

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT. I developed and tested a training module composed of course materials and an examination to train students in an early childhood education program how to conduct a problem-based conference with parents. Students were taught specific strategies and techniques to use in the conference setting, and they completed a simulated parent-teacher conference with a hypothetical problem. Evaluation of this module revealed a significant increase in students' self-reported comfort level with respect to giving parents advice and feeling prepared to conduct one-on-one parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, students reported that this module was very helpful in preparing them for a career in early childhood education. Anecdotal evidence from students completing internships suggests both lasting and practical effects of this module.

Communicating with parents, particularly about classroom problems or issues in a child's development, is one of the most difficult tasks faced by early childhood educators (Kinnell, 2002; Morgan, 1989). Although this topic is mentioned frequently in textbooks on early childhood development and care, though usually not in great detail (Deiner, 1997; Driscoll & Nagel, 2002; Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2001), the pedagogical literature yields few examples of empirical evaluations of programs or teaching methods designed to train students to conduct successful parent-teacher conferences in the preschool years.

For example, a search of the ERIC database using the subject heading "parent teacher conferences" and the words "teaching" or "training" yielded 107 and 76 hits, respectively. Most of these articles concern primary or secondary school educators, not preschool/early childhood educators, and as Brown and Brown (1992) have observed, "the professional literature is

abundant with articles offering practical advice... [but] they are not firmly grounded in

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research” (p. 3). After eliminating articles that were not empirical evaluations of training programs specifically directed towards preschool/early childhood educators dealing with non-disabled populations, no articles remained. This is a serious shortcoming in the pedagogical literature.

This shortage of empirically validated training programs is further exacerbated by the fact that early childhood educators themselves have reported that although parent-teacher conferences are an important part of their job (with over half stating that skills in communicating with parents were “critical” to their job), learning how to conduct conferences was not a priority in the training they received while in school (Cornelius, 1987). Barnes (1983), using a sample of student teachers (though not indicating if they were early childhood, primary, or secondary), reported that most student teachers were expected to pick up the necessary parent-teacher conferencing skills during their student teaching (i.e., on the job) without any prior training. These findings are echoed by Fuller (1982) and Seldin (1991), who both reported that the elementary educators in their samples had received little, if any, prior training in parent-teacher conferencing skills. Brown and Brown (1992) concluded that elementary educators are graduating (after having completed student teaching) still lacking sufficient training in parent-teacher conferencing skills.

Further, both Thompson and Hulley (1997) and Wallbrown and Prichard (1979) reported that elementary educators in their samples said they needed more training in parent-teacher conference skills, with Wallbrown and Prichard’s educators reporting a specific need for skills in conducting problem-oriented parent-teacher conferences. Given the unique developmental issues or “problems” which affect even younger children (e.g., separation anxiety, sleep associations,

biting, etc.), it is likely that early childhood educators may have an even greater necessity to learn the skills necessary to conduct problem-oriented conferences.

In spite of this clearly demonstrated need for more classroom training or education on the topic of parent-teacher conferencing, the idea is not a new one. Both Barnes (1983) and Martin (1992) have suggested incorporating material on parent-teacher conferencing and interacting with parents into the education curriculum. Hiatt-Michael (2001) has pointed out that if educators do not acquire these skills through training while still in college, there is very little opportunity for them to receive this training once they have started teaching.

Specific suggestions for what material or activities to include in this training have also been made. By far the most pervasive suggestion has been to include a practice-oriented component to this training to give students a chance to rehearse their skills, with the most common operationalization of this being role-plays or simulations (Barnes, 1983; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Lomax, 1996; Martin, 1992; Shartrand, Kreider, & Erickson-Warfield, 1994). The benefits of role-plays may be best summarized by Gary (1991):

Role-playing may be used to stimulate discussions, [sic] train in skills and sensitivity to solve human relations and social problems. Participants in role-playing exercises can be oriented to specific tasks and functions within an organization. Members learn how to ask for, give, and summarize information, facilitate decision making, and enable others to communicate effectively.

Through role-playing, participants are able to cooperatively evaluate problems, develop strategies to solve problems, and effectively discuss solutions and outcomes of them. (p. 13)

Morris, Taylor, and Knight (1997), Thompson and Hulley (1997), and Wallbrown and Prichard (1979) have all used the role-playing/simulation technique, but reported no evaluation data on its effectiveness. However, Gary (1991), using a sample of elementary educators, reported that teachers participating in role-play exercises as part of an in-service workshop demonstrated significant improvements in communication skills, such as conflict resolution and working cooperatively with parents to find a mutually acceptable course of action, and competency at conducting parent-teacher conferences.

It should also be noted that the more general pedagogical literature has also frequently suggested the use of role-plays in other areas. While role-plays may be most frequently recognized from the literature on teaching counseling skills (e.g., Freeman, 1989), there are numerous other areas in which role-plays have been used: teaching web-based courses (Murphy & Gazi, 2001), promoting discussions of diversity and consciousness raising (Howe & Pang, 2000), responding to racism (Plous, 2000), improving social and conflict resolution skills (Ciampa, Farr, & Kaplan, 2000), teaching critical thinking skills (Powell, 2000), and teaching about income and wealth inequality (Kellog & Davidson, 1999). Unfortunately, this literature has also been short on assessments or evaluations of the effectiveness of role-plays despite their persistent use.

What is missing from the literature, then, is not the idea to include role-play training, but rather an empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of such training. To provide such an evaluation and address this shortcoming, I developed course materials and a role-playing examination to train students in an early childhood education program how to conduct a problem-based conference with parents. Students were taught specific strategies and techniques

to use in the conference setting, and they completed a simulated parent-teacher conference with a hypothetical problem.

The Training Module

The materials I developed for use in the training module were based on commonly used or frequently recommended techniques from the literature, and were drawn primarily from eight sources. Four of the sources (Caudill, 1997; Deiner, 1997; Kinnell, 2002; Morgan, 1989) contained recommendations specifically for early childhood educators, and four of the sources (Gary, 1991; Manning, 1983; Thompson & Hulley, 1997; Walbrown & Prichard, 1979) contained recommendations for elementary educators, but which I determined to be helpful for early childhood educators nonetheless.

Recommendations for early childhood educators. Caudill (1997) provided information on the general goals of parent-teacher conferences, how to prepare for the conference, and specific suggestions on how to conduct the conference, such as using emotionally neutral language (e.g., describing the child's behavior rather than referring to the child as a "problem child"). Additionally, a separate set of guidelines and suggestions was provided specifically for problem-oriented conferences. Deiner (1997) provided information on scheduling and planning conferences and additional information on conducting conferences, particularly with respect to introducing the "sandwich technique" to problem-oriented conferences. The sandwich technique involves talking about the child's positive qualities or developmental progress before stating the concerns or problem, then concluding on a positive note.

Kinnell (2002) provided suggestions exclusively concerning problem-oriented conferences about biting, which allowed for the development of concrete materials about a specific problem that is frequent in early childhood education. For example, it is important to

inquire about the incidence of biting in the home environment and parental responses to that biting. Morgan (1989) provided information on the difference between parent-initiated and teacher-initiated conferences, and the unique needs and skills required of each situation. Of particular value was the section on sharing information objectively with parents and using “I-messages” to express concern.

Recommendations from elementary educators. Gary (1991) included training materials on non-defensive communication and general guidelines to follow when conducting conferences, such as maintaining the confidentiality of the conference. Manning (1983) specifically addressed challenges that arise when the parent or one of the parents is a father, and the need to maintain an atmosphere free of sexism or sex stereotypes and to welcome all parents. Thompson and Hulley (1997) contributed additional information on planning and conducting the conference, particularly with respect to a dos and don'ts list and specifically addressing how to handle the hard-to-please parent. Wallbrown and Prichard (1979) addressed how to understand parental resistance or parental defenses and how to respond in a non-defensive, emotion-free manner to this behavior in order to prevent a conference from escalating in intensity and becoming non-productive.

Evaluation. I planned to evaluate the effectiveness of this training by having students enrolled in my class on infant and toddler development complete a pretest/posttest questionnaire assessing four specific desired outcomes: preparedness for conducting future parent-teacher conferences, knowledge of how to communicate information to parents in a conference setting, comfort in conducting conferences, and topic-specific content knowledge (i.e., giving good advice). The first three have been suggested as important outcomes by the literature (Katz & Bauch, 1999; Morris et al., 1997), while the fourth outcome is intuitively obvious: a program

designed to train students how to conduct effective parent-teacher conferences would be a dismal failure if the students made recommendations that were harmful or contrary to the findings of scientific research.

Hypotheses

I hypothesized that as a result of this training module, from pretest to posttest: 1. Students' self-reported preparedness for conducting future parent-teacher conferences would significantly increase. 2. Students' self-reported knowledge of how to communicate with parents would significantly increase. 3. Students' self-reported comfort in conducting conferences would significantly increase. 4. Students' demonstrated topic-specific content knowledge would significantly improve.

Additionally, for the training module to be successful, students would need to demonstrate mastery of the techniques taught for conducting a parent-teacher conference. Therefore, it was also hypothesized that if the training module were effective, students would be able to demonstrate an average mastery in excess of 70% on the role-playing parent-teacher conference examination.

Methods

Sample

A total of 26 college students (25 female, one male) enrolled in one section of a required laboratory course on prenatal and infant development as part of a major in Child and Family Development participated in this investigation. Three of the students did not complete one of the two evaluation forms and were excluded from those analyses. Most of the students were between 18-25 years of age. Fifteen of the students (57.69%) were Caucasian and the remaining 11(42.31%) were African-American.

Measures

Two measures were used in this investigation. The first was a pretest/posttest evaluation form containing five items at pretest and six items at posttest. This measure was designed to assess the respondents' comfort level and preparation with respect to interacting as a professional child-care provider with parents. The first four items on the pretest form were all five-point Likert scale questions asking respondents the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the listed statement (from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 5=*Strongly Agree*). The four statements were: 1. *If a parent of a child under three asked me for advice on child development, I think I would know enough to give them sound advice.* 2. *If one of the toddlers in the lab group I'm assigned bit another child, I would know how to discuss the situation with the children's parents.* 3. *If a parent asked me for toilet training advice, I would feel comfortable talking about it.* 4. *I feel prepared to have a one-on-one parent-teacher conference with the parents of the children in my lab group.*

The fifth item was a free response question that asked respondents, "If a parent asked you how long it would be before their infant slept through the night, what would you say? What suggestions would you offer to the parent to help their baby sleep through the night?" This item was scored based on information provided in class lecture and readings about recommended practice on this topic. For each correct and helpful suggestion, students received one point. For each incorrect or harmful suggestion, students had one point deducted. Students who had negative scores were given zeros on this question.

The sixth item, which appeared only on the posttest form, was an additional Likert-scale item that asked respondents, "How much do you feel that the final interview exam in this course has helped to prepare you for working with parents in a child-care setting?" with response

categories from *Not at All* to *Very Much*. The first two items assessed self-reported knowledge (hypothesis two). The third item assessed self-reported comfort (hypothesis three). The fourth and sixth items assessed self-reported preparation (hypothesis one). The fifth item assessed content-specific knowledge (hypothesis four).

The second measure used in this investigation was the grading rubric for the simulated conference. I graded students in four areas: 1. Scheduling (setting up an appointment to meet with me over the phone following a specific script and arriving on time for the conference). 2. Professionalism (speech, conduct, appearance/dress). 3. Content (using the sandwich technique to present the problem and responding to surprise questions). 4. Prep Work (completing the conference plan worksheet). Students received a total percentage score between zero and 100, with 100 being the highest possible score/grade. The grading rubric, along with instructions for the conference, the conference plan worksheet, and the telephone script are all included as Appendix A.

Procedure

On the first day of class, students were given seven minutes to complete the pretest evaluation form. Approximately six weeks later, one course period was spent on the topic of working with families and promoting parent-provider connections in child-care facilities. During this lecture (and additionally in the readings), students were introduced to the sandwich technique (Deiner, 1997) and how to use it, as well as other specific strategies that are helpful for early childhood educators to use when dealing with parents.

Two weeks before the end of the course, each student received one of six hypothetical problems for their conference, as well as specific instructions on how to schedule and conduct the conference. The six problems are included in Appendix B. Students scheduled their 15-

minute conferences with me for mutually agreeable times during finals week. (This conference was their final examination.) They arrived at my office at the scheduled time, held the simulated conference with me playing the role of parent, and I graded their performance. At the conclusion of each conference, students received both their grade on the conference and their grade in the course. They were then handed a posttest evaluation and asked to complete it on their own time (out of my office) and return it to an envelope taped outside my office door.

Results

Evaluation Forms

The first four Likert-scale items and the score from the free response question were subjected to paired t-test analyses for pretest-posttest differences. All five tests were significant at the $p < .001$ level, with posttest scores higher or better than pretest scores. Effect sizes were calculated following the procedure recommended by Lipsey (1990) to control for the correlation between pretest and posttest measures, as the correlation represents variation unrelated to the treatment effect.

Item one about knowledge of general child development advice was significant, with students reporting greater knowledge at posttest ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .52$) than at pretest ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .82$), $t(22) = -6.87$, $ES = 2.03$. Item two concerning knowledge about discussing biting issues with parents was significant, with students reporting greater knowledge at posttest ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .37$) than at pretest ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.01$), $t(22) = -4.40$, $ES = 1.36$. Item three concerning student comfort talking about toilet training advice was significant, with students reporting greater comfort at posttest ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .85$) than at pretest ($M = 2.57$, $SD = .84$), $t(22) = -4.87$, $ES = 1.43$. Item four concerning preparation to conduct a one-on-one parent-teacher conference was significant, with students reporting greater preparation at posttest ($M = 3.91$, SD

= .61) than at pretest ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .85$), $t(21) = -8.23$, $ES = 2.50$. Item five concerning specific suggestions to make about helping infants sleep through the night was significant, with more helpful suggestions offered at posttest ($M = 1.13$, $SD = .82$) than at pretest ($M = .26$, $SD = .45$), $t(22) = -4.11$, $ES = 1.20$. Results appear in Table 1.

Additionally, item six, the Likert-scale question which asked students how much they thought that the simulated conference had helped them to prepare for working with parents in a child-care setting yielded a high overall score ($M = 4.70$, $SD = .47$) with all 23 students reporting either a four (*A Good Deal*) or a five (*Very Much*).

Graded Work

Overall, students performed very well on the graded portions of the simulated interview ($M = 91.56\%$, $SD = 4.71\%$), with most students exceeding 90%, clearly demonstrating mastery of the techniques taught. Interestingly, when students' grades on the interview were correlated with their ratings on the six items on the evaluation forms, none of the correlations was significant.

Anecdotal Evidence

Although I did not solicit additional student comments about the simulated conference beyond the evaluation form, I have received several that attest to the longer-lasting effects of this teaching component. At least five students have spontaneously commented to me since this class that they have used these skills in their other classes. Further, two of the 26 students who participated in this course have completed their required internships, and both specifically volunteered unsolicited comments that the simulated conference was helpful to them in their internship.

Discussion

All five of the project hypotheses were fully supported. From pretest to posttest, significant increases were detected in: students' self-reported preparedness for conducting future parent-teacher conferences, students' self-reported knowledge of how to communicate with parents, students' self-reported comfort in conducting conferences, and students' demonstrated topic-specific content knowledge. Additionally, the average level of mastery of the techniques taught exceeded 90%, well over the 70% *a priori* threshold set for determining effectiveness. Further, item six, which assessed students' opinions of how helpful the training module was, clearly indicated that all students found it very helpful to them.

Of particular interest is the fact that all observed effect sizes were very large (i.e., $ES > 1.00$), which is particularly noteworthy given the relatively small amount of time and effort dedicated to teaching this training module, and the small sample with which these results were achieved. Fuller (1982) has argued that the most useful conferencing skills can be learned in a relatively short period of time. The results of this investigation support that assertion. These results were produced from a 50-minute lecture, a small number of assigned readings, and a 15-minute one-on-one role-play with each student (excluding student preparation time).

The implications of these findings for those who teach early childhood educators are clear. Much prior literature has documented the need for such training modules, but in the absence of empirical evaluation, many educators may have been hesitant to use them. This evaluation has provided empirical evidence of the effectiveness of such training modules. Further, it has demonstrated that large changes in students' self reported knowledge, comfort, and preparation, as well as high levels of mastery of the techniques, can be achieved through relatively modest means. Given the importance of problem-oriented parent-teacher conferences in the daily lives of early childhood educators, training modules such as the one described here

would be a significant curricular and pedagogical addition to any early childhood education program.

These findings can also inform teaching other types of role-playing not limited to parent-teacher conferencing. First, role-playing can be used to teach skills and competencies in many different scenarios. Since one of the major effects of this training module was an increase in self-reported student comfort and preparedness likely as a result of the added experience, it is likely that similar role-playing modules would have the same effect regardless of the specific situation or skills involved because they provide the same additional experience. Additionally, one would hope that the specific skills taught for those situations would likewise be acquired.

Role-playing exercises could be used to prepare students to work in any of the following situations, to name just a few: rape crisis counseling/sexual assault prevention (Lonsway, 1996), marriage and family counseling (Freeman, 1989), elder and hospice care (Kane, 2003; St. George & DiCicco-Bloom, 1985), social work/family services (Oltjenbruns & Schatz, 1996; Werrbach, 1993), and pregnancy/abortion counseling (Kanfer, Englund, Lennhoff, & Rhodes, 1995). Role-playing could also be used more generally to simulate coworker conflicts or employer-employee conflicts. Courses on professional relationships or relational issues could benefit from such role-plays. Role-playing could even be used to help prepare teaching assistants for their duties (Goodlad, 1997).

Second, role-playing itself can be taught (Stringer, 1999) so that students can utilize role-playing strategies in developing programs for clients in future employment settings. For example, many extension educators who work with families may wish to include role-playing components in the programs and materials they develop. They may find it helpful to have families, parents, or children role-play different scenarios in order to develop certain

interpersonal skills or competencies (e.g., how to say no to drugs, how to keep calm yet indicate your displeasure when your child is misbehaving, how to respond when grandma objects to receiving nursing care, how to respond to a step-child when they say, “You’re not my real dad,” etc.).

However, several important limitations of this investigation must also be discussed. First, although the results are significant, the design of this investigation was not fully experimental. Without a control group who did not receive the training, changes in students’ knowledge, comfort, and preparation cannot conclusively be attributed to the training module as opposed to what they might have otherwise learned in the course. Future research incorporating a control group is necessary to more conclusively establish a causal relationship. Second, conducting the actual role-play part of the module is very time consuming. For example, allowing 15 minutes per student times an average enrollment of 30 students yields seven and a half contact hours necessary to administer the examination, versus the two-three hours usually allotted for administering a final examination. Finding that kind of time during finals week, and working around students’ other examinations is not an easy task. However, by making it students’ responsibility to schedule a mutually agreeable time, a significant amount of work on the part of the instructor can be eliminated. Further, if one otherwise spends five hours grading an essay examination that took three hours to administer, there would not be a significant increase in the time required to switch to this component as a final examination. Alternatively, one could administer the examination as an additional examination during the course of the semester rather than as a final examination, which would help spread the time burden out among a greater number of days.

Third, the objective grading component of the module appeared completely orthogonal to the subjective experiential component (i.e., the evaluations), which at first glance suggests that students' performance on the examination was not linked with how they felt about the process. However, low variance in both components would make any significant relationship difficult to detect, particularly with such a small sample, and as both components yielded highly positive results, the lack of a detectable relationship between them may be less of a concern.

Fourth, it could be argued that a student's grade may have influenced the evaluation in one of two ways. First, a student may have rated the module highly in hopes of getting a higher grade, but this is unlikely since the student would have received the grade before being given the evaluation to complete. Second, a student may have rated the module more highly because they received a higher grade, but given the lack of any significant correlations to this effect, this is unlikely.

Fifth, although this module appears to have significant impact on students' attitudes and skills with respect to parent-teacher conferencing, it is unknown if there are long-term benefits or if it is practically significant (i.e., will it work with real parents in real conferences?). However, the anecdotal evidence previously presented suggests that for the two students who have had those opportunities, this module has been very helpful and continues to be an asset to them in their professional lives as early childhood educators.

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Appendix A

INSTRUCTIONS

Time: To be arranged individually by each student. As in real life, you will need to schedule a conference appointment with the “parent” (i.e., your instructor). You will select the day and time of the appointment (9-5 during the designated days), subject to approval from the instructor. You should plan for the appointment to last 15 minutes. Once an appointment has been scheduled, it will not be changed except in case of emergency, so **PLAN CAREFULLY**.

Location: All conference appointments will meet in the instructor’s office. Be sure to bring your Conference Plan sheet with you, as you will need it for the conference, and will need to turn it in for points when you are finished.

Professionalism: This may only be a simulated conference, but all students are expected to take it seriously. Students should speak and conduct themselves professionally, as if they were really in the situation being simulated. Students should dress in compliance with the lab school dress code. Think of how you would react if you were the hypothetical parent.

Content: Most of what you will discuss during the conference you will receive in advance so that you can prepare, just like in real life (i.e., a hypothetical problem). However, you will be asked to respond to questions that you have not prepared for, just like the kind that real-life parents ask! Both your responses, and your poise in addressing them, will be evaluated.

Feedback: All students will receive written feedback about their performance on the final, as well as an itemized score/point value. Students may look over this feedback immediately after their exam, but cannot take it with them. (It would offer an unfair advantage to those who take the final later in the week if they know how it went for others.)

Integrity: Some students may receive the same conference “problem” to prepare for. Your work must be your own. You are not allowed to work with other students on this final, nor are you allow to discuss your conference with other students until finals week is over.

GRADING CRITERIA

Category	Item	Points
<u>Scheduling</u>	Following Phone Script	/5
	Arriving on Time	/5
<u>Professionalism</u>	Speech (including smiling!)	/5
	Conduct	/5
	Appearance	/5
<u>Content</u> (Sandwich Technique)	Discuss Positive Qualities/Development	/20
	State Concerns about Child/Concrete Examples	/15
	Conclude on Positive Note	/5
(Surprise Questions)		/10
<u>Prep Work</u>	Conference Plan Worksheet	/25
	TOTAL	/100

Comments:

CONFERENCE PLAN WORKSHEET

Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Sandwich Technique:

I. Discuss Positive Qualities/Development (10 pts.)

(Have prepared at least 3 qualities/developments from different developmental areas [language, cognitive, social, emotional, motor])

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Use this script as an "outline" of how the conversation will go:

"Good Morning/Afternoon! Today I'd like to talk with you a little bit about your son/daughter _____'s [name] progress in our program. There are three specific developments/milestones you son/daughter has achieved and we wanted to share them with you." [Go over what each one is, what it means, and why it is important.]

II. State Concerns About the Child/Concrete Examples (10 pts.)

Use this script as an "outline" of how this section will go:

"However, there is one thing we are a little concerned about. [State the problem and give the example below.]

We are concerned about this because _____ [State why it is a problem below.]

Have you noticed this behavior/problem at home? [if this applies to your problem]

We think we can overcome this problem because _____ [State how you plan to address the problem, and how the parents can help below. Be specific!]

III. Conclude on a Positive Note (5 pts.)

Use this script as an "outline" of how this section will go:

"That's about all I needed to discuss with you. Allow me to take this opportunity to say thank you for meeting with me to discuss this issue. I'm sure with both of us working on it together, everything will work out great. Also, I just wanted to say [positive thing about child below]

Do YOU have any questions you'd like to ask me?

[When appointment is over, be sure to thank parent again.]

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

“Hello. My name is _____ and I work with your son/daughter _____ [child’s name] at the [center name] as part of my Prenatal and Infant Development Class. I was wondering if we could meet sometime for about 10 minutes to talk about _____ [child’s name] and his/her development and progress in our program. [wait for acknowledgement]

Great, I was thinking about [time & date]. Would that work for you? [Be prepared with at least 3 different times.]

IF “NO”: Ok, well how about [alternate date & time]? [Continue until you find an agreeable date/time, then go to “yes” below.]

IF “YES”: Great! I’ll see you [repeat day & time, wait for acknowledgement]. Good-bye.”

BE SURE TO WRITE DOWN THE TIME/DATE YOU HAVE SELECTED. YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SHOWING UP AT THAT TIME!

Appendix B

Hypothetical Conference Problems

1. The child in question becomes very distressed during arrival time/separation from the parent. It can sometimes take 15 minutes to calm and soothe the child from the experience. This isn't a new problem, but the child is relatively new to your care, and has been doing this since coming to the center a few weeks ago. This is, of course, heartwrenching for a parent to see as they drop a child off!
2. The child in question always seems to have trouble getting to sleep/taking naps. The child does not seem to have learned to go to sleep yet.
3. The child in question seems to have developed "bottle mouth." The other day, part of a front tooth chipped off while the child was at the center. The other front tooth also looks decayed.
4. The child in question was recently transferred from an infant classroom to a crawler classroom because the child has reached the right age/developmental level for the transition. The sudden change in caregivers and other children seems to have upset the child. The child seems to get distressed at arrival time, and seems ill-at-ease throughout the day.
5. The child in question has started biting other children in the classroom. The bites aren't too serious, yet.
6. The child in question has started exhibiting aggressive behavior towards other children. When the child wants a toy that another child is playing with, she/he will take it by force, hitting if necessary.

Table 1

Pretest-Posttest Differences in Conference Evaluations (N = 23)

Item	<i>Pretest</i>		<i>Posttest</i>		<i>t</i> (22)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
General advice	2.70	.82	3.91	.52	-6.87*
Biting advice	3.13	1.01	4.04	.37	-4.40*
Toilet training advice	2.57	.84	3.48	.85	-4.87*
Conference preparation	2.18	.85	3.91	.61	-8.23*
Free response	.26	.45	1.13	.82	-4.11*

Note. For conference preparation, *df* = 21 because of missing data.

**p* < .001