sort of reinforced that... (Long pause)... Basically it ...reinforces what you already know in a way because you get that...feedback back from the caregiver and you say, "Oh I noticed he did this and that. Does he do that at home?, and "Oh ya he does do that at home." So...its all reassuring that he doesn't have a split personality when he leaves or something like that.

It gave me a more complete picture. If I compare it to

now when we don't have a journal definitely we had more information then. The journal was more thorough. If I pop in she may volunteer it ...I have to ask.'

Pretty well everything was child related.;

I have loved reading daily what he has accomplished during the day - sometimes these are incidences I would not hear about when picking him up after work.

Especially because I haven't been at the daycare for almost two months this journal has been great as a "fill me in" book.

We find that the journal is more informative for specific issues.

There have always been good open lines of communication with the staff at the centre, but the journal has given us a more defined method of communication.

It's also convenient having all the information re: (care) in one book.

The journal has given me the opportunity to share more information than I can normally through verbal communication with the caregivers.

We continue to enjoy using the book and feel we have learned much about our child using it.

Facilitating Transitions

Transitions refer to: a) the shift changes of the providers that result in the parent not being able to see their child's provider due to her shift beginning later than drop-off time, or ending earlier than pick-up time, b) the movement of the child from one provider's care into another provider's care due to gradual entry into the next program, and c) absence of the provider and replacement by another provider. These transitions were identified as being areas of communication facilitated by the use of the communication journal. Both the provider and the parents mentioned in their comments the value of the journal in bridging these gaps: "Normally she wasn't there so she could write down a few things cause we didn't get to see her - That was really valuable." A parent and a provider both indicated that they often didn't see each other to talk due to transition times (shift changes).

Transition of the second type was mentioned by the parent of a child moving into the next group. In her situation her child was moving from one program into another. She commented that she felt the journal might have facilitated the communication between herself and the next provider: "It probably would have made the whole thing a little smoother." The provider for this child also commented that she found she had to communicate more with the other

provider in order to find out how the child was doing in the new program.

One parent also makes a recommendation regarding the third type of transition, having communication continue when the provider isn't there. "In 'real life' it would be important to have a back-up for the caregiver. She has been away at various times and on these occasions there was no one else to write in the book."

Facilitating Communication at Drop off and Pick up Times

Evidence in the data indicated that, due to time and recollection, the communication experienced in daily contacts, during drop off and pick up times, was not as facilitative of continuous dialogue about the child's day or the various topics addressed in the journal. Parents indicated that time is a factor which affects drop off and pick up time communication. They indicated that a variety of conversations could take place and that other than significant information asked for, or volunteered by either the parent or provider, this communication could be on a variety of topics or purposes, and usually included social exchanges. One parent indicated that she and her husband took turns dropping off and picking up their child and that the communication from the provider could be different for each of them. Another parent indicated that there was usually too much going on at pick-up time and that they communicated very little. Yet another parent indicated that they were usually in too much of a hurry to leave. Providers also supported the notion that drop off and pick up times

were often hectic. Several commented during the post-implementation interviews that the journal facilitated some of these times by eliminating the need for as much communication. One parent summed up what many implied in their reflections about use of the journal, and how it facilitated communication: "...all of what we communicated could/should technically be communicated orally, but this is difficult when there is such a commotion (often) when we pick up our child."

Difficulties with Journal Communication

The Providers' Perspectives

Several difficulties with the use of the journal were raised by the providers. Time, comfort with written communication, perceived suitability of a written form to the purpose of the communication, and the distraction from the care of the children, were the three areas that emerged as presenting the most difficulty for the providers in use of the journal.

Time was the theme that emerged as the main difficulty with communication through the journal. Most providers found it difficult to find time during the day to make their entries and any time found was still difficult due to interruptions: "There is only one time of the day during my shift that I can write in their book and it's a very short time. I was going to write them (the books) on my lunch hour but I look at that as my time away to rejuvenate for the afternoon. I stayed after work this afternoon to write what I didn't finish. I find it a bit frustrating that there is

such a time constraint and very little space." Another provider suggests that in theory such communication is a necessity, but in the practical sense the time factor needs consideration: "If you had a half an hour to sit out and do it." Another provider commented on how much time it took to write in the journals for two children: "It took me a good twenty minutes to do both books." The providers of the older, pre-school aged, children tended to write less. One comments: "I feel I haven't written much in the journals. I'm finding it hard to find the time."

Time related concerns were a factor for both parents and providers. "Time is a huge factor for both families and caregivers, so I thought...if the questions could be more specific and not require alot of writing and still be personal it might be easier to keep up." Both parents and providers felt the journals would be impossible to maintain on a daily basis for all of the children in a provider's care. One provider emphatically states in her post-implementation interview, "I don't think I could do it every day. I did and that was alot!"

Two providers indicated a preference for verbal communication and that they were less comfortable with written communication. One also raised concerns about the mis-communication that could occur with written communication and the lack of immediacy in responding to a problem. One provider commented that a whole day elapsed before she was able to respond to a parent concern raised in the journal: "This really made me think that if there was a serious issue

that needed to be dealt with we would need to find another form of communication that we could have immediate action."

Two providers indicated that there were concerns with the time the journal took away from the other children in their care. They found that their focus was on the children about whom they were writing and that this sometimes affected their time with the other children. A second concern was writing in the journals during the day. Writing was often done in the room with the children and, although this did not appear to be a major concern, providers commented on feeling uncomfortable with parents of the other children coming in and finding them spending time writing about other children during the day.

The Parents' Perspectives

Most parents also mentioned time related difficulties. Time was equated with 'extra burden'. Key words such as: 'chore' and 'homework' were noted in the reflections and again in the post-implementation interviews. One parent comments: "It has been quite difficult finding time after work to write in the journal - it is another chore that has been added to an already busy night." Another comments after the second two week period of use: "I found the second set of sessions a lot more cumbersome. I have been working extra hours etc. and found that I was forgetting to write ..."

