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## A Content Analysis of Public School Education News in an Independently Owned Small Daily Newspaper

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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL  
EDUCATION NEWS IN AN INDEPENDENTLY  
OWNED SMALL DAILY NEWSPAPER

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Linda L. McCleary  
May, 1980

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL  
EDUCATION NEWS IN AN INDEPENDENTLY  
OWNED SMALL DAILY NEWSPAPER

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April, 1980

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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL  
EDUCATION NEWS IN AN INDEPENDENTLY  
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April, 1980

Newspapers and school districts form a tentative partnership in the dissemination of education news. Subjects preferred by readers have not been reflected in actual education news coverage. Emphasis on utility information at the expense of indepth writing about what is going on in public education has been standard practice. Content analysis shows that while quantity of education news seems reasonable, the quality of that news fails to transmit to readers the substance of what teachers and children are accomplishing in the public schools.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	viii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
List of Definitions . . . . .	6
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . .	12
ABSTRACT . . . . .	12
DAILY NEWSPAPERS: STATISTICAL BACKGROUND . .	12
DAILY NEWSPAPERS: READERSHIP PATTERNS . . .	15
NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP: EDITORIAL VIGOR . . .	19
NEWSPAPER EDITORS: POWER AND INFLUENCE . .	21
SMALL DAILY NEWSPAPERS: CONSENSUS, CONFLICT, CREDIBILITY . . . . .	23
SMALL DAILY NEWSPAPERS: EDUCATION NEWS . . .	24
EDUCATION NEWS: HISTORY, UPDATE . . . . .	26
NEWSPAPER SPACE ALLOCATION: ADVERTISING, NEWSHOLE . . . . .	29
DAILY NEWSPAPERS: WIRE SERVICE USE . . . .	31
III. METHODOLOGY . . . . .	34
CONTENT ANALYSIS . . . . .	34
SAMPLE SIZE . . . . .	36
RESEARCH DESIGN . . . . .	37
CATEGORY DEFINITIONS . . . . .	39
Quantitative Only Categories . . . . .	39

CHAPTER		PAGE
III.	Picture essay . . . . .	39
	Picture with brief caption . . . . .	40
	Utility item . . . . .	40
	Student written column . . . . .	40
	Indepth subject story . . . . .	40
	Sports . . . . .	40
	Qualitative as well as Quantitative . . .	40
	Editorial . . . . .	40
	Letters to the editor . . . . .	41
	Indepth subject, general education . .	41
	Negotiations . . . . .	41
	Fiscal . . . . .	41
	Teacher oriented news . . . . .	41
	Additional Category Measurement . . . . .	42
	Crisis . . . . .	42
	Non-Crisis . . . . .	42
	For all Categories and all Items . . . .	42
	For Qualitative Measurement of Only Letters to the Editor; Editorials; Indepth Subjects Stories Focused on Negotiations, Teacher Oriented News, Fiscal, General Education	43
	CODER RELIABILITY PROCEDURES . . . . .	46
	CODER RELIABILITY RESULTS . . . . .	48
IV.	FINDINGS. . . . .	52
	INTRODUCTION . . . . .	52
	FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE . . . . .	53

CHAPTER		PAGE
IV.	Picture Essay . . . . .	53
	Picture with Brief Caption-Out of Ellensburg . . . . .	54
	Picture with Brief Caption-Ellensburg Only . . . . .	55
	Utility Item : . . . . .	56
	Student Written Columns . . . . .	58
	Indepth Subject--Out of Ellensburg . . .	58
	Sports--All Public Schools Reported . . .	60
	FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE . . . . .	62
	Editorials . . . . .	63
	Letters to the Editor . . . . .	64
	In Depth Subjects . . . . .	65
	Teacher oriented news . . . . .	66
	General education news . . . . .	67
	SUMMARY . . . . .	68
V.	CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	76
	IMPLICATIONS . . . . .	77
	BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	80
APPENDICES		
A.	EDUCATION NEWS: AN INTERVIEW, John Ludtka. .	86
B.	EDUCATION NEWS: AN INTERVIEW, Kent Matheson	90
C.	<u>DAILY RECORD</u> : A BRIEF HISTORY . . . . .	93

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Coder Reliability . . . . .	51
II. Public School Education News Quantitative . . .	61
III. Public School Education News Qualitative . . .	68
IV. Public School Education News, Relative Frequency Page Location --- Crisis and Non-crisis News . .	71
V. Age Emphasis of Education News, Percent of Mention Within Each Category . . . . .	72
VI. Public School Education News, Item Analysis . .	73
VII. Chi-square Analysis . . . . .	75

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Sample Coding Sheet (Qualitative Analysis) . . .	44
2. Sample Coding Sheet (All subject categories) . .	45

The feeble tremble before it;  
the foolish defy it;  
the wise judge it;  
the meek follow it;  
the media distort it;  
the skillful direct it.

public opinion  
described by  
C. Montgomery Johnson

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Newspapers and school districts form a tentative partnership as contributors to community knowledge about what is going on in the schools. Education news found in local newspapers may be seen as having great impact upon citizens' views of the educative process in local public schools. It has been estimated (11:69) that "a fourth of a communities' population is directly involved in education." They, as well as the other 75 percent of the citizenry must rely, in most cases, upon the local newspaper for education news. Kindred (28:207) described the newspaper as "a vital tool in telling the school story." Apparently this is so, for Moberly (37) reported that in a national survey focused on the role and purposes of public education, nearly 99 percent of the respondents indicated they depended upon school or community newspapers for education news.

Acknowledging that newspapers are important transmitters of education news as well as being in many cases, the primary sources of such news, questions about content and quantity of that news are raised. Specifically, the researcher became concerned about the quantity, or numbers of column inches, of education news found in these newspapers. How much newspaper space is given to education

news may be seen as important information, but a deeper look into the content, that is the indepth or qualitative aspect, of education news should present even greater understanding of that news.

Contemplation of the quantity and quality of education news provided direction for this thesis study. Preliminary perusal of existing published research established the fact that little or no information was available about the content of education news, particularly in small daily newspapers (see page 6). Upon further investigation of published research, it became apparent that choosing a small daily newspaper found in an education-centered community would likely provide a comprehensive picture of education news within that community. The Ellensburg Daily Record was chosen as the newspaper to be studied for it qualified as a small daily. It was independently owned and would not be influenced by corporate management far from the scene of education news gathering (see Appendix C and page 19). Ellensburg, with a population of under 15,000 would qualify, rather uniquely, as an education centered community as it is the home of Central Washington University where over 7,000 students are enrolled each term. CWU is the area's largest employer. The Ellensburg Public School District enrolls slightly under 2,700 students plus faculty and staff of about 300. There are five surrounding school districts which feed education news into the Daily Record pages as well as a branch office of Yakima Valley Community

College. Overall, the Ellensburg community, its surrounding small towns, and the independently owned, small daily newspaper provided ideal components from which to investigate the content of education news being read by local citizens.

From available research, it appears that education news has not been studied in any comprehensive manner to ascertain what it contains and how much of it there is in any certain community publication such as the local newspaper. Isolated aspects of education news deemed significant by researchers have been studied in isolation, but an encapsulated study of all those mentioned categories within one publication over an extended period of time, has not been documented. Is education news in a specific community reflective of the educational process going on in their schools? Upon collection of education news data, will it clarify the emphasis of that news by showing which ages are most reported, and which education subjects are most often found in the local newspaper? Based on findings, does education news meet expectations of readers, school administrators and editors? If discrepancies exist between desired education news (based on nationally reported research), and actual education news (determined from data compilation), will the findings provide bases for change? Finally, will establishment of content education news baseline data instigate comparative research focused on other daily newspapers? Implications for use of this study are

there; time will show the impact, if any, upon the quality and quantity of education news as it is found in a small, independently owned daily newspaper such as the Ellensburg Daily Record.

To accurately foresee any changes of reporting efforts in the content of education news in the local community because of new information about the past emphases of education news may not be possible. However, it is safe to say that content of that news cannot in itself, be the sole determinant of newly emphasized procedures regarding education news in a daily newspaper. There are many interrelated factors that have great influence upon newspaper education news. Newspaper size which is generally seen in terms of circulation figures (57, 52), readership patterns (44, 37), effects of chain ownership (68, 65), and editor influence (44, 38), all make significant contributions to the determination of newshole in a daily newspaper. An influence not to be denied is the percent of advertising found in a given newspaper (16, 63) as well as that newspaper's use of wire services (57) for content news. Credibility of the newspaper in its readers' views (21, 49) will be reflected in circulation figures and breadth of advertising. The consensus or conflict orientation of the news reported (21) will influence all aspects of the newspaper and education newshole will not be exempt from that powerful effect.

Research has shown that news of sports and extra-curricular activities makes up a sizeable portion of education news (23) but, conversely readers say they want more information about curriculum (28). School administrators endorse the idea of content reports about what is going on in the schools (36, 7) with emphasis on those people involved in the education process (14). Questions still remain unanswered concerning the actual subject matter of education news in a small daily newspaper. New information to be gained from this study pinpoints the crisis or non-crisis orientation of the news items and the significance of page location (61, 33).

For purposes of this study, it was accepted that newspapers are important transmitters of education news to the community; that little, if any, information is available about the entire content of education news in a small daily newspaper; that many factors contribute to education newshole allocation; and that readers' subject preferences in education news and reported education news coverage have not been parallel. Additionally, expectation of compilation of new information concerning the crisis or non-crisis orientation of education news items and significance of page location was also deemed useful to the results of this thesis study. It was hypothesized that:

1. The Ellensburg Daily Record provides a respectable proportion of space allocation for education news,

but fails to include, in any significant quantity, the kind of content readers say they want to read.

2. Local newspaper reporting of education news will reflect a strong consensus view as opposed to conflict view.

3. Sports education news and utility information news receive greater emphasis than all other categories of education news.

4. High school ages receive a disproportionate amount of newspaper space when compared to other public school ages.

5. Non-crisis content education news items would rarely be found on page one of the local newspaper.

#### List of Definitions

Definitions relating to the hypotheses and the entire study, listed in order of appearance, are:

Education news. Informational articles found in newspapers in which subject emphasis is centered on persons or activities directly supported by local public schools.

Quantitative refers to numbers of column inches per education news item.

Qualitative refers to negative, positive or neutral slant of an indepth education news article.

Content education news. Indepth subject story of at least seven column inches focused on persons or activities directly supported by local public school systems.

Small daily newspaper. Any daily newspaper with a circulation figure of under 10,000.

