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Parent-Teacher Conferences in the Elementary School

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PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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by

Donald C. Crosland

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mutual understanding between parents and teachers is of vital importance in the wholesome development of every child. In view of the fact that parents and teachers are greatly concerned with helping him grow up to be a socially and emotionally mature person, it is difficult to understand why they have not always worked more closely together on their mutual task.

As parent-teacher conferences develop, they seem to release creative talents for democratic leadership on the part of both parents and teachers. Through the guidance of the administration, the conception that educating the children was the school's business alone has gradually changed to an attitude of mutual trust and cooperative action.

As teachers have grown in their philosophy and practice, they have come to appreciate more and more the importance of becoming sufficiently acquainted with the parents of their children to understand the problems, conflicts, interests, and needs represented in the home of each child. The traditional practice of consulting the parents only after some difficulty has reached the problem stage is changing to one of endeavoring to

discover the needs of each child so that problems may be averted.

Parents are realizing how much more meaningful their contributions to their children may become when working in close cooperation with the school. The parents are cooperating more and more with the school in an endeavor to discover the particular technic which will be successful with each individual child. This necessitates an exchange of ideas between the parent and the teacher of the child in order that deep, basic understandings may be established and successful working approaches may be made. Only through a harmonious attitude between parents and teachers can many of the problems of education be solved.

In order to have a better understanding of the child, we need to have effective parent-teacher conferences. Only through the parents of the child can we better understand him.

Many schools in the nation have parent-teacher conferences in operation and many qualified writers have written on the subject of such conferences. Ralph G. Eckert and Faith W. Smitter, writing for the California State Department of Education say:

Certain schools have pioneered to parents on their children's progress largely by individual conferences rather than by the usual report card.

With approximately one-half of the parents choosing to return for a second conference after midyear, the percentage has steadily increased until now about nine out of ten do so. Both parents will participate wholeheartedly if a plan is worked out.¹

Probably one of the most authoritative person to write on parent-teacher conferences is Katherine Edith D'Evelyn. D'Evelyn has written many articles on this subject. In her booklet on parent-teacher conferences she makes this statement about the worth of such a joint meeting:

The home and the school have joint responsibility for a child's development. What happens to him in either place affects his total behavior. In order to help him develop a well-balanced personality structure, the home and the school must cooperate in working out a suitable program of activities and experiences. Individual parent-teacher conferences are one of the most satisfactory means of making this cooperative planning possible.²

It has been made clear that we can only gather the vital information needed in teaching by contacting the parent of the child concerned. Inga C. Mc Daniel, guidance consultant, San Bernadino County, California, in writing for the California Journal of Elementary Education, tells us of the importance of obtaining the facts from the parents.

From the parent the teacher can best obtain the facts concerning the child that will help her to

¹ Ralph G. Eckert and Faith W. Smitter, "Home and School Work Together for Young Children," Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, P. 14, March, 1949.

² Katherine Edith D'Evelyn, Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences (New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1945), p. 1.

understand the child's behavior and to enable her to give more effective guidance.³

The Child welfare counselor of the Long Beach Public Schools, Long Beach, California, has this to say about the relationships of parents and teachers.

Parent-teacher relationships are a major factor in the development of a child's personality. The child, through the understanding and cooperation of the parents within the home, and the understanding and cooperation of the teacher in the classroom will develop independence, responsibility, and both social and emotional stability.⁴

To further substantiate the evidence that parents and teachers must work together in the educational program, V. Hufstedler, guidance director of the Corpus Christi Public Schools of Texas, says:

One of the fundamental steps in all educational programs is the evaluation of pupil progress. This evaluation is necessary for functional education. Both planning and evaluation are provinces of the student, parent, and teacher, and in order for them to be done effectively, both steps should be the result of their combined efforts. When the teacher evaluates the progress of the student without the help of the parent and student himself, he may place too much emphasis on academic aspects of work and lose sight of the goals the family holds for the child. If a parent attempts to judge his child's progress without consulting the pupil and the instructor, he may be unaware of the school's goals and philosophy. The student himself needs the counsel and help of these two adults, who are in a

³Inga C. McDaniel, "Establishing Effective Home-School Relationships," California Journal of Elementary Education, p. 162, February, 1948

⁴Phyllis J. Shane, "Parent-Teacher Relationships," American Childhood, p. 11, September, 1949.

position to know best his needs, assets, and liabilities. Since the student is the most important of these elements, parent-student and teacher-student conferences are equally important in evaluation.⁵

Benjamin C. Willis, Superintendent of Schools, Yonkers, New York, found this to be true in his work on parent-teacher relationships:

Good relations are necessary at all times so that the years in school will be as valuable as possible for the child and for society as a whole. A good school is not an island with twice-daily contact from the mainland.

Today's children are participating in more stimulating educational experiences and entering adult life with better preparation than would have been true in many places without the good relations existing. The program of activities can and should be such that parents and teachers both vitally concerned with our children, together build better communities.⁶

Ethel Kawin, writing in the National Parent Teacher magazine, also points out the necessity of parents and teachers working together cooperatively for the better understanding of the child.

Every pattern of life has its fulfillments and its frustrations. Good mental hygiene lies in emphasizing the fulfillments and minimizing the frustrations of ones own life. When both parents and teachers are mentally healthy and emotionally mature, they are able to deal with each other understandingly, each realizing that the other has both unmet needs and deep satisfactions. They will also

⁵ V. Hufstedler, "Parents and Teachers Talk It Over," Educational Leadership, p. 429, April, 1947.

⁶ Benjamin C. Willis, "Good Home-School Relations," School Executive, p. 6, November, 1948.

realize that their two different patterns of life supplement each other in relation to the child. Together, cooperatively, they can meet childrens' needs in ways that neither one could meet them alone.⁷

It has been previously pointed out that many schools are operating parent-teacher conferences in their schools. Some interesting conclusions were formed after such a conference in the public schools of Glen Rock, New Jersey. Kenneth Coulter wrote in the Elementary School Journal on the Glen Rock conferences:

1. Parents are interested in the welfare of their children, as is proved by their willingness to come to school to visit with the teachers.

2. Parents recognize that their children can be disturbed by other than physical ills. Though in the main, uneducated in the field of mental hygiene, parents are alert concerning the mental and emotional growth of their children.

3. Teachers who are aware of the problems of child development can do a great deal to assist parents in their efforts to rear their children properly.

4. Parents are not opposed to "newer" methods and procedures in education; they are unwilling, and wisely so, to give up to a type that they do not understand.

5. The wise teacher will realize that time spent on parent conferences is really time saved because it helps to eliminate many problems in the classroom.

⁷ Ethel Kawin, "Tensions in Parent-Teacher Relations: Mist They Exist?" National Parent Teacher, p. 12, October, 1951.

6. Children are best served by constant cooperation between the two institutions most concerned with children--home and school.⁸

Mr. Coulter goes further and gives some recommendations that administrators should follow when they employ teachers. He states his recommendations under four points:

1. In employing teachers, the administrator should always make sure that

- (a) the prospective teacher will be willing to spend time with parents over and above regular school hours;
- (b) that he has a sound working knowledge of child development and of child "psychology and that he is not addicted to any peculiar brand of "Psycho-this" or "psycho-that"; and
- (c) that he has the ability to deal with people as individuals.

2. Public schools would do well to set up in-service training courses for teachers on the technique of interviews.

3. A written record of every conference held should be filed.

4. The schools should periodically restate their purpose in terms that the public can understand.⁹

⁸ Kenneth C. Coulter, "Parent-Teacher Conferences," Elementary School Journal, p. 389-90, March, 1947.

⁹ Coulter, loc. cit.

CHAPTER II

LIMITING FACTORS TO OVERCOME

APPREHENSIONS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS

In the past certain negative factors have hindered the development of positive attitudes toward the school. A program that is fair to the child cannot successfully be carried on if the parent and the teacher are afraid of one another. There must be some basis for these fears that have been, and are, prevalent in parents and teachers alike. Why do parents fear teachers? Why do teachers fear parents? Ralph G. Eckert and Faith W. Smither list a few items why parents fear teachers, and why teachers fear parents.

Why Parents Fear Teachers

1. Fear that they are not well educated and that the teacher may think them uninformed if they ask questions.
2. Fear of the teacher as an unconscious carry-over from childhood.
3. Fear that their criticism of the school may lead to reprisals against their own child.
4. Fear of being considered meddlers or "apple polishers".
5. Fear that they are being blamed because their child acts as a normal child rather than a superior adult.
6. Fear that the school may be experimenting on their child.

Why Teachers Fear Parents

1. Fear, because the teacher too often has had conferences only with irritated parents
2. Fear, because parents are the teachers' employers.
3. Fear, that cooperation with parents and the parent-teacher association will increase her work.
4. Fear, because the teacher does not know the parent.
5. Fear, because parents are frequently older and more experienced with children, particularly their own.
6. Fear lest parents ask questions about the child's problems or the school which the teacher will not be able to answer.
7. Fear that parents are critical of the teacher's method of handling children.¹⁰

DIFFICULTIES IN ENLISTING LOCAL SUPPORT

It will do no good to organize a program of parent-teacher conferences without first getting the parents to support such a program. The idea of "selling" the public on the idea of the conference is probably the major point in setting up any parent-teacher conference.

There is probably no better organization in the school than the Parent Teachers' Association in which to begin the program. The Parent Teachers' Association

¹⁰ Ralph G. Eckert and Faith W. Smitter, "Home and School Work Together for Young Children," Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, pp. 1-2, March, 1949.

is the strongest link between the parent and the school. The primary purpose of the Parent Teachers' Association is to co-ordinate the work of home and school for the welfare of the child. To enlist the help of this organization would be wise.

E. T. Mc Swain writing in the National Parent Teacher says:

The unprecedented increase in the school population in recent years presents many crucial problems. One of the most pressing of these is the need for improved home-school relations. There is only one way to solve the problems. That is to take such measures as will give parents and teachers an understanding of the psychological factors involved in parent-teacher interaction.

