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Abstract

This action research project investigated the relationship between student-led conferencing and parent involvement and satisfaction. Student-led conferences were held in four early childhood classrooms in Michigan, in the hopes that parent involvement and satisfaction would increase. A fifth classroom implemented traditional parent-teacher conferences. A parent satisfaction survey was created to measure parent understanding of their student's academic performance, parent satisfaction, and parent plans for future attendance of conferences. The results indicate that while student-led conferences may impact parent communication and involvement in the classroom, there is not a direct correlation between parent satisfaction and student-led conferences.

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Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

Student-Led Conferences in the Early Childhood Classroom

By

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B.A. Calvin College, 2016

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment Of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Education

Department of Education
Dordt University
Sioux Center, Iowa
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Table of Contents

Title Page.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
List of Tables.....	3
List of Figures.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Review of the Literature.....	9
Methodology.....	16
Results.....	18
Discussion.....	24
References.....	28
Appendix 1: Parent Survey.....	30

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Age and Gender of Participants	16
2. Comparison of Parent Response Request and Parent Participation in Survey ...	19
3. Parent Satisfaction with Conferences	22

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Parent Survey Results of Holistic Viewpoint of Learner	21
2. Parent Survey Results of Picture of Child as a Learner	21
3. Experimental Group Future	23
4. Control Group Future	23

Abstract

This action research project investigated the relationship between student-led conferencing and parent involvement and satisfaction. Student-led conferences were held in four early childhood classrooms in Michigan, in the hopes that parent involvement and satisfaction would increase. A fifth classroom implemented traditional parent-teacher conferences. A parent satisfaction survey was created to measure parent understanding of their student's academic performance, parent satisfaction, and parent plans for future attendance of conferences.

The results indicate that while student-led conferences may impact parent communication and involvement in the classroom, there is not a direct correlation between parent satisfaction and student-led conferences.

When parent-teacher conferences work well, they are a model of great communication, informing and involving parents in their child's education, and opening the door for discussion of any challenges or concerns either party has (Stevens & Tollafield, 2003). Conferences are a time set aside for a more formal dive into the child's relationship with the school and give an opportunity to share and plan what the student needs and what the goals for the future should be for the teacher, the student, and the parents. There is a need for teachers to be prepared for these valuable conversations, but there is also a need for parents to find the value in these set-aside times, even when their impression is that there are no issues in their child's education (Rotter, 1987). Parent-teacher conferences are a time for growth and goal setting, as well as a time for reflection and "a deeper understanding of the specific needs of individual families" (Hou & Hsieh, 2019).

Parent communication is crucial to student success, and recent research from Hanson and Pugliese (2020) stated that, on average, students in kindergarten through 12th grade have parents who reported participating in multiple school activities in one school calendar year. However, the least common school-related event that parents attended was parent-teacher conferences, with only 75% of the total number of parents polled attending (Hanson & Pugliese, 2020). From this viewpoint, it is clear that some aspects of conferencing need improvement to keep parent communication and attendance intact. It is estimated that an average of 89% of elementary school parents attend parent-teacher conferences, and this rapidly declines to nearly 57% as their child ages (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

The format of parent-teacher conferences is one that is familiar to most; however, individual experiences with this format vary greatly. There are students that were fearful,

anxious, and concerned about the outcome of these meetings between their parents and their teacher. Additionally, there are students who know the reviews, and that they will be celebrated when their parents arrived home. During a traditional parent-teacher conference, a student is left in the hallway, at home, or in another individual's care. In a different model, student-led conferences, students are invited to the conference to communicate their growth and witness a conversation between their parents and teacher.

One method for increasing parent involvement in conferences is to include students in conferences as an avenue for increased “confidence as students talk about their learning with parents and teachers” (Brodie, 2014, p. 35). In student-led conferences, students are given the opportunity to share their learning with important people in their lives and are given the opportunity to share the learning activities that are difficult for them. Educators agree that having students present their learning strengths and weaknesses to their parents is a much more effective mode of communication than their parent hearing relayed information from a teacher (Benson & Barnett, 2005).