Newshole. Percent of newspaper space devoted to news as opposed to space devoted to advertising.

Readership refers to which subjects or parts of a newspaper readers are reading.

Consensus vs. conflict. Style of reporting practiced by a newspaper in which the positive aspects in a story are emphasized (consensus) as opposed to the negative aspects (conflict) in a story.

Crisis vs. non-crisis refers to placement of education news items on page one when they are controversy precipitated (crisis) as opposed to non-controversy precipitated (non-crisis) and found on page one.

Coder reliability refers to the percent of agreement between trial coders and researcher when applying a specified coding procedure to specific material.

With existing research carefully overviewed, hypotheses stated and study goals formulated, sample size was settled upon. Ellensburg Daily Record newspapers were read beginning July 1, 1977 through June 30, 1979; a two year period based on the school district fiscal year. Budd (9) and Gerbner and Holsti (20) emphasized the need to tabulate

all time periods within a sample period. By encompassing a sizeable sample, seasonal bias in measurement was eliminated.

In keeping with reported research, determination was made to measure all education news items quantitatively using the standard newspaper column inch measurement. Each item was measured separately, thus producing a total item count as well as a total number of column inches for each education news subject. Quantitative measurement, that is, the number of column inches per article, was applied to all subject areas of education news to generate data relevant to the third hypothesis. Additionally, a more indepth analysis was applied to selected areas of education news and was termed qualitative content analysis based on principles and procedures developed by Lasswell (30); Budd (9); Gerbner and Holsti (20) and Berelson (4). Qualitative analysis provided a coding system to determine slant of the news article. Use of verbs, adverbs and adjectives, when found, were coded under negative, positive or neutral slant as they appeared in the sentence context. Greenberg (21) and Stone (62) found small daily newspapers operated on a consensus reporting philosophy in which news reflected a predominance of positively slanted writing. Data from this research would show the Ellensburg Daily Record reporting orientation. Execution of qualitative content analysis must be accomplished through use of highly specific and clearly formulated categories pertinent to indepth study.

Letters to the editor and editorials were two categories deemed to reflect important dimensions of education news (11, 22, 44).

Additionally, indepth stories featuring Ellensburg public school fiscal matters, teacher oriented news, general education news and negotiation news were analyzed in an identical manner, each within its specific subject area. The net result was that all the above mentioned categories were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Within each category, provision was made for tallying age emphasis of each education news item. Results of that data would provide a basis for accepting or rejecting hypothesis four.

Categories measured for quantity only were sports, pictures, picture essays, student written columns, utility items and indepth content stories focused out of Ellensburg (see page 39). Indepth stories focused out of Ellensburg were not analyzed qualitatively because they are generally always news wire stories and are not authored locally. Because search for an answer to the second hypothesis was to discern a consensus or conflict reporting practice of the local newspaper staff, wire service stories were deemed not pertinent to this specialized research premise.

To add new information to the study and to try to delineate a crisis or non-crisis orientation of indepth reporting in the Ellensburg Daily Record, provision was made within the coding procedure to determine the extent of crisis education news appearing on page one of the local

newspaper. From this data, the fifth hypothesis could be accepted or rejected.

One final aspect of the research approach is that of establishing a reliability factor for the coding system applied to accumulate data for interpretation. Because the scope of this thesis study covers all education news found in a small daily newspaper, the coding system was necessarily detailed and comprehensively designed to apply to all areas of education news. That coding system was tested by two trial coders using over 1,100 column inches of education news items found in the Ellensburg Daily Record. The high coder reliability factor (see Table I, page 51) supported other reported coder reliability factors in similar communication studies (4). Based upon the obtained coder reliability factors, it is possible to expect that other coders, using the coding system devised for this study would, within a small margin of error, be able to replicate results.

In summation, this study of education news in a small daily newspaper will reflect hypotheses generated from reported research, related background information and implications based on logical reasoning processes combined with purposes of the study. Definitions of words or phrases pertinent to the study are found on page 6. Chapter II presents a review of literature relevant to the research design and Chapter III describes the methodology employed to obtain data for interpretation. Chapter IV presents

findings of the study and Chapter V provides conclusions and implications based upon the findings.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### ABSTRACT

Newshole allocation for local news is dependent upon circulation size, which is dictated by readership patterns and proportion of advertising found in the local daily newspaper. Editor influence and that role in the context of community structure has far reaching implications for the amount of space given to education news. Content education news, its perceived utility to readers, and local newspaper credibility are inseparable aspects of the total newshole allocation system of a small daily newspaper.

#### DAILY NEWSPAPERS: STATISTICAL BACKGROUND

"When we try to seek the causes and effects of unseen and complicated affairs, haphazard opinion is very tricky. There are few big issues in public life where cause and effect are obvious at once" (32:98). And so it is when comprehensive understanding of the amount of newspaper space given to education news is the focus of research.

Exceedingly important to the allotment of space for education news is the relationship of readership and circulation to newshole allocation under the general category of local news.

The fact that circulation is the foundation of a newspaper's financial success, a measure of its community service and influence and a sound indication of the newspaper's true value makes it worthy of the fullest consideration from every angle (52:7).

Inextricably entwined with the above mentioned considerations, is the ever present credibility factor of newspapers in the eyes of the readers. Of particular concern is the statistical condition of the daily newspaper nationwide. Where has it been in recent years and what trends are currently noticeable? Additionally, what factors influence publication of local news?

Looking back, statistics show there were 1,894 newspapers published in the United States (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) in 1950. In 1965, 1,843 daily newspapers were in circulation (67:584) and in 1973, circulation reached an all time high of 63 million (68:10). By 1975, only 1,819 daily newspapers were published nationwide, but the decline in the number of daily newspapers reached an all time low during 1976 with 1,813 dailies (67:584). Sobel and Emery (57) found the number of big cities with competing dailies of large circulation decreased from 1971 to 1976, although at the same time, there were 39 cities with daily newspapers that did not have them in 1971. During this same period, the number of

Cities and smaller communities with competitive newspapers under 25,000 circulation increased by six (57). The growth in the smallest daily newspaper communities may be viewed as significant in terms of emerging trends as well as being an important frame of reference as focus of research narrows to daily newspapers with circulation figures of under 10,000.

Nationwide, in 1970, newspapers of under 10,000 circulation numbered 759 and accounted for 43.4 percent of all daily newspapers published (67). These small dailies accounted for seven percent of the total newspaper circulation. In 1975, the number of newspapers of the same size had decreased to 734, accounting for 41.8 percent of the total national circulation, or 7.2 percent of all circulation (67). The decline in number of daily newspapers under ten thousand circulation, reflected a trend for all daily newspapers in 1976 and reached a low of 728, representing 41.3 percent of all daily newspapers published. In this year, small dailies again accounted for only seven percent of the total nationwide circulation (67). Still, in 1977, nearly a million more copies a day were circulated than in 1975 (46).

In the past two years, it appears that daily newspaper circulation is increasing (68). The latest available figures show there were 1,544 United States cities where daily newspapers were published. In 185 of those cities, two or more dailies were in operation (60). Modest circulation gains were reported in 39 states with an overall gain

of just below one percent, representing the highest figures reported since 1974 (46).

Washington state, in 1978, had twenty seven daily newspapers (34) with Ellensburg Daily Record counted in the under 10,000 circulation category. Columbia Basin Herald in Moses Lake is the only other daily resembling the Ellensburg paper in circulation size and format (34). Ellensburg recorded an estimated population size of 13,351 in 1978 and newspaper circulation was 5,814 (33) for the Daily Record.

The importance of circulation figures cannot be denied, and may be seen as a section of a circle encompassing the entire newspaper. Numbers of readers have a direct effect on all aspects of the newspaper, particularly the amount of advertising space which in turn is directly related to newshole allocation practices. What news is reported and how meaningful it is to subscribers completes the circle by determining the extent of circulation. Understanding of readership, that is, what people are reading in daily newspapers and why, is receiving considerable research emphasis in recent publications.

#### DAILY NEWSPAPERS: READERSHIP PATTERNS

The Newspaper Readership Council, in 1977, conducted a survey (42) which showed that 69 percent of the people surveyed received news from newspapers. Fifty percent reported they read a newspaper daily. In a survey

conducted by Columbia University in 1977, findings were that nearly 99 percent of respondents depend on school or community newspapers for education news (37). Gallup (18) found the most frequently mentioned sources of education news are students and newspapers. Another interesting finding was reported by Johnson (26:48) in which "only about 4 persons in 10 believe the local media present a fair and accurate picture of what's happening in schools."

Olien (44) found the type of local newspaper was determined by community size and structure. Stone (62:514) found that "commitment to the local community results in newspaper subscribing as a matter of utility; this type of resident is more likely to consider the newspaper as a necessity." He further perceived the housing situation, or numbers of homeowners, as being crucial to newspaper circulation.

Grotta (23) found, in surveying readership in small daily newspapers, that local news and advertising provided incentive for reading as 80 percent of respondents reported reading for this purpose. Grotta (23) also found that advertising and local news served in a complimentary function with advertising rated as very important to readers. Harris (24:33) found "reporters seriously underestimate readers interest in hard news and grossly overestimate the interest the public has in sports." The Columbia University survey revealed that "educators rely principally on

print media and word of mouth to communicate school goals to the community" (37:237).

Further definition of readership characteristics has shown a number of important variables which effect readership patterns. Weaver (70) found newspaper management interest in identifying these various news sections and editions to better meet needs and wants of readers. The desire for utility type of information was identified (70). Earlier, Sears (55:81) found "the greater the perceived utility of the information, the greater will be the desire to be exposed to it." Utility of information prompts readership of newspapers and defines the acceptability of the paper in the readers' views. "Anticipated conversational usefulness" (70:793) also seems to play an important role in reader acceptability. Alperstein (1) found local information used by people in daily living to be the most important aspect from the readers' views.

"Page location, and the amount of space are key variables in predicting readership for newshole items," according to McCombs (40). Stewart (61) quite some time ago, identified the fact that page one location of news was more important than pages following. That is still a valid fact today and is of particular significance to education news space allocation. Placing news on the top of a page is more important to readership than if the news item is located in the middle or bottom. Ludtka (33) neatly reaffirmed this idea when he spoke about the fact

that in the Daily Record, "local stories ride high on the page and are easily identified."

Other important factors are the source and form of the news item and its geographic significance to the reader. Despite these apparently important criteria for readership, between 1950 and 1970, the number of local news stories decreased and the number of wire service stories increased (1). About headlines, Stewart (61) saw the size of type in the headline as well as the width of the headline (numbers of columns) as being indicative of the importance of the story. Day (13:96) was more content oriented in his assessment of headline value. He found "the headline sometimes takes a stand on a controversial issue while the news story under it is unbiased."

