Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

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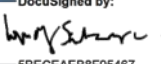
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Utilizing Video Communication Applications

to Improve Parent-Teacher

Communication

by

Nolan Hutton

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Abstract

This research intended to determine the benefits and challenges related to the use of video communication applications to inform the recommendation of utilizing tools like Skype to facilitate parent-teacher communication. The literature revealed questions pertaining to the use of video communication applications such as Skype to offer the convenience of computer mediated communication (CMC) while providing some of the features of face to face (FTF) communication, access to tone and body language. The research questions addressed in this research included: RQ1: What factors of video conferencing applications appeal to parents and teachers and what factors dissuade use? RQ2: How did the use of video conferencing applications like Skype effect the frequency and quality of parent teacher communication? To address these questions, a series of surveys regarding the use of video communication applications were distributed and a parent teacher conference offering Skype as a mode of communication was held. The quantitative data provided by these surveys was analyzed using frequency distribution and the qualitative data was analyzed using the Iterative Framework. The research found that most families were satisfied with parent-teacher communication and utilized email as their primary means of communication. However, the group of families that utilized Skype as mode of communication for a parent-teacher conference expressed interest in continuing to use this method of communication, often citing that it was a convenient mode for working parents to participate. Educators may want to consider this research when determining how best to utilize video communication applications to improve parent-teacher communication.

Keywords: computer mediated communication, communication, technology, face to face communication, parent-teacher communication, parent involvement, video communication application.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter One: Definition of Problem

Teachers and parents require a variety of modes of communication to participate in the various types of dialogue required to collaborate meaningfully to raise the achievement of students and children. This chapter states the purpose of research, which is to: understand the potential of utilizing communication applications to improve parent-teacher communication; preview the literature that comments on parent teacher communication, parent involvement and communication technology; preview the methodology, analysis of surveys utilizing the iterative framework and frequency distribution; state the significance of research, potentially improving the quality and frequency of parent-teacher communication; and provide definitions of key terms.

Purpose of Research

Establishing opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate can be challenging for a variety of reasons like conflicting work schedules, language barriers, and lack of childcare (Georgiou, 1998). Parents often use asynchronous means of communication like email to circumvent the challenge of scheduling face to face (FTF) meetings, however, Thompson (2008) found that parents and teachers preferred FTF communication for complex issues, like classroom behavior or academic challenges. Murray, McFarland-Piazza and Harrison (2014) state that opportunities for parent involvement should be accessible. Furthering the idea of accessibility, Nitza and Roman (2016) suggest that computer mediated communication (CMC) like video conferencing, among other CMC options to improve communication, should be explored. This research intends to determine whether teachers and parents should pursue using video conferencing through computer-based communication applications like Skype by addressing the research questions:

RQ1: What factors of video conferencing applications appeal to parents and teachers and what factors dissuade use?

RQ2: How did the use of video conferencing applications like Skype effect the frequency and quality of parent teacher communication?

If parents can engage in the complex dialogue that email doesn't support without having to leave work or arrange for child care, parent-teacher communication may occur more frequently. This dialogue may then include more complex topics providing teachers and parents higher quality information in terms of supporting students academically and socially.

Preview of Literature

While reviewing literature to address the above research questions, three key areas emerged: parent-teacher involvement, parent-teacher communication, and communication technology. Thompson (2008), a leading author on the subject of parent-teacher communication, suggests that the research linking parental involvement to academic achievement has inspired a "substantial push" to increase parent involvement in schools (p. 202). Kraft and Rogers (2015) note that Americans consistently cite increased parental support as a priority for improving student achievement. Santiago (2016) suggests theoretical models indicate the significant influence of the home and school settings on a child's development. Iruka, Winn, Kingsley and Orthodoxou (2011) further highlight that the relationship between parents and teachers is considered pivotal to academic and social emotional progress. Thompson, Mazer and Flood (2015) suggest that the proliferation of smart phones is altering the modes in which parents and teachers communicate. Further, Nitza and Roman (2016) emphasize that CMC is an efficient way to improve parent teacher communication.

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Preview of Methodology

To collect data a survey was distributed to teachers and parents of an elementary school in southern California regarding parent-teacher communication practices with an emphasis on the use of communication applications. One-hundred-one surveys were collected for analysis. Then parents of students from a classroom at the elementary school were offered the opportunity to participate in a parent-teacher conference utilizing a video conferencing communication application. These parents were given a survey with open ended questions regarding their experience.

To analyze a series of surveys regarding the research questions above, two methods will be utilized. The first which is quantitative, is frequency distribution (Manikandan, 2011). Frequency distribution illustrates the number of times a response or class occurs in comparison to other classes. For example, the survey administered contained 1-5 Likert scales. Frequency distribution would indicate how many survey participants chose each answer, demonstrating which answer had the highest frequency. In the case of the survey questions posed, high or low frequencies would indicate interest or feasibility of utilizing communication applications for school events like parent-teacher conferences.

The second method used was the Iterative Framework (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This method was used to analyze responses to open ended questions on the surveys related to perceived pros and cons related to using video conferencing communication applications for events like parent teacher conferences and questions related to describing the quality of communication when using these applications. This is a framework which imposes three questions on qualitative data analysis that serve to ensure that the researcher develops impartial conclusions that relate strictly to the data presented. This will guide the research process in

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determining whether it is worthwhile to pursue promoting this form of communication on the

campus and recommending it to fellow educators and administrators.

Significance of Research

If the data indicates that computer-based communication applications offer a feasible

mode of parent-teacher communication that facilitates complex conversations that are not

appropriate for email, then this research is promising in that it has the potential to increase the

frequency and quality of communication between teachers and parents, particularly for

challenging students. Parents and teachers will be more likely to determine behavioral or

academic interventions as a team which can increase the effectiveness of the strategies. This

could serve to increase academic achievement for students that have challenges academically or

behaviorally in a relatively cost-effective manner.

Summary of Chapter

This research intends to determine whether video conferencing communication

applications are an effective mode of communication for parents and teachers. The research

indicates that CMCs should be investigated as a means of improving parent-teacher

communication which may improve academic achievement and social-emotional development.

A series of surveys related to parent-teacher communication and the use of video conference

applications. The surveys were analyzed using a mixed methods approach. The survey questions

with Likert-scale response were analyzed using frequency distribution. The surveys with open

ended questions were analyzed using the iterative process.

Definitions

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC): Communication that occurs with the use of a

computer.

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Face to Face Communication (FTF): Communication that occurs in person.

Video Communication Applications: Computer based communication applications like Skype,

Zoom, and Facetime which offer visual and auditory communication between communicators in

different locations.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

Parent-teacher communication is a topic that many researchers identify as having a positive correlation with student achievement (Iruka, Winn, Kingsley & Orthodoxou, 2011; Kraft & Rogers, 2015; Thompson, 2008). Though the research is conflicted as to how parent-teacher communication specifically impacts student achievement, and some research indicates that there is not a correlation between this communication and academic performance, researchers consistently state the need for further research to leverage the power of these two key stakeholders in the field of education (El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). While emergent research discusses the use of technology—email and cell phones—to improve parent teacher communication (Chena & Chena, 2015; Ho, Hung & Chen, 2013; Thompson, Mazer & Flood, 2015) there is a need for further research into the effect of specific communication applications, i.e. Skype, Facetime and Zoom, on parent teacher communication. For teachers to have the best understanding of the potential impact of parent teacher communication, research exploring the most current forms of communication is required. To contribute to the research on parent-teacher communication, the following research questions concerning (RQ1) which factors of video conferencing applications appeal to parents and teachers and which dissuade use and (RQ2) ways in which the use of video conferencing applications like Skype effect the frequency and quality of parent teacher communication will be addressed. Articles for consideration were pulled together for this literature review by searching the terms 'parent,' 'teacher,' 'communication,' 'involvement' and 'technology' in the California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) library Article + database. Relevant articles were selected using the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose (CRAAP) test for each source. Most of the research articles chosen employed a quantitative method which analyzed data collected from surveys for

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trends or a qualitative method in which interviews or surveys with open ended questions were

analyzed using various frameworks that analyzed the social use of technology in terms of the

educational setting. Some of the research drew correlations between academic performance or

behavior in the school setting and parent teacher communication or involvement. The research

revealed three major themes: parent involvement, parent teacher communication and

communication technology.

Parent Involvement

Active parent-teacher communication facilitates constructive parent involvement, which

research indicates positively effects student performance (Iruka, Winn, Kingsley & Orthodoxou,

2011; Marlow, 2016; Santiago, Garbacz, Beattie & Moore, 2016). To understand the potential

influence of parent-teacher communication, it is key to understand the benefits of parent

involvement. Families and schools each play a critical role in a child's development (Santiago et

al., 2016, p. 1003). The significance of this relationship is affirmed by Iruka, Winn, Kingsley and

Orthodoxou. (2011) when they suggest,

> Home and school are the two primary ecological contexts that support young
>
> children's growth during the early years, and the connection between home
>
> (parents) and school (teachers) has long been viewed as an essential influence in
>
> children's academic and social-emotional success (p. 388).

In an ecological framework, parent involvement is described as the mesosystem that unites the

autonomous microsystems, home and school. (El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010, p.

988). While discussing effective practices for parent teacher conferences, Marlow (2016)

suggests that teachers and parents must work together to support students in achieving their

goals. The research repeatedly notes the value of unifying the two environments which have the

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most influence on a child's development—home and school. Teachers and parents that

communicate regarding a student's needs and challenges can identify specific strategies to

effectively support the students learning (Iruka et al., 2011, p. 388). Parent involvement can lead

to shared instructional and social development knowledge and strategies which can increase the

efficiency at which children or students reach the goals identified by their parents and teachers.

(El Nokali, 2010, p. 988).

Several studies have sought to quantify or validate the effect of parent involvement on

student achievement academically, and more recently, socially. To determine the relationship

between parent involvement and student performance, El Nokali et al. (2010) performed a study

in which the level of parent involvement as quantified by parent and teacher surveys was

compared to standardized achievement and social emotional growth measures from birth to 5th

grade. El Nokali et al. (2010) found that frequency of parent involvement did not share a positive

correlation with student progress on academic skills. While Nokali et al. (2010) noted that some

literature did not find a correlation between parent involvement and student performance, many

positive associations between parent involvement and student performance have been established

in education literature (p. 989). Though this data provides evidence that the connection between

academic performance is unrelated to parent involvement, further research is required to

definitively reduce the discrepancy in the current research findings. Nokali et al. (2010) suggests,

> past findings of positive between-child associations of parent involvement and
>
> achievement may be artifacts of selection bias, whereby involved parents differed
>
> from less involved parents in a variety of ways such as in their motivation and
>
> beliefs about parenting, education, and their children's development (p. 1001),

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which could explain the discrepancy in the research noted above. It is also proposed that parent

involvement is most effective when teachers and parents coordinate to target specific academic

skills or subjects (El Nokali et al. 2010), suggesting that research needs to be done considering

the effect of parent involvement on academic achievement regarding student specific academic

deficits or challenges.