The local Parent Teachers' Association provides both opportunity and the means for a cooperative study to determine just where the problems lie and what kind of active program will eliminate the contributing causes. At general meetings and in study groups the psychology of human relations should be emphasized. The fourth R in the elementary school, as essential to the child's mental and emotional health as "Readin', 'Ritin, and 'Righmatick," is human Relations. The foundation for democratic living for the child--in the school and in the home--is a high quality of parent-teacher relations. Each individual creates his own interpretation of the kind of home-school relations he desires for his child. What the parent or teacher wants for one child should be his goal for all children.¹¹

Inga Mc Daniel, writing for the California Journal of Elementary Education, makes the following remarks about the Parent Teachers' Association:

¹¹ E. T. Mc Swain, "Problems in the Parent-Teacher Relationships," National Parent Teacher, p. 28, September, 1949.

There is no agency which can be more valuable in bringing the home and the school into closer relationship than the Parent Teacher Association. Its primary purpose is to co-ordinate the work of home and school for the welfare of the child. The Parent Teachers' Association has sponsored some of the finest projects carried on in our schools. The school has a challenge and responsibility in helping the Parent Teacher Association plan an effective program of study: in presenting problems and needs of the school, as well as in clarifying principles of today's schools.¹²

In conclusion it might be assumed that parents and teachers can be brought together through their mutual interest in the child's welfare. It is conceivable that if the underlying misunderstandings which they have for one another are overcome, and if the parents are shown the desirability of cooperating with the school in the conference plan, then the parent-teacher conference may be successful. This harmony between parent and teacher might be achieved through the medium of the Parent Teachers' Association.

¹² Inga C. Mc Daniel, "Establishing Effective Home-School Relationships," California Journal of Elementary Education, p. 171, February, 1948.

CHAPTER III

PREPARING FOR, CONDUCTING, AND EVALUATING THE CONFERENCE

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR THE TEACHERS

It would do no good to enlist the support of the parents with an objective in mind and then not be able to reach this objective due to the lack of trained personnel to administer the parent-teacher conference.

Administrators have often commented that a person not trained in the "know-how" of good parent relations can harm more than he can help the school. It is imperative that the teachers on the staff be well trained in the task which confronts them. A good in-service training program will increase competence of the staff, and will help to make certain parent-teacher conferences are successful. It is of vital importance, then, that a good in-service program is projected.

Inga Mc Daniel draws the following conclusions about the teacher training program:

It is imperative that teacher-training institutions and in-service training programs include instruction in home-school relationships, emphasizing techniques of interview, letters and reports to parents; effective ways of bringing the home and the school closer in understanding and in achievement of mutual goals; and

Most important of all, an understanding of the whole child which includes a knowledge of the effects of home environment and parent-child relationships. Specific preparation is needed in parent counseling. A special background of study and training is required for successful conferences. Teachers must be well grounded in mental hygiene and the psychology of personality adjustment. They need a thorough knowledge of the normative growth and behavior expectations of the age range of the children with whom they will be working. It is obvious that unless a teacher knows what behavior is within the normal range of expectations, she will not know which children are deviating seriously enough to cause concern. Good counseling techniques can be learned through supervised practice and study and should also be a required part of each student-teacher training.¹³

Walter G. Sites, director of guidance, Cleveland Heights Public Schools, Ohio, declares this about in-service training of teachers, and the importance of the training:

In-service training would be necessary to develop them (teachers) in the art of holding a conference, establishing rapport, interviewing, counseling, closing a conference, and summarizing the conversation for record purposes.¹⁴

In-service training is a vital part of the program to help the teacher understand the basic principles of the conferences, both group and individual. In this training period all aspects of the conference would be discussed and the

¹³ Inga D. Mc Daniel, "Establishing Effective Home-School Relationships," California Journal of Elementary Education, p. 174, February, 1948.

¹⁴ Walter G. Sites, "Shall We Grade Them Or Guide Them" School Executive, pp. 36-7, August, 1951.

teacher's questions would be answered. This is the most important phase of preparation for a good parent-teacher conference.

GROUP CONFERENCES WITH PARENTS

It is only logical that before successful individual conferences can be held, group conferences must be arranged to educate the parents on what is to be accomplished. The group conference could be a meeting of all the parents to be interviewed. Or, the group meetings could be arranged so that the parents of one particular age group could meet at one time to familiarize themselves with the plan of the conference.

Chester A. Taft, the administrative assistant of the Inglewood schools, Inglewood, California, states the following on the conference held in their school:

The first conference in the fall, instead of being an individual parent conference, is now a group conference. All of the parents of a class in the school are invited to attend one conference at which the goals of the school are explained and the objectives for this particular group are interpreted. In addition, the teacher attempts to make the parents aware of the growth and developmental characteristics of the children in relation to these objectives.¹⁵

¹⁵ Chester A. Taft, "Fostering Home-School Relations," Educational Leadership, pp. 315-17, February, 1950.

It is also feasible to invite the parents to a group conference that includes all children concerned regardless of the class they are in. In this larger meeting a more general concept of the conference could be given to all the parents at one time.

Inga C. Mc Daniel makes a statement about such a group conference and the general understanding which prevails as a result of the larger group conference:

As a preparation to individual conferences, the teacher may invite all parents to participate in a group conference for the purpose of discussing plans, goals, policies, and philosophy which affect the group of children as a whole. During the conference, the parents have the opportunity to ask questions concerning grouping of children, educational guidance, school policies, and teaching procedures. The teacher has the rare opportunity to learn which of the school experiences are retold the most frequently at home.¹⁶

The group conference plan should be thoroughly explained and discussed during the in-service training of teachers to make certain that the teachers are cognizant of the scope of the plan. Thorough preparation for the meeting should be made in advance. Qualified persons should be selected to conduct the meetings. It is from a good group conference that good individual conferences will result.

¹⁶ Inga C. Mc Daniel, "Establishing Effective Home-School Relationships," California Journal Of Elementary Education, p. 163, February, 1948.

Ralph Eckert and Faith Smitter list a few things that are important in a group meeting and need to be discussed.

Leading a discussion of parents is not too difficult for the average teacher if she will follow a few simple rules set forth:

1. Purpose of the meeting: The teacher should be sure there is a purpose for the meeting. The administration may call the meeting in order to gain the parents' co-operation and ideas or the parents themselves may initiate group meetings. During individual conferences with the parents, a teacher might inquire as to whether the parent would like to meet with other interested parents to discuss common problems. Four or five of those who show the greatest interest might then be asked to form a steering committee to meet with the teacher to talk over the problems they would like to have discussed and develop a questionnaire to be sent to all parents suggesting a number of topics and possible times for meetings. The committee might then proceed to organize such a series of meetings weekly for four, five or six weeks or perhaps a monthly meeting throughout the year.¹⁷

2. Preparation for the meeting: The planning committee should prepare for the meeting. One of the parents or an experienced group leader might lead the first discussion or series, with a teacher acting as consultant. It would seem desirable, however, for the teacher, as soon as possible, to develop into a competent leader.

3. Collection of pertinent reading material: The teacher might collect reading material pertaining to the subject under discussion with the help of the steering committee. The meeting might begin by having brief reports on magazine articles, book, or chapters in books relating to the subject under discussion. It should be remembered that the more persons are involved in the program, the greater the interest and participation. Some parents will have more time for reading and the development of lists of helpful books than the teacher has.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ralph G. Eckert, Faith W. Smitter, "Home and School Work Together for Young Children," Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, pp. 16-18, March, 1949.

4. Guidance of meeting by leader: A teacher with insight into the problems of development can become a successful leader of group discussion. The best discussion leader, like the best counselor, is one who asks the best questions and suggests the best alternatives. A point which the skillful leader draws from the group is their idea. As a consequence they remember it. If she tells them it is her idea and it may or may not become theirs. The goal of group discussion, as of successful counseling, is to help the individuals grow in insight, self-confidence, and self-direction.

5. Avoidance of arguments: Controversial points are best dealt with not by allowing the group to argue a controversial statement, but by asking the group what other positions are held by authorities. If these are well presented, an argument avoided and the participants have several new ideas which they must think about in developing their conclusions.

6. Methods of keeping discussion going: The leader should avoid asking the kind of questions which can be answered by "yes" or "no".

7. Consultants at meeting: Asking the parents to write questions in advance or giving them a check sheet listing more items than can possibly be covered enables the consultant to know what the parents are eager to learn.

8. Time limit for discussion: A discussion should be kept within a time limit and stopped while interest is still strong. This tends to stimulate interest in the next session and people are more likely to come if they know the meetings have a definite stopping time.

It can't be emphasized too strongly the importance of a group conference to pave the way for the individual conference to follow. In the group conference, many of the fears that parents and teachers seem to feel towards each other can be eliminated. In such meetings rapport can be set up between parents and teachers and the individual conference will be a greater success.

OPERATION OF A LIBRARY FOR PARENTS

It is a good idea to have a collection of books and other reading materials available for the parents at the close of the discussion period. Many questions that parents have, may not be covered in the discussion, and if a pamphlet is handy for the parents to take home and read it may answer a number of their questions. The teacher should be familiar with the material available, and if a particular question arises she can quickly locate the particular pamphlet and let the interested parent read it.

Eckert and Smither discuss the importance of a teacher having an interesting and varied library on subjects pertaining to the children and schools.

More and more books for parents are constantly being published. While most of these books are good, the parent with limited reading time or interest is overwhelmed by their great number, and wants and needs aid in selecting the most helpful material.

Knowing the books and knowing the child, the teacher can help the mother select the book that will be most helpful. If the book is helpful to her in understanding her child, she will find it interesting and want to read more. If it is not helpful, she will find it uninteresting and her appetite for reading will be dulled rather than stimulated.¹⁸

If the teacher does not have material of her own, she could obtain much of the needed information from any library.

