

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

1998

The effect of student led conferences on students, parents, and teachers

Paul Brian Meyers

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meyers, Paul Brian, "The effect of student led conferences on students, parents, and teachers" (1998).

Theses Digitization Project. 1513.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/1513>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

THE EFFECT OF STUDENT LED CONFERENCES
ON STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Educational Administration

by
Paul Brian Meyers
June 1998

THE EFFECT OF STUDENT LED CONFERENCES
ON STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

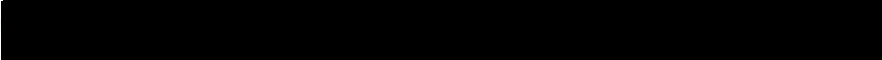
A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino


by
Paul Brian Meyers
June 1998

Approved by:


Cheryl F. Fischer, Ph.D., Chair
Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction

6/4/98
Date


David O. Stine, Ed.D.


Jan Vondra, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Snowline Joint Unified School District

ABSTRACT

Student led conferences are parent-teacher conferences led by the student. The student led conference model was developed over ten years ago, and despite its growing popularity in schools, the model has not been thoroughly researched. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of student led conferences on the students, parents, and teachers involved. The study was conducted in a small, rural middle school in which the entire school participated in student led conferences, replacing the previous traditional parent-teacher conference.

The sample consists of 309 student surveys, 313 parent surveys, and 16 teacher surveys. This study measured the approval rating of each of the following areas: increased student responsibility, communication, understanding, and confidence; better understanding of the student's progress in school; and an overall rating of student led conferences. The responses were analyzed using statistical means. The data was also examined by comparing the responses of students and the parents of the students with different grade point averages to determine if all students benefit from this process.

The results of this study show the strongest approval rating from the parent, followed by the teachers, then the students. The attribute most valued by the students and parents in student led conferences is helping the student and

their parent gain a better understanding the student's progress in school. Furthermore, the results show that all students benefited from the student led conference process despite their level of school performance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF GRAPHS.....	xii
CHAPTER 1	
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Nature of the Problem.....	3
Significance of the Problem.....	5
Student Accountability.....	6
Student Self-Improvement.....	6
Skills for the Future.....	8
Home-School Communication.....	9
Portfolios.....	10
Standards Movement.....	11
Summary.....	13
Statement of the Problem.....	14
Purpose of the Study.....	14
Overview of the Research Questions.....	15
Limitations of the Available Research.....	16
Definitions.....	17
CHAPTER 2	
Organization.....	19
Purpose of the Literature Review.....	19
Sources of the Literature Review.....	20
Effects of Student Led Conferences on Students.....	20

Effects of Student Led Conferences on Parents.....	25
Effects of Student Led Conferences on Teachers.....	28
Review of the Literature Available on Student Led Conferences.....	30
Student Led Conferences and School Reform.....	38
Summary.....	47
CHAPTER 3	
Research Design and Procedures.....	48
Research Questions.....	49
Population Sample and Description.....	49
Students	49
Parents.....	50
Teachers.....	51
Data Collection, Processing and Analysis.....	52
CHAPTER 4	
Overview.....	54
Analysis of Student Responses.....	54
Analysis of Parent Responses.....	66
Analysis of Teacher Responses.....	80
Summary.....	92
CHAPTER 5	
Summary of the Study.....	95
Discussion of the Student Results.....	96
Discussion of the Parent Results.....	101
Discussion of the Teacher Results.....	104

Comparison of Student, Parent and Teacher Results.....	106
Conclusions.....	109
Recommendations.....	110
APPENDIX A: Original Research Project.....	112
Problem Statement.....	112
Purpose Statement.....	115
Research Questions.....	115
Research Methodology.....	116
Findings.....	116
Table 1: Student Attitudes.....	117
Table 2: Positive Impact on Students.....	117
Table 3: Parent Approval Rating.....	118
Table 4: Parent Benefits.....	118
Table 5: Parent Drawbacks.....	119
Table 6: Teacher Benefits.....	119
Table 7: Teacher Drawbacks.....	120
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	120
References.....	125
Student Evaluation Form.....	126
Parent Evaluation Form.....	127
Teacher Evaluation Form.....	128
APPENDIX B: Student Survey.....	129
APPENDIX C: Parent Survey.....	130
APPENDIX D: Teacher Survey.....	131
REFERENCES.....	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	X1: GPA.....	55
Table 2.	X1: Responsibility.....	55
Table 3.	X1: Communication.....	56
Table 4.	X1: Understanding.....	56
Table 5.	X1: Confidence.....	56
Table 6.	X1: Progress.....	56
Table 7.	X1: Process.....	56
Table 8.	Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Responsibility.....	57
Table 9.	Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Communication.....	57
Table 10.	Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Understanding.....	58
Table 11.	Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Confidence.....	58
Table 12.	Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Progress.....	59
Table 13.	Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Process.....	59
Table 14.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	60
Table 15.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	60
Table 16.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Communication...	61
Table 17.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Communication...	61
Table 18.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Understanding...	62
Table 19.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Understanding...	62
Table 20.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	63
Table 21.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	63
Table 22.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Progress.....	64
Table 23.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Progress.....	64
Table 24.	One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Process.....	65

Table 25. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Process.....	65
Table 26. X1: GPA.....	67
Table 27. X1: Responsibility.....	68
Table 28. X1: Communication.....	68
Table 29. X1: Understanding.....	68
Table 30. X1: Confidence.....	68
Table 31. X1: Progress.....	68
Table 32. X1: Process.....	69
Table 33. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Responsibility.....	69
Table 34. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Communication.....	70
Table 35. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Understanding.....	70
Table 36. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Confidence.....	71
Table 37. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Progress.....	72
Table 38. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Process.....	72
Table 39. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	73
Table 40. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	73
Table 41. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	74
Table 42. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	74
Table 43. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	75
Table 44. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Understanding...	75
Table 45. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Understanding...	76
Table 46. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	76
Table 47. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	77
Table 48. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	77
Table 49. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Progress.....	78
Table 50. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Progress.....	78

Table 51. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Process.....	79
Table 52. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Process.....	79
Table 53. X1: Responsibility.....	81
Table 54. X1: Communication.....	82
Table 55. X1: Understanding.....	82
Table 56. X1: Confidence.....	82
Table 57. X1: Progress.....	82
Table 58. X1: Process.....	82
Table 59. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Responsibility.....	83
Table 60. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Communication.....	83
Table 61. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Understanding.....	84
Table 62. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Confidence.....	84
Table 63. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Progress.....	84
Table 64. Corr. Coeff. X1:GPA Y1:Process.....	84
Table 65. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	85
Table 66. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Responsibility..	85
Table 67. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Communication...	86
Table 68. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Communication...	86
Table 69. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Understanding...	87
Table 70. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Understanding...	87
Table 71. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	88
Table 72. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	88
Table 73. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Confidence.....	89
Table 74. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Progress.....	89
Table 75. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Progress.....	90
Table 76. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Process.....	90
Table 77. One Factor ANOVA X1:GPA Level Y1:Process.....	91

Table 78. Ranking of Student, Parent and Teacher Means.....	106
--	-----

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 1. Scattergram for Columns X1 Y1 $r^2 = .015$	58
Graph 2. Student Mean Responses.....	66
Graph 3. Scattergram for Columns X1 Y1 $r^2 = .026$	70
Graph 4. Scattergram for Columns X1 Y1 $r^2 = .058$	71
Graph 5. Parent Mean Responses.....	80
Graph 6. Teacher Mean Responses.....	91
Graph 7. Student, Parent and Teacher Means.....	92
Graph 8. Low GPA Student and Parent Responses.....	93
Graph 9. Medium GPA Student and Parent Responses.....	93
Graph 10. High GPA Student and Parent Responses.....	94

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Student led conferences are parent-teacher conferences that are directed by the student. The conferences are scheduled by the teachers, and are performed during the pre-established parent-teacher conference times. The student leads the conference by explaining to his/her parents and teachers his/her previously completed self-evaluation sheets on classroom behavior, work habits, and study skills. The student then discusses his/her strengths and weaknesses, followed by a presentation of his/her self-improvement plan including short and long term goals with action plans for each. The student then presents his/her subject portfolios (a collection of work gathered by the student), and student work is shown and explained. At the conclusion of the conference, parents have the opportunity to ask their student or the teacher any questions.

Background

In February 1989, Little and Allan published the first article in Elementary School Guidance and Counseling introducing the concept of student led conferences. In seeking a solution to the dissatisfaction of traditional parent-teacher conferences, Little and Allan (1989) designed

a pilot program which put students in charge of the parent-teacher conference. The results were highly successful. Little and Allan (1989) wrote, "With one intervention strategy - student-led conferencing - many needs were met" (p. 217). Little and Allan concluded that student led conferences encourage the students to become more responsible and accountable for their education, increased parent's understanding of their child's progress in school, and provided teachers an improved format to effectively communicate student concerns with parents. Two additional articles published in the same year reported similar conclusions (Guyton & Fielstein, 1989; Hubert, 1989). These articles have been the source of inspiration and reference to educators worldwide as they began transforming their traditional parent-teacher conferences.

Traditional parent-teacher conferences were developed to provide a forum for teachers to communicate with parents concerning the academic, social, and emotional growth of their children (Bernick, Rutherford, & Elliott, 1991). Supported by research stating that many school-related student problems can be corrected by parent-teacher conference, the practice has continued (Rotter, Robinson, & Fey, 1987).

Recently, educators have begun to question the effectiveness of a conference model which does not include students - the vital link in effective home-school communications (Hackmann, Kenworthy, & Nibblelink, 1995).

Countryman and Schroeder (1996) assert that parent-teacher conferences without the student present interfered with the productive communication between student, parent, and teacher. Picciotto (1996) reports that many parents feel intimidated when conferencing alone with their child's teacher. Austin (1994) observed little long term improvement in students with traditional conferences.

Grant, Heffler, and Mereweather (1995) report that there are four types of parents at traditional conferences: timid, worried, supportive, and critical. They observed that attendance at traditional parent conferences is low, decreases as the grade level increases, and usually only attended by parents of successful students.

Since the inception of student led conferences, virtually every school using this new conference format has reported improved parent attendance and home school communications.

Nature of the Problem

The student led conference format, due to the reports that it can improve parent attendance and improve communication between home and school, is an educational reform that is being seriously considered by teachers, administrators, and school boards. In today's political climate, while educators are eager to embrace new strategies which improve student performance, they are equally cautious

to implement untested or inadequately researched programs. Educators using the student led conference format have reported the many wonderful benefits of them, including improved student performance (Uselman, 1996). Unfortunately, most of these reports are perceived benefits mainly from the observations of the teachers involved. The majority of all the research in student led conferences is informal, based on surveys and observations of pilot programs and individual teacher successes (Arter, 1995).

Pilot programs were the database for the benefits purported by Austin (1994), Baber and Tolensky (1998), Countryman and Schroeder (1996), Grant et al. (1995), Guyton and Fielstein (1989), Kasse (1994), Little and Allan (1989), Moyers (1994), Paglin (1996), and Picciotto (1996). School-wide implementation of student led conferences was performed by Hackmann et al. (1995), Hubert (1989), and Johnson (1996), but only Hackmann conducted a survey to record results. Hackmann et al. (1994) surveyed both the students and the parents on their approval ratings of student led conferences, similar to this author's research. To date, no data on the attitudes of teachers toward student led conferences has been formally collected.

Despite the lack of research, student led conferences have been widely successful. Paglin (1996) reports that the student led conference format has been successfully implemented as early as kindergarten. As with many successful school programs, change in the classroom begins

with teacher practice, followed by student achievement, and established by a change in teacher philosophy. This takes research; evidence that the program is good for all students, as well as parents and teachers. Although nothing negative has ever been written about the student led conference model, this study hopes to provide data representing the opinions of all students, parents, and teachers involved in this new conference format.

Significance of the Problem

The original purpose of student led conferences is to encourage students to become more accountable for their learning, improve their communication and leadership skills, and more adequately inform their parents about their child's learning (Little & Allan, 1989). Due to the innate power of the conference format, the wide range of benefits, and overall effectiveness of the process, student led conferences are growing in popularity worldwide.

To more clearly represent the significance of student led conferences, this section has been organized in the following subtopics:

Student Accountability

Student Self-Improvement

Skills for the Future

Home-School Communication

Portfolios

School Reform
Standards

Student Accountability. Accountability requires the student to gather information about their learning in school, make judgments about their performance, and provide suggestions on how it can be improved. Accountability must be meaningful and understandable to all participants. The purpose of accountability is not to point blame, but to improve or fix the problems.

Student led conferences place the responsibility of learning on the student. This student centered approach provides students the forum to have a voice in their education, motivation to perform in school, and an opportunity to assume greater control over their personal growth.

Student Self-Improvement. Claremont Graduate School (1992) conducted a study on schools titled Voices from the Inside. Students reported that schools hurt their "spirit," a feeling shared by teachers, administrators, and parents. These same people expressed a strong desire to make schools better, and students voiced a desire to improve themselves.

One of the major conclusions of this study centered on the lack of effective relationships between students and the school staff. Students longed for "real" relationships, where they were "trusted, given responsibility, spoken to

honestly and warmly, and treated with dignity and respect" (p. 21). In effect, students wanted teachers to care about them.

This concern was mirrored by the students' parents. In fact, parents were more concerned with how schools contributed to the students' self-esteem than they were about issues of achievement. Everyone understands the importance of self-esteem. Studies have shown there is a direct correlation between low self-esteem and low student performance (Kaiser, 1993). Studies have also shown students feel powerless in school (Kaiser, 1993). Student led conferences are believed to empower students and give them increased confidence.

Since the feedback we receive from what we do influences our self-esteem, the evaluation device used can play an important part in enhancing self-esteem (Beane & Lipka, 1987). McGinnis (1987) claims that knowing the truth about yourself is one of the twelve rules for building self-confidence. The self-evaluation component built in to student led conferences can help students know themselves better and the insight to change. Within the process of student led conferences, students have the opportunity to see things and "make them conscious of things that are right in front of their faces, things that they cannot see while everyone else can" (Brown, 1991, p. 254).

Skills for the Future. Student led conferences provide students the motivation to perform in school, practice new skills, and reinforce good habits. According to Covey (1989), author of The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People, knowledge is the what to do and the why; skill is the how to do; and desire is what motivates, or the want to do. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we must have all three.

Involving and engaging students in their education is the common denominator of the school reform movement. Creating schools that are learner-centered, engage students in purposeful lessons, and involve students in self-evaluation are needed to prepare students for the next millennium. According to Workplace Basics (1988), some of the skills employers want students to know are: learn to learn; listening and oral communication; personal management-self-esteem, goal setting, and motivation; and organizational effectiveness and leadership. One of Deming's fourteen points for education urges schools to "institute a vigorous progression of education and self-improvement" (Melvin, 1991, p. 23). Even Gardner (1991), in his book, The Unschooled Mind, presents overwhelming evidence that schools today are not designed to develop the habits and skills needed for students to be successful. Student led conference gives schools a reason to refute these criticisms of our school system and answer the demands placed upon us by the ever-changing world.

Home-School Communication. "Student led conferences may be the biggest breakthrough in communication about student achievement in the last four decades," claims Dr. Richard Stiggins, director of the Assessment Institute in Portland, Oregon. "The level of responsibility it brings to the student and pride in accomplishment that can engender when they succeed is unprecedented" (Paglin, 1996). Parents want to know more about what their children are learning in school (Jaeger, Gorney, & Johnson, 1994). Recently, politicians have made educational issues, especially improved student learning and performance, part of their political platform. People want to see results. Schmoker (1996), author of Results: The Key to Continuous Improvement, believes this trend will continue as our economy becomes more knowledge based.

Explaining changes in education, assessments, and learning can be difficult for schools. One advantage of the student led conference model is the student explains his or her learning to the parent. Another advantage is parents gain valuable insight into the changes in their child's work and the relationship between the teacher and their child (Hubert, 1989).

Schools using the student led conference model have found that more parents attend the conferences (Hackmann, et al., 1995). This may be due to the inclusion of students at the conference. Hubert (1989) found that parents appreciated the open, honest dialogue that occurred with all the

participants present. Quality schools understand the need for positive home-school relations. Student led conferences help support this goal.

Portfolios. School reform has challenged educators to emphasize student learning. Instead of content drive learning, today schools are focusing on the learning process (Grant, et al, 1995). Portfolios provide evidence of student learning and growth. They focus on what students can do, making them positive in focus. Portfolios provide students an opportunity to reflect on their work.

Portfolios are often defined as a collection of work for a purpose and an audience. The audience, usually parents, provides a source of motivation for the students. Student led conferences can exist without portfolios; portfolios can exist without student led conferences. However, when used together, they can complement each other and have a tremendous impact on students, parents and teachers. In a study on helping students take ownership of their education, Uselman (1996) used both portfolios and student led conferences. Her study found that students responded more positively to the conferences than the portfolios (Uselman, 1996).

Paulson and Paulson (1994) believe that in order to use student led conferences well, "the student must be able to tell a story about themselves as learners" (p. 2). Using portfolios to assess students in learning gives students an

active role in their learning, helping take more ownership of their education. Johnson (1996) found that student led conferences were more successful when teachers recognized and utilized the benefits of portfolio assessment.

Standards Movement. Legislators and educational policy makers are forcing schools to focus on results. In a recent conference titled "From Rules to Results" on the new standards movement in California, Kit Marshal and Gary Soto of Action Learning Systems explained what the public is demanding from education:

Achievement at high academic standards.

Accountability for measurable results.

Access to expanded learning opportunities for all students.

