

# Teachers' Strategies to Foster Parental Self-determination in Parent-Teacher Conferences

Johanna Hilkenmeier\*

Paderborn University, Germany

johanna.hilkenmeier@uni-paderborn.de

Sabrina Wiescholek

Paderborn University, Germany

sabrina.wiescholek@uni-paderborn.de

Christian Greiner

Paderborn University, Germany

christian.greiner@uni-paderborn.de

Heike M. Buhl

Paderborn University, Germany

heike.buhl@uni-paderborn.de

\* corresponding author

## **Abstract**

Parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity for teachers to foster parental involvement. However, little is known about the quality of these talks. The purpose of this article is to investigate and describe a model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences on the basis of self-determination theory. First, a preliminary model is described summarizing recommendations by researchers and practitioners. A qualitative content analysis of 11 teacher interviews in Study 1 enables further validation and model differentiation. The assumed model is then tested through confirmatory factor analysis with data from 208 teachers and 201 parents (Study 2). The results show that self-determination theory can be used to describe teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences within the teacher reports, but not within the parents' sample.

*Keywords:* parental involvement; parent-teacher conferences; parent-teacher talk; self-determination; motivation

### **Self-determination in Parent-Teacher Conferences**

The body of research about communication between parents and teachers has grown increasingly in the last decades. One reason for this development is that this communication can enhance parental involvement (e.g., Epstein, e.g., 2009; Keyes, 2002), which in turn has been shown to be an important variable for student's academic achievement (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2012; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Thus, also parent-teacher conferences should lead to an increase of parental involvement. However, little is known about the actual quality of parent-teacher conferences.

The purpose of this article is to describe teachers' strategies in parent-teacher conferences on the basis of self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). First, previous findings and practical suggestions about parent-teacher conferences are unified in a preliminary model. A first validation and further model differentiation takes place through a qualitative analysis of teacher interviews (Study 1). The model's validity is then assessed quantitatively through a sample of teachers and parents (Study 2). The data from both studies were collected in Germany.

### **Fostering Parental Involvement**

Research has shown that various antecedents lead to parental involvement (e.g., supporting the child in learning activities or volunteering in school). For instance, the parent's self-efficacy and role construction as well as the perceived invitations from school or child lead to a higher degree of parental involvement (e.g., Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 2005; Yotyodying & Wild, 2014). Though, little is known about how these antecedents can be or are being fostered.

Epstein et al. (e.g., 2009) distinguish six types of parental involvement, which simultaneously illustrate how teachers can work with parents in order to enhance parental

involvement: “Parenting” and “Learning at Home” focus on providing support and information for parents regarding the establishment of a helpful home learning environment for the child. “Volunteering” and “Decision Making” describe the inclusion of parents regarding volunteer work and decision making. “Collaborating with the Community” reflects the integration of parents in community networks and “Communicating” focuses on establishing regular conferences as well as providing clear information through different channels such as internet, memos or newsletters. Especially “Communicating” takes a central position when it comes to the enhancement of parental involvement, as a functioning communication between home and school is the basis for establishing all other types of involvement (e.g., Keyes, 2002).

With respect to the antecedents mentioned above, “Parenting” and “Learning at Home” should foster parental self-efficacy and role-construction. “Volunteering”, “Decision Making” and “Collaborating with the Community” could furthermore lead to an increase of perceived invitations. “Communicating” however precedes all other strategies inasmuch as one way or the other it takes place in every interaction between teacher and parents and should therefore offer the opportunity to foster all of the named antecedents.

### **Fostering Parental Involvement through Self-determination**

Looking at parental motivation for involvement in the child’s schooling, the self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) provides a useful framework. According to the theory, perceived competence, autonomy and relatedness lead to an increase in motivation. Thus, people feeling capable and effective (competence), feeling their own behavior to be an expression and choice of themselves (autonomy), feeling cared for and feeling connected to others (relatedness), show a higher degree of motivation and self-determined behavior. The theoretical concept has already been proved in various domains

such as work, parenting, medicine, education, psychotherapy and sports (see Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002).

In order to enhance perceived competence, autonomy, relatedness and consequently motivation, the following dimensions of social context can be distinguished: autonomy support (vs. control), interpersonal involvement (responsiveness) and structure (Grolnick et al., 1997). Studies in the domain of homework supervision could show that the child's motivation increases during homework completion when parents are perceived as autonomy supportive, responsive and structuring (Dumont et al., 2014; Lorenz & Wild, 2007).

Responsiveness comprises showing caring, affection, respect, acceptance, warmth, intimacy and interest (e.g., Grolnick et al., 1997; Ryan & Solky, 1996). Autonomy support describes the encouragement of self-initiated activities and the provision of choice (e.g., Grolnick et al., 1997), whereas control would offer no freedom of action. Structure includes providing a framework or guidelines, organizing the environment, communicating expectations and providing informational feedback (e.g., Grolnick et al., 1997). Both autonomy support and structure would lead to feelings of competence and autonomy, whereas responsiveness would lead to the feeling of relatedness. However, it is important to distinguish between structure and control. While structure can refer to giving information about the connection between behavior and consequences, control rather describes pressuring and surveilling (e.g., Grolnick et al., 1997).