¹⁸ Ralph G. Eckert, Faith W. Smither, "Home and School Work Together For Young Children," Bulletin of The California State Department of Education, p. 18, March, 1949.

There are extensive bibliographies on human growth and child development in most school and city libraries. (Note appendix number I, page 50)

Another good aid in helping parents is to have on hand a list of educational movies that can be shown in the school audio-visual room if the parent is interested in any phase of the development of his child. The list may be obtained from any of the state colleges and also from private concerns.

PREPARING FOR THE INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE

Before letters are sent to parents, inviting them to the individual conference, it is necessary to ascertain the following items. What makes a good interview? What do parents really want to know about their children? What are the assumptions of an interview? These and many more questions must be answered before the parent and teacher confer.

All the conferences will be different just as all people are different. Raymond N. Hatch lists nine things that most parents would like to know about their child.

They are:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of our child?
2. What special aptitudes does he have?
3. What is his learning potentiality?
4. What are his interests and plans?
5. What special problems does he face?
6. How does his achievement compare with his ability?
7. What can be done for him at home?
8. How may certain home problems be solved?
9. Something good about the child.¹⁹

¹⁹ Raymond N. Hatch, "The Counseling Service," Guidance Services In The Elementary School, p. 101, 1951.

When an interview is anticipated with a parent, certain things are assumed. The assumptions must be clear in the minds of interviewers. Raymond Hatch list ten assumptions that he feels are the most important. These are:

1. That an individual may or may not have the ability to analyze his problem or make realistic plans.
2. That an interview implies a mutual responsibility for diagnosis and planning.
3. That both participants have a responsibility for the outcomes.
4. That the results of the counseling process will be directly related to the relationship established between the two participants.
5. That the active participation of two individuals makes for a more complete analysis and more valid plans.
6. That the counselee must be an active participant in order to accept the product of the process.
7. That no two interviews or interviewees are alike, thus making it necessary to alter the interview emphasis for maximum results.
8. That the counselor assumes the responsibility for providing an opportunity to bring all of the facts to light for careful analysis.
9. That the counselee's problems are the purpose for the interview and that every interview closes with some plan.
10. That both participants recognize and accept the responsibility of the counselee to make the final decision from the alternatives established by analysis.²⁰

²⁰ Raymond N. Hatch, "The Counseling Service," Guidance Services In The Elementary School, p. 87, 1951.

GENERAL GUIDES FOR CONFERENCES

Another very important aspect of the individual parent-teachers conferences is the method of conducting the conference. This is very important because the way the teacher handles herself means success or failure in a good many cases.

Celia Burns Stendler, assistant professor of education, University of Illinois, lists a few points that the role of the teacher plays in such a conference. Her four points are:

1. The role the teacher plays in the conference bears a direct relationship to the personality pattern of the teacher. A dominant personality may overpower the parent with suggestions and advice to the point where the parent may temporarily acquiesce. An aggressive personality may be openly critical and attack the parent for her methods of child rearing.

2. The role the teacher adopts helps determine the response of the parent.

3. Attempting to shift roles in the course of the conference may be difficult to do. If the teacher starts out as the omniscient one, telling the parent the answers, she may establish such a relationship that when she later tries to establish an attitude of working together to solve a problem she will be unsuccessful.

4. Teachers need to know more about child behavior and development before they can counsel effectively.²¹

Just as every person interviewed is different, so every interviewee is different. Some authors write that

²¹ Celia Burns Stendler, "Let's Look At Parent-Teacher Conferences," Educational Leadership, February, 1949

notes should be taken during the conference; other authors state that there should be no note taking until after the individual parent-teacher conference is over. The general feeling among the authors is that there should not be any note taking during the conference because it might put the interview on a less friendly basis. The major objective behind the individual parent-teacher conference is to obtain information from the parent that otherwise could not be obtained from any other source. This information is then recorded on the child's permanent record for further use.

It is very important that the individual conference start as early in the child's training as possible. The information that is gathered on the kindergarten level will be helpful to teachers as the child progresses in school.

From the point of view of two writer, L. V. Burge and B. L. Stinson, professors at the Western Michigan College of Education, Kalamazoo, Michigan, the following positive values to be derived from the parent-teacher conference at kindergarten level are:

1. The obtaining and evaluating of the information gained from the conferences give impetus to further study of the professional literature in the area of child growth and development, and a desire to study more intensively a greater number of children.

2. The data obtained present a challenge for continuous curriculum revision at the kindergarten level.

3. The experiences in the conferences and a study of the data on individual children should be of value to student teachers in shaping their philosophy relative to the individual child and his needs.

4. The information obtained about the early years of the child provides basis data for cumulative records which may be of value to eachers in other grades.

5. The conferences provide an opportunity for the teachers to interpret the school and the basic purposes of education to the parent.²²

Many authors have listed their views of a good interview and how a teacher should handle herself when giving the interview. Burge and Stinson indicate that throughout the conference the supervisor notes information relative to the following points:

- (a) Family background
- (b) Physical development and health of child
- (c) The child's relationship with other people
- (d) The child's interest in and knowledge of his environment
- (e) The personality of the child
- (f) What the parent feels the school should do for the child
- (g) Any other items which appear significant in interpreting causes of behavior. The supervisor develops and records these notes immediately after the conference. This data forms the basis for the cumulative record which is used throughout the kindergarten year, and which may be of value throughout the child's school year.²³

Probably the greatest authority in the field of parent-teacher conferences is D'Evelyn. A good many authors have listed points on what to do at a conference and what

²² L. V. Burge, B. L. Stinson, "Techniques and Values Of Parent Conferences," Peabody Journal of Education, p. 342, May, 1947

²³ Ibid., p. 338.

constitutes a good conference, D'Evelyn summarizes them by saying:

Not forgetting that each parent is unique in his personality and his problems, it may be helpful to list a few guides to conferences in general.

1. Responsibility for the success or failure of a conference rests primarily with the teacher. It is well to remember that success is relative, and each conference must be judged according to its own circumstances and results.

2. It is well to arrange for no interruptions during a conference. Nothing is more disturbing to the serious efforts of trying to think through a problem than to be interrupted at a crucial moment.

3. It is easier to build a cooperative relationship if the teacher is not seated behind a desk. Behind a desk is in the place of authority, not partnership.

4. The teacher's greeting should be friendly and relaxed. If he is hurried or tense, the parent will know it. It is difficult to discuss a problem with someone who looks as if he wished you were not there, or would leave soon.

5. Listen, and then listen some more. The teacher did not invite the parent in to deliver a lecture to him, but to get, as well as to give, help. Encourage the parent to talk, and then listen to what he has to say.

6. Find out how the parent is thinking and feeling about his child. This is important, because the teacher cannot understand the child's behavior until he knows the parent's attitude.

7. If a parent says he is worried about his child's behavior, follow through. Find out why he is worried. The teacher should not assume that he knows why. He and the parent may not feel the same way about the child.

8. If a parent gives what he thinks is the reason for a child's behavior, accept it, and lead the discussion on to the consideration of other possible causes. Behavior is the result of many causative factors, not of one.

9. If a parent suggests a plan of action, accept it if at all possible to do so. It is better for the parent to try it than for the teacher to force one of his own. One of the goals in parent counseling is to try to get the parent to take the initiative. If the parent's plan fails, it is always possible to suggest others that may strike nearer to the root of the difficulty.

10. If the parent cannot suggest reasons for a child's behavior, or plans of action to deal with it, the teacher might suggest alternatives for joint consideration. "This might be a possibility. What do you think? You know all the facts of the situation better than I do." Or, "We might try this and see what happens. It may take us awhile to find the source of the difficulty." Such an approach makes the parent a participator in the final decision for tentative plans, and leads to discussion that helps him to accept the plan as his own.

11. It does not help to argue with a parent. Arguing will arouse resentment and resistance.

12. It is better not to assume that a parent wants help or advice. Such assumption usually brings resistance, because it implies a form of criticism.

13. Most parents cannot be objective about their own children. Therefore, do not criticize, either directly or indirectly. Criticism is fatal to the building of a cooperative relationship.

14. Avoid giving direct advice when the parent gives a statement of his problem and then leans back, saying, "Tell me what to do." Let any advice or suggestions grow out of mutual discussion and a growing insight on the part of the parent into the reasons for the behavior.

15. Do not get ahead of the parent in his thinking. In other words, the teacher should not try to push his thinking onto a parent before the parent is ready to see it through a process of discussion and mutual thinking.

16. Try to be aware of sensitive spots, and avoid embarrassing the parent by noting facial expressions, gestures, and voice. These all give a clue to the parent's thinking.

17. Be accepting. That is, accept anything the parent tells you without showing surprise or disapproval. If the teacher cannot do this, he will not get an honest picture of the parent's attitudes and feelings.

18. The teacher should be ready to recognize problems that are so difficult as to prevent him from giving sufficient help to the parent. Parents with complex emotional problems should be referred to the consulting psychologist or guidance specialist on the staff, who in turn will refer the individual to a psychiatrist if there is such need. If there is no one on the school staff to whom the teacher can refer, he should try to have available the names of specialists in the community. In referring, it is easy to say, "I wish I could help you, but I feel you need more help than I can give you. I have the names of two or three consultants if you wish them, or you may know someone yourself."

If the teacher is in a community where there is no one to whom he can refer the parent, he can do his best in easing the troublesome behavior symptoms in the child, but he should not let the parent become involved in pouring out his emotions repeatedly. It will not help the parent beyond giving the temporary relief of tension that comes from telling your troubles to any good listener. This relief is necessary, but unless the teacher can help the parent go on to constructive planning, he is not giving real help.