Assessment that informs us continually

Authentic application of important learning.

Student led conferences can provide students and parents all of the above. By embedding California's new core-curricular standards into the student self-evaluation sheets, students would not only rate their achievement at accomplishing the standard, but required to show evidence of achievement. Student led conferences hold students accountable for results and provide them access to expanded learning opportunities. By using portfolios to provide evidence of student learning, assessment would be continual,

almost seamless, and provide one of the multiple assessments needed to truly evaluate student success. Student led conferences are performance-based and are an authentic, real-life skill activity in which students are free to be creative and utilize their strengths according to Gardner's (1992) multiple intelligence theory. Student led conferences take students from knowing to showing.

Standards are what students should know and be able to do. Standards, in many ways, are the marriage of ideals of two prominent educational leaders, Hirsch (1987), who in his book Cultural Literacy, states what students should know, and Sizer (1992), who in his book Horace's School, stresses the importance of what students should be able to do with what they know. Student led conferences embrace Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools concepts of the "student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach," and engaged in activities requiring them to analyze, evaluate, and perform.

Standards are really about what students are able to do. They are about actions. When attempting to measure student progress at achieving the standards, standardized tests attempt to measure the student's ability to: 1) access or collect information, 2) interpret, predict, or summarize information, 3) product, design, write, or construct information, 4) disseminate, explain, or publish this information, and 5) evaluate the information. While traditional schooling trains students well on how to access (passive) information and produce (active) information,

student led conferences have gained much support in that they engage students in interpreting information, disseminating information, and evaluating information.

Teaching students what they should know and how to access it, and what they should be able to do and how to produce it, will enable students to experience success on test days. Teaching students how to interpret, disseminate, and evaluate will enable them to become life-long learners and experience success in the future.

Eric Hoffer, the San Francisco longshoreman as quoted by Dr. David Thornburg in a recent conference, says it this way: "In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists."

Summary: In and of themselves, student led conferences do not change or reform a school. They do, however, provide a catalyst for change. As society changes, schools must respond. Schools can no longer afford to hold on to practices that do not support our future. The student led conference model is an example of one practice that supports our future: it includes our students and holds them accountable; it engages our students in practicing skills needed to be successful in the future; and it effectively involves and communicates with parents.

Statement of the Problem

Student led conferences have been around for at least ten years and are increasing in popularity. Portrayed as the "biggest breakthrough in communication about student achievement in the last four decades" (Paglin, 1996), student led conferences is a subject of continuing controversy and interest. More and more schools are making the decision to replace traditional parent-teacher conferences with student led conferences supported by the observations and perceived benefits from teachers involved in this conference model. Schools using student led conferences have not conducted formal research on the effectiveness of student led conferences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of student led conferences on the seventh and eighth grade students, the parents of the students, and the teachers in a small, rural middle school. The sample consists of over 309 student surveys, 313 parent surveys, and 16 teacher surveys. This study will measure the approval rating of each of the areas identified in the 1996 study: increased student responsibility, communication, insight, and confidence; better understanding of the student's progress in school; and an overall rating of student led conferences. The data will

be examined by comparing the responses of students with different grade point averages to determine if all students benefit from this process. Male and female students in grades seven or eight were grouped together in this study.

The significance of such a study rests on the assumption that student led conferences do benefit the students, parents, and teachers. The results of this study can be used to help determine whether the student led conference format is worth all the time and effort.

Overview of the Research Questions

The accolades of student led conferences are abundant. "The process of student led conferences empowers students" (Grant, 1996). "The level of responsibility it (student led conferences) brings to the student and the pride in accomplishment that can engender when they (students) succeed is unprecedented" (Paglin, 1996). Are student led conferences having a positive impact on all students? Do all students share the same benefits? What benefits are most valued by the parents and teachers? The primary purpose of student led conferences when they began in the Pacific Northwest over ten years ago was to encourage students to accept personal responsibility for reporting their academic progress to the parents (Guyton & Fielstein, 1989; Little & Allan, 1989). Where are we now, ten years later? Have we strayed from the original intent of student led conferences?

This study will investigate the approval ratings of the students, parents, and teachers involved in the second school-wide implementation of student led conferences in October of 1997 and attempt to determine if all students are benefiting from this process.

Limitations of the Available Research

In reviewing the literature for this study, only one school-wide evaluation could be located, and this study presented the approval ratings of parents and students as "helpful" or "very helpful" (Hackmann, et al., 1995). Most schools using the student led conference model are doing so in isolated classrooms, teams, or pilot programs; whole school participation in student led conferences is rare. In a time when parents and legislators are demanding more accountability in public schools, this study attempts to provide the much needed research and data to evaluate the effects of total, school-wide implementation of the student led conference format on all the participants involved the students, the parents, and the teachers.

In explaining the student led conference format to teachers and administrators, most are so intrigued with the concept, the simplicity, and the innate potency that the format is implemented at their site swiftly and sometimes hurriedly. The success of the first year of the program, which is usually evaluated by the teachers involved,

determines whether the program will continue or not the following year. With preparation of the students the main factor in the success of student led conferences (Grant, 1995; Jones, 1997), schools rushing to "get on board" can have disastrous results (Paglin, 1996). Thus, programs usually begin as pilot programs with teachers who volunteer to participate and are invested in the results. Schools with positive evaluations post their isolated successes on the Internet, boasting "that well in excess of 90 percent of parents and students prefer student led conferences to the traditional parent-teacher format" (Hackmann, 1996). Recently, many new ideas have been accepted and put into place on the recommendation of teachers invested in the outcome of a pilot program. In this study, the entire school population will be surveyed all the students, parents, and staff involved will be given the opportunity to evaluate the new conference format.

Definitions

Accountability: to gather information and use it to form judgments about performance and how it can be improved.

Assessment: continual gathering of data, including written work, individual and group work, teacher observations and student reflections.

Authentic: "real-life" or simulated life experiences or performances as opposed to traditional paper and pencil tests.

Evaluation: judgments made based upon several different assessments.

Portfolios: collection of work for a purpose and an audience.

Standards: a statement of what a student should know and be able to do.

Student Led Conferences: parent-teacher conferences led by the student. The student presents evidence of learning and sets goals for improvement.

CHAPTER 2

Organization

For the purpose of this study, the review of the literature was organized as follows:

Effects of student led conferences on students
Effects of student led conferences on parents
Effects of student led conferences on teachers
Review of all literature available on student led conferences

Purpose of the Literature Review

Recommendations and commendations abound in numerous documents about the benefits of student led conferences on students, parents, and teachers. Although a scant amount of research has been conducted by educators, the perceived benefits have convinced many educators to practice this new conference format. The purpose of this literature review is to collect and summarize all the reported benefits of student led conferences to students, parents, and teachers. In addition, a brief review is provided of all available articles, books, and studies written on or about student led conferences.

Sources of the Literature Review

The majority of the reviewed literature was obtained from the California State University of San Bernardino library, as well as the libraries at the University of Redlands and the Claremont Colleges. Sources of information included the Internet services: Education Research and Information Clearinghouse, and various search engines. In addition, the personal libraries of teachers and administrators in the Bear Valley Unified School District, San Bernardino County Superintendent of School's Office, and California State University of San Bernardino were utilized. Finally, book searches were performed by Edelweiss book store in Big Bear Lake, California.

Effects of Students Led Conferences on Students

Student led conference have been described both nationally and internationally as being highly successful with students (Hackmann, Kenworthy, & Nibblelink, 1995). Evaluations from students, parents, and teachers, both verbal and written, are very positive (Kasse, 1994). One study reports that 95% of the students preferred student led conference to traditional conferences, and 97% noted student led conferences as being "helpful" or "very helpful" (Hackmann et al., 1995). The student led conference is reported as working at any grade level (Grant, Heffler, &

Mereweather, 1995). Due to the many benefits and the overwhelming positive experience it is for students, student led conferences can be a powerful motivation in improving student learning achievement, and responsibility (Paglin, 1996).

Student led conferences are successful because students see the value in it. Student led conferences gives students a purpose and validates their feelings towards education (Grant et al., 1995). Students involved in this innovative conference format are required to look at their own performance in school and then discuss with their parents and teachers their strengths and weakness. The student led conferences is a self-assessment (Grant et al., 1995), and encourages self-evaluation (Johnson, 1996). Students participating in this process gain skills to become more self-directed because they see the value and importance of self-evaluation (Little & Allan, 1989).

While the student led conference is a form of authentic assessment (Hackmann, 1996), more important it is an authentic evaluation (Picciotto, 1996). Student led conferences provide students the opportunity to reflect on their own learning (Paglin, 1996), and encourages students to become aware and utilize their preferred learning style (Grant et al., 1995; Picciotto, 1996).

In student led conferences, students benefit from independence (Grant, et al., 1995). Instead of being compared to other students, a student performance is measured

by how well he or she achieves his or her goals (Little & Allan, 1989). These goals can be individual, or in the case in some schools, the student measures his/her achievement toward pre-established student outcomes (Countryman & Schroeder, 1996), which assists students by providing a clear understanding of the expectations for student learning (Baber and Tolensky, 1998). By focusing on efforts rather than grades, "even struggling students can shine" (Paglin, 1996).

The student prepared portfolio, an integral part of the student led conference, is an example of authentic assessment. Portfolios provide evidence, and represent the whole child (Grant et al., 1995). When reviewing their portfolio and presenting examples of learning to their parents and teachers, students often provide more information and detail than many teacher's would (Little & Allan, 1989). This process creates the opportunity for students to gain significant insights about themselves as learners (Picciotto, 1996).

Hackmann (1997) reports that including both the cognitive and affective components in student led conferences is important. Student led conferences provide students a chance to reflect on one's own learning and help develop their intrapersonal intelligence as introduced by Howard Gardner in Frames of Mind (1991). The individualized, solution-orientated format of student led conferences helps change a students' perception from education being something imposed onto them to something in which they are actively

involved (Paglin, 1996).

Students benefit from active participation in the evaluation practice (Grant et al., 1995; Hackmann, 1996). In addition to helping students become life-long learners, students develop a sense of ownership for their own educational progress (Grant et al., 1995 & Hackmann et al., 1995). Baber and Tolensky (1998) support student led conference because the ownership for learning is placed with the students.

By experiencing how to initiate, plan, and conduct a conference, students learn valuable leadership skills (Baber & Tolensky, 1989, Grant et al., 1995, Little & Allan, 1989). Student led conferences develop student oral communication skills and organizational skills (Hackmann, 1997). Student led conferences foster both thinking skills (Grant et al., 1995), and presentation skills (Paglin, 1996).

Another real-life skill learned in student led conferences fall into a category Little and Allan (1989) termed "social competency." Little and Allan (1989) observed students came dressed up for the conference and learned to introduce their parents. This atmosphere of excitement and seriousness (Little & Allan, 1989) increased interaction between the student and parent (Grant et al., 1995) and enabled students to experience positive relationships with their parents (Uselman, 1996).

The student led conference format requires students engage in goal setting (Johnson, 1996). Whether personal or

academic, goal setting clarifies the roles and responsibilities of students, as well as parents and teachers (Paglin, 1996), and helps students experience the importance of having work goals (Little & Allan, 1989). Before, during, and after the conference, students reflect in writing their progress in achieving their goals. Students create action plans and set new goals as old goals are accomplished (Paglin, 1996). While Paglin (1996) writes that goals can be updated monthly, in the author's school, goals were written, reviewed and updated weekly.

Baber and Tolensky (1998) and Grant et al. (1995) believes engaging students in developing personal growth plans empowers students. Students led conferences gives students a voice to express their feelings about school and a choice on what to present to their parents (Paglin, 1996). Countryman and Schroeder (1996) reported that fifty percent of the students surveyed liked the freedom of selecting what to show their parents and ten percent of the students enjoyed seeing the reactions on their parents faces when they presented their work to them. Guyton and Fielstein (1989) indicated students were pleased by the opportunity to be given adult responsibility.

By giving students a voice and a choice, student led conferences holds the students accountable for their performance in school (Grant et al., 1995). Guyton and Fielstein (1989); Hackmann et al. (1995) report that students became more accountable for their school work and homework

both before and during the student led conference period. Grant et al. (1995) believe students increase their commitment to school work because they are presenting to their parents. By focusing on the students and giving them the ownership for their education (Grant et al., 1995), the researcher found the student led conferences takes away the typical excuses for below-average student performance because students explain their progress in school, or lack of it. Giving student ownership of their education teaches students how to be responsible (Guyton & Fielstein, 1989) and helps them develop self-responsibility (Hackmann et al., 1995; Little & Allan, 1989).

Engaging students in self-evaluation and empowering students by giving them the responsibility and ownership of their education enhances a students self-esteem and self-confidence (Baber & Tolensky, 1998; Grant et al. 1995; Hackmann et al. 1995, Little & Allan 1989, Paglin 1996). By focusing that students have the skills to be life-long learners, and setting attainable goals for improvements, educators are preparing all students for their continued success in the future (Grant et al., 1995).

Effects of Student Led Conferences on Parents

In an informed study of parent approval ratings of student led conferences, ninety-six percent of the 296 parents surveyed rated the conference "helpful" or "very

Helpful," and ninety-four percent preferred them to traditional parent-teacher conference (Hackmann et al. 1995). Parents reported gaining a better understanding of their students' progress in school (Guyton & Fielstein, 1989). Parents also reported feeling more comfortable in student led conferences to discuss their child's progress (Grant et al., 1995). Hackmann et al. (1995) also found that student led conferences encouraged open parent-student-teacher discussion, and Guyton and Fielstein (1989) reported that student led conferences encouraged student-parent communication.

Placing the student in the center of the learning and evaluation, as student led conferences do (Picciotto, 1996), helps educate parents on the complexities of learning and removes mystery surrounding the assessment process (Paglin, 1996). Parents, instead of hearing about their child, actually see their child perform (Little & Allan, 1989) and gain a better understanding of their child's learning (Grant et al., 1995; Guyton & Fielstein, 1989).

Giving students the responsibility to report their progress to their parents implies to parents that their child can be responsible and show leadership ability (Little & Allan, 1989). Parents gain an awareness of their child's progress and can view him/her making decisions and assuring more responsibility (Hackmann et al., 1995).

Parents not only play audience for the student's performance, they are also thoughtful contributors (Grant et

al., 1995). Parents play a significant role in their child's learning (Grant et al., 1995), and their involvement in student led conferences supports the belief of shared responsibility between school and home (Picciotto, 1996). In some conferences, whole families showed up to listen to the student's presentation (Johnson, 1996).

Hackmann (1996) described the conference atmosphere as relaxed and supportive. Little and Allan (1989) observed parents as less anxious and less threaten with their child present. Grant et al. (1995) report parents found student led conferences more comfortable and inviting, especially for non-english speaking parents. As the child interprets and reports the information to parents in their first language, parent understand more. (Grant et al., 1995; Little & Allan, 1989).

With a more relaxed environment, parents and students talked more freely, productively, and positively (Grant et al., 1995). Guyton and Fielstein (1989), Johnson (1996), and Paglin (1996) all claim student led conference increase and improve the communication between parents and students.

Little and Allan (1989) assert that student led conferences satisfied most concerns of parents because it address the parents needs to know what and how their child is learning in school. Better understanding and improved communication, Hackmann et al. (1995) state, encourages parents to have more frequent discussion about academic concerns with their child. In addition, the author observed

tremendous parental pride in their children as they performed their student led conference. At the conclusion of the conference, parents smiled and praised their child; and the student left with mom or dad's arm around his/her shoulder

Effects of Student Led Conferences on Teachers

As with any change in the school system, the author has observed that there are some teachers who embrace change, others which resist change, and those unaware of change. While there are no published studies reporting the teachers' approval noting of student led conferences, Countryman and Schroeder (1996) claim teachers fully support the student led conference format. Several educators have observed and reported on several benefits of student led conferences to teachers. The author has discovered that there are a variety of formats of student led conferences, reinforcing the ease and flexibility at which the format can be implemented in schools and modified to include the school's learning outcomes or performance standards.

In student led conferences, teachers became advisors, facilitators, coaches, or "guides on the side" (Baber & Tolensky, 1998; Grant et al., 1995; Little & Allan, 1989). Teachers enjoyed the positive atmosphere of student led conferences (Hackmann et al., 1995) and felt they were less stressful (Kasse, 1994). Children were not criticized during the conference, and teachers received praise from parents for

the novel idea (Little & Allan, 1989).

Teachers' initial concerns of increased workload, the possibility of rejection from parents, and expected resistance from students were reported by Little and Allan (1989) as not being problems. Grant (1995) reported teachers felt student led conferences were less work. Teachers also stated they felt energized after the conferences, verse feeling tired after traditional parent-teacher conferences (Little & Allan, 1989). Hackmann (1996) claims teachers using the student led conference format now look forward to conference time.

Student led conferences focus on student performance, not grades, enabling teachers to learn more about their students as individuals as they explain their progress to their parents (Picciotto, 1996). Grant et al. (1995) found teachers enjoyed taking on the observing role as the students and parents talked because it provided a tremendous opportunity to gain insight on the family dynamics. As the parent and child interacted together, emotions flowed allowing the teacher to see the student in another light (Little & Allan, 1989; Picciotto, 1996).

Schools using student led conferences have shown increased parental involvement in conferences (Guyton & Fielstein, 1989; Hackmann et al., 1995; Little & Allan, 1989) as well as increased student participation (Grant et al., 1995). Johnson (1996) claims student led conferences are an excellent way to improve public relations and communication

with parents. Hackmann et al. (1995) stated teachers reported that after student led conferences, parents were more supportive when contacted throughout the year.