The automated production systems have generated a revolution in the American daily newspaper industry (54) and overall effect of the new technology has proved beneficial. In Schreiber's (54) view, because of the new technology, there is potential for markedly improving product quality. Alperstein (1) found there was a reduction in local news content resulting from fewer reporters as well as the acquisition of automated typesetting and editing. He further suggested that those were contributing factors to the decline, evident since World War II, in numbers of households receiving daily newspapers. Research is showing that although, in recent years, readership needs have been identified and these needs strongly influence

circulation, use of automated production systems is having a limiting effect on the amount of local news getting into daily newspapers.

#### NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP: EDITORIAL VIGOR

Several variables can be identified as having implications for mediating the apparent conflict of readers wanting more local news, and technology, in part, limiting the emphasis given by newspapers to local news. Among those are the effect of chain ownership as compared to independent ownership. Since 1900, the general trend toward group ownership of newspapers has been "speedy and consistent" (57:149). In 1960, chains owned 30 percent of United States daily newspapers (65:327). By 1977, 60 percent of the dailies were owned by groups and 71 percent of the total circulation was held by these groups (57:149). Controlling 25 percent of the total United States daily newspaper circulation were Knight-Ridder, Newhouse, Chicago Tribune Company, Gannett and Times Mirror Company (57). Defending the trend toward group ownership, Knight-Ridder President Alvah H. Chapman, Jr. commented that "many of the independent newspapers were lacking in economic strength" and he labeled them as "pervasively mediocre, unprofessional and timid." In his view, the editor and publisher were often "selected more by family position than by professional commitments and qualification" (68:10).

Thrift (65) found in his study of editorials in twenty-four West Coast newspapers, that chain ownership had a measurable effect on the quality of editorials in those daily newspapers. He concluded that "declines in vigor are statistically significant when they are compared against what has happened to the editorials of newspapers which were not absorbed by chains" (65:331). Contradicting Thrift's conclusions, Roche (50) thought editor influence appeared to have greater significance in newsroom decisions than did that of the owner. This idea supports other recent findings that owners are less influential in newsroom decisions than earlier research has suggested.

Another dimension of the editor-publisher influence on newspapers was studied by Trotter (66). He found that editors, when asked to rank news items as they would publish them, perceived themselves to be in greater agreement with their publishers than they actually were. Concerning the influence of the editor, B.C. Cohen (10:13) felt

The editor may believe he is only printing the things people want to read, but he is thereby putting a claim on their attention, powerfully determining what they will be thinking about and talking about until the next wave laps their shore.

Majority view, then, appears to place editors first on the list of determiners of newshole allocation as well as exercisers of great influence on editorial policy. If, indeed, editors greatly control newshole content, how is that influence felt in the community?

## NEWSPAPER EDITORS: POWER AND INFLUENCE

Editorials are viewed as being the lifeblood of a newspaper, particularly an independently owned, small daily. The editor's position in the community power structure apparently has some bearing on the reporting of conflict in the smaller newspaper (44). Controversy, or news of local government conflict is "sharply limited" (44:243) and news reports tend to protect community institutions by emphasizing positive news. In essence, the small daily is looked to as an "instrument of tension management" (44:244). The school system, as one of the community institutions, is involved as a meaningful news source for the local newspaper. If education news content reflects only insubstantial stories, perhaps "trivia breeds trivia" (11:64).

Generally speaking, a newspaper does not find it profitable to criticize local institutional effort without cause. When newspapers devote editorial columns to criticism of the schools, they are usually convinced that there is good cause (40:459).

Editors evidently are aware of the strength of editorials and when surveyed, had specific ideas about improving their columns (25). Upgrading the quality of editorial pages and taking a stand on important community issues were the top priorities for improvement. Daily Record Editor-Publisher, John Ludtka (33) saw no need for an editor to write about every subject. An interesting idea emerged in which editors proposed an expanded use of opposing editorial views, including guest columns (25).

Frederick (17) found news editors viewed school financing as the number one topic of significance for school news. In contrast, school superintendents attached news importance to stories dealing with curriculum. Kent Matheson, Ellensburg School Superintendent (36:85) described news of "what kids are being taught and how they're doing" as the most important education news.

Letters to the editor category of newspaper space are labeled by Grey (22:471) as "valuable indicators of political attitudes, frustrations and change." Readers view them as being reliable and 33 percent of those surveyed by Singletary (56) said they read the letters to the editor regularly. Another twelve percent said they read them often. Sending letters to the editor has been done by 7.1 percent of the respondents, with men being 65 percent of those writing. Twenty-five years ago, the average age of those reading the letters to the editor was 59. Currently, the under 35 age group comprises the largest number of readers of this section, by slightly more than the 35 to 60 age bracket (56). Dapper (11) saw letters to the editor as a valuable indicator of what people were interested in, as well as being a signal of what needed to be covered more completely in school news items.

SMALL DAILY NEWSPAPERS: CONSENSUS  
CONFLICT, CREDIBILITY

The small community daily newspaper has a different function than its counterpart in a larger city (62). Small dailies meet a different set of goals than does the metropolitan press. Greenberg (21) found that the emphasis of smaller newspapers printing local news and pictures which larger papers do not, provides a unifying tie within the community. In this role, the local newspaper is looked to as an "instrument of tension management. It becomes a promoter of consensus rather than a reporter of conflict and its modes of operation promote community unity (64:314)."<sup>11</sup> Rippey (49) qualified the influence of small circulation dailies, concluding that they had little or no influence outside their communities or regions. Yet, as evidenced in a study of a small daily in Texas, Whitfied (71) found that the newspaper reflected consensus opinion within the community and was a trusted source. Broadly speaking, credibility ratings of daily newspapers remain high with only television having greater credibility (31). Research in the area of media credibility is substantial and consistently supports Lee's findings. Olien (44:445) found that "usually the higher the use of the preference for print media, the higher the level of knowledge about public affairs topics."<sup>12</sup> Focusing on schools, Gallup (18:6) suggests that schools have had "poor press" and he found "good news goes neglected."

Opinions of subscribers about smaller community daily newspapers tend to support Whitfield's conclusions concerning media credibility. Ryan (53) found readers perceived no errors in 30.6 percent of the stories they were asked to evaluate. In the remaining stories, average errors in each were 3.88 percent with more errors commonly found in stories of social issues. Results of this study seem particularly relevant in view of the fact that often local conversational topics are, in part, dependent upon what's been read in the local newspapers (2). A significant correlation has been found between reported reading and reported talking about news at the local level (2). B.C. Cohen (10:13) discussing credibility, said the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." If, indeed, smaller daily newspapers put greater emphasis on local news, are community consensus oriented, and have circulation figures that reflect editorial vigor, how does newshole allocation for education news fit into the total news allocation structure?

#### SMALL DAILY NEWSPAPERS: EDUCATION NEWS

Kindred (28:207) saw the newspaper as a "vital tool in telling the school story." Wilfred Woods, publisher of Daily World in Wenatchee, Washington, succinctly stated an

interesting view of newspaper coverage of education news.

We want real school news because it interests our subscribers. News about schools is part of our bread and butter. We believe in the value of high quality schools. Studies have shown that as levels of education rise, so does newspaper circulation (39:439).

In a March 17, 1962 article in Saturday Review, school publicists Barbara Carter and Gloria Dapper (12:17) wrote that "chances are you have virtually no information or perspective on the major national issues in education and only the most fragmentary view of even the local school's picture." Gerbner (19) apparently did not share Dapper's view, for he suggested that the local news orientation of daily newspapers assures a fair amount of community school news. Dapper (11) saw newspaper coverage in a slightly different perspective. In her view, the number of column inches given to school coverage needs to be looked at closely for its content. "Long lists of names are of no substance, but there is no reason to think without them, other news would be printed instead" (11:63). She further defined content of education news, saying "school stories are not educational essays on methods. They are news and feature items on the fabric of an education designed to equip a child for life" (11:63). Kindred (28), twelve years later, cited a demand from readers for more news dealing with curriculum. Boon (6) found, in Washington, that curriculum was the most emphasized news from school districts. Dapper (11:62) saw newspapers as looking at things

in two ways. "They are mirrors of what is actually going on and they are leaders in steering the community on the course they feel it should be taking." McCloskey (39:436) concurred with Dapper writing that "newspapers have immense power to convey information and influence opinion." Once again media credibility is affirmed and recognized as having important ramifications for placement of education news in the public understanding.

#### EDUCATION NEWS: HISTORY, UPDATE

What is the history of education news coverage in the media? What has determined newshole allocation to education news and are there any emerging trends in the coverage of education news?

The first specialized coverage of education news began in 1923 in Time magazine (19). In 1929, Belmont Farley conducted a survey to find out how much newspaper space was given to content education news that people indicated they were interested in reading. He found pupil progress and achievement to be the top priority of reader interest (27:23) but only 5.6 percent of education news space was given to that priority. Method of instruction was a second preference item by readers and yet only 2.9 percent of education news coverage was allotted to the subject. News of extracurricular activities was rated lowest by respondents, but 47.1 percent of education news coverage at that time, was devoted to the subject (27).

His study clearly identified the need to improve content of education news coverage, for as Kindred (27:22) stated, "schools are news; in fact they have become page one news."

Benjamin Fine was hired in 1937 by the New York Times as a school news reporter and in 1941 became education editor (19). In 1944, Associated Press Wire Service hired a full time education editor. In the mid-forties, "school news was found to affect not only the quality of learning, but also community power and allocation of resources" (19:211). The late forties and early fifties were seen as a time of "professionalization of education reporting" (19:211), because following World War II, a new interest in public education was experienced. This quickened interest was due, in part, to the rise in visibility and significance of education reporting. There was also an increase in the number of reporters and editors specializing in education news, but no evidence indicated that the increase was disproportionate to all other editorial assignments (19:211).

