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A Study of the Progress of Guidance of Elementary School Children Through a Survey of Reporting Methods Used in Yakima County in the State of Washington

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A STUDY OF THE PROGRESS OF GUIDANCE OF
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH
A SURVEY OF REPORTING METHODS
USED IN YAKIMA COUNTY IN THE
STATE OF WASHINGTON

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington College of Education

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

by
Carol Lippincott Tate
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INTRODUCTION

The writing of this paper has been undertaken in the belief that there is a common need in the elementary schools of today for a more comprehensive understanding of the term "guidance" and the part that the classroom teacher, through reporting to parents, must play in it.

The fundamental guidance process in the elementary school years necessitates a sympathetic understanding of the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and moral background of each individual being guided daily in the classroom. It becomes meaningful only when the teacher assumes more than his professional prerogative of making children and their parents his daily business. He must make them his friends and co-workers. Only when this has been accomplished will the guidance process be fully realized. Only then can educators assure themselves that they have led all individuals to live self-disciplined, self-directed, and self-controlled lives.

Therefore, we find that the two separate terms of "guidance" and "parent-reporting" become inextricably woven together and making partners of parents becomes synonymous with

the process of good education.

Because Yakima County school districts have been progressing toward a more satisfactory reporting method commensurate with their philosophy of education and more closely correlating the objectives they have set for themselves the writer has attempted to present in concise form the types of reporting that are currently being used in the eighteen schools of this county, not as an absolute record but rather as an indication of the trend in progress currently being made by Yakima County educators.

Since an analysis of the survey showed the trend to be toward more parent-teacher contacts through individual and group conferences, it seemed fitting to present a study in general of this type of reporting as a background for the survey.

CHAPTER I

THE PROGRESS OF REPORTING METHODS

Possibly the main purpose of the progress of education is to change the behavior of the learner. The concept of behavior must be broad to encompass terms of thinking effectively, choosing goals, discriminating, expressing ideas. These are behavior as well as more observable ones. If the result is going to be a change in ways of behaving then the schools must identify their objectives in terms of the question, "How should he learn to behave?" The next problem would be one of evaluation in which the schools would ask themselves, "How well does he do what he should do?" And coming to the most pertinent point for this study the reporting problem is identified in this question: "What kind of reports should we make to tell how well he has done the things he should do?"

In William Wrinkle's book on Improving Marking and Reporting Practices in Elementary and Secondary Schools, he tells us that:

Regardless of the variety or kinds of symbols used in a marking system, the same basic problems are involved. Is the symbol supposed to indicate the achievement of the student in terms of other students in his class, or in terms of his own ability? These problems have to be answered

before any symbols can have meaning apart from the local situation in which they are used.¹

Universally over a period of years there has been noted a discontent among educators concerning the accepted practices of conventional reporting to parents of the progress of their children in school. Thus there evolved a line of many methods of reporting that were developed and discarded in elementary schools everywhere in a search for a method that would be compatible with the philosophy of education as it was being interpreted in terms of the guidance of the whole individual child. Analytical minds probed into the symbols that were being used and became aware of a desperate need to define the objectives of the school in terms that would be understandable to the parent who was being informed. There were developed report forms from detailed evaluation, check lists, and scale type reports to different symbols. In some cases all forms of written reporting have been abandoned and parent-teacher conferences have been substituted. There has not yet been developed a report form that will fit every school and every situation. Each school has to work out its own forms and practices on the basis of its own objectives, its own philosophy, and its own staff.

¹William L. Wrinkle, Improving Marking and Reporting Practices in Elementary and Secondary Schools (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1947), p. 52.

Again referring to Improving Marking and Reporting

Practices, we find that Mr. Wrinkle has given us a concise list of criteria that may be used in evaluating marking and reporting forms and practices:

1. Have the objectives of the educational program been identified?
2. Are the objectives clearly stated?
3. Are the objectives sufficiently analyzed so that they have specific meaning?
4. Are the objectives understood, accepted, and recognized as important by the students, teachers, and parents?
5. Are different objectives evaluated and reported separately?
6. Are different forms provided to serve different purposes?
7. Are different bases for evaluation utilized which are appropriate to the purposes involved?
8. Can the teacher evaluate with sufficient reliability the achievement and growth of the student with respect to the objectives which have been set up?
9. Can the reports be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort?
10. Do the evaluation procedures make provision for student self-evaluation?
11. Is provision made for the reporting of evidence and comments relative to the evaluations?
12. Are the forms so constructed as to facilitate recording?
13. Can the evaluations be easily translated into other symbols if the evaluations may have to be stated in terms of other systems of marking?
14. Do the forms and practices serve the various functions which they were designed to serve, that is, give information, stimulate interest in improvement, facilitate guidance, . . .²

²Ibid., pp. 109-10.

At this point, it may be well to stop to consider the various forms of reporting that have been experimentally developed as departures from the conventional symbols. The first supplement to the reporting practice was the checking of citizenship. This was followed rapidly by the addition of traits of character and personality. This represented definite progress as a supplement to subject achievement reporting. But thoughtful educators were still not satisfied. They felt that the symbols of A, B, C, D, F could not adequately serve the functions of administration, guidance, information, and motivation and discipline; and thus became too general and open to misinterpretation. According to Wrinkle there were six major fallacies in the use of this reporting method:

- (1) The mark is an effective conveyor of information;
- (2) anyone can achieve any mark he wishes if he is willing to make the necessary effort;
- (3) people succeed in out-of-school life about the same as they do in school;
- (4) the mark is rightly comparable to a pay check;
- (5) marking practices provide a justifiable introduction to competitive adult life;
- and (6) the mark can be used as a means without its eventually being recognized as an end in itself. All are unsound.³

In their efforts to improve the reporting system educators began to substitute one symbol for another. Thus they began to use the S and U method which was really much weaker because it removed

³Ibid., p. 49.

the chief function of marking, that is, motivation. Its main advantage lay in the fact that it made marking less important as an end in itself. Some teachers added a plus and a minus and again they were back at essentially the same practice as the A, B, C, D, F method.

The Parent-Teacher Conference idea evolved from the premise that in direct discussion with a parent there would be no misinterpretation of objectives and the parent could, through questions directly asked and answered, become a partner in the information giving report. Essentially getting parents and teachers together is an excellent practice for other purposes than reporting. The teacher can work much more effectively in reporting if he knows the youngsters' home background, home problems, home associations, and other things. The parents can help the school if they know what it is trying to do. In knowing the home background the teacher can bring to the reporting time a much more effective evaluation of personal achievement and behavior.

However, the conference does not usually result in a record which is necessary, and unless it does it cannot be thought of as a substitute for conventional reporting practices.

The conference plan works best in undepartmentalized school programs; thus, it necessarily works best in the lower

elementary grades. Although a core teacher could prepare for conferences by discussions with other teachers it would mean a great deal of time expenditure. Although this is extremely valuable, it is not practical for upper grade teachers. It demands a heavy time investment in addition to a regular teaching load. The possibility that it may be included as a part of a day's work in the guidance of the learner is feasible and practical.

Another obstacle of the conference plan is that not many parents beyond the beginning elementary level would take time for conferences with their youngster's teacher. Visiting the school seems to become less important in the upper elementary years.

An obvious substitute for the conference plan because of its disadvantages is the informal letter plan. In the hands of a teacher who is capable of putting meaning into words so that parents may understand, it could be an excellent means of reporting. It is impractical for teachers who work with large numbers of students because of time expenditure. Because of this it would be more workable in the beginning elementary grades than in the upper level.

There is another difficulty involved in the informal letter plan. Many teachers do not have facility with the written word. Possibilities of misinterpretation are involved to a greater degree than in the use of the formal printed report form.

If the informal letter type is desired, it is possible to control the language of the letters. This can be done through the development of a cooperative list of stock comments which may be used by teachers on different levels. This seems fairly desirable if standardized in practice, but all letters should be approved by the principal of the school to eliminate the possibility of human error.

The informal letter type of reporting can be extremely satisfactory as developed by conscientious competent teachers who are willing to devote much time to the guidance method through reporting in this way. It has a good personal quality that makes parents know the school is sincerely interested in the guidance and learning of the children. The standardization of comments ensures understanding. However, the problem of conferences is also true of this method of reporting in that a separate reporting for purposes of record and transfer must be maintained.

The check form is a short cut to writing of informal notes. A check is made a substitute for a sentence. In the hands of analytical educators there is a tendency for this form to become too detailed and complex. Mechanically, it is the most practical and generally the most usable of the various departures from the conventional type of reporting. This does not mean that it is necessarily the best, but rather the simplest method of reporting more information

in less time with less effort and with a possibility of keeping a record at the same time. These advantages would warrant a departure from conventional practice to this form of reporting in many instances.

Two other types of departure that may be made from the conventional reporting method are: (1) student self-evaluation and reporting with both the essay-type and the check-type of report; and (2) a parents' report to the school. More and more schools are providing space on their report cards or booklets for a parent response to the teacher evaluation. This has been successful and has many possibilities that are being explored.

Almost every school has its own particular form of reporting and different types of forms are combined in most instances. The most significant departure from convention is the identifying of objectives of the school in relation to the resultant behavior of the learner. This is a basic premise of curriculum, guidance, evaluation, and reporting.

CHAPTER II

GUIDANCE THROUGH REPORTING

For general purposes, Webster defines guidance as "an act of guiding--and to assist or superintend--to guide direction as leader" or "advice given to pupils to enable them to choose appropriate educational or vocational work."

Today, educators have added new meanings and concepts to the word. Whereas it formerly alluded only to children enrolled in junior and senior high schools, it is now a function available to all children enrolled in any grade. Reporting to parents and enlisting their understanding sympathy and participation in the motivation of the learner in the elementary school is one of the most valuable functions of the guidance method.

Technical books in the guidance field tell us that the guidance services consist of analyzing the individual, counseling with personal, social, occupational, and educational data, adjusting the individual and keeping up a routine of follow-up. Through these services the teacher may better analyze abilities, aptitudes, limitations, interests, and attitudes of each individual for whom she is responsible.

This sounds very coldly statistical in nature, but Detjen and Detjen in their book on Elementary School Guidance preface their text by making the guidance method a very real and warmly human relationship:

Real guidance is not a cold methodical chore, but comes as a result of a warm, understanding relationship between student and teacher. Some of the most effectual guidance may be brought about incidentally by means of casual conversation with the children or through correlation with language, health, art, writing, arithmetic, and other lessons.⁴

How important the guidance method has been and is becoming is noted in almost every text available of recent date by the number of references that are made to the guidance method. Haskew in This is Teaching says that "guidance is systematic assistance given to learners to help them toward self-direction."⁵

While this author has given much food for thought in a concise short statement in words that even the beginning teacher can very well understand, another authority in the field of guidance says in Willey's Guidance in Elementary Education:

⁴Erwin W. Detjen and Mary Ford Detjen, Elementary School Guidance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1952).

⁵Lawrence D. Haskew, This is Teaching (Chicago: Scott, Foresman Co., 1956).

Guidance--controlled environment in which several forces share control but in which the most dominant force is the classroom teacher. Guidance provides an environment in which every child can grow into a socially desirable, happy and wholesome personality.

In such environment we encourage him to develop traits of self-direction, self-control, and self-appraisal, aiding him in making an adequate adjustment to the society in which he lives. Guidance is a special concept of the teaching process which requires a specific point of view. Guidance in the elementary school requires a consideration of the 'whole child.' With such a concept guidance is thus concerned with physical, mental, emotional and educational needs. All effort is directed toward the promotion of optimal growth and adjustment to life as a whole.