19. It is helpful to try to close the conference on a constructive, a pleasant, or a forward-going note, such a plan for further consultation, a definite date for the next conference, a statement of encouragement or reassurance, a statement of a plan for cooperative action.²⁴

²⁴ Katherine Edith D'Evelyn, Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences, Teachers College, Columbia University, pp. 95-7, 1945

LETTERS TO PARENTS

Informing the parents by letters of the coming events in the schedule is very important if a successful individual parent-teacher conference is to be held. It is much better for the parents and the teachers to have the information in writing so that the facts will not be forgotten or the message will not be confused as might be the case if the information were given over the telephone.

Even in writing the letter to the parent the teacher must be careful to follow certain rules. The proper letter to the parent could very easily mean the difference between a successful conference, an unsuccessful conference, or possibly no conference with the parent at all.

The teacher should write a friendly note inviting the parent to come to school for a visit and a conference. The note should be written so the parent will be ready and willing to come to school for the interview.

Phyllis Shane, Child Welfare Counselor, Long Beach Public Schools, Long Beach, California says that in writing a letter to the parents the teacher should keep certain things in mind.

1. Try not to put the parent on the defensive before she visits the school.

2. Send only notes to the home that give positive conotation. If negative conditions are present to an extreme, perhaps it would be better for the teacher to make a personal home visitation.

3. It might be advisable for the teacher to discuss with the principal the action she is taking and a future guidance program for the child.²⁵

Examples of letters will be discussed and shown in Chapter IV. There are many forms of letters to be followed if one chooses to do so. J. E. Grinnell wrote an article for the American School Board Journal in which he has many forms showing the how, when, why and what to write in letters to parents to keep them informed in the aspects of educational advancement.²⁶

TIME FOR THE CONFERENCES

The time at which the conference is to be held must be carefully considered. The appointment hour must be convenient for both the parent and the teacher. If the father is to be included, as is often desirable, then the conference must coincide with his work free hours.

Teachers find it convenient to hold conferences during school hours. However, problems are posed by such an arrangement. A few of these problems involved are: making arrangements for a substitute teacher, or dismissing school at a specified time to allow regular time for conferences. The individual school would need to solve

²⁵ Phyllis J. Shane, "Parent-Teacher Relationships," American Childhood, p. 11, September, 1949.

²⁶ J. E. Grinnell, "Keep In Touch With The Parents," American School Board Journal, September, 1947.

these problems.

D'Evelyn stresses the time element in her writings by saying:

There are three main difficulties in the way of successful individual parent-teacher conferences in many schools today. One is lack of training for this work on the part of the teachers; another is lack of understanding of the meaning of parent conferences on the part of administrators; and a third is lack of time and energy on the part of teachers because of heavy loads and inadequate provision for such conferences in the regular school program. Teachers can gain the necessary background and training for conferences, but this is not enough. They must have the support and understanding of the administrators, for it is through them that class loads will be lightened and the school program reorganized to include the conferences as an integral part of the educational program.²⁷

Walter Sites also mentions the fact that the administrative program should include the parent-teacher conference and that this should be considered as a part of the day of the teacher.

Teachers would welcome an organized parent-teacher conference program, providing the administrator would consider it an integral part of their job, and make administrative provisions for it during their working day.²⁸

²⁷ Katherine Edith D'Evelyn, Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences, Teacher College, Columbia University, pp. 93-94, 1945.

²⁸ Walter G. Sites, "Shall We Grade Them Or Guide Them," School Executive, p. 36, August, 1951.

It must be taken into consideration that it would almost be impossible for a teacher to meet all the parents during the school hours devoted to conference time, but if at all possible, the trend is to try and work out the conference during school time.

Inga Mc Daniel also takes the stand of holding the conferences during the regular schedule when she writes:

Parent-teacher conferences, vital as they are, should not be relegated to after school hours, when teachers are weary at the end of a day and when mothers are concerned about dinner preparations and the responsibilities of after-school child care. Time for these conferences should be set aside in the regular schedule.²⁹

REPORTING THE CONFERENCE

The value of the conference with the parent is to establish facts about the child that will help the teacher do a better job of teaching that particular child. The information gathered on a child one year will help in teaching the child in years to come.

The information gathered should be put in a permanent file of the child along with any other statistical information that can be gathered.

All records, or reported material, should be treated by teachers in a professional manner, just as a physician

²⁹ Inga C. Mc Daniel, "Establishing Effective Home-School Relationships," California Journal of Elementary Education, p. 166, February, 1948.

treats his records of his patients. This information should be seen only by the teacher or teachers working with the child or parent. The records should be kept in strict confidence, and they should be filed in a locked cabinet conveniently accessible to the teacher who has need for them.

D'Evelyn sums up the reporting of the conferences in this manner:

Conference reports should be ethical; they should not contain any of the more personal or confidential information given by a parent who has established a close working relationship with a teacher. This information is not necessary to the writing of a clean, helpful report, nor is it wise to include it. The report goes on with the child throughout his school life. This means that many teachers will be having access to it, not just one teacher or the guidance counselor. Extremely personal conferences should not be a part of a record that will be on permanent file throughout a child's school life.

With these criteria in mind, it is possible to write conference reports that give enough of dynamics of the situation to permit the succeeding teacher to go forward with cooperative planning with the parent.³⁰

The actual conference takes much preparation. The teachers must be trained carefully in order that they conduct the interviews in a professional manner.

A library of reading material for the parent would help to follow through on the conference's purpose.

Preparation for the conference includes arousing

³⁰ Katherine Edith D'Evelyn, "Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences," Teachers College, Columbia University, p. 87, 1945.

interest in the parent and then arranging the time for group and individual conferences.

A tactful, thorough report should be made by the teacher for the child's permanent record file. All information so gathered should be kept in the strictest confidence.

CHAPTER IV

LETTERS AND FORMS THAT COULD BE USED

It has been determined that letters to parents are very important in organizing an effective parent-teacher conference.

Most of the letters and forms in this chapter are from the Everett School System, Everett, Washington. The letters and forms are included to give the reader an example of what one school system has done in organizing the conference.

It should also be understood that some of these forms are no longer used in the Everett system, but more complete forms have taken their place.

The forms and letters in Chapter IV were given to the writer upon request from Mr. T. Muncaster, Assistant Superintendent of the Everett Schools.

Before the teacher interviews the parent in the individual conference, she should study all the information available on the child. The permanent file should contain some vital information on the child.

On the next page is a form that will give some of the information that the teacher would like to have about every child. This sheet should be sent home and the parents should fill it out as completely as possible.

FORM I. FAMILY DATA ON CHILD

EVERETT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Information Requested of Parents
of
Children New To Everett Schools

School _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Child's Full Name _____ Sex _____ Phone _____

Address and Directions _____

	: Name:	: Living:	: Address:	: Occupation:	: Place of Birth:	: Re-Married:	: Bus. Phone:
Mother:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Father:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

Language Spoken In Home _____ Church Preference _____

With Whom Does Child Reside If Not With The Parents? _____

Address _____

Is There Anyone Living In The Home Besides The Regular Family:
 I. E., Father, Mother, Sister, or Brothers? Who? _____

<u>Brothers</u>	<u>Year of Birth</u>	<u>Sisters</u>	<u>Year of Birth</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Family Physician _____ Address _____ Phone _____

Is There Any Problem To Which You Would Like To Call Special Attention? _____

Speech Difficulties _____ Nervous Habits and Fears _____

Other Problems _____

Special Interests Of Child _____

How May You Be Reached In Case Of An Emergency Or Illness Of
Your Child? _____

Person To Be Contacted In Case You Cannot Be Reached _____

Address _____ Phone _____

If The Above Designated Persons Cannot Be Reached Shall The
Physician Named Above Be Called? Yes _____ No _____

Signature of Parent

It is conceivable that at some time in an interview with the parent, some of the vital information might be forgotten if the interviewer waits until after the conference to write his report. If he has a form to follow, the information that he gathers could be jotted down while the conference is in progress. However, it should be remembered that note taking tends to make the interview more formal and may make the one being interviewed nervous and restrained. Therefore, any notations made should be done as inconspicuously as possible.

Such an interview sheet is found on the next three pages.

FORM II. INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH PARENT

Name of Child _____ Sex _____

Birth Date _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Previous Schooling _____ Where _____ How Long _____

Teacher _____

Parent's Name _____ Address _____

Business Address _____ Phone _____

Father living? _____ Occupation _____ Health _____ Education _____

Mother living? _____ Occupation _____ Health _____ Education _____

Whom to contact in case of emergency _____ Doctor _____

Home conditions or situations which might effect child such as broken home, family deaths, illnesses, frequent moving, etc.

Note major illnesses, operations or injuries your child has had.

Illnesses	Age	Operations or injuries	Age
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Immunizations	Yes	No	Yes	No
Diphtheria	_____	_____	Typhoid	_____
Scarlet Fever	_____	_____	Whooping Cough	_____
Small Pox	_____	_____	T. B. Test	_____

Special conditions to be watched at school. Please check.

Elimination _____ Allergies _____ Hay Fever _____

Asthma _____ Sinus _____ Colds _____

Others (Specify) _____

Sleep and rest habits

a. Usual bedtime_____

b. Does he go to sleep promptly_____

c. Arising time_____

Height and Weight September_____

Height and Weight January _____

Defects or handicaps:

Auditory _____ Visual _____ Other _____

Special interests _____

Play activities:

Usual playmates: Older _____ Younger _____ Same Age _____

Same Sex _____ Opposite sex _____ Plays happily with others _____

Plays happily alone _____ Does he listen to radio _____

What programs _____

Is radio a problem _____

How often does he attend movies _____

What type _____

Does he attend Sunday School _____

Does child present any special problems at home _____

Obedience _____ Sulking _____

Sleeping habits _____ Eating _____

Jealousy _____ Speech difficulties _____

Thumb sucking _____ Nail biting _____

Nose picking _____ Other habits (Specify) _____

Does he have home responsibilities _____

Attitude:

1. Toward his family _____

2. Family toward him _____

3. Toward entering school _____

The first letter to the parents should include all the information about the conference that the parent may wish to know. This letter should be friendly, to the point, and concise.