      While the literature is mixed when discussing the effects of parent involvement on

academic achievement, the growing research regarding parent involvement and social emotional

development suggests that the two are positively correlated. Increased parent involvement is

associated with positive social skills and behavior (Nokali et al., 2010, p. 996). In their study,

Iruka et al. (2011) examined the relationship between parent involvement and the social skills of

kindergartners, particularly regarding ethnicity and family income level by examining the

relationship between parent-teacher relationships and social skills as determined by parent and

teacher rating scales (p. 391). Iruka et al. (2011) also looked for associations related to

race/ethnicity and family income (p. 391). This research is critical because it speaks to the

relevance of parent involvement generally, and specifically addresses the growing population of

students that are impacted by achievement gaps in the education system. "With minority

students, especially Latinos, projected to be an ever-increasing proportion of children under the

age of 18, the home-school connection becomes more critical because most teachers have limited

in-depth knowledge and understanding of Latino children's home contexts" (Iruka et al., 2011, p.

390). Generally, positive home-school relationships are positively correlated with child

development which may reduce issues related to adjusting to kindergarten (Iruka, 2011).

Utilizing similar instructional strategies and applying consistent reinforcement identified through

a proactive relationship between teacher and parent across school and home settings is a

fundamental best practice for young children. More specifically, Iruka et al. (2011) examines the

concept of trust between parent and teacher or home and school, to determine whether this

relationship quality improves the effects of parent involvement. For example, Iruka et al. (2011)

cited Peet, Powell and O'Donnel's (1997) finding that a mutual understanding of a child's

academic performance and participation is correlated with a higher grade-point average, when

compared to children whose parents and teachers have conflicting perceptions of a child's

performance (p. 389). In this sense, having a shared understanding, or trust in each other's

assessment correlated to academic achievement. Iruka et al. (2011) also noted that these

dissimilarities caused parents and teachers to develop misperceptions about each other which

discouraged communication and even led to a diminished sense of respect (p. 390). Conversely,

a lack of proactive communication may be detrimental to parent involvement and therefore

prevent relationships that could serve to improve student performance.

Iruka et al. (2011) sought to determine whether this correlation similarly effected

opportunities for social development. Iruka et al. (2011) found that kindergarten students were

rated as socially confident more frequently when teachers indicated a "strong relationship" with

the student's parent (p. 399). This result affirms previous research that indicates a positive

correlation between parent involvement and social competence. Iruka et al. (2011) goes on to

report that children whose teachers reported a strong relationship with parents were less likely to

have behavioral issues (p. 400). Students that spend less time resolving social challenges or

experiencing consequences related to problem behaviors have more time to engage in positive

social interactions and the academic curriculum. This suggests that in the absence of a strong

parent-teacher relationship, children are more likely to experience engagement and social

challenges which may have a detrimental effect on their performance in school, academically and socially (Iruka et al., 2011, p. 403). It should also be noted that an

> increase in the strength of parent-teacher relationships, as indicated by more
> communication, trust, and agreement, was associated with increased likelihood
> that African American children would be rated as more socially competent by
> parents and less aggressive by teachers compared to Caucasian children (Iruka et
> al., 2011, p. 403),

demonstrating the significance of developing proactive, positive relationships with the families of African American students as a means of reducing the achievement gap.

An effective parent-teacher relationship, which includes frequent communication, trust, and a shared understanding of a child are pivotal when addressing social challenges and aggressive behavior (Iruka et al., 2011, p. 405). Santiago et al. (2016) further develops the significance of parent involvement based on a foundation of trust. Santiago (2016) defines trust within his study as the expectation that each person will act in accordance with their role, for example the teacher is "open, honest, benevolent, and reliable" (Santiago, 2016, p. 1003). The role of the teacher in establishing a relationship with the parents through open and consistent communication is essential. Santiago et al. (2016), cited Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, and Aupperlee's (2009) finding that parent involvement is correlated with positive parent-teacher relationships as described by factors including "trust, warmth, and communication" (p. 1005).

Teachers and educational institutions should provide opportunities for parents to become directly involved in the education practice to provide more frequent opportunities for communication. Utilizing parent and teacher surveys to determine level of trust and social competence in comparison to free and reduced lunch, caregiver, and English Language Learner

data, Santiago et al. (2016) looked to determine predictors for a parent's capacity to trust a

teacher or school and a correlation between parent trust and social behavior. Santiago et al.

(2016) found that

> a student's eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch significantly predicted a
>
> decrease in parent trust in their child's teacher…. The presence of an alternate
>
> caregiver in the home significantly predicted an increase in parent trust in their
>
> child's teacher…. Zero-order correlation of the family's primary home language
>
> significantly predicted parent trust in school, but the unique variance explained by
>
> that variable (i.e., family's primary home language) did not (p. 1012-1013).

These results continue to indicate the need for school institutions to facilitate positive parent

involvement opportunities through frequent parent-teacher communication, particularly

regarding high need student populations like students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Parent-Teacher Communication

According to Thompson (2008) "a substantial push for parental involvement, including

parent-teacher communication, has occurred at these levels due in large part to the mounting

body of research that links parental involvement to increased academic achievement" (p. 202).

Once the significance of parent involvement is understood, it is important to analyze parent

teacher communication which, as suggested above, facilitates parent involvement. A long history

of research reflects an interest on the part of parents and teachers to improve parent-teacher

communication. Effective parent-teacher communication can increase parental involvement

which develops public interest and support of schools (Stafford, 1987, p. 182). School sites

benefit from parent involvement through volunteer support, financial support, and information

about specific students which supports instruction and intervention. Though Georgiou (1998)

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proposes that school sites in Cyprus are complacent in terms of parent-teacher communication systems, the statement, "the teachers believed that more communication was needed for the two groups to understand each other better," suggests otherwise (p. 365). Educators should provide a variety of modes of communication to demonstrate the school's willingness to overcome the complex barriers that inhibit communication for many families (Murray, McFarland-Piazza and Harrison, 2014, p. 1033). Americans demonstrate their desire to improve parent-teacher communication when they identify "increased parental support as a top priority" (Kraft and Rogers, 2015, p. 49). Parent teacher communication is a priority that must be continually examined as school demographics and communication technology are constantly changing.

For some school sites this means actively engaging in a campaign to identify and confront challenges related to parent teacher communication. Georgiou (1998) modeled such a campaign on a national level in Cyprus. In his study he found that parents wanted to increase their involvement but were unconfident and unsure of their role in the educational system (Georgiou, 1998, p. 363). While he attributed this resentment to social and political issues within Cyprus, when considering barriers to communication in any setting, it is important to recognize that there may be strong emotional factors that prevent open communication between parents and teachers. Georgiou (1998) determined that, within the urban setting, parents were most interested in learning about discipline methods to support behavior at home (p. 365). In his study Georgiou (1998) collected parent feedback on possible strategies for addressing concerns, and parents suggested the action group schedule informational meetings led by specialists in education regarding adolescent issues, demonstrating that the communication challenges had concrete solutions which parents and school sites could address, given opportunities to plan together (p. 365). He repeated this experiment in the rural setting and found that the top priority for parents

was information regarding homework as they did not feel they had the language or math skills to support their children academically (Georgiou, 1998, p. 365). Again, Georgiou, found a specific issue that could be remedied, if the parents and teachers in that community had the opportunity and means to communicate. Though establishing these opportunities is a challenge, as parents are a diverse group with a variety of communication obstacles related to proximity, language and other factors (Georgiou, 1998, p. 366).

While a positive association between student performance and parent involvement has been demonstrated, the factors that contribute to this relationship require further investigation (Kraft and Rogers, 2015, p.50). Parent-teacher communication is complex. There are a variety of logistical issues, like scheduling conflicts and language barriers, but there are also the emotional challenges related to discussing social or academic challenges as they relate to instructional and parental strategies. Teachers and parents must persevere through the above challenges because teachers have information that can motivate parents to actively participate in their child's education and parents can influence their child's school behavior and academic success (Kraft and Rogers, 2015, p.50). As remarked when discussing parent involvement, parents and teachers can plan interventions and instruction more efficiently when sharing their collective knowledge. In a study in which parents were provided weekly communications, like a short call, text or email, Kraft and Rogers (2015) discovered "that weekly teacher-to-parent communication in the form of messages sent to parents from teachers increased the probability [that] a student earned credit for each class they took by 6.5 percentage points" (p. 50). When analyzing the data, Kraft and Rogers (2015) also found that the increase in passing rates was attributed to the parents addressing specific ways to improve school performance with their children (p. 50). While teachers and parents often agree that parent-teacher communication is beneficial, "evidence

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suggests this communication is infrequent and unsystematic in most schools" (Kraft & Rogers, 2015, p. 60). School systems must try to capitalize on the potential benefits related to specific, frequent communication like that which was described in Kraft and Rogers (2015) study by utilizing current technology to establish convenient systematic communication between parents and teachers. It should also be considered that this parent-teacher communication program, which provides statistically significant results, is cheaper than other educational interventions (Kraft and Rogers, 2015, p. 50). Any tool, strategy or intervention that can positively impact student performance in a cost-effective manner should be considered as a high priority in a system that is often strained by budgetary concerns.

Researching parent-teacher communication systems is critical currently as communication applications and web-based learning management systems provide relatively inexpensive methods for communicating individualized information to parents regarding student performance (Kraft and Rogers, 2015, p. 61). This is particularly significant for supporting high need student populations. According to Murray et al. (2014)

> it has also been argued that schools typically operate according to middle-class values and are better able to facilitate communication with parents who share these values and beliefs. Hence, it may be more difficult to engage parents who hold a different set of values related to education, or who differ in cultural or economic backgrounds (p. 1034).

Finding effective ways to communicate with families from low socio-economic backgrounds could prove to be incredibly beneficial in terms of raising the achievement of a population that performs below its potential. This is similarly true for the English Language Learner population. "Dyson (2001) found that in a setting where English was the dominant language, parents who did

not speak English as their first language communicated less frequently with their child's teacher

than parents for whom English is their first language" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 1035). While the

logistical challenge may be different, schools must look at communication systems and available

resources like technology to increase the frequency and quality of communication for both these

populations, which could serve to close the achievement gaps within the education system. To

begin with, the role of the regular teacher outreach, which is correlated with parent involvement,

must not be overlooked (Murray et al., 2014, p. 1047). Communication systems should include

accessible opportunities for parents to participate, supports that promote parent involvement, and

opportunities that encourage parents to utilize their strengths and talents (Murray et al., 2014, p.

1033). Schools have to offer a variety of methods for parent-teacher communication to ensure

that all families can communicate directly with their child's teacher, as there is no single system

that will work for all families.