Basically dependent upon the doctrine of individual differences, guidance is always directed toward the individual. It is concerned with helping pupils to discover their needs and abilities, to develop desirable purposive action, to plan for this action and to move toward the realization of the goals chosen. Guidance in the elementary school is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. The teacher should not accept the premise that guidance concerns itself primarily with problems of serious maladjustment.

The objectives of good guidance and good teaching are the same, helping pupils to achieve a fuller, happier life by attainment of self-realization, effective human relationships, economic efficiency and civic responsibility. Good guidance affords the means for social recognition and approval, opportunities for successful achievement, and recognition of maladjustment. Honesty, dependability, good manners, and critical thinking are all encouraged. From the guidance point of view, the focus of attention in education is upon the 'self-containment' of the pupil, e. g., aiding him to choose goals for himself, to spend his leisure time properly, to analyze his strengths and weaknesses,

and to develop desirable habits in the field of physical and mental health.⁶

In the elementary school, guidance through parent reporting and parent understanding is a primary consideration beginning with the six-year-old in a first-grade classroom. Crow and Crow in Human Development and Learning bear this out in their statements:

One important guidance function deals with the orientation of first grade children to school experiences. Children who have attended kindergartens find the transfer to the elementary school to be relatively easy. In some school systems the first grade becomes a kind of kindergarten extension in which learning activities represent the continuation of those experiences in the kindergarten, except that they are gradually increased in difficulty to meet increasing maturational ability to perform.

Serious adjustment difficulties may be experienced by the child who comes directly from the sheltered environment of the home into a strange and possibly overwhelming new world. It usually is difficult for a six year old to tear himself away for a whole day from his accustomed home activities which, by this age, may be following a definite and satisfying pattern. Moreover, during these first six years, so close a bond may have developed between the child and his mother that neither can tolerate a separation for a whole day. Hence there is need for a planned program of orientation for the parent as well as the child.⁷

⁶Roy DeVerl Willey, Guidance in Elementary Education, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), p. 35.

⁷Lester D. Crow and Alice Crow, Human Development and Learning (New York: American Book Company, 1956), p. 536.

Many things contribute to the effectiveness of the guidance program in the elementary school. This is expressed in the philosophy of the Glencoe, Illinois, guidance program as told in Willey,

Guidance in the Elementary School:

There is a growing recognition that successful guidance at the upper school levels must be super-imposed upon the more fundamental guidance or adjustment programs which reach children in their early years. In the future, schools may offer guidance to parents of pre-school children. Inasmuch as we have more pupils in the primary years than at any other level, our efforts to prevent maladjustments during these early years constitute a much more constructive and significant mental hygiene program than the attempts to remedy serious problem situations after they occur. Guidance is an integral part of the whole school system and is not limited to a separate service or department staffed with specialists who are concerned alone with serious cases of maladjustment. Guidance should be concerned with the study, understanding, and adjustment of every child. This means curriculum, staff morale, teacher load, emotional climate, classes, pupil tension, and physical arrangements. It is also concerned with the home and the community.⁸

Again Crow and Crow define the true function of guidance not as a program for the maladjusted in later years of their development but in its true capacity as prevention of that maladjustment before it can occur:

⁸Willey, op. cit., p. 28.

Guidance as a school function may be interpreted to include whatever is done for the individual to help him in the solution of whatever difficulties or problems he may encounter in any area of his life activities, and relationships, and (insofar as it is possible) to prevent the arousal of any such difficulties or problems.⁹

Teachers talk a great deal about the guidance method of leading children, but in many cases seem unable to fit themselves into the picture of guidance. More and more we are sensing the need for knowledge about ourselves in order to understand others, and more and more we know that teachers are a dominant factor in influencing a good guidance program. What is this method of leading youth? It is a method that is appropriate in our democracy because of its very nature of helping people to help themselves. Those concerned with guidance, as teachers should be, know that the guidance method does not give advice, but rather helps the child to see all points of view and to make his choice from among them. The guidance method works very slowly because it puts the burden of the decision where it belongs--on the individual being guided. It always begins with cooperative planning. It can never start unless it has a clear understanding of WHY and it concludes with a definite self-operative WHAT.

⁹Crow and Crow, op. cit., p. 532.

Together parents and teachers should take understandings and pooled knowledge of children, and together should build slowly but surely for him the inner resources that he needs to be a self-governed, self-propelled, self-disciplined man--maturity, mental health, and character. The clear purpose together must be to lead children to acquire the best understandings, attitudes, appreciations, habits and skills of living of which they are capable.

Together parents and teachers have common goals to teach children to learn to live democratically. Quoting Miss Applegate:

1. Children must be taught the privileges and responsibilities of freedom.
2. They must practice in their daily living the skills and techniques of living together.
3. They must acquire right attitudes toward and an understanding of their community and world neighbors.¹⁰

We must necessarily teach children to read and think critically and to use the facts thus gained to change their ways. Since it must become an essential part of his living it must be first a pattern of learning, thus again the beginning school years are a foundation. Always, however, it must be understood by both parents and teachers that all attitudes begin at home and are supplemented by

¹⁰Mauree Applegate, Everybody's Business--Our Children (Evanston, Illinois: Row-Peterson Co., 1952), p. 60.

a planned program at school. Thus the cooperation of the parents and teachers through a planned partnership is so necessary to the fullest learning of the child.

Although the purpose of this writer is not to discuss the guidance of the exceptional child in the classroom through parent contacts, it may be well to point out that in cases of extreme problems that involve physical handicaps of the child (which are not unusual in any classroom, the results of the teaching of the school may be negligible unless there is cooperation of parents in continuing the same teaching techniques that are used daily. A case in point may be children with speech difficulties that require careful, constant and consistent attention. In the beginning school years, some errors in speech are not infrequent, and the understanding teacher will begin an early program of correction and guidance of the emotional climate of the classroom in conjunction with this difficulty. However, the daily guidance of the teacher must be supplemented by parental understanding and in some cases with actual teaching by the parent. This is brought out in Talking-Time:

In all cases of speech deviations, the parents should be brought into the picture in order to continue the speech drills, in a play way, in the atmosphere of the home. In those cases in which the problem is basically an emotional one expressing itself through speech, it is the parents, and

not the children, who will need the guidance and counseling which the professional can provide. The teacher herself can capitalize, however, upon the advantages of the group situation of the classroom in building emotional stability and security in the speech-emotionally handicapped child.¹¹

This must be accomplished by an understanding and patient elementary school teacher to prevent guidance difficulties in later years. A child with a speech problem that is not corrected may show feelings of resentment, antagonism, inadequacy, or other speech involvements. An understanding teacher will make speech correction technics part of her everyday classroom guidance program, in such a way that attention is not drawn to any one individual. It can be fun for everyone if the teacher has perception and ability to carry out good theory.

Here as for every child is shown the essence of the guidance program in parent-teacher conferences and through classroom teaching procedures. Indeed, unless the attention of the parent is called to the special work given her child, an otherwise cooperative person may well be turned into a critic.

Since the major purpose of reporting to parents is one of motivation for the learner it is an essential device for the guidance program which will facilitate the process if thoughtfully and conscientiously executed.

CHAPTER III

VALUES OF PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

The values of Parent-Teacher Conferences are myriad for parents, for teachers, and for the children. Muriel Brown has summed them up in concise form in a bulletin of the Association for Childhood Education International:

Values in General: Parents, children, and teachers working together have learned to appreciate each other. Mutual understanding, respect, and confidence have developed as people revealed their responsibilities in joint problem-solving. Out of successfully shared experiences have come new feelings of personal worth and personal responsibility for behaving well one's self, and for helping to create conditions favorable for the achievement of values by others. Tensions between home and school have been reduced, and there has been a consequent lessening of strains in the lives of teachers, parents, and pupils.

Values for Children: Wonderful things may happen to children when they sense a unity of purpose between their homes and schools. They make better progress because: (1) their teachers know more about them, and give them more help; (2) their parents understand what teachers are trying to do; and (3) their adjustment problems are solved in better ways because home and school are working together to find and deal with causes. (4) They are released from the tensions which develop when requirements of homes and schools are in conflict, or are not coordinated. (5) They feel more secure because parents, teachers and children like each other better and are surrounded by an atmosphere of friendly purpose.

Values for Parents: Parents benefit as much as children do when homes and schools are in genuine partnership. They develop feelings of status and greater security in the parent role. Their experience is enriched through opportunities to keep up with advancing knowledge about children, education, and family development through:

Opportunities for gaining skill in cooperative action.
Opportunities to take part in a variety of useful activities which are personally satisfying.

Experiences with many different kinds of families, and many different kinds of educational needs and problems.

The sharing of experience and ideas with other parents.

The awakening interest in issues and problems affecting homes, schools, and children.¹²

Teachers can interpret school to parents and parents, in turn, can interpret their children to teachers. Unless properly prepared, parents dread the experience of a parent-teacher conference. Probably the reason for this is that few understand what parents really want of teachers and what teachers want of parents. Mr. Ralph Ojemann, of the Child Guidance Research Division of the State University of Iowa, once conducted a summer institute at Wisconsin State Teachers College and in a guidance talk

¹²Muriel W. Brown, "A Guide to Better Home-School Relationships," (Washington, D. C.: Bulletin of the Association for Childhood Education International, 1950), pp. 5-6.

stated that he felt parents desired but three things from teachers in talks about their children. The first question a parent had was "How does my child rank with other children his age and experience?" The next question asked was: "What are you doing to help him?" The last question was: "What can we parents do to help him?"

These three questions have boiled down all the trivial points that arise. The three questions above raised so clearly and sincerely state in themselves that the parents want the truth about their children even though it hurts them to hear it and even though they may not agree with the teacher that told it. Less false tact and more honesty would seem to be the order of the day in conferences then. The success with which this can be applied reverts directly back to the personality of the teacher (as all points seem to) and her ability to make bluntness kind. But truth there should be, whether it hurts or not, in order that there can be good rapport in the partnership. Again quoting Miss Applegate:

When kindness and consideration temper the remarks of both day and night parents of the child, the truth will not hurt either of them. And while we're discussing this matter of truth, let us remember that truth sharing is a two-way process. Parents may sometimes have truths to tell which teachers will find bitter to the taste.¹³

¹³Applegate, op. cit., p. 242.

Yes, truth is a two-way process. Teachers need to understand parents and to know that although they may be poorly schooled many of them are very well educated, and that paradoxically there are still some teachers who, though well-schooled, yet need to be educated in the ways of understanding and guidance. It is our business to accept in our children that which we cannot do much about, but to work on children's habits about which we can do a great deal.

Teachers can interpret school to parents. There are many ways for parents and teachers to learn together, and values of the home and the school background interpreted to both sides can certainly aid in the guidance of the child, the youth, up through adulthood. Values in Conferences? Certainly, there are values in conferences for the parents, the teachers, and the children.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF CONFERENCES IN LIEU OF OR WITH REPORT CARDS

There are three main objectives in knowing parents informally and discussing with them the attitudes of the school toward their children. These may summarily be enumerated as (1) understanding, (2) sympathy, and (3) participation. Understanding of the school and its problems by the parents is probably the first requisite to the starting of a successful partnership. The second would be to build up an attitude of sympathy on the part of the parent with the program that the school has worked out for the child. Last of all, but certainly not the least in importance, is to create a feeling in the parent to want to participate in this program. This participation may be interpreted differently for different individuals. Mrs. Jones may do no more than to say a good word about the school at a Woman's Club meeting; Mr. Ames may take the chairmanship of a campaign for a new bond issue; Mrs. Belle may visit school to confer or just to visit, but Mrs. Jamison may invite the teacher for dinner some evening. All of these are methods of participation and show an effort to cooperate.