Time was also equated with difficulty in thinking of what to write: "I'm also finding that although the journal only takes me five minutes to fill in, I'm feeling a bit rushed to fill it in and make worthwhile, substantial comments." Parents

also recognized the time element that the journals took for the providers. Overall they felt that although the journals were nice to have, they could see that it was very time consuming for the providers. "I still do feel that the journal is too time consuming to keep up to date day after day for each child... "

Most parents found that they preferred verbal communication for some purposes. One parent states that verbal communication is her preferred means of communication and indicates she is less comfortable with written communication. She writes in her reflections: "My preferred means of communication is verbal which works well at ...(the centre) because I'm so close and can visit at lunch..." In the post-implementation interview she confirms her preference: "If I had a problem I would talk to them - quicker, I'm not a writer. It could be miscommunicated." With many of the parents, verbal communication emerged as being the preferred form of communication in communicating concerns around sensitive issues or immediate concerns: "I would fear that they (referring to her comments in writing) could be misunderstood. Verbal is better. At least we find that with e-mail you can't read the body language and tone." One parent, who is not able to visit the centre regularly, comments that: "None of it can replace being there and talking to them. Written words can be misinterpreted." Another parent comments on communicating about problems through the journal: "I wouldn't want to communicate a problem through it ...alot of things you could put in the

journal, but I guess if I really want to make sure that someone's going to understand where I'm coming from on something, I think I'd want to do it face to face only because things can be so easily misunderstood, or when you see it on paper sometimes they get the wrong tone to it or something."

Benefits Derived from Use of the Journal

This section outlines the benefits derived from the use of the journal as a form of communication, first from the perspective of providers, and second from the perspective of the parents. The benefits are the positive results of using the journal as identified by providers and parents. The analysis of the parent and provider interviews and reflections resulted in several themes emerging that were identified as benefits resulting from the use of the communication journal.

Overall, the journal communication emphasized the child and, it was evident that this communication provided information for both parents and providers about the child. This increased knowledge and awareness of the child resulted in several benefits for the providers, the parents, and for their relationship with the child.

Benefits from Providers' Perspectives

During the pre-implementation interview providers were asked a series of questions related to their knowledge of the child both at the centre and at home (Section C of Interview questions). Providers' responses indicated that they were able to respond to all areas when asked about the child in

the day care setting. Providers responses to the same questions about knowledge of the child at home were often responses ranging from uncertainty, no knowledge at all, to making an assumption. Responses included such qualifiers as: "From what I understand..."; "... sounds like..."; "... not really..."; "... nothing in particular that I'm aware of..."; "... hasn't mentioned a topic I can think of..."; "... I don't think..."; "... from what I've heard..."; "... I think..."; " I'm not sure..."; "... couldn't tell you..."; "I don't know..."; shrug (gesture in response)...; "I really don't know..."; "I have no idea (laughter)"; ...shook head (in gesturing 'no)...; "I can't even tell you..."; "No idea..."; "There's a good question..".; "Don't know ...; "I would say..."; "I would assume..."; "I've never observed anything..."; "That I (long pause) ...I'm not sure about..."; "Not that Mom and Dad have shared with me..."; "I'm sure"

In contrast, the post-implementation interview revealed that providers had more knowledge about the child at home, although there were still some indications of uncertainty. Comparatively, however, the parent-provider partnership in which the journal had been used with the least consistency and frequency, the provider responded as before, with uncertainty and 'don't know' responses to the questions related to the child at home. The providers who had established regular and consistent use of the journal, even after a time lapse since its use, indicated through their responses: greater certainty, that they had inquired more

about the child at home, and that they had gained more knowledge of the child at home: "I think both don't have friends at home and neither have family close. I remember asking both." When asked about what the child talks about at home during the pre and post- implementation interviews one provider's responses were as follows:

Pre-implementation interview - He talks about J. K told me that... (pause). I can't even tell you. Sorry.

Post-implementation interview - You can't believe what he's saying. Things in the moment, what's going on around his home, his mom and dad.

Only a slight increase in quantity and depth of the answer was noticed in the providers' answer to questions, about the child at home, after the use of the journal. However, the qualifiers that suggested uncertainty, such as those prevalent in the pre-implementation interview were less apparent and less frequent in the responses in the post-implementation interview. During the post-implementation interview providers tended to respond to the questions about their knowledge of the child in their home environment with some response. These responses were limited, but were given with greater confidence than in the pre-implementation interview. The time lapse between the end of the implementation period and the final interview may have affected the providers' ability to recall this information.

During this time lapse some of these children had moved into a different care area with different providers. Providers' comments in the final interview and in their reflections on use of the journal suggested that their awareness of the child was a benefit resulting from it's use.

The providers identified that their increased knowledge of the child and regular communication through the journal impacted their relationship with the child. It created a greater awareness of the child and for some a greater bond with the child. One provider comments on her relationship with the two children for whom she was maintaining a journal: "... I would like to say that I have learned a tremendous amount about both my children and feel a special bond with them both." Her sense of developing a greater bond was confirmed in the post-implementation interview. In response to being asked: "Did the journal impact your relationship with the children?," she responded: "I feel really close to both of them." All of the providers' comments indicated that they had a greater awareness of the children for whom they maintained the journal. The following comments illustrate some of their thoughts: "...gives opportunity for both parent and educator to clarify their thinking and what they perceive of the child."; " I was a lot more conscious of tracking those two, whereas before it was something you did unconsciously."; "What I liked was realizing what her interests were." Writing about the child each day resulted in an increased focus on the child. Providers indicated that they observed these children more. Some indicated that they

made anecdotal notes about the child during the day and others commented that the journal was an opportunity to sit with the child, talk and write in the journal about their day.