As educators consider systems of communication, it is important to look at current trends

like computer mediated communication (CMC) to ascertain the benefits and challenges

associated with current practices to guide decisions for future practices. Initial studies of CMC

portrayed it as an impersonal mode of communication best suited for completing specific tasks,

rather than promoting the relational communication required for complex dialogue topics, which

implies that email may not be a sufficient mode of communication for sensitive topics

(Thompson, 2015, p. 203). Parents and teachers have stated that email is the most effective mode

of communication when discussing grades, noting that the mode included "simple, concrete

messages" (Thompson, 2008, p. 208). Email also effectively communicates information like

meeting dates and times (Thompson, 2008, p. 209). While parents and teachers indicated that

addressing concrete issues through email was convenient, they were resistant to the idea of using

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email to communicate about behavior, preferring face to face communication for complex topic

because it allows them to regulate the tone of their statements (Thompson, 2008, p. 217). As

issues become increasingly complex it may be prudent to consider other platforms of

communication, in which parents and teachers can attend to tone of voice and body language,

like Skype, Facetime or Zoom. It can be helpful to educators to determine the reasoning behind a

parent's choice to use email instead of other communication modes (Thompson, 2008, p. 220).

Selecting the appropriate mode of communication can lead to more frequent interactions, which

provides more opportunities for parent involvement.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Communication Technology**</p>

As communication technology rapidly evolves and becomes commonly utilized by the

general population it is important that educators consider the best means to communicate with

the community they serve. Thompson, Mazer and Flood (2015) affirm, "the proliferation of

smartphones has changed the nature of communication, likely once again altering the modes

parents select to communicate with teachers" (p. 187). Research suggests that mobile phone

applications may provide a convenient tool for supporting parent-teacher communication (Chena

and Chena, 2015 p. 5618). Frequent communication and effective communication instruments

aid in building consensus as well as decrease misunderstandings and disagreements between

parents and teachers or school officials (Ho, Hung, and Chen, 2013, p. 105). Nitza and Roman

(2016) reinforce this idea when they state,

> computer mediated communication (CMC), such as video conferencing,
>
> telephone conferencing, online correspondence, and e-mail, are efficient means
>
> for increasing school-home communication and provide parents, teachers, and

students with a way of remaining connected and updated, as well as encouraging

regular communication (p.155).

How do parents and teachers utilize the increasing access to communication technology to

improve parent teacher communication?

To gain a better understanding of parents' intentions regarding the use of smart phone

applications as parent-teacher communication tools Chena and Chena (2015) developed a study

in which they analyzed the results of surveys designed to scrutinize the factors like the perceived

ease of use and the perceived usefulness (p. 5618-5622). Ultimately, Chena and Chena (2015)

recommended that "authorities should devote [time and resources] to demonstrate the advantages

of using smart device messages as a communication tool between parents and school" (p. 5623).

They could start by highlighting the success Line and Messages, two popular applications that

teachers use to set up groups of parents, so they can share information instantly (Chena & Chena,

2015, p. 5618). Introducing changes to a large system takes time. However, as the technology

becomes accessible, and its benefits apparent, more parents will opt to use it. As information

technology improves, communication between parents and teachers becomes more efficient,

allowing more opportunities, like messages, email, websites, and weblogs, (Ho et al., 2013, p.

106). These technologies provide more convenient communication options, which gives more

families an opportunity to find a mode of communication that suits their needs.

Examples of the effective use of CMC are increasingly being proven as viable.

Bauch (1994) developed the Transparent School Model by using computer-based

voice messaging to exchange messages between parents and teachers. Results

indicate that when implemented correctly, interactions between parents and

teachers increase, parent attitudes are more positive, and student academic

achievement increases. (Ho et al., 2013, p. 106)

A successful message system requires that school officials provide communication and training

before implementation, focusing on the benefits of the system (Ho et al., 2013 p. 113) As ease of

use is a strong indicator as to whether new technology will be utilized it is important that

teachers are given training on any new technology so that they may confidently implement it and

guide parents in its use. The smartphone app may become the preferred method of

communication between parent and teacher, so it is critical that educators develop an

understanding of the use of short message communication modes before implementing the new

technology (Ho et al., 2013, p.114). It is important that as communicators we attend to how the

medium impacts our expression, just as the email removes body language and tone of voice,

some communication apps tend to encourage short messages that may affect our communication

style.

Frequent communication through "daily technologies" supports parent involvement as

well as parent support of school behavior (Nitza and Roman, 2016, p. 155). To ensure that CMC

systems are developed meaningfully, it is important to determine pathways of communication

that would be improved by CMC. (Nitza & Roman, 2016, p. 155). It is important that school

sites don't adopt communication applications or platforms simply to update technology but find

applications that meet the needs of their families. Leadership impacts the development of CMC

by the level of responsibility they demonstrate toward innovating communication. (Nitza &

Roman, 2016, p. 156). To successfully adopt school wide systems of communication, teachers

require the guidance and support of administrators.

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Thompson et al. (2015) suggests that, "mechanisms such as Skype and FaceTime have the potential to enhance parent–teacher communication by combining the advantages of (face to face) FTF and CMC, enabling parents and teachers to capitalize on cues that are more pronounced FTF" (p. 188). Research has noted that texts and email exclude tone of voice and body language, while face to face meetings are often inconvenient logistically. Video conferencing applications may provide logistical benefits when arranging meetings while still providing the rich communication experience that comes with face to face communication. Thompson et al. (2015) found that parents

> would like to use Skype with teachers: 'FTF or Skype would be the best method of communication, as it shows face and body language as well as verbal communication.' Thus, Skype offered the potential to take advantage of both immediate feedback and visual/auditory cues present in richer media consistent with (media rich theory) MRT without losing the convenience of asynchronous communication (p. 197-198).

While "parents' open-ended responses demonstrated an even stronger preference for e-mail than in the statistical data (Thompson et al., 2015, p.195), parents indicated that FTF communication would lead to less misunderstandings (Thompson et al., 2015, p.201). Further research should look at the potential of utilizing CMC applications that include FTF characteristics like Skype, Facetime and Zoom.

Summary

The literature indicates that there are positive correlations between parent involvement and student performance (Iruka et al., 2011; Kraft & Rogers, 2015; Thompson, 2008). While the research supporting the relationship between academic performance is less clear as to the

specific relationship between academic performance and parent involvement, there are many

articles that cite a positive correlation (El Nokali et al., 2010). The literature also suggests that

parent involvement supports positive social development. Major factors that inhibit parent

involvement are logistical factors like scheduling conflicts and language barriers (Murray et al.,

2014). Past negative parent school experiences can also inhibit involvement (Iruka et al., 2011).

Parent-teacher communication facilitates parent involvement. As communication

technology evolves and becomes more accessible, parents and teachers are utilizing emails,

texting and communication applications to communicate. Parents and teachers identify email as

the most convenient form of communication but acknowledge that the lack of body

language and tone of voice create opportunities for misunderstanding when discussing complex

issues (Chena & Chena, 2015; Ho, Hung & Chen, 2013; Thompson, Mazer & Flood, 2015).

It has been suggested within the literature that communication applications like Skype

and Facetime could provide some of the conveniences of CMC and the richness of FTF

communication, which speaks to the research questions posed in this current study (Thompson et

al., 2015). The research suggests that video conferencing may provide a higher quality form of

communication compared to e-mail as it will include body language and tone of voice. It may

also increase attendance to events as parents will not have to be physically present on the campus

to attend (Thompson et al., 2015). However, further research is required to determine the effects

of video conferencing applications like Skype, Facetime and Zoom.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Chapter Three: Methodology

Teachers and parents face a variety of challenges related to frequent and meaningful communication regarding student performance and behavior (Georgiou, 1998). To ensure that all families can communicate with their child's teacher a variety of communication methods should be offered by schools (Murray, McFarland-Piazza & Harrison., 2014). Families have indicated that e-mail is a preferred method of communication because of its convenience as an asynchronous form of communication. However, research also suggests that parents are uncomfortable using e-mail to discuss sensitive or complex issues because it lacks the tone and body language available during face-to-face communication (Thompson, 2008). As communication technology becomes more sophisticated and more accessible, parents and teachers should explore the increasing variety of means available for communication (Thompson, Mazer & Flood et al., 2015). To investigate the potential of utilizing video communication applications this research sought to determine (RQ1) factors of video communication applications that appealed to parents and teachers and factors that dissuaded their use and (RQ2) how the use of video communication applications like Skype effect the frequency and quality of parent teacher communication?

In this chapter the design of the research is identified. This includes, the process for selecting participants and gaining their consent, the setting in which the study took place, and its relevance to the study is described. Finally, the instruments are explained, the procedures are justified, and the analysis is validated.

Design

To address RQ1 a survey was provided to teachers and parents. The survey included questions concerning frequency of parent-teacher communication, preferred medium of parent-

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

teacher communication, interest level in using video conferencing applications for parent teacher

communication, feelings about the effectiveness of parent teacher communication as a tool to

improve student performance. The design of the methodology was mixed as some of the

questions on the survey required a response on a Likert scale which provided quantitative data

and some of the questions were open-ended which provided qualitative data. The questions that

provided quantitative data established the degree of interest parents and teachers had in using

video conferencing applications, which spoke to RQ1. The open-ended question responses were

coded according to common categories identified in the variety of responses. The coding

provided evidence of trends of thought that also addressed RQ1. Considering both quantitative

and qualitative data provided a thorough understanding of parent and teacher attitude toward

video communication applications.

Additionally, all the parents of students in a special education class that indicated an

interest in using video communication applications on the initial survey were given the

opportunity to participate in parent-teacher conferences via Skype. Attendance of the special

education class' parents to a parent-teacher conference was compared to attendance of the same

class' parents to parent-teacher conference held with Skype as an available mode of

communication, which addressed RQ2. The parents that participated in the conference using

Skype were also given a survey regarding their experience, as in the first survey some questions

required a Likert scale response and some questions were open ended providing both qualitative

and quantitative data which addressed the quality aspect of RQ2.

This research design is modeled after Chena and Chena's (2015) study which examined

the use of smart phone applications as parent-teacher communication tools by analyzing the

results of a survey designed to scrutinize factors like the perceived ease of use and the perceived

usefulness of smartphone communication applications. The design provides data that can provide

insight into communication practices in general as well as information that directly addresses

research questions one and two.