While gathering data on parent participation, Benson and Barnett (2005) interviewed a preschool teacher that saw a rise from 11% parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences to 100% parent attendance at student-led, teacher-guided conferences (Bailey & Guskey, 2001). In addition, the anticipation of an upcoming conference for students was an opportunity to be held accountable for their learning experiences and goals, to explain to both their parents and teacher why they struggle with one academic area, and to grow in confidence hearing what their teacher has to say about their growth (Benson & Barnett, 2005, p. 2).

Student-led conferences (SLCs) have become an increasingly more prevalent method for the implementation of conferences (Conderman, Ikan, & Hatcher, 2000). Parent-

teacher conferences vary from school to school, city to city, and country to country, but one aspect of conferences that all parent-teacher conferences incorporate is the use of artifacts, examples, and portfolios (Oh & Pomerantz, 2022). Educators have found the use of portfolios (Benson & Barnett, 2005) to be an effective tool for assistance in conducting student-led conferences, but these portfolios combined with student-led conferences are one way to combat low parent participation and encourage student confidence (Bailey & Guskey, 2001). “Parent–teacher conferences have the potential to serve as an important bridge between home and school, thereby fostering parents’ involvement in children’s schooling” (Oh & Pomerantz, 2022).

Portfolio presentation is a common practice in many early childhood programs, but the combination of portfolios and student-led conferences does not have a large basis of evidence-based research to correlate the two. “There is mounting proof that student-led conferencing is a powerful tool in educating students more effectively” (Benson & Barnett, 2005, p. 95). There is a strong need for the implementation of portfolio presentation paired with student-led conference early on in a child’s education to give foundational skills for students to grow in confidence, accountability to their academic growth, and see first-hand, the purpose of their education (Benson & Barnett 2005, p. 8).

Purpose of Study

Given the lack of research on the impact and effectiveness of the use of student-led conferences in early education, the purpose of this study is to expand that research by exploring student-led conferences in the early childhood setting and describing their effect on parent communication and involvement.

Research Question

The driving question for this research is the following:

1. What is the effect of student-led conferences on parent communication and involvement?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions will be used for the purpose of this study and, unless otherwise noted, are the definitions of the author.

Accountability: the responsibility shown by a student that portrays involvement and stake in their educational journey

Implementation: the use of time, effort, and resources to carry out a specific program, plan, or study.

Ownership: viewing one's place in an experience and recognizing the agency one has in any situation.

Portfolio: An intentional collection of authentic artifacts that represent the growth of a student over the course of time (Benson & Barnett, 2005).

Student-Led Conferences: a conference time that includes the teacher as a guide, the student as a leader, and the parent as a learner.

Literature Review

The implementation of student-led conferences reaches beyond the parent-teacher relationship and into the parent-child relationship. Conferencing is utilized as an avenue for educators and parents to communicate about the growth of students in the classroom, and student-led conferences give students the leading voice in a conference to impact the

relationship between parent and student. There are many ways to set up and carry out parent-teacher conferences, one of which is student-led conferences.

“Student-led conferences engage and empower students as they collect work artifacts, reflect, and set goals” (Brodie, 2014, p. 35). Research shows an increase in parent attendance at conferences (Goodman, 2008) based on the implementation of student-led conferences. Student-led conferences add another dimension to the areas of growth seen in a student, as they look at the child holistically (Hackman, Kenworthy, & Nebbelink, 1998) as opposed to just the academic dimension. Additionally, student-led conferences invite the student into the conversation (Cleland, 1999). The review of the following literature represents what scholars have explored and described surrounding the intricacies of student-led conferencing and the importance of parent involvement.

History

Student-led conferencing is a way to support teachers and students during conference times that can often be stressful, grade-driven, formal, summative, and teacher-led. Student-led conferences originated with Little and Allen (1989), who sought out ideas and resources to improve conferences and give students increased ownership in conferencing. The research of Little and Allan (1989) started a foundational three-step model for student-led conferencing of prepare, implement, and evaluate. In the prepare phase, students collect schoolwork, role play conferences, and set up the space for conferences to be held, all typically jobs of a teacher in preparation for conferencing. In the implementation phase, students meet parents and share their learning while the teacher and parents listen. In the evaluation phase, the counselor meets with the teachers to discuss positive and negatives of the student-led conferences that were held. Based on the preliminary work of Little and Allan

(1989), Guyton and Fielstein (1989) expanded the implementation of student-led conferences by adding more student involvement in the reflection phase, as well as expanding on parent communication in the evaluation phase. Guyton and Fielstein (1989) expanded the objectives in this way:

The educational objectives of the student-led conference were (a) to foster a sense of accountability within the student for academic progress, (b) to encourage students to take pride in their work, (c) to allow for more time for each conference, and (d) to encourage student-parent communication with regard to school performance” (p. 170).