More recently, Dennis (14) found that coverage of news about children is likely to be centered on institutional aspects rather than being people oriented. Additionally, news about children is "likely to emphasize administrative issues, school boards and taxes" (14:53) rather than focusing on a child's views. Cause of this shortcoming is attributed to education reporters, who Dennis (14) sees as failing to understand audiences and

the need for content in education news. Dapper (11:69) stated, "something like a fourth of a communities' population is directly involved in education: more people are involved than in any other enterprise in town." Marx (35) estimated that 26 percent of all homes have school age children, and he upheld the need for generating support for schools through content education news. Daily stories about good teachers and teaching have positive impact, according to Dapper (11), and are indirectly helpful in getting budgets passed. Korvola (29), in a limited research effort, could find no correlation between direct or indirect communication of school news to budget passing. Common sense thinking, however, would not preclude the idea that positive school news would generate affirmative results in a variety of ways. In an Ohio study, Rings (48:62) found "in general, most school systems with a half time or full time public relations director had above average taxes (support) for public instruction and teachers salaries." Boon (6) found, in the state of Washington, educators recognized the importance of establishing and maintaining good community relations with newspapers.

An absolutely essential course of action for boards and administrators is to keep all the people fully and honestly informed about the schools. This should include clear, full, and accurate information concerning budgetary matters, and any issues involving strong differences of opinion (7:272).

Content education news disseminated through the local newspaper would have the effect of meeting readership needs

for the newspaper as well as meeting the school district need to provide useful education news and could result in a mutually beneficial effort.

NEWSPAPER SPACE ALLOCATION:  
ADVERTISING, NEWSHOLE

In 1964, Dapper (11:52) wrote that daily newspapers were made up of about 60 percent advertising and 40 percent news. Drew (16) reported less than 45 percent of newspaper space was given to newshole on an average publishing day. Some newspapers were giving as little as 23 percent to news while others were devoting as much as 73 percent to news. Local news comprised the largest proportion of non-advertising content (16). In 1978, Sobel (57) found an overwhelming majority of daily newspapers gave 50 percent or more space to advertising. Despite all the space given to advertising, newspapers received only 16.8 percent of national advertising expenditures allotted to mass media in 1975. Advertising revenues from local advertisers rose from 70 percent in 1960 to 85 percent in 1975 (57:149).

Systems for determining newshole allocation differ within the industry. Forty one percent of United States dailies use the "fixed minimum system" (16:435) to determine newshole allocation. This practice assures a specified minimum number of column inches for non-advertising content each day. The fixed minimum system has declined in use since 1957, when 54 percent of the daily newspapers

used it, as compared to 41 percent currently using it. The average daily number of column inches used under this system is 1,914 column inches with a low figure of 352 and a high of 4,725 column inches. Managing editors, according to Drew (16), estimated that 75 percent of the non-advertising content was given to local news. This system is preferred by managing editors using it because they think it guarantees adequate news coverage. Papers using this system tend to have larger circulation, more staff, or more pages on a typical day. They also devote significantly more space to advertising (16).

The "sliding percentage system" (16:435) was used by 26 percent of daily newspapers surveyed. The percentage formula for newshole varies according to the number of pages in the newspaper on a particular day. Papers using the fixed percentage system comprise about seven percent and run an average of 47 percent non-advertising material (16). Some carry as little as 25 percent newshole, while others as much as 55 percent. Twenty-six percent of newspapers responding used other assorted systems for news space allocation (16). Stone (63) suggested that differences in proportions of content in various news categories seem dependent upon circulation size. Research to prove this idea has not been conclusive, but apparently, newshole allocation policies are fairly predictable based on size of the daily newspaper. Drew (16) found no significant difference between newshole sizes of newspapers when looking

at chain owned dailies compared to independent dailies. Specific allocation of space to education news, based on the Los Angeles Times, was studied by Ross (51), looking back over a sixteen year period. Categories of administration and student activities received the most coverage. In her subcategories, athletics, student dissent and minority education received the most press.

Significant positive trends were found in the amount of coverage in inches, the number of articles by education reporters and by-lined staff, and the percentage of newshole devoted to education during this period (51).

#### DAILY NEWSPAPERS: WIRE SERVICE USE

A final aspect of newshole allocation pertinent to this thesis study is the use of wire service news and the implications that use has for coverage of local news in the small daily newspaper. Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) are major sources for nonlocal news items for United States daily newspapers (57). In cities having at least one daily newspaper with circulation of under 25,000, there is an almost balanced use of AP and UPI. Smaller papers typically use UPI (Sobel, 57). Current research (1) has shown that the more wire service news used, the fewer local news items there will be in the daily newspaper.

Education news, then, may be seen as a vital and useful part of local news that serves an important function in the small daily newspaper. Content education news is of

prime importance to the newspaper reader and because of the perceived usefulness of education news, circulation will likely be boosted. When circulation increases, advertising space will be filled and more news will reach more people in the region of the small daily newspaper. Editorial vigor and the influence of the editor upon newshole allocation is not to be denied. While the small daily newspaper tends to maximize consensus reporting and minimize conflict, it is held in high esteem by subscribers as being a trusted source for news.

Based on the literature dealing with the various influential factors governing the inclusion of education news in the daily newspaper, it is reasonable to expect that accumulated data will parallel national trends in some aspects, but perhaps deviate in others. The literature clearly points to the lack of content education news in newspapers, at least as it is perceived by readers. Data will tell if the Ellensburg Daily Record adds to those statistics in the same manner and if sports garners a majority share of education news space as it appears to do nationally. Consensus reporting seems to be characteristic of small daily newspapers. Whether education news in a small daily newspaper reflects a consensus view will be determined from research data. No specific reported research focuses upon the age emphasis of education news in any size newspaper, nor is the crisis/non-crisis

orientation of education news documented. From this thesis study, new information will be forthcoming on these points.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis, while only recognized in the last half century or so, has been documented as being used in the early 1640's when it was employed as a frequency count (quantitative) in a church hymnal to pinpoint the word themes of various hymns (15). The New York Times, in the mid-1890's was the focus of a study in which numbers of column inches given to certain subjects were analyzed. Most famous of all early content analysis studies was that done by Malcolm Willey in 1926. Willey found a demonstrable role change in newspaper content of the country news paper as large city dailies became more widespread. The subject matter categories used by Willey are still in favor today as viable content analysis methods. Lasswell (30) developed his style of content analysis by using political science as a framework of procedure. He applied frequency counts of key political symbols (words) to written and spoken texts in order to better understand the indepth meaning of the subject matter. Lasswell's symbol analysis techniques are well known methodology in content analysis. Berelson (5) specialized in communication content analysis

and it is upon his techniques of research and those of Budd (9) and Bowers (8) that this study, focused on a small daily newspaper, is designed.

Content analysis, while a widely used technique, is not always well understood as to its meaning and intent. Pool (47) describes content analysis as "a technique which aims at describing with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time." Lasswell (30:55) wrote that content analysis provided a "precise means of describing the contents of any sort of communication." Budd (9:2) defined content analysis as "a systematic technique for analyzing message content and message handling--it is a tool for observing and analyzing the overt communication behavior of selected communicators." Berelson (5:18) described content analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."

Content analysis, by definition and by methodology can be important in enhancing the scientific findings of a social science study. Gerbner (19:113) found that quantitative content analysis is "at least as useful for measuring intensity or importance as any available alternative." Day (13) endorsed the methodological procedures of content analysis as offering objective and systematic techniques for accurately describing content. When a sound research design is rigorously adhered to, Budd (9) found that possible bias

of the investigator is eliminated. Bowers (8) found a particular virtue of content analysis was that it avoids "distortion by selective perception," for once the sample and procedures are established by the researcher, all relevant material is included in the study. Berelson (4:14) found that "content analysis proceeds in terms of what is said, not on intention or response."

The goal of content analysis procedures in this study is to better understand what is said within the quantitative measurement of education news in a small daily newspaper. Ascertaining the slant or direction of a statement (qualitative analysis), paragraph or article provides a dimension of understanding and insight that is not possible to document when only a frequency (quantitative) count is employed (13, 8, 9). Both aspects of content analysis methods will be used in this thesis study in order to gain a complete, indepth understanding of the content of education news in a small daily newspaper.

#### SAMPLE SIZE

Highly relevant to effective content analysis research is the sample size of material to be studied. Bowers (8) warned against using random choice as a sampling method, for he saw it eliminating extremes, such as heavy news content issues or light news content issues, from the study. Rather to be chosen is a narrow topic or

research in which all materials relevant to the topic can be analyzed (8). Basler (3) endorsed that view by urging those beginning a research project to adopt the largest sample possible. Budd (9:21) recommended "a larger sample to allow a deeper analysis of content." These views do not agree with generally accepted sampling theory, but when applied to newspaper analysis, they were deemed highly apropos as guidelines in determining<sup>ing</sup> sample size. Adoption of the ideas espoused by Bowers (8) and Budd (9) were incorporated as basic in the selection of sample size for this thesis study. The school calendar years beginning July 1, 1977 and ending June 30, 1979 were selected as the sample size. Every issue of the Ellensburg Daily Record was analyzed for education news during that sample period.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

Establishment of categories within the sampling unit is regarded by all authorities as the crux of an effective content analysis research design. Berelson (5:147) explicitly stated that "content analysis stands or falls by its categories. Particular studies have been productive to the extent that the categories were clearly formulated and well adapted to the problem and to the content." Precise definition of categories so that others can apply them and obtain the same results is a primary concern when constructing a content analysis research design. Lasswell (30:61) cited a strong need for the use

of "explicit reference categories rather than implicit ones." Budd (9) advocated use of a complete and thorough definition that delineates exactly what material is and is not to be included in the categories. For this study, overviewing education news in the Ellensburg Daily Record coupled with categories mentioned in reported research provided clear answers to questions concerning proper and useful category choices.

Based on published research and preliminary tabulation of education news items, particularly definable were the categories of letters to the editor, editorials, sports, pictures and brief captions, and student written columns within the broad area of education news. Some clarification of characteristics of the categories of picture essay, utility items, and indepth subject stories was needed.

For most of the categories, quantitative analysis or column inch measurement proved to be highly appropriate and revealing of desired data. However, further knowledge was desired to determine the slant or qualitative content of specific categories. Those categories focused upon locally written articles about public school education and were termed indepth subjects for purposes of measurement. Recording units within the indepth subject or qualitative analysis categories were determined to be verb, adverb, and adjective words found within the context of a sentence. Therefore, the "recording unit" is the word processed in the larger "context unit" (9:19). "The smaller unit is

the one being classified, but in order to do so properly, the larger unit is required to give meaning to the smaller" (9:19). It is important to note that in newspapers, a sentence is often a paragraph and the use of evaluative words, particularly adjectives, is held to a minimum. Because words are so economically used in journalistic writing, it was determined that the most action signifying words found in education news would be verbs. Qualitative analysis coding procedures were based on Pool (47), who wrote that rules for classifying observations in sub-categories of negative, positive or neutral should be very clear and explicit. Maximizing reliability was seen as a result of this careful procedure and in Pool's view, validity of inferences from data was enhanced. Once again, the research design reflected procedures that had been tried and proven by others in the field of communication analysis. Rules for applying content analysis procedures for this specific study are found on page 42.