The student led conference is a process, not an event. While Little and Allan (1989) found student led conferences improved the education climate during conference time, Guyton and Fielstein (1989) claim teachers noticed an overall increase in student academic achievement and progress. In the author's school, not only have we observed improved student performance, but improved teaching techniques. Picciotto (1996) supports this by stating teachers can see how well they taught (or what the student learned) when the student explains his/her work to the parents. In the author's school, student led conferences have helped teachers evaluate their teaching strategies and engage in multiple instructional practices and varied assessment practices.

Review of the Literature Available on Student Led Conferences

Arter, Spandrel, and Culham (1995) define portfolios as a "purposeful collection of student work that tells a story of student achievement or growth." Portfolios, the authors claim, promote student assessment, support student led conferences, certify student competence, build student self-confidence, evaluate curriculum and instruction, and provide a better way to communicate with parents. Portfolios are used to increase student achievement levels and have students

take ownership of their education through systematic reflection and goal setting.

Austin (1994) writes a very touching, personal book about the journey she takes in not only implementing student led conferences, but changing the entire culture within the classroom. Student led conferences provide the vehicle for change as she takes the reader on the path toward more meaningful education for her students.

Baber and Tolensky (1998) describe student led conferences as a celebration of student success with responsibility being shared between the student, parent, and teacher. The authors have outlined the nuts and bolts of implementing student led conferences on the York Region Board of Education, Ontario, Canada website.

Bernick, Rutherford, and Elliot (1991) researched the importance of middle school conferences. While conferences are the traditional way families and teachers communicate, less than fifty percent of all families have conferences with their children's teachers. Bernick, Rutherford, and Elliot review the value of conferences and illustrate four different formats: the advisor, conference, the student led conference, the arena conference, and the team conference. Elements of effective conference are also presented.

At Caledonia Middle School (1998), located in Caledonia, Michigan, parent participation at the spring 1997 student led conference at ninety-one percent, up from eighty-nine percent the previous year. The school also reported an increase in

overall student achievement since initiating student led conferences in 1995.

Countryman and Schroeder (1996) implemented student led conferences with sixth and seventh grades in an effort to let students "exercise choice, take responsibility for their learning, and do their best work." Traditional parent conferences were more frustrating than helpful, and using the work of Guyton and Fielstein (1989), they created a student centered conference model. Although parent and student reviews of the new conference format were mixed and less supportive than in other informal studies, teachers and advisors fully supported the new format.

Grant, Heffler, and Mereweather (1995) write on the journey and refinement of what they refer to as a "gift from heaven," student led conferences. These educators describe the student led conference process and explore the concept further with three pilot teachers in grades 3, 5/6, and 7/8. Rational, variations, and advise fill this informative book.

Guyton and Fielstein (1989) developed the student led conference format during the same time as did Little and Allan (1989). Guyton and Fielstein, however, developed this new conferencing format to foster accountability within sixth grade students. The results of their informal study were in agreement with those reported in Little and Allan (1989). The parents surveyed felt student led conferences had developed a sense of accountability in their child, encouraged him/her to take pride in his/her work, and

encouraged student-parent communication.

Hackmann (1997) describes the benefits of student led conferences and reviews the conference goals. Describing the student led conference model, Hackmann breaks it down to three parts: preparation, the conference, and evaluation. Options for parents still wanting traditional parent-teacher conferences are provided.

Hackmann (1996) reviews the value of student led conferences including students in the conference, as well as the purpose and benefits of student led conferences in the March 1996 Bulletin, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Advice is shared on getting started with the new conference format.

Hackmann, Kenworthy, and Nibblelink (1995), concerned with the inadequacy of the traditional conference model, developed a student led conference model to help promote student responsibility, increase students' confidence and communication skills, and improve the participation of parents. While receiving both positive and negative comments from parents and students in regards to the process, teachers steadfastly supported the student led conferences. The results of their evaluation of the 1994-95 school year shows tremendous results: parent attendance was ninety-three percent; of the 296 parents attending, ninety-six percent of parents describe student led conferences as "helpful" or "very helpful"; and ninety-four percent preferred student led conferences over traditional parent-teacher conferences. Of

the 344 students participating, ninety-seven percent rated student led conference as "helpful" or "very helpful", and ninety-five percent preferred the student led conference model.

Hubert (1989) is one of the early pioneers of including students into parent-teacher conference. As principal of an elementary school in Calgary, Alberta (Canada) she encourages her staff to include students on the grounds of fairness. The result was strong support from the parents, and a recommendation from all involved to continue the practice.

Jones (1997) focused on the value of communication between student and parent in student led conferences. Teachers act as a middleman to help students communicate with their parents, present work they are proud of, and discuss the goals they have set to help them improve in the future.

Johnson (1996) reports eighty-eight percent of his elementary students participated in the school's first Portfolio Sharing Night. Similar to student led conference process, students presented their portfolio presentations to their parents and teachers. Parents, teachers, and students all reported having a positive experience with the presentations. Johnson (1996) purports Portfolio Sharing Night to be "an excellent way to improve public relations and communication with parents, and to encourage self-evaluation and goal setting for our students" (p.45). A critical factor for the program's success was teachers recognizing the merits of portfolio assessment.

Kasse (1994) found student led conferences were less stressful than traditional conferences. Kasse refers to these conferences as student/parent conferences. Feedback on the new conferencing format, both written and verbal, was very positive.

Little and Allan (1989) were the first people known to the author to publish material and promote student-led parent-teacher conferences. Little and Allan named and designed this new conference format to lessen the burden of parent-teacher conference on teachers as well as to provide a more satisfying experience for those involved. The purpose of this Kindergarten through fifth grade conference format was to help students be more accountable and motivate them to be more active in the learning process. Little and Allan describe the school implementation process and even provide instructions on "folder making," and "curriculum sample collection," of what we now know as a portfolio. Results of the new format are broken down by student, parent, and teacher.

In Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Work (1996) published by the National Parent Teacher Association and National Education Association, importance is placed on the value of parent-teacher conferences. Parent-teacher conferences provide the opportunity for parents to learn more about their students progress, and it provides an opportunity for the important people in a student's life to work together and discuss ways to help the student do his/her best.

Moyers (1994) believes including students at elementary parent-teacher conferences makes the conferences more meaningful and more fun. Moyers reviews the student led conference format and offers suggestions for implementation.

Paglin (1996) writes student led conferences are a outgrowth of a school's commitment to give students a voice in the classroom. The student centered approach to student led conferences can restore student confidence due to its individualized, solution oriented approach. To students, student led conferences provide the opportunity to reflect on and speak out regarding their learning, as well as practice presentation skills. To teachers, student led conferences provide the opportunity to educate parents about student learning and new assessment practices. Student led conferences, according to Paglin, can be a powerful motivation for students and change their perception of education. Paglin reports student led conferences were an "overwhelmingly positive experience for most students and parents."

Parent Power (1996), a newsletter promoting awareness and involvement in schools writes that student led conferences at one middle school have increased parent participation in parent-teacher conferences from thirty percent attendance to ninety-two percent. Parents enjoyed the real life experience, comparing it to a job interview. Parents appreciated the students self-evaluation and especially the interpersonal skills developed through the

process of students speaking in front of his/her parents and teachers.

Paulson and Paulson (1994) write on the benefits and rationale of implementing student led conferences in the place of traditional parent conferences. Using portfolios, students in Kindergarten and up can become independent, self-directed learners. Portfolio assessment is an activity students perform and share with other people.

The work of Picciotto (1996) focuses on using student led conferences in Kindergarten through grade three. This book provides rationale, classroom-tested activities, reproducible letters to parents, schedules, and assessment forms.

In the website titled Student Led Conferencing: Voices of Students in Assessing Their Learning, students are said to gain greater power, freedom, and responsibility when they report their progress to their parents. By giving students a voice in their own assessment, the evaluation process is more meaningful.

Uselman (1996), in a practicum designed to increase student achievement, used student led conferencing as a culminating project with the students involved in her research. Uselman found that students responded positively to the conferences: grades went up, and students experienced improved relationships with others and their parents. Uselman recommends the use of student led conferences to help students take ownership of their education.

Student Led Conferences and School Reform.

None of the following scholars, educational leaders, or school reform advocates mention student led conferences by name. Yet, embedded within the pages of these books are clear support for the ideals and perceived benefits of student led conferences.

Aligning student led conferences with the theories of educational leaders provides support and credibility for the conference model. In addition, by showing the broad-based support of student led conferences in satisfying many school reform issues currently being discussed reinforces its wide appeal to educators everywhere.

Czikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory, explained in Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, purports productivity and learning are increased when there is a balance between challenge and skills. Too much challenge and not enough skills results in anxiety; too much skills and not enough challenge results in boredom. The right amount of challenge and the right amount of skills results in what Czikszentmihalyi describes as flow. In flow, the task is its own reward. Time becomes irrelevant, and learning increases at a faster rate. Relating this theory to education reinforces our need to implement strategies like student led conferences, which engage students in meaningful experiences that both challenge them and increase their skills.

Education is Not a Spectator Sport, written by Willard R. Daggett and Benedict Kruse (1997) states, "Education has become a spectator sport; the people who should be active participants, the students, have... been regulated to the roles of onlooker" (p. 1). Student led conference, although not intended to change how teachers teach, does provide students an active role in their assessment and in their education. Proponents of student led conferences claim they are a process, not an event, much the way Daggett supports learning being a process. The natural way to learn is by doing. Daggett encourages schools to allow students to learn "with the same kind of curiosity - driven, motivated learning that serves so well in early childhood" (p. 65).

Daggett promotes the use of rigor and relevance in our schools. Similar to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow, the balance between challenge and skills, Daggett uses a balance between Bloom's Taxonomy (rigor) and real life application (relevance).

Besides our present day basics of reading, writing, and math skills, Daggett believes schools, in order for students to be prepared for the future, need to add these new prerequisites: thinking skills; human relation sensitivity and capabilities; familiarity of information systems; organizational skills; and personal skills. "Very few schools," Daggett states, "deal with organizing information and ideas for oral presentations" (p. 57). Student led conferences support these prerequisites and enable students

to gain experience in speaking and leading. According to Daggett, most schools are not preparing students for the "real world" after graduation; only in schools where these new prerequisites are emphasized and stressed in the curriculum.

Daggett also supports activities that encourage parents and teachers to work together and share information. Daggett believes parents and teachers share many common interests and by working together can help "improve the diligence of students, (and) overall achievement of schools" (p. 36). One important goal of student led conferences and supported by Daggett is helping students understand how learning occurs. When students understand this, it can improve student performance and be a confidence builder. Another goal of student led conferences is to represent the whole child. Daggett reinforces this concept by stating: "The time has come when a school cannot deal with students in isolation from their surroundings and from the totality of their identity. This means that parents and members of extended families have to be invited into the education process as participants" (p. 190).

Student led conferences support Daggett's ideals of education reform by engaging students in active learning, developing skills in students to enable them success in the future, and by encouraging supportive relationships with students' families.

Michael Fullan, author of Change Forces, writes about the process of change rather than what specifically to change in schools. His concept, "Ready, Fire, Aim," has been used often in schools to encourage change without necessarily knowing exactly how or what the change will effect. In the researcher's seventh and eighth grade middle school, student led conferences became the catalyst for change. Beginning as a pilot program in 1993 each year the program grew in support. In 1996, 100 percent of the teachers and students were involved in student led conferences. With the implementation of student led conferences, teachers embraced many reform elements such as portfolio development, project-based learning, thematic units, and increased use of technology.

Student led conferences also support Fullan's concern that schools are not preparing students for the real-world job market. Today's companies want people who can communicate well, be responsible, and be able to work with others.

Fullan also believes schools need to work more closely with a student's family, and the need for improved "connectedness" with the world around the student. Fullan states, "Our connections (with students) must be more balanced, more authentic, more to the total person" (p. 142).

William Glasser, author of The Quality School (1990) and several other books concerning students and schools,

describes what he believes are the components of a quality school. Glasser is heavily influenced by the total quality management (TQM) philosophy of W. Edwards Deming, whose work revolutionized the Japanese industry. Deming's work suggests that workers evaluate their own work, and one of Glasser's three concepts for which a quality school is based is that schools "persuade students to evaluate their own work" (p. 200). Glasser doesn't explain how to do this, only that this is an area difficult for teachers to put into practice. Student led conferences provide a place and a purpose for students to engage in self-evaluation.

Glasser also believes that one of the reasons students become disconnected from school and fail to do their work is because they feel powerless. Students want power; someone to listen to them. Student led conferences provides an activity which gives students power and a voice to be heard.

Deborah Meier, author of The Power of Their Ideas (1995), is the founder and principal of some excellent small schools in East Harlem known as Central Park East. She states, "We need to invent a new learned tradition with goals that we honor and that all who strive can achieve..." (p. 170). She believes students should be expected to demonstrate their abilities directly - to show what they know and can do. In addition, she states that parents should be informed and involved in their children's education. Student led conferences address both of these concerns.

In an article titled Supposing That..., Meier (1996) asks the reader to wonder what schools would be like if we made the criterion for all schooling the same as we expect from a good kindergarten class. Meier (1996) writes, "I wanted to prepare students to be comfortable in the 'big conversations' that grown-ups engage in... to feel confident... to be able to do anything that seemed important or worthwhile to them" (p. 272). If we did, Meier believes, our schools would be more focused on developing the whole child.

In 1990, Phillip Schlechty wrote Schools for the 21st Century, in which he proposed several school reforms in order to more adequately prepare our students for the future of constant change. Evaluation and assessment, according to Schlechty, are "the key elements in building a results-oriented, self-regulating environment" (p. 111). Schlechty believes that evaluation is not only the way in which people learn what is expected, it is also the way people come to value their performance in regards to these expectations. Who evaluates? Schlechty writes, "In a success-oriented, participatory leadership environment, everyone, including students, must learn to measure (quality work), for it is measurement (evaluation) of progress toward agreed upon goals that provides direction" (p. 60).

In 1997, Schlechty authored Inventing Better Schools, in which he claims that school reform of the future will focus

around the schools ability to invent engaging work for students. "Students need engaging work," writes Schlechty, "compelling work - work that produces products that bring feelings of accomplishment and pride" (p. 144). Parents, too, want the work their students do to be meaningful and is understandable and purposeful to them as well. Schools need to be more student-focused, according to Schlechty.

Mike Schmoker, author of Results: The Key to Continuous Improvement (1996), asks educators to focus less on the process and more on the results of school reform. Results are the focus of total quality management organizations, which are concerned with processes only to the point that they effect results. Schmoker writes, "We all work more effectively and purposefully toward what we can see and comprehend" (p. 72). In measuring the success of a program, educators should not measure progress toward academic results, but also progress toward behavior goals that are linked to those results" (p. 69-70). Student led conferences provide students an opportunity to increase their responsibility and improve their behavior, both of which are integral to growth and development, and which can "dramatically affect the academic climate of a school" (p.97).

Peter Senge, author of The Fifth Discipline, wrote his book more for the business world; however, educators have embraced many of his concepts. Senge believes that the spirit of an organization centers around its ability to

provide "personal mastery," the discipline of personal growth and learning (p. 141). Schools support this ideal; however, there is another concept which relates as well to student led conferences - the idea that schools cannot only address a student's school life. Senge writes, "There is a natural connection between a person's work life and all other aspects of life. We live only one life, but for a long time our organizations have operated as if this simple fact can be ignored, as if we have two separate lives" (p. 307). Student led conferences bring together the student's two lives home and school.

Theodore Sizer, professor and chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University, has written three important and intriguing books on education: Horace's Compromise (1984), Horace's School (1992), and Horace's Hope (1996). The underlying philosophy represented in all of Sizer's books is summed up in the nine principles. Student led conferences address three of these principles. The first principle is focus: helping students use their minds well. In Horace's Compromise (1984), Sizer states, "A student's personal engagement with their own learning is crucial" (p. 34). In Horace's School (1992), Sizer clarifies with, "Busy is not the same as involved" (p. 87), and in Horace's Hope (1996), Sizer solidifies the principle with, "All of us, including adolescents, learn well only when we engage" (p. 91).

Introduced in Horace's Compromise (1984) and probably what Sizer is most noted by is the student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach principle. In Horace's Compromise (1984), Sizer reminds us of what we already know. "How are skills learned? By experience. How, then, are they best taught? By coaching" (p. 106). Student led conferences compel students to be the key worker in the school. His job is to present evidence, or products, of his learning to his parents. The teacher, then, assists or coaches the students to learn.

In his most recent book, Horace's Hope (1996), Sizer emphasizes the principle of personalization. "More than one teacher," Sizer writes, "must know each child (and her family) well" (p. 91). Presenting what matters in effective schools, Sizer stress the need for students to feel cared about and valued by adults.

Student led conferences offer some compelling attributes and characteristics which address and help satisfy many common beliefs or principles of current educational reformism, specifically the need to engage students in their work, provide them an opportunity to self-evaluate, involve parents, and address the whole child. Not very often does a single program deliver so many benefits with virtually no additional costs needed to put it into practice. The power and potential of this concept is phenomenal and significant to any school willing to give it a try.

Summary

The introduction of using student led conference in schools began ten years ago. Since then, much has been written about the benefits of student led conferences, but very little research has been done on the subject. Most of the published materials focus on student benefits, some mention benefits to parents, and few discuss benefits to teachers. The majority of schools utilizing the student led conference format are elementary schools. Coupled with student portfolios, student led conferences make a powerful impact on the students, parents, teachers, and the school culture. The facts that they fit the regular scheduled conference periods and that they do not cost any additional money make them even more appealing. Despite the lack of research, student led conferencing is a growing trend in schools across the country.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Procedures

This study was conducted using quantitative data to generate conclusions. The researcher distributed questionnaires to all participants following a student led conference. The responses on these surveys will provide the quantitative data for analysis and comparison.