Guyton and Fielstein (1989) added to the research of Little and Allan (1989) by emphasizing recognition of student accountability, student pride, and student-parent relationships by adding more time in the preparation phase of SLCs and adding in a student reflection to the evaluation phase, rather than just a teacher reflection and evaluation as had been previously done.

Further, Hackman, Kenworthy, and Nibbelink (1998) focused on how these student-led conferences made students feel, how they engaged in the work of goal setting, and focused on the forward discussions that were had between parents and students. The work of Hackman, Kenworthy and Nebbelink (1998) proposed a problem-and-solution format for the conferences. The problem was parent attendance, communication, and student accountability; the solution was well-planned and engaging conferences where students have ownership of their learning by leading the conferences with an audience of valued individuals, such as parents, coaches, guardians, extended family members, or even school custodians (Borba & Olvera, 2001).

Hackman, Kenworthy and Nebbelink (1998) found that parent attendance of student-led conferences was 92.4%, an increase from the previous 89-90% attendance rate at traditional parent-teacher conferences” (p. 38). When students gained excitement about their upcoming conferences, that increased the parent interest in discovering what their students had learned (Hackman, Kenworthy & Nebbelink, 1998), and students that did not have a parent that could attend invited other valued individuals.

Building on the work of Hackman, Konderman, and Nebellink (1998), Conderman, Ikan and Hatcher (2000) took their knowledge and experience in special education to express how SLC’s and IEP’s can intersect. These researchers expanded the three-step plan from prior research to a six-step format of the following: inform, educate/model/teach, set goals, practice, implement, and then evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of SLC’s. Conderman, Ikan and Hatcher (2000) put a considerable amount of emphasis on the preparation and practice for students in the stage before conferencing. Using this six-step format, the researchers found that “More than 90% of parents indicated that they believed that student-led conferences focused on the whole child, fostered student accountability, and promoted positive discussions regarding the child’s progress” (Conderman, Ikan & Hatcher, 2000, p. 25).

Benefits to Parents and Students

There has been an effort to encourage positive parent/teacher interactions as well as parent/student and student/teacher communication. Additionally, educators have desired a way to increase student accountability and confidence by giving students an active role in their learning. Benson & Barnett (2005) give ample evidence and discussion about how student-led, teacher-guided conferences can be seen as one model for effective communication with

parents.

Student-Led Conferences are continuations of the classroom conversations about learning that take place between the teacher and the student throughout the year...it puts the students at the heart of the process so that they have the opportunity to tell the story of their own achievements and are held accountable for doing so. (p. 2)

The continuation of the conversations happens both inside the classroom, but also outside of the classroom between educators. The works of Benson & Barnett (2005), as well as Bailey & Guskey (2001), incorporate the positive impacts that student-led conferences can have on student confidence, parent participation, and effective communication, and spur on conversations of best practices in schools and strategies to implement them well.

In addition to Conderman, Ikan and Hatcher (2000), Borba and Olvera (2001) outlined higher parent involvement and communication, as well as the successful motivation of students, as two benefits of “the Gustine Experience,” a term they coined to name the student-led conference research they conducted in a middle school in Gustine, California. This study took preparation for SLC’s very seriously, with six stages, four of which happen before the conference (Borba & Olvera, 2001, p. 335). In the first four stages, the student compiles and organizes their portfolio, and does a full procedural run-through of the process for conference night (Borba & Olvera, 2001). The fifth stage is the actual student-led conference, and the sixth stage is a student-written thank you note to their valued individual, who is invited to write a letter of review for the child to utilize as a reflection point for further learning and growth (Borba & Olvera, 2001). The strong emphasis on goal setting, as well as the aspect of self-reflection at the conclusion of a conference (Borba & Olvera, 2001), encouraged more

research to be done.