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS  
(Based on Reported Research)

Quantitative Only Categories

Picture essay. At least one-fourth of a total page devoted to short descriptive text complimented by several pictures and focusing upon a specific subject.

Picture with brief caption. An isolated picture featuring school related subjects and underscored by a brief caption pertinent to the picture. Divided into Ellensburg only and out of Ellensburg only categories.

Utility item. A brief announcement, list of names, news release, menu, or other strictly informational item. Divided into Ellensburg and out of Ellensburg categories.

Student written column. School news columns written by students from various area schools. Regularly found on a specific page of Saturday's newspaper during the school year. Divided into Ellensburg and out of Ellensburg categories.

Indepth subject story. Focused out of Ellensburg only. All education news items of at least six column inches in length that explore an event or subject indepth.

Sports. All items focusing on sports activities associated with public school sponsored activities. Most items appear on the "sports page" but are not confined to only that page. Divided into Ellensburg only and out of Ellensburg only.

Qualitative as well as Quantitative Categories

Editorial. An opinion item occupying the traditional editorial space in the newspaper. Any complete

editorial or part of an editorial discussing public education.

Letters to the editor. Items written by persons other than newspaper staff that discuss education or subjects directly related to public school education. May be a total item or any part of an item discussing public school education.

Indepth subject, general education. Any article of at least seven column inches in length in which an education subject or event is featured indepth and focuses in Ellensburg.

Negotiations. Any article of at least six column inches in length that focuses on negotiations in the public school sector. All items measured must specifically relate to Ellensburg public schools.

Fiscal. Any item of at least ten column inches in length that discusses fiscally centered education news relating to Ellensburg public schools.

Teacher oriented news. Any item of at least six column inches in length that focuses upon a public school teacher.

Additional Category Measurement

Crisis. Any item of at least six column inches in length that is issue or person centered and appears because it is controversy precipitated.

Non-Crisis. Any item of at least six column inches in length that appears but is not controversy precipitated.

## RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

For all Categories and all Items

For each issue of Daily Record, read page by page.

Begin with page one. Scan for education news.

Upon location of education news item, scan and determine appropriate category for item. Locate appropriately headed coding sheet. Record;

Issue date.

Measure total column inches of item, rounding up to nearest one fourth inch, if needed. Record column inch measurement.

Record page number upon which article is found.

Scan article for age of subject. Record as HS-High School; JrH-Junior High School; E-Elementary; A-Adult.

Scan article for male/female mention. Record as number of Mad-Male adult; number of Fad-Female adult; Mhs-Male High School; Fhs-Female High School; JrH and E preceded by M or F-MJrH or FJrH; Elementary the same.

Ascertain subject emphasis and record.

Record source of item, if by-lined, i.e., UPI,  
Ludtka.

Record headline.

Record number of pictures, size (i.e., 3" x 4"),  
caption column inch measurement, if any. Record number of  
M/F pictured.

For Qualitative Measurement of only Letters to the Editor;  
Editorials; Indepth Subject Stories Focused on Negotiations,  
Teacher Oriented News, Fiscal, General Education

On a separate qualitative analysis sheet record,  
under specific column headings, all verbs, adjectives or  
adverbs.

Negative words shall be recorded under the negative  
column heading when they are used in a negative sense within  
the sentence context. Positive words used in a negative  
sense will be recorded under the negative column heading.

Positive words shall be recorded under positive  
column heading when they are used in a positive sense within  
the sentence context. Negative words used in a positive  
sense will be recorded under the negative column heading.

Neutral words evoke neither positive or negative  
connotations. Words will be recorded in the neutral column  
when used in a neutral sense within the context of the  
sentence.

Category: i.e. Editorial	Issue Date: 3/2/79	Page No.: 4
<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>neutral</u>
cannot	will be able	has been chosen
disgusted	happily	. will be announced
doesn't agree	wanted/best	

Figure 1

Sample Coding Sheet  
(Qualitative Analysis)

(Subject Emphasis) i.e. Utility Item

Issue Date	Total Column Inches per Article	Page No.	Item Location	Age of Subject	Indiv. or Group	Mentioned Number of Male/Female	Subject Emphasis	Headline	Source of Article	Location	Picture Size & Number of
9.20.77	3 3/4	12	TR	HS	Gr	6 mad:lfad 2MHS: 4fHS	Music	Students Go to Regional Conference	Lipsky	Ellensburg	1-8" x 4 1/2"

Figure 2

Sample Coding Sheet  
(All subject categories)

## CODER RELIABILITY PROCEDURE

Reliability of the content analysis needed to be established. A sufficiently high reliability factor was required to indicate that, within a small margin of error, a similar result would be obtained by another analyst using the same procedures (30). Budd (9) underlined the usefulness of reliability checks as an aid in gaining objectivity. An interesting point about choosing trial coders was made by Stempel (59) when he cautioned researchers to be selective about who executes the trial coding procedure. A similar frame of reference (59) was seen as being highly important to successful use of content analysis methods to establish a reliability factor. With that point in mind, two coders were chosen to establish a reliability factor for this thesis study. Trial coding by coders other than the research designer proved to be an invaluable procedure which produced refinement of the coding tools. Clarification of rules and procedures was accomplished although, overall, few alterations were necessary.

Both coders were of the same sex, in their mid-years of living and each held a Bachelor of Arts degree; one an English major with a minor in Drama and the other a major in French and Spanish with a minor in Music. Use of the language was deemed a most important coder skill, hence the choice of coders with expertise in basic language structure and contextual use of words. Over 1,100

column inches were coded by the trial coders to assure that consistent trends were verifiable. All categories of analysis were included in the trial coding. Once trial coding was completed, a coder reliability formula devised by Holsti (9:68) was applied to the coders' content analysis results. Although several methods of analysis are reported in published research, each seemed to be highly specific to a particular study. For this thesis study, Holsti's formula was especially pertinent as it has been used in newspaper content analysis for coder reliability verification. That formula is

$$R = \frac{2 (C_{1,2})}{C_1 + C_2}$$

and allows  $C_{1,2}$  to represent the total number of category assignments both coders agree upon.  $C_1 + C_2$  represents the total number of category assignments made by both coders.

Consideration was given to the distinct possibility that the reliability factor might not generate the needed results. In that event, modification of the content analysis tool would have been undertaken and further coder reliability checks instituted. Fortunately, results were satisfactory when compared to other reported reliability factors for newspaper analysis (20, 5).

## CODER RELIABILITY RESULTS

Reported reliability factors in various studies show a trend toward them being uniformly high (5). Berelson found upon reviewing some thirty studies and experiments, that the range of percentage agreements was between 66 and 96 percent with a concentration of over 90 percent. His findings are supported by other content analysis authors (9, 8, 20) but all agree it is congruent with carefully designed studies and deliberate care when choosing trial coders.

The usual reporting method is a gross reliability factor (5) in which all trial coded categories are reported as one. In keeping with accepted procedures, the gross reliability factor method of reporting is used in this study although provision has been made to show each coder's reliability factor within each classification. Because this research was broadly quantitative and additionally selectively qualitative, separate coder reliability factors seemed particularly helpful and revealing.

In the quantitative classification of education news content, all subject categories were coded despite the fact that each was highly uniform in coding procedure with other categories. Trial Coder I rated a 98.8 coder reliability factor on quantitative coding while Coder II produced a 96.1 coder reliability factor. Overall, the quantitative coder reliability factor was 97.7. A high

reliability factor was expected in this classification due to the highly specific measuring techniques of the analysis tool.

A somewhat lower reliability factor was expected as coders read newspapers to apply qualitative content analysis. All subject categories in the qualitative classification were read by coders. Coder I obtained a 93.4 coder reliability factor while Coder II, 91.9. The overall coder reliability factor on qualitative content analysis trial coding of education news in a small daily newspaper was 92.5.

The coder reliability factor for the entire trial coding procedure encompassing both qualitative and quantitative subject analysis was 95.4. A total of 1,170.50 column inches was coded by the two trial coders. See Table I, page 51. These findings are in keeping with a nationally reported trend in reliability factors for trial coding procedures. Simple counting of items, measuring space, recording dates, pages, subject emphases and headlines can be seen to be fairly uniform procedures when attacked with concentration. When methodology of research is carefully refined and applied, quantitative content analysis may be expected to produce a fairly high degree of reliability (5, 9, 59).

Qualitative content analysis adds another dimension to newspaper analysis that is truly revealing if the measuring tool is able to reflect that dimension. A lower

coder reliability factor is not unexpected within this classification, for in a sense, it reflects a basic underlying principle of language use. Interpretation of how words are used within a specific context is always colored by the reader's personal background and language expertise. Within the entire content analysis procedure, concentration by trial coders is of utmost importance, and is particularly demanding within the qualitative analysis framework. Adherence to the concentrated effort required was an obstacle to be overcome as trial coding proceeded. From the coder's view, the problem of unfamiliarity with the entire content analysis procedure contributed greatly to a lack of speed in processing. At the same time, it provided unbiased results since there were no preconceived ideas of procedures and expected results. Time required to complete the trial coding process was sizeable and both coders expressed the feeling that had they known, second thoughts might have influenced their decisions to participate in the study.

With an acceptable coder reliability factor, actual accumulation of data from two years of Ellensburg Daily Record newspapers was undertaken. With verified content analysis procedures in hand, reported research in mind and hypotheses stated, impetus was there for a comprehensive look at the content of education news in a small, independently owned, daily newspaper.

Table I  
Coder Reliability\*

Quantitative		Totals
Coder I	Coder II	
98.8	96.1	97.7
Qualitative		Totals
Coder I	Coder II	
93.4	91.9	92.5
Gross Reliability Factor		
		95.4

\*Based on 1170.50 column inches coded by trial coders

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION

As mentioned previously in this report, all public school education news appearing in the Ellensburg Daily Record during a two year period was analyzed item by item and measured quantitatively for date, number of column inches per item, page number, age mention, male/female mention, subject emphasis, headline, source of article, where given, and pictures plus caption column inch added to the article column inch measurement. See page 45 for sample coding sheet. Additionally, locally written indepth news was analyzed qualitatively to uncover a further dimension of the measured education news. See page 44 for sample coding sheet. Each coding category was reported within the general classifications of quantitative or qualitative content analysis. Within the findings report intracomparisons of data follow individual category analyses and finally, within the summary, comparisons are made to any available national research pertinent to the problem.