Most research on self-determination theory assumes the dimensions autonomy support and control to be two ends of only one dimension (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985). Following Silk et al. (2003), as well as Lorenz and Wild (2007), we argue, that "autonomy appears to be more than the mere absence of psychological control" (Lorenz & Wild, 2007, p. 304). Thus, in the following we distinguish the four dimensions autonomy support, control, structure and responsiveness.

The previously named antecedents of parental involvement as well as the described types of involvement strategies can also be considered within self-determination theory. For instance, autonomy support as well as structure comprise fostering antecedents such as parental self-efficacy and role-construction and could be established through different involvement strategies such as “Parenting”, “Learning at Home”, “Volunteering” and “Decision Making”. Responsiveness could be provided through “Collaboration with the Community” and again, “Communicating” could be the crucial tool to enhance autonomy support, structure and responsiveness at once.

### **Fostering Self-determination through Communication in Parent-teacher Conferences**

The parent-teacher conference represents a common opportunity for communication. It usually takes place twice a year and enables parents and teachers to talk about the student’s academic and social growth (e.g., Grady, 2013; Sacher, 2014; Seldin, 1991). Usually, parent-teacher conferences are being attended by a teacher and one or both parents. Some parent-teacher conferences also include the child as an active participant (e.g., Minke & Anderson, 2003).

In line with the described self-determination theory, during parent-teacher conferences parents should feel motivated when they perceive the teacher as autonomy supportive, responsive, structuring, and not controlling correspondingly. Research already suggests that teachers actually use these strategies during classroom time with students (e.g., Reeve, 2002). Nonetheless, little is known about teachers' strategies within the communication in parent-teacher conferences (e.g., Grady, 2013; Minke & Anderson, 2003).

However, research based on conversational analysis shows some interesting findings about the quality of parent-teacher talk. For instance, Bennewitz and Wegner (2014) described parent-teacher talk as a moral discourse about guilt and responsibility. In other studies the teacher is being described as controlling and as a dominant authority (Keogh,

1996; MacLure & Walker, 2000) which also is revealed in unequal speaking proportions (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Howard & Lipinoga, 2010).

Furthermore, theoretically and empirically well-founded conceptualizations about parent counseling and teacher competencies in parent-teacher talk have been developed (e.g., Aich, 2011; Bruder, 2011; Gerich et al., 2015; Hertel, 2009; Gartmeier et al., 2011) using theories such as the client-centered approach (Rogers, e.g., 1983), behavioral approach (e.g., Ellis & Hoellen, 1997), communication model (Schulz von Thun, e.g., 2010) or the common ground theory (Clark & Brennan, e.g., 1991). Beside this, a number of researchers and practitioners have specified a comprehensive body of suggestions and guidelines for teachers in order to ensure a high quality of parent-teacher communication. A unifying overview of recommendations by researchers and practitioners is listed in Table 1.

*[Insert Table 1 about here]*

As can be seen, the suggestions can easily be matched to the dimensions responsiveness, autonomy support, structure and control. For example, Friedman (1980) proposes to ask parents: “How can I be of assistance to you in carrying out the plan?” (p. 38). Further he argues: „Such an approach addresses the intelligent, problem-solving side of the parent – the Adult – and gives it space in which to operate” (p. 38). This advice for instance can be seen as an example for teachers to support parental autonomy. In line with the dimension structure, Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies (2007) propose: “Develop an action plan. Choose one or two areas on which to focus” (p. 293) and an example for responsiveness is given by Stevens and Tollafield (2003): “Treating each person with warmth and respect will help to encourage him or her to participate” (p. 524).

Table 1 is a first step towards a model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences. However, it is not clear whether these strategies

are actually being used or perceived by teachers and parents. Also, the comprehensiveness of the model should be explored and strengthened through further model differentiation.

To examine our research questions we conducted two studies. The first study consisted of a qualitative content analysis of 11 teacher interviews. Based on research so far and the results from study 1 we developed a scale to assess teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement. In the second study we used this scale and conducted a survey using standardized self-reports. We then analyzed data of 208 teachers and 201 parents using confirmatory factor analysis. The following research questions are being pursued:

1. Which of the named and proposed teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences are being reported by teachers (Study 1)?
2. To what extent can the preliminary model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences be further differentiated through teacher reports (Study 1)?
3. Can the assumed model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences be represented through quantitative data of teachers (Study 2a)?
4. Can the assumed model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences be represented through quantitative data of parents (Study 2b)?

## **Study 1**

### **Method**

The purpose of Study 1 was to answer research questions 1 and 2: (1) Which of the named and proposed strategies in parent-teacher conferences are being reported by teachers, and (2) to what extent can the preliminary model be further differentiated through teacher reports?