Participants

This study included two target populations: parents and teachers. Parents and teachers

affiliated with a school in San Diego County California willing to participate in the survey

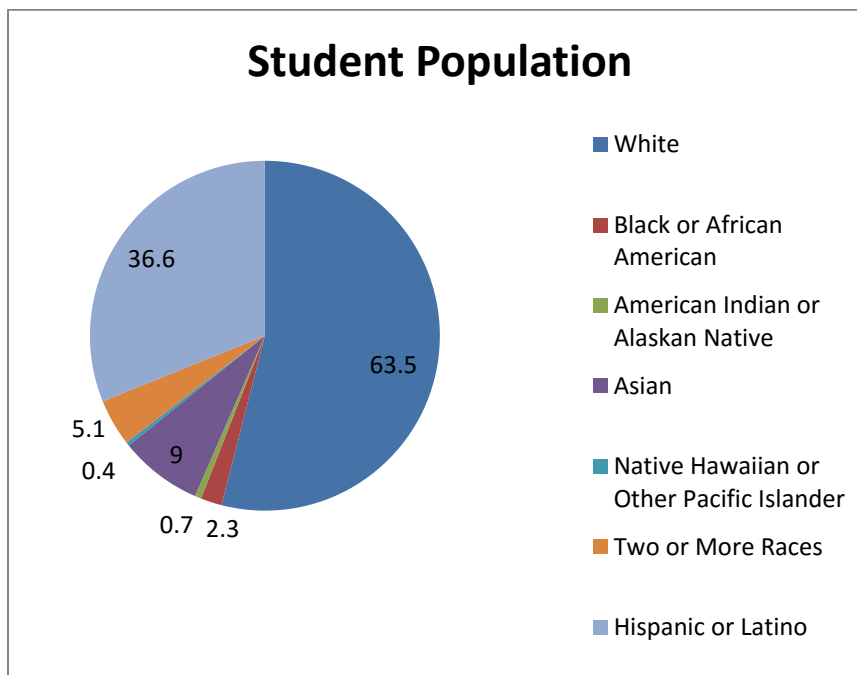process provided the sample group for this research.

Eight-hundred-thirty-six surveys were sent home to all the parents of the students that

attended the school. Families that have students that were identified as English Learners and

speak Spanish in the home were provided with a Spanish version of the survey. Forty-two

surveys were given to teachers. To establish informed consent, in compliance with the research

design approved by the Institutional Review Board, the survey included a description of the

research project, a list of possible risks and benefits associated with participation in the research,

and a notice that participation or non-participation in the survey would not affect the treatment of

their child. The survey also included a notice stating that a returned survey with a signature

affirming consent would be included in the study. Nineteen surveys with signatures consenting to

have data included in the study were collected. Eighty-two parent surveys with signatures

consenting to have data included in the study were collected. A total of 101 surveys provided the

data for analysis regarding RQ1 and RQ2.

Setting

The population of the city in which the school is largely middleclass and resides in a

suburban setting. As of the 2010 census: 63.5% of the population identified as White alone, 2.3%

as Black or African American, 0.7% as American Indian and Alaskan Native alone, 9.0% as

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Asian alone, 0.4% as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, 5.1% as Two or More

Races, 36.6% as Hispanic or Latino, and 48.6% identified as White alone, not Hispanic or

Latino, (Jarmin, 2017).

Student Population

The 2010 census also indicates that 81.4% of the population of persons age 25 years or

older achieved a High School Diploma and 29.7% of the population of persons age 25 or older

achieved a bachelor's degree or higher (Jarmin, 2017). The median household income (in 2015)

dollars was 57,822. The most common jobs held by the city's residents are administrative, sales,

and management (Perrin, 2015).

Twenty percent of the students are identified as students learning English. Forty-six

percent of the students are identified as coming from low-income families (Ferrelra, 2017). The

campus accommodates approximately 850 students. There is a 22:1 student to teacher ratio and

87% of the teachers have three or more years of experience (Ferrelra, 2017). Additionally, 82%

of the teachers are certified (Ferrelra, 2017). The district and site level administration have

identified parent involvement as an area that requires improvement. Parent-teacher

communication is a means to improve parent involvement, which informed the decision to conduct this research at this site. As a teacher at this site, I spend more than 50 hours a week on this campus, which also informed the selection of the research sample group as it was convenient to conduct the research at the place of my employment.

Instruments

Teacher and parent surveys, which were approved by the IRB, were distributed to collect data regarding current communication practices and interest in using video communication applications for parent-teacher communication. There was a teacher version and a parent version of the first survey, which examined frequency and mode of communication as well as participants' sense that parent-teacher communication affects student performance to address RQ1. The content of the questions was the same for each version, with the exception that the survey was addressed to either a teacher or a parent (see surveys in appendix). The survey included questions which required a closed response and provided quantitative data like: How often do you communicate with the parents in your class on average; What is the most common method of communication you use; On a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied are you with your frequency of communication with parents; On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your interest in using communication applications like Skype to communicate with parents for events like parent-teacher conferences; On a scale of 1 to 5 do you find a correlation between parent-teacher communication and student performance; Do you use communication applications like Skype outside of work? The survey also included an open-ended question, which provided qualitative data that addressed RQ2; Are there any other comments you would like to include regarding parent teacher communication?

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The second survey asked parents to reflect on the use of a communication application during a parent-teacher conference, which addressed RQ2. One of the survey questions employed a Likert scale and the rest of the survey questions were open ended. The questions included: Describe benefits related to using a communication application for parent-teacher conferences; Describe challenges related to using a communication application for parent-teacher conferences; On a scale of 1 to 5, how interested in are you in using communication applications for further communication with teachers or to participate in school events?

Procedures

Permission was obtained from the principal of the elementary school to conduct research. The IRB approved the design of the research project. A copy of the teacher survey and the research consent form were placed in teacher mail boxes on campus. Additional packets were sent home to parents containing a consent form, which described the research process as well as copy of the parent survey. One-hundred-one (101) surveys, 19 from teachers and 82 from parents, were collected and analyzed which contained a signature consenting to participate in the study. These surveys were analyzed to gain insight into research questions one and two.

To gain further insight into research questions one and two, parent conferences were held, and parents were offered an option of participating in the conferences via a communication application like Skype or Zoom. Three of the ten families chose to participate in a parent-teacher conference via Skype. During the parent-teacher conferences, progress of annual IEP goals was presented. Parents that participated in the parent teacher conference using a communication application were given a survey regarding their experience. These factors will be considered to recommend or dissuade the use of communication applications to improve parent-teacher communication.

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Analysis

To determine the viability of using video conferencing communication applications as a mode of parent-teacher communication frequency distribution analysis of the survey questions responses that required a Likert scale response was utilized (Manikandan, 2011). For example, the responses to the question, "on a scale of 1 to 5, what is your interest in using communication applications like Skype to communicate with parents for events like parent-teacher conferences?" were grouped into classes 1 (not interested) – 5 (very interested) and the number of selections each class received was recorded. A high frequency of 4 or 5 responses would indicate that this is a mode of communication that administration should consider implementing as soon as possible and a high frequency of 1 or 2 responses have suggest that this mode of communication does not merit administration's facilitation or that parents or teachers require further education related to this mode of communication and its potential. Given the number of classes, 5, and the number of surveys, 100, frequency distribution should provide a valid measure of the data collected.

To further understand the factors that inhibited or promoted the use of video conferencing communication applications, the Iterative Framework was employed to analyze the qualitative data provided by the open-ended question responses (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). The Iterative Framework provides three questions which guide a researcher in making meaning of the data through an impartial and reflexive process. The questions include: what is the data telling me; what is it I want to know, what is the dialectal relationship between what I want to know and what the data is telling me? Through the Iterative Framework, the data may make a case for either pursuing video conferencing communication applications as a mode for parent-teacher communication at this time, pursuing other means of improving parent-teacher communication,

or providing education to families and teachers to promote the use of video conferencing applications.
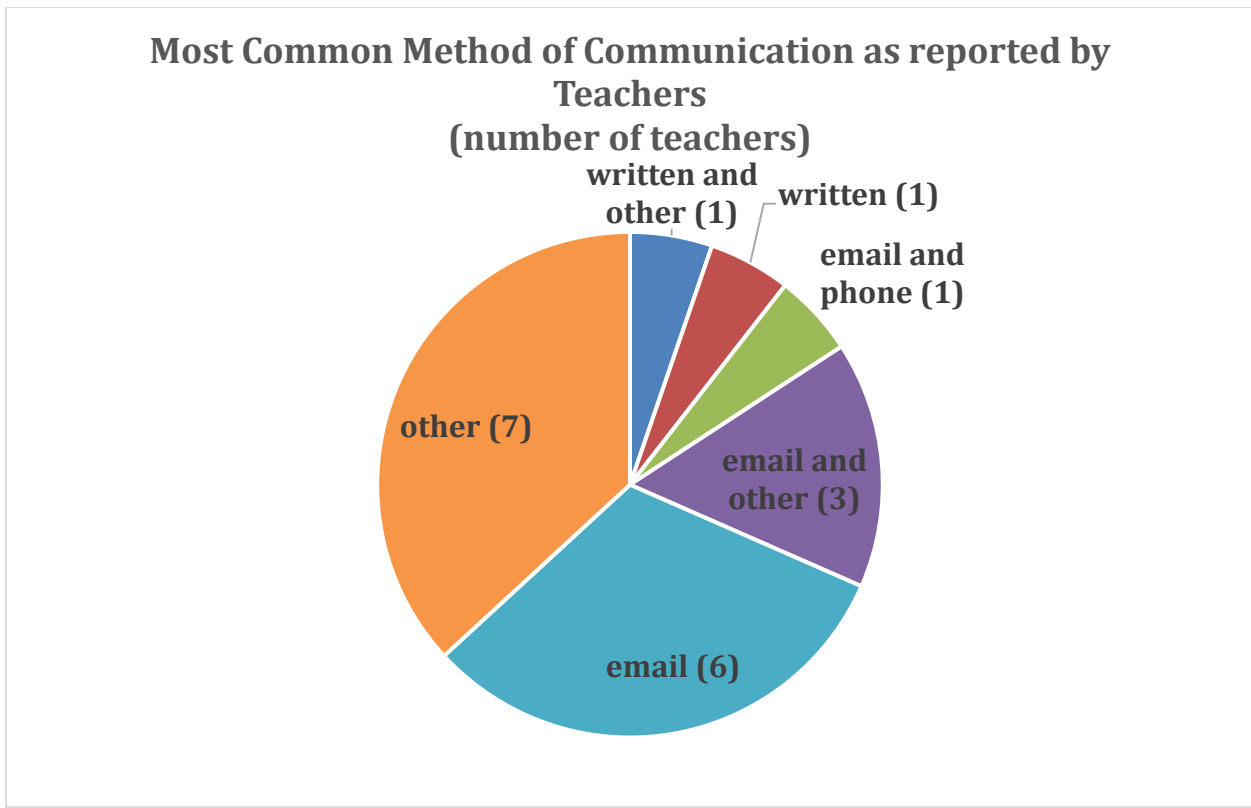
Summary