In 1996, a preliminary study was conducted to produce a much more balanced and realistic picture of the effectiveness of student led conferences from the perspective of the student, the parent, and the teacher (Appendix A). The main purpose of this study was to provide an authentic evaluation of student led conferences. Recently, many new ideas have been accepted and put into place on the recommendation of teachers invested in the outcome of a pilot program. In this study, the entire school population was surveyed - all the students, parents, and staff involved were given the opportunity to evaluate the new conference format.

After participating in a student led conference, students, parents, and teachers were asked to voluntarily complete a short survey regarding their perceptions of student led conferences. Their responses were tallied and organized, noting the frequency and major themes identified. The data derived was used to compile a list of specific student, parent, and teacher outcomes as a result of student led conferences.

Research Questions

1. What is the approval rating of student led conferences from the students, parents, and teachers?
2. Which attributes of the student led conferences format are most valued and by which group?
3. Do all students share the same benefits of student led conferences?

Population Sample and Description

Students: The student sample consists of 309 male and female, seventh and eighth grade surveys. The middle school participating in this study has population of approximately 600 students in grades seven and eight. According to the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), in October, 1997, the school population totaled 596 students. All of the students in the school prepared for student led conferences, and 86% presented their portfolios to their parent or parents on the scheduled conference days September 30 to October 3, 1997.

The middle school participating in this study is located in a rural, mountain community in California.

The school population comes from a wide range in economic backgrounds from welfare recipients to those who are affluent. In the 1996-97 school year, twenty percent of the students received aid for families with dependent children (AFDC), and fifty-one percent qualified for free or

reduced lunch.

The student ethnic composition is mainly White and Hispanic. The ethnicity totals are as follows: White, 87.48%; Hispanic, 9.35%; Black, 1.41%; American Indian, 1.23%; Asian, .35%; and Filipino, .18%.

Approximately ten percent of the students in the sample receive special education services. The two Resource Specialist Programs (RSP) serve twenty-seven and twenty-two students respectfully at the seventh and eighth grades. In addition, the Special Day Class (SDC) serves fifteen seventh and eighth graders.

The school currently has ten Limited English Proficient (LEP) students assisted by a half-time aide.

Ten eighth grade students and fifteen seventh grade students are enrolled in an "Opportunity Class" to facilitate academic success. These students are on a modified school day.

The average daily attendance ranges from ninety-six to ninety-eight percent, including excused absences. The transient rate is approximately ten to fifteen percent a year. Enrollment increases an average of two to three percent a year.

Parents: The parent sample consists of 313 surveys. The parent sample mirrors the student sample. Parent participation in student led conferences in the twenty homeroom classes ranged from sixty to one hundred percent. The median was eighty-six percent; the mean was eighty-five point twenty-seven percent.

Teachers: The teacher sample consists of sixteen surveys. The middle school where this study was conducted employs twenty-five full time teaching positions. Included in this number are two RSP teachers, one SDC teacher, one Opportunity teacher, and one computer specialist/network manager teacher. Remaining are the regular education teachers: ten serving the seventh grade students, and ten serving the eighth grade students. The student-teacher ratio is 30:1.

The age of the teachers employed for the school during this study ranged from twenty-four to fifty-four years. The median age was thirty-nine; the mean age was thirty-eight point fifty-eight years. The number of years in teaching ranged from one to twenty-nine. The median number of years teaching was eleven; the mean was eleven point thirty-five.

Student led conferences were held by every teacher in the school studied. The student led conference model began as a pilot program in 1992 and grew in support and numbers. In the 1996-97 school year, one hundred percent of the teachers participated in holding student led conferences. The 1997-98 school year is the second year the school involved in this study has had one-hundred percent teacher participation. With the exception of the five teachers hired for the 1997-98 school year, all the staff were familiar with the student led conference format.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

Student and parent questionnaires were distributed following the student led conference. Students and parents were asked to assess the helpfulness of student led conferences in various areas. Students and parents used a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being labeled "Did not help" and 10 labeled "Very helpful." The first five questions began with, "Did the student led conferences help..." and followed with statements addressing five areas. The areas addressed were: becoming more responsible; increase communication between the student and the parent; understanding their self better; increasing student confidence; and, understanding their progress in school. The last question analyzed was, "How did you like the student led conference process?" In addition, students and parents were asked to write in their or their child's current grade point average, and a line was provided for students to make comments.

A small table with pencils was provided for the survey to be completed and placed into the privacy boxes. Participation in the survey was open to all students and parents who participated and was completely voluntary and anonymous. Teacher surveys were distributed on the last conference day and were placed into the privacy boxes provided as well.

The questionnaires were similar in format and wording for all three participating samples (Appendixes 2, 3, and 4). Data generated from the surveys were analyzed through statistical means. Pearson-r correlations were performed to

determine if any significant correlations existed between the student's grade point average and the effect of student led conferences in improving student responsibility, communication, self-understanding, self-confidence, understanding of progress in school, and overall preference of the student led conference model. In addition, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there were any significant differences between the high, medium, and low performing student, the parents of high, medium, and low performing students, and seventh and eighth grade teacher responses to the effect of student led conferences in improving student responsibility, communication, self-understanding, self-confidence, understanding of progress in school, and overall preference of the student led conference model.

CHAPTER 4

Overview

The data collected from the surveys completed by the students, parents, and teachers was subject to statistical analysis and interpretation. The sample consists of 309 student surveys, 313 parent surveys, and 16 teacher surveys.

Analysis of Student Responses

The 309 student surveys included in this research were completed by male and female students in grades seven and eight. This sample represents 51.8% of the total student population of 596 at the time the research was conducted. All students were encouraged to complete the voluntary and anonymous survey. Students were grouped according to their first quarter grade point averages (GPA's) which coincided with the end of the quarter student led conference. Of the 309 student surveys, 285 students included their grade point average. The grade point averages groups were defined as high GPA - 3.00 to 4.17, medium GPA - 2.00 to 2.99, and low GPA - 0.00 to 1.99. The student sample contains 33 students reporting a low GPA, 67 reporting a medium GPA, and 185 reporting a high GPA. The mean grade point average was 3.083 (Table 1).

X₁ : GPA

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
3.083	.873	.052	.763	28.329	285
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
.66	4.17	3.51	878.73	2926.032	26

Table 1

The students were asked to rate the helpfulness of student led conferences in six areas: increasing their responsibility, improving their communication between the child and the parent, understanding their self better, instilling confidence, comprehending their progress in school, and the overall student led conference process (Appendix B). In the area of responsibility, the mean response was 7.498 (Table 2). The mean in communication was 7.552 (Table 3). The mean ranking level of understanding was 7.4 (Table 4). In the area of confidence, the mean was 7.767 (Table 5). The highest mean response was in the area of comprehending their school progress with a mean of 8.434 (Table 6). The mean for the overall process of student led conferences was 7.685 (Table 7).

X₁ : Responsibility

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.498	2.197	.125	4.829	29.305	309
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2317	18861	2

Table 2

X₁ : Communication

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.552	2.497	.142	6.235	33.064	308
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2326	19480	3

Table 3

X₁ : Understanding

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.4	2.585	.147	6.685	34.94	309
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2286.5	18978.25	2

Table 4

X₁ : Confidence

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.767	2.34	.133	5.476	30.13	309
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2400	20327.5	2

Table 5

X₁ : Progress

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
8.434	2.143	.122	4.591	25.405	309
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2606	23392	2

Table 6

X₁ : Process

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.685	2.639	.15	6.966	34.343	308
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2367	20329	3

Table 7

Student data was analyzed to measure the relationship between student grade point averages and the six deferent areas being assessed. Student responses produced weak correlations, both positive and negative. There was no significant correlation ($r = -.04$) between GPA and responsibility (Table 8). The Pearson-r value was the highest ($r = -.121$) in the area of communication (Table 9). This relationship is illustrated in graph 1. The relationship between GPA and understanding ($r = -.087$) produced a weak negative correlation (Table 10). The correlation between GPA and confidence ($r = .058$) is also weak (Table 11). The weakest r value ($r = -.005$) was in the relationship between GPA and progress (Table 12). The correlation between GPA and the student led conference process ($r = .083$) was also weak (Table 13).

Corr. Coeff.		X ₁ : GPA	Y ₁ : Responsibility
Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
285	-.074	-.04	.002

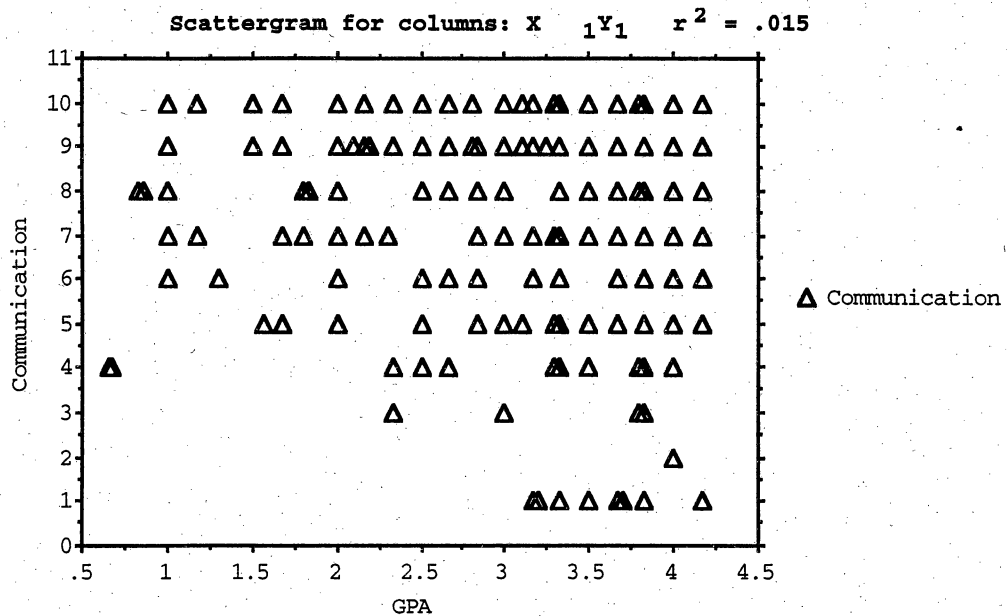
Note: 26 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 8

Corr. Coeff.		X ₁ : GPA	Y ₁ : Communication
Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
284	-.26	-.121	.015

Note: 27 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 9



Corr. Coeff. X₁ : GPA Y₁ : Understanding

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
285	-.195	-.087	.008

Note: 26 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 10

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : GPA Y₁ : Confidence

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
285	.117	.058	.003

Note: 26 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 11

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : GPA Y₁ : Progress

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
285	-.01	-.005	2.677E-5

Note: 26 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 12

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : GPA Y₁ : Process

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
284	.188	.083	.007

Note: 27 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 13

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the population sample. The purpose of this is to compare the means of the three groups of student grade point averages. The grade point averages groups were defined as high GPA - 3.00 to 4.17, medium GPA - 2.00 to 2.99, and low GPA - 0.00 to 1.99.

In the area of responsibility (Table 14), the results of the ANOVA indicated that there was no significant interaction between grade point averages and responsibility, $F(2,282) = 2.344$, $p = .0978$. However, the mean rating of the students with a low GPA (Table 15) ranked student led conferences as higher ($M = 8.242$) in helpfulness than students with a medium GPA ($M = 7.313$) or a high GPA ($M = 7.44$).

One Factor ANOVA X 1 : GPA Level Y 1 : Responsibility

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	20.987	10.494	2.344
Within groups	282	1262.241	4.476	p = .0978
Total	284	1283.228		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .083

Table 14

One Factor ANOVA X 1 : GPA Level Y 1 : Responsibility

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	33	8.242	1.786	.311
Medium GPA	67	7.313	2.083	.255
High GPA	185	7.449	2.179	.16

Table 15

In the area of communication (Table 16), there was no significant difference between grade point averages and communication, $F(2,282) = 2.635$, $p = .0735$. The means rank of the grouped GPA's (Table 17) is 8.152 for the low GPA, 7.909 for the medium GPA, and 7.303 for the high GPA.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Communication

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	31.747	15.874	2.635
Within groups	281	1692.746	6.024	p = .0735
Total	283	1724.493		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .137

Table 16

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Communication

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	33	8.152	1.822	.317
Medium GPA	66	7.909	1.998	.246
High GPA	185	7.303	2.686	.197

Table 17

In comparing grade point averages with understanding (Table 18), there was no significant interaction between the two groups, $F(2,282) = 1.763$, $p = .1734$. The mean of the low GPA was 8.03, slightly higher than the medium GPA at a mean of 7.642, and the high GPA mean at 7.222 (Table 19).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Understanding

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	22.858	11.429	1.763
Within groups	282	1828.286	6.483	p = .1734
Total	284	1851.144		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .068

Table 18

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Understanding

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	33	8.03	2.744	.478
Medium GPA	67	7.642	2.13	.26
High GPA	185	7.222	2.646	.195

Table 19

In the area of confidence (Table 20), there was no significant relationship between grade point average and communication, $F(2,282) = .485$, $p = .6165$. The means of the three groups (Table 21) were similar, with the low GPA at a mean of 8.00, high GPA at 7.865, and medium GPA at 7.582.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Confidence

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	5.224	2.612	.485
Within groups	282	1519.92	5.39	p = .6165
Total	284	1525.144		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.038

Table 20

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Confidence

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	33	8	2.5	.435
Medium GPA	67	7.582	2.147	.262
High GPA	185	7.865	2.349	.173

Table 21

In the area of progress (Table 22), there was no significance between grade point average and students understanding their progress in school, $F(2,282) = .037$, $p = .9632$. In the area, the means for all three groups (Table 23) of grade point averages are considerably higher than the other five categories, although there was very little difference between the three. The high mean was the medium GPA at 8.537; low GPA had a mean of 8.515 and the high GPA

had a mean of 8.459.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Progress

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	.334	.167	.037
Within groups	282	1256.845	4.457	p = .9632
Total	284	1257.179		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.059

Table 22

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Progress

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	33	8.515	2.266	.394
Medium GPA	67	8.537	1.795	.219
High GPA	185	8.459	2.187	.161

Table 23

In the area of process (Table 24), there was no significant differences between grade point averages and the students' approval rating of the overall student led conference process, $F(2,281) = .645$, $p = .5256$. Interestingly, in comparing the means (Table 25), the high GPA ranked the highest in this area with a mean of 7.865. The medium GPA followed with a mean of 7.576. Last was the

low GPA with a mean of 7.394.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Process

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	8.614	4.307	.645
Within groups	281	1877.622	6.682	p = .5256
Total	283	1886.236		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.033

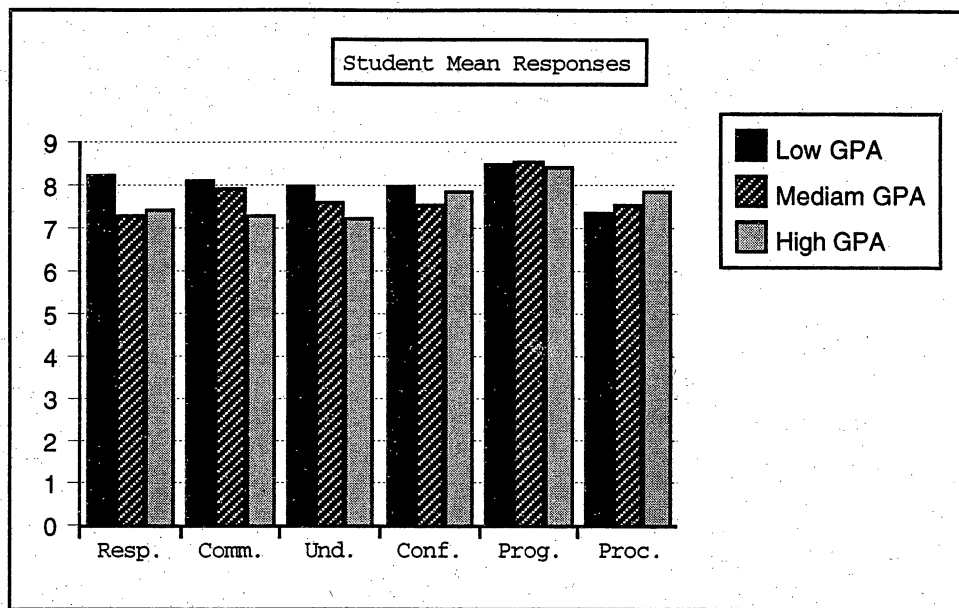
Table 24

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Process

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	33	7.394	2.573	.448
Medium GPA	66	7.576	2.649	.326
High GPA	185	7.865	2.564	.189

Table 25

In summary, Graph 2 provides a quick look at the mean responses to the six questions asked of students in this study.



Graph 2

Analysis of Parent Responses

The 313 parent surveys included in this research represent the parents of seventh and/or eighth grade students. All of the students' parents were encouraged to complete the voluntary and anonymous survey.

Parents were grouped according to their students' first quarter grade point averages (GPA's) which coincided with the end of the quarter student led conference. The grade point averages groups were defined as high GPA - 3.00 to 4.17, medium GPA - 2.00 to 2.99, and low GPA - 0.00 to 1.99. The parents reported their student's grade point average on the questionnaire (Appendix C) when completing the survey. Out of 313 surveys, 284 or 90.7% included a grade point average.