Mauree Applegate in her book, Everybody's Business--

Our Children, tells us:

Since we have the same children--we teachers at school, you parents at home--we no doubt have the same problems. . . . I believe that our children are getting confused, too, and no wonder; you'd be confused, too, if you had to get used to an autocratic home and a democratic school (or the other way around) both at the same time.

It is almost startling to consider the number of people who have a stake in our children: the church is interested in teaching them early; insurance companies spend money to keep them well and safe; the departments of welfare strive to make them into self-supporting adults; the government is interested in their learning to govern themselves; and even therossest, grumpiest old curmudgeon in the country has free advice to give to those of us who are trying to bring up the children.

Yes, our children are everybody's business, but especially, of course, they are our business--yours and mine. They are especially the responsibility of us who either brought them into the world or are bringing the world to them.¹⁴

The foundation that teachers attempt to give the children is viewed in many ways by both parents and educators. The values attained and attitudes gained in the first years of school are important ones that will carry over into all of his later years of school and into adult life. This importance cannot be underestimated, and yet, paradoxically, there seems to be a feeling that anyone can teach and

¹⁴Ibid., p. 2.

guide children in the first grade; that it requires no great capacity on the part of the teacher to hold the interest of children at this young age ("They're such babies, aren't they, my dear!"), and that school at this age is a "play" school.

The teacher of the six-year-old should have finer technics and better understanding of constructive guidance than at any other age. The first grade teacher must be physically, morally, mentally, and emotionally stable, mature, and alert. She is the dominant influence in guidance of first graders. She must have an understanding, not only of the children she is to teach, but she must be aware of and proud of her own stature as a very important influence on their lives, and must recognize the importance of cooperation between the home and the school in maintaining the highest standards of growth possible in all the children. Here constructive techniques in discipline will lead to later self-discipline. Here in the first grade, the first contact with school, are born the ideals and values of adulthood that will remain long after the methods used and skills attained have been forgotten. Here the best of all guidance techniques should be used daily in school living. Here must begin the education of knowing "what is good, better than we ourselves have known it; to think more clearly than we have thought; and to act better than we, up to now, have

acted.¹⁵

If properly handled by the elementary school teacher much of the guidance problems of later years will be alleviated. However, it is unnecessary to state that there must be a good follow-up in each year through high school. In these all-important elementary school years must be nurtured that feeling of parent-teacher partnership in which the teacher should take her part enthusiastically as the leader and the guide. Miss Applegate tells us again:

It has always puzzled me mightily that parents and teachers consider themselves to be different from one another. The parent sitting across the desk from the teacher is often times educated better than the teacher that he faces, even though not better schooled. A penetrating mind, whether it belongs to a parent or to a teacher, can size up a child's capabilities fairly well. But the shallow-minded parent or teacher will rarely understand a child, no matter how much time he spend with him. After all, a teacher is only a parent who gets his child from the census roll instead of from the hospital, a parent who nurses him through fractions instead of fractures, and who, like the old woman who lived in a shoe, has so many children, she doesn't know what to do.¹⁶

It is stated in the book, Counseling With Parents, that

All of us who work with children have a common stake in the world of tomorrow. Parents and teachers, whether they realize it or not, stand side by side in helping to build the thoughts and lives of those who will participate in the shaping of our civilization in the years ahead. Parents

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 243.

are not only legally responsible for their children, but, in most cases, are deeply interested in their welfare. . . . Teachers often have a specialized knowledge of child psychology which some parents do not have, but parents have the intimate knowledge of the child which they have gained through close association with him in the home before and after he enters school. Out of this joint responsibility toward children and their development springs the need for united effort on the part of those adults to whom any one child or group of children is entrusted. It is this common meeting ground that calls into being the parent-teacher counseling program of the school with all of its ramifications.

A sense of joint responsibility shouldered by parents and teachers is an excellent basis for building wholesome relationships between home and school. It is only when these two establish understanding, appreciation, and active cooperation with each other that there can exist a continuity in the child's experiences. The child who senses a sympathetic bond between his parents and his teacher has a much greater feeling of security. When school and home enjoy understanding it is comparatively easy for one to approach the other on any individual or group situation that may exist. When teachers and parents discover ways of accomplishing common goals, and when their common activities are an essential part of the school, some sort of teacher-parent counseling program is already in operation.¹⁷

Although the problems at the elementary school age may assume nebulous and fleeting form, the teacher and parent together must be aware of a tendency in any child to deviate from a normal pattern. Thus cooperation and conferences are necessary not only

¹⁷Edith M. Leonard, Dorothy VanDeman, Lillian E. Miles, Counseling With Parents (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), pp. 1-2.

for the child with actual problems but for all children.

Later in discussing the objectives of counseling, the authors touch on the vital point of the common needs of all children from all types of homes and communities:

These children from the homes of the nation, the hovels, the cottages, the apartments, and the mansions, are at our school doors with a common need--the need for security, for patience, companionship, and understanding. . . . Sometimes superior teachers . . . see in their profession a vision beyond the boundaries of the school domain. The teacher who catches this vision and in so doing accepts responsibility not only for teaching and guiding the child, but also for counseling with and learning from his parents, makes of her work the truly professional service to the community that it should and can be.¹⁸

That understanding of the school must be an important objective of the school parent-counseling program is the underlying theme of all books written of reporting and counseling. Ruth Strang, in her monograph Reporting to Parents, has this to say:

Although parents want a periodic report primarily to learn about their children's progress, they also gain other information from it. They learn about the school. One type of report tells them that the school is primarily interested in the pupil's achievement in the content fields and the tool subjects. Another seems to say that the school is concerned with the well-rounded development of every child. Still another indicates that the school is trying to focus the teachers' and parents' attention on what the

¹⁸Ibid., p. 2.

child can become. If an enlightened public interest in education is to be developed, reports to parents must convey accurately the philosophy and goals of the school.¹⁹

In speaking of building a cooperative attitude on the part of the parent, D'Evelyn says:

The first important step, --is to establish a working relationship with the parent. Nothing can be accomplished for the child unless the teacher knows how to do this. After such a relationship is established, the teacher must know child behavior well enough to be of definite help to the parent. . . . The teacher who understands child behavior will find it easier to win the confidence and cooperation, as well as to lead the discussion into constructive planning. . . . But in gaining the parent's cooperation and interest, the conference technics are the same regardless of the child's age.²⁰

Much later in her monograph, D'Evelyn summarizes the need for conferences to be an integral part of the school program and states that:

It must be a relationship that permits the parent to express his thoughts and his feelings with the knowledge that he will be listened to and understood by a sympathetic and accepting person, who in understanding and accepting helps him in turn to understand and accept both himself and his child.²¹

¹⁹Ruth Strang, "Reporting to Parents." Practical Suggestions for Teaching, No. 10 (New York, Bulletin of Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1947), p. 2.

²⁰Katherine E. D'Evelyn, "Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences." Practical Suggestions for Teaching, No. 9 (New York, Bulletin of Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945), p. 2.

²¹Ibid., p. 97.

Grace Langdon and Irving W. Stout in their book on Teacher-Parent Interviews touch on the subject of "good-will" through counseling which fosters the partnership feeling that parents and teachers should have through their common bond--the child:

It makes for good will for parents to know what goes on, to feel that there is willingness that they should know what happens in their child's room, to know that the teacher is ready to take the time and trouble to tell them and to listen to what they have to say about it. It makes for good will for them to feel that the school really cares about the individual children; that it cares how they get along not only in their school work but in all of their relationships. Often a teacher who talks with the parents, explaining here, interpreting there, giving and asking for help, little realizes that each interview can add to this good will which is the very basis of the administrator's public relations program, the basis for the parents' acceptance and support of the school. It is good for a teacher to recognize this.²²

There is urgency in our fast-moving world for complete cooperation of parents through understanding, sympathy, and participation. And even more important, teachers must assume the leadership in bringing this about. In approaching any conference situation, whether it be informal or planned, teachers may be sure of one thing:

²²Grace Langdon and Irving Stout. Teacher-Parent Interviews (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), p. 14.

Every parent wants his child to experience success in school. Moreover, his child is one of his greatest interests in life. For these reasons, any school person wishing to talk with a parent about his child has a most receptive listener and eager reporter. There is no topic dearer to his heart. Accordingly, a consideration of the problems of a particular child or small group of children is usually an excellent first step in building an understanding of school work. . . . Early in the fall all first grade teachers should arrange to explain the reading program to the mothers of children who are beginning reading instruction.²³

Reading is perhaps the most interesting point of discussion for the parents of beginners:

It has been emphasized that an approach to the understanding of a modern reading program is made most successfully through the problems of a particular child or group of children known to the parent or parents. . . . As the purposes and activities of a modern reading program become clear, parents not only are willing to support the school in over-the-back-fence discussions or in voting a bond issue, but they are better able to help their children achieve a maximum of success in reading and in all the learning experiences which comprise education.²⁴

Teachers will probably find that when parents are contributing to the success of their child through an understanding of the school program, they won't be critics. Many parents who come to school to solve a problem or to observe have stayed to be active participants because they want to become a part of their children's

²³Eleanor G. Robison, "Helping Parents Understand the Modern Reading Program" (A Monograph of Ginn and Company), p. 2.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 6-7.

school living. Most parents want teachers to feel that they are willing to help if they knew how to do it. Can educators lead them to this knowledge?

CHAPTER V

TYPES OF CONFERENCES THAT MAY BE HELD

There are many types of meetings that might take place between the parent and the teacher other than the individual conference. For convenience these are listed below:

1. First Grade Group Meeting in the Spring preceding Fall Enrollment:

In which the children are registered, checked by the school nurse, and a general tour of the school conducted by older children or principal while the teacher is talking with the parents about what they can do to help get their children ready for the first grade.

Possibly the first grade children might prepare a program composed of the learning accomplished through the year so that parents will in this way become acquainted with part of the school program. This may be done on any level to acquaint parents with work that will be accomplished during the year.

2. Planned Demonstrations: In which the teacher has planned a definite type of classroom work in any area with which she particularly wants parents to become acquainted. This can be an invitation of one parent to show reactions of her child in a group working situation or

many parents in an area that is little understood by parents.

3. Group Meeting in the Fall: In which parents become oriented and acquainted with the other parents, the school itself, the school personnel, the purposes and objectives of the school, the rules and regulations necessary to the running of the school and the parent's place in the better education of his child.

4. Regular School Assemblies in which the students participate.

These will bring more parents to the school who would not otherwise attend a conference as such. If a teacher is alert, she will seek out these parents at the assembly to make them feel welcome, and will encourage them to come back and see the school and talk at a later date.

5. P. T. A. is a monthly group meeting at which time it is not advisable to encourage parents to talk about any problems. However, arrangements might be made at this time for later discussions. The P. T. A. study group is a good way to break up into areas of interest on the part of both parents and teachers and this will encourage discussions in problem areas or little understood areas.