Goodman (2008) leaned into expanding previous studies and focused on improving parent/student and parent/teacher communication. “Such conferences invite parents into the learning environment, helping them better understand the unique developmental needs of their children” (Goodman, 2008, p. 54). Goodman’s work in Anchorage, Alaska, explored SLCs with elementary students and coined the term “student-led, teacher-supported” (Goodman, 2008, p. 51). Using this terminology, the Anchorage school district was able to communicate with parents the expectation of the conference time and convey the importance of attendance, and conference attendance increased by 20% (Goodman, 2008, p. 54). In addition to increased parent attendance, Goodman (2008) found that the feedback from parents was positive and clear that the information presented by their child representative of how their child was performing in school tasks (Goodman, 2008). One parent on a reflection survey following Anchorage school district conferences commented, “Having my son explain more than the final grade truly helped me understand just what areas I can help him with” (Goodman, 2008, p. 48).

Recognizing the improvement in parent involvement due to student-led conferences, Brodie (2014) found that there were more benefits to student-led conferencing than only attendance percentages. “Students gain confidence as they talk about their learning with parents and teachers” (Brodie, 2014, p. 35). The idea of student confidence and reflection is presented as essential to gaining insights into strengths and weaknesses and increasing the ability to change their learning habits. Alongside the research of Brodie (2014), Clemensen (2021) discussed how student-led conferences gave space for meaningful conversation, an increase in parent attendance from 55.8% to 85.65% and active participation as well as

immediate feedback for the child. Clemensen (2021) wrote, “Not only did we see an increase in attendance, but we also had parents who were engaged in their student's educational process” (p. 140).

The work of Clemensen (2021) has outlined what this process can look like in a high school setting, with many students attending at coordinating times and teachers rotating through the room to give support as students see many classroom teachers throughout the day. Benson & Barnett (2005) provide practical avenues for the use of portfolios in scenarios where there are multiple students and one teacher, such as the early childhood classroom, by suggesting expanding dates of conferences so each student attends one-on-one with teacher and parent or have teachers set up stations for students to bring their parents through and check in with the teacher at the end, or even including a gallery walk of work students are excited to share (Benson & Barnett, 2005, p.53).

Implementation Considerations for Early Education

Different implementations of SLCs are present all around the country and are valued by teachers and parents, as well as school districts. There are many differences in how long, what format, and what model should be followed, as those considerations are dependent on context. For example, Clemensen (2021) suggests singular 15-minute conferences, while Borba and Olvera (2001) suggest five simultaneous student-led conferences in one room. For the implementation of this method for young children, it is suggested to keep the format informal and shorter (Bailey & Guskey, 2001), while for older students, the format can be individual, many at one time, or even virtual. The work of Benson & Barnett (2005) makes it very clear that no matter what format you choose, it should be reflective, informative, and

about the child’s specific school experiences (Benson & Barnett, 2005).

Methodology

Participants

The research participants in this study included a total of 82 students, including 26 three-year-old students, 23 four-year-old students, nine young-fives students, and 24 kindergarten students at a private PreK-8th grade school in the Midwest during the 2022-2023 school year. Students come from the surrounding rural area. The ages and genders of each classroom are shown in Table 1. The control group is delineated as “PK * Control” and was comprised of 13 three-year-old preschool students from a partnering school that did not implement student-led conferences.

Table 1

Age and Gender of Participants

Age Group	Male	Female	Students per Age Group
3-year-olds	9	4	13
4-year-olds	12	11	23
Young Fives	6	3	9
PK* Control	7	6	13
Kindergarten	15	9	24
Total Students	43	30	82

Materials

A Likert scale satisfaction survey (See Appendix 1) was given to all participating parents, those that attended parent-teacher conferences, and those that attended student-led conferences. The survey was derived and modified from a Benson & Barnett (2005) parent reflection survey.

In the Benson & Barnett (2005) survey, the parents were asked to answer quantitative questions about their child's conference regarding what was heard in the meeting, how they can help their child's academic progress, and suggestions for the next conferences. The purpose of the satisfaction survey that was chosen to implement was to gauge parent involvement in the conferences, as well as ask their preferences regarding conferences. This quantitative study utilized parent feedback as a gauge for parent satisfaction and the likelihood of future involvement in the parents of students ages three through five.

