

# Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Monthly DVD Classroom Newsletters

Claudia Sanchez  
*Texas Woman's University*

Bridget A. Walsh  
*University of Nevada, Reno*

Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) classroom newsletters are a mode to promote home and school communication. Although research has started to examine the role of DVDs as tools for parental involvement, little is known about teachers' perceptions of this approach to parental involvement. This pilot study explored teachers' perceptions of the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters in three pre-kindergarten settings. Pre- and post- surveys, along with interview questionnaires were administered to the participating teachers. Results from the surveys showed that the teachers increased their level of agreement that (a) all families have strengths on which teachers can build to increase parental involvement, and (b) parents in general want to be involved in their children's education. Results from the interviews indicated that teachers found the monthly classroom newsletters approach helpful. Specifically, DVD newsletters were identified as effective tools for school-home communication that yielded unexpected benefits (i.e., families' enthusiasm and student engagement). In addition, teachers shared their insights on the continued implementation of the DVD newsletter approach in their classrooms.

Keywords: parental involvement, technology, teacher education, pre-kindergarten

## BACKGROUND

How to effectively involve parents and families in the education of young children is a long-standing question among educators. According to the literature, parental

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*Claudia Sanchez is an associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Texas Woman's University. Bridget Walsh is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, & Human Development at University of Nevada, Reno. Please contact Bridget Walsh at [bridgetw@unr.edu](mailto:bridgetw@unr.edu)*

involvement or family involvement is important to the students' positive behavioral skills (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004) and their overall academic success (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Delgado-Gaitán 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Hamilton, Roach, & Riley 2003; McWayne et al., 2004; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Various modes of technology can enhance learning and instructional dynamics for children, teachers, and parents (Kenner, Ruby, Jessel, Gregory, & Arju, 2008; Lewis, 2009; Trepanier-Street, Hong, & Bauer, 2001). Some methods of technology have been used to enhance parental involvement practices (Graham-Clay, 2005). These methods have included email (Tobolka, 2006), telephone technology (Harrison, 2001; Kasprowicz, 2002) website programs and the Internet (Lopez, 2005; Tobolka, 2006), as well as video and Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) technologies (Calabrese, 2006; Clevenson, 1999; Walsh, Buckley, Rose, Sanchez & Gillum, 2008). The purpose of the current study is to contribute to the existing literature by exploring early childhood teachers' insights on the use of DVD classroom newsletters with families.

Clevenson (1999) cautioned educators that in some schools many families may not have accessibility to diverse forms of technology. However, studies that have focused on video or DVD technology have found that ownership of a video cassette recorder (Calabrese, 2006; Cameron & Lee, 1997; Clevenson, 1999) or DVD technology (Walsh et al., 2008) was the overwhelming majority, not the minority. Since the majority does not equal everyone, teachers are nonetheless faced with the challenge of attempting to reach all families in their classrooms. To this end, teachers wishing to explore the use of video or DVD technology for communication purposes may benefit from surveying parents and families on their access to DVD technology at home (Bush, 2000; Sanchez, Walsh, & Rose, in press). To counter the possible unavailability of DVD technology among families, teachers could provide a location at the school where parents could view the monthly DVD classroom newsletters without the risk of being stigmatized. In addition, teachers may consider compiling and distributing a list of alternate viewing options available to families (e.g., public libraries, adult learning centers in parental involvement programs, and community centers with DVD players or computer access).

Because video technology is accessible to families, it is not surprising that the integration of this technology (Calabrese, 2006; Clevenson, 1999) has been documented in the published literature as an approach that can enhance parental involvement. The published literature documenting this approach is nonetheless scarce to date. One reason that may account for this paucity in the literature may be the fact that the implementation of video technology communication is a challenging task that requires special considerations, such as a team willing to oversee taping and production, funding, and technical assistance (Calabrese, 2006).

Calabrese (2006) conducted an exploratory study to promote communication and relationships between schools and families. To do this, the researcher created a school video for early childhood classrooms in an urban, public setting that provided an overview of the school as well as parenting advice for families. Calabrese's creation was a one-time school video (i.e., a videotape that was distributed once to all children with parental approval to participate in the project). A brief survey was sent home to the parents with a response rate of 23% (Calabrese, 2006). Surveys indicated that parents reported learning new information about school programs offered as well as ways to help their children be successful in school. In addition, families of pre-kindergarteners reported on average watching the video at least two times (Calabrese, 2006). This finding is consistent with literature indicating that families who receive videotaped information from the school about their children's daily activities often view the videos on more than one occasion (Clevenson, 1999; Trepanier et al., 2001), which suggests that video

technology's appeal to families may have the potential to enhance school-home communication and parental involvement practices.

