



<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

ResearchSpace@Auckland

Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](#) and [Deposit Licence](#).

Note : Masters Theses

The digital copy of a masters thesis is as submitted for examination and contains no corrections. The print copy, usually available in the University Library, may contain corrections made by hand, which have been requested by the supervisor.

Student-Led Conferences: An Alternative Reporting Method

Cherie Taylor-Patel

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
The University of Auckland, 2011

ABSTRACT

Student-led conferences, an alternative reporting method, have been used in primary and intermediate schools for several years, both in New Zealand and overseas. This thesis examines *the extent to which student-led conferences are effective as a reporting method, how they change teachers' practice, and their impact on the development of student competencies in reporting*. It is the argument of this thesis that student-led conferences can be effective if there is clarity around four conditions of reporting if teachers have sufficient knowledge and understanding of assessment and reporting as they link to class-based teaching, and learning that result in student competencies in assessment and reporting being developed.

From this study, a conceptual framework and four-stage audit and evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of student-led conferences based upon school, teacher, and student capacity has been developed.

This thesis was developed using an embedded multiple case study design. Within two case studies there are three sources of evidence: Year 3-6 students, their parents, and teachers. Results showed teacher and parent expectations in each case study differed and that some conditions of reporting were met in each case study. There were high levels of variation in teachers' levels of understanding of assessment within and between schools, and students' knowledge and understanding of assessment information and ability to articulate the information about reporting, also varied within and between schools. Differences found were attributed to school practices around assessment and reporting, teachers' 'Assessment Literacy' levels and the extent to which they had been effective in developing students' understanding of their learning and skills to articulate this to parents.

To successfully implement student-led conferences, schools need to align professional development, effective teaching practice, assessment, and reporting systems to student-centred pedagogy, and be willing to redefine the roles of students and parents in the reporting process. From this study, a conceptual framework and four-stage audit and evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of student-led conferences based upon school, teacher, and student capacity has been developed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the support of the parents, teachers, and students of the two case study schools on which this thesis is based. Thank you all for your contributions. It was much appreciated.

I thank my family, especially Greg and Glenn, for their unconditional love and support during the eight years it has taken to complete this work. It began as a way to cope with family loss, but became a challenge much bigger than I ever imagined it would be. I owe you, along with the extended family, so much.

Special thanks to my school and my wonderful extended network of colleagues and friends, whom have all stepped up when needed to accommodate a principal researcher who wanted to 'do it all'. You are a truly special 'community of learners' that I am so proud to be part of. Kaku aroha nui ki a koe.

Extra special thanks to my supervisors, Professor John Hattie and Dr. Helen Timperley. Your generosity in sharing your wealth of skills, knowledge, and expertise has been humbling and your support has truly felt like 'standing on the shoulder of giants'. Without your comprehensive, thought-provoking challenging feedback, your advice, assistance, and—most of all—your belief in me, I would not have completed this thesis. John—you have been a wonderful mentor and so encouraging at each stage of this learning process. People never forget inspiring teachers and this is what you have been for me. Helen – your insistence that I be as good as I can be has helped me achieve more than I ever thought I could.

Thank you to Michael Absolum for allowing me to build upon the work you, and the team at Evaluation Associates developed around student-centred teaching and learning. Your influence on my practice as a teacher and a leader was another catalyst that set me on this path. Other groups I need to acknowledge include Brenda and Graeme Martin, my Education Doctorate 'cheer' team, Andrew and Lyn Lavery from Academic Consulting and the asTTLe and Starpath research teams for their expertise and encouragement at each stage along the way. I also gratefully acknowledge the Cognition Education Research Trust and the New Zealand Teachers Council for their logistical and financial assistance during the process of completing this thesis.

And finally, I hope, now the thesis is done, that there will be more time to begin to give back to you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
LIST OF TABLES	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	X
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Definition of student-led conferences	3
The purpose of this research.....	3
Theory of effective reporting using student-led conferences	5
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Introduction.....	8
Background.....	8
Reporting to parents.....	10
The place of students in the reporting process	16
Student-led conferences	16
Assessment	20
Assessment and reporting.....	20
‘Assessment for Learning’ teaching pedagogy	24
‘Student voice’ in assessment and reporting.....	27
Parental participation in education	30
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	37
Section 1: Research design	37
Section 2: Participants	41
The schools.....	41
Researcher’s position	42
Teachers, students, and parents	43
Selection bias.....	45
Section 3: Data collection methods	45
Stages of data collection	46
Stage 1	46
Stage 2.....	48
Stage 3.....	50
Section 4: Sources of evidence	52
Documentation	52
Semi-structured interviews.....	53
The questionnaire	54
Section 5: Analytical Frameworks.....	57
Reporting Analytical Framework.....	57
Teachers’ practice.....	58
The teachers ‘Assessment Literacy’ dimensions framework	59
Student capabilities	60
Student competency framework.....	60
Section 6: Data analysis.....	61
Analysis of interviews.....	61
Analysis of questionnaires.....	62
Document analysis	63
Conclusion.....	63
Section 7: Ethical dilemmas	64
Section 8 :Methodological constraints.....	65
Sources of evidence.....	65