The twelve-question survey (See Appendix 1) was distributed via email to the parents of all students that were offered conferences in the spring semester. The first two questions included data collection on what age the child was and who their teacher was. Questions 3-10 included rating scale questions of one to five about specific aspects of the conference. Lastly, questions eleven and twelve asked specifically about parent satisfaction.

Design

One of the five classrooms, which is in a partnering school, was used as the control group, continuing with their parent-teacher conferencing format. The other four classes implemented the student-led conferences in the spring after having done parent-teacher conferences in the fall semester. The independent variable was the use of student-led conferences. The dependent variables were the degree of parent involvement, parent satisfaction, and parent attendance.

Procedure

The experimental group was invited to participate in student-led conferences during the spring semester after having attended parent-teacher conferences in the fall. The parents in the experimental group were briefed on the importance of their child attending the

conference with them.

The experimental group of students collected artifacts of their learning to be placed in a portfolio for review with their parents in a conference. The experimental group students followed the order of collect, rehearse, invite, share, and reflect. After collecting artifacts, they rehearsed their student-led conference with the teacher and then with a peer. Students then invited their parents to attend, presented their portfolio at the conference time, and then reflected with their teacher after.

The control group followed the traditional parent-teacher conference model of the teacher collecting data and artifacts, inviting parents, and sharing about the student. Students were not present at the control group conferences.

At the conclusion of both the control and experimental group conferences in their respective styles, all participating parents were invited to participate in the Likert-scale survey (See Appendix 1) within one week of their conferences being held. Classroom teachers invited parents to fill out the conference reflection form to “allow us to consider how we can continue to meet our goal of providing successful opportunities for communication.” The parents that attended SLCs were unaware that there were participants completing the survey that had attended traditional parent-teacher conferences, and the parents that attended traditional parent-teacher conferences were unaware that there were participants completing the survey that had attended student-led conferences.

Results

After the completion of the survey by the parents, the researcher first compared the data, not separating out the control group to ensure balanced data collection of age groups, as well as classrooms represented. After this collection was completed, the researcher noticed

that the “Young Fives” data was voided, as none of the parents of any Young Fives students volunteered to participate in the survey process. 44.1% of surveyed parents have students in kindergarten, and 55.9% of surveyed parents have students in three-year-old and four-year-old preschool (See Table 2). The control group consisted of 13 preschool families, labeled as PK below. Of the control group, 23% of the parents participated in the satisfaction, while the subgroups of the experimental group had higher response rates ranging from 39-63%.

The researcher took the data collected in the first four columns of Table 2 and found the percentage of participation in each class, noticing that the range of participation in each grade level varied from 0%-63%. The researcher took this data into consideration when looking at the remaining nine questions and derived the following results using only the data of those that participated in the survey.

Table 2

Comparison of Parent Response Request and Parent Participation in Survey

Class/Age Group	Parent Sent Survey	Parent Participation	Difference	Percentage of participation
3-year-olds	13	7	6	54%
4-year-olds	23	9	14	39%
PK* Control	13	3	10	23%
Young Fives	9	0	9	0%
Kindergarten	24	15	9	63%
Total Students	82	34	48	41%

The purpose of this study was to measure parent satisfaction with recently completed conferences, as well as how it may positively or negatively affect parent involvement in future

conferences. The question asked at the introduction of this research was “What is the effect of student-led conferences on parent communication and involvement?” Table 2 compared the participation of parents in the survey with the parents requested to complete the survey, with 41% of the parents participating. In the control group, 23% of the parents participated, and in the experimental group 45% of the parents participated.

Parent Understanding of Academic Performance

Of the parents who completed the survey, 97% reported feeling well informed about their child’s academic performance regardless of the style of conferences they attended. From the data collected in survey questions 4, 7, and 10, there was a consensus from all survey participants that the information presented about their child was organized, holistic, and gave a good picture of both the child’s academic and social development.

Figure 1 shows that of the 34 responses, all parents were in the highest two categories when thinking about how the conference provided a holistic picture of their child as a learner. This represents the responses of both the control and experimental groups. 100% of the responses in the control group indicated a response of five, indicating that a holistic picture of the learner was presented in the parent-teacher conferences. However, as illustrated in Figure 2, 2.9% of the respondents felt “neutral” about being presented with a good picture of their child’s achievement.