The letter should inform the parents the objectives of the school. In the letter on the next page it should be observed that the school has aroused the interest of the parent, explained the reason for the parent-teacher conferences, and told when the conferences will take place.

Also it should be noticed that at the end of the letter there is a form to be torn out by the parents, sent back to the school to indicate that the parent will attend the meeting. This form also aids in the planning of the final letter to be sent to the parents.

FORM III. FIRST LETTER TO PARENTS

MADISON SCHOOL

October 19, 1950

Dear Parent:

How good is your school? What do you expect the school to do for your child? Do you know the goals and skills that teachers are working for in the classrooms? You know how your child acts and makes adjustments at home, but do you know how he reacts in school situations? Is he a leader? Does he express himself clearly before the class?

I know you would like to have these questions answered and many others. You have the answers to many questions that we would like to know about your child. We need your help to do the total job of educating your child. This total job can't be accomplished by reporting to you periodically by means of the traditional report card and letter grades.

Individual parent teacher conferences have proved very helpful in the exchange of information. Parents who are familiar with this method of reporting pupil progress will verify its success. This year marks our fourth year for conferences in the kindergarten and second year in the first grade.

With your help, we would like to include all grades for parent-teacher conferences. For those of you who are not familiar with the procedure, I will explain briefly. There will be no report card: instead every parent will receive a personal invitation stating a given day and hour to meet with the teacher. At that time the parent and the teacher will discuss their common interest, the welfare of the child. A minimum of two conferences a year will be scheduled with each parent. We will schedule the first one beginning in the month of November, the second will begin in April.

Conferences in general will be held on Monday. School will dismiss one hour earlier on conference days to assure ample time for the numerous conferences to be held. We can make special arrangements for parents who are unable to keep appointments as scheduled, but we would appreciate your every effort to keep appointments as scheduled. When it is impossible

for you to be here at the appointed time, will you inform the teacher so that she can contact another parent to take your appointed time. You will be notified later as we begin conferences.

Sincerely,

Principal

To assure us that this letter has reached you, will you tear this part off, sign and return it to the school?

*(will)
I *(will not) be available for parent-teacher conferences.

Signed

* Cross out one

When the slips have all been returned from the first letter, and the proper arrangements have been made in the school to handle the conference, then the second letter should be sent to the parents.

This letter includes the time the conferences will start, and also getting the final tabulation on the number of parents that may be expected for the conference.

It is very important that the school give the parents ample time to make arrangements to attend the conference.

FORM IV. GENERAL CONFERENCE NOTICE

MADISON SCHOOL

November 2, 1950

Dear Parent:

Beginning on Monday, November 13 and every Monday through December 18, school will be dismissed at 2:00 o'clock. The purpose of these early dismissals is to free the teachers for scheduled individual conferences with parents.

If you have indicated that you are available for a conference, you will receive a notice a week in advance, stating the date and time for your conference. If for any reason you cannot keep the appointment assigned to you, will you notify the teacher so that a more convenient time can be arranged? You may be assigned to a conference date other than Monday as it will be impossible to complete all conferences using Mondays only. All conferences that are not scheduled on Monday will be held after 3:15.

If you indicated on the previous notice that you would not be available for conferences, and have since found a solution to your problem, will you inform the teacher of the change?

Sincerely,

Principal

After all the arrangements are made and the school is organized on the time of the conference, what to do with the children during the conference, the reception of the parents, etc., then the final letter will be sent home to the parents. This, of course, sets the actual time for the parents to come to school. If the parent can't keep the appointed meeting, then she would call the teacher and another time would be arranged.

FORM V. INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE APPOINTMENT

MADISON SCHOOL

Dear _____

Will you accept this invitation to come to the school on
_____ at _____ O'clock to get acquainted
and exchange information regarding the progress of _____

Sincerely,

Tear off and return

I will keep the appointment as scheduled.

Parent's Signature _____

In nearly every conference there will be parents that will not come to the school. Then the question arises, "What do you do about their children as far as reporting is concerned?" If the parent of the child does not make an appointment for a conference, and there is little chance that the parent will come to school, then a special report is sent home to the parent for their benefit. On the next page is a report to parents on pupil progress.

It should be noted that the school still encourages these parents to plan to have a conference in the near future.

FORM VI. A REPORT TO PARENTS ON PUPIL PROGRESS

MADISON SCHOOL

TO THE PARENTS:

We have just completed our first group of conferences with parents. Over 90 per cent of the parents were able to meet with their child's teacher. We feel that we have gained immeasurably from those contacts and can thus do a better job.

Judging from the enthusiastic response of both teachers and parents, conferences as a method of reporting to parents, will be continued.

Since you are one of the parents who was not able to be present for a conference, we are taking this means of informing you briefly of your child's progress. We hope that before another conference period is planned that we can include you on our schedule.

Principal

Name of Pupil _____ Date _____

Days present to December 21, 1950 _____

Days Absent _____

Times Tardy _____

Remarks: _____

Teacher _____

It is important that the school evaluate and record the conference results for future reference. Included are sample reports which the teacher would fill in for the administration. It should be noticed that there is space provided on the report sheet for the teacher's opinion.

FORM VII. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

MADISON SCHOOL

December, 1950

1. How many families were represented in your room at the time of conferences? _____
2. How many families were you able to contact for conferences

3. How many mothers came alone? _____
4. How many fathers came alone? _____
5. How many fathers and mothers came together? _____
6. Did you conference any person other than father or mother except in cases where the child was not living with his parents? _____
7. If your answer on 6 was "yes", explain briefly why. _____

8. What would you estimate the average length of your conferences? _____
9. State briefly your personal reaction to the conference type of report to parents.

Teacher _____ Grade _____

Our Primer For Parents

After the first individual conference, it would be worthwhile to have some literature on questions pertaining to the child available for the parents. A library of selected readings would prove valuable.

In the appendix of this paper is a pamphlet which originated in the Everett schools and was printed in quantity and given to the parents at the end of the conference period.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Chester A. Taft gives a brief summary of the conference method as a means of reporting to the parents.

Reporting to parents by the conference method is available because it is a cooperative process, an integral part of teaching. It includes planning, recording, and evaluation of the "whole" child. It helps parents and teachers to understand the child, and builds better rapport. It explains what written words never could. It helps the child plan, develop, and evaluates his sense of responsibility and, in many cases, brings both parents into the working relationship with the schools.³¹

To introduce the subject of parent-teacher conferences this paper began with quotations from authorities on the subject. These authorities either emphasize the need for the conference as a means of helping the school help the child, or they tell how successful the conference method has been in schools where it has been used.

The paper next developed the idea of parent-teacher conferences by telling some of the difficulties which must be surmounted. These obstacles are poor parent-teacher relationships and lack of public support of the idea, both of which hinder the development of the conference plan, but both may be overcome by better understanding between the school and the public.

³¹ Chester A. Taft, "Fostering Home-School Relations," Educational Leadership, p. 317, February, 1950.

The main body of the paper told of the actual preparation for, the conducting of, and the evaluating of the conference.

The conferences are of two kinds usually--the group conference and the individual conference. The group conference precedes the individual conference. The individual conference is the meeting between the parent and the teacher. How the teacher conducts this meeting determines the success or failure of the conference. The teacher is the one who determines whether the conference is successful or not. The teacher's ability as an interviewer is of paramount importance in promoting a good interview. The interview is followed by the teacher making a report to the administrator on the details of the conference and also an informative report of the conference will be filed in the child's permanent record folder.

Some of the forms necessary to carry out a successful parent-teacher conference are included in Chapter Four. These forms were used in one school, and other schools would probably use other forms to meet their own particular needs.

It may be concluded that the need for parent-teacher conferences is great. Some schools are doing a splendid job of conducting conferences, while others are still in the experimental stage. In the future there will be an increasing number of schools accepting the parent-teacher conference plan as a means of better pupil understanding.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Parents' Library Material

Sources from which helpful publications may be obtained.

Write for lists to:³¹

Association for Arts in Childhood
519 West 212th Street
New York, New York

Association for Childhood Education International
1200 Fifteenth Street Northwest
Washington 5, D. C.

National Association for Nursery Education
Roosevelt College
430 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago 5, Illinois

National Committee for Mental Hygiene, Inc.
1708 Broadway
New York 19, New York

National Congress of Parents and Teachers
600 South Michigan Boulevard
Chicago 5, Illinois

New York City Committee on Mental Hygiene
105 East 22nd Street
New York 10, New York

The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

The U. S. Children's Bureau
Federal Security Agency
Washington 25, D. C.

The U. S. Office of Education
Federal Security Agency
Washington 25, D. C.

³¹ Edith N. Norton, "Parent Education in the Nursery School", Bulletin of the Association for Childhood Education International, pp. 29-30, 1949.

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APPENDIX II

Our Primer For Parents



LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Friendship and understanding between the home and the school will make your child's life happier and more successful.

For the child who attended kindergarten, this is the second most important phase of his school life. Most of all we want this step in the direction of education to be a sure step, a step which will make the following ones as easy and pleasant as possible.

During this year, we will try to accomplish many things and we feel that you as a parent will be deeply interested in our aims. We all know that the early years in school lay the foundation for the child's entire life.

We must understand that all children are not ready to do the same thing at the same time. Children do not mature at the same rate. All children differ, and it is the teacher's aim and desire to help each child develop normally in his school activities. We know that you will want to help and share in these school experiences.