Understanding of the findings is enhanced if certain factors are kept in mind. Those are: 1) all education news was coded by item. Words coded for slant were coded

in the context of a sentence. In most cases, that also comprises a paragraph; 2) all items were coded completely. None were coded partially or analyzed in brief; 3) excepting picture essay, all sports news was recorded entirely and separately in the sports category; 4) in all cases, adherence to the rules set forth on page 42 were held by the researcher in seeking to determine the qualitative thrust of locally written items in the Ellensburg Daily Record.

#### FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE

Categories measured in the quantitative classification include: picture essay; picture with brief caption-Ellensburg only; picture with brief caption-out of Ellensburg; student written columns-Ellensburg only; student written columns-out of Ellensburg; utility item-out of Ellensburg; utility item-Ellensburg only; indepth subject-out of Ellensburg only. All categories were measured in accordance with rules set forth on page 42.

##### Picture Essay

Picture essay as a method of communicating education news contributed .19 percent to the entire total of newspaper space given to education news in the Ellensburg Daily Record. Eight items were found in two years and of those, three were devoted to sports. Two of the remaining five were centered on science curriculum in Ellensburg and

one, given a half page of space, focused on nutrition in a nearby school district.

The curriculum items were elementary school oriented and the sports essays featured high school ages. The remaining two picture essays focused on education related activities. Females were pictured half as often as were males and boys were featured in three whole pages as participants in sports tournaments while girls were shown on a half page under the headline "play and learn." Within these three articles, girls sports news was given one fourth of the column inches given boys. When a picture essay is in the newspaper, and that is not often, a reader may expect to find it 33 percent of the time on page 10, 22 percent of the time on page 7 or equally easily on pages 8, 11, 15 or 6. The average item text length is 8.03 column inches and the average number of pictures in each essay is 4.6.

Picture with Brief Caption-  
out of Ellensburg

Pictures with brief captions are regularly used in the Ellensburg Daily Record and in the 1977-78 school year were most often found on pages one or two. In the 1978-79 school year, they were most prevalent on pages 5, 6 and 14. Within the two years measured, 45 percent of all pictures in this category were found during 1977-78 and 55 percent were printed in the 1978-79 school year. A most popular subject for this category featured persons receiving honors

(.32) while curriculum related pictures were shown 30 percent of the time and drama 16 percent. Age emphasis was clearly focused on high school followed by elementary children. Junior high ages were shown only in .05 percent of all pictures with brief captions. Females were featured in 70 percent of the pictures leaving males pictured about one third of the time. The average caption length was 2.99 column inches. This category accounted for .50 percent of all education news.

Picture with Brief Caption-  
Ellensburg Only

In the 1977-78 school year, pictures with brief captions centering on Ellensburg public school education would most commonly be found on page two. In 1978-79, it was page one. Curriculum received the most emphasis (.37) followed by nonacademic related pictured news (.32). Awards (.16) and drama (.07) received fewer pictures than did those same subjects, out of Ellensburg. Again, high school ages were featured 47 percent of the time followed by elementary (.35). Ellensburg junior high ages fared only slightly better (.09) than out of Ellensburg junior high children (.05). Fifty-four percent of the time males were pictured, compared with 46 percent for females. Average length of captions with pictures was 3.12 column inches and this category accounted for .88 percent of all education news. One sex role stereotyped

picture appeared during the two year period. The caption read:

BUDDING ENGINEER--Pat Monnin (left) asked his friend Jill McCleary to hold onto the model of his snowman, while he made mental notes about where he'd get the snow he'll need for the snowman he wants to build at Mt. Stuart Elementary School playground. His blueprint is the 'snowflake man' he and Jill made in their first grade class taught by Ginger Jensen. Jill is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. William McCleary and Pat is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Jules Monnin, all of Ellensburg. (Record Photo)

Depicting the boy in the action role; thinking, doing while the girl observes and follows is clearly illustrated in this picture with a brief caption.

#### Utility Item

Utility items were measured for both Ellensburg only and out of Ellensburg. The average article length for items out of Ellensburg was 4.48 column inches compared to 5.60 column inches for Ellensburg. Out of Ellensburg items provided 7.63 percent of all such news while Ellensburg centered items provided 7.08 percent of all education news. These items, while not appearing to be especially significant, do provide a valuable communication link between schools and community. Honor rolls, open houses, school plays, lunch menus, meeting announcements, concerts and short news releases do give readers an idea of activities going on within the educational process. At the same time, these brief items cannot be construed as content education news. Utility news items are scattered throughout

**BUDDING ENGINEER** — Pat Monnin (left) asked his friend Jill McCleary hold onto the model of his snowman, while he made mental notes about where he'd get the snow he'll need for the snowman he wants to build at the Mt. Stuart Elementary School playground. His

blueprint is the "snowflake man" he and Jill made in their first grade class, taught by Ginger Jensen. Jill is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. William McCleary and Pat is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Jules Monnin, all of Ellensburg. (Record photo)

each newspaper, generally fitting into small spaces left by lengthier news items.

#### Student Written Columns

As with other categories, Ellensburg and out of Ellensburg items were recorded separately. In interpretation of data, it is important to recognize that out of Ellensburg student written columns are provided by students from five districts. Regularly included is not only high school and junior high news, but news of all schools within small districts. Ellensburg contributed only two columns each week. Page is not significant for, during the school year, each Saturday's paper provides an entire page for these columns. Out of Ellensburg columns mentioned males somewhat more often (.55) compared to a .45 mention for females. A reverse trend is noted in the student written columns of Ellensburg where male mention (.47) was less often than female mention (.53). Overall, student written columns out of Ellensburg provided 13.63 percent of all education news and Ellensburg only student columns contributed only 3.51 percent of all education news. Average item length was 14.76 column inches for out of Ellensburg columns and 17.85 column inches for Ellensburg student written columns.

#### Indepth Subject--Out of Ellensburg

Indepth subject stories focused out of Ellensburg were particularly significant. In keeping with the purpose

of this study, a more detailed analysis was given this subject in order to provide a comparison with other indepth news coded in qualitative classification. Indepth subject stories out of Ellensburg keep Daily Record readers abreast of education news via the wire services. They also provide news of nearby school districts. Indirectly, these articles are a basis of comparison for local readers, that is, in most cases, another view of education news that is not written locally. Out of Ellensburg indepth subjects augment locally written editorials, letters to the editor and other indicators of educational climate. Of these items, nearly two thirds were attributed to United Press International (UPI) and the other one third were written about neighboring school districts. Overall, 12.22 percent of all education news was in this category. Subject emphasis shows teachers were featured 27 percent of the time and fiscal news items .33. Students rated the spotlight 12 percent of the time and curriculum rated .06 percent as did crime news items. Curriculum related subjects (.15) received more space in this category than did stories centered specifically on curriculum (.06).

The additional measurement coded in this area was categorizing indepth subject stories according to page number and whether or not they were crisis precipitated or non-crisis information stories. Over the two year period, the crisis (.51) and non-crisis (.49) stories were nearly evenly divided. Thirty-one percent of all crisis stories

were found on page one while only .09 percent of non-crisis stories were on page one. In two years, 20 percent of all indepth subject stories focused out of Ellensburg were found on page one. Another 11 percent of both crisis and non-crisis items were found on page 5. No other page number carried more than .08 of all stories.

In trying to ascertain a predominant slant in articles written by Daily Record staff, headlines in this category were also analyzed. Headlines termed neutral were found to appear twice as often as negative or positively slanted headlines.

#### Sports--All Public Schools Reported

In the Ellensburg Daily Record, 43.1 percent of all education news is about sports. Of that, 18.74 percent is devoted to Ellensburg sports and 24.36 percent featured sports activities out of Ellensburg. Again it is significant to remember that out of Ellensburg sports news encompasses five other nearby school districts plus statewide scores on a regular basis. Average item length for Ellensburg sports news was 6.85 column inches and out of Ellensburg sports received a somewhat larger share with each item averaging 7.46 column inches. Pictures are regularly found on the sports pages averaging slightly less than one picture for every three items for Ellensburg and one picture for every five items out of Ellensburg. Boys sports are definitely the center of interest in sports news, but girls

sports are reported, even though in many fewer column inches. Occasionally, a headline will indicate an article about a girls' contest only to lapse into detailed analysis of the boys' participation. This is more prevalent in activities such as cross country, track, tennis. Sports measurement in this study was strictly for quantitative, percent of whole information.

Table II  
Public School Education News  
Quantitative

Category	Total Number of Items	Average Article Length	% of all Education News
Picture Essay	8	8.03	.19
Picture with Caption-out	56	2.99	.50
Picture with Caption-in	94	3.12	.88
Utility Item-out	562	4.48	7.63
Utility Item-in	418	5.60	7.08
Student Written Columns-out	305	14.76	13.63
Student Written Columns-in	65	17.85	3.51
Indepth Story Out	315	12.82	12.22
Sports In	903	6.85	18.74
Sports Out	1,078	7.46	24.36
Totals	3,804	8.39	88.74

## FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE

Dapper (11:63) deftly defined content education news, saying "school stories are not educational essays on methods. They are news and feature items on the fabric of an education designed to equip a child for life." It is upon this definition that this category of education news was based, researched and tabulated. Content education news must detail aspects of public school activity other than sports and utility news. It must provide an indepth view of an aspect, such as curriculum, teacher-child activity or fiscal matter within public school education.

Based on surveys of readers' desires concerning the subject matter of education news items, are small daily newspapers responding to these needs? We cannot say conclusively, but it appears they are not. Is the Ellensburg Daily Record meeting readers' needs in education news? Quantitatively speaking, it appears that sizeable numbers of column inches are devoted to education news. The question remains--how much is content education news?

Categories measured in the qualitative classification are editorials, letters to the editor, and indepth stories divided into four groups. Those groups are: 1) negotiations, 2) fiscal, 3) teacher oriented, 4) general education news. All categories were analyzed in accordance

with procedures set forth on page 42. All articles were measured in their entirety.