Figure 1

Parent Survey Results of Holistic Viewpoint of Learner

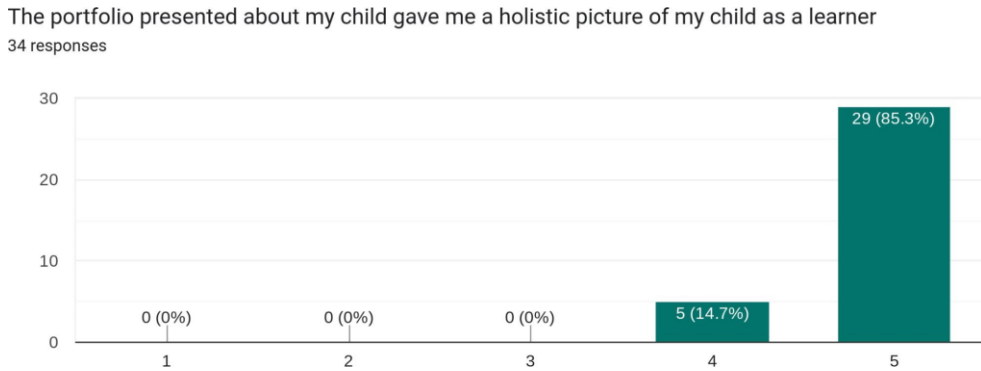
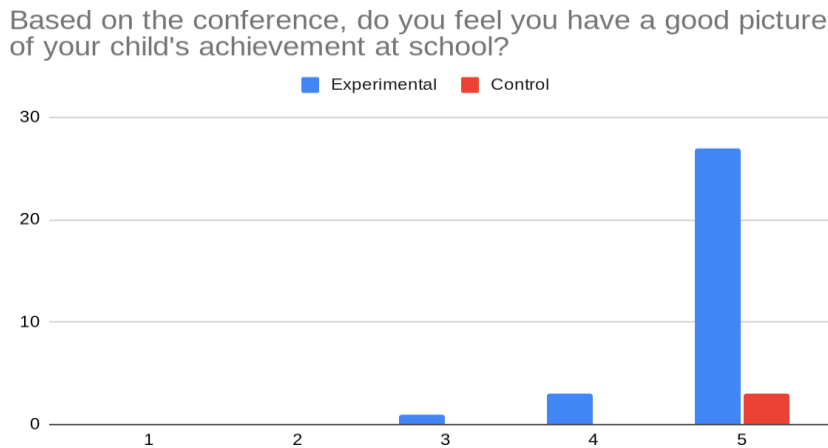


Figure 2 shows the responses of both the control and experimental group to their understanding of their child as a learner. For the experimental group in question 10 of the survey, the answer range was in the range of four and five, while the other questions presented the response of five across both groups. In comparison, the families that attended student-led conferences likely felt their understanding of their child’s academic achievement was lower than expected, as the control group responded entirely in the five range, while the experimental group was in the three, four, and five range.

Figure 2

Parent Survey Results of Picture of Child as a Learner



Future Conference Attendance

Parent attendance at future conferences is likely to be increased based on the results of question number 12 in the parent satisfaction survey. Of the parents polled, 17.6 % were satisfied with their conference, and the other 82.4% were very satisfied.

To separate the data, the researcher compared the satisfaction of the control group with the satisfaction of the experimental group, as listed in Table 3. There was a slightly lower satisfaction rate in the experimental group than in the control group.

Table 3

Parent Satisfaction with Conferences

	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Total Sampled Group	6 responses - 18% of total respondents	28 responses - 82% of total respondents
Experimental Group	6 responses - 19% of total respondents	25 responses - 81% of total respondents
Control Group	0 responses - 0% of total respondents	3 responses - 100% of total respondents
*Additional options (Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, and Neutral) were given as possible responses, but have been removed from this table due to zero respondents marking that response option.		

Following the results of Table 3, the researcher separated the control group and the experimental group for more accurate percentages. Figure 3 shows the results of the experimental group, where 80.65% of the participating parents were very satisfied with their conference, while 19.35% were satisfied.