6. Information Reporting Conferences in which there is supplemented

information on a written report to the parents or it may be a way to replace the written report altogether. Possibly it may be a time when parent and teacher wish to discuss a problem that has arisen.

7. Group Conferences other than the initial get-acquainted meeting-- to discuss always general aspects of a given area--reading readiness, report cards, retentions, achievement levels at certain times, testing, etc.
8. Individual Conferences in which discussion of specific problems is predominant and takes precedence over general educational procedures.
9. Home Visits for get-acquainted purposes primarily or for informal sharing of materials concerned with the child; or by invitation of parent for informal chat, coffee, tea, luncheon, or dinner. This type of visit should never embody only home inspection.
10. Open House at which a program may be presented or just room visitation and refreshments.
11. Informal Classroom Visiting to have the parent sit in on reading classes or other areas of learning to see the reaction of the group as a whole and of the particular child in group work.

In discussing Number eleven on this list, it may be well to summarize the feelings of some parents. In a questionnaire survey they have suggested that although group or individual conferences are good ways to learn the theory of school routine that it remains mere theory in many respects unless it has been supplemented by classroom visitation in which much that has been discussed in conferences becomes clear and meaningful. In some instances parents have suggested that they would like to be invited to visit the classroom informally before attending a conference. One thoughtful man likened himself to the Man from Missouri who had to be shown that teachers could follow through with practical application of the theory which teachers knew so well. He is a veteran of many conferences over the years and recently told of his feelings about the first conference. His feelings were something like those of an early pioneer being suddenly transported through time and space to sit in on a class of pilots learning to fly a jet airplane when he had never before seen an airplane. He learned the theory but had no idea what to do with it until he could apply it. This simile which he discussed with other parents seemed particularly appropriate. Perhaps many parents would feel less reluctant to ask questions if they had a background of observation first. It does give food for thought.

CHAPTER VI

PLANNING THE CONFERENCE

A study of conference technics will show that no approach to a conference, whether it be formal or informal, can be complete without pre-planning. The purpose of the conference should be well thought out in advance and be clearly in mind; then the records and all pertinent information should be gathered in usable order. All of the information may be obtained from the permanent record files and classroom work and notes taken from previous conferences if any.

Ada Shockley, in a master's thesis, "Status Study of Parent-Teacher Conferences in First-Class Districts in the State of Washington," says:

The first conference in the fall might be a group meeting, arranged by inviting all the parents of a class to school at some appointed time in the afternoon. The principal could appoint ahead of time someone to provide activities for the children. At this group meeting, the teacher might inform the parents concerning the reporting program, tell of tentative plans for the year in social studies, language arts, fine arts, and physical education. The teacher would also provide an opportunity for parents to meet the superintendent, principal, nurse, and other members of the school staff. She would also encourage further parent visitation and participation in the school

program.²⁵

It was mentioned before that the parent needed to be prepared for individual conferences. This may be done by letter, bulletin, note, or telephone. At the group conference the purpose of the individual conference is outlined, and the parent is given some idea of the purpose and the nature of the conference. This understanding will help them approach the individual conference without anxiety. Parents should be told how they can help to make the conference more successful if they will furnish some of the information about the child that would be difficult for the teacher to obtain otherwise. John A. Barr, Assistant Professor of Guidance at the University of Washington, outlined the following facts to show how a parent could help:

1. Relationship of the child to other children in the family or neighborhood.
2. Relationship to adults in the family and the neighborhood.
3. Types of free play activities and interests he selects.
4. Emotional reactions in the home to frustrating experiences.
5. Emotional reactions to other experiences such as radio, television and visitors in the home.
6. Expressed attitude toward school.
7. Hobbies and interests of all members of the family.

²⁵Ada Shockley, "Status Study of Parent-Teacher Conferences in First-Class Districts in the State of Washington." (Central Washington College of Education, Master's Thesis), 1954.

8. General health conditions. .
9. Unusual experiences that may have affected the child, such as travel, absence of one or both parents, illness of child or members of the family, death, clinical helps.
10. Other institutions which may have an effect on the child, such as church, community play groups, YMCA.
11. General neighborhood pattern in which the child lives.²⁶

The planning of the conference by both the parent and the teacher so that purposes are clearly in mind before the conference starts, then, is conducive to success of the conference.

²⁶John A. Barr, "Parent-Teacher Conferences"
College of Education Record (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington) Vol. XX, Number 1, (November, 1953), p. 6.

CHAPTER VII

SCHEDULING THE CONFERENCE

The scheduling of any conference is necessarily the business of the school, and since schools vary in their needs and desires, so the scheduling is done by individual schools as it seems to fit best into the needs of the community. If conferences are held with all the parents, a mimeographed letter with an accompanying form for indicating the desired time of the conference is sent home with the children to the parents. Needless to say, it is essential that these letters or notes or invitations be kept brief and gracious. Long dissertations on the purpose, et cetera, will serve only to scare many parents away, and others who think the schools are "form letter happy" will give it a glance and toss it into the nearest basket. The result will be that the conference will include only such parents as are already interested in school activities.

Many schools use a personal invitation form and find this form to be very conducive to parents to feel free of anxiety in attending a conference. Since the child is wanted in as much of the planning of the conference as possible, it adds a note of personal interest when the beginning school child can add his own decoration

some place on the invitation. At the time that he is incorporating this with his art work, it would be well to talk informally with the whole group of children about the plans for the conference, how we enjoy having visitors at school; in this way the children all feel that they are not being singled out for attention; they feel secure in the knowledge that the people closest to them are going to become friends.

Generally speaking, the conference held during the regular school day is most successful. Many schools make arrangements for early dismissal of school in the grades concerned, while others make arrangements for substitutes to handle the classroom routine while the teacher is freed to talk to the parents in another room-- or in the classroom if the children may be taken elsewhere. Since conferences scheduled during school time usually exclude fathers, this time-scheduling may be in the negative. Also, the mother of small children may not be able to attend because of lack of facilities for caring for them while she is away. Many schools have taken care of this problem by having a nursery while the mother is in the conference, using older students or parents of other children as service-workers.

Conferences held after school are common, but this also

has negative aspects. Teachers have just finished a teaching day and are not as fresh as the importance of the conference would warrant; home problems seem to be more pressing at this time and the conference tends to be hurried, and there are bound to be frequent disturbances.

Evening conferences in groups seem to be satisfactory. In this way father and other members of the family or community who are interested may participate.

Where conferences are scheduled with all parents as a part of the reporting system, some schools will attempt to meet each individual parent during a one or two week period. Conferences are scheduled closely and usually are of twenty to thirty minutes duration. From the viewpoint of efficiency in meeting each parent, such scheduling seems to be useful. However, with such a telescoped approach, it is almost impossible for teachers to treat each child and each parent as an individual . . . the total time must be scattered over a period of several weeks if a teacher has a large class and if all parents are to be scheduled.²⁷

Some teachers prefer to schedule conferences of the people who have children with problems first and then take the ones who will be easier. Others think it is much better for the morale of the student and the parent to have the ones with no problems first and then the ones who do have. Others feel that it is better to have them alphabetically.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 2-3.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SETTING OF THE CONFERENCE

The setting of the conference may directly affect the success of the parent-teacher partnership. A list of nineteen factors contributing to the success of conferences have been listed by D'Evelyn in her book on Individual Conferences. This same list seems to have been accepted, used, rearranged, or reworded by almost every reference on parent conferences, but this list seemed to be the most concise and to the point. Later this writer would like to add two items that seem essential to the success of the partnership and to delete one:

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, the teacher is in a 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 like 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. 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 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 it is at all possible to do so. . . . One of the goals in parent counseling is to try to get the parent to take the initiative. If his plan fails, it is always possible to suggest others that may strike nearer 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. 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 a 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. They all give a clue to the parent's emotions.
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 parents' 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 that have 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 a 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. You may know the names of some consultants, or I do if you wish them!'

19. It is helpful to try to close the conference on a constructive, a pleasant, or a forward-going note such as a plan for further consultation, a definite date for the next conference, a statement of encouragement or reassurance, and a statement of a plan for cooperative action.²⁸

Point number three in this list says in effect that the teacher should not sit behind her desk because it places her in a position of authority rather than partnership, and that it is not possible to have a true partnership with the parent in such a case. However, this writer feels that it is the attitude of the teacher that makes the partnership idea successful and not the desk behind which she is sitting. If the friendliness is there, the enthusiasm (so very important!) for her job, sincerity in her desire to help the child, and kindness and respect for the individual who either sits at her side at the desk or across from her, that person will respect and have confidence in the teacher-half of the partnership. In all cases the feeling seems to be that the teacher must take the leadership of the conferences; that she is responsible for the success of the conference; and it is her attitude toward it that will count more than where she sits. The desk is her working tool--it is the place to put the records during conferences and jot down notes

²⁸D'Evelyn, op. cit., p. 95.

if necessary. By this it is not meant that a teacher should always sit behind a desk when conferencing with a parent. It may be just 'home base' as a parent is shown around the classroom, but it is an important part of most classrooms.

The writer would like to add two points to those listed in D'Evelyn's report, the first one being that the teacher must have a sincere desire to talk with the parent about helping her child or all else fails; the second one that all teachers should have a professional library near at hand, including books and pamphlets and magazines about their particular field of education. It is also essential to have all possible obtainable reference material from books, current magazines, and other publications that can be easily understood by the parent available to share when he shows an interest in knowing more about his particular problem. It is also a good way to get to the home for an informal visit. A call on the telephone sometime after a conference--"Oh, Mrs. Smith, I just found a good article that seemed to be written just for you. May I drop it by after school this evening?"

About point number five, Grace Langdon and Irving W. Stout again say:

It is one thing to talk it over and suggest the purpose to be accomplished and another to say that it should be

done this way or that or to insist that it be done at all.
. . . As a teacher comes to an awareness of all that goes
into making a conference what it is, she will probably
come to feel that each family's home life is something
which only that family can work out and will be content
to leave it with them.²⁹

How important this thought is! Many teachers feel that they must
somehow convey to parents better ways of living in their own home
and thus create a tension that is not good for the partnership.

²⁹Langdon and Stout, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONFERENCE

The conference itself to be of any value at all must be interpreted correctly by both parties. It is especially important that the teacher use vocabulary that the parent can understand--not words common to the profession only. The teacher should be able to interpret adequately the curriculum, standardized tests, social, emotional, physical, and mental growth of children.

The interview in the individual conference should be in a relaxed atmosphere and pleasant surroundings. A general discussion to begin will lead into the point of the interview if handled correctly by the teacher. The teacher should be able to sense if the attitudes of the parents are friendly or hostile, negative or indifferent, and gauge her discussion accordingly. Being a good listener in the case of a parent's emotional upset over problems is the best method. The teacher should be extra careful of giving any advice or using "I think" technic. She should keep the number of ideas presented at any one interview at a minimum. Notetaking should probably be done after the conference is concluded--immediately after to avoid losing important points.

In concluding the conference the teacher will probably summarize the important points brought out, and lay out, with the parent, the course of action to be followed. Plans may be made for further conferences if necessary.

John Barr has listed a seven point check for evaluating a Parent-Teacher Conference as:

1. What proportion of the time was used by the teacher in talking?
2. Were topics covered pertinent, directly or indirectly, to the child?
3. Were proper technics of the conference observed?
4. Did both teacher and parent feel comfortable at the conclusion of the conference?
5. If repeating conference, what would be done differently?
6. What aspects of the conference were most successful? Why?
7. What was accomplished?³⁰

Another point that might be added to this list is to check to see if efforts to reach parents who did not come to the meeting were effective and how many parents attended that do not otherwise come to school.