#### Editorials

Editorials comprised .79 percent of all education news in the Ellensburg Daily Record. Average article length was 16.40 column inches and there were 16 items. The local editor sometimes employed a particular writing format in which he offered a "potpourri" editorial. In those editorials, education focused news was measured and analyzed even though it was only a part of the entire editorial. The local editor, who is now the editor-publisher, provided .75 percent of all editorials during this two year period. The managing editor wrote .19 of all editorials and .06 were written by the school district assistant superintendent. This editorial was the longest editorial space (44.75 column inches) given to education news. Editorials were evenly divided between crisis and non-crisis orientations. Curriculum and negotiations received the most emphasis followed by fiscal comments. The consensus view prevailed in writing by local editors and carefully neutral writing was clearly apparent. Headlines were evenly divided between negative, neutral and positive. Page location was not significant for editorials always appear in the same spot and page numbers indicate only the size of that particular issue. Elementary or junior high schools were not mentioned specifically,

and high school and adults received the most emphasis. Of 16 editorials dealing with education news and written in the two year period, 14 were authored by Record editors.

#### Letters to the Editor

Dapper (11) saw letters to the editor as a valuable indicator of what people were interested in, as well as being a signal of what needed to be covered more completely in school news items. Analysis of data shows that her views compliment this category in the Daily Record. Slant of letters written by readers was generally negative with nearly twice as many crisis precipitated letters than non-crisis. Non-crisis letters were regularly highly positive focusing on thank you or praise of effort or persons. All ages were mentioned, but adults were the front runners in numbers of mention. From July 1977 to July, 1978, 33 percent of all crisis letters appeared while 17 percent of all non-crisis letters were found. From July 1978 to July 1979, ~~30%~~ of all crisis letters appeared and 19 percent of all non-crisis. Overall, 64 percent of all letters to the editor were crisis precipitated and 36 percent were non-crisis. Page location is not significant in the Daily Record, for letters to the editor always appear on the editorial page. Headline analysis was also termed useless, for this space is nearly always termed letters to the editor, only. To the entire total of public school education news, letters

to the editor contributed 1.54 percent. The average letter was 7.31 column inches long.

#### In Depth Subjects

Negotiations. There were no non-crisis articles about negotiations during the two year research period. Sixty-eight percent of all articles on this subject were found on page one, and when continued, would finish on page 12. Writing by Record staff members was clearly neutral both in story content and headlines. Men were mentioned about six times more often than females. This data must be tempered with the fact that few women are involved in the negotiating process and those who are seem to be very quiet when dealing with the newspaper. Teachers were mentioned in headlines three times more often than the school board. Ramifications of that fact would need to be explored in detail before any conclusions could be drawn, but an interesting fact, nonetheless. Negotiations accounted for 3.12 percent of all education news, but article length averaged 21.94 column inches. August and September of each year produced by far the most news on this subject. A few stories can be found scattered through April and May of those years, but it seems that feast or famine does prevail concerning articles about negotiations.

Fiscal. Fiscal news in the Daily Record accounted for only .73 percent of all education news. Average article length was 15.10 column inches. Fiscal news represents

such a small portion of the total that to say that 56 percent were crisis precipitated seems somewhat overly stated. About one third of fiscal articles centered on budget, and funding with the other two thirds focused on levy votes. Page one was preferred 66 percent of the time for crisis news on this subject while non-crisis fiscal news appeared most often on page 12. In keeping with the trend, headlines tend to reflect neutral stances as did the articles themselves.

Teacher oriented news. News about teachers was consistently (.66) non-crisis and found most often on page one. If the news was crisis precipitated, 60 percent of the time it would be on page one. There was slightly more than three times more non-crisis news about teachers in 1978-79 than in 1977-78. Teachers also rated three times more news than did administrators. The Daily Record articles reflected a positive slant in this category with subjects of hiring and resigning receiving the most coverage. Just one indepth article featured a teacher's efforts with children and curriculum and that was sports centered. The only other indepth teacher-child centered article related to a textbook controversy. Despite the negative connotation of the subject, the latter article was carefully weighted toward a positive vein with neutral and negative referents neatly balanced. Teacher oriented news supplied

.45 percent of all education news during the two year period measured. Average article length was 10.83.

General education news. Non-crisis articles were featured 75 percent of the time in the general education news category. High school ages were the focus and curriculum academic subjects predominated in the stories, followed by nonacademic school news. Business week and school board news outdistanced music, scholarship and foreign students for news space. Headlines were overwhelmingly positive as was the slant of articles written about subjects in this category. General education news was likely to be found on page one followed by page two and if it was crisis news in this category, 76 percent of the time it was on page one. If it was non-crisis news, it would appear on page one 14 percent of the time. About two-thirds of the non-crisis stories in the two year period appeared in the 1978-79 time frame. Crisis stories were nearly evenly divided between the two years. Overall, general education news accounted for 4.54 percent of all education news during this two year period. Average article length was 16.95 column inches. See Table III.

Table III  
Public School Education News  
Qualitative

Category	Total Number of Items	Average Article Length	% of All News
Editorial	16	16.40	79
Letters to Editor	70	7.31	1.54
Indepth Story In, Only	178	14.89	8.84
Total			11.20
<hr/>			
Negotiations	47	21.94	3.12
Fiscal	16	15.10	.73
Teacher Oriented	14	10.83	.45
General Education	94	15.95	4.54
Total			8.84

#### SUMMARY

The content of public school education news over a two year period in a small daily newspaper, the Ellensburg Daily Record, is now known. It is also known that roughly five percent of newshole in this newspaper is devoted to education news (33). Explicit statistics for education news in other daily newspapers appear not to be gathered for those few studies that even mention education news,

lump it together with science and philanthropy news (43). Looking at non-competitive dailies, Nixon found that in 130 issues, 7.90 percent of the 94.44 percent newshole was devoted to education, science and philanthropy news. In another differently focused study, Ross (51) studied trends of increase in education news over a sixteen year period in a large California newspaper and found a significant increase in education news appearing during that time. Her category system was wholly different and therefore not comparable for purposes of this study.

In the Daily Record, utility information news, including sports, provides 88.74 percent of all education news while content education news accounted for 11.20 of all education news. The local editor, admitting he was guessing, thought that perhaps about 65 percent of education news would be utilitarian in nature and another 35 percent would be follow up or content oriented, within the Daily Record. The local superintendent thought all education news bases were fairly well covered although he saw a need for more indepth stories about those involved in the educational process. Reported research indicates education news generally overemphasizes sports (27) and underemphasizes curriculum. Dennis (14) found too little indepth reporting on people, specifically children, in education news.

Data would disprove the idea that content education news is significantly reported in the Ellensburg Daily Record if only news focused in Ellensburg Public Schools

was considered. That news totaled 8.84 percent of all news. Add news focused out of Ellensburg in the indepth category (12.22) and the total exceeds one fifth (21.06 percent) of all education news. Sports received something over twice that amount of coverage (43.1 percent) and utility items 14.71 percent of all education news.

Consensus reporting definitely prevails in the education news reporting in the Ellensburg Daily Record, and in so doing, adds a reinforcing statistic to those reported nationally.

New information found centering upon page one crisis/non-crisis placement presents a mixture of data. If an indepth out of Ellensburg focused story was of crisis orientation, one third of the time it was on page one, but only .09 percent of non-crisis items in this category were on page one. Indepth articles about negotiations were always crisis oriented and two thirds of the time were on page one. Fifty-six percent of the fiscal news was crisis oriented and appeared on page one 66 percent of the time. General education news, if crisis oriented, will be found three fourths of the time on page one. The one deviation from the trend toward crisis precipitated page one coverage was in the teacher oriented news category. Two thirds of all this news was non-crisis in nature but still was found most often on page one (see page 71). Editorials were evenly divided between crisis

and non-crisis orientation, but, of course, are never on page one.

In all categories, with the exception of letters to the editor, high school ages received the most coverage (see page 72). In pictures, males were shown more often than females (see page 55) and received the most attention in sports. In student written columns, male/female emphasis was nearly equally divided (see page 61).

One area of measurement of particular interest in education is that of sex role stereotyping. Of all items published during the two year period, only one picture with brief caption depicted traditional and stereotyped male/female roles (see page 57). Generally speaking, that sort of education news coverage is, for all intent and purpose, nonexistent in the Daily Record.

Table IV

Public School Education News  
Relative Frequency  
Page Location -- Crisis and Non-crisis News

Page No.	% Crisis	% Non-crisis	Category
1	68	--	Negotiations
1	60	20	Teacher Oriented
1	76	14	General Education
1	66	29	Fiscal
1	31	09	Indepth-Out

To read: Of all stories about negotiations 68% were crisis and were found on page one.

Table V

Age Emphasis of Education News  
 % of Mention Within Each Category\*

	Picture Essay	Pictures With Caption Out	Pictures With Caption In	Indepth Out	General Education	Letters to Editor	Editorials	Sports (estimated)
High School	.40 (sports)	.64	.47	--	.38	.11	.05	.92
Junior High	.10	.05	.09	--	.05	.13	--	.07
Elementary	.40 (Curri.)	.24	.35	--	.15	.15	--	--
Adult	.10	.04	.08	.28	.28	.60	.65	--
All Ages	--	--	--	.12	.15	--	.04	--

\*Does not total 100% in each category.

Table VI  
Public School Education News  
Item Analysis

Category	No. of Items	Average Article Length /Column Inches
Picture Essay	8	8.03
Pictures with Captions	150	3.05
Utility Item	980	5.04
Student Written Columns	370	16.30
Indepth Story Out	315	12.82
Sports	1,981	7.15
Editorial	16	16.40
Letters to the Editor	70	7.31
Indepth Story In	178	14.89

A final comparison question is raised as the detailed analysis of education news is completed. Remembering the input of school news from the five surrounding school districts and the quantity of Ellensburg news, is there a significant difference in the amount of Ellensburg news compared to the amount of out of Ellensburg news in the Daily Record? A chi-square test of significance was applied to data to determine significant difference, if any, in the amount of education news focused in Ellensburg

compared to that focused out of Ellensburg. Having chosen a .05 level of significance (8) with four degrees of freedom, a chi-square of 9.488 was required for statistical significance. Obtainment of 135.4 showed a significant difference at the .00001 level in the two items and was not unexpected (see page 75).

Table VII  
Chi-square Analysis

	Pictures	Utility	Student Written	Indepth	Sports	Row Totals
In Ellensburg	62.6	408.9	154.4	205.7	826.5	1658
	94	418	65	178	903	
Out of Ellensburg	87.4	571.1	215.6	287.3	1154.5	2316
	56	562	305	315	1078	
Column Totals	150	980	370	493	1981	3974

$$.05 \quad \chi^2 = 9.488$$

$$\chi^2 = 135.4$$

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

A Content Analysis of Education News in a Small, Independently Owned Daily Newspaper has shown definite trends of specific category coverage as well as data reflective of the quantity of that coverage. A further analysis of indepth news as it is locally written has shown the slant of news reporting as it has appeared in the Ellensburg Daily Record during the two year period in which newspapers were read and tabulated. A clear picture of the content of education news in one small daily newspaper has been ascertained.