The design of the study was as follows. Teachers and parents were given surveys regarding parent-teacher communication practices with questions that gauged the interest level in using video conferencing applications to improve parent-teacher communication in terms of quality and frequency. Parents were then offered an opportunity to participate in a parent-teacher conference via Skype. Participants were then surveyed concerning their experience using video-conferencing communication applications. Participants were parents and teachers from a southern California elementary school at which forty-nine percent of the students identified as Hispanic and thirty-seven percent identify as White. The instruments included the surveys that were given to gauge interest and determine the factors that promoted the use of such applications. Procedures were followed to ensure that surveys were only included if parents or teachers consented to participating in the research. Steps were also taken to ensure that data could be collected responsibly and safely on the school site. After obtaining permission to conduct research from the IRB committee, the surveys were distributed, and the parent-teacher conferences were scheduled. The quantitative data was then analyzed using a frequency distribution model and the qualitative data was analyzed using the Iterative Framework. Finally, the analysis was compiled to inform an educational administration plan on how best to utilize the use of video conferencing as a form of parent-teacher communication.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Chapter Four: Data

A survey regarding parent-teacher communication practices was distributed to 38 teachers at an elementary school in San Diego County California. Nineteen teachers completed the survey and granted their consent to have their responses included in the study. A similar survey was distributed 847 families of the same school. Eighty-two parents completed the survey and granted their consent to have their responses included in the survey. A total of 101 surveys were collected and analyzed. After these surveys were collected, three families from a special education class were offered the opportunity to participate in a parent-teacher conference based on their indication on the initial survey that they would be interested in utilizing Skype as a method of communication. Three families from a class of ten agreed to participate and completed a survey regarding their experience. The following data was collected from the surveys the parent-teacher-communication surveys described above. The data was organized into bar graphs and pie charts to illustrate the frequency distribution of resources. Data regarding the attendance of parent teacher conferences was also included.

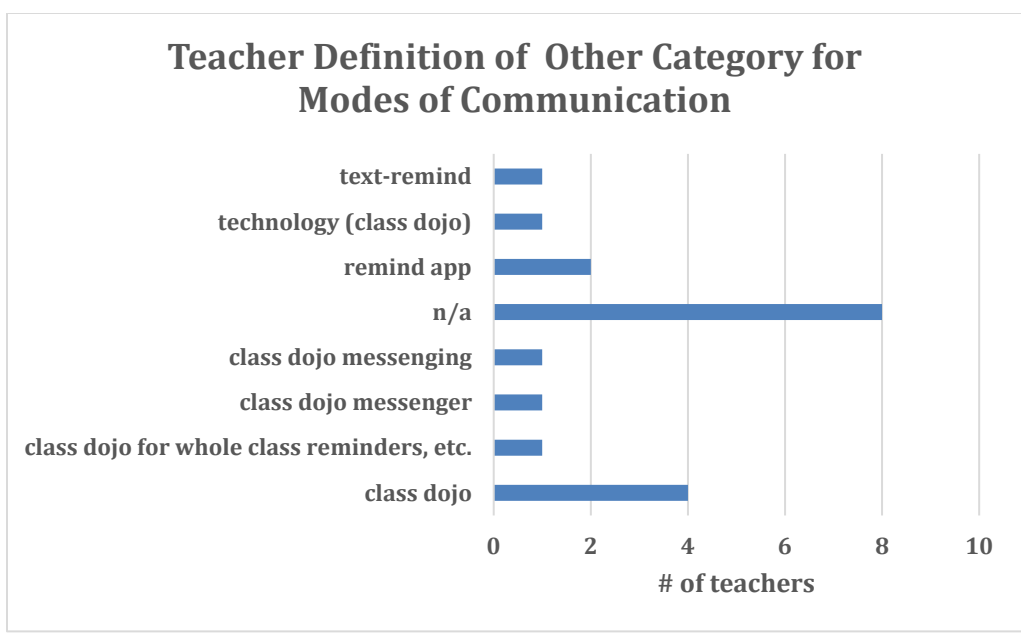## Data Presentation

Question two asked, "What is the most common method of communication you use?" Email was the most popular form of communication as ten teachers included it in their response. The least popular was phone with only one teacher including it in their response.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

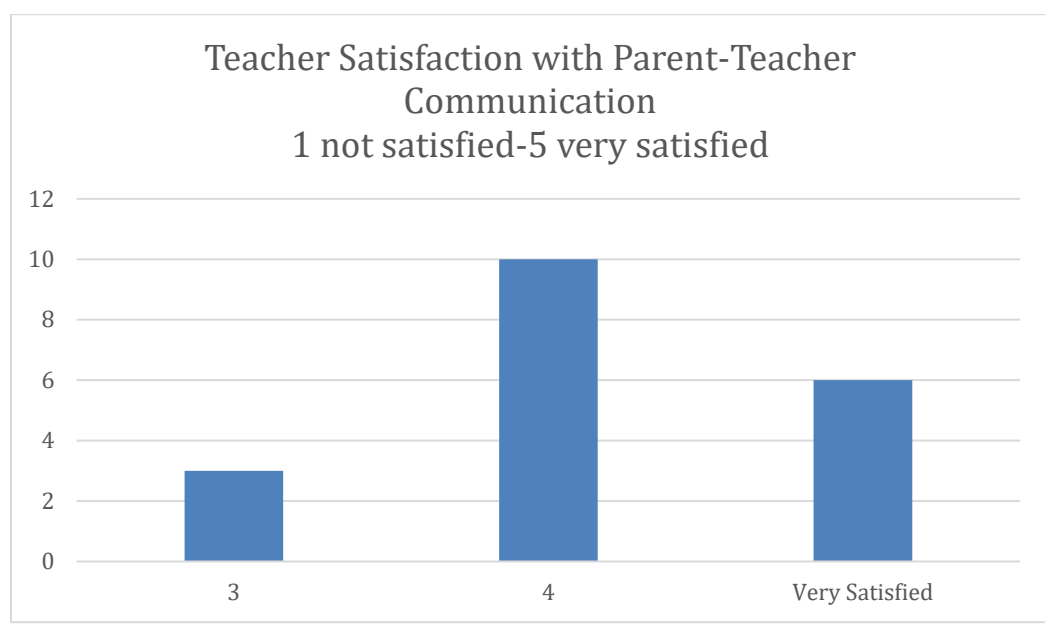Most Common Method of Communication as reported by Teachers (number of teachers)

The following graph indicates what teachers defined as other when they selected that response. Many teachers did not select the other category as indicated by the eight n/a responses. Eight teachers indicated the communication application class dojo as a preferred form of communication.

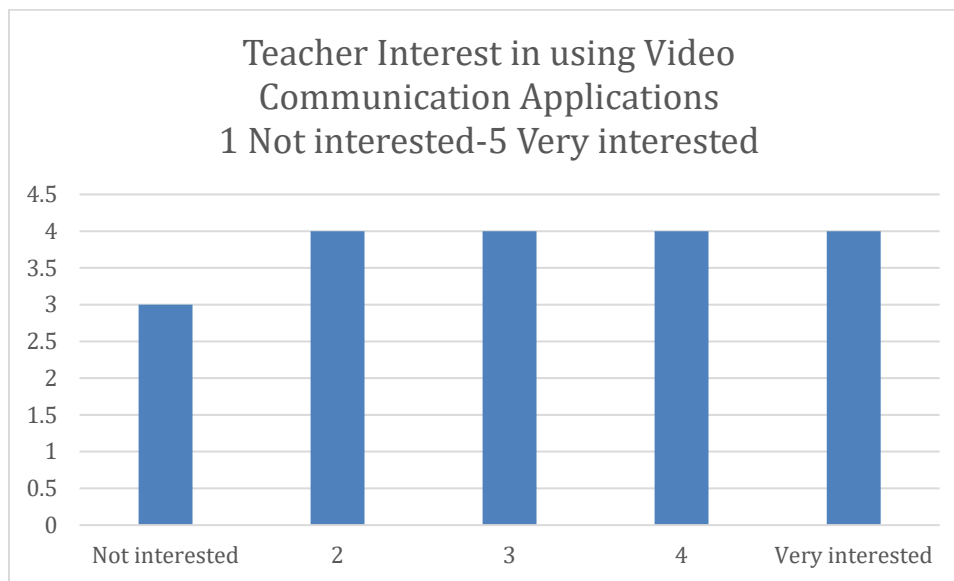Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Teacher Definition of Other Category for Modes of Communication

Category	# of teachers
text-remind	1
technology (class dojo)	1
remind app	2
n/a	8
class dojo messenging	1
class dojo messenger	1
class dojo for whole class reminders, etc.	1
class dojo	4

# of teachers

Question three of the initial survey asked, **"**On a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied are you with the frequency of communication with parents?" 1 indicated not satisfied and 5 indicated very satisfied. The most frequent response, ten teachers, was a 4. Zero teachers responded with a 1 or 2.

Teacher Satisfaction with Parent-Teacher Communication
1 not satisfied-5 very satisfied

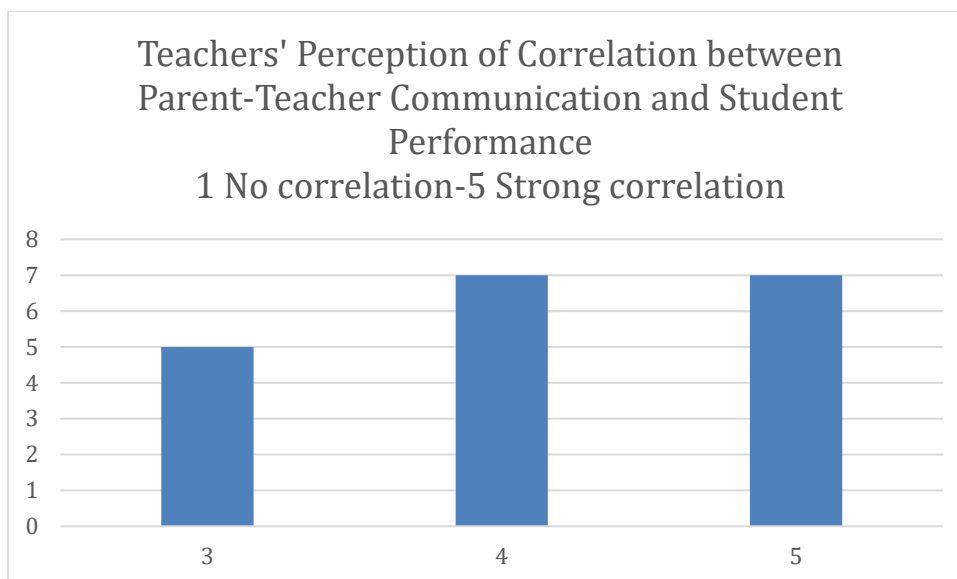| Rating	Count
3	3
4	10
Very Satisfied	6

Question four asked, "On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your interest in using communication applications like Skype to communicate with parents for events like parent-teacher