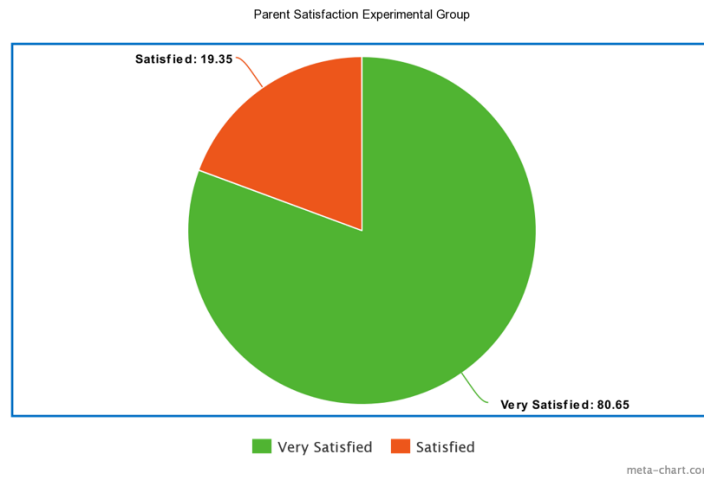
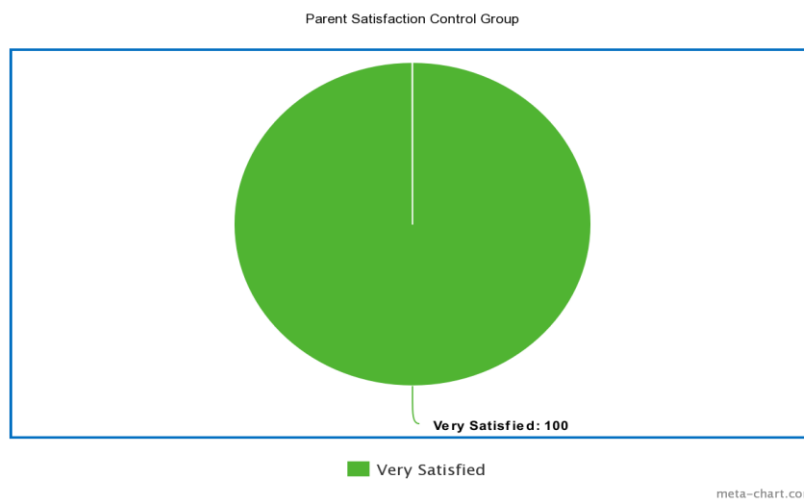
Figure 3*Experimental Group Future*

Figure 4 shows the results of the control group. In the control group, 100% of the participants in the participating parents were very satisfied with their conference. The parents who attended the student-led conferences had a lower satisfaction rate than those that attended traditional parent-teacher conferences.

Figure 4*Control Group Future*

Discussion

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to discover if parent involvement and satisfaction were negatively or positively impacted by the implementation of student-led conferences. Student-led conferences were implemented in four classrooms, while traditional parent-teacher conferences were conducted in a fifth classroom. After conferences were held, parents were surveyed on the information presented in the conference, parent satisfaction with the conference, and parent intent to attend the next round of conferences.

Summary of Findings

The data collected showed that while student-led conferences may impact parent communication and involvement in the classroom, there is not a direct correlation between parent satisfaction and student-led conferences. In the age group surveyed, all responding parents were satisfied with their conferences, the content presented, and the organization of the conference, and articulated an intent to attend the next round of conferences regardless of the model of conferencing attended.

The response percentage of 41% of parents may give a glimpse at parent communication rates, but no conclusions can be made from this data. While focusing on the question “What is the effect of student-led conferences on parent communication and involvement?” the research could conclude that low response percentages may show a need for more consistency and improvement in parent communication, but no definitive data is present.

Additionally, parent satisfaction was slightly lower in the student-led conferences

group and higher in the parent-teacher conference group. While teachers self-reported that 100% of their parents attended conferences, it is estimated that an average of 89% of elementary school parents attend parent-teacher conferences, and this rapidly declines to nearly 57% as their child ages (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). This indicates that the sample group had a higher attendance rate than the estimated average.

The data collection of this research report strongly correlates to the work of Conderman, Ikan and Hatcher (2000), who found that “More than 90% of parents indicated that they believed that student-led conferences focused on the whole child, fostered student accountability, and promoted positive discussions regarding the child’s progress.” Parents in this study reported having attended a conference with their child’s teacher that was focused on the whole child, there was clear evidence that their student had academic growth and that their learner was presenting accurate information to their parents with their teacher as a guide.