The providers' comments indicated that their relationship with the parents was also benefited as a result of using the journal. Providers' perceptions of how the journal benefited their relationship with parents varied. Some felt they were able to communicate more easily and effectively with parents. One mentioned that it made her want to find a way to talk to them and that she realized how much certain things meant to them. One felt that she had become closer with the two children's parents and that they had established a partnership: "I also have a great relationship with both sets of parents, we are learning together and sharing ideas and strategies." Another comments on her relationship with the child's father: "Dad became more comfortable with me."

Providers spoke of their own awareness of themselves as professionals and in relation to their practice in the final interview and in their reflections. All of the providers indicated through their responses that the journal had caused them to reflect on themselves and/or the program: "I'd think about what parents wrote and what I wrote."; "As an educator you see more about what you're doing, the program, my personal strengths and weaknesses."; "As it got more repetitive I was aware that I needed to do more different things..."; "It made me slow down and think about what was

significant."; "The journal made me notice how little time I'm spending with them..."; "I thought I was repeating myself over and over. I thought of a new way which I could approach each day in a different style."; "This would help programming."; and finally one provider comments on where her observations led her in terms of working with the child and the parents: "The more I studied R and his parents the more Aug. ... statement became a realistic expectation."

For those parents who were unable to visit the centre during the day, the journal made information more accessible: "It's nice to be able to access that kind of information especially when I'm working so far away downtown." Parents and providers both saw the journal as a benefit for parents who could not access the centre: "If I couldn't be at the centre I would want something."; "If I couldn't I wouldn't know what he is doing..."; "Just at morning pick -up is not enough time, everyone is rushed."; "If I couldn't go there, oh ya, this would be great (referring to journal use)."

A provider sheds light on the importance of sharing the child's day with the parents. In response to how she would see the communication journal if parents were not near by and could not drop in to see their children?, she comments: "I think parents feel more piece of mind if they know what their child is doing."

Other areas that appeared to be beneficial aspects of the journal were less emphasized, but were apparent. Several providers commented that the journal served as record and a memory of the child. A few of the providers noted that the

information recorded about the child provided them opportunities to extend activities or conversations with the child at the centre. One provider mentioned that keeping the journal had opened up communication sooner with providers in the other program. All of the providers, when asked, felt that the journal would be beneficial for communicating with parents who do have such easy access to their child's centre.

Benefit from Parents' Perspectives

Overall parents' comments showed that they perceived similar benefits in the use of the journals. Of importance was the benefit the journal served in sharing knowledge of the child thereby increasing awareness. Parents' comments showed that they valued both receiving information that increased their awareness of their child, and giving information that increased the provider's awareness of their child. As one parent comments during the post-implementation interview:

I guess this way she could elaborate more on, ah, what she thought he was improving or what kind of skills he was developing or... I guess she probably ..., from her side of it, she probably could understand ... what he was doing at home... that probably gave her a bit more understanding ... of how his mind worked.

Parents also valued the information in the journal as a way of extending communication and activities from the centre to home. Three of the parents indicated that they would use the information to talk with their child, or to extend an

activity. One parent specifically indicated that because it was written down she was more likely to ask her child about it. Another parent commented that they found the journal a good reason to sit down and reflect on their child's day: "It's probably beneficial to sit and spend 10 minutes a night recounting your child's day with his successes and experiences." All parents commented on the value of knowing about how their child spent the day.

Other areas of benefit, identified by parents, included: the value of the journal as a diary of their child, the importance of such a communication tool if parents did not have access to their child's centre, the opportunity for partnership, reinforcement of the parent's knowledge about their child, and convenience of having information in one place.

Child-related Communication

Almost all of the communication recorded in the journals was focused on the child. Entries focused on the child's growth and development, care, and a sharing of knowledge about the child. These were the three areas that received the most attention through the recorded entries. From the perspective of the parents it was a supplement of information about their child that they would not normally receive. This supplement included insights into their child in the setting where they spend their day without the parent:

You get a little of what appeals to her in my absence.
Insight into what she enjoys.

It just made it better. It gave us a more rounded picture of how he was doing.

You could say I didn't know that my child liked that and it was really quite illuminating.

...it reinforced what I knew and understood about him.

It gave me a more complete picture. If I compare it to now when we don't have a journal definitely we had more information then.

The journal was more thorough. If I pop in she may volunteer it ...I have to ask.

Pretty well everything was child related.

I have loved reading daily what he has accomplished during the day - sometimes these are incidences I would not hear about when picking him up after work.

Especially because I haven't been at the daycare for almost two months this journal has been great as a "fill me in" book.

We find that the journal is more informative for specific issues.

There have always been good open lines of communication with the staff at the centre, but the journal has given us a more defined method of communication.

It's also convenient having all the information re:(care) in one book.

The journal has given me the opportunity to share more information than I can normally through verbal communication with the caregivers.

We continue to enjoy using the book and feel we have learned much about our child using it.

Discussion of the Findings

The importance of communication in establishing parent partnership, and/or as a connection between home and school has been well documented. The findings in this study revealed that parents and providers both perceive communication as important. Both saw communication as essential, however, emphasis on what was important about communication was different. Parents emphasized maintaining consistency, partnership, and preventing problems. Providers emphasized the need to provide support, be open, and the importance of communication in working together toward the development and well being of the child.

Evident in the communication in the journal were

characteristics of effective communication such as those identified by Hauser-Cram (cited in Swap, 1993) and Atkin, Bastiani and Goode (1988). The journals contained communication that showed appreciation for the child, recognized the child's uniqueness, showed that the provider had knowledge of the child's interests, and informed the parents how the child spent their day. As well, the communication emphasized two-way communication, was clear, reassuring, informal and friendly and positive and invited parents to respond. The journal provided a means of frequent (daily) communication and the topics of communication were more diverse than those identified as a part of daily communication prior to use of the journal.