This is important, because it is the ones that are never seen at school that teachers hope to reach. It is necessary to be aware constantly of new means of getting all parents to school. And as teachers find these technics workable they should make other

³⁰Barr, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

teachers cognizant of them. Through teacher cooperation in this way the path of education may progress.

CHAPTER X

LOOKING AHEAD TO OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PARENT-TEACHER UNDERSTANDING

Although the teacher's attitude is one of hopeful sympathy with the parent, she must also be realistic in realizing there are bound to be some hazards in the association. Will the closer alliance of parents and teachers through the use of parent conferences necessitate the pollyanna feeling that all troubles will be solved? Will there be assurance that now schools may be content in the knowledge that because some parents are understanding, that a rose-colored utopia of completely amicable educational harmony has been created? Are schools going to think that now all children shall receive full benefit of cooperation and agreement through attempts to assure it? Thoughtful parents and anxious teachers hope so, but are aware of the barriers to this.

Being a parent is a hard job. So is being a teacher. It's not surprising then, that relations between the two are not always perfect. Yet if we face the facts we must admit that husband and wife do not always live amicably together. Brother and sister often have bitter quarrels. Friend speaks to friend in accents anything but gentle. Surely it is unreasonable to look for perfection in the relationship of parents and teachers. Are they so different from the rest of the human race that they can

be expected always to agree, never to become impatient with the endless demands of the most complicated task on earth?

But there are ways toward closer cooperation--through greater understanding of the individual parent and teacher and through greater understanding of their different but dependent roles.³¹

Because the teacher is human and does not usually exemplify all the traits that parents would expect of him and because the word "parent" is not usually synonymous with perfection in the eyes of the teacher there will be problems that cannot be worked out with complete equanimity. But if teachers can honestly say that professionally speaking they have made every attempt that is within their normal ability, educators will feel that schools are nearing a future that will contribute to the better education of other generations of the world's children. In looking ahead they will feel assured that unequivocal progress is weighted toward the positive side.

There are apathetic parents, to be sure, just as there are apathetic teachers. Fortunately, the apathetic are in a minority in both groups. Fortunately, too, the

³¹Eva Grant, Parents and Teachers as Partners (Bulletin of the Science Research Associates, Inc., 1952), p. 12.

number of parents and teachers who do not know they are partners in this greatest of all enterprises, or who do not care to know, are an even smaller minority. We know they are in our midst and that because of them certain children suffer. However, their numbers are too few to distort the picture of the parent-teacher alliance--a picture which viewed realistically reveals good will, innate decency, and a desire to work together.³²

When the destruction of some of the barriers that stand between parents and teachers has been achieved, some of the stumbling blocks to good education will also disappear. Then the way has been prepared for future teachers to make further progress in the same way.

Parents, teachers, pupils, can share in the planning and creation of new, better schools. But these changes will not occur unless each person starts his particular task. Not until everyone concerned is at work on his own share can we have education for **ALL** American Children.³³

In the National Education Association Journal for December, 1956, there is an excellent article, "See How They Learn," by Marie Fraser, that tells how the latest film of the New Indiana State Teachers' Association has improved public

³²Ibid., p. 47.

³³Teach Them All in Elementary Schools (Publication of the Educational Policies Commission of the N. E. A., Washington, D. C., 1948), p. 31.

relations not only in their own state schools, but they have made it possible for schools throughout the nation to do the same through their film.

Faced with the challenge of those who don't understand modern teaching methods and those who intimate that the Three R's are neglected in today's schools, the Indiana State Teachers Association decided to make the documentary film in order to correct some wrong impressions.

Their objective was to give parents and taxpayers a quick, thumbnail sketch of all the steps in the learning process in the primary grades without actually pulling them back to school for a three year rerun of the first, second and third grades.

.

The movie's basic function is to answer four questions: What is today's classroom like? What sort of person is today's teacher? What are today's children learning, and how are they learning it? What are the tools with which they are learning?³⁴

The film is available for use through distribution from the Indiana University Audio-Visual Center. It may be used on television. It shows completely natural classroom situations that may give any parent a better understanding of the schools throughout the nation and seems especially fine for those parents who are unable to attend class sessions during the year. If it were shown at P. T. A.

³⁴Marie Fraser, "See How They Learn," National Education Journal, December, 1956, pp. 578-79.

meetings, it would give vital food for thought and discussion. If shown on television it would reach a wider audience of not only parents but other community members.

It would seem that through combined research such as this that another landmark has been established upon which to base good understanding of our ever-expanding program of education. Many other schools across the nation are doing similar work that is coming to the attention of educators and parents alike. With a good public relations program in effect the impact of their research in making an already fine program even better should reach all communities and bind the tie of understanding even closer.

CHAPTER XI

A STUDY OF THE PROGRESS MADE IN REPORTING METHODS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN YAKIMA COUNTY IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

In making a survey of the reporting methods that are currently in use in the various elementary schools of Yakima County, the writer wished to fulfill a need for all the administrators and teachers of the county schools to know what each school has as its objectives in parent-reporting. It seemed necessary also to carry this a step further to coordinate the thinking done in each school in a concise form available to any administrator, teacher, or study group who is interested in changing or improving their own system of reporting.

To this end the following letter and questionnaire were sent to the eighteen superintendents of the county schools requesting their help. The promptness of their replies would indicate their interest in this work.

The results of this questionnaire are not absolute. In school districts of more than one elementary school practices in relation to reporting may vary according to the individual

philosophy of the principal and staff involved. However, it was possible to obtain a general over-all picture that is indicative of the type of reporting that is being done at the time this study was made.

February 1, 1957

Mr. _____
Superintendent of Schools

Dear _____:

I am making a survey of the type of parent reporting that is being done in the schools of Yakima County from grades one through six. This will be research material for a Master's thesis.

My purpose in this survey is actually two-fold: Personally, I shall benefit for the above-named reason; but even more important there seems to be a definite need for each of us to know what is being done in our county about parent reporting-- a need to coordinate our thinking in a concise form available to any administrator, teacher, or study group who is interested in changing or improving their own system of reporting.

This will not be an evaluation of the work now being done, merely reporting. I am sure you will agree that your help will add to the value of this work.

I shall be very happy if you will be able to give the enclosed questionnaire consideration. For your convenience in forwarding it to me as soon as possible, I am enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope. I do sincerely appreciate your help.

Very truly yours,

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
TO REPORT THE TYPE OF PARENT REPORTING
NOW BEING DONE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
IN YAKIMA COUNTY IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FORM I: REPORT CARDS

A. What marks do you use on report cards:

1. Grades of A, B, C, D, F: _____
2. S or U grades: _____
3. Plus or minus grades: _____
4. Numbers of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: _____
5. Notes written by teacher: _____
6. Other: (If so, what types?) _____

B. Do you have different type report cards for each grade? _____

C. Do you have different type report cards for primary and intermediate level? _____

D. Do you have an explanation of your grading system on the card? _____

E. Do students help fill in report cards in primary grades? _____

F. Do students help fill in report cards in intermediate grades? _____

G. Do you report on factors other than content subjects?

1. Attitudes: _____
2. Effort: _____
3. Personality traits: _____
4. Health and cleanliness _____
5. Other (If so, please name.) _____

H. What type of marking system is used for this (refer to G)? _____

- I. How often do you report to parents? _____
- J. Do you have space for parent comment on your cards? _____
- K. Are you satisfied with your reporting method? _____
- L. Do you feel your reporting method should be revised? _____
- M. Has your reporting method been revised recently? _____
- N. Do you have staff committees working on report card revision? _____

FORM II: PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCESA. Individual Conferences

1. When do you have individual conferences?
 - a. in lieu of report cards? _____
 - b. alternated with report cards? _____
 - c. only when problems are involved? _____
 - d. in conjunction with report cards? _____

2. Do you have a form that the teacher uses during or after conference to record information? _____

3. Is information obtained during conferences kept in cumulative record folders? _____

4. Are persons other than teachers used for conferences? (psychologist, nurse, principal, supervisors) _____

5. Do you have a form type for inviting parents to conferences? _____
 - a. note _____
 - b. telephone _____
 - c. form letter _____
 - d. other _____

6. How do you prepare parents for conferences?
 - a. bulletin _____
 - b. form letter _____
 - c. check list _____
 - d. other (if so, please name) _____

7. Do you give parents duplicate sheets of points covered in conferences? _____

8. What materials does teacher have available at time of conference?
- a. evaluation sheet _____
 - b. case history folder _____
 - c. check list _____
 - d. register _____
 - e. grade book _____
 - f. work folder _____
 - g. tests _____
 - h. other (if so, name) _____
9. Does teacher take notes during conference or immediately after? _____
10. Who attends conferences?
- a. mother only _____
 - b. father only _____
 - c. both parents _____
 - d. child and parent _____
11. When are your conferences scheduled?
- a. immediately after school _____
 - b. during school hours _____
 - c. early dismissal _____
 - d. evening conferences _____
12. Where are conferences held?
- a. in a teacher's room _____
 - b. in principal's office _____
 - c. in classroom _____
 - d. in the home _____
 - e. in a regular conference room _____
13. What is the general time given for each conference? _____
14. How often during the year do you have individual conferences with parents? _____

15. How do you evaluate conferences?

- a. check list
- b. file card
- c. written report
- d. follow-up letter to parents
- e. other (if so, please name)

B. Group Conferences:

1. Do you ever hold group conferences? _____
2. What is the general purpose of this type of conference in your school?

FORM III: REPORTS BETWEEN REPORT CARDS AND/OR
CONFERENCES:

- A. Do you send home notes (such as poor work slips) between each reporting time? _____
1. If so, do you have a standard form for this purpose? _____
 2. Are these teacher written notes? _____
 3. Do you report outstanding work as well as poor work at this time? _____
 4. Do these notes request personal conferences on student work? _____
 5. Do you request parent response and return of the note or form? _____
 6. Are these notes sent home by students? _____
 7. Are these notes sent home by mail? _____

(Will you please include a sample of the form used for this if you have one available?)

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Do you ever send bulletins of general school news to parents? _____
2. Do you encourage parent visitation in classrooms? _____
3. Do you encourage parents' participation in class work? (telling stories, lectures, demonstrations?) _____

The questionnaire was sent to the following superintendents of the Yakima County schools:

Mr. Lawrence I. Palmer, Superintendent
District No. 2, Union Gap

Mr. Ned Phillips, Superintendent
District No. Jt. 3, Naches Valley

Miss Helen Peterson, Curriculum Coordinator
District No. 7, Yakima City Schools

Mr. Norman L. Westling, Superintendent
District No. 33, Broadway School (Yakima)

Mr. Frank M. Robertson, Superintendent
District No. 88, White Swan Schools

Mr. Walter A. Hitchcock, Superintendent
District No. 90, Moxee Consolidated Schools

Mr. Victor C. Anderson, Superintendent
District No. 108, Harrah Schools

Mr. Aubrey Dunnington, Principal
District No. 115, Castlevale School (Yakima)

Mr. E. L. Steinke, Superintendent
District No. 119, Selah Schools

Mr. M. F. Garred, Superintendent
District No. 120, Mabton Schools

Mr. Clarence McClure, Superintendent
District No. Jt. 116/200, Grandview Schools

Mr. K. P. Mallery, Superintendent
District No. 201, Sunnyside Schools

Mr. A. K. Temperley, Superintendent
District No. 202, Toppenish Schools

Mr. Clarence Zimmerman, Superintendent
District No. 203, Highland (Coviche)

Mr. J. H. Temby, Superintendent
District No. 204, Granger Schools

Mr. W. Lyndle Moore, Superintendent
District No. 205, Zillah Schools

Mr. P. R. Syrdal, Superintendent
District No. 207, Wapato Schools

Mr. Harold C. Griffith, Superintendent
District No. 208, West Valley Schools (Yakima)

In order to present a better picture of each school district in the Yakima County, it is interesting to have in mind the approximate number of teachers that are involved in the reporting methods of the eighteen districts of the County in grades one through six. This is shown by the following chart. It is necessary to bear in mind that the result is not absolute because during the writing of this paper changes are being made in some of the districts. The compilation of this list was made from the 1956-57 School Directory of Yakima County as published in the office of the County Superintendent of Schools, Mr. A. W. Allen.