The mean grade point average of the surveys collected for this study was 3.113 (Table 26).

X₁ : GPA

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
3.113	.838	.05	.703	26.933	284
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
.66	4.17	3.51	884.003	2950.525	31

Table 26

The parents were asked to rate the helpfulness of student led conferences in six areas: increasing their student's responsibility, improving communication between the parent and student, understanding their child better, instilling confidence in their child, comprehending their child's progress in school, and the overall student led conference format (Appendix C). In the area of responsibility, the mean response of the parents was 8.212 (Table 27). The mean in improving communication was 8.123 (Table 28). In helping parents better understand and gain insight into their child, the mean was 7.997 (Table 29). In the area of increasing their child's confidence, the mean was 8.19 (Table 30). In the area of comprehending their child's progress in school, the mean was 8.92 (Table 31). The highest mean of all six questions was the mean for the overall process of student led conferences, which came in at 8.949 (Table 32).

Table 31

1	10	9	2792	25696	2
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
8.92	1.592	.09	2.535	17.85	313
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:

X1 : Progress

Table 30

1	10	9	2506	21680	9
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
8.19	1.948	.111	3.793	23.783	306
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:

X1 : Confidence

Table 29

1	10	9	2495	21445	3
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
7.997	2.191	.124	4.801	27.399	312
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:

X1 : Understanding

Table 28

1	10	9	2510	21726	6
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
8.123	2.084	.119	4.342	25.652	309
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:

X1 : Communication

Table 27

1	10	9	2513	21797	9
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
8.212	1.95	.111	3.801	23.739	306
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:

X1 : Responsibility

X₁ : Process

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
8.949	1.809	.102	3.273	20.216	313
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
1	10	9	2801	26087	2

Table 32

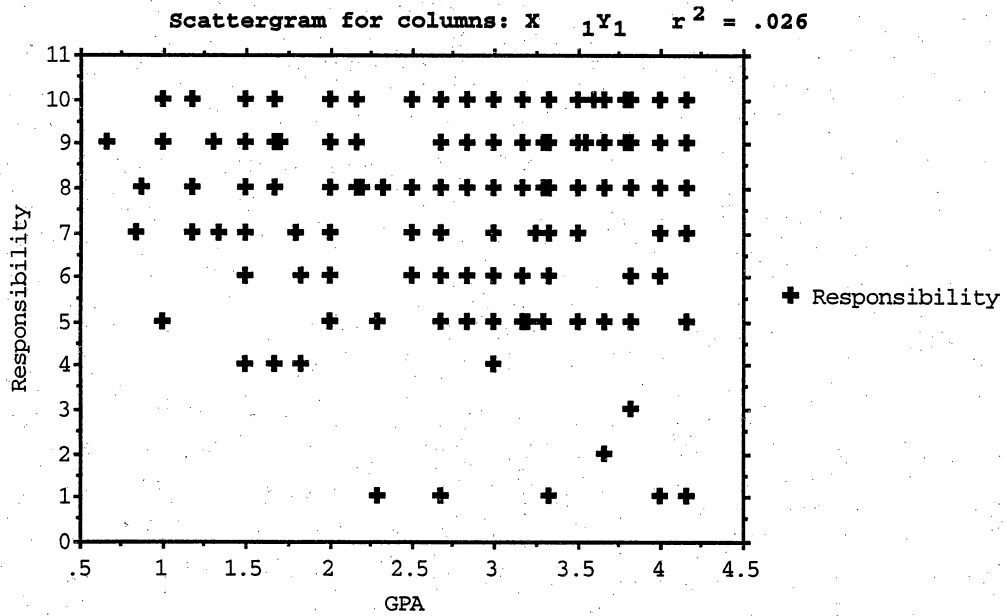
The parent data was analyzed to measure the relationship between the parent's child's grade point averages and the six deferent areas being assessed. Parent responses produced no significant correlations between grade point averages and the various questions asked. In the area of responsibility (Table 33), there was a weak positive correlation ($r = .161$). A scattergram has been included (Graph 3). In the area of communication (Table 34), there was not a significant correlation ($r = .076$). In the area of understanding (Table 33), there was a weak, positive correlation ($r = .104$).

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : GPA Y₁ : Responsibility

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
277	.264	.161	.026

Note: 38 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 33



Graph 3

Corr. Coeff. X₁: GPA Y₁: Communication

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
280	.135	.076	.006

Note: 35 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 34

Corr. Coeff. X₁: GPA Y₁: Understanding

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
283	.195	.104	.011

Note: 32 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 35

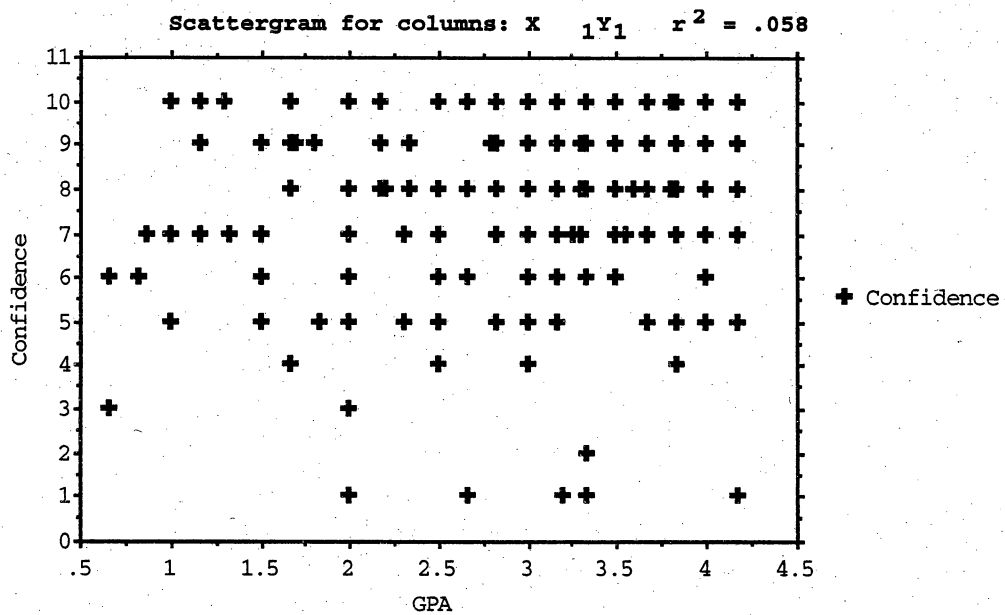
The highest correlation ($r = .240$) was in the area of confidence (Table 36). This relationship is illustrated in graph 4. The weakest correlation ($r = -.01$) was in the relationship between GPA and progress (Table 37). This was also the weakest correlation in the student surveys (Table 12). The correlation between GPA and the student led conference process ($r = .098$) was also weak (Table 38).

Corr. Coeff. X₁: GPA Y₁: Confidence

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
277	.395	.24	.058

Note: 38 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 36



Graph 4

Corr. Coeff. X₁: GPA Y₁: Progress

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
284	.014	.01	9.985E-5

Note: 31 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 37

Corr. Coeff. X₁: GPA Y₁: Process

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
284	.154	.098	.01

Note: 31 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 38

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the parent population sample. The purpose of this is to compare the means of the three groups of student grade point averages, as reported by the parents of the students. The grade point averages groups were defined as high GPA - 3.00 to 4.17, medium GPA - 2.00 to 2.99, and low GPA - 0.00 to 1.99.

In the area of responsibility (Table 39), the results of the ANOVA indicated that there was a significant interaction between grade point averages and responsibility, $F(2,276) = 4.614$, $p = .0107$, as well as a significant difference between medium GPA and high GPA parents on the impact of student led conferences improving their child's responsibility (Table 40). The mean of the high GPA was 8.45, while the medium GPA recorded a mean of 7.672. The low GPA was slightly higher at

7.704. A comparison of the means is shown in Table 41.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Responsibility

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	35.426	17.713	4.614
Within groups	274	1051.845	3.839	p = .0107
Total	276	1087.271		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .21

Table 39

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Responsibility

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	27	7.704	1.877	.361
Medium GPA	61	7.672	2.087	.267
High GPA	189	8.45	1.928	.14

Table 40

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Responsibility

Comparison:	Mean Diff.:	Fisher PLSD:	Scheffe F-test:	Dunnett t:
Low GPA vs. Medium GPA	.032	.892	.002	.07
Low GPA vs. High GPA	-.746	.794	1.713	1.851
Medium GPA vs. High GPA	-.778	.568*	3.632*	2.695

* Significant at 95%

Table 41

In the area of communication (Table 42), there was no significant interaction between the grade point average of the parent's child and improved communication, $F(2,279) = .876$, $p = .4175$. The means (Table 43) show that the high GPA group of parents ranked communication higher than the other two groups with a mean of 8.17. The medium group had a mean of 7.906, followed by the low GPA group with a mean of 7.679.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Communication

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	7.87	3.935	.876
Within groups	277	1244.098	4.491	$p = .4175$
Total	279	1251.968		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.008

Table 42

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Communication

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	28	7.679	1.722	.326
Medium GPA	64	7.906	2.129	.266
High GPA	188	8.17	2.168	.158

Table 43

In the area of understanding (Table 44), there was no significant relationship between grade point average and parent understanding of their child's school progress, $F(2,282) = 2.014$. $p = .1354$. The high GPA also had the highest mean with 8.09; the medium GPA was at 7.455, and the low GPA was slightly higher at 7.821 (Table 45).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Understanding

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	20.023	10.011	2.014
Within groups	280	1391.942	4.971	$p = .1354$
Total	282	1411.965		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .073

Table 44

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Understanding

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	28	7.821	2.358	.446
Medium GPA	66	7.455	2.451	.302
High GPA	189	8.09	2.128	.155

Table 45

In the area of confidence (Table 46), there was a significant relationship between grade point average and the parents perception of increased student confidence, $F(2,276) = 6.283$, $p = .0021$. The means (Table 47) reveal a high GPA significantly higher than the other two with a mean of 8.478. The medium GPA group has a mean of 7.625, and low GPA group has a mean of 7.556. A comparison of the means is presented in Table 46.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Confidence

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	46.779	23.389	6.283
Within groups	274	1020.081	3.723	$p = .0021$
Total	276	1066.859		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .292

Table 46

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Confidence

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	27	7.556	2.063	.397
Medium GPA	64	7.625	2.236	.28
High GPA	186	8.478	1.792	.131

Table 47

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Confidence

Comparison:	Mean Diff.:	Fisher PLSD:	Scheffe F-test:	Dunnett t:
Low GPA vs. Medium GPA	-.069	.872	.012	.157
Low GPA vs. High GPA	-.923	.782*	2.697	2.323
Medium GPA vs. High GPA	-.853	.55*	4.658*	3.052

* Significant at 95%

Table 48

In the area of progress (Table 49), there was no significant interaction between the grade point average of the student and the parents understanding of their child's progress in school, $F(2,283) = .137$, $p = .8723$. The highest mean in this question was 9.00, recorded by the low GPA group (Table 50). The high GPA group followed with a mean of 8.905. The medium GPA reported a mean of 8.818.

One Factor ANOVA X 1 : GPA Level Y 1 : Progress

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	.718	.359	.137
Within groups	281	738.113	2.627	p = .8723
Total	283	738.831		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.033

Table 49

One Factor ANOVA X 1 : GPA Level Y 1 : Progress

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	28	9	1.388	.262
Medium GPA	66	8.818	1.538	.189
High GPA	190	8.905	1.678	.122

Table 50

In the area of process (Table 52), there was no significant relationship between grade point averages of the parents' students and their approval of the student led conference process, $F(2,283) = .799$, $p = .451$. The mean ($M = 8.949$) of the approval ratings for this question were the highest of all the other questions (Table 32). Parents of students with a high GPA reported the highest mean at 9.011 (Table 52). Parents of students with a medium GPA show a mean

of 8.727, and parents of students with a low GPA tabulated a mean of 8.679.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Process

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	5.622	2.811	.799
Within groups	281	989.177	3.52	p = .451
Total	283	994.799		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.01

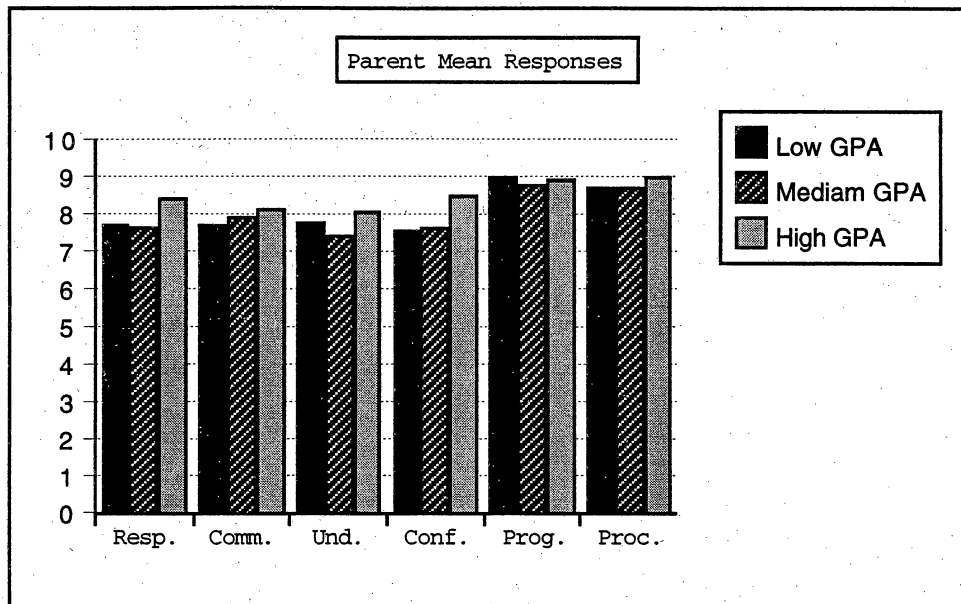
Table 51

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : GPA Level Y₁ : Process

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Low GPA	28	8.679	2.144	.405
Medium GPA	66	8.727	1.877	.231
High GPA	190	9.011	1.834	.133

Table 52

In summary, Graph 5 provides an overview of all the parent means to each question.



Graph 5

Analysis of Teacher Responses

The teacher sample consists of sixteen surveys. The middle school where this study was conducted employs twenty-five full time teaching positions. Included in this number are two RSP teachers, one serving the seventh grade and one serving the eighth grade; one SDC teacher teaching both seventh and eighth grades; one Opportunity teacher teaching both seventh and eighth grades; and one computer specialist/network manager teacher serving both grades seven and eight. Remaining are the regular education teachers: ten serving the seventh grade students, and ten serving the eighth grade students. All of the teachers were encouraged to complete the voluntary and anonymous survey. The data collected for this study shows surveys six seventh grade,

eight eighth grade surveys, and two seventh and eighth grade surveys were submitted.

The teachers were asked to rate the helpfulness of student led conferences in six areas: increasing student responsibility, improving communication between the teacher, the student, and the parents, understanding the student better, increasing the students' confidence, helping students understand their progress in school better, and the overall student led conference process (Appendix D). In the area of responsibility, the mean of the teachers' responses was 7.5 (Table 53). The mean in communication was 8.233 (Table 54). The mean ranking level of understanding was 7.5 (Table 55). In the area of confidence, the mean was 6.867 (Table 56). In the area of students comprehending their school progress, the mean was 7.75 (Table 57). The highest mean was for the overall process of student led conferences, which computed to a mean of 8.312 (Table 58).

X₁ : Responsibility

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.5	1.265	.316	1.6	16.865	16
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
5	10	5	120	924	2

Table 53

X₁ : Communication

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
8.233	1.083	.28	1.174	13.159	15
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
6	10	4	123.5	1033.25	3

Table 54

X₁ : Understanding

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.5	1.454	.389	2.115	19.392	14
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
4	9	5	105	815	4

Table 55

X₁ : Confidence

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
6.867	1.407	.363	1.981	20.497	15
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
4	9	5	103	735	3

Table 56

X₁ : Progress

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.75	1.39	.348	1.933	17.941	16
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
5	10	5	124	990	2

Table 57

X₁ : Process

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
8.312	1.957	.489	3.829	23.541	16
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum of Sqr.:	# Missing:
2	10	8	133	1163	2

Table 58

The teacher data was analyzed to measure the relationship between the teachers' grade levels assignments and the six different areas being assessed. In the area of

responsibility (Table 59), the data shows a moderately negative correlation ($r = -.4$) between teacher grade level and the perceived helpfulness of student led conferences in increasing student responsibility. In the area of communication (Table 60), there was a very weak negative correlation ($r = -.006$). In the area of understanding (Table 61), a weak, negative correlation ($r = -.289$) was noted. In the area of confidence (Table 62), there was a weak, positive correlation ($r = .262$). In regards to progress (Table 63), a positive correlation ($r = .261$) was found. In the area of process (Table 64), there was no significant correlation ($r = -.164$).

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : Grade Level Y₁ : Responsibility

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
14	-.264	-.4	.16

Note: 4 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 59

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : Grade Level Y₁ : Communication

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
13	-.003	-.006	3.049E-5

Note: 5 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 60

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : Grade Level Y₁ : Understanding

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
12	-.227	-.289	.084

Note: 6 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 61

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : Grade Level Y₁ : Confidence

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
13	.167	.262	.069

Note: 5 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 62

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : Grade Level Y₁ : Progress

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
14	.165	.261	.068

Note: 4 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 63

Corr. Coeff. X₁ : Grade Level Y₁ : Process

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
14	-.176	-.164	.027

Note: 4 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 64

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the teacher population sample. The purpose of this is to compare the means of the three groups of teachers, those teaching grade seven, those teaching grades seven and eighth, and those teaching eighth grade.