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

conferences?" 1 indicated not interested and 5 indicated very interested. Three teachers indicated

1 or not interested. Four teachers indicated 2. Four teachers indicated 3. Four teachers indicated

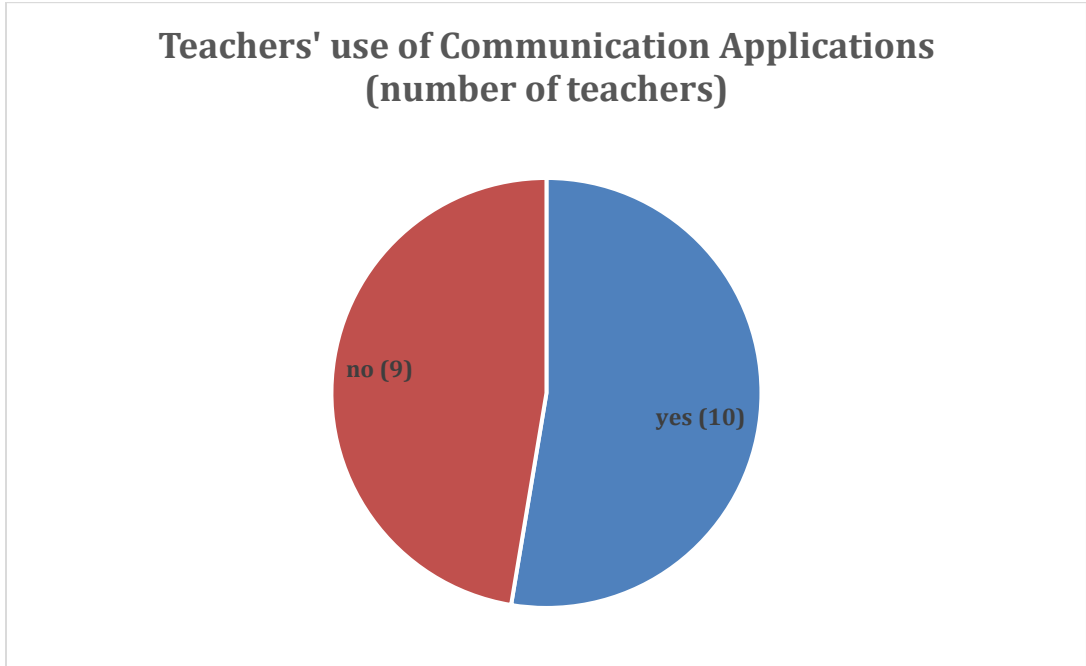4. Four teachers indicated and 5 or very interested.

Question five asked, "On a scale of 1 to 5 do you find a correlation between parent-

teacher communication and student performance?" 1 indicated no correlation and 5 indicated a

strong correlation. The most frequent responses were 4 and 5. Fourteen teachers indicated 4 and
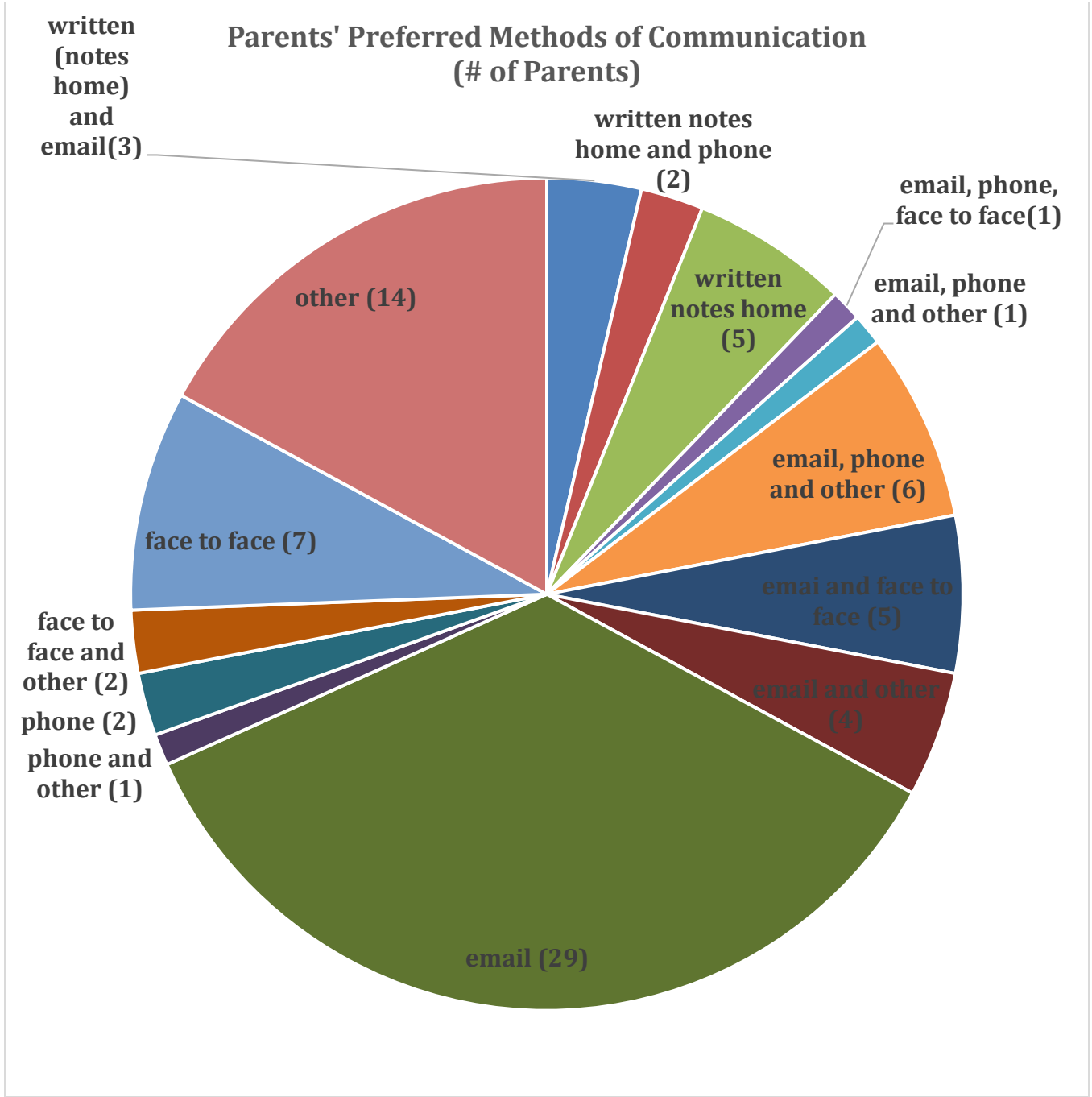
5. Zero teachers indicated 1 or 2.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Question six asked, "Do you use communication applications like Skype outside of

work? Ten teachers indicated yes, and nine teachers selected no.

Teachers' use of Communication Applications (number of teachers)
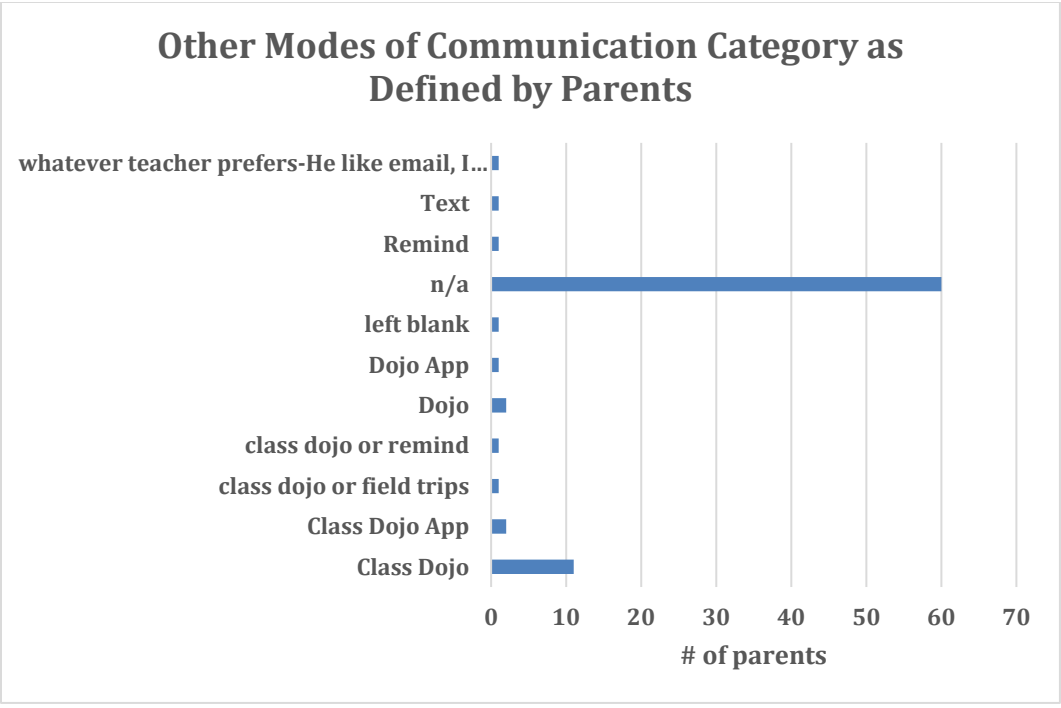
no (9)

yes (10)

Question two of the parent survey asked, "What is the most common method of

communication you use?" Fifty-three parents included email in their response, making it the

most frequent response. The least frequent response was written notes home, selected by ten

parents.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

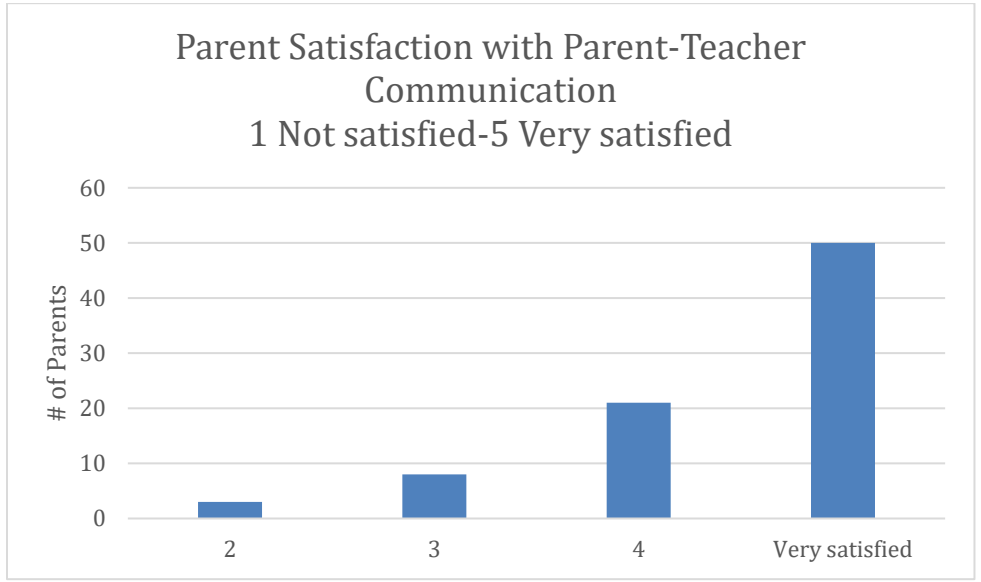**Parents' Preferred Methods of Communication (# of Parents)**

The following graph indicates how parents defined the other category when they selected that option. Sixty parents did not select the other category, which was the most frequent response. Of the parents that selected the other category, eighteen parents mentioned the Class Dojo application.