District	Elem. Schools	Grades 1-6 Teachers	Special Services
2 Union Gap	1	12	2
3 Naches Valley	2	21	3
7 Yakima City*	15	100*	10
33 Broadway	2	20	3
88 White Swan	1	9	0
90 Moxee	2	21	2
108 Harrah	1	14	2
115 Castlevale	1	12	3
119 Selah	2	33	1
120 Mabton	2	13	0
116/200 Grandview	3	38	3
201 Sunnyside	5	66	2
202 Toppenish	4	46	0
203 Highland	1	16	0
204 Granger	2	21	2
205 Zillah	1	11	0
207 Wapato	4	54	4
208 West Valley	3	34	3

* Exact count not established at time of writing.

CHAPTER XII

TABULATION OF SURVEY

Form I of the questionnaire formulated an indication of the type of marks that are currently being used by the schools in Yakima County. Throughout the entire report of this survey it is necessary to bear in mind that the findings are not absolute. As in all types of endeavor in education when progress is being made changes can occur daily. Although progress may be slow and methodical in some schools within districts, in others it is going ahead rapidly. Within each school system there are different types of changes occurring that conform with the philosophy and standards of individual principals and staff of each school involved. While this is excellent for progress it is difficult to record.

In the eighteen districts within the county there is more general use of the A B C method or its equivalent forms of reporting than any other with eighty-three per cent of the districts reporting use of this method. However, it is also interesting to note on Chart I that this type of reporting is done only in conjunction with other methods, principally those of conferences and notes.

The districts that use the County Report form use the letter (A B C) method of reporting in the intermediate grades and the S and U method in the primary grades.

CHART I

TYPES OF MARKS USED ON REPORT CARDS
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF YAKIMA COUNTY

District School	A B C	S U	f -	1-2-3	Notes	Confer- ences
2 Union Gap	x				x	x
3 Naches Valley	x					x
7 Yakima	x	x	x		x	x
33 Broadway	x	x	x			x
88 White Swan*	x	x				
90 Moxee*	x	x			x	x
108 Harrah*	x	x	x			
115 Castlevale	x	x	x			x
119 Selah				x	x	x
120 Mabton*	x	x			x	
116-200 Grandview						x
201 Sunnyside	x	x	x			x
202 Toppenish	x	x	x		x	
203 Highland*	x	x				
204 Granger*	x	x			x	
205 Zillah*	x	x				x
207 Wapato*	x	x				
208 West Valley						x

* These schools use the regular standard Report Form issued by the County Superintendent's Office.

A more distinct picture of reporting methods in Yakima County may be seen in the answers to the following questions:

I. REPORTING IN CONTENT FIELD:	YES	NO
Schools having different reporting methods for each grade:	0	18
Schools having different reporting methods for primary and intermediate levels:	16	2
Schools having an explanation for their method of reporting on the report form:	18	0
Schools having student participation in reporting in primary grades:	3	15
Schools having student participation in reporting in intermediate grades:	1	17
II. REPORTING ON FACTORS OTHER THAN CONTENT SUBJECTS:		
Schools reporting on attitudes	18	0
Schools reporting on effort	17	0
Schools reporting on personality	17	1
Schools reporting on health and cleanliness	16	1
Schools reporting on social development	2	0

Yakima County is very methodically progressing toward more analytical appraisal of student behavior through guidance in the form of parent reporting. This is shown in the reporting of sixteen of the eighteen schools of the use of notes and conferences in conjunction with the usual report form.

An excellent use of the guidance method in reporting is made in eight districts out of the eighteen in the county by a change from the regular report form to a booklet inviting parent comment and leaving ample space for any comment.

Eight of the superintendents reporting for their districts indicated that they were not satisfied with their present method of reports. Seven were only partially satisfied. Of these seven, three had had report card revision just recently and still were not satisfied completely. Only two of the eighteen superintendents or eleven per cent of the districts reporting in the survey were wholly satisfied with their methods of contacting parents through current report forms.

Because of their dissatisfaction with the present reporting methods in their districts nine of the superintendents felt that the forms should be revised completely and seven felt there was justification for further study and revision as needed to fit their standards and philosophy of education. One district felt the reporting methods in use currently were adequate and commensurate with the philosophy

of the schools in that district.

Since a majority of eleven districts of the eighteen answering the questionnaire indicated as shown in Chart I that they believed in and used individual conferences in conjunction with the usual report form it is interesting to note how these districts make use of this guidance method. Some districts have made group studies of this plan and have derived several different methods of conferencing within their own districts and instructional levels. As shown on Chart II only one school district uses conferences in place of report cards, five districts alternate conferences with the usual report form, six districts use individual conferences as necessary, and seven districts reported using conferences with report cards. All districts deviate at times. The three districts that do not make use of individual conferences have good reason to use only the standard report form because of the type of districts they are. All are farming communities in which transient labor and inconvenience of parent participation in conferences make that method a poor one for reporting.

CHART II

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULING
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF YAKIMA COUNTY

District	School	In place of report cards	Alternated with reports	As neces- sary	With reports
2	Union Gap	x		x	x
3	Naches Valley		x		
7	Yakima		x		
33	Broadway		x		
88	White Swan			x	
90	Moxee			x	x
108	Harrah				
115	Castlevale				x
119	Selah		x		
120	Mabton				x
116-200	Grandview		x		x
201	Sunnyside				x
202	Toppenish				
203	Highland			x	
204	Granger			x	
205	Zillah			x	
207	Wapato				
208	West Valley				x

In Form II of the questionnaire on Parent-Teacher Conferences, it seemed necessary to the writer to leave the answers in tabulation form to see what is being done at a glance. The questions with their answers appear as they were given on the questionnaire on the following pages.

A. INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES:

2. Do you have a form that the teacher uses during or after conference to record information?

8 No

6 Yes

3. Is information obtained during conferences kept in cumulative record folders?

10 Yes

3 No

4. Are persons other than teachers used for conferences? (school psychologist, nurse, principal, supervisors?)

17 When necessary

1 No

5. Do you have a form type for inviting parents to conferences?

5 Notes

5 Telephone

7 Form letter

1 Home Visit

6. How do you prepare parents for conferences?

- 8 Form letters
- 3 Bulletins
- 2 Pamphlets
- 2 No conferences used
- 1 Telephone
- 1 Home visit
- 1 Personal letter

7. Do you give parents duplicate sheets of points covered in conferences?

- 12 No
- 1 Making plans to do so

8. What materials does teacher have available at time of conference?

- 13 case history folder
- 12 work folder
- 12 tests
- 11 grade book
- 9 register
- 7 evaluation sheet
- 3 check list
- 1 anecdotal records

9. Does teacher take notes during conference or immediately after?
- 5 Immediately after
 - 3 During conference
 - 3 Do not take notes
10. Who attends conferences?
- 12 Mother only usually
 - 10 Both parents
 - 8 Father only at times
 - 1 Child and parent
11. When are your conferences scheduled?
- 8 Immediately after school
 - 5 Early dismissal
 - 5 Evening
 - 2 During school time
12. Where are conferences held?
- 8 In a teacher's room
 - 7 In a classroom
 - 3 In principal's office
 - 3 In the home
13. What is the general time given for each conference?
- 9 20-30 minute average
 - 2 As occasion requires

1 40 minutes

1 15 minutes

14. How often during the year do you have individual conferences with parents?

7 When need arises

4 Two regularly
scheduled

2 No set routine

1 When requested

1 Once in fall and
others as necessary

15. How do you evaluate conferences?

6 No set procedure

4 Written report

3 Do not have
conferences

2 Follow-up letter to
parents

1 Teacher-Principal
talks

1 Check list

Of the eighteen districts in the Yakima County Survey, six indicated that they do use group conferences effectively as Chart III shows:

CHART III
EFFECTIVE USE OF GROUP CONFERENCES IN REPORTING

District	School	Purpose of Group Conference
2	Union Gap	Curriculum evaluation and general problems explained
3	Naches Valley	To acquaint parents with characteristics of six-year-olds and what to expect of them in school
7	Yakima	To explain and interpret the school program
90	Moxee	To explain the curriculum methods to first-grade parents
119	Selah	To inform first-grade parents about the general school program and the part they have in it
201	Sunnyside	Information to parents

Although this chart shows that currently these six schools are using group conferences for the indoctrination of parents into the methods and curriculum used for the education of their children there is indication at the time of this writing that some of the schools in the

County feel that they are ready to progress to group conferences on other levels of instruction and reporting.

Nine of the districts reporting do make use of the general school bulletin to inform parents of current and general items of interest concerning the guidance of their children and to invite their participation on matters of school and community interest. This is used in some of the schools in conjunction with methods of reporting other than the usual report form.

Fourteen of the districts encourage parent visitation in classrooms. This is done in different ways relating to the philosophy of the individual district. Some of the districts use the bulletin for this purpose while many of the schools encourage it through the explanation of the marks used on report cards inviting parents to see the schools in action to understand the philosophy underlying that particular marking method.

Of the fourteen districts who do encourage parent visitation, six also carry this a step further and encourage participation in class work through the telling of stories, lectures, and demonstrations and indicate that they have found that many parents have much to offer the children through these methods of participation. Three other districts indicated that they would like to see this used more

in their districts, but that it depended upon the individual teachers how much it was used.

CHART IV

WRITTEN REPORTS BETWEEN REPORT CARDS
AND/OR CONFERENCES

District	School	Standard Form	Teacher-Written Notes
2	Union Gap	x	x
3	Naches Valley		x
7	Yakima	x	x
33	Broadway		
88	White Swan		x
90	Moxee	x	x
108	Harrah*		
115	Castlevale*		
119	Selah	x	x
120	Mabton		x
116-200	Grandview	x	
201	Sunnyside		x
202	Toppenish*		
203	Highland	x	
204	Granger		x
205	Zillah*		
207	Wapato		x
208	West Valley	x	

* These schools did not reply to this section of the questionnaire.

The written report that is sent home between report cards is usually in the form of a poor work slip. Since reports are made in all the County schools at intervals of nine weeks, these reports are sent approximately two weeks before each reporting time, or the seventh week. This informs parents ahead of time of the need for better work by the student if his report is to appear satisfactory.

As indicated it is the general rule that this written report is sent because of poor work, but five schools in the county make an exception of this rule and also report on outstanding work at this time. Three other districts indicated that they encourage it, but it is the business of the individual teachers to carry out the program.