We conducted 11 interviews with 7 female and 4 male teachers from five elementary schools in midwestern Germany. The sample size was determined through the principle of saturation (e.g., Helfferich, 2011). The teachers had a mean work experience of 15 years ( $SD = 10.61$ ; min. = 0.5; max. = 35). The semi-structured interview comprised open questions about techniques and strategies, teachers use in parent-teacher conferences to involve parents in the child's schooling (e.g., "What strategies do you use in parent-teacher conferences?"). The duration of the interviews was on average 41 minutes ( $SD = 13.4$ ; min. = 25; max. = 65).

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The analysis of the text material consisted of two steps. The first step comprised the structuring and summarizing qualitative content analysis (see Mayring, 2010), in which the raw statements were reduced to core contents. Coders were trained through a coding manual with coding rules in order to identify and allocate relevant units (see examples in Table 2).

*[Insert Table 2 about here]*

In sum 21 categories (e.g., "give specific examples", "make written agreements", "threaten with negative consequences") were identified inductively. Inter-rater reliability was acceptable (Cohen's Kappa [2 raters] = .72;  $p < .01$ ). An excerpt of the coding system with translated examples of the transcribed material is shown in Table 2. As the coding rules for all 21 categories can't be displayed at this point, one example for each dimension found in step two was selected for illustration.

The second step of analysis consisted of a deductive allocation of the categories to the dimensions responsiveness, autonomy support, control and structure. Reliability was acceptable also for this procedure (Cohen's Kappa (2 raters) = .79;  $p < .01$ ).

## **Results**

Regarding the research question, whether the named and proposed strategies are being reported by teachers, the allocation of the 21 categories to the dimensions responsiveness,

autonomy support, control and structure was possible. The results are shown in Table 3. Except the teacher-related categories “self-reflection and self-regulation”, “written preparation in advance” and “schedule time and duration diligently”, all categories can be associated with the dimensions.

Comparing the results from Table 3 with the preliminary model, numerous congruencies can be found between the recommendations (Table 1) and the reported strategies (Table 3). The following six strategies however can be identified to yield somewhat new aspects, which lead to a further model differentiation (research question 2): “Phrase words in a respectful way”, “Emphasize partnership”, “Emphasize the parent's responsibility and role”, “Let the parents sign agreements”, “Invite a third person like the school principal” and “Plan further contact”.

*[Insert Table 3 about here]*

## **Study 2a: Teachers**

### **Method**

On the basis of the review of literature (Table 1) and the results that were gained in Study 1 (Table 3) we pursued the third research question: Can the assumed model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences be represented through quantitative data of teachers?

We constructed a scale in order to assess teachers' strategies regarding autonomy support, responsiveness, structure and control in parent-teacher conferences. A survey with elementary school teachers was conducted. Teachers filled out either a paper-pencil or a online questionnaire.

**Sample.** The 208 elementary school teachers were mainly female (88%) and had a mean work experience of 16.6 years ( $SD = 10.3$ ; min. = 0; max. = 41). 80 teachers (38,5%)

declared to have attended vocational training regarding the topics parental involvement, parent-teacher conferences or counseling.

**Instruments.** The scale to assess the teachers' use of strategies in parent-teacher conferences comprised 41 items. 16 items were adapted from the study regarding the quality of parental homework supervision (Lorenz & Wild, 2007). In addition, 25 more items were developed on the basis of the literature preview as well as the results of Study 1 in order to gain a more differentiated and comprehensive picture. Teachers could answer on a 5-point likert scale ranging from “very” to “not at all”. The scale to assess quality of communication in parent-teacher conferences was introduced by the phrase: “I use the following strategies in order to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences”.

Furthermore the teachers were asked to specify their gender, work experience in years and vocational training regarding the topics parental involvement, parent-teacher conferences or counseling. Also, teachers were asked about the size of the school they work at, and whether the school is situated in a rural or urban neighborhood. The teacher questionnaire ended with two general statements about parent-teacher conferences: “Through parent-teacher conferences I can have an effect on parents” and “I enjoy parent-teacher conferences.” The questionnaire ended with an open question for comments.

**Analysis.** To test the hypothesized dimensional structure we conducted confirmatory factor analysis on a latent level using Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2000). To take into account missing data ( $M = 2,4 \%$ ;  $Max. = 5,3 \%$  per variable), Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was used.