In the area of responsibility (Table 65), there was not a significant interaction between the groups, $F(2,15) = 1.3$, $p = .3057$. The mean for grade seven teachers and teachers of seventh and eighth was 8.00, for eighth only the mean was 7.00 (Table 66).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Responsibility

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	4	2	1.3
Within groups	13	20	1.538	$p = .3057$
Total	15	24		

Model II estimate of between component variance = .097

Table 65

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Responsibility

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Grade 7	6	8	1.414	.577
Grades 7/8	2	8	1.414	1
Grade 8	8	7	1.069	.378

Table 66

In the area of communication (Table 67), there were no significant interactions between the groups, $F(2,14) = .083$, $p = .9205$. The means were all similar (Table 68); grade

seven was 8.2, grade seven/eight was 8.5, and grade eight was 8.125.

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Communication

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	.225	.113	.083
Within groups	12	16.175	1.348	p = .9205
Total	14	16.4		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.281

Table 67

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Communication

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Grade 7	5	8.2	1.483	.663
Grades 7/8	2	8.5	.707	.5
Grade 8	8	8.125	.991	.35

Table 68

In the area of understanding (Table 69), no significant interactions were found, $F(2,13) = .591$, $p = .5706$. The mean of each group was 7.833 for grade seven, 8 for grades seven/eight, and 7 for grade eight (Table 70).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Understanding

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	2.667	1.333	.591
Within groups	11	24.833	2.258	p = .5706
Total	13	27.5		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.216

Table 69

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Understanding

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Grade 7	6	7.833	1.329	.543
Grades 7/8	2	8	1.414	1
Grade 8	6	7	1.673	.683

Table 70

In the area of confidence (Table 71), there was no significant relationship between the groups $F(2,14) = .72$, $p = .5066$. The mean score of student led conferences in increasing student confidence was considerably lower for this question than for the others (Table 72). The mean for grade seven was 6,667; grades seven/eight was 6.00; and for grade eight it was 7.286. The difference between grade seven/eight was -1.286 (Table 73).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Confidence

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	2.971	1.486	.72
Within groups	12	24.762	2.063	p = .5066
Total	14	27.733		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.127

Table 71

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Confidence

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Grade 7	6	6.667	1.633	.667
Grades 7/8	2	6	2.828	2
Grade 8	7	7.286	.756	.286

Table 72

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Confidence

Comparison:	Mean Diff.:	Fisher PLSD:	Scheffe F-test:	Dunnett t:
Grade 7 vs. Grades 7/8	.667	2.555	.162	.568
Grade 7 vs. Grade 8	-.619	1.741	.3	.775
Grades 7/8 vs. Grade 8	-1.286	2.509	.623	1.116

Table 73

In the area of progress (Table 74), there was no significant interaction between groups $F(2,15) = .647$, $p = .5397$. The mean for grade seven was 7.5; the mean for grades seven/eight was 7.00; and, the mean for grade eight was 8.125 (Table 75).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Progress

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	2.625	1.312	.647
Within groups	13	26.375	2.029	p = .5397
Total	15	29		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.151

Table 74

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Progress

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Grade 7	6	7.5	.548	.224
Grades 7/8	2	7	2.828	2
Grade 8	8	8.125	1.553	.549

Table 75

In the area of process (Table 76), there was no significant relationship between groups, $F(2,15) = .187$, $p = .8318$. The mean for grade seven was 8.667; for grades

seven/eight the mean was 8.5; for grade eight the mean was 8.00 (Table 77).

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Process

Analysis of Variance Table

Source:	DF:	Sum Squares:	Mean Square:	F-test:
Between groups	2	1.604	.802	.187
Within groups	13	55.833	4.295	p = .8318
Total	15	57.438		

Model II estimate of between component variance = -.735

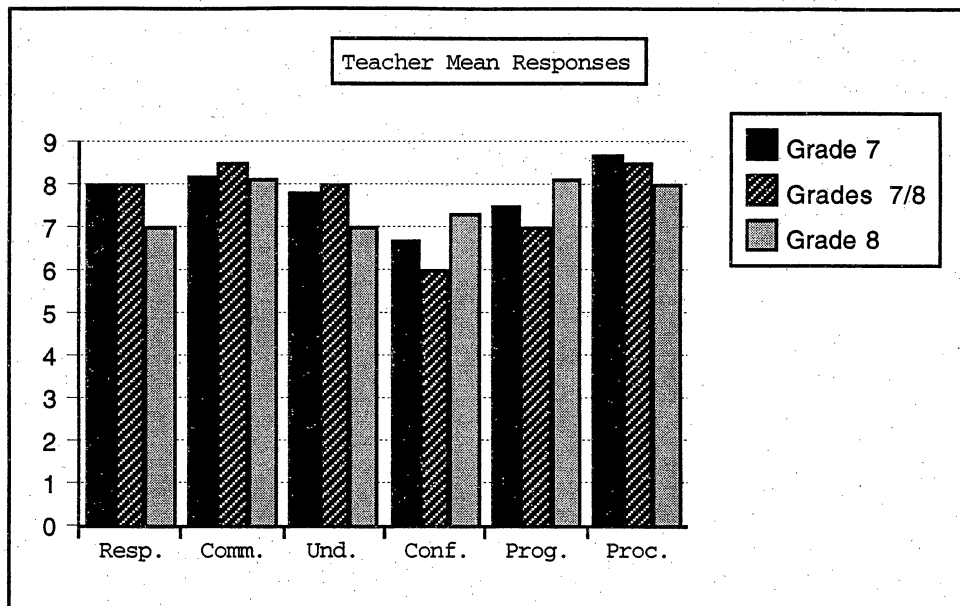
Table 76

One Factor ANOVA X₁ : Grade Y₁ : Process

Group:	Count:	Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:
Grade 7	6	8.667	1.211	.494
Grades 7/8	2	8.5	.707	.5
Grade 8	8	8	2.619	.926

Table 77

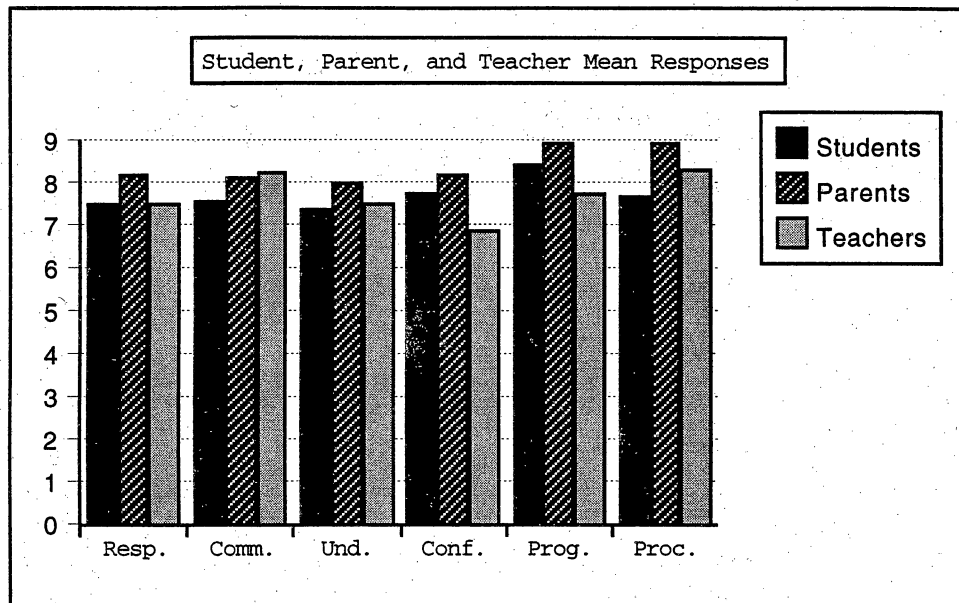
In summary, Graph 6 provides an overview of the teacher means in each group.



Graph 6

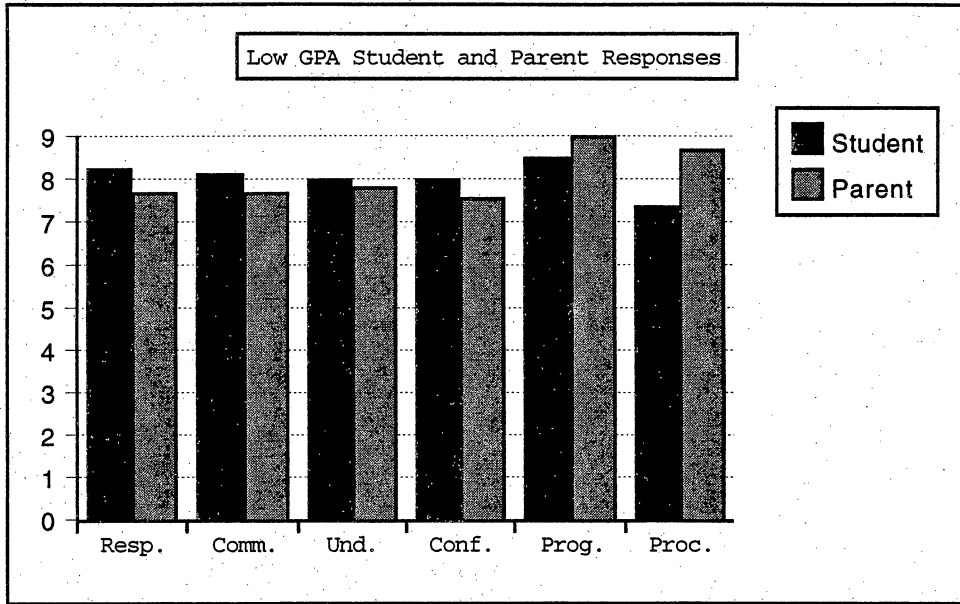
Summary

Graph 7 presents a graphic representation of the means from each population studied, the students, parents, and teachers. This graph illustrates the differences between populations.

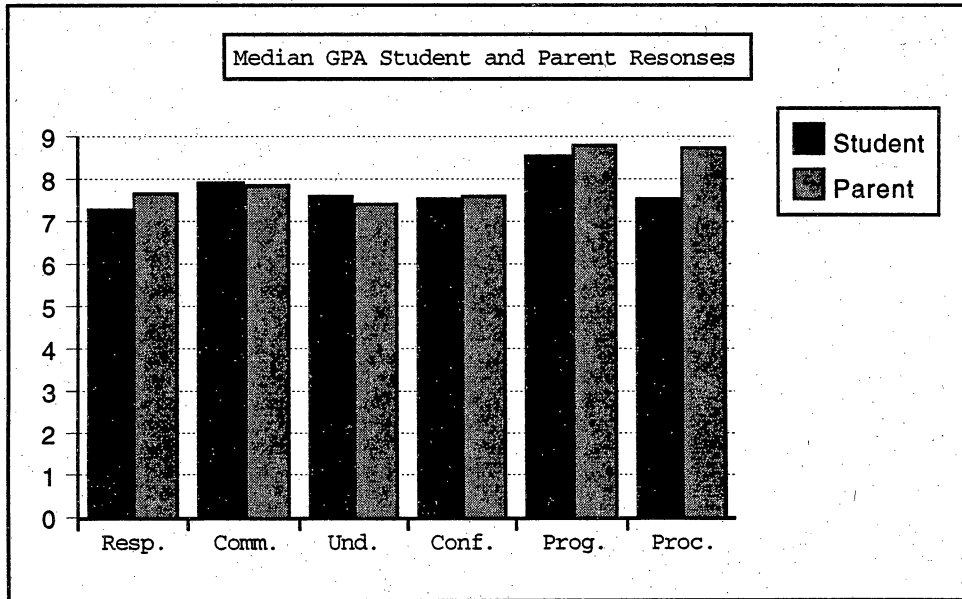


Graph 7

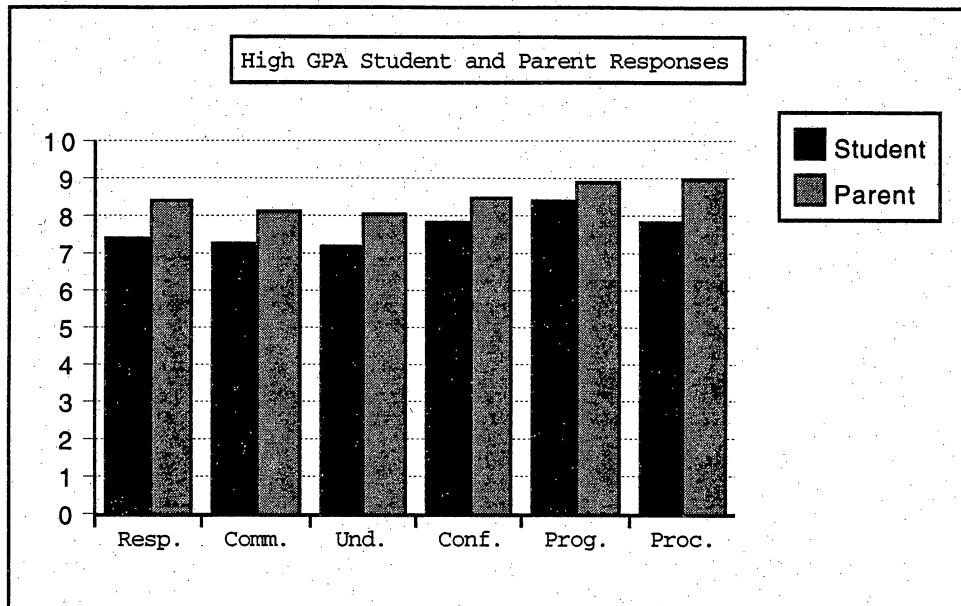
Graphs 8, 9 and 10 represent the different means from subgroups within the populations studied. Graph 8 shows the differences between the low GPA student and parent responses. Graph 9 illustrates the similarities between medium GPA student and parent responses. Graph 10 represents the differences between high GPA student and parent responses.



Graph 8



Graph 9



Graph 10

CHAPTER 5

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of student led conferences on the seventh and eighth grade students, the parents of the students, and the teachers in a small, rural middle school. The sample consists of over 309 student surveys, 313 parent surveys, and 16 teacher surveys. This study measured the approval rating of each of the following areas: increased student responsibility; improved communication; insight or better understanding of the student; increased student confidence; better understanding of the student's progress in school; and an overall rating of student led conferences. Student data was examined by comparing the responses of students with different grade point averages to determine if all students benefit from this process. Parent data was compared by their student's grade point average, and teacher data was compared by the different grade levels taught. Student and parent data was also compared.

Student and parent questionnaires were distributed following the student led conference at the end of the first quarter grading period. A small table with pencils was provided for the survey to be completed and placed into the privacy boxes. Participation in the survey was open to all students and parents who participated and was completely

voluntary and anonymous. Teacher surveys were distributed on the last conference day and were placed into the privacy boxes provided as well.

The questionnaires were similar in format and wording for all three participating samples (Appendixes 2, 3, and 4).

Data generated from the surveys was analyzed through statistical means. Pearson-r correlations were performed to determine if any significant correlations existed between the students' grade point average and the effect of student led conferences in improving student responsibility, communication, self-understanding, self-confidence, understanding of progress in school, and overall preference of the student led conference model. In addition, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there were any significant differences between the high, medium, and low performing student, the parents of high, medium, and low performing students, and seventh and eighth grade teacher responses to the effect of student led conferences in improving student responsibility, communication, self-understanding, self-confidence, understanding of progress in school, and overall preference of the student led conference model.

Discussion of Student Results

Students were asked to assess the helpfulness of student led conferences in various areas (Appendix B). Students used a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being labeled "Did not help" and 10

labeled "Very helpful." The first five questions began with, "Did the student led conferences help...", and followed with statements addressing five areas. The areas addressed were: becoming more responsible; increase communication between the student and the parent; understanding their self better; increasing student confidence; and, understanding their progress in school. The last question analyzed was, "How did you like the student led conference process?" In addition, students were asked to write in their current grade point average, and a line was provided for students to make comments.

Each of the 309 student surveys were analyzed through statistical means. The results were encouraging. Students rated the helpfulness of the student led conference process at a relatively high mean of 7.685. The coefficient of correlation showed no significant relationship between student performance and student rating for the questions asked on the survey. All of the correlations had weak r-values, the highest being a weak $r = -.121$ in the area of communication. The data shows that the grade point average of the student did not play a significant role in determining the students' preference in the areas studied. No one group of students, low GPA, medium GPA, nor high GPA, benefited more than another group. For the purposes of this study, it could be concluded that all students, regardless of performance in school, benefited equally from the student led conference format.

Of the five areas mentioned above, the ability of

student led conferences in helping students understand his or her progress in school ranked first with the highest mean of 8.434. This may be due to the self-evaluation sheets which are integral to the student led conference format, or because the student is presenting his or her education, he or she must become more aware of his or her progress in order to explain it to his or her parents. Also playing a role in students understanding of his or her progress is the inclusion and development of student portfolios. Using portfolios to assess students in learning gives students an active role in their learning and helps them take more ownership of their education.

Helping students increase their confidence was ranked second by the students with a mean of 7.767. In the researcher's experience in assisting students prepare for student led conferences, students exhibit a certain amount of apprehension when introduced to the new conference model. Accomplishing a tasks that appears threatening or intimidating can stretch students, and the feeling of accomplishment and pride are sure to follow a successful presentation. As the surveys were available immediately after completing the conference, it could be concluded that the majority of students felt good about their performance. In addition, some comments were included on the surveys mentioning the students' appreciation to be given a voice, an opportunity to speak and say what they wanted to say, and a forum for parents to actually listened to them.