Summary

Chapter Four has provided a detailed analysis of the journal communication, the parents and providers reflections on their use of the journal, and of the pre and post-implementation interviews. The findings were presented as they related to the research questions and in seeking understanding of the parents and providers perceptions of communication and the effect the journal had on it. Chapter Five will present a brief discussion of the study and outline recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

Communication is an important link in connecting the home and day care environment. A communication journal can be an effective tool in enhancing communication. This study has gathered evidence to show that the use of the communication journal provided an effective means for providers and parents to communicate, and that the communication contained many of the characteristics attributed to quality communication. Evidence also emerged that showed that the process of participating in the study, and use of the journal, had an effect on the parents' and providers' perceptions of communication.

The Site and Participants

The site was unusual due to its location and clientele. Most parents worked in the building adjacent to the centre and were able to come to the centre during the day to visit with their child. Communication opportunities between parents and providers were therefore more abundant than in most day care centres. Initially it appeared that this might adversely affect the communication in the journals. A study by Horowitz (1984), however, indicates that frequency of communication is not affected by the proximity of the site. The interview revealed that the communication, during these visits, was limited and not much emphasis was placed on talking about the child. Not all parents did visit on a regular basis, and of those that did; one indicated that she spent the time playing with her child and didn't often

communicate with the provider; one did communicate with the provider regularly during her visits and this seemed to affect the questions she asked; and one indicated that she usually chatted informally with other parents and the providers at this time.

The Journal

The journal format was found to be easy to use and useful for the participants, although suggestions were made for some changes. The format was designed to encourage two way communication, to encourage information about how the child spent the day, to be positive, and to include a space for information providers already record regarding the child's physical care. The analysis of the communication recorded showed that it seemed to be successful in encouraging two-way communication, recording a description of the child's day and in encouraging positive communication. The chart of information on physical care was used by some and not by others. Those who used it commented on the convenience of having it there. One parent specifically commented on the convenience of having this information recorded so that she could refer to it at home.

Parent Comments and Suggestions

One parent commented on the use of the journal and on the format of the journal. During the period of journal use she found that when the provider was away there was no communication recorded. She suggested having the substitute care giver fill in the journal when the provider is absent in order to continue the communication. Due to confidentiality

assurances, for this study, having anyone else fill in the journal was not possible, however, this is something to be considered in any study of this kind and in actual implementation of a communication vehicle. In her comments on the format of the journal; this parent found repeating the child's name over and over redundant and unnecessary. This is a good point. For implementation in a centre this would not be necessary. For the purposes of the study the space for the name served as a guide for the participants. This parent also commented that the term "Star and Wishes" sounded "cutesy" and that she would prefer something "clearer". Clearer terms were initially considered, but it was felt that they often sound clinical and could invite negative entries. The journal was intended be a positive record of the child. Terms used were designed to encourage a child oriented and positive focus in the communication. The format was successful in promoting such communication. Several parents commented on the convenience of having the daily information chart included on the page. Including this as a part of the communication journal would be recommended and could be the part that is communicated daily.

Provider Comments and Suggestions

Providers had a few suggestions to offer on the journal format. One suggested a checklist type of format for telling about the child's day, another wanted more room to write, and another suggested that the format might be better if it was altered to suit each program's needs. Most commented that they found it easy to fill out and positive.

Overall the journal format was found to be successful. The communication was very positive, and those who needed more space wrote on the back of the page. The question section was found to be beneficial in supporting two-way communication and in challenging parents and providers to think about the child in each setting. Many parents and providers commented on how difficult they found thinking of questions to ask and noted that asking questions made them think about the child. The use of a journal as a means of encouraging questions may have been an effective vehicle, or it may be that this difficulty suggests an alternative means would be more effective. This leads to questions about whether parents would find an alternative means for asking questions, and whether the questions would be as thoughtful? It is possible that the journal promoted thoughtful questions and provide a vehicle for asking them?

The daily use of the journal implemented in the study was seen as too frequent to be manageable and was implemented on a daily basis due to the timeline of the study. Had a greater timeline been possible the researcher would have recommended that each child have comments, questions and a description recorded on a cycle of once of week or on a one-child-per-day basis over the period of a year. Parents and providers suggested that daily use be altered to weekly, monthly, or even on an 'as needed' basis. In order to gain the benefit of the accumulated information about the child, and to maintain consistent two way communication, no less than weekly use or a one-child-per- day cycle would be

recommended.

The Interviews

The interviews were effective in gaining an understanding of the parents' and providers' perspectives on communication. These revealed what they considered as important in communicating; what they perceived was being communicated; what they actually communicated in the journal; and how they perceived the journal communication. The interviews provided a source of information for looking at the participants' perceptions of communication. Section C of the questions was repeated in both interviews and focused on the parents' and providers' knowledge of the child at home and at the centre. Although it provided some insights into what parents and providers actually knew about the child in the two settings, the value of such information was limited. This section did, however, serve a purpose that was not expected. Both providers and parents were made aware of what they didn't know about the child and the result was heightened awareness of the child. Comments made in response to the questions, and questions that were recorded in the journals were directed at finding out more about the child in each setting.

The interviews were arranged in places convenient to the parents and providers, but outside of their home, whenever possible, to avoid the distractions of young children, other family members, etc. Three parents chose to have the interviews in their home. As it turned out, these interviews proved to be the most focused and most free of distractions.

Parents had made arrangements to have their children cared for in the home during the interview by either the child's father or by a babysitter. Other settings tended to be noisy (which created background noise on the tapes) and to have distracting events going on in the area.

Two open ended questions were included in the final interview: asking participants for suggestions they had for use of the communication journal, and asking providers to share their thoughts on writing the reflections. All participants agreed that daily use of the journal for every child would be unmanageable. Participants also found that writing on a daily basis made it difficult to think of what to write. Providers felt that they were repetitious in the journals, and parents felt the journal became a burden. However, all participants, except for one of the parents, saw the journal as a valuable form of communication. All participants offered suggestions for changes in the journal use, and all suggested less frequent use.

One parent declined participation in both of the interviews. One parent, who had moved her child from the centre, did not participate in the final interview. She was difficult to reach and did not return calls or respond to any attempts made to contact her. All other parents and all of the providers participated in both interviews.