## Results

The assumed model with 41 items relating to four dimensions showed a nonsatisfying fit ( $CMIN/DF = 2.059$ ;  $TLI = .594$ ;  $CFI = .636$ ;  $RMSEA = .071$ ). In a next step, items with loadings lower than .50 were removed ( $CMIN/DF = 1.948$ ;  $TLI = .834$ ;  $CFI = .858$ ;  $RMSEA$

= .068). However, in this model a correlation higher than 1 was found between the dimensions autonomy and responsiveness (Heywood case, e.g., Urban & Mayerl, 2014). One possible explanation for parameters ranging above 1 lies in multicollinearity (Urban & Mayerl, 2014). As responsiveness correlated highly with autonomy support ( $r > 1$ ) and structuring ( $r = .93$ ), the dimension was removed from the model (CMIN/DF = 1.806; TLI = .869; CFI = .891; RMSEA = .063). To improve model fit and to approach the assumed dimensional structure, we further considered item content and item-analytic characteristics in order to remove further items. A final model with nine items and three dimensions was found to fit the data best (CMIN/DF = 1.36; TLI = .97; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .036). Table 4 shows the wording and item-analytic as well as dimensional characteristics of the remaining items.

*[Insert Table 4 about here]*

On the basis of the final model, significant correlations were found between the dimensions structure and control (.42) as well as structure and autonomy support (.51). Furthermore, teachers who answered to use autonomy supportive strategies in parent-teacher conferences also declared to enjoy parent-teacher conferences ( $r = .22$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Also, teachers who reported to use autonomy supportive and structuring strategies in parent-teacher conferences indicated to have attended vocational training in this field ( $r = .26$  and  $.30$ ;  $p < .01$ ). No correlations were found with the dimension control.

## **Study 2b: Parents**

### **Method**

In order to answer the fourth research question whether the assumed model can be represented through quantitative data of parents, we conducted another survey with 201 parents of elementary school children. We used the same scale that was utilized within the teacher survey. Items were changed as little as possible to enable comparison. The parents

filled out the questionnaire regarding their last parent-teacher conference also with paper-pencil or online.

**Sample (Parents).** The sample of parents consisted of 201 parents. The age ranged from 22 to 51 years ( $M = 38.77$ ;  $SD = 5.00$ ). 86,3% were female. 28 parents reported to have a migration background. The parents reported to have up to five children ( $M = 1.84$ ;  $SD = .91$ ). The duration of the parent-teacher talk was on average 15 minutes ( $SD = 7.13$ ; min. = 5; max. = 60). In 33 cases also the child attended the parent-teacher conference.

**Instruments.** The same items that were used in the teacher questionnaire were used for the parents' survey, however they were adapted to the parent's perspective. Also parents could answer on a 5-point likert scale ranging from "very" to "not at all". The parents were introduced by the phrase: "Please think about the last parent-teacher conference when answering the following questions." The questionnaire ended with an open question for comments.

When parents had more than one child, they were asked to think about only one of them (one that attends an elementary school). Furthermore, parents were asked about their own as well as their childrens' sex and age, about how long the last conference they attended lasted and whether the child was present at the parent-teacher conference. The parent questionnaire ended with two general statements about parent-teacher conferences: "Parent-teacher conferences are useful" and "I enjoy and like to attend parent-teacher conferences".

**Analysis.** Also for this research question we conducted confirmatory analysis on a latent level using Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2000). As the parents' data was a nested structure due to the recruitment through school classes, the correction of standard errors was established through the analysis option „type = complex“. Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was used for missing data ( $M = 4.53\%$ ; Max. = 17.4 % per variable).

## **Results**

Comparable to the teachers' data, the first model including all items and four dimensions showed a nonsatisfying fit ( $\text{CMIN/DF} = 2.16$ ;  $\text{TLI} = .586$ ;  $\text{CFI} = .611$ ;  $\text{RMSEA} = .076$ ). Furthermore, removing items loading lower than .50 did not show a satisfying improvement. Finally, the final teacher model was tested with the parents' sample, which also did not show a satisfying fit ( $\text{CMIN/DF} = 2.95$ ;  $\text{TLI} = .68$ ;  $\text{CFI} = .79$ ;  $\text{RMSEA} = .09$ ). Correlations above 1 were found between the dimensions autonomy support and structure, and the model could not be further interpreted.

Subsequent exploratory factor analysis yielded a different model with other items and resulted in a satisfying model fit. However, the model was not comparable to either the assumed model or the teacher model. Furthermore, the dimensions showed different interrelations compared to study 2a and to previous research on self-determination theory. As the model probably represents a different dimensional structure, it was not further pursued within this study.

## **Discussion**

Regarding the research so far, parent-teacher conferences have not received a lot of attention. Little is known about the quality of communication between teachers and parents during conference time. However, this encounter could be an opportunity for teachers to foster parental motivation to involve in the child's schooling.

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretically and empirically systematized model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences on the basis of self-determination theory. First, a preliminary model was described unifying previous recommendations from researchers and practitioners. The various recommendations could easily be integrated into the framework of self-determination theory. Thus, teachers

should show responsiveness, support the parent's autonomy, avoid controlling strategies and provide structure for the parents.