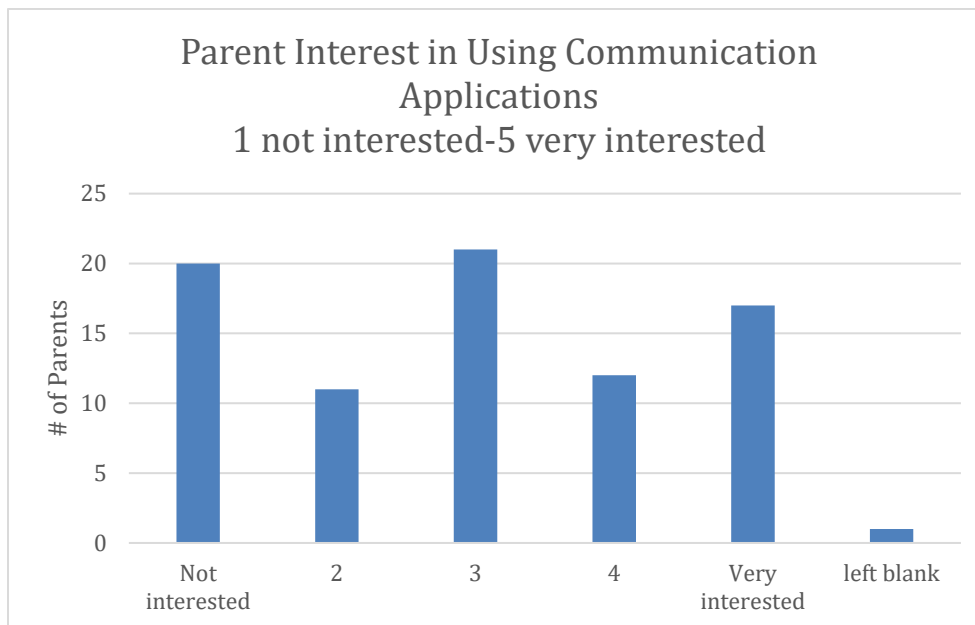Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Other Modes of Communication Category as Defined by Parents

(bar chart)

whatever teacher prefers-He like email, I...
Text
Remind
n/a
left blank
Dojo App
Dojo
class dojo or remind
class dojo or field trips
Class Dojo App
Class Dojo

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70

# of parents

Question three of the parent survey asked, "On a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied are you with the frequency of communication with your teacher?" 1 indicated not satisfied and 5 indicated very satisfied. The most frequent response was 5 or very satisfied, 50 parents. Zero parents indicated 1 or not satisfied.
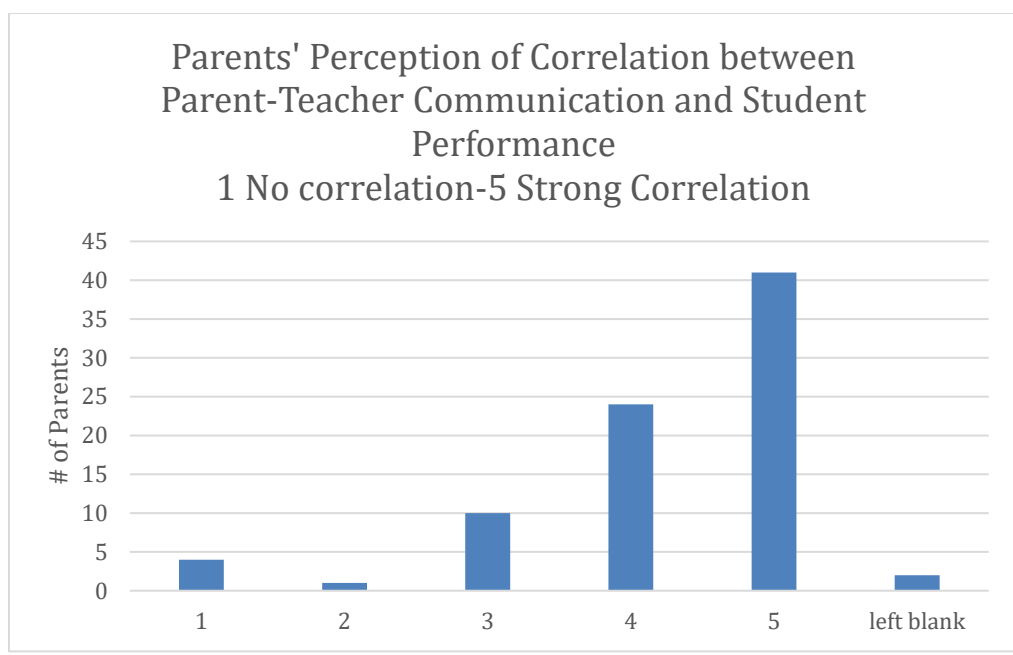
Parent Satisfaction with Parent-Teacher Communication
1 Not satisfied-5 Very satisfied

(bar chart)

# of Parents

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

2   3   4   Very satisfied

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Question four of the parent survey asked, "On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your interest in using communication applications like Skype to communicate with teachers for events like parent-teacher conferences?" 1 indicated not interested and 5 indicated very interested. The most frequent response was 3, 21 parents. Twenty parents selected 1, not interested. Seventeen parents selected 5, very interested
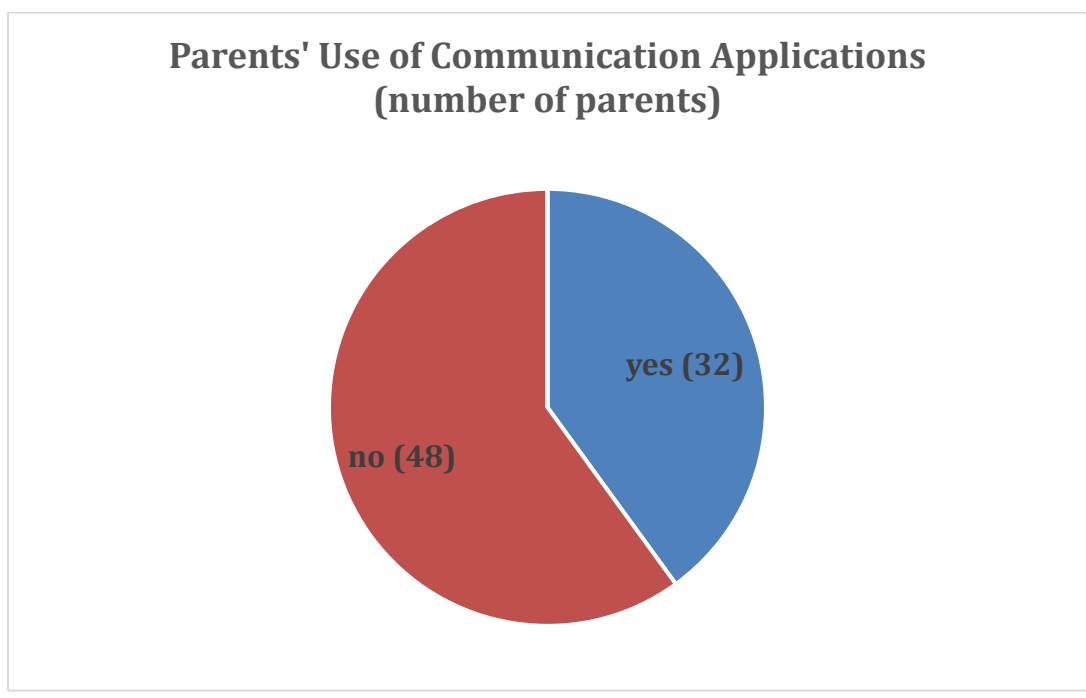

Question five of the parent survey asked, "On a scale of 1 to 5 do you find a correlation between parent-teacher communication and your child's performance?" One indicated no correlation and 5 indicated a strong correlation. The most frequent response was 5 or a strong correlation, 41 parents.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

Parents' Perception of Correlation between Parent-Teacher Communication and Student Performance
1 No correlation-5 Strong Correlation

Question six asked, "Do you use communication applications like Skype outside of work?" Forty-eight parents selected no and 32 parents selected yes. Two parents did not respond to this item.

Parents' Use of Communication Applications (number of parents)

yes (32)

no (48)

The survey that was given to families after participating in a parent-teacher conference via Skype consisted of three questions. The first question was, "Describe benefits related to suing

a communication application for parent-teacher conferences." The first parent stated, "Both (name omitted) and I work so the ability to skype with (name omitted) is very convenient." The second parent stated, "Working parents can be more involved with their child's education without the hassle of getting off work and driving to school." The third parent stated, "Mainly I love the fact that I'm able to bypass the need to having to be at the school." The first parent also stated, "when I asked for clarification on a goal (name omitted) was able to white board an example for me. I like the video option for the presentation it adds." The third parent also noted that using Skype provides, "more flexibility for when scheduling times for meeting."

The second question asked, "Describe challenges related to using a communication application for parent-teacher conferences." The first parent stated, "I'd also recommend instructions for parents before the meeting, so they can download the app, create a profile etc." The second parent stated, "Some parents might not be into using technology yet." The third parent listed, "1) unfamiliarity w/chat app/skype 2) difficulties w/ logging into skype" under a heading titled, difficulties.

Summary

The data above was organized and coded to facilitate analysis utilizing frequency distribution and the Iterative Framework to address RQ1 and RQ2. Chapter five will summarize findings, interpretations, lessons learned educational implications, limitations of research and future research directions.

Chapter Five: Thesis Recommendations

Teachers and parents face many logistical issues when it comes to frequent and meaningful communication. A key issue is scheduling meeting times when parents and teachers are both available (Georgiou, 1998). Parent work schedules often conflict with a classroom teacher's availability. Asynchronous communication like email has been used to address scheduling challenges. However, parents have suggested that they prefer face to face communication for sensitive issues related to academic performance or behavior (Thompson, 2008). This research explored using video communication applications like Skype to provide parents and teachers another means of meeting. Video communication applications offer access to body language like face to face communication, which may provide parents with the comfort required to discuss more complex issues and provide parents the opportunity of meeting without leaving their places of employment, which may increase the frequency at which parents and teachers are able to meet. This chapter will include a summary of my findings as well as my interpretations of the findings, educational implications, limitations of research, future research directions, and a summary of the research.