Walsh et al.'s (2008) pilot study was inspired on Calabrese's (2006) study. However, instead of employing a one-time videotape largely focused on school policies, programs, and curriculum (Calabrese, 2006), Walsh et al. developed monthly DVD newsletters that focused largely on classroom activities and strategies parents could use to encourage children's learning at home. Walsh et al. (2008) investigated parental perceptions of parental involvement and DVD monthly classroom newsletters. The researchers sent home English and Spanish versions of a survey to the parents prior to the DVD intervention. The parental involvement and efficacy scales that Walsh et al. (2008) adopted for their survey were developed by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). In Walsh et al.'s (2008) study, most of the parents reported having a low income and almost half of the sample reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino. In addition, half of the participants who completed the Spanish version of the questionnaire agreed with the statement, "I don't know how to help my child learn" (Walsh et al., 2008). The researchers found that parents reported the information provided in the DVD classroom newsletters was helpful in promoting children's learning. Because the participants in Walsh et al.'s (2008) pilot study reported being very likely to implement the ideas teachers suggested and demonstrated on the DVD newsletters, it is plausible that this innovative approach may serve as an effective mode to promote parental involvement. Walsh et al.'s (2008) study was a precursor to the present pilot study, which examines teachers' perceptions of the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters in two educational settings interested in improving their parental involvement practices.

Although earlier studies exploring parents' perspectives seemed to indicate that video technology might prove to be an effective tool for promoting parental involvement, teachers' views regarding the project's outcomes were not reported in previous work with early childhood samples (e.g., Calabrese, 2006; Walsh et al., 2008). Clevenson's (1999) project description of classroom videos showed that teachers had positive perceptions of the video technology, but the participants were middle school teachers, not early childhood. In Clevenson's (1999) videos, teachers and student actors would describe school project guidelines, show demonstrations, and provide tips as to how parents could assist their children with school projects.

### *RESEARCH QUESTION*

In the present pilot study, the research question was: What are teachers' perceptions of the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters with families in three pre-K classrooms at two early childhood education centers in the North Texas area?

## **METHOD**

### *CONTEXT*

Two public schools located in medium-size suburban communities of large metropolitan areas of North Texas provided the context for this study. Both schools predominantly served children from families with low socioeconomic status, and almost half (48%) of the families in these districts are Hispanic or Latino. One participating school was an intensely academic focused setting with a Texas Education Agency (TEA) rating of Excellent, which means that 90% or more of its students passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS, the State's mandated achievement tests for grade levels third to 12<sup>th</sup>) at the time of this study. The two participating classrooms from

this school, (one classroom that was English-speaking only and another that was Spanish-speaking only), were housed at a school that served pre-kindergarteners to fifth graders, and served 22 and 27 families respectively.

The other participating school received an accountability rating of Academically Acceptable by the TEA, which indicates a 45% to 70% passing rate of the TAKS. One classroom from this school participated in this study. The classroom served 27 families and was located at a prekindergarten site housed in a Community Learning Complex that served only pre-kindergarten students.

At the project's planning meetings principals, parent coordinators, a language arts coordinator, and assistants to the superintendents highlighted the need for individualized forms of parental involvement on a classroom level. Schools reported utilizing traditional methods for parental involvement (i.e., school-wide paper newsletters and phone) in addition to technology-enhanced approaches such as Internet sites and podcasts. School staff at the participating schools expressed their interest in implementing monthly DVD classroom newsletters as a new method of school-home communication to encourage parental involvement.

### *PARTICIPANTS*

The participating pre-kindergarten teachers were recruited through a mailed letter and consent form sent to both school districts. This pilot study was conducted with a sample size of three participants. This modest sample size is attributed to the exploratory nature of the monthly DVD newsletter project. Since the project involved a total of three teachers in two public schools, the size of the population eligible for this study was modest in the first place.