The Reflections

Parent reflection sheets were brief and filled in after every two week period. All but two parents completed all three of these. Incorporating these into the journal by

inserting a reminder sheet appears to have been a successful means of having the reflections maintained by the parents. Providers were asked to keep daily reflections and kept these in books separate from the journals. All of the providers experienced difficulty keeping these on a daily basis. Comments indicated that they felt their responses in these were repetitious and therefore not valuable. Time was also a factor mentioned by all of the providers. The frequency with which the providers wrote their reflections and the amounts recorded varied according to the individual providers. Two wrote quite extensively. Two wrote very little. The reflections provided valuable pieces of information and often verified what was expressed elsewhere. As well, the reflections were valuable in contributing to understanding each provider and their beliefs. Future researchers may wish to consider a means of having reflections maintained more consistently and in greater depth.

The Interpretation

The interpretation process began with a review of the journals. These were the core of the project and it seemed that they therefore would be the key to the meaning of the experience. The journals were read several times and then analyzed through the application of a coding system. This break down did reveal something about the communication, but it also became apparent that breaking down the communication created a fragmentation. Returning to a more holistic approach and looking at the journal communication for what this communication was mainly about, led to greater awareness

of the implicit meaning within the context of the communication. Interviews also offered insight into the perceptions parents and providers had of their communication before and after use of the journal. The analysis of the interviews also revealed that portions of the information gained through the interview may have been more readily obtained through a questionnaire given to the participants to complete. This is a point future researchers may wish to consider.

Reflections were also used to both support themes that emerged in the journal communication and in parents' perceptions and providers' perceptions of the journal. The providers' reflections in particular revealed a greater understanding of their communication in both the journals and the thoughts they shared on communication in the interviews.

The results indicated that use of a communication journal is a valuable tool in meeting the needs of parents and providers for connecting with each other, and providing for the child. It is not however a panacea for communication between parents and providers, nor unproblematic as a connection between the two settings. Participants indicated that time was a factor that made such communication a difficulty. It is therefore suggested that both parents and providers consider an adaptation of such a communication method, possibly through alteration of the time sequence. Continuing to look for a means of adapting the journal is something that will have to be pursued in order for a journal to be successfully implemented and maintained. Ability with

written communication and comfort with this form of communication are also factors that need to be considered, although in this study this did not appear to be an issue.

The journal did facilitate communication in numerous ways and parents and providers did identify benefits to this form of communication. Most apparent was the journal's effect on the topics of communication and what this revealed about the parents' and providers' perceptions of their role in communication.

Of note were the discrepancies that emerged. Parents indicated that growth and development were not frequent topics of communication prior to use of the journals. Parents also indicated that development was a topic only if of particular concern. Providers indicated that they did give parents information on the child's growth and development during the communication prior to use of the journal.

Parents noted, after the use of the journal in which communication was largely about the growth and development of the child, that the journal communication provided a source of supplemental, and not, "significant" information. Although parents valued the journals and the information in them, many found the journals a 'burden', an 'extra chore' and likened the keeping of them to 'homework'. All commented that they were happy to see them coming to an end. Topics about the child's care emerged as the topics parents asked most about, and the topics they considered as 'significant' or important. Prior to use of the journal,

partnership; what each perceives as their role in the partnership and what each perceives as the role of the other in the partnership.

Recommendations

The study showed that the journal was an effective vehicle for communication between the home and the care setting. The following recommendations are made for future researchers:

Journal Implementation

In implementing use of journals the following are recommended for consideration by the researcher:

1. To maintain a similar format as it encourages positive responses and qualities of effective communication
2. Use of the journal to bridge transition between programs. The journal provides: a continuous record of the child's growth and development, knowledge of the child and concerns that have been a focus of the parents and providers. This information can be a valuable resource for the next provider and a good communication vehicle between the providers in both programs and the parent for recording information and questions during the transition time. Zinnick and Blakey (1995) cite Bredekamps, key factors in the successful transition process for children moving from one learning environment to another. One of these factors is the maintenance and exchange of communication between the programs and a second is the involvement of parents in the process. Potential for the journal to serve in this function

is recognized, but would require further study.

3. To use the journals on a regular basis for each child, but not daily. It must be kept manageable for parents and providers

4. To have the journal available to all providers who are involved with the child. This may eliminate discontinuity during absences, shift changes, etc.

5. To include the daily chart information as a daily entry and to have parents take the journal home. Parents all chose to take the journals home to read them and write in them. They also found the chart of information about the child's care a valuable source of information to have at home.

Duplication or Extension Recommendations

Researchers duplicating or extending this research need to be aware of several factors that affected this study or revealed a need for further consideration. These include: the timeline, the site, and the selection of participants, the interview questions, and sensitivity around the use of terms.

The interviews and reflections played a supportive role in confirming the meaning extracted from the journal. To gain a more realistic view of how journals would function as a communication vehicle the timeline would have to allow for more realistic and meaningful use of the journals. Parents and providers found the journal recording an unrealistic expectation. Daily recording in more than one child's journal was unrealistic in terms of time. As well,

daily recording affected the communication that was recorded. Parents found it difficult to think of questions to ask on a daily basis and providers found it difficult to find something new to record about the child each day. The daily recording for a six week period of time was affected by vacations and illness. Due to the short time span it was any change in the child or the communication would be less evident that over a longer period of time.

The site and participants are also factors that require careful consideration. This site is unique in that the parents are able to access the centre during the day. Parents see their child engaged in activities in the centre and they interact with the provider during the day. This study reveals the impact of the journal in a setting in which communication is considered to be "good" and in which there are more opportunities to communicate. Most centres are not accessible to parents during the day, and it is recommended that such centres be used to further study the effects of the use of a journal as a vehicle between parents and providers.