Improved communication between the student and the

parent ranked third in student means with a mean of 7.552. The helpfulness of this process may be that students actually show parents the work they have accomplished, verse the grade they have earned. One student commented that this was the first time he had ever discussed his work with his parents. In a busy world, parents and children find it increasingly difficult to find time to discuss school work. Student led conferences may be of help in facilitating the dialogue between parent and child.

Increased responsibility ranked fourth with a mean of 7.498. Students found the conference helpful because they were required to prepare for the conference. They were on stage, and a poor performance would reflect badly on them, not the teacher. An empty portfolio had to be explained by the student, not the teacher. This motivated the student to become more responsible and accountable for their performance in school.

Ranking fifth in helpfulness, but with only a slightly less mean, was students' understanding of themselves with a mean of 7.4. This high of a mean signifies this component of student led conferences, while not as highly rated as others, is still significantly valued by the students. The researcher concludes the value is the result of students preparing portfolios and completing self-evaluation sheets.

A comparison between helpfulness rating levels and grade point averages reveals some interesting observations. In the area of progress, students from each of the grade point average groups rated the helpfulness of student led

conferences in better understanding their progress in school equally high, resulting in the highest mean of all the areas studied.

However, in the area of responsibility, students with a low GPA rated the helpfulness of student led conferences in becoming more responsible at 8.242, nearly a full point above the medium GPA mean of 7.313. Clearly, low performing students felt that student led conferences had benefited them in becoming more responsible in school than students in the other two groups.

This same pattern exists in the areas of communication, understanding, and confidence as well: low GPA students rated the helpfulness of each of these areas higher than the other groups. There could be several reasons for this. One, successful students may feel they already possess these skills or attributes, and therefore did not value the process as highly as students who are not currently performing well in school. Second, students not performing well in school may be more motivated to increase their school performance since the student led conference has provided a reason to perform. Third, filling a portfolio with accomplished school work may be a much bigger task for a low performing student than a student already achieving at high levels of performance.

Curiously, when students evaluated the helpfulness of the process of student led conferences, the results inverted. On this question, the mean of the high GPA group of students was 7.865, followed by the mean of the medium GPA at 7.576,

and then by the low GPA group at 7.394. Students performing well at school valued the student led conference more than those performing poorly. Why would the low performing students, who rated the helpfulness of student led conferences in the areas of responsibility, communication, understanding, and confidence higher than either the medium or higher performing group of students, rate the process significantly lower? To answer this question would require additional research. Low GPA students averaged a mean of 8.187 on the other questions, yet rated the process nearly a point lower at a mean of 7.394. A mean of 7.394 is not low; in fact, it shows firm support for the process. Perhaps low performing students did not appreciate being required to participate, despite the fact the process benefited them.

Discussion of Parent Results

Parents were asked to assess the helpfulness of student led conferences in various areas (Appendix C). Parents used a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being labeled "Did not help" and 10 labeled "Very helpful." The first five questions began with, "Did the student led conferences help..." and followed with statements addressing five areas. The areas addressed were: becoming more responsible; increase communication between the student and the parent; understanding their student better; increasing their student's confidence; and, understanding their student's progress in school. The last question analyzed was, "How did you like the student led conference

process?" In addition, parents were asked to write in their students current grade point average, and a line was provided for parents to make comments.

Each of the 313 parent surveys were analyzed through statistical means. The results showed strong support for student led conferences. Parents rated the helpfulness of the student led conference process at a significantly high mean of 8.949. The coefficient of correlation showed no significant relationship between the grade point average and the questions asked. All of the correlations had weak r-values, the highest being a weak $r = .240$ in the area of confidence. This positive correlation, although weak, represents a slight trend for parents of high achieving students to rate the helpfulness of student led conferences in increasing their child's confidence higher than parents of medium or low performing students. The data shows that the grade point average of the student did not play a significant role in determining the parents' preference in the areas studied.

According to the data, parents rated the ability of student led conferences in helping parents understand their student's progress in school ranked first among the benefits with the highest mean of 8.92. This may be because in student led conferences, actual student work is presented as evidence of learning, verse the explanation of a letter grade. In addition, the parent hears about the progress of his or her child from his or her child. Furthermore, the parent actually observes his or her child perform providing a convincing and

often impressive performance, the likes of which are a rare view into the child's school experience.

The area parents perceived to be the most helpful to their child was in increasing the child's responsibility. Receiving a mean of 8.212, increasing their child's level of responsibility was recognized as a positive benefit of student led conferences. The other areas followed in this order: increasing their student's confidence ($\bar{M} = 8.19$); improving communication between parent and child ($\bar{M} = 8.123$); and, better understanding their child ($\bar{M} = 7.997$). All of these means are relatively close in value, demonstrating little to no significant preference by parents.

In comparing the means of each of the three groups of parents, parents of low GPA students (0.00 to 1.99), medium GPA students (2.00 to 2.99), and high GPA students (3.00 to 4.17), the data provides some interesting results. Whereas low achieving students rated the benefits of responsibility, communication, understanding, and confidence higher than the other two groups, the parents of the low achieving students rated the benefits lower than the other groups. Parents of the high achieving students perceived the benefits as greater for their children than did parents of medium or low achieving students. This is true for every question but one: understanding the child's progress in school. In this question, the parents of the low achieving group recorded the highest mean at 9.00.

In following the same conclusion reached in the student results where it was reasoned that low achieving had more

room for growth and therefore rated the helpfulness of certain areas of student led conferences higher than high achieving students, parents of high achieving student may have rated the helpfulness of certain areas higher than parents of low achieving students because they may credit the process for their child's success. Parents of low achieving students may not have felt it helped their child enough - indeed, the grade point average for the low achieving group is 0.00 to 1.99, below the often dreaded C-average, 2.00 GPA.

Discussion of Teacher Results

Teachers were asked to assess the helpfulness of student led conferences in various areas (Appendix D). Teachers used a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being labeled "Did not help" and 10 labeled "Very helpful." The first five questions began with, "Did the student led conferences help...", and followed with statements addressing five areas. The areas addressed were: student responsibility; increase communication between the student and the parent; understanding their student better; increasing their student's confidence; and, in assisting the student to better understand their progress in school. The last question analyzed was, "How did you like the student led conference process?" In addition, teachers were asked to write in their current grade level, and a line was provided for teachers to make comments.

Each of the 16 teacher surveys were analyzed through statistical means. Teachers rated the helpfulness of the

student led conference process at a significantly high mean of 8.312. The coefficient of correlation produced one moderately negative correlation between the teachers' grade level and the level at which they responded to the question on responsibility. The pattern of responses suggested that the teachers in the eighth grade valued the helpfulness of student led conferences in assisting students to be more responsible less than did teachers in seventh grade. The other correlations produced no significant relationship.

The area perceived as the most helpful by teachers was in improving communication between the child and the parent ($M = 8.233$). Helping students to understand their progress in school ranked second with a mean of 7.75. Student led conferences provide an opportunity for the student and parent to have a meaningful dialogue regarding the student's progress in school. This communication between the child and the parent is valued more by teachers than the understanding of the child's progress, according to the data. Teachers viewed student led conferences as most helpful in developing communication, an important skill for the future, over the here-and-now importance of understanding the student's progress in school.

Improving student responsibility and understanding the student better followed, each with a mean of 7.5. Ranking last, with a mean of 6.867, was improving students' confidence.

The teacher ANOVA results were inconclusive due to the small sample. The comparisons between the three groups,

seventh grade teachers, seventh and eighth grade teachers, and eighth grade teachers, resulted in no significant interactions between them.

Comparison of Student, Parent and Teacher Results

When comparing the means from each of the populations studied (Table 78), one area of student led conferences stands out as being the most helpful - understanding student progress. This area ranked number one in both the student and the parent means, and number two in the teacher means. Whether this is due to the student self-evaluation sheets, goal setting or the presentation of subject portfolios, the result is clear. At the conclusion of the conference, the student understood his academic standing, and the parent understood what and how his or her child was learning.

Ranking of Student, Parent and Teacher Means

<u>Student</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Progress	8.434	Progress	8.92	Communi.	8.312
Confidence	7.767	Respon.	8.212	Progress	7.75
Communi.	7.552	Confidence	8.19	Respon.	7.5
Respon.	7.498	Communi.	8.123	Underst.	7.5
Underst.	7.4	Underst.	7.997	Confidence	6.867

Table 78

Communication, responsibility, and confidence follow, each valued higher in one population than the others.

Communication was ranked first in the teacher means, third in the students, and fourth in the parents. Is it that teachers perceived the benefit greater than it really was? The two parties who were suppose to be communicating did not rate communication as highly as teachers.

Responsibility ranked fourth in student means, the ones who were suppose to become more responsible as a result of student led conferences, yet the parent means places it second, and the teacher means places it third. Much of this was perception. Rarely does a middle school age student admit to being irresponsible, and seldom do the parents and teachers describe their children or students are being responsible.

In the area of confidence, the student mean places it second in rank, the parent mean has it third, and the teacher mean places it last in rank. The parent and teacher means were based on observation; the student mean was a reflection of personal experience. The latter holds more credibility.

The area student led conferences least helped, in comparison to the other areas, was understanding the student better. This ranked last with the students and parents, and fourth with the teachers. This question may have been deceiving. Originally, the survey contained the word insight in place of understanding. Insight was not a word familiar to students, so understanding replaced it. Either word is still somewhat vague, hard to define, and even harder to measure. Insight is often gained subtly, and can occur without much recognition.

In comparing students and their parents with a low GPA (Graph 8), the student means for responsibility, communication, understanding, and confidence were higher than the means of their parents in these same areas. However, when rating how they liked the student led conference process, the parents rated it significantly higher than the students. Students with low GPA's appreciated the benefits of student led conferences more than their parents, yet they did not like the process as much.

In comparing the student and their parent responses with medium GPA's (Graph 9), student means showed a preference in communication and understanding, while the parents valued responsibility and confidence more than their students did. Again, the parents rated the process much higher than their students did, but the means were considerably closer in the rating of the benefits.

In comparing the student and parent responses with high GPA's (Graph 10), the parent means show considerably more support for the areas of responsibility, communication, understanding, and confidence than their students report. This is opposite of the means of the low achieving student and parent means. The reason for this is unknown, however, it could be speculated that while low achieving students value the intrinsic benefits of student led conferences, their parent do not see the value reflected in the grade report. Parents of high achieving students, on the other hand, see their child performing well as reflected by a high grade point average and credit the school programs, while

their children, many of whom already possess the perceived benefits, do not value the process as highly.

Conclusions

Students, parents, and teachers score student led conferences with a high approval rating. In responding to the question relating to how they like the student led conference process, the parent mean response was an overwhelmingly supportive 8.949 on a scale of one to ten, ten being highest.. The teacher mean was 8.312, followed by an impressive student mean of 7.685.

The attribute of the student led conference format most valued was in understanding student progress. This attribute received a top mean score from the students and the parents, and the teacher mean rated it second. Improved communication between the child and the parent was top of the teacher mean, third with the students, and fourth with the parents. Increased student responsibility ranked second on the parent means, third with the teachers, and fourth with the students. Increased confidence ranked second in the student means, third with the parents and fifth with the teachers. Understanding the student better was fourth in the teacher mean, and fifth with both the student and teacher means.

The coefficient of correlation showed no significant relationship between student performance and student rating for the questions asked on the survey. The data shows that the grade point average of the student did not play a

significant role in determining the students' preference in the areas studied. No one group of students benefited more than another group. For the purposes of this study, it could be concluded that all students, regardless of performance in school, benefited equally from the student led conference format.

Recommendations

The results of this study support the underlying assumption that student led conferences provide many benefits to the students, parents, and teachers, as well as an improved conference model for parent-teacher conferences. However, there are eight areas of further study needed. The survey used in this study lacked some important demographic information, including grade level of the student, ethnicity of the student, and gender of the student. Does grade level make a difference in the approval rating? Does the student/family ethnicity make a difference? Does the student led conference process work better for boys or for girls? These are questions yet to be answered.

In addition, this study was conducted in a small, rural school where the process grew from the teachers within as a pilot program. How well does the model transfer to other schools? How well would the process do in a suburban school or an inner-city school? Or a more ethnically diverse school?

Perhaps the big question that needs to be answered is: How

does student led conferences improve student performance? At the school where this study was conducted, data was collect showing improved student attendance, decreased discipline referrals, and an increase in overall grade point average in the last two years. However, this data could not be directly linked to student led conferences because several other successful strategies were employed simultaneously. Regretfully, the value of student performance data was extremely underestimated when this study was initially conceived.

It is not enough to claim intrinsic value, benefits, or skills developed by students performing a student led conference - legislators, policy makers, administrators, parents, teachers, and yes, even students want to see results. While this study provides additional and much needed support for the student led conference model, it falls short of addressing the important issue of student performance.

APPENDIX A: Original Research Project

A Survey of Attitudes and Perceptions on the Use of Student Led Conferences by the Students, Parents, and Teachers at the school in the study

Paul Brian Meyers

August 1996

I. Problem Statement

Student led conferences are increasing in popularity. Portrayed as the "biggest breakthrough in communication about student achievement in the last four decades" (Paglin, 1996), student led conferences is a subject of continuing controversy and interest. More and more schools are replacing traditional parent-teacher conferences with student led conferences supported only with the evidence that student led conferences will increase the percentages of parents that actually attend (Hackmann, 1996). Schools using student led conferences have collected little data on the effectiveness of this new program. References collected for this study produced no reports of any formalized evaluation or data on how student led conferences impact the students, parents, or teachers. In a time when parents and legislators are demanding more accountability in public schools, this study attempts to provide the much need data to evaluate the

student led conference format.

Student led conferences are parent-teacher conferences that are directed by the student. The student leads the conference by explaining to his/her parents previously completed self-evaluation sheets on classroom behavior, work habits, and study skills. The students then discuss their strengths and weaknesses, followed by a presentation of their self-improvement plan including short and long term goals with action plans for each. Students then present to their parents their subject portfolios, and student work is shown and explained. Parents then have the opportunity to ask their student or the teacher any questions.

In explaining the student led conference format to teachers and administrators, most are so intrigued with the concept, the simplicity, and the innate potency that the format is implemented at their site swiftly and sometimes hurriedly. The success of the first year of the program, which is usually evaluated by the teachers involved, determines whether the program will continue or not the following year. With preparation of the students the main factor in the success of student led conferences (Grant et al., 1995; Jones, 1996), schools rushing to "get on board" can have disastrous results (Paglin, 1996). Thus, programs usually begin as pilot programs with teachers who volunteer to participate and are invested in the results. Schools with positive evaluations post their success on the Internet boasting "that well in excess of ninety percent of parents

and students prefer student led conferences to the traditional parent-teacher format." (Hackmann, 1996).

At the middle school in the study, the teachers and administration became euphoric at the results of our pilot program in 1992. We increased our parent participation from thirty-three percent to over ninety percent. Only two of the fifty-eight parents surveyed did not like the new format. During the next five years, support for the program grew from two teachers to nineteen. In 1996, with the help of peer pressure and a directive from the principal, we had reached our goal of one hundred percent participation of our teachers involved in student led conferences. While most teachers openly supported student led conferences, other teachers went along with the process. The results from this study were sure to produce a much more balanced and realistic picture of the effectiveness of student led conferences from the perspective of the student, the parent, and the teacher.

The accolades of student led conferences are abundant. "The process of student led conferences empowers students." (Grant et al., 1996) "The level of responsibility (student led conferences) brings to the student and the pride in accomplishment that can engender when (students) succeed is unprecedented." (Paglin, 1996) Are student led conferences having a positive impact on our students? Are our students being encouraged by the process to increase their academic success, or improve their communication skills, or take more responsibility? The primary purpose of student led

conferences when they began in the Pacific Northwest over ten years ago was to encourage students to accept personal responsibility for reporting their academic progress to the parents (Guyton & Fielstein, 1989; Little & Allen, 1989). Where are we now, ten years later? Have we strayed from the original intent of student led conferences? This study will describe the perceptions and attitude of the students, parents, and teachers involved in the first school-wide implementation of student led conferences in October of 1996.

II. Purpose Statement

The intent of this study was to examine the effect of student led conferences on students, parents, and teachers. This descriptive study was an attempt to determine the specific outcomes of student led conferences from the point of view of the student, parents, and teachers involved in this new format of parent-teacher conferences.

III. Research Questions

1. What do students perceive as the impact of student led conferences?
2. What do parents perceive as the benefits or drawbacks of student led conferences verses the traditional parent-teacher conferences?
3. What do teachers perceive as the benefits or drawbacks of

student led conferences?

IV. Research Methodology

After participating in a student led conference, students, parents, and teachers were asked to voluntarily complete a short survey regarding their perceptions of student led conferences. Their responses were tallied and organized, noting the frequency and major themes identified. The data derived was used to compile a list of specific student, parent, and teacher outcomes as a result of student led conferences.

V. Findings

The middle school at the time of the study had a population of 538 students and nineteen homeroom teachers. The total number of students that presented student led conferences was 478, or 88.8 percent. A total of seventy-four students responded to the survey, or 16 percent. Ninety-one parents responded to the survey, or 19 percent. Eleven out of nineteen teachers returned their survey, or 58 percent.

Findings of the study are presented in descriptive tables with brief narratives following each table. Tables 1-2 report specific findings related to the questions designed to collect data on the students' attitudes and perceptions concerning student led conferences. Tables 3-5 report

specific findings related to the questions designed to collect data on the parents' benefits and drawbacks concerning student led conferences. Tables 6-7 report specific findings related to the questions designed to collect data on the teachers' benefits and drawbacks concerning student led conferences.