Whether these notes are standard forms or teacher-written notes, twelve of the districts using this method of reporting make use of a guidance method in requesting personal conferences on the student work. Eight of these twelve also request a parent response and return of the note.

Six of the districts send this type of report home with the students and ten resort to the mails for this purpose.

CHAPTER XIII

INTRODUCTION TO A QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDY PARENT THINKING ABOUT PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES IN ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN YAKIMA COUNTY

If a parent is asked at the time of a conference if he feels conferences are beneficial, he will presumably agree that they are, but will probably not make any suggestions for the improvement of them. However, after he has had an opportunity to think back over a period of time of the value that these conferences have had for him and his child, and if he has an opportunity to say what he thinks at a later time, much valuable help may be given to the teacher in preparing for the meetings. To this end, a questionnaire for parents has been prepared and has been completed by a sampling of twenty-five parents.

It is hoped that over a period of time this study may prove its worth in making conferences and informal contacts more successful; or its value may lie in the fact that the parents appreciate the conferences and will tell teachers that they do.

This study embodies only an analysis of first grade conferences because it is felt that it is particularly pertinent to begin the

program of parent-partnership at this age as a foundation for future planning. It is also hoped that through these completed questionnaires more teachers will approach the conference situation with less reservation and more assurance that it will help them to do a good job better. Parents too may realize more fully that schools are dependent upon parent understanding to better educate the children.

If educators talk of the parents as becoming true partners in this business of helping the child to gain more from his school experience, then in turn they must ask parent opinions and invite constructive criticism of the methods used. Much has been done in checking and reporting on the methods that teachers use in conferences but the true picture cannot be obtained unless schools also have official information from parents and tabulate their attitudes and ideas.

A sampling of twenty-five parents whose children have been taught in the Terrace Heights School in Yakima County in the First Grade over a period of ten years has been chosen to answer this questionnaire. These particular people have been chosen because of confidence in their complete honesty and sincere thoughtfulness in answering the questions, and it is believed they will stand firm in their beliefs, but are not intolerant or narrow-minded. They

are people who have shown that they will accept new ideas and are willing to change their opinions if it is proven that a new way is a better way. Some parents were deliberately chosen who, it is known, have had an antipathy towards the school at one time or another, but whose criticism is valued because it is felt it would give a better over-all picture of the parent's outlook on education and will make this questionnaire more valid.

The people chosen have many different occupations--a cross section of people in the Terrace Heights District whose ideas and thoughts would represent a fair sampling of the thinking of people whose children are or have been in our school.

An inadvertent result of the choice of parents also gave a good cross-section of types of children and their problems.

These particular twenty-five parents were chosen through the registrations of children in the school for the past ten years, eliminating any that were similar in background or experience. Before the questionnaire was little more than an idea in embryo, the writer had occasion to see and talk informally with many of these parents. With no exception, all were sincerely interested in this study and graciously accepted the responsibility of filling in a questionnaire. The only reserve expressed was lack of ability to express thoughts on paper. They were assured that it

would be well to write just as they thought, because in editing much of the original freedom is lost and words may become stilted and meaningless.

Later, when the questionnaire was in final form, all twenty-five parents were contacted and again told the reasons for inviting their ideas. Again, without exception, all accepted the responsibility in the spirit in which it was tendered and gave it all the thought and consideration they could. The following tabulation will show the results of their thinking.

CHAPTER XIV

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire for Parents of the Terrace Heights School of Moxee Consolidated School District 90 to Determine Value of Past Conferences (Both Individual and Group) and to Obtain Constructive Criticism Relevant to the Success of Future Conferences

1. Father's name: _____

Occupation: _____

2. Mother's name: _____

Occupation: _____

3. Have you attended group conferences held at school by the first grade teacher? _____

Did father attend? _____

Did mother attend? _____

Did both attend? _____

4. Have you had individual conferences with the first grade teacher? _____

5. Did you feel that you as a parent benefited from these conferences? _____

6. Did you feel that your child benefited directly from these conferences? _____

7. Did father and mother have different ideas about the value of these conferences?
If so, what is father's opinion? _____

If so, what is mother's opinion?

8. Have you in any way changed your attitude toward school since attending these conferences? _____

Will you comment here about the change in your attitude please?

9. Did you feel that the school is a place you enjoyed visiting? _____

a. Did you go to school only when you had a problem? _____

b. Did you go only because your first grader asked you? _____

c. Did you go only when there was a program or assembly in which your child participated? _____

d. Did you go to Open House in the Fall? _____

e. Did you visit the classroom informally? _____

10. Do you feel that these conferences should take place in the

Principal's Office? _____

In the Classroom? _____

In a teacher's room? _____

Why do you feel the conference should be held in this place?

11. Did you feel that the contacts you had at school would be more beneficial if you talked

Directly with the teacher? _____

With the principal? _____
 With both teacher and principal? _____

12. Did you feel free to talk at these conferences? _____

13. Did you feel that the teacher was sincerely interested in meeting and knowing you? _____

a. Did you feel that you and the teacher are partners in helping your child to learn? _____

14. Do you think first grade conferences are important in helping you understand how the school is trying to help your child? _____

15. Were you given time to ask questions at these conferences? _____

16. At what time did you prefer having these conferences?

During school time if a helper takes over teacher duties? _____

Directly after school so the children will not be around? _____

In the evening so that both father and mother may attend? _____

Other suggestions? _____

17. What are some things you like to hear discussed at group meetings? Use this check list and suggest others if you wish.

Reading Readiness _____

Social adjustment of first graders _____

Report cards _____

Testing program _____

Work habits of first graders _____

Kindergarten _____

Lunch room policies and routine _____
 School Bus regulations _____
 School policy and rules _____
 What children will learn during the year _____
 Discipline _____
 Explanation of seatwork and parents'
 share in it _____
 Value of Visual Aids _____
 Special School Workers (psychologist,
 nurse, etc.) _____
 Can you think of others? If so, write
 them on the back of this sheet) _____

18. Would you like duplicate sheets of points covered in the conference to take home? _____
19. Would you feel free to have the teacher come to your home to visit? _____
20. Would you read bulletins or newsletters about general school policies if they were sent home? _____
21. Please make any comments here concerning the conferences. If you have any questions about them, don't hesitate to say so. I shall be happy to have any suggestions or criticisms you would care to make.

CHAPTER XV

TABULATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Question One and Question Two asked for a statement of Father's Name and Occupation and Mother's Name and Occupation. For purposes of tabulation the names are not necessary except as they are on the original questionnaires which will be kept in a permanent file. They will be valuable as reference in future contacts. However, it might be said here that all parents who answered the items listed were perfectly willing that their names should be used if necessary for the validity of the questioning. They were also in accord with the feeling that any problems their own children had could be expressed as deemed necessary to clarify any points.

For the purpose of tabulation, each questionnaire is numbered from one to twenty-five and each quoted comment is followed by a number--the number on the questionnaire. Thus, if a check should be necessary for verification, it can easily be found.

The occupations of both father and mother preceded by questionnaire number will be found on the following pages.

OCCUPATION OF PARENTS

1. Father: Insurance Company District Manager
Mother: Homemaker; part-time library helper
2. Father: Bakery Truck Driver
Mother: Homemaker
3. Father: Cattle Rancher; G. E. Pile Operator
Mother: Part-time Office Worker
4. Father: Savings and Loan Executive
Mother: Homemaker
5. Father: Business Manager, Grange Supply
Mother: Homemaker
6. Father: Farmer (Orchards)
Mother: Homemaker
7. Father: Orthodontist
Mother: Homemaker
8. Father: Farmer-Gardener
Mother: Clerk in Jewelry Store
9. Father: Veterinarian
Mother: Homemaker; part-time cannery worker
10. Father: Manager Building Supplies
Mother: Free-Lance Television Programs
11. Father: Manager Retail Grocery Store
Mother: Homemaker
12. Father: Service Station Operator, Bookkeeper, Mechanic
Mother: Homemaker
13. Father: Instrumental Technician, G. E.
Mother: Homemaker

14. Father: Architectural Draftsman
Mother: Homemaker
15. Father: Cinematographer (for television)
Mother: Homemaker
16. Father: Office Manager, Employment Office
Mother: Part-time Cannery Worker
17. Father: Business Manager of local Union
Mother: Homemaker; part-time cook
18. Father: Minister
Mother: Teacher
19. Father: Purchasing Agent Lumber Company
Mother: Homemaker; part-time church secretary
20. Father: Junior College Teacher
Mother: Elementary School Teacher
21. Father: Veteran's Administration--Supervisor of
Vocational Rehabilitation
Mother: Homemaker
22. Father: High School Teacher
Mother: Part-time Secretarial Work
23. Father: Investment Counsellor
Mother: Homemaker
24. Father: Curriculum Coordinator
Mother: Homemaker
25. Grand- (Lives with grandmother as guardian)
mother: Cook and farmer

QUESTION THREE:

Have you attended group conferences held at school by the first grade teacher?

Did Both Attend? 14

Did Mother Attend? 8

Neither Attended? 2

Did Father Attend? 1

Comments:

"The only group meetings we remember are the discussions at PTA meetings. Some of these were arranged principally for first-grade problems."

(Note: Actually the meeting was a group conference for first grade parents and teacher four years ago.)

"Father had to stay home to baby sit."

"Sorry!"

QUESTION FOUR:

Have you had individual conferences with the first grade teacher?

25 Yes

0 No

Comments:

"Informally" (18)

"At time of visiting school" (11)

QUESTION FIVE:

Did you feel that you as a parent benefited from these conferences?

25 Yes

0 No

Comments: "We more fully understood our problem."
(5)

"Teacher could point out just where child's weaknesses were and suggest how to give help at home." (11)

"Definitely." (12, 22)

QUESTION SIX:

Did you feel that your child benefited directly from these conferences?

25 Yes

0 No

Comments: "Yes, right away!" (3)

"It helped us to better understand him and his problems." (5)

"Definitely." (10)

QUESTION SEVEN:

Did father and mother have different ideas about the value of conferences?

24 No

0 Yes

1 No answer

What is Father's Opinion?

Comments: "We both felt that our child was in very capable hands and that he would receive expert training, love, understanding and guidance, necessary to his further development. We realized that new techniques would make his learning easier and we

appreciated knowing how to be of help at home without contradicting his teacher." (15)

"We both think they are very important. He would rather I would go and report to him. Have our discussion together then in our own way help both teacher and child as the need arises. It upsets our boy if he thinks Dad is checking. Mother's visits seem natural to him." (12)

"The conferences were quite helpful to child and parents." (8)

"It helped us both to understand the daily routine of school and what was expected of our child and of us as parents." (14)

"Because we are both convinced of the value of the conferences." (20)

"No, we both had a better idea of what was expected of our child and what we could do to help him meet this goal." (22)

What is Mother's Opinion?

Comments: "Helpful and beneficial to child and parents." (8)

"I think it is important for both to meet and know the first grade teacher and to know exactly what she is trying to do and what she expects of your child and you as parents and then to do everything in your power to see that her goals are reached. Parents need to take the teachers advice and ideas. It is she who is keeping up with the education program." (12)

"When teacher and mother both understood that the child's eyes were not ready for reading, the child's anxiety about reading was much less." (14)

"I felt I found out more what she or the teacher was trying to teach or get across to my child." (25)

QUESTION EIGHT:

Have you in any way changed your attitude toward school since attending these conferences?

15 Yes

6 No

4 (Answered by comment only)

Will you comment here about the change in your attitude, please?