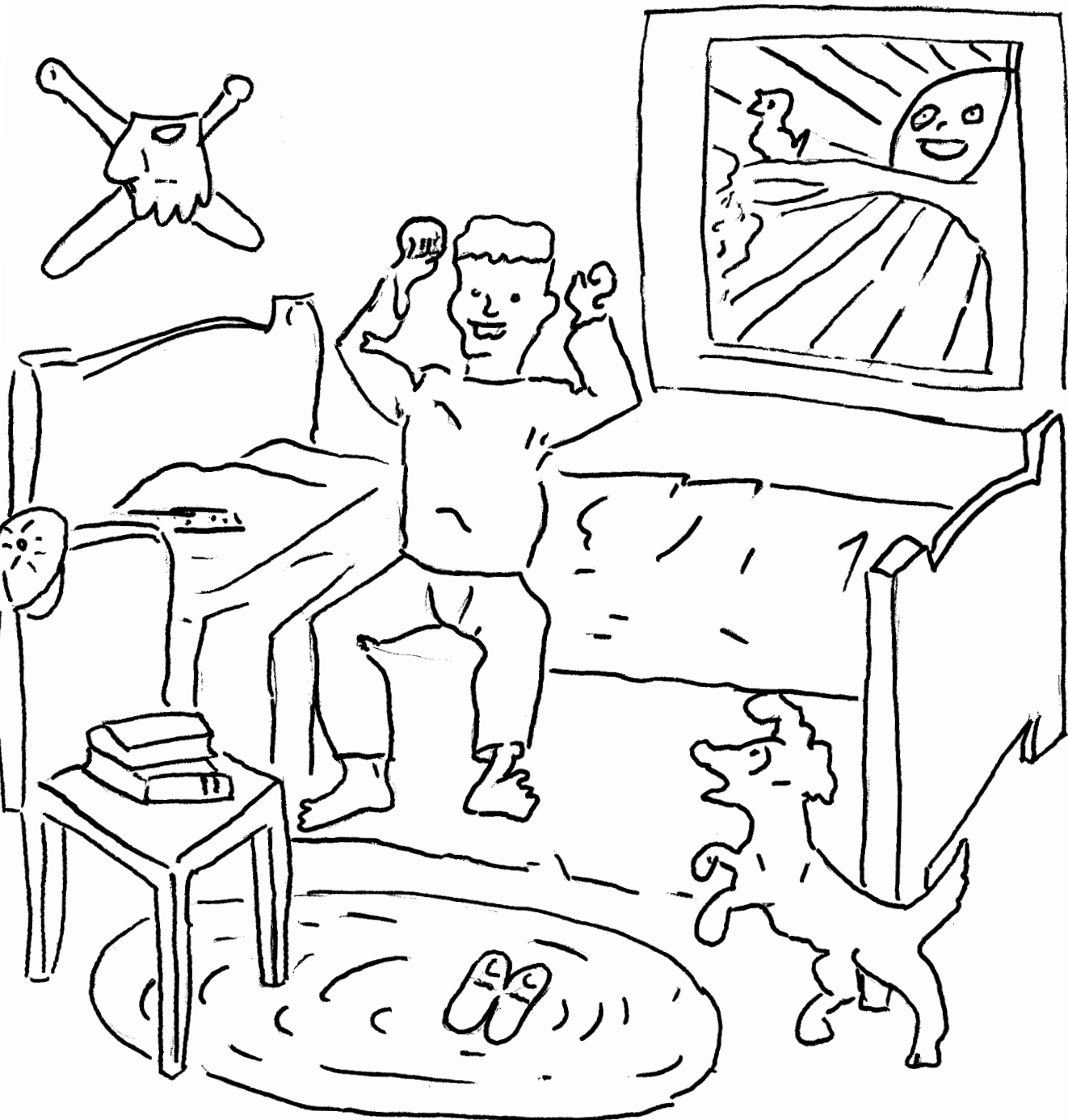
On the following pages you will find four very important factors that have a direct effect upon your child's learning, which will help determine his readiness for reading.

The home and the school will both contribute in smoothing the path at these vital points.

PHYSICAL READINESS

"A Healthy Child Is A Happy Child"

Upon health and comfort depends both the speed and the eagerness with which your child will approach his reading and school problems. It is especially important that any slight defects in vision, hearing, or speech be detected and corrected as the child enters school. Personal feelings of inferiority and insecurity are often the results of slight physical hindrances which contribute to an appearance of mental inferiority.

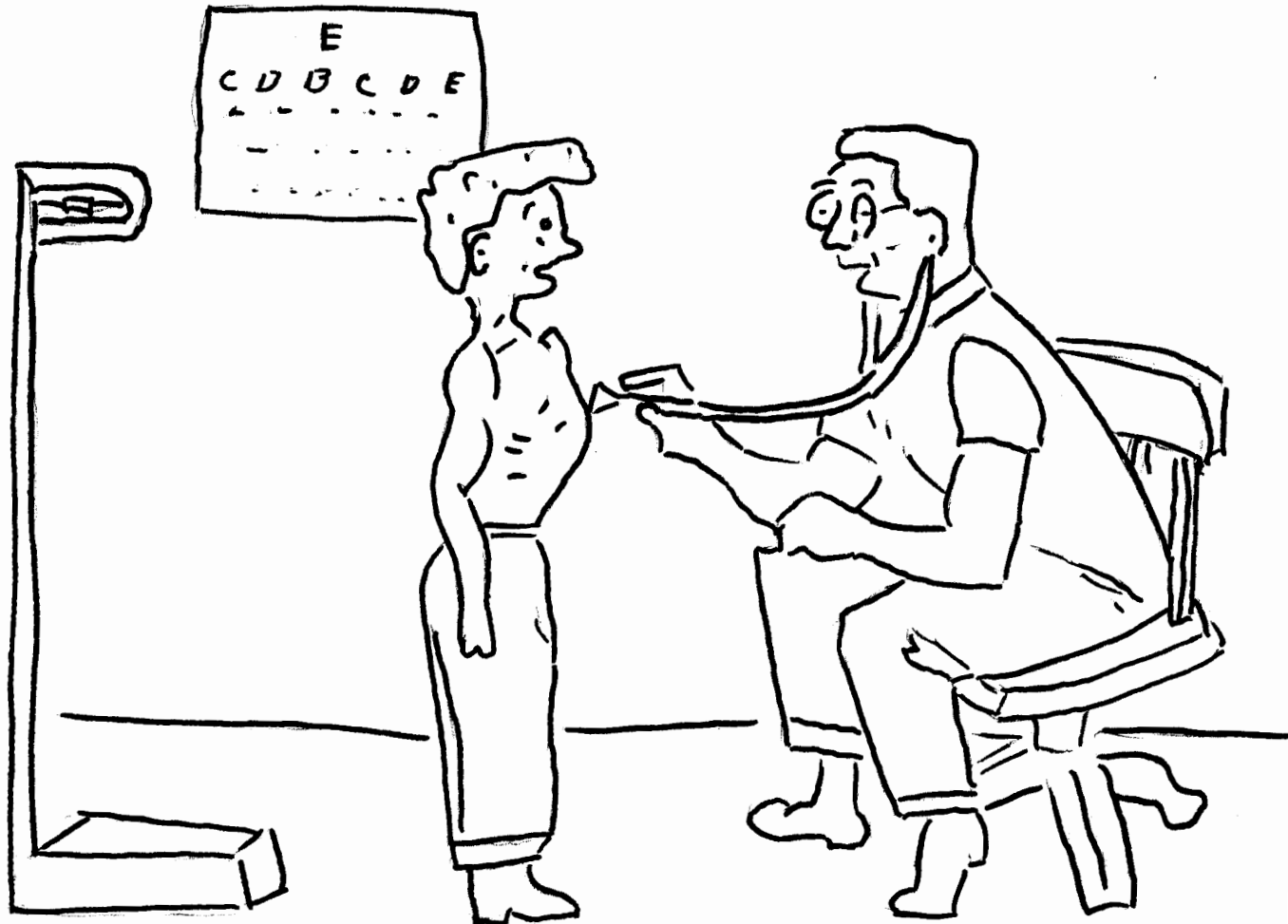


WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN DO FOR PHYSICAL READINESS

1. Maintain a school nurse for regular health examinations.
2. Plan the school day's program to include periods of exercise and relaxation.
3. Teach basic rules of hygiene to promote "health consciousness."
4. Encourage the habits of cleanliness and elimination instilled by the parents at home.

WHAT THE PARENTS CAN DO FOR PHYSICAL READINESS

1. Take the child to the family doctor for a thorough physical check up.
2. Encourage regular health habits including cleanliness in both his person and his clothes, plenty of rest, regular morning elimination, and a good balanced diet.





MENTAL MATURITY

All children do not stand
 Or even wave their hand
 All children do not talk
 Or even learn to walk
 At the same age, you know,
 And still they are not slow.
 If they do not learn to read
 At the same rate of speed
 Please go along with me
 When I group them one, two, three.

The teacher

Mental maturity depends largely upon the child's range of experience before he enters school. The home and kindergarten make an invaluable contribution to the child's readiness to read.