The choice of participants also affected the study. This is difficult. In order for the study to be implemented parents and providers involved with the same child must both be willing to participate. This is more difficult to achieve when parents and providers are less familiar with one another. It is recommended, however, that either the researcher try to engage parents that are less familiar with the provider as well as those more willing; or that the researcher have the providers invite and use the journal with

all of the parents and leave it up to parents to choose to use the journal as they wish. Issues of confidentiality and permission would have to be considered in the latter. The participants in this study represented a homogeneous sample and therefore the findings are considered case specific. In order to explore the effects of social class, cultural background, and economic and educational status on the nature and impact of this communication vehicle a heterogeneous sample would be recommended for future research.

The information gained from the interviews was valuable, however other means of obtaining some of the information may be more efficient and as informative for some of the questions, such as those in the first section. It would also be recommended that interviews delve more into changed perceptions. This was never a direct question asked of the participants and may have been a valuable addition. Asking more in-depth and direct questions would be recommended.

A final recommendation for future researchers is one that considers sensitivity around terms used to address the professionals who care for children in day care. After the study had commenced it was revealed by the providers that they are referred to by different titles (care givers, providers, and educators) and that many have a preference for one term over the others. The term most preferred is 'educators' and the term least preferred is 'care givers' It was not possible to facilitate this preference, in this study, due to previously prepared materials and the need to

maintain consistency in use of terms. It is recommended that researchers be sensitive to the term when pursuing future studies in day care.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study revealed that less was recorded by pre-school providers and parents and that both of these parents dropped out of the study at the time of the final interview. There were extenuating circumstances for one of the providers and both parents that may have affected their ability to participate. However, comments made by providers and parents, prior to the implementation of the journal, indicated that in the pre-school there is less communication. It may be worthwhile to look more specifically at the communication needs and the perceptions of the parents and providers at this level, and beyond, in exploring the use of a communication journal as an effective vehicle for communication at different levels.

The journal format encouraged questions by both parents and providers. Parents and providers indicated that questions were difficult. At the same time it was revealed that questions made them 'think' and heightened their awareness of the child. Parents also expressed that they had to ask or they didn't gain information about their child. Questions appear to have value and what remains is to explore whether the journal is an effective method for asking questions?

While the study revealed much about communication between parents and providers, and the effects of using a

communication journal, the discrepancies that emerged may have revealed the essence of this communication. The parents indicated that topics related to their child's growth and development were least often addressed in daily communication prior to use of the journal. Yet, the journal communication showed that this was the area that was most frequently the topic of the entries. When considering this discrepancy two questions emerge: Who is it that wants to discuss this? and Why is it not a topic during daily contacts? Such discrepancies lead to a reconsideration of the communication between parents and providers/educators. Before considering the role communication plays in establishing a connection between home and school/centre and in establishing a partnership between parents and educators/providers, it is important to first understand what the partners truly consider important to communicate. As educators move toward partnership, compelling questions remain for future research: "What does communication mean to providers/educators and parents; and what purpose does communication serve in their respective roles and in understanding what they perceive about the roles of one another?"

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Appendix A
Journal Page

Date: _____ Provider: _____

Something I would like to share with you about _____'s day today: (This could be dictated by the child)

* Stars and Wishes *
(Comments and Questions)

From _____'s provider

* _____

* _____

? _____

From _____'s parent(s)

* _____

* _____

? _____

Daily Routines:

A,M, snack _____

Lunch _____

P.M. snack _____

Diaper changes: _____ BM _____

Teeth brushed Yes No Nap (Time) _____ - _____

Medication: (if applicable put in dosage and time) _____

Appendix B

Journal Writing Procedures

Journal Writing Procedures for Parents:

You can complete the journal at home and return it daily, or it can be completed at pick up time on site.

1. For each day please read the Educator's/Provider's daily comments about your child's day and share them with your child.
2. Write your own comments and any question you may want to ask. These comments focus on your child; interests at home, something your child did or is doing at home, or any information you can share about your child. The comments leaders on the enclosed sheet may be of help to you.
3. After each two week period, you are asked to write a reflective response about your use of the journal on the enclosed "Reflections" sheets marked "Week 2", "Week 4" and "Week 6". These can be found behind your child's journal. Please enclose these in the envelopes provided, after each two week period, and return them to your child's educator/provider. If you have any questions please call.

Thank you for your support with this project!

Journal Writing Procedures for Educators

1. Write daily in each child's journal.

The first section is a place to tell something about how the child spends the day at the centre:

This can be written by you, or if the child is able to tell you about his/her day it can be dictated by the child and scribed by you. The comment section provides an opportunity for you to give two positive comments about the child and an opportunity to share something about the child's development etc. at the centre. The question space provides an opportunity to ask about the child at home, or to ask for parent input.

2. Give the journal to the parents at the end of the day for completion on site or to take home. Please remind parents to return it to you in the morning, unless they have chosen to use it on site.
3. Write down your thoughts about use of the journal each day in the "Reflections booklet". You may find taking a few minutes after pick-up, after writing in the communication journal or after reading it are the times when something comes to mind to record in your reflection booklet.
4. Please keep all materials in the folder for pick-up during and at the end of the study. If you have any questions please call.

Thank you for your support with this project!

Appendix C

Parent Reflection and Reminder Sheets

Reminder for Parents: Time to fill in the Bi-weekly Reflection Sheet

Reflection sheets (yellow sheets) are enclosed in the journal package. Please complete the two week reflection sheet, place it in one of the envelopes enclosed in the journal package, and return it to your child's educator/provider.

Thanks again!

Appendix D

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Before Implementation of the Journals

Section A: Information Questions

1. Are any of the participating children related to the provider?

2. What time of day does each child arrive at the centre?

How long do they spend at the centre each day? How often do they come to the centre (full time, part time)?

3. How many children are in the provider's care?

Section B: General Procedures. These questions will be asked only at the pre-implementation interview and are asked of both the parent and the provider.

1. Who brings "Name of Child" to the centre? Can you describe a typical arrival procedure?

2. Do you speak with the parent/provider (depending on which is answering the question) at this time? (If yes go on to question 3).