Comments:

"Became cognizant of teacher's personal interest and problems." (1)

"Our feeling is of high regard for teachers and principals of schools. This, however, is not too different to the feeling we have always had. We do feel teachers have a tremendous responsibility." (8)

"I found that if my child is trying hard he does get some credit for the effort even though his work is very poor." (4)

"A sincere interest is shown each individual child and through parent cooperation, the teacher is trying to attain the best possible solution to certain problems." (5)

"Mostly in the reading part of the school system. I thought it odd the way it was

taught until we discussed it and finally saw the results." (6)

"I have found the schools more aware of the individual child and his abilities than I realized. Any problems or weakness they have are immediately recognized and special help is given." (7)

"We felt that our children were being treated as individuals, and that no matter what problems should arise, we were free to speak with the teacher or principal and work them out together." (9)

"I feel that both Mr. Brown and I came to a better understanding of our child, and the school she was attending--as well as their relations to each other and to us through these conferences." (10)

"Can see where some help at home is beneficial." (11)

"I feel that I am definitely a part of Jimmy's education, as it is stressed that if parents and teachers work closely together your child will gain by it. I think the conferences I had with Jimmy's first grade teacher has made Jimmy a much better student as I have been made aware of his weaknesses so I could carry on at home what the teacher was doing in class." (12)

"While it didn't change my attitude it did show me that the school was giving what I expected of it." (13)

"We came away with a feeling that the teacher has our child's welfare in mind. Also that the teacher was looking ahead to the years of schooling to come and was pointing our child in that direction." (14)

"No, but we had a more thorough understanding of the scope of modern education." (15)

"You can understand more of the problems that a teacher has to face with 30 first graders." (17)

"It helped to understand the method of teaching and my child better." (19)

"We were happy to find that the teacher regarded our child as an individual and not as just one of the many." (20)

"This confirmed our belief that the school is sincerely interested in the child's needs and development." (21)

"Since attending these conferences I came to a better understanding of so-called 'progressive' methods of education, and had a more relaxed attitude about the progress of our child." (22)

"I also got to know the teacher and understand what stumbling blocks they were up against with not only my child but others too. Also think one should just drop in and visit often as they can and see what is taught and how the child reacts and what the teacher is like." (25)

QUESTION NINE:

Did you feel that school is a place you enjoyed visiting?

25 Yes

0 No

Comment:

"Very much!" (12)

QUESTION NINE (a):

Did you go to school only when you had a problem?

22 No

0 Yes

Comments:

"Principally." (8)

"Class visitation was an enjoyable time. The teacher used the visitation as a challenge to the class." (22)

QUESTION NINE (b):

Did you go only because your first grader asked you?

22 No

0 Yes

Comments:

"I have tried to stay away more than I liked to, thinking that I may be in the way. I never visit but what I learn something that definitely helps me as a parent. Each visit makes me appreciate teachers more." (12)

"Partly. The pressure put by a first grader to attend sometimes was the added zest needed to put forth the effort to go." (13)

"Mostly." (20)

"But this was the most urgent reason." (21)

"But rather to satisfy myself as to his ability to get along in a group." (22)

QUESTION NINE (c):

Did you go only when there was a program or assembly in which your child participated?

22	No
0	Yes
3	No answer

QUESTION NINE (d):

Did you go to Open House in the fall?

21	Yes
1	No
3	No answer

QUESTION NINE (e):

Did you visit the classroom informally?

23	Yes
1	No
1	No answer

Comment:

"Many times--my preference." (12)

QUESTION TEN:

Do you feel that these conferences should take place in the:

Principal's Office?

24	No
0	Yes
1	No answer

In the classroom?

19 Yes

3 No

3 No answer

In a teacher's room set aside for
the purpose of conferences?

19 No

3 Yes

3 No answer

QUESTION TEN, PART TWO:

Why do you feel the conference should be
held in this place?

(Teacher's room)

Comment:

"Teacher and parent more at ease." (1)

(Classroom)

Comments:

"I feel the conference should be held in
the classroom because you can see what
the child has done and the method in how
the teacher is teaching him." (2)

"A classroom conference seems more
informal to me." (3)

"It [the classroom] seems the best place
because you are surrounded with the work
your child is doing. On the blackboard
and bulletins you see their work and can
better realize that every child has good
and bad subjects for him. Most first
graders aren't good in everything." (4)

"The classroom is the place where the child spends his time and it gives a more complete picture of his school activities." (5)

"Any work, problems, or references needed in discussion would be in the classroom." (6)

"Pupil's material is available if you meet in his classroom as well as the teacher's records and books. Gives the parent a chance to see where his child lives at school." (7)

"Because we feel the teacher can better explain her methods in her own room and we can see clearer by the work our children have been doing, surrounding us." (9)

"Because the teacher is in her own familiar environment in the classroom--with tangible evidence of the child's progress and problems near at hand. Moreover, I feel the classroom provides a less formal setting, which makes conversation easier." (10)

"Can be in same surroundings as your child and see the progress reports and type of work being done in relation to other students." (11)

"In the teacher's home room, you are in the child's surroundings. You have an opportunity to see actually what he is doing, where he sits, where and who his friends are. Seems to me it gave me closer contact with teacher and problem. The principal's office is only for business, not little problems to be discussed frankly." (12)

"In the classroom where the child is working, it lets the parents know what environment, and get the feel, and see the work

done by the child." (13)

"This is where the child spends so much of her time. I like to visualize her doing the everyday things of classroom activity." (14)

"All material to be explained is available and the room itself tells of the everyday activities of the child and teacher." (15)

"To be familiar with environment and work being done." (16)

"It gives a parent a chance to see how his child is doing in class. And then later can discuss his problem with the teacher and how to help or correct said problem." (17)

"It is the scene of the child's daily activity, the setting in which she studies, etc." (18)

(Teacher's Room)

Comments:

"Because it gives the parent and teacher a better chance to talk privately if necessary." (19)

"The classroom is the child's home away from home and we enjoyed being there." (20)

"Here is where the teacher and the child meet, and here is where the child's work can be seen and compared with that of other children in the room." (22)

"Because that is a sort of a home for the child and he should, or I think he feels more at ease in his own classroom than anywhere else." (25)

QUESTION ELEVEN:

Did you feel that the contacts you had at school were more beneficial if you talked

a. Directly to the teacher?

24 Yes

0 No

1 Sometimes

b. With the principal?

20 No

5 Sometimes

c. With the teacher and principal together?

14 No

0 Yes

9 Sometimes

Comments on a.:

"She the teacher deals more directly with the problem." (11)

"I think you should know the principal, but the teacher spends the most time with your child and knows what you want to know to be able to help your child be a better pupil and a better citizen." (12)

Comments on c.:

"Only when you have a personal problem." (9)

"In extreme cases." (10)

"In case of a real problem perhaps that would be necessary." (17)

"It would depend upon my problem." (25)

QUESTION TWELVE:

Did you feel free to talk at these conferences whether they were group or individual?

25 Yes

0 No

Comment:

"Yes, but it is easier to talk in individual conferences." (7)

QUESTION THIRTEEN:

Did you feel that the teacher was sincerely interested in meeting and knowing you?

23 Yes

1 Emphatically

1 Definitely

0 No

a. Did you feel that you and the teacher are partners in helping your child to learn?

25 Yes

0 No

QUESTION FOURTEEN:

Do you think first grade conferences are important in helping you understand how the school is trying to help your child?

25 Yes

0 No

Comments: "Especially so if a child is slow." (5)
 "Yes, you are re-acquainted with new methods of teaching how to help." (11)

QUESTION FIFTEEN:

Were you given time to ask questions at these conferences?

24	Yes
1	Some
0	No

Comments: "Felt more free to do so at individual conferences." (5)

QUESTION SIXTEEN:

At what time did you prefer having these conferences?

a. During school time if a helper takes over the duties of the teacher?

21	No
4	Yes

b. Directly after school so the children will not be around?

16	No
7	Yes

c. In the evening so that both mother and father may attend?

16	Yes
9	No

Comments:

"The evening would be all right but most good teachers work long hours and should not be asked to give up more evenings than are absolutely necessary." (4)

"Individual conferences should be after school but group conferences should be in the evening so both parents may attend." (5)

"I feel that both parents should be present at these affairs." (17)

"Fathers are usually not free to come in the day time." (20)

"I don't think the children should be around any time that it is held." (25)

"Both teachers and parents are apt to be tired after school and not too relaxed which might prevent a feeling of freedom and willingness to understand." (8)

"It might be helpful to have someone to take children to a play room so parents who were unable to get a sitter might attend." (13)

QUESTION SEVENTEEN: What are some things you like to hear discussed at group meetings? Use this check list and suggest others if you wish.

Explanation of seatwork and how parents should share in it	22
Work habits of first graders	20
How parents can work with the school	19
Reading readiness and what it means	18
What children will learn during the year by subjects	18
Social adjustment of first graders	18

Testing program	17
School policy and rules on playground, halls, and classroom	16
Discipline	14
Value of Visual Aids	14
Report Cards	13
School bus regulations	11
Special School workers such as County Psychologist, School Nurse, Speech Therapist, and others	11
Lunch room policies and routine	9
Kindergarten	3

Can you think of others? (None suggested)

Comments: "Child's attitude toward subjects, and if child is doing as well as she is capable of doing."

"We really enjoyed our first grade group meeting. The principal introduced himself, then introduced the teacher and left. The teacher took us briefly through an entire first grade day, explained what they would learn and do in that year and then had a question and answer period. Of all my associations with the school, I think this was the most pleasant and informative. A real good start for parents." (12) (Note: This was six years ago.)

"Many parents want to help the child at home. Should they? And in what way?" (19)

"What responsibilities do children need to be able to assume before starting school, such as--tying shoe laces, attending to their own toilet needs, etc.?" (20)

QUESTION EIGHTEEN: Would you have liked duplicate sheets of points covered in the conference to take home?

19 Yes

5 No

1 No answer

Comments: "No, they are well explained in the meeting." (12)

"Yes--can be discussed with husband point by point." (11)

QUESTION NINETEEN: Would you feel free to have the teacher come to your home to visit?

24 Yes

1 No answer

Comments: "By all means, as I say one should get to know the teacher and one surely can find no better place than in your own home." (25)

"As a friend, yes, but not to discuss child." (17)

"I'd love it. The coffee pot is always on."
(12)

QUESTION TWENTY: Would you read bulletins or newsletters about general school policies if they were sent home?

25 Yes

0 No

Comments: "I'd like that. A parent would feel he was keeping up." (12)

QUESTION TWENTY-ONE: Please make any comments here concerning the conferences we have had. If you have any questions about them, don't hesitate to say so. I shall be happy to have any suggestions or criticisms you would care to make.

Comments: "I think the most important factor in parent-teacher conferences is the pride the child takes in her parents coming to school and meeting their teacher." (3)

"I enjoyed it very much and have no criticism." (4)

"In our particular situation we feel as though we were very capably and adequately taken care of through individual conferences. We feel that the individual conference was a must in our case. However, the group conference at the beginning of the year was a great help in giving us the over-all picture of what a first grader is expected to do and how parents can help and methods used." (5)

"I found group conferences most helpful in acquainting me with the program, subjects, methods and routine. I found individual conferences especially helpful in watching a handicapped child and deciding whether she could remain in grade school or should have special instruction." (7)

"We feel that much more is gained by direct conversation with the teacher than group conferences." (9)

"Our