The preliminary model was validated and further differentiated through findings from 11 teacher interviews in Study 1. The qualitative analysis of the teacher interviews showed that teachers effectively report to use the proposed and assumed strategies. Interestingly, also several controlling strategies were reported. Furthermore, additional strategies could be identified: Phrasing words respectfully, emphasizing partnership as well as the parent's responsibility and the parent's role reflect aspects of responsiveness and autonomy support. Letting parents sign agreements and involving a third person such as the school principle describe controlling strategies and planning further contact could give parents structure. Thus, the preliminary model could be specified in further detail. However, three categories could not be allocated to the dimensions autonomy support, structure, responsiveness or control: "self-reflection and self-regulation", "written preparation in advance" and "schedule time and duration diligently". These strategies rather describe aspects of teacher self-regulation before and during the parent-teacher talk. Although they should also contribute to an increase of parental involvement, they rather describe a useful and indispensable fundament and pre-condition, in which communication between parents and teachers can take place.

In order to assess whether the assumed model (operationalized with 41 items) can be represented quantitatively, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with a sample of 208 teachers and 201 parents. In the teachers' sample, all items from the dimension responsiveness had to be excluded due to high interrelations with the other dimensions. Effectively, for the teacher data 9 items could be used to represent the assumed dimensions. The positive relations between the dimensions go in line with previous research. For instance, Lorenz and Wild (2007) found comparable correlations between the dimensions autonomy

support and structure (.26) and structure and control (.58). Also, the positive relations between autonomy support and structure with the teacher's enjoyment and the teacher's vocational training experience, as well as the missing relation between control and enjoyment as well as the teacher's vocational experience speak for the validity of the dimensional structure. Thus, teachers with more knowledge and enjoyment in this field showed more autonomy support and structuring strategies.

However, confirmatory factor analysis of the teachers' data also showed some validity problems. The items representing the dimension responsiveness could not be further taken into account as they showed high intercorrelations with the other dimensions. Though, this could actually be explained with responsiveness being an underlying competency and highly relevant for both successful autonomy support and structuring correspondingly. Furthermore, the intercorrelations could be caused by problems of item wording which should be investigated in further research.

Also, indices for the quality of measurement showed comparatively low discriminant validity for the dimensions. An explanation for validity problems could be that teachers probably answered in a social desirable manner. Furthermore, similar to findings from the research on learning strategies (e.g., Artelt, 2006), also for this data it cannot be excluded that teachers actually did not report the strategies they actually use, but rather reported strategies they know about or strategies they prefer and think are effective. This should be validated in further research by actual observational data of parent-teacher talk and data from parents that can be matched to the specific teacher.

The parents' data did not fit to assumed model or the teachers' final model. Several explanations can be taken into consideration at this point. The high intercorrelations could indicate that parents do not differentiate between the dimensions but rather only distinguish between "good" and "bad" parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, going over the parents'



written comments at the end of the survey, we can also assume that the item wording was not suitable for the parent's perspective. 27 parents noted that the survey's questions emphasize too many problematic situations and that some questions could not be answered as the parents apparently did not have problems regarding the child's academic achievements. Probably, the close adaption from the teacher's items could not be applied as easily as assumed on the parent's perspective. Further research is needed to investigate and ameliorate the item's wordings to assess self-determination quantitatively in the parents' sample. Analogous to Study 1, qualitative interviews should be conducted first in order to allow a better insight into the parents' perception of parent-teacher conferences.

The assumed dimensional structure for teachers' strategies in parent-teacher conferences could partly be confirmed. However, more research is needed to test the dimensional structure in more detail. Further effort should be made in the validation, refinement and adjustment of the here used scale.

This article gave a systematic and detailed view of fostering parental involvement through communication in parent-teacher conferences. A gain of the proclaimed model of teachers' strategies to foster parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences is the rather apparent and comprehensible structure based on the self-determination theory. Applying motivational theory in the field of parental involvement appears to be a reasonable and promising approach that should be further pursued in following research.

## Literature

- Aich, G. (2011). *Professionalisierung von Lehrenden im Eltern-Lehrer-Gespräch. Entwicklung und Evaluation eines Trainingsprogramms* [Professionalisation of teachers in parent- teacher- conferences. Development and evaluation of a training program]. Hohengehren: Schneider.
- Akers, P. (2005). Conferencing the SMART way. *Principal*, 84 (3), 47-47.
- Artelt, C. (2006). Lernstrategien in der Schule [Learning Strategies in School]. In H. Mandl, & H. F. Friedrich (Eds.), *Handbuch Lernstrategien* (pp. 337-351). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Bennewitz, H., & Wegner, L. (2015). „da hast du dich irgendwie gar nicht gemeldet“. Die Aushandlung von Verantwortungsübernahme in Elternsprechtagsgesprächen [„you didn’t put your hand up“. The negotiation of responsibilities in parent- teacher conferences]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie der Erziehung und Sozialisation* 35 (1), 86 – 105.
- Brandt, S. (2003). What parents really want out of parent-teacher conferences. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 39 (4), 160–163.
- Bruder, S. (2011). *Lernberatung in der Schule. Ein zentraler Bereich professionellen Lehrerhandelns*. Dissertation, Institut für Psychologie, Humanwissenschaften. TU Darmstadt.
- Cheatham, G. A., & Ostrosky, M. M. (2013). Goal setting during early childhood parent-teacher conferences: A comparison of three groups of parents. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 27 (2), 166–189.
- Clark, H. H., & Brennan, S. E. (1991). Grounding in Communication. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S.D. Teasley (Eds.), *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition* (pp. 127–149). Washington, DC.: APA Books.
- Coleman, M. (1991). Planning for the changing nature of family life in school for young children. *Young Children*, 46 (4), 15–20.