Table 1. Student attitudes of student led conferences

N=74	
Positive impact (n=57)	77%
No impact (n=16)	22%
Negative impact (n=1)	1%

Table 1 shows that 77 percent of the students felt student led conferences had a positive affect on them.

Table 2. How did the student led conference have a positive impact on the student?

N=74	
Improved responsibility (n=16)	28%
Gained insight or awareness(n=16)	28%
Improved communication (n=16)	28%
Increased confidence (n=16)	11%
Other (n=3)	5%

Table 2 shows students felt that student led conferences had impacted them positively by improving

responsibility, gaining insight or awareness, improved communication, or increased confidence.

Table 3. Parent approval rating for student led conferences

N=91	
For (n=74)	81%
Not sure (n=11)	12%
Against (n=6)	7%

Table 3 shows that 81 percent of the parents support student led conferences.

Table 4. What did parents perceive as the benefits of student led conferences?

N=110 (Some parents gave more than one benefit)	
Held student accountable (n=40)	36.4%
Improved communication (n=29)	26.3%
Student centered (n=20)	18.2%
More informative (n=18)	16.4%
Other (n=3)	2.7%

Table 4 shows the top reason parents approved of student led conferences was because it held students accountable for their education.

Table 5. What did parents perceive as the drawbacks of student led conferences?

N=47 (Some parents gave more than one drawback)

Wanted more teacher input (n=17)	36.2%
Wanted to meet with all teachers (n=11)	23.4%
Did not want student present (n=8)	17.0%
Wanted to see student grades (n=7)	14.9%
Other (n=4)	8.5%

Table 5 shows parents want more teacher input and feedback at conferences.

Table 6. What did teachers perceive as the benefits of student led conferences?

N=20

Students were accountable (n=8)	40%
Increased parent participation (n=5)	25%
Students were involved (n=4)	20%
Speaking and leading skills (n=1)	5%
Student setting goal (n=1)	5%
Empowers students (n=1)	5%

Table 6 shows teachers view student accountability as the main benefit of student led conferences.

Table 7. What do teachers perceive as the drawbacks of student led conferences?

N=20

It takes a lot of time to prepare (n=7)	35%
Teachers can't attend each conference (n=4)	20%
Doesn't include grades (n=2)	10%
No incentive for student to prepare (n=1)	5%
Need more teacher input (n=1)	5%
No follow through (n=1)	5%
Too long (n=1)	5%
Too soon in school year (n=1)	5%
Lack of privacy (n=1)	5%

Table 7 shows teacher and student time needed to prepare for student led conferences is the biggest drawback.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the study that parents and teachers perceive student accountability to be the primary benefit of student led conferences (Tables 4&6).

Students reported that increased responsibility was one of the top benefits of student led conferences, but also weighed the benefit of improved communication and increased insight as top benefits. Since accountability begins with the realization you are in control of your own life (or destiny) and is measured by the actions of the person (also

referred to as responsibility), an argument could be made to combine the student result of responsibility and insight (table 2) to show accountability as the top student responses as well.

Improved communication is the second most valued attribute of student led conferences. Students, parents, and teachers agreed on this but for different reasons.

Students felt student led conferences helped them communicate with their parents. Many claimed it was their first time they had an opportunity to show their parents what they did in school. Parents felt student led conferences helped them understand what their student's life was like at school. Teachers enjoyed the insight gained from watching the dynamics as the student interacted with his/her parent. Nevertheless, communication is very important in effective schools, and student led conferences assisted in reinforcing the concept of the "triangle of learners" - student, parent, and teacher.

The main drawback of student led conferences as reported by parents were lack of teacher input and wanting to meet with each teacher. Each is a result of not educating parents properly before the conferences. If parents were expecting a similar conference as they had when their student was in elementary or when they had had a student in the middle school in years prior, then they were no doubt surprised and perhaps disappointed. By eliminating the parents past expectations through improved communication and preparation,

this complaint would diminish. Another possible reason behind the parent concern over lack of teacher input could be due to the fact that some teachers on staff did not fully support or participate in all the preparation prior to the conference and therefore may have included minimal teacher input.

The top teacher drawback was that the student led conferences took a lot of time to prepare. This is a concern that must be addressed before the next set of conferences. Teachers will need to be given more time to prepare. Not to address this issue is to sabotage the entire program. As stated before, research states that proper preparation is the main ingredient of success in student led conferences (Grant et al., 1995; Jones, 1996).

Our overall approval rating was 81 percent for parents, and 77 percent for students. This was significantly below what other schools had reported. This study offers a more realistic, representative approval rating due to 100 percent of the staff participating, verse a select few enthusiastic teachers running a pilot program. Some teachers are just not as committed or invested, therefore enthusiasm for the program drops resulting in a lower overall approval rating.

Some students, 22 percent (Table 1), reported that student led conferences had "no impact" on them. Curiously, after writing this statement, many students went on to validate the benefits of student led conferences with comments like, "It had no impact on me really. It made me realize that education was important." This type of comment

implies students didn't fully understand the question.

Many recommendations are needed in order to clarify the data received in this survey. One, fix the typographical error in the parent questionnaire. The question reads, "Compare this conference you have had in the past." It should read, "Compare this conference with conferences you have had in the past." a further refinement and to keep parents from comparing one student led conference to another, would be to rephrase the question to be, "Compare this student led conference to traditional parent-teacher conferences in the past." Two, simplify the collected data by producing a questionnaire verse an open-ended survey. Three, include a demographic section on the questionnaire to determine if the student, parent, or teacher had participated in student led conferences in the past. Four, remove the name line on the surveys. They should be anonymous and voluntary.

The main purpose of this study was to provide an authentic evaluation of student led conferences. Recently, many new ideas have been accepted and put into place on the recommendation of teachers invested in the outcome of a pilot program. In this study, the entire school population was surveyed - all the students, parents, and staff involved were given the opportunity to evaluate the new conference format.

The importance of this study rests in the data. Schools beginning the student led conference format can benefit greatly by learning from the shortcomings of those who have

begun them, and yielding to the information in the data the drawbacks indicate. Student led conferences done poorly can have a disastrous effect. (Paglin, 1996). Dr. Stiggins, head of the Assessment Training Institute based in Portland is quoted as saying, "This is not an easy idea to implement. It takes careful study and preparation, and an up front investment in professional development." (Paglin, 1996)

Proper communication together with adequate preparation will enable schools to successfully implement student led conferences. The benefits of this conferences format is shown in this study. Middle school age students are at a time in their life when they generally feel a desire for greater independence and are expected to assume increasing responsibility for their learning. Schools everywhere are struggling to find ways to engage students while winning parent support. Student led conferences have proven they are a format which can promote student responsibility, increases student accountability and inform parents effectively.

REFERENCES

Guyton, J., & Fielstein, L. (1989, December) Student-led parent conferences: A model for teaching responsibility. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 24(2), 169-172. ED 408 172.

Hackmann, D. G. (1996). Student led conferences at the middle level: Promoting student responsibility. *National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Bulletin*, 80(578), 31-36. ED 407 171.

Jones, K. (1996) Student parent-teacher conferences. [Online] Calgary Board of Education. Available: <http://www.cbe.ab.cay/b865/assess/SPTCONFERENCE.HTM> [1998, March30].

Little, N & Allan, J. (1989, February) Student-led parent-teacher conferences. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 23(3), 210-218. EJ 390 297.

Paglin, C. (1996) Caity's conference: Kids show their stuff at student led conferences. *Northwest Education*, [Online]. Available: http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/fall_96/article4.html [1998, March 30].

Student Led Conference Review

Student Self-Evaluation for the Teacher

Now that the conference is over, what are your feelings about student led conferences?

Which parts of the conference went as expected?

Which parts did not go as expected?

Do you feel you were prepared to lead this conference? Why or why not?

What will you do differently next time you lead your conference?

What impact did this conference have on you? In what ways did it change you or your outlook on your education?

Student Led Conferences Review

Parent to Teacher

Please take a moment to provide us with some feedback on our new approach to parent conferences. Thank you!

Compare and contrast this conference with other conferences you have had in the past. How was it better? How was it worse?

If we were to do this type of conference again, what suggestions could you give us?

Additional comments:

While this conference covered a lot of material, you may still feel the need to meet again and discuss in more length a particular issue. If so, please indicate below which teachers (or subjects) with whom you would like to meet. We will contact you to set an appointment.

I would like to meet with: _____

Your name: _____

Your student's name: _____

Telephone number: _____

Your student's homeroom teacher: _____

Teacher Review of Student Led Conferences

As a teacher, what do you see as the benefits of Student Led Conferences?

What are the drawbacks?

When we do these next year, what modifications would you suggest?

How has Student Led Conferences benefited you as a teacher?
(i.e. teaching methods, homework assignments, view of students, role as teacher/coach, student relations, etc.)

APPENDIX B: Student Survey

Please take a moment to provide us with some feedback on the conference process. Remember your input is valuable and helps us improve future conferences.

On a scale of 1 to 10 rate the following items:

1. Did this student-led conference help you become more responsible?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

2. Did this student-led conference help increase communication between you and your parent?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

3. Did this student-led conference help you understand yourself better?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

4. Did this student-led conference help increase your confidence?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

5. Did this student-led conference help you understand your progress in school?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

6. How did you like the student-led conference process?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

What is your current grade point average? _____

Comments: _____

APPENDIX C: Parent Survey

Please take a moment to provide us with some feedback on the conference process. Remember your input is valuable and helps us improve future conferences.

On a scale of 1 to 10 rate the following items:

1. Did this student-led conference help your child become more responsible?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

2. Did this student-led conference help increase communication between you and your child?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

3. Did this student-led conference help you understand your child better?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

4. Did this student-led conference help increase your child's confidence?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

5. Did this student-led conference help you understand your child's progress in school?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

6. How did you like the student-led conference process?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

What is your student's current grade point average? _____

Comments: _____

APPENDIX D: Teacher Survey

Please take a moment to provide us with some feedback on the conference process. Remember your input is valuable and helps us improve future conferences.

On a scale of 1 to 10 rate the following items:

1. Did the student-led conferences help your students become more responsible?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

2. Did the student-led conference help increase communication between your students and their parents?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

3. Did the student-led conference help your students understand themselves better?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

4. Did the student-led conference help increase your students confidence?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

5. Did the student-led conferences help your students understand their progress in school?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

6. How did you like the student-led conference process?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Did not help Very Helpful

What grade level do you teach? 7th 8th

Comments: _____

REFERENCES

Akin, J. (1993) Transforming the staff culture. Educational Leadership, 22(7), 26-30.

Arter, J., Spandrel, V., & Culham, R. (1995) Portfolios for assessment and instruction. ERIC Digest. ED 388 890.

Askew, J. (1997) Student portfolios and self-assessment rubrics. [On-line] Available: <http://pc65.frontier.osrhe.edu/HS/SCIENCE/ota4.htm> [1998, March 30].

Austin, T. (1994) Changing the view: Student-led parent conferences. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. ED 382 310.

Baber, S., & Tolensky, L. (1998) Student-led conferences. [On-line] The York Board of Education, Ontario, Canada. Available: <http://www.yrbe.edu.on.cay/~sicken/sly/home.htm> [1998, March 30].

Beane, J., & Lipka, R. (1987) When the kids come first: Enhancing self-esteem. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

Bernick, R., Rutherford, B., & Elliott, J. (1991) School and family conferences in the middle grades. Hampton, NH: RMC Research Corporation. ED 364 352.

Brown, R. (1991) Schools of thought. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Caledonia Middle School (1998) [On-line] Available: <http://www.caledonia.k12.mi.us/dist/annrept/bldgrep/msbldrep.html> [1998, March 30].

Claremont Graduate School (1992) Voices from the Inside. A Report on Schooling From inside the classroom. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate School.

Countryman, L. L., & Schroeder, M. (1996) When students lead parent-teacher conferences. Educational Leadership, 53(7), 64-68. EJ 522 790.

Covey, S. (1989) The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful lessons in Personal Change. New York: Fireside Books.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. New York: Harper Collins.

Daggett, W. (1997) Education is not a spectator sport. New York: Leadership Press.

Dalhiem, M. (Ed.) (1993) Student portfolios. Teacher to Teacher Series. National Education Association: NEA Professional Library.

Fogarty, R. (Ed.) (1996) Student portfolios: A collection of articles. Palatine, IL: IRI/Skylight. ED 392 542.

Fullan, M. (1993) Change forces: Probing the depths of education reform. Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Gardner, H. (1991) The unschooled mind. New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences. New York: Basic Books.

Glasser, W. (1992) The quality school: Managing students without coercion (2nd ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

Grant, J., Heffler, B., & Mereweather, K. (1995) Student led conferences. Using portfolios to share learning with parents. Markham, OH: Pembroke.

Guyton, J., & Fielstein, L. (1989, December) Student-led parent conferences: A model for teaching responsibility. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 24(2), 169-172. ED 408 172.

Hackmann, D. G. (1997). Student led conferences at the middle level. ERIC Digest. ED 407 171.

Hackmann, D. G. (1996). Student led conferences at the middle level: Promoting student responsibility. National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Bulletin, 80(578), 31-36. ED 407 171.

Hackmann, D. G., Kenworthy, J., & Nibblelink, S. (1995). Student led conferences: Encouraging student-parent academic discussions. Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Conference of the National Middle School Association, New Orleans, LA. ED 388 449.

Hirsch, E.D. (1987) Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Hubert, B., (1989) Students belong in the parent-teacher conference, too. Educational Leadership, 47(2) 30.

Jaeger, R., Gorney, B., & Johnson, R. (1994) The Other Kind of Report Card: When schools are grades. Educational Leadership, 52(2): 42-45.

Jones, K. (1996) *Student parent-teacher conferences*. [Online] Calgary Board of Education. Available: <http://www.cbe.ab.cay/b865/assess/SPTCONF.HTM> [1998, March30].

Johnson, P., (1996) Sharing portfolios with parents. Principal, 76(1) 44-45.

Kasse, S., (1994, November/December) Student led conferences: A new generation. Teaching Pre K-8, 25: 78-79.

Kaiser, A. (1993) Feeling good. Thrust for Educational Leadership, 22(7) 31-34.

Little, N & Allan, J. (1989, February) Student-led parent-teacher conferences. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 23(3), 210-218. EJ 390 297.

Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Work. (1996) Teacher's guide to parent and family involvement. [Online]. National PTA and NEA. Available http://www.pta.org/programs/tchwk9_10.htm [1997, August 2].

McGinnis, A. (1987) Confidence: How to succeed at being yourself. Minneapolis, MN; Argsburg Publishing.

Meier, D. (1996) Supposing that... Phi Delta Kappan, 271-276.

Meier, D. (1995) The Power Of Their Ideas: Lessons for America From a Small School in Harlem. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Melvin, C. (1991) Translating Deming's 14 points for Education. The School Administrator, 19-23.

Moyers, S. (1994, October) Giving students a voice at conference time. Instructor, 104: 64-66.

Noli, P. (Ed.) (1993) Coming to grips with portfolio assessment in your classroom. Unpublished material. The California Elementary Education Association.

Paglin, C. (1996) Caity's conference: Kids show their stuff at student led conferences. Northwest Education, [Online]. Available: http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/fall_96/article4.html [1998, March 30].

Parent power: Promoting awareness and involvement in schools (1996). Student led conferences put kids in charge. [Online] Available: <http://www.parentpower.org/wnew896.html> [1997, August 2].

Paulson, F. L., & Paulson, P. R. (1994) Student-led portfolio conferences. ED 377 241.

Picciotto, L. P., (1996) Student-led parent conferences: How to launch and manage conferences that get parents involved and improve student learning. Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic. ED 401 042

Rotter, J., Robinson, E., & Fey, M. (1987). Parent-teacher conferencing: What research says to the teacher (2nd. ed.). Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Santa, C. (1995, April) Assessment: Students lead their own conferences. Teaching Pre K-8, 25(7): 92, 94.

Schlechty, P. (1997) Inventing better schools: An action plan for educational reform. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schlechty, P. (1990) Schools for the 21st century: Leadership Imperatives for Educational Reform. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schmoker, M. (1996) Results: The key to continuous school improvement. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Senge, P. (1990) The Fifth Discipline: The Art and practice of the learning organization. New York: Doubleday.

Sizer, T. (1996) Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Sizer, T. (1992) Horace's School: Redesigning the American School. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Sizer, T. (1986) Rebuilding: First steps by the coalition on essential schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 68: 38-42.

Sizer, T. (1984) Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Student led conferences put kids in charge. (1996, August) [On-line] Available: <http://www.parentpower.org/wnew896.html> [1998, March 30].

Student led conferencing: voices of students in assessing their learning [Online], 19 paragraphs. Available <http://wwwvms.utexas.edu/~possible/sly.html> [1998, March 30].

Uselman, J. (1996) Aiding seventh and eighth graders at a private Christian school to take ownership if their own learning. Ed.D. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, 1996. ED 401 010.

Walters, J., & Seidal, S. (1993) The designs of portfolios for authentic assessment. Draft Version. Harvard Project Zero. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Boston.

Wiggins, G. (1996) Practicing what we preach in designing authentic assessments. Educational Leadership, 18-25.

Wiggins, G. (1993) Assessment, Authenticity, Context and Validity. Phi Delta Kappan: 200-214.

Workplace basics: The skills employers want. (1988) Report issued jointly by the American Society for Training and Development and the United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.