The Ellensburg Daily Record, based on data accumulated, may be said to provide a respectable proportion of space allocation for education news. At the same time, there is noticeable lack of indepth stories on subjects thought to be vital in telling the education story to the public. Data supported the first hypothesis.

Qualitative analysis of the content of education news has shown that Daily Record reporting and writing is consistently neutral in stance and reflects a consensus view within the community rather than a conflict view of local education news. The second hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis three was clearly supported as sports and utility information news accounted for nearly 89 percent of all education news.

High school ages are definitely the newsworthy ages based on what news has appeared in the Ellensburg Daily Record. The space allocation to high school ages is distinctly disproportionate to other ages who receive much less coverage. Hypothesis four was supported.

A final hypothesis stating that non-crisis education news would rarely be found on page one was not entirely supported. Non-crisis news about teachers was found on page one in about one third of all news in that category and about half the time when the subject was fiscal news. Other categories of general education and negotiations were centered on page one crisis orientation (see page 71).

#### IMPLICATIONS

Focus on education news in the Ellensburg Daily Record is clearly on utility information. Little, if anything is written about "news and feature items on the fabric of an education designed to equip a child for life" (11:63) or about the single most important person hired to accomplish that task; the teacher. Less is written of those administering the tax dollars and educational policy.

On the surface it might be concluded that the newspaper is unwilling to comprehensively cover those subjects. That seems less a valid conclusion when consideration is

given to the fact that about one-eighth of all newshole is devoted to education news. Both the local editor and school superintendent agree on news coverage priorities, but in reality, thinking and doing have not produced desired results. The crux of the problem lies, I believe, in "who" will write content education news. Aside from a need for a high degree of writing skill, where is a person who is able to recognize newsworthy events within the educational effort? If there are such persons, who is to hire them to accomplish a much needed task?

School districts enrolling well under 3,000 students likely cannot justify a full time public relations person. Similarly, a small daily newspaper with under 9,000 circulation may not see its way clear to hire an education writer--even in an education centered community. A viable solution to the improvement in quality of education news would be a school district newspaper cooperative hiring of a part-time person to supervise and write ongoing education news. Long range cooperative planning between the writer, school district and newspaper would be a priority item in which areas of responsibility would be clearly outlined. Controversial as well as general news items should be included in the news coverage and care should be taken not to infringe upon the city news editor's coverage.

What has been a tentative partnership between schools and the newspaper holds highly favorable indications that a mutually helpful and satisfying partnership

could be executed. Readers would find greater newspaper emphasis on content education news more satisfying and likely that would increase circulation which would directly affect newshole and advertising. The school district would benefit from better and more comprehensive news of the educative process and the participants in the education process would receive more than crisis oriented news coverage. Essentially, a fairer news balance of what is going on in public schools would be effected. Problems would not always be the only page one news about schools if there was a person to write newsworthy, educationally significant content stories.

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## APPENDIX A

## EDUCATION NEWS: AN INTERVIEW

John Ludtka, Publisher, Editor  
Ellensburg Daily Record  
February 12, 1980

Daily Record readers "want to read about events that are happening here. They want to read about other people rather than 'things,'" stated John Ludtka, editor-publisher of the Ellensburg Daily Record. "Local stories ride high on the page and are easily identified," he observed.

Continuing in greater detail, Ludtka explained that he has conducted informal readership surveys to determine what news interest readers have. Within his readership surveys, Ludtka said the subject of "education news seldom came up." Responding to an inquiry about the "why" of that, Ludtka suggested that this is maybe "because education is taken for granted" and particularly in Ellensburg, people "are used to a good school situation."

Smiling cheerfully, Ludtka acknowledged that controversy about education subjects is high interest reading for Daily Record subscribers. He then expressed his belief that education news would not have to be crisis precipitated to rate page one space. At the same time, there is no doubt that "if education news is crisis precipitated, it would be on page one," he observed. Quickly amending that statement, Ludtka pointed out that "not only

education news" that is crisis precipitated makes page one. "Conflict makes news," Ludtka stated simply.

Responding to a question about the adequacy of education news coverage, Ludtka said "a good fair answer is no, it isn't as comprehensive as it could be. Overall," Ludtka said reflectively, "we probably fall short in some areas. More on follow up than in 'on the spot' kinds of news." He cited failure to follow up story leads and lack of analysis and interpretation of school news as shortcomings in the reporting of education news in the Daily Record. He also said he thinks the "school district should do more with leads to the newspaper."

Speaking about factors influencing the depth of education news coverage, Ludtka centered on staff capability as being very influential. Time and staff member availability to cover education news can effectively limit indepth coverage of education news, Ludtka emphasized. Despite that, Ludtka said he thinks the Daily Record "does far more than most of them [newspapers] do. They don't cover education news nearly as comprehensively as we do."

Concerning the overall makeup of the Daily Record Ludtka said they run between 305 and 310 issues yearly. "At the very minimum we try to run 14 pages per issue. That number was slightly higher in 1979," he said. Circulation figures were 5,718 in 1977 and 5,814 in 1978.

The average Daily Record page has 126 column inches according to Ludtka, but he said they "don't try to meet

any particular balance between ads and newshole." He thinks ads run "in the neighborhood of 50 to 55 percent" leaving 45 to 55 percent for newshole. "We try to run a bigger newshole than most papers," he commented.

His philosophy concerning page makeup is that he "wants every page to sustain some strong news element," although he frankly admits that "ads will infringe upon that." Writing headlines for the entire paper is shared among Daily Record staff members on a rotating basis, Ludtka explained. The exception to that is the family page editor and the sports page editor who are responsible for those headlines each day.

Addressing questions of percentage allotments for specific education news categories, Ludtka, shaking his head and smiling, said he, "had not the slightest idea." Admittedly guessing, he said "65 percent might fall in the utility item" category and another "35 percent would be follow-up." He feels sports receives the most coverage, saying 50 to 60 percent of that centers on local sports news.

What is the editor-publisher's role in the Daily Record editorial page? "I don't believe I should have an opinion on every subject," Ludtka stated emphatically.

Reflecting on what he thought the slant of writing was in the Daily Record, Ludtka quickly responded that he "hoped it would be neutral." Compromising the facts is something he hopes never happens in reporting news to

Ellensburg Daily Record readers. At the same time, he says he "doesn't see a need to fan the flames" as a lot of newspapers do. "We can't avoid the facts, but we can present them in a way that isn't alarming," he stressed. He then quickly added that, at the same time, controversy will not be ignored.

Summing up the subject of education news as found in the Ellensburg Daily Record, Ludtka expressed his sense of "obligation to all the school districts." He views Ellensburg and surrounding areas as being "more conscious" of the education news because "we're in an education-centered community." He feels the Daily Record reflects this consciousness in the amount of space given to education news.

Writer's note: Following the interview, "interviewee and interviewer" exchanged a few pertinent, but rounded figures and Ludtka quickly ran them through his calculator. He arrived at the figure, "5.1 percent of all newshole allocation" as being the amount of education news that has been found in the Ellensburg Daily Record from July 1, 1977 to July 1, 1979.

## APPENDIX B

## EDUCATION NEWS: AN INTERVIEW

Dr. Kent Matheson, Superintendent of Schools  
Ellensburg School District  
February 11, 1980

"There is something in the newspaper every day that touches on schools," stated Dr. Kent Matheson when questioned about how much education news appears in the Ellensburg Daily Record. Qualifying that comment, Matheson said he thinks those education items are "predominantly informational."

Praising the Daily Record coverage of education news, Matheson said he feels the local newspaper "covers most programs: they touch on almost everything that's happening in the district." He said he finds that "kind of remarkable" and feels that concerning news of education, "most people know if they want to know."

Commenting upon the press-school district relationship, Matheson acknowledged that it is very important despite the fact agreement on everything does not necessarily occur. He expressed with satisfaction that there is about a fifty-fifty balance between Daily Record and school district instigated education news. Clarifying further, Matheson stressed that he "does not perceive or intend for any school news to be a hard sell."

Thinking about page one education news, Matheson said his reaction is, that overall, it is of a crisis

nature. He said he thinks stories of finance--taxes and their impact are page one news. Additionally, articles dealing with controversy within the educational system will be found on page one, he thinks. Significant changes in key school district personnel are likely to be page one news, he observed, but may not be necessarily of a crisis orientation.

Focusing on what he thought the major kinds of education news items were, in the Daily Record, Matheson said he thought athletic or sports news was very important and was a priority item for readers of education news. "News that's tinged with controversy" also rates high readership, Matheson suggested, but he thought school activity news "appealed more to specific groups" than to general readership. Matheson said he thinks "what kids are being taught and how they're doing" is the most important kind of education news. He said he feels the Daily Record conveys this type of news "in a general way, but specifically, no." He said he views the lack of indepth coverage of programs and individuals (in the education process) as a negative aspect. He qualified that by saying the school district is equally as responsible as the Daily Record for the lack of indepth news.

Focusing on the deficiencies of school news, Matheson said he feels the newspaper does not provide a "great deal of understanding" to their readers on "collective bargaining and school finance." He commented that he

recognizes that both subjects are complex and not easy to report, in an interesting manner, to newspaper readers.

"The Daily Record does an above average job informing the community about education in a positive manner," Matheson stressed. "They have not sensationalized school news as many other papers do," he pointed out.

What is the best source of education news in Ellensburg? "The newspaper--the Daily Record," Matheson said thoughtfully. He says he sees the best quality education news coming from school newsletters and parent conferences, but noted that those other than parents are not reached through those school district efforts.

Matheson said he does not anticipate any drastic changes in practices related to dissemination of education news. He regards it as "pretty good" with the exception of a need for more indepth articles about programs and individuals.

telegraph operator was stationed in the Record office where he took the news directly by Morse code.

Today, the Daily Record receives about 100,000 words daily through United Press International newswire services. Technology has found its way to the Daily Record, for typewriters are rarely used nowadays. They have been replaced by computerized keyboards for faster, more efficient news processing.

As times have changed, so has the Daily Record, although one element of the newspaper has remained the same. It has always been an independently owned newspaper, and still is today. The former publisher has relinquished his title to the current Publisher-Editor, John Ludtka, but maintains close touch with the paper as its owner. The general manager oversees a staff consisting of city, sports, and family page editors plus two reporters.