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, M. R. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, M. R. (2002). *Handbook of self-determination theory*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Dumont, H., Trautwein, U., Nagy, G., & Nagengast, B. (2014). Quality of parental homework involvement: Predictors of reciprocal relations with academic functioning in the reading domain. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 106 (1), 144–161.
- Edwards, P.A. (1992). Strategies and techniques for establishing home-school partnerships with minority parents. In A. Barona, & E. Garcia (Eds.), *Children at-risk: Poverty, minority status, and other issues in educational equity* (pp. 217–236). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Ellis, A., & Hoellen, B. (1997). *Die Rational-Emotive Verhaltenstherapie – Reflexionen und Neubestimmungen* [The rational-emotive behavior therapy – reflexion and redetermination]. München: Pfeiffer.
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Rodriguez Jansorn, N. et al. (2009). *School, family and community partnerships: Your handbook for action (3rd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Friedman, P. G. (1980). *Communicating in conferences: Parent-teacher-student interaction*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication skills: Speech Communication Association, Falls Church, VA.
- Gartmeier, M., Bauer, J., Fischer, M. R., Karsten, G., & Prenzel, M. (2011). Modellierung und Assessment professioneller Gesprächsführungskompetenz von Lehrpersonen im Lehrer-Elterngespräch [Modeling and assessment of teachers' professional conversation management skills in parent- teacher conversations]. In O. Zlatikin-Troitschanskaia

(Eds.), *Stationen Empirischer Bildungsforschung. Traditionslinien und Perspektiven* (pp. 412–426). Wiesbaden: VS.

Gerich, M., Bruder, S., Hertel, S., Hascher, T. & Schmitz, B. (2015). What skills and abilities are essential for counseling parents in supporting their children's learning process? Modelling and Predicting Teacher's Counselling Competence: in: *Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspsychologie und Pädagogische Psychologie*, 47 (2), 62-71.

Grady, D. E. (2013). *Elements of parent-teacher conferences that foster parental engagement and home-school partnerships in a rural k-3 elementary school*. Doctoral dissertation, Edgewood college.

Graham-Clay, S. (2005). Communicating with parents: Strategies for teachers. *The School Community Journal*, 16 (1), 117–129.

Green, C. L., Walker, J. M. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99 (3), 532–544.

Grolnick, W. S., Benjet, C., Kurowski, C. O., & Apostoleris, N. H. (1997). Predictors of parent involvement in children's schooling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89 (3), 538–548.

Grolnick, W. S., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1997). Internalization within the family: The self-determination theory perspective. In J. E. Grusec & L. Kuczynski (Eds.), *Parenting and children's internalization of values: A handbook of contemporary theory* (pp. 135–161). New York: Wiley.

Guskey, T. R. (2002, April). Perspectives on grading and reporting: Differences among teachers, students and parents. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, LA.

Harvard Family Research Project (2010). *Parent-teacher conference Tip Sheets for principals, teachers, and parents*. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge.

- Helfferrich, C. (2011). *Die Qualität qualitativer Daten. Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews* [The quality of qualitative data. A manual for the implementation of qualitative interviews]. Wiesbaden: VS, Verl. für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D., (2007). *Beyond the bake sale. The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. New York: The New Press.
- Hertel, S. (2009). *Beratungskompetenz von Lehrern – Kompetenzdiagnostik, Kompetenzförderung, Kompetenzmodellierung* [Counseling competence of teachers – competence diagnostics, competence enhancement, competence modeling]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740–763.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, 97 (2), 310–331.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2005). *Final performance report for OERI Grant # R305T010673: The social context of parental involvement: A path to enhanced achievement*. Presented to Project Monitor, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, March 22, 2005.
- Howard, K. M., & Lipinoga, S. (2010). Closing down openings: Pretextuality and misunderstanding in parent-teacher conferences with Mexican immigrant families. *Language & Communication*, 30 (1), 33–47.
- Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education*, 47 (4), 706–742.
- Keogh, J. (1996). Governmentality in Parent-Teacher Communications. *Language and Education*, 10 (2-3), 119–131.