3. What do you most often speak about?

- special instructions (re: the child)
- to inform (child or family related)
- social topics (non-child related)
- sharing of information about the child (re: growth and development/educational topics)
- to ask about the child's day (at home, at the centre)

4. At the end of the day can you describe the typical pick-up procedure?

5. Do you speak to the provider/parent at this time?
(If yes go to question 6.)

6. What do you most often speak about?

- special instructions (re: the child)
- to inform (child or family related)
- social topics (non-child related)
- sharing of information about the child (re: growth and development/educational topics)
- to ask about the child's day (at home, at the centre)

7. What is the most common format you use for communicating with the provider/parents? (talk, newsletter, note, phone, etc.)

8. When you need to communicate with the provider/parent:

- With whom would you communicate?
- How would you communicate? (phone, in person, note, etc.)
- What would likely be the reason for contact?
(special instructions, inform, social, to share information/educational, etc.)

9. Is there an area that is particularly difficult to talk to the provider/parent about? Can you describe this and

how you would handle it?

10. Do you think it is important to communicate with the parent/provider?

Section C: Before and After Implementation

This section contains questions specific to the child. These questions will be repeated at the interview before and after the implementation of the journal. They are asked of both the parent and the provider for each participating child. (X = the participating child and the child's name would be substituted)

Tell me about "X" in terms of:

1. Which activities "X" enjoys most at the centre:

Which activities "X" enjoys most at home:

2. Does he/she play mostly alone or with other children? When would he/she play alone? with others?

When he/she plays with other children who are they?
(Encourage description)

Who are his/her friends at the centre?

Who are his/her friends at home?

3. How would you describe "X's" temperament?
(Prompt with examples: happy, outgoing, still, quiet, shy, etc.) Can you give some examples?
4. Tell me the most recent thing "X" has learned or is learning to do at the centre? at home?
5. What does "X" talk about with you? Why? What about at home? What about at the centre?
6. How does child "X" solve problems? Can you give an example of how he/she meets challenges?
7. What strategies are used for promoting confidence and achievement? at home? at the centre?

Section D: Post-Implementation

These questions will be asked only after the implementation and use of the journals. They will be asked of both parents and providers.

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1. Tell me your thoughts on the use of the communication journal.
2. Did using the communication journal have any impact on any of the following areas? (Describe as fully as possible)

- areas of communication that are ordinarily more difficult

- child-related communication

- drop off or pick up communication

3. Are there any areas of communication that the communication journal does not address?

- addresses well?

4. Has the use of the communication journal affected any other aspects of communication at the centre? at home?

5. How has the use of the communication journal impacted

- your relationship with "X"

- your view of "X"

6. Did you share the journal with others? (child, spouse, others) Prompt for further details. Why? What was their response?

7. Any suggestions/recommendation for using the communication journal? What you would change. etc.?

8. If you couldn't visit the centre what would you think about the use of the communication journal?

9. Anything you would like to add?

10. Ask providers about keeping the reflections. It appeared to be difficult - why?

Appendix E

Introduction Package

Letter of Introduction

Dear Parents and Providers,

My name is Jill Levere. I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria. My interest in the growth and development of young children has led me to doing a project entitled:

The Effects of Implementing a Communication Journal as a Communication Tool Between Parents and Providers

My purpose in doing this project is to see if communication journals can serve as a way of meeting some of the communication needs of parents and providers and provide a connection between the home and day care setting. In order to do this I require the participation of the providers and the parents of the children in the day care setting.

Participation in this project would require some of your time. An interview would take place before and after the period of journal use and would be arranged at a time and place convenient for you. As well, you would be asked to read the communication journal daily and write a response that will be read by your child's provider and the researcher only. This would take about ten minutes per day. At the end of each of three two week periods you will be asked to write a summary of your thoughts and reflections on use of the journal. This may require up to a half an hour of your time or may take as little as ten to fifteen minutes on each of these occasions.

Participation would require more time from providers. Providers will be asked to keep a running journal of their reflections throughout the study period. This would require ten to twenty minutes per day. Providers will also be asked to make entries into each child's journal which will be read by the child's parents and the researcher only. Writing entries would take approximately five minutes per child. Providers are also asked to take part in an interview before and after the period of journal use. These would be arranged at a time and place convenient for you.

I believe there are benefits derived from participating in this project. The finding should provide information about what parents and providers see as important to communicate to each other and you will have the opportunity to reflect on the utility of a communication journal. The information gained from this project may also benefit others interested in enhancing communication between parents and providers.

If you agree to participate you have the right to withdraw at any time without explanation. Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. All data

will be in the possession of the researcher only, and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Journals will be given to the parent at the end of the study or destroyed with the rest of the data. Participants will not be identified and their anonymity will be protected when results are published in whatever form.

I am available to answer your questions at any time and can be reached at the following number. I do hope that you will consider participating in this study. I believe it has the potential to provide a valuable experience and valuable information that will benefit the care, growth and development of children. Thank you for your consideration. If you decide you are willing to participate a letter of consent is attached. Please sign and return the letter of consent to the day care to indicate that you are willing to participate. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Attachment: Letter of consent

Description of Procedures

Parent Participants

1. Initial interview
2. Three two week periods of maintaining journals by reading it, recording entries and returning it to the centre daily (See sample attached).
3. Record reflections on reflection sheet after each two week period of journal use.
4. A final interview

Provider Participants

1. Initial interview
2. Three, two week periods of journal use. You will be requested to write daily entries into each participating child's journal and have it available for parents at pick up time (See sample attached).
4. You will be asked to keep a daily journal of your thoughts and reflections throughout the study.
5. A final interview

Communication Journal

(Sample Page)

Date: _____ Child's Name: _____

Something I would like to share with you about _____'s day today: (This could be dictated by the child)

A note from _____'s provider (These could be stars and wishes, something positive you have noticed about the child's progress, and a question you might want help with from home. A suggestion sheet is attached if you would like more ideas for sharing information)

* _____
* _____
? _____

A note from _____'s parent(s) (These can be stars and wishes, positive comments about something you have noticed about your child at home and would like to share, something you think is important for the provider to know about your child and a question that the provider might be able to help with from the centre. A suggestion sheet is attached if you would like more ideas for sharing information in the notes).