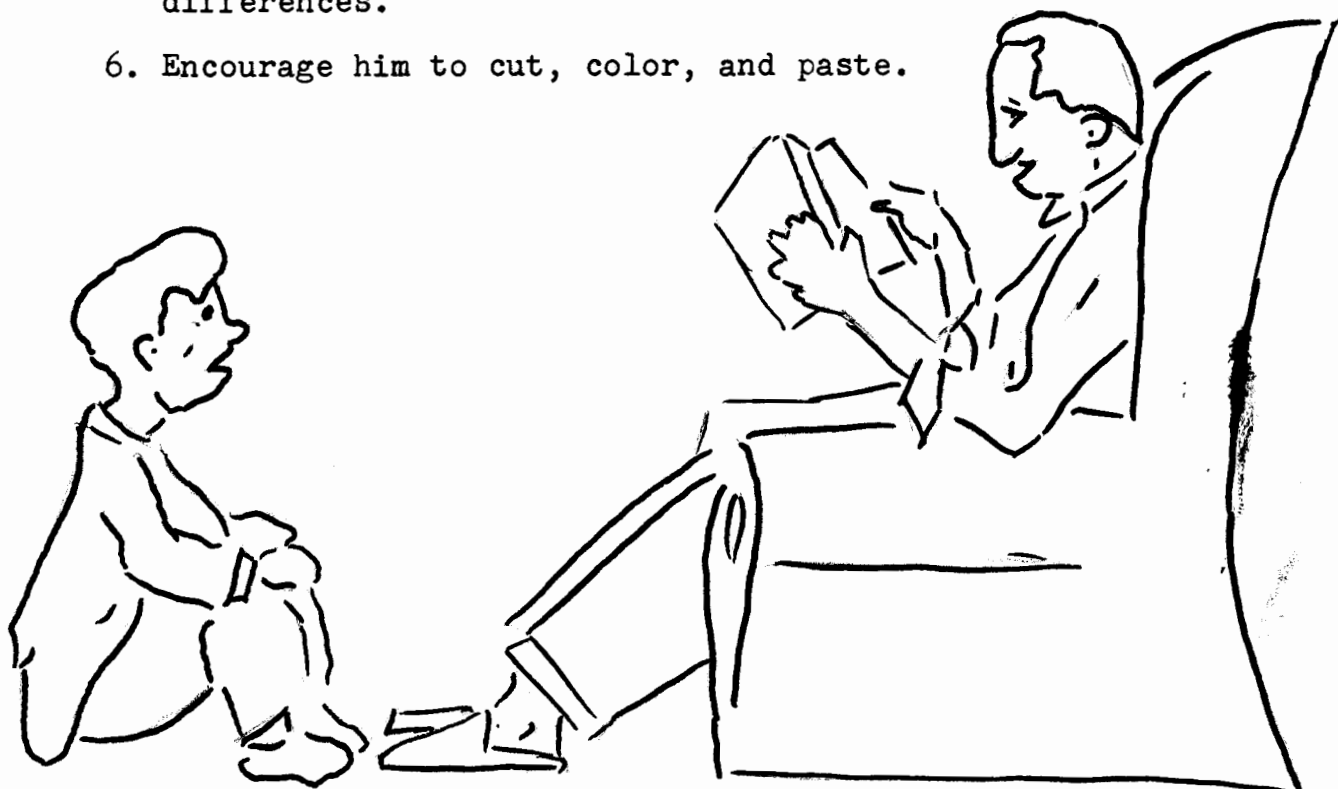
The responsibility for developing and evaluating specific abilities falls upon the first grade teacher. For this reason we spend some time finding out how ready the individual child is for the reading program. We think that readiness for reading is something that can be developed by increasing the child's mental maturity to best advantage.

WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN DO TO DEVELOP MENTAL MATURITY

1. The teacher as friend and helper will encourage spontaneous conversation about familiar experiences.
2. The child will learn to express himself through uses of new materials in addition to new words.
3. The development of the child's ability to see and interpret pictures will provide training in observation and will increase his range of experience.
4. The sharing of experiences will establish a common basis of interest that will aid him in learning to read.

WHAT THE PARENTS CAN DO TO DEVELOP MENTAL MATURITY

1. Read to the children.
2. Provide wide and various types of experiences such as visiting the zoo, a farm, the waterfront, etc.
3. Encourage your child to own and care for a pet.
4. Listen to him and answer his questions.
5. Play games with him that teach him to observe likenesses and differences.
6. Encourage him to cut, color, and paste.





SOCIAL READINESS

"You Must Share With Someone Else To Be Truly Happy Yourself."

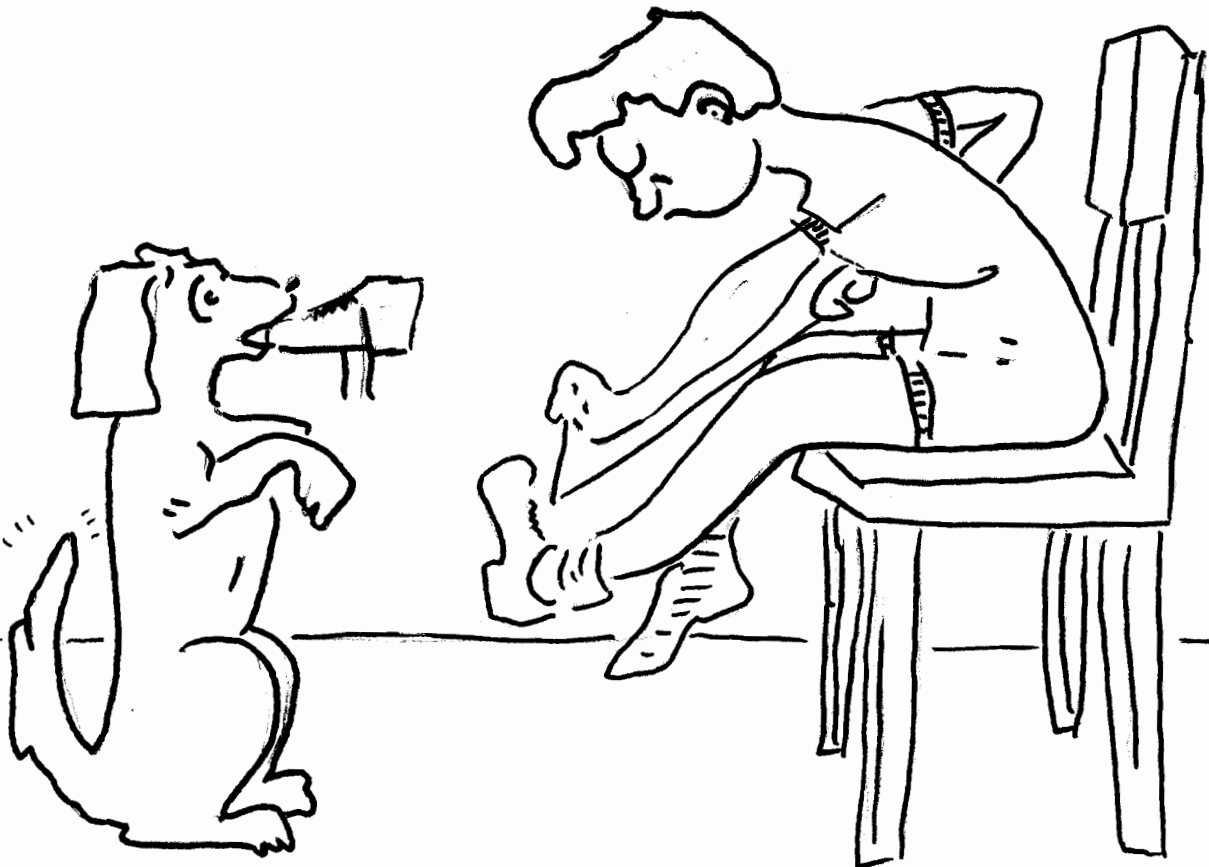
As your child begins school, he enters that social pattern which distinguishes every phase of our lives. This is the pattern of group activity, cooperation, and competition. Social readiness implies discipline, but more important it suggests a sense of responsibility toward duty and toward group welfare. Learning well, in the first grade, how to make friends and how to live happily with other children prepares the child for success not only in his twelve years of school but for the rest of his life.

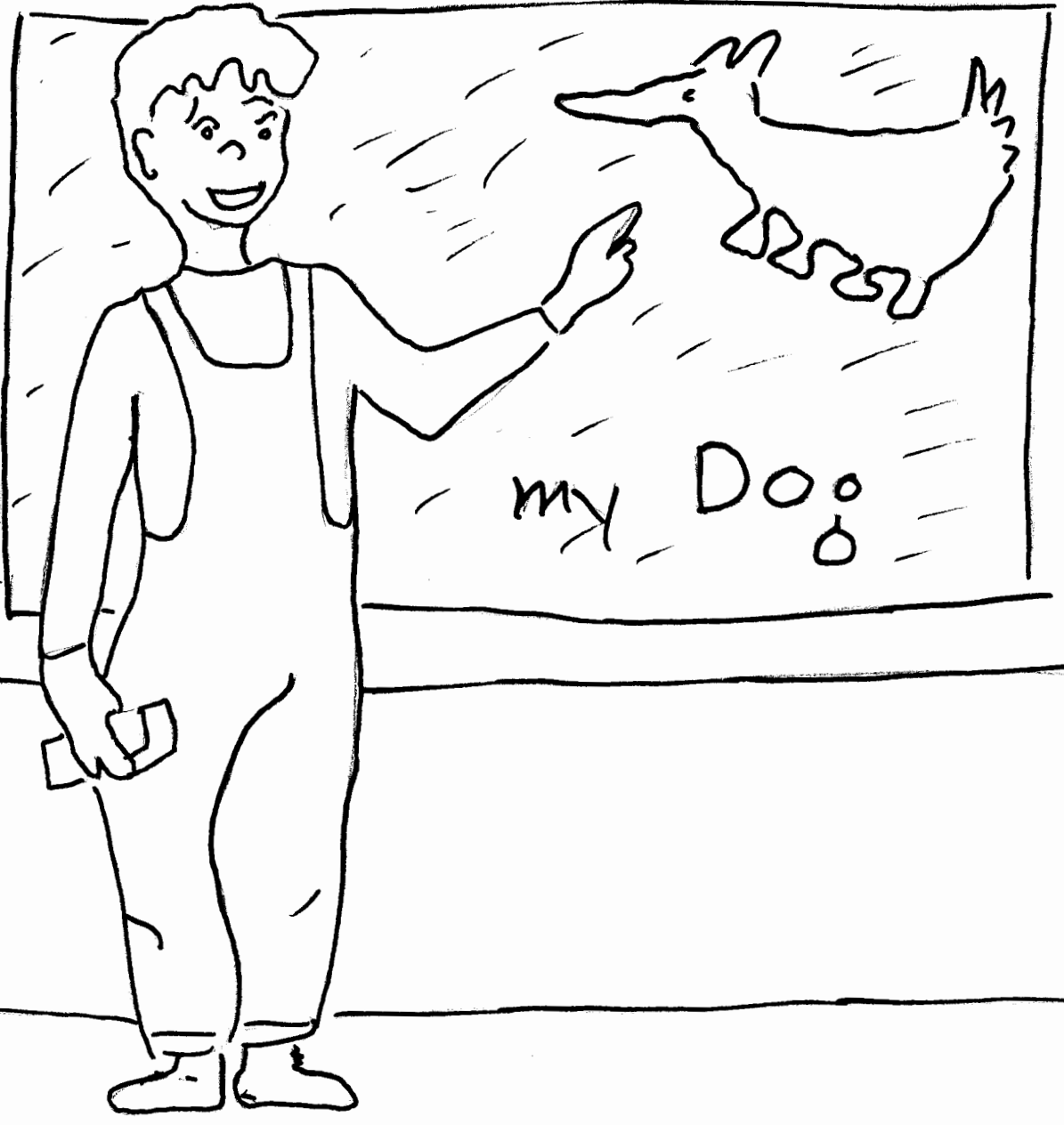
WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN DO TO DEVELOP SOCIAL READINESS

1. Early in the year we will become acquainted with one another and with the people in the building.
2. We will feel that the room is our room to make and keep an attractive place in which to work and play.
3. We will endeavor to instill in the child the pride of personal achievement as difficult tasks are attempted and carried through to completion.
4. We will help him to help himself by being a good listener, by learning to follow directions, and by working and sharing with others.