- Keyes, C. R. (2002). A way of thinking about parent/teacher partnership for teachers. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 10 (3), 177–191.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2003). *The essential conversation. What parents and teachers can learn from each other*. New York: Random House.
- Lorenz, F., & Wild, E. (2007) Parental involvement in schooling - results concerning its structure and impact on students' motivation. In M. Prenzel, & L. Allolio-Näcke (Eds.), *Studies on the educational quality of schools. The final report on the DFG Priority Programme* (pp. 299–316). Münster: Waxmann.
- MacLure, M., & Walker, B. M. (2000). Disenchanted Evenings: The social organization of talk in parent-teacher consultations in UK secondary schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 21 (1), 5–25.
- Mayring, P. (2010). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* [Qualitative content analysis. Theoretical foundation and techniques]. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Minke, K. M., & Anderson, K. J. (2003). Restructuring routine parent-teacher conferences: The family-school conference model. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104 (1), 49–69.
- Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research*, 77 (3), 373–410.
- Rogers, C. R. (1983). *Die klientenzentrierte Gesprächspsychotherapie* [Client- centered conversational psychotherapy]. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Rotter, J., Robinson, E., & Fey, M. (1987). *Parent-teacher conferencing. What research says to the teacher (2nd edition)*. Washington D.C.: National Education Association.
- Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., & Grolnick, W. S. (1995). Autonomy, relatedness, and the self: Their relation to development and psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti, & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Theory and methods* (pp. 618–655). New York: Wiley.

- Ryan, R. M. & Solky, J. A. (1996). What is supportive about social-support? On the psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness. In G. R. Pierce, B. R. Sarason, & I. G. Sarason (Eds.), *Handbook of social support and the family* (pp. 249-267). New York, NY: Plenum.
- Sacher, W. (2014). *Elternarbeit als Erziehungs- und Bildungspartnerschaft. Grundlagen und Gestaltungsvorschläge für alle Schularten* [Parental involvement as home-school-partnership. Theretical basics and suggestions for all school types]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Schulz von Thun, F. (2010). *Miteinander reden 1: Störungen und Klärungen. Allgemeine Psychologie der Kommunikation* [Let's talk]. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- Seldin, C. A. (1991). Parent/teacher conferencing: A three year study to enrich communication. Report. University of Massachusetts.
- Seplocha, H. (2004). Partnerships for learning: Conferencing with families. *Young Children*, 59 (5), 28–32.
- Silk, J. S., Morris, A. S., Kanaya, T., & Steinberg, L. (2003). Psychological control and autonomy granting: Opposite ends of a continuum or distinct constructs? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13 (1), 113–128.
- Stevens, B. A., & Tollafield, A. (2003). Creating comfortable and productive parent/teacher conferences. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84 (7), 521–524.
- Urban, D., & Mayerl, J. (2014). *Strukturgleichungsmodellierung. Ein Ratgeber für die Praxis* [Structural equation modeling. A guide for practice]. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Virginia Department of Education (2002). *Collaborative Family-School Relationships for Children's Learning. Beliefs and Practices*.

Yotyodying, S., & Wild, E. (2014). Antecedents of different qualities of home-based parental involvement: Findings from a cross-cultural study in Germany and Thailand. *Learning Culture and Social Interaction*, 3 (2), 98-110.



Table 1

*Recommendations by Practitioners and Researchers for Successful Parent-teacher Communication Matched to the Dimensions Responsiveness, Autonomy Support (vs. Control) and Structure*

Dimensions	Recommendations	Authors
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mention, focus on and value the child's strengths.</li> <li>- Lead with the positive.</li> <li>- Make feel comfortable, make feel invited and welcome.</li> <li>- Show caring, empathy, sensitivity and understanding.</li> <li>- Respect and value the person and accept differences.</li> <li>- Show warmth.</li> <li>- Listen, demonstrate interest and ask about the child.</li> <li>- Establish rapport and a trusting relationship.</li> <li>- Show Recognition.</li> </ul>	Aich, 2011; Brandt, 2003; Coleman, 1991; Edwards, 1992; Friedman, 1980; Gartmeier et al., 2011; Grady, 2013; Graham-Clay, 2005; Harvard Family Research Project (2010); Henderson et al., 2007; Hertel, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Minke & Anderson, 2003; Rotter et al., 1987; Sacher, 2014; Selpocha, 2004; Stevens & Tollafield, 2003.
Autonomy support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a two-way communication.</li> <li>- Encourage parental sense of self-efficacy. Don't do for them what they can do for themselves.</li> <li>- Parents are experts and can solve own problems.</li> <li>- Allow families to decide how they will help.</li> <li>- Ask parents for their ideas and suggestions.</li> <li>- Establish shared decision making.</li> <li>- See parents as equals/partners/colleagues and share responsibility.</li> </ul>	Coleman, 1991; Edwards, 1992; Friedman, 1980; Gartmeier et al., 2011; Grady, 2013; Graham-Clay, 2005; Harvard Family Research Project, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007; Hertel, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Minke & Anderson, 2003; Rotter et al., 1987; Sacher, 2014; Selpocha, 2004; Stevens & Tollafield, 2003; Virginia Department of Education, 2002.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create an action plan, make specific plans, establish (child's) goals.</li> <li>- Give examples for student work.</li> <li>- Give advice and suggestions for home.</li> </ul>	Akers, 2005; Brandt, 2003; Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Coleman, 1991; Edwards, 1992; Friedman, 1980; Gartmeier et al., 2011; Grady, 2013; Graham-Clay, 2005; Guskey,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give topics in advance, make meeting's structure transparent, communicate clearly expectations.</li> <li>- Be brief, clear, concrete and specific (examples).</li> <li>- Limit number of topics and suggestions.</li> <li>- Provide information.</li> <li>- Model.</li> <li>- Make written notes and suggestions to take home for the parents.</li> </ul>	<p>2002; Harvard Family Research Project (2010); Henderson et al., 2007; Hertel, 2009; Howard &amp; Lipinoga, 2010; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Minke &amp; Anderson, 2003; Rotter et al., 1987; Sacher, 2014; Stevens &amp; Tollafield, 2003.</p>
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't decide everything for the parents.</li> <li>- Don't dominate conversation.</li> <li>- Don't confront and blame.</li> <li>- Don't expose the parent.</li> <li>- Avoid lecturing.</li> <li>- Don't power play to diminish the other.</li> <li>- Don't act as you can't be questioned.</li> <li>- Forego control.</li> <li>- Don't make suggestions if not asked for.</li> <li>- Avoid words such as "must" and "should".</li> <li>- Don't persuade and try to convince through threat.</li> </ul>	<p>Aich, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Robinson, 1997; Rotter et al., 1987; Sacher, 2014.</p>