Reliability of data	66
Section 9: Generalisability	67
CHAPTER 4A: CASE STUDY 1	68
SECTION A: CONDITIONS OF REPORTING—BELIEFS, PRACTICES, AND CONSEQUENCES	68
The definition of an effective student-led conference	68
Overview	69
Consequences: Competing conditions	71
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	72
Summary	73
Condition 1: Reporting focused on learning—The teachers’ perspective	79
Preparation for student-led conferences	79
Student-led conferences in practice	80
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs	80
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	82
Condition 2: Social purposes of reporting—The teachers’ perspective	83
Preparation for student-led conferences	83
Student-led conferences in practice	83
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs	84
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	84
Condition 3: Traditional issues in reporting—The teachers’ perspective	85
Preparation for student-led conferences	85
Student-led conferences in practice	86
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs	86
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	86
Condition 4: Student-led conferences—A student-centred reporting method—The teachers’ perspective	87
Preparation for student-led conferences	87
Student-led conferences in practice	88
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs	88
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	89
Conclusion	89
SECTION B: PARENTS AND THE PURPOSE OF REPORTING—BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND CONSEQUENCES	90
Overview	90
Consequences: Parent beliefs	90
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	92
Condition 1: Reporting focused on learning—The parents’ perspective	96
Student-led conferences in practice	97
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs	97
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	99
Condition 2: Social purposes of reporting—The parents’ perspective	99
Student-led conferences in practice	100
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs	100
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	100
Condition 3: Traditional issues in reporting—The parents’ perspective	101
Student-led conferences in practice	101
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs	102
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	102

Condition 4: Participating in a new student-centred reporting method—The parents’ perspective.....	102
Preparation for student-led conferences.....	103
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs.....	104
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting.....	105
Summary.....	106
Conclusion.....	107
CHAPTER 4B: THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER COMPETENCY IN ASSESSMENT THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATING IN STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES	109
Overview.....	109
The theory of effective student-led conferences.....	111
Assessment of teachers’ levels of ‘Assessment Literacy’ at the beginning of the study .	116
Student involvement in assessment.....	118
Clarity about next steps in learning.....	121
‘Big picture’ understanding of assessment.....	123
Assessment as it links to reporting.....	123
Conclusion.....	126
CHAPTER 4C: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ‘STUDENT COMPETENCIES’ THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATING IN STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES	128
Overview.....	128
The theory of effective student-led conferences.....	131
Evidence of student competencies.....	136
Assessment Literacy.....	136
Student motivation for learning.....	137
Student confidence to share information about learning.....	140
Student capacity to articulate learning.....	142
Student understanding of learning.....	144
Conclusion.....	146
CHAPTER 5A: CASE STUDY 2	149
SECTION A: TEACHERS AND THE PURPOSE OF REPORTING—BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND CONSEQUENCES	149
Overview.....	149
Consequences: Competing conditions.....	151
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting.....	152
Condition 1: Reporting focused on learning—The teachers’ perspective.....	160
The theory of an effective reporting method.....	162
Student background in reporting.....	162
Preparation for student-led conferences.....	164
Student-led conferences in practice.....	166
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs.....	167
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting.....	169
Condition 2: Social purposes of reporting—The teachers’ perspective.....	170
Preparation for student-led conferences.....	171
Student-led conferences in practice.....	172
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs.....	173
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting.....	174
Condition 3: Traditional issues in reporting—The teachers’ perspective.....	175
Preparation for student-led conferences.....	178
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs.....	180
Consequences-The theory of effective reporting.....	182