* _____
* _____
? _____

Daily Routines:

A,M, snack _____

Lunch _____

P.M. snack _____

Diaper changes: _____ BM _____

Teeth brushed: Yes No Nap (Time) _____ - _____

Medication: (if applicable put in dosage and time) _____

Parent Consent

Consent Form for Participation in the Study Entitled,
The Effects of Implementing a Communication Journal as a Communication
Tool Between Parents and Providers

I understand that this research project is a study of the communication between parents and providers. I understand that I will be asked to make written responses in a daily journal and that these responses will contain comments and questions regarding my child and that these will be read by my child's provider. No other person will have access to these comments and any comments used in published results will be anonymous. I understand that I will also be asked to participate in an interview before and after the period of journal use. I will be asked questions prepared by Jill Levere, Master's candidate, about my child's care outside of the home and this information will be used to analyze the use of a communication journal as a means of communication between parents and providers.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation, and that there will be no negative consequences due to my withdrawal.

I understand that any data collected in the study will remain confidential and will be kept in a locked cabinet. Furthermore I understand that neither my name, nor that of my child will be attached to any results and that our anonymity will be protected. Journal contents will have been shared with my child's provider.

I understand that my interviews will be taped, as well as recorded in written notes, and that all of these will be destroyed upon completion of the study. I also understand that I can refuse to have the interview taped and still participate.

I understand that my child will be indirectly involved in this study through comments made in the journal and that data used will not bear my child's name and that the journal will be given to me or destroyed, along with all other data, at the end of the study. I further understand that participants will not be identified and their anonymity will be protected when the results are published in any form.

I agree that I will respect and maintain the confidentiality of others and protect the anonymity of other participants.

Date: _____ Researcher: _____

Signature: _____ Supervisor: _____

Provider Consent

Consent Form for Participation in the Study Entitled,
The Effects of Implementing a Communication Journal as a Communication
Tool Between Parents and Providers

I understand that this research project is a study of the communication between parents and providers. I understand that I will be asked to make written responses in a daily journal and that these responses, containing comments and questions regarding children in my care will be read by their respective parents. I understand that I will also be asked to participate in two interviews, one before beginning the use of journals and one at the end of the six week period of journal use. I understand that I will be asked questions prepared by Jill Levere, Master's candidate, about caring for children outside of the home, and about communication with their parents. This information will be used to analyze the use of a communication journal as a means of communication between parents and providers.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation and with no negative consequences.

I understand that my interview will be taped as well as recorded in written transcripts and that all of these will be destroyed upon completion of the study. (No names will be attached to the tape, a coded number will be used) I also understand that I can refuse to have the interview taped and have the information recorded in note form instead.

I understand that data collected in the study, will remain confidential, and will be shared with no other person than the researcher. Interview results and data collected will be kept in a locked cabinet. I also understand that the journals will either be returned to the parents or destroyed with the other data upon the completion of the study. Furthermore, I understand that my name will not be attached to any results.

I understand that the children in my care will be indirectly involved in this study through comments made in the journal and that any data used will not bear any childrens' names, that the parents will have consented to their childrens' involvement. I further understand that all participants will not be identified and their anonymity will be protected when the results are published in whatever form.

I understand that whether or not I participate in this study will have no bearing on my employment status and that my supervisor will not have access to any of the information

collected without my consent.

I agree to respect the confidentiality of all other participants and to protect their anonymity.

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Supervisor: _____

Agency Consent

Consent Form for Participation in the Study Entitled,
The Effects of Implementing a Communication Journal as a Communication
 Tool Between Parents and Providers

I understand that this research project is studying communication between parents and providers. I understand that providers will be asked to make written responses in a daily journal and that these responses will contain comments and questions regarding children in their care. I also understand that these comments will be read by the childrens' respective parents and that parents' comments in turn will be read by the child's provider.

I understand that the children in the providers' care will be indirectly involved in this study through comments made in the journal and that each child's parents will have consented to this. I understand that the journal will be given to the parent at the end of the study or destroyed along with the other data.

I understand that the providers' and parents' participation in the study is completely voluntary and that the provider and parent can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation and without negative consequences.

I understand that any data collected in the study will remain confidential and be kept in a locked cabinet. Furthermore, I understand that neither my name, nor the day care's name, nor the name of anyone attached to the day care will be attached to any results; that all participants' anonymity will be protected during the study and in the results when they are published and in whatever form.

As the administrator of this institutions I give my permission for the providers, who consent to do so, to take part in this study and I agree that any result of the providers' participation will not affect their employment status in any way.

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Supervisor: _____

Appendix F
Comment Leaders

Communication Journal
 Suggestions for Writing Notes and Questions

The following suggestions provide different ways of beginning your comments and questions between home and the day care centre. They have been included as **suggestions only** and hopefully will provide you with a start when you need it. All comments and questions are intended to be positive and child focused (Stars and Wishes).

Suggestions for Comments and Comment Leaders

I noticed that ...

Jeannie really sleeps well when ...

During our craft activity today ...

Steve did a wonderful job...

I enjoyed watching Susan....

Carl often chooses to ...

Today Jill has this to say "quote something from child about their day"

Wow! Steve was able to ...

Susan seems to really enjoy ... She ...

When we were outside, John ...

Sample questions and question beginnings

Would it be possible to ...

Do you have any suggestions for ...

Susan really likes to look at books? Are there some things we can do at home to help her develop her reading?

Have you noticed ...?

VITA

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Title of Thesis:

The Effects of Implementing a Communication Journal as a
Communication Tool Between Parents and Providers

Author

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May 30, 1997