Table 2

*Excerpt of the Used Coding System in Study 1 (Translated from German)*

Category	Coding rule	Example within the material
Phrase words in a respectful way	Statements are allocated to this category when teachers emphasize the importance of using words diligently, carefully and in a smart and sensible way in order to not expose the parents.	“Well in the way that parents can save their face in the situation and that they are willing to think about it afterwards.”
Give specific advice	Statements are allocated to this category when teachers report the importance of giving specific, concrete and practical advice.	“We try to give very concrete advice because without it would not make sense. To tell parents to do more math is not concrete enough, so this doesn’t help at all because then they do weird stuff at home. “
Threaten with negative consequences	Statements are allocated to this category when teachers communicate that there will be negative consequences if nothing changes.	“I say I think we have to initiate a special needs education and [ <i>laughing</i> ] then they realize quickly and then it works.”
Ask for and include parent’s ideas	Statements are allocated to this category when teachers report to ask for the parent’s ideas and consider them carefully.	“Or I sometimes think together with the parents about how we can achieve this goal.”

Table 3

*Categories Deductively Allocated to the Dimensions Responsiveness, Autonomy Support, Control and Structure*

Dimension	Category
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on the child.</li> <li>- Bear in mind and adapt to the parent's background.</li> <li>- Praise and encourage the parent.</li> <li>- Phrase words in a respectful way.</li> <li>- Try to understand the parent's perspective.</li> </ul>
Autonomy support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasize partnership.</li> <li>- Ask for and include parent's ideas.</li> <li>- Emphasize the parent's responsibility and role.</li> </ul>
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give specific advice.</li> <li>- Show how (model and demonstrate given advice).</li> <li>- Reduce the number of given advices.</li> <li>- Show transparency through giving a preview.</li> <li>- Give concrete examples for your observations.</li> <li>- Plan further contact.</li> </ul>
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Threaten with negative consequences.</li> <li>- Be strict and severe.</li> <li>- Let the parents sign agreements.</li> <li>- Invite a third person like the school principal.</li> </ul>

Table 4

*Teacher Data Model: Items (Translated from German), Descriptive Statistics, Factor Loadings, Factor Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*

	M	SD	min.	max.	factor loadings	factor reliability	AVE
<b>Autonomy Support</b>							
I ask the parents about what ideas they have to support their child.	3.66	.92	1	5	.74		
I ask the parents how I can be of help to them when supporting their child.*	3.74	.97	1	5	.71	.75	.49
I don't give immediate advice, I first ask the parents about how they want to cope with the situation.*	3.56	.97	1	5	.66		
<b>Structure</b>							
I communicate a central message.	4.00	.82	1	5	.63		
When parents don't have time to support their child at home, we precisely talk about who else can support the child where and when.*	3.51	1.0	1	5	.61	.64	.37
I try to ensure that after the conference parents know exactly what I expect from them.*	4.20	.72	1	5	.59		
<b>Control</b>							
Sometimes I have to accuse the parents of not taking enough care about the child's school achievements.	2.83	.94	1	5	.55		
I request and demand from the parents that they support their child more.*	3.24	.93	1	5	.72	.64	.38
I threaten with negative consequences about what happens when parents don't support their child more and the child's school performance doesn't improve.*	2.84	.83	1	5	.55		

*Note.* The items marked with \* are adaptations from Lorenz and Wild (2007)