Recommendations

Overall, the results of this study support that parents of children at a young age appreciate hearing about their child’s academic performance, are generally satisfied and comfortable with their child’s teacher, and are encouraged to be involved and continue open lines of communication with their child’s teacher.

At the school where student-led conferences are being implemented throughout the early childhood program, there is an encouragement to those implementing to pass on the excitement of this satisfaction and model to the other grade levels. Moving forward, collecting qualitative data alongside this quantitative data would be beneficial for the use of communicating to parents and colleagues the benefits of student-led conferences not only for

the child and the parent but also for the school staff and the wider school community.

Additionally, qualitative data could bring an additional explanation to parental responses in the experimental group and explain variances in understanding from the traditional conferencing models.

Early childhood education can set the tone for many years of education ahead of a family and student. The researcher suggests that while parent-teacher conferences are useful and capable of increasing parent communication and involvement, student-led conferences take the knowledge of a student's progress and identity as a learner to the next level. This is done while bolstering student confidence as well as accountability and engagement as opposed to the anxiety-inducing methods of traditional parent-teacher conferences.

This data would be interesting to compare to data collected after conferences with students in an older age group. When looking forward to students in even first and second grade at the same schools, it is important to note that parent attendance is reported to decline based on prior research performed (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study was the size of the control group and the percentage of responses from them. Only 13% of the parents requested in the control group responded. If the control group had had a greater number of individual responses, the results may have been more varied.

In addition, future research on parent-teacher versus student-led conferences should be performed with class sizes that are more balanced, are made up of more varied demographics, and have a larger selection of parents requested to participate to receive a

larger field of reports. Also, having a wider range of socioeconomic and other key demographic variables may lead to a broader set of results that vary in more measurable patterns.

Additionally, the participants polled were all families from a private, rural, Christian school, and no data collected was from public, or inner-city schools. The limitation presented here is the demographic of the participants being very similar. This data may vary in a public school or a charter school or be consistent with this data collection. If this data was collected again and expanded on, the statement “There is mounting proof that student-led conferencing is a powerful tool in educating students more effectively” (Benson & Barnett, 2005, p. 95) may become more impactful for the implementation of student-led conferences in these other contexts.

Lastly, student-led conferences are an avenue to conferences that were introduced in 1989. Recognizing that SLCs have changed and adapted over the course of 35 years, the lack of consistency in the models of SLCs is a limitation. Each school, researcher, and teacher utilized a different model, with varying steps and implementations. SLCs are also not as familiar among parents and teachers alike, and the lack of knowledge about their structure, benefits, and disadvantages may impact perceptions. Parents could have been more prepared to receive the format and information about SLCs, and students could have been more prepared to share their learning.

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Appendix 1

Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

Thank you for participating in our spring conferences. Your participation in this survey will allow us to consider how we can continue to meet our goal of providing successful opportunities for communication. We would appreciate your thoughts on the following questions.

1. What grade is your child in:
 - a. Preschool
 - b. Kindergarten
 - c. Young Fives
2. Who is your child's teacher:
 - a. Mrs. V
 - b. Mrs. N
 - c. Mrs. A
 - d. Mrs. C
 - e. Mrs. P
3. How comfortable were you in the meeting?
 - a. Very Comfortable
 - b. Comfortable
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Uncomfortable
 - e. Very uncomfortable
4. I feel well-informed about my child's schoolwork, challenges, and academic progress
 - a. very informed
 - b. Informed
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Un-informed
 - e. Very un-informed
5. The conference was organized. Scale 1-5
6. The questions I had going into my child's conference were answered. Scale 1-5
7. The portfolio presented about my child gave me a holistic picture of my child as a learner. Scale 1-5
8. There was evidence/documentation provided to support my child's academic progress. Scale 1-5
9. There was evidence/documentation provided to support my child's

social/emotional well-being. Scale 1-5

10. Based on the conference, do you feel you have a good picture of your child's achievement at school? Scale 1-5

11. How likely are you to attend the next round of conferences? Scale 1-5

12. How satisfied were you with your conference?

- Very dissatisfied
- Not satisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Source: Adapted from work 1995 Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District Bailey, J.J., & Guskey, T.R., *Implementing Student-Led Conferences*. Copyright 2001, Corwin Press Inc.