Condition 4: Student-led conferences—A student-centred reporting method—The teachers’ perspective	183
Preparation for student-led conferences	185
Student-led conferences in practice.....	189
Consequences: Teachers’ beliefs	190
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting.....	196
SECTION B-PARENTS AND THE CONDITIONS OF REPORTING—BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND CONSEQUENCES	198
Condition 1: Reporting focused on learning.....	201
Student-led conferences in practice.....	203
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs	204
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	208
Summary.....	208
Condition 2: Social purposes of reporting—The parents’ perspective	208
Student-led conferences in practice.....	209
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs	209
Consequences: Theory of effective reporting.....	210
Condition 3: Traditional issues in reporting—The parents’ perspective.....	211
Preparation for student-led conferences	212
Student-led conferences in practice.....	213
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	214
Condition 4: Participating in a new student-centred reporting method—The parents’ perspective	214
Preparation for student-led conferences	215
Consequences: Parents’ beliefs.....	215
Consequences: The theory of effective reporting	218
Conclusion	219
CHAPTER 5B: THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER COMPETENCY IN ASSESSMENT THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATING IN STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES	221
Overview.....	221
The theory of effective student-led conferences.....	223
Assessment of teachers’ levels of ‘Assessment Literacy’ at the beginning of the study .	229
Student involvement in assessment	234
Clarity about next steps in learning	239
‘Big picture’ understanding of assessment.....	241
Assessment as it links to reporting	243
Conclusion	247
CHAPTER 5C: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ‘STUDENT COMPETENCIES’ THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATING IN STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES	249
Overview.....	249
The theory of effective student-led conferences.....	252
Evidence of ‘Student Competencies’	256
‘Assessment Literacy’	256
Student motivation for learning.....	260
Student confidence to share information about learning	265
Student capacity to articulate learning	268
Student understanding of learning.....	271
Conclusion	275
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	278
Introduction.....	278
Conditions of reporting: Case Study 1	279
Conditions of reporting and the theory of effective reporting.....	281

Conditions of reporting: Case Study 2	281
Conditions of reporting and the theory of effective reporting.....	283
Student-led conferences: Entry levels and effective reporting	287
Student-led conferences entry level conceptual model	289
Student-led conferences: A reporting audit framework	290
Student-led conferences and teachers' 'Assessment Literacy'	295
Student-led conferences and the development of 'Student Competencies'	297
Research and policy challenges.....	300
Limitations and implications for further research	301
Conclusion	302
APPENDICES	304
REFERENCES.....	332

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Data collection Stage 1—Prior to the introduction of student-led conferences	47
Table 2 Data collection—Stage 2—Preparation for student-led conferences.....	49
Table 3 Data collection—Stage 3—Post-student-led conferences.....	51
Table 4 Conditions of reporting—A framework for analysis	58
Table 5 Teachers ‘Assessment Literacy’ dimensions framework.....	59
Table 6 ‘Student Competency’ dimensions framework.....	61
Table 7 Case study 1: The purpose of reporting—Teachers—Beliefs, practices and consequences.....	75
Table 8 Case study 1: Frequency count of purposes of written reports and parent-teacher interviews (n=116).....	79
Table 9 Case study 1: The purpose of reporting—Parents—Beliefs, practices and consequences	94
Table 10 Teachers ‘Assessment Literacy’ dimensions matrix—based on the work of Michael Absolum in Ministry of Education ‘Assessment for Learning’ contracts.....	112
Table 11 Case Study 1: Teachers' development in 'assessment literacy' through the process of implementing student-led conferences.....	114
Table 12 Frequency count of students’ perceptions of changes in teachers’ practices (n=208)	129
Table 13 ‘Student Competency’ dimension matrix—based on the work of Michael Absolum in Ministry of Education ‘Assessment for Learning’ contracts	132
Table 14 Frequency count of student enjoyment of learning (n=274).....	139
Table 15 Frequency count of students’ perceptions of how well they were doing in their learning (n=208).....	145
Table 16 Case Study 2—The purpose of reporting—Teachers’ beliefs, practices and consequences.....	155
Table 17 Parents and the conditions of reporting—beliefs, practices and consequences	198
Table 18 Frequency Count of Purposes of Reporting (n=116).....	201
Table 19 Means, standard deviations and effect sizes of parents’ views of quality of information from student-led conferences	204
Table 20 Means, standard deviations and effect size of parents’ perceptions of students’ understanding of their learning	216
Table 21 Case Study 2: Teachers' development in 'assessment literacy' through the process of implementing student-led conferences.....	224
Table 22 Teachers ‘Assessment Literacy’ dimensions matrix—based on the work of Michael Absolum in Ministry of Education ‘Assessment for Learning’ contracts.....	227

Table 23 ‘Student Competency’ dimensions matrix—based on the work of Michael Absolum in Ministry of Education ‘Assessment for Learning’ contracts	254
Table 24 Reporting Audit and evaluation framework—For design of student-led conferences for individual school contexts.....	286
Table 25 Reporting Audit framework: Schools moving towards effective student-centred reporting practices.....	292

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Conceptual model—Entry levels for schools implementing student-led conferences	285
--	-----