Interpretations

According to Thompson (2015) while email is the preferred method of communication for parents, parents also acknowledged that face to face communication was less likely to be misinterpreted due to the presence of body language and tone, which is absent from email. This supports Thompson (2008), which suggests that parents prefer face to face communication for more complex issues related to behavioral or academic challenges. Thompson (2015) found that parents were interested in using video conferencing applications like Skype for communication. My research tested that assertion.

Research question one, **"What factors of video conferencing applications appeal to parents and teachers and what factors dissuade use?"** was addressed by a survey regarding parent-teacher communication practices. Questions 3-5 established a baseline of attitudes toward parent teacher communication as well as an interest level in using communication applications. Parents and teachers alike most frequently indicated that there is a strong correlation between student performance and parent-teacher communication, which indicates that the practice of parent-teacher communication is valued. The high value that these two groups of stakeholders attribute to parent-teacher communication suggests that it is potentially a practice that could be leveraged to affect student performance. Parents and teachers also most frequently indicated that they were satisfied to very satisfied with their current parent-teacher communication practices, which indicates that parents and teachers may not feel a need to adopt new practices related to parent-teacher communication. When parents were asked about their interest in using video communication applications like Skype, they most frequently indicated 3, 21 parents. Twenty parents indicated no interest and 17 parents indicated strong interest. This suggests that most parents do not see added value in using video communication applications as a method of parent-teacher communication. Teachers had an even distribution of the spectrum of interest regarding the use of video communication applications. Three teachers indicated not interested; four indicated 2; four indicated 3; four indicated 4; and four indicated 5 or very interested. This suggests that while there is interest among teachers, it is not at a high frequency which would suggest that a campaign to introduce or increase the use of video communication applications would achieve the threshold of 80% staff buy in.

The second survey also addressed research question one, **"What factors of video conferencing applications appeal to parents and teachers and what factors dissuade use?"** The

parents that participated in the Skype parent teacher conference suggested that the Skype was convenient for working parents. One parent noted that the video aspect allowed the teacher to show examples of student work. And another parent noted that scheduling meetings would be easier. While the data from the first survey does not support a school leader allocating significant resources toward implementing the use of video communication applications for parent-teacher communication as parents and teachers are generally satisfied with parent-teacher communication, the limited data (three surveys) from the second survey suggests that the tool may be helpful to working families and that schools with a larger population of working families that are comfortable with video communication applications may want to consider utilizing the tool on a schoolwide scale. When asked, "On a scale of 1 to 5, how interested in are you in using communication applications for further communication with teachers or to participate in school events?" all three families indicated 5, or very interested. On campuses where this is not the case, it should be considered as a tool available on a case by case basis when there is a communication challenge. This tool could be especially useful for scheduling special education Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings or Student Support Team (SST) meetings. Responses to the second survey also suggest that schools need to provide information on the setup and operation of communication applications if they are going to be used as a communication tool as multiple parents indicated the need for information or support in setting up the application.

Finally, to address the frequency aspect of RQ2, the attendance of the parent-teacher conference with video communication applications was compared to the attendance of the previous parent-teacher conference held for the same student population without video communication application as an option for participating. Three of ten families attended the first parent-teacher conference which did not offer video communication applications as an option for

attendance. Five of ten families attended the parent-teacher conference that offered video communication applications as an option for attendance, which improved attendance by 20%.

During both sets of conferences IEP goal progress was reviewed and parent questions were answered. With the use of video, the teacher was able to model sample problems and show student work during the conferences held via a video communication application. Which suggests that the quality of communication was seemingly unaffected regarding the quality aspect of RQ1.

Given current data, an administrator may pursue further exploration of video communication applications to support parent-teacher communication with a small group of interested teachers on a voluntary basis. There is not currently enough interest or evidence validating the practice to pursue supporting this means of parent-teacher communication on a school wide level. Video-communication applications should also be considered for meetings or conversations that involve sensitive or complex topics when the educators and family members involved have conflicting schedules that inhibit scheduling a face to face meeting.

Lessons Learned/Educational Implications

Based on the survey results indicating that parents and teachers are largely satisfied with current communication practices and interest in utilizing video communication applications is average, the assertion can be made that a school site leader should not divert resources or time toward prompting the use of such a strategy schoolwide. However, a leader should keep video communication applications in mind to address specific cases of communication related to scheduling conflicts and communicating sensitive information. School leaders should also remain sensitive to shifting trends in communication. While video communication applications

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may currently appeal to a small portion of the parent population, this may change if such

applications become more popular in personal use.

Limitations of Research

The most glaring limitation of this research was the number of parents that were offered

the opportunity to participate in a parent-teacher exchange utilizing a video communication

application. While the first surveys were offered to every family and teacher associated with the

school, the opportunity to participate in a parent-teacher conference was only offered to students

in a special education class containing 10 students. Should this study be repeated, it should by a

researcher or team that has the capacity to offer opportunities to communicate via video

communication applications on a larger scale.

Another limitation that should be considered is the disproportionate number of surveys

completed and returned by families that speak Spanish. fewer than six percent of the surveys

returned were completed by families that speak Spanish which does not represent the percentage

of families that speak Spanish school wide. Feelings and opinions about parent-teacher

communication may not have been accurately represented for this group of families.

Finally, families that completed and returned the survey which included a consent form

demonstrated a high level of engagement in parent-teacher communication by doing so. which

may indicate that the results of the survey analysis reflect a group of parents that actively engage

in parent-teacher communication which may indicate that the data represented to the survey does

not represent the entire family population of the school.

Future Research Directions

The general satisfaction with parent-teacher communication that was described by the

data suggests that teachers and administration should continue to or increase the use of email as a

primary method of communication. The frequent reference to Class Dojo as preferred method of communication in the other category indicates that teachers and administrators should consider exploring Class Dojo as an application to support parent-teacher communication. Researchers may also want to identify positive and negative attributes of Class Dojo, to aid in the design future communications systems. Administrators should consider video communication applications for families that have schedules that make it difficult to meet when they want to address a topic or issue that they are uncomfortable discussing through email. This could be an effective tool for facilitating events like SST or IEP meetings.

Summary/Conclusion

Chapter One defined the problem: Parents often use asynchronous means of communication like email to circumvent the challenge of scheduling face to face (FTF) meetings, however, Thompson (2008) found that parents and teachers preferred FTF communication for complex issues, like classroom behavior or academic challenges. Therefor this research intended to determine whether the use of video communication applications like Skype could support parent-teacher communication by increasing the frequency and quality of communication. The research also sought to identify factors that encouraged or dissuaded the use of video communication applications like Skype.

Chapter two reviewed the literature related to parent teacher involvement, parent-teacher communication, and communication technology. Active parent-teacher communication facilitates constructive parent involvement, which research indicates positively effects student performance (Iruka, Winn, Kingsley & Orthodoxou, 2011; Marlow, 2016; Santiago, Garbacz, Beattie & Moore, 2016). Parents and educators agree that parent-teacher communication supports students, but research indicates that communication between school and home is often

"infrequent and unsystematic" (Kraft and Rogers, 2015, p. 60). Thompson et al. (2015) suggests

that, "mechanisms such as Skype and FaceTime have the potential to enhance parent–teacher

communication by combining the advantages of (face to face) FTF and CMC, enabling parents

and teachers to capitalize on cues that are more pronounced FTF" (p. 188).

Chapter three reviewed the design of the study, which included the distribution and

analysis of a series of surveys. The first survey was disturbed to all teachers and families

associated with the school and contained questions about current methods of parent-teacher

communication and interest in the use of video communication applications, which provided

quantitative data. The second survey gathered qualitative data regarding the experience of using

a video communication application after participating in a parent-teacher conference using

Skype. The chapter also described the tools for analysis; frequency distribution for quantitative

data and the iterative framework for qualitative data.

Chapter four presented the data gathered from the surveys, which indicated that parents

and teachers at the school site were generally satisfied with current parent-teacher

communication practices. The most popular communication practices were email and application

call Class Dojo. However, the families that did participate in the parent-teacher conference via

Skype indicated that they were vary interested in using a video communication application again

and noted that it was convenient for working parents.

Chapter five reviewed the findings from an administrative lens, suggesting that video

communication applications should be considered in situations that include a family that is

difficult to schedule a face to face meeting with and the subject matter of the meeting is sensitive

or does not seem appropriate for email communication. Currently, the data does not suggest

investing many resources into organizing the use of video communication applications on a

schoolwide scale.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

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Appendix A: Surveys

Teachers

1) How often do you communicate with the parents in your class on average?

  a) once a year
  b) once a month
  c) more than once a month
  d) once a week
  e) daily

2) What is the most common method of communication you use?

  a) written (notes home)
  b) email
  c) phone
  d) face to face
  e) other _____

3) On a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied are you with your frequency of communication with parents?

1 is not satisfied at all. 5 is very satisfied.

1   2   3   4   5

4) On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your interest in using communication applications like Skype to communicate with parents for events like parent-teacher conferences?

1 is not interested. 5 is very interested.

1   2   3   4   5

5) On a scale of 1 to 5 do you find a correlation between parent-teacher communication and student performance?

1 is no correlation. 5 is strong correlation.

1   2   3   4   5

6) Do you use communication applications like Skype outside of work?

Yes   No   If so which?_____

7) Are there any other comments you would like to include regarding parent teacher communication?

Parent-Teacher Communication: Video Communication Applications

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Parents

1) How often do you communicate with your child's teacher on average?

    f)   once a year
    g)   once a month
    h)   more than once a month
    i)   once a week
    j)   daily

2) What is the most common method of communication you use?

    f)   written (notes home)
    g)   email
    h)   phone
    i)   face to face
    j)   other _____

3) On a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied are you with your frequency of communication with your teacher?

1 is not satisfied at all. 5 is very satisfied.

1   2   3   4   5

4) On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your interest in using communication applications like Skype to communicate with teachers for events like parent-teacher conferences?

1 is not interested. 5 is very interested.

1   2   3   4   5

5) On a scale of 1 to 5 do you find a correlation between parent-teacher communication and your child's performance?

1 is no correlation. 5 is strong correlation.

1   2   3   4   5

6) Do you use communication applications like Skype for personal or work use?

Yes   No   If so which?_____

7) Are there any other comments you would like to include regarding parent teacher communication?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Parents After Participating in Parent Teacher Conference

1) **Describe benefits related to using a communication application for parent-teacher conferences.**

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

2) **Describe challenges related to using a communication application for parent-teacher conferences.**

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

3) **On a scale of 1 to 5, how interested in are you in using communication applications for further communication with teachers or to participate in school events?**

1 is not interested. 5 is very interested.

1   2   3   4   5