WHAT THE PARENTS CAN DO TO DEVELOP SOCIAL READINESS

1. Let him sing and sing with him.
2. Create opportunities for him to meet many other children.
3. Teach him responsibility by letting him do things for himself such as dressing, hanging up his clothes, and putting on his rubbers.





EMOTIONAL READINESS

"We Do That Best Which We Enjoy Most."

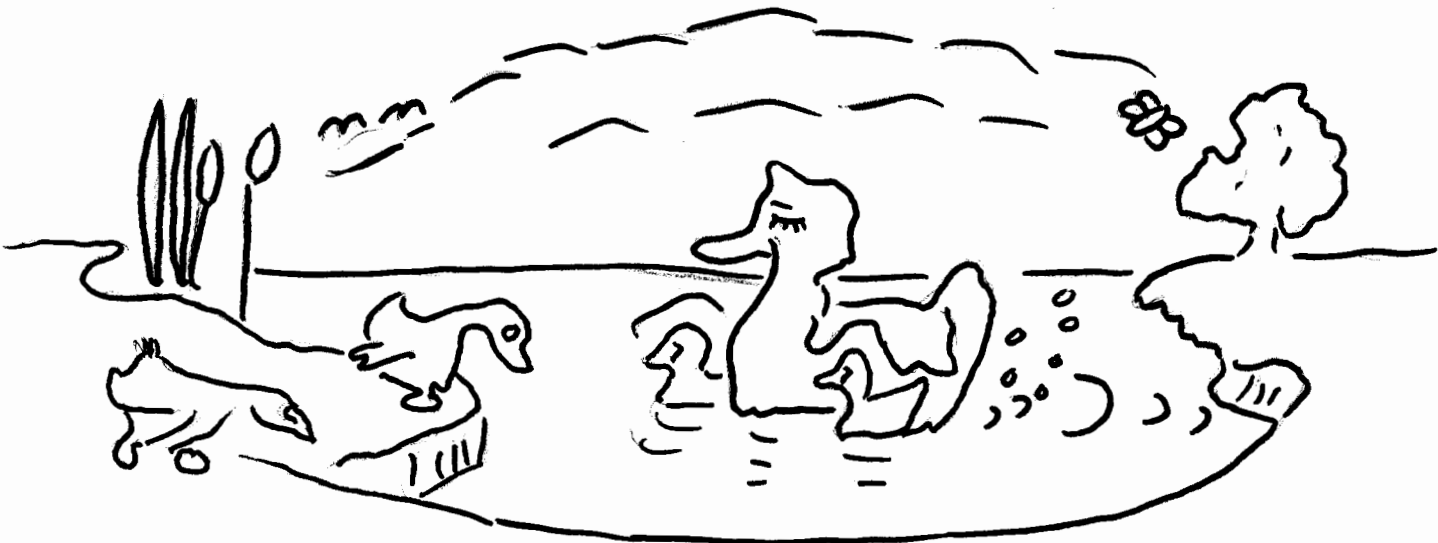
Your child's impression of the first grade will affect his attitude for the entire twelve years ahead of him. The speed and accuracy of his reading will depend to a great extent on the enjoyment derived from the learning process and the school program. To start the child off on the right foot, we must work to provide an emotional security which will remove any fears of this new experience.

WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN DO TO INSURE EMOTIONAL READINESS

1. We can assure your child that he is an accepted, secure, happy individual in the school environment by bringing his personal experiences into the classroom and having him partake in new experiences there.
2. Confidence will be inspired in the child as he tries and succeeds in doing many new things.
3. A feeling of friendliness between the teacher and her pupil will be the result of adopting an attitude of "learning together" in the classroom.
4. By balancing work periods with play periods the entire day can be made pleasant and enjoyable.

WHAT THE PARENTS CAN DO TO INSURE EMOTIONAL READINESS

1. Your child is a happy child when he has opportunities and freedom to express himself.
2. Give him a feeling of security. Let him feel that he is wanted and needed.
3. Praise him for successful efforts.
4. Be most careful in criticizing his work or reproving him for his failures. His first year should be one of pleasant memories. He must not be made to feel that he is below average or that he is presented with tasks too difficult to surmount. In this first encounter with a new environment, he will falter at times. His natural and spontaneous adjustment will come out of the security which we give him.



READING READINESS

Every child is entitled to a happy and successful introduction to reading. Every child has the right to be introduced to reading in the way, at the time, and at the rate best suited to his individual powers of accomplishment. The readiness period seeks to guarantee this to each child by delaying formal reading until he can begin to learn with a reasonable degree of success. It is not, then, something that takes place in a few weeks or months of school, but it is a period of development which includes all of the child's life up until the time he actually is beginning the reading process. The home and the school are, thus, both responsible for a child's readiness to read.

Teacher observation, tests which establish mental age, and reading readiness tests are used to help determine when the child is ready to read.

Through means of observation the teacher notes:

1. An interest in the readiness material. (Picture books, story books, and reading readiness books.)
2. Ability to tell a story about a picture.
3. Whether he can tell a story from a series of pictures leading from left to right.
4. That he is a good listener.
5. His ability to relate an experience.
6. Whether or not he stays with a task until it is done.
7. His ability to remember and follow simple directions.
8. His skill in relating a sequence of events in a simple story.
9. Whether or not he has a reasonably good vocabulary.
10. His curiosity about signs, labels, and other words.
11. His sensitivity to like sound elements.
12. Whether or not he is interested in group activities and contributes to them.
13. His enjoyment in looking at books
14. His ability to see likenesses and differences in pictures and word construction.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

Many parents ask, "When shall I teach my child his letters?" or "When shall I teach him to count?" Educators feel that if a child asks to learn to print his name or to count, or wants to know the name of a letter or word, he is "ready" and that is the time to tell him. He should not be pushed into learning these things before he is ready. However, there are many other things parents can do at home which will give a background of experience that will help him in school.

BEFORE THE CHILD BEGINS FORMAL READING

The parent can:

1. Provide many and varied experiences. Visit the zoo, parks, beach, docks, farm, railroads, woods, fire station, airport, library, bus depot and broadcasting station.
2. Allow him to have and care for a pet.
3. Let him go to and give parties.
4. Read to him.
5. Insist upon good speech habits. "Baby talk" can be embarrassing to the child in school.
6. Teach him to have a sense of responsibility and to do things for himself.
7. Provide a variety of materials for your child to work with that will develop his initiative. (Hammer and nails, saw, wood, scissors, and paper.)
8. Develop his number sense by practical experience, not just teach him to count by rote.
9. Above all, provide him with a sense of security which comes from living in a happy home where he feels he is wanted and needed and where parents AGREE upon a plan of discipline.

AFTER FORMAL READING BEGINS

(As your child finishes each preprimer and primer, he will bring it home to read it to you. Remember, parents, you are not expected to teach, but you are expected to LISTEN.)

Parents can also:

1. Provide a time and a quiet place for reading. This is especially important in this day of radio and television.
2. Listen to your child read and reread familiar stories.
3. Provide materials, picture books, and magazines on his interest level and his vocabulary level.
4. Tell and retell words as often as necessary at first. Later he will have instruction in the various methods of attacking new words--including phonetic analysis.
5. Give him a few moments to read unfamiliar material silently before reading it to you.
6. Help him to understand meaning of unfamiliar words.
7. After the story is finished, discuss what has just been read.
8. Give him the feeling that this is reading for fun.



The growth of your child in his own individual way is dependent upon your helping us to understand him. In order to better work for his welfare and guide his progress through the year, we are going to plan and look forward to repeated visits from you.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO PARENTS

1. LABELING:

Label all of your child's belongings clearly-- this means both boots and both mittens,--coat, hat, and leggings, too please.

2. MONEY:

If your child is to bring money for any purpose, place it in a sealed envelop with his name, his teacher's name, and the amount on the outside. You might also include the purpose for which the money is being sent.

3. ABSENCE:

If your child is absent for any reason at all, please be sure that he returns to school with a note stating why he was absent.

4. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION:

If for any reason you do not wish your child to play outside with the others at any time, please send a note in the morning or inform the teacher by telephone. We wish to cooperate with you if you will just let us know.

.WHEN TO VISIT SCHOOL

We are always happy to have parents visit school. Here are some suggestions that might help the visits to be happier occasions.

1. Visits should be frequent and relatively short in duration.
2. In order to see a normal classroom situation, it is advisable to leave younger children at home.
3. You do not need to knock, just slip in quietly.
4. Any question which arises should be taken up with the teacher when it will not interrupt classroom activity.