The three teachers who participated in this study were female. Two of the teachers were White, and one teacher was Hispanic. The teacher who identified herself as Hispanic was bilingual in English and Spanish. The three teachers reported holding a teacher's certificate; in addition, two teachers held a Bachelor's degree, and one teacher held a Master's degree. The teachers ranged from having three years to 12 years of pre-kindergarten teaching experience. All teachers taught both morning and afternoon pre-kindergarten sessions, and one teacher taught in a Spanish only speaking classroom.

### *MONTHLY DVD CLASSROOM NEWSLETTERS*

The project occurred over four months (February, March, April, and May) with monthly DVD newsletters created and given to each child and teacher. The newsletters were the product of a school-university partnership whereby the university affiliates produced the DVDs with input from the participating teachers on design and content. The development of the monthly DVD classroom newsletters consisted of a planning phase and a production phase.

*Planning Phase.* At the onset of the project, the two school district partners collected a consent form for parents to give their permission for their children to appear in the monthly classroom DVD newsletters. Children whose parents did not give consent to participate in the project were blurred from the footage and did not appear in the DVD newsletters.

To plan the DVD newsletters, four research assistants met with their assigned teachers every month to collect teachers' input on the design and content to be featured in the DVDs for each classroom. The first meeting was face-to-face, and subsequent contacts took place via email. Teachers indicated the chosen language for the DVD (Spanish or English), the content they wanted the research team to focus on, any

announcements or information they wanted to appear in bold face at the bottom of the screen or at the beginning or end of the DVD, information on what parents reported they wished to see (e.g., their own children captured working on individual projects), the time and date of taping, and any updates on child consent form information (e.g., a mother who at the onset of the project had not given consent for her child to appear in the DVDs, later changed her mind after seeing the first DVD monthly newsletter).

*Production Phase.* To produce the DVD newsletters, the research team used video-recording and video-editing equipment from the partnering university's Technology Resource Center (TRC). A consultant from the TRC provided the research team with a training session on how to use iMovie from Apple, as well as Pinnacle's Studio version 9 for video editing. The training included techniques to blur out children without consent from the footage. In addition, the consultant showed the team how to burn multiple copies of the DVDs. A couple of internal mini-grants from the College of Professional Education and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the partnering university, in addition to a third external mini-grant provided the funds needed to purchase the recording tapes and DVD's with jewel cases. The research assistants were undergraduate students who donated their time and effort to this project. They received a small stipend as a token of appreciation for their work.

After the research assistants gathered teachers' input on the DVD newsletters' design and content, they obtained about one hour's worth of raw footage each month from their assigned classrooms. The footage featured the head teacher, a teacher assistant, and the children whose parents gave consent to participate. The footage typically contained (a) an overview of the classroom (location of centers, classroom pet, and the like); (b) artwork displayed on the classroom walls; (c) storybook reading by the teacher to the entire class; (d) small group activities; (e) one-on-one activities in which the research assistant would individually ask each child (with consent) a question; (f) teacher demonstrations of activities and ways parents can help their children learn at home, and (g) classroom announcements from the teacher. The raw footage was then edited into DVD classroom newsletters, each of which took approximately 3 to 6 hours to edit for each month. Anecdotally, according to the research assistants, the editing time was reduced each month due to the team's increasing familiarity with the technological tools and process. The final version of each DVD ran about 12 to 20 minutes in length. This run time is consistent with previous video technology interventions (e.g., Calabrese, 2006; Clevenson, 1999).

The information presented on the monthly classroom DVD newsletters included a welcome message from the teacher, details about skills being learned in the classroom, and ways to practice such skills at home. For example, in one DVD, a classroom teacher was shown describing the concept of patterns through a series of examples. After the teacher explained the concept, the children were shown actually participating in a pattern activity. Next, the teacher was shown again, but this time she provided examples of how parents could incorporate patterns into their home routines. One of the suggested ways to do this consisted in engaging children in creating a pattern at breakfast by using items such as eggs, toast, eggs, toast. To clarify even more, bold-faced words related to the concepts were featured on the bottom of the screen. After the strategy the teacher shared with parents, the DVD showed announcements about ongoing and upcoming classroom and school activities. Finally, the DVD featured video segments showing the teacher and children working and playing during the school day.

### *INSTRUMENTATION*

The research team explored teachers' perceptions of the use of technology for parental involvement through mailed surveys prior to and after the newsletter intervention, as well as through face-to-face interviews. For the pre- and post-surveys, the research team used two similar parental involvement measures. The difference between these measures was that the post-surveys included two additional questions that asked teachers about their opinions about the intervention (see Appendices A and B). The surveys assessed teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in general as well as teachers' perceptions of specific parental involvement practices. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones and Reed (2002) developed a general scale of eight items and a specific parental involvement scale comprised of 16 items. These two scales were employed in the present study. Regarding the measure on teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in general, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2002) reported an alpha reliability of .65 (pre-test) and .75 (post-test). For the measure on specific parental involvement practices, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2002) reported an alpha reliability of .90 for pre-test and an alpha reliability of .94 for post-test. In the present study, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement via a six-point rating scale ranging from disagree very strongly to agree very strongly, consistent with Hoover-Dempsey et al.'s (2002) scale. Six demographic items adopted from Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues were included at the end of the pre- and post-surveys.

The surveys also included a technology subscale developed by the authors of the present study. The technology subscale comprised the first part of the pre- and post-surveys, and assessed the ways teachers communicate with families, as well as teachers' perceptions of monthly DVD classroom newsletters. Specifically, teachers were asked to identify the ways in which they inform parents about children's participation in classroom activities. The methods listed included podcasts, web sites on the Internet, videotape, audio tape, DVDs, email, electronic newsletter, paper newsletter, and parent-teacher conferences. The surveys also inquired about teachers' expectations and views regarding the implementation of the DVD newsletters in their classrooms; their opinions on whether the DVD newsletters would increase parental involvement and/or facilitate communication with parents; and the likelihood that the teachers would continue to use DVD newsletters after the intervention.

Two of the three teachers individually participated in an interview after the completion of the intervention. The third teacher did not give her consent to be interviewed. The interview consisted of 12 open-ended questions that focused on their experiences, opinions, and suggestions regarding the implementation of monthly DVD classroom newsletters in their pre-kindergarten classrooms. The interview questions (see Appendix C) were constructed to explore pre-kindergarten teachers' insights on their experiences using monthly DVD classroom newsletters.

### *PROCEDURE*

Three teachers agreed to participate in the DVD newsletter intervention by signing a consent form. The participants received a cover letter, consent form, survey, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope prior to the intervention. The questionnaire required about 15 minutes to complete. The teachers returned the consent form and pre-test survey via mail to the researchers. No incentives were offered to these teachers for their participation in this study. The teachers were involved in the planning and taping of the DVD's, and they individually viewed one DVD newsletter per month during the four month intervention.

At the conclusion of the monthly DVD classroom newsletter intervention, each teacher was mailed a post-questionnaire with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for its return. Approximately 2 weeks later, the teachers agreed to be interviewed by the second author.

Two of the three teachers were interviewed after the completion of the intervention, and each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes. Teachers' responses to the questions were written in shorthand by the interviewer and the entire interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and coded by the researchers. The codes were then used to identify common themes in the participants' responses.

## RESULTS

### FINDINGS FROM TEACHER SURVEYS

*Teachers' beliefs about parental involvement.* Teacher participants (N = 3) in this study were surveyed on their beliefs about parental involvement. Results from the pre- and post- surveys revealed that although teachers slightly disagreed that most parents know how to help their children with school, they agreed or strongly agreed that (a) parental involvement was important for school and student success; (b) all parents can learn ways to help their children learn; (c) parental involvement can help teachers be more effective; and (d) the school views parents as valuable partners. Interestingly, while teachers' beliefs remained positive as measured by the pre- and post- surveys, two items showed greater agreement in the post-survey results: (e) every family has some strengths that can be tapped to increase family involvement in school; (f) parents want to be more involved. We could speculate that greater agreement for these two items may indicate that the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters might have provided a context conducive to the development of more positive perceptions of families' potential and willingness to be involved in school. Table 1 shows the items that yielded greater agreement after the DVD intervention.

Table 1: *Teachers degree of agreement/disagreement with parental involvement statements*

Variable	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Every family has some strengths that can be tapped to increase student success at school.	4.33	.58	4-5	5.33	.58	4-5
Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are.	4.33	1.16	3-5	5	1.00	3-5

*Note.* A Likert-type scale was used (1= disagree very strongly, 2= disagree, 3= disagree just a little, 4 = agree just a little, 5= agree, 6= agree very strongly)

*Forms of school-home communication.* Participating teachers were asked about the forms of communication they implemented with families. The teachers indicated they used web sites, email, paper newsletters, as well as in-person and telephone interviews with parents. No use of podcasts, videotapes, audiotapes, DVDs, or electronic newsletters was reported at the onset of the intervention. Table 2 shows the reported methods used by teachers in the pre- and post- surveys.

Table 2: *Number of Teachers Reporting Methods of Informing Parents (N = 3)*

Methods	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
	Number of Teachers	
Web sites on the Internet	2	1
Email	1	1
Paper newsletter	3	3
Talking with parents	3	3
Podcasts	0	0
Videotapes	0	0
Audiotapes	0	0
DVDs	0	1
Electronic newsletter	0	0
Telephone	1	1

As Table 2 shows, teachers' methods of communicating with parents remained the same with the exception of web sites and DVDs. From the three participating teachers, only one reported using DVDs as a method to inform parents after the intervention. This appears to be an indication that our intervention may have led this teacher to feel involved in the DVD intervention enough to affect her reported strategies for parental involvement.

*Teachers' views of the intervention according to survey data.* Prior to and after the intervention, teachers were asked if monthly DVD classroom newsletters would increase parental involvement and/or facilitate communication with parents. A five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 3= no opinion, 5= strongly agree) showed that teachers did not express agreement or disagreement with the statement ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ). However, after the intervention, the three teachers agreed ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = .57$ ) that monthly DVD classroom newsletters facilitated communication with parents.

Before the intervention, the teachers were also asked their opinion about using DVD newsletters in the classroom. Two out of three teachers responded to this question. As the survey data revealed, one teacher reported feeling hesitant and unsure that parents would be receptive to the technology-enhanced newsletters.

[I feel] a little apprehensive. Not sure if parents will take the time to view the DVD.

The second teacher, on the other hand, felt positive about the role of the DVD newsletters in encouraging parental involvement.

I think the DVD newsletter will allow parents more access to their children's education than before. I think it will give the parents an insight on how the school day goes for the students. It can also be a helpful tool for parents for helping their children with homework.

After the intervention, teachers were asked their opinion about their experience with the DVD newsletters. This time, the three teachers responded to the question and although only one teacher reported feeling uneasy appearing on video, all teachers agreed that the experiences of sharing the newsletters with parents were positive. As one teacher indicated in her survey,

[It was] great. There was little effort on my part. My parents loved it. The parents had a chance to see what was happening at school.

### FINDINGS FROM TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Three main themes emerged from the interview data analysis: (a) DVD newsletters as effective tools for communication with parents, (b) unexpected benefits of the DVD newsletters, and (c) insights on continued implementation of the DVD newsletters by the participating teachers.

*DVD newsletters as effective tools for communication with parents.* The data analyses revealed that teachers agreed the DVD newsletters proved to be a more successful tool for communication than other electronic methods they had used in the past (e.g., web sites, email). Two reasons accounted for the perceived superior effectiveness (i.e., capability of the DVD newsletters to facilitate communication with parents). First, the DVD newsletters allowed parents to see and hear classroom activities, as well as receive teachers' tips for encouraging learning at home. According to the teachers, watching a DVD was more effective than reading traditional newsletters on paper, especially in the case of parents with low literacy skills. Second, the DVD format of the newsletters allowed teachers to share much more information with parents than they would have been able to do via traditional forms of communication, such as printed newsletters or parent conferences. On this, one teacher commented,

[Some parents] don't even read, so being able to see [the DVD newsletters] was very beneficial to them because they now have an understanding of what's going on in the classroom.

*Unexpected benefits of the monthly DVD newsletters.* The interview data analyses confirmed parents' positive views of the newsletters. Parents not only welcomed the newsletters, but were very enthusiastic about receiving them every month. As one teacher commented,

The parents were able to see their kids in action and the parents loved it. [...] They kept telling me 'Oh, we loved it.' [...] First, they would send [the DVDs] back thinking that they didn't get to keep them and then they were like 'Oh, I get to keep it.' And [...] they were really thrilled.

As well, both teachers and children benefited from the intervention. Teachers were pleased with the assistance the research team provided in developing the newsletters and running the production of the DVD newsletters. Teachers also reported an additional benefit associated with the intervention: students were engaged during the intervention and enjoyed "seeing themselves" on television at home.

*Teachers' insights on continued implementation of the DVD newsletter.* When asked about their perceptions of future implementation of the newsletters, teachers commented on the promising benefits of the approach. In their opinions, most parents would enjoy monthly DVD newsletters showing regular school updates. Teachers would also enjoy continuing to send home the newsletters, given their attractive DVD format and their potential to facilitate communication with parents. Teachers indicated that parents reported using some of the ideas featured in the newsletters on how to help their children learn at home. Teachers also thought the DVD format was a good way to document child growth and development by allowing comparisons to be made from Time 1 (February) and Time 4 (May). In this respect, teachers thought the monthly DVD classroom newsletters might be a handy incorporation or reference point to enhance parent-teacher conferences. Teachers also mentioned they would like to plan ahead of time (i.e., at the beginning of the school year) the topics they would like to cover with parents in order to implement the DVD newsletter approach at the beginning of the school year.

With regard to the likelihood that teachers would continue to use DVD newsletters after the intervention, they indicated they would like to do so provided that they had the materials, assistance, and training they needed. In the present pilot study, teachers

benefitted from the work of a school-university partnership that assumed all tasks related to production of the DVD newsletters. This included collecting teachers' ideas for newsletters design, as well as recording and editing video digitally, and making individual copies of the newsletters for families. Without the assistance teachers received through the school-university partnership, teachers thought it would be difficult to continue using the DVD newsletter approach for school-home communication. As one teacher indicated,

As a teacher, [it would be] a bit hard to put [the DVD newsletter] together without assistance.

## DISCUSSION

The present pilot study explored early childhood teachers' perceptions of monthly DVD classroom newsletters. This section of the article discusses our findings regarding teachers' beliefs, teachers' forms of school-home communication, and their views regarding the intervention. In terms of teachers' beliefs, findings indicated that at the onset of the project, the three participating teachers reported very positive beliefs regarding parental involvement in general and a concern that many parents might not know how to help their children learn. After the intervention, the teachers' beliefs not only remained positive, but showed about a one-point increase of mean scores, which suggests stronger agreement that (a) all families have strengths that can be tapped to increase student success, and (b) parents want to be involved more than they actually are. This finding suggests that the intervention may have impacted teachers' beliefs regarding parental involvement in a positive way.

The teachers' report of the use of web sites and email to communicate with parents demonstrates the participating schools' capacity for technology. After the intervention, one out of three teachers reported using DVDs as a method to communicate with parents. It is interesting to speculate that possibly one teacher may have felt highly involved in the process of creating the DVDs. We presume that one possible reason that two teacher participants did not report using the DVD newsletter approach after the intervention was that they may not have felt comfortable claiming this project their own, since it was not an individual initiative, but a collaborative project developed through a school-university partnership. The three participating teachers praised the work this partnership did to create the DVD newsletters. Future projects may wish to consider inviting parents to contribute to the work of school-university partnerships producing DVD classroom newsletters. This would instill a sense of teamwork among teachers, parents, and university partners (Clevenson, 1999), enrich the project with diverse perspectives on topics to feature, and ultimately impact the education of children in a positive way.

Finally, regarding teachers' views of the intervention, results indicated that at the onset of the project, teachers did not know what to expect from the use of DVD newsletters for parental involvement purposes. However, after the intervention, the three teachers agreed that the classroom newsletters approach facilitated communication with parents. The teachers also reported that implementing the monthly DVD classroom newsletters into their parental involvement practices was a positive experience. In the existing literature, parents' perspectives indicate that video technology (Calabrese, 2006) and monthly DVD classroom newsletters (Walsh et al., 2008) might prove to be an effective technique for promoting family involvement. The current study helps to support the positive appraisal of this type of communication, and results from the analysis of the teacher interview data further substantiate the effectiveness of the DVD classroom newsletter approach. Teachers indicated that the DVD newsletters were a more effective tool for parental involvement that engaged parents and students alike. This effectiveness

may be due in part to the audiovisual capabilities of DVDs, which more traditional forms of communication lack. Teachers believed the DVDs were beneficial to the parents, the pre-kindergarteners, and themselves. With regard to benefits to parents, one teacher stated that the DVD was really helpful to parents who do not read. This is reminiscent of one of Calabrese's (2006) charges that some families have literacy issues and face challenges when receiving written materials from teachers.

In terms of the continued implementation of the DVD newsletter approach, teachers expressed that unavailability of materials, assistance, and training would be an obstacle to furthering the use of this approach for parental involvement. This concern echoes the need for staff development experiences in technology, which is documented in the literature. Not only do teachers need access to technological tools such as computer and videographic gear to create DVDs, they need to know how technology works and what it can do to enhance their practice (Kearsley & Lynch, 1992; U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1995). We suggest that equipping pre-kindergarten schools with the technological capacity to support teachers is an important first step in the process of adopting innovative technological methods, such as DVDs to communicate with parents.

Beyond the small sample size, the present pilot study has two key limitations that a study with a large sample should address. First, the intervention should start at the beginning of the school year. In the present study, we had to launch our project half-way through the school year due to time constraints mainly associated with availability of funds for this initiative. Second, a control group will allow comparisons to be made between teachers in classrooms that utilize the DVD newsletters and those that employ more traditional means. The findings from this study are nonetheless important because they suggest that the use of DVD newsletters as an innovative technological method for school-home communication may prove effective in enhancing family involvement practices of early childhood teachers.

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**Appendix A**

Pre-Survey on Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Monthly DVD Classroom Newsletters  
Part I: In this section, we would like to find out about your current practices for parental communication. Please check the appropriate response.

1. Please check all of the ways you inform parents about what children are doing in your classroom.

- Podcasts
  - Web sites on the Internet
  - Videotapes
  - Audio tapes
  - DVDs
  - Email
  - Electronic newsletter
  - Paper newsletter
  - Talking with the parents
  - Other (please explain)
- 

2. How do you feel about the idea of using a DVD newsletter in your classroom?

**Appendix B**

Post-Survey on Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Monthly DVD Classroom Newsletters

Part I: In this section, we would like to find out about your current practices for parental communication. Please check the appropriate response.

1. Please check all of the ways you inform parents about what children are doing in your classroom.

- Podcasts
- Web sites on the Internet
- Videotapes
- Audio tapes
- DVDs
- Email
- Electronic newsletter

- Paper newsletter  
 Talking with the parents  
 Other (please explain)
- 

2. How do you feel about the idea of using a DVD newsletter in your classroom?

3. I feel that the use of the DVD newsletter in my classroom increased parental involvement and/or facilitated communication with parents.
- a) Strongly Disagree      b) Disagree      c) No Opinion  
 d) Agree      e) Strongly Agree
4. I will continue to use DVD newsletters in my classroom.
- a) Strongly Disagree      b) Disagree      c) No Opinion  
 d) Agree      e) Strongly Agree
- 4-a. Why or why not?

### Appendix C

#### Teacher Interview Questionnaire

1. To what extent did you, as a teacher, benefit from the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters?
2. To what extent do you think your students' parents were receptive to the monthly DVD classroom newsletters you sent home? Please explain.
3. To what extent do you think your students' parents benefit from the monthly DVD classroom newsletters you sent home? Please explain.
4. To what extent do you think your students benefit from the monthly DVD classroom newsletters you sent home? Please explain.
5. To what extent do you think *most* parents in this school would be receptive to monthly DVD classroom newsletters? Please explain.
6. What input (if any) from your students' parents did you receive on the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters?
7. What input (if any) from your students did you receive on the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters?
8. What input (if any) from your fellow teachers or administrators did you receive on the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters?
9. Based on your experience with the monthly DVD classroom newsletters, in what ways are these newsletters a *more* effective means of communication than other means you have used in the past? Please explain.
10. Based on your experience with the monthly DVD classroom newsletters, in what ways are these newsletters a *less* effective means of communication than other means you have used in the past? Please explain.

11. To what extent would you be willing to continue using monthly DVD classroom newsletters to encourage parental involvement throughout the school year?
12. What would be your suggestions for improving the use of monthly DVD classroom newsletters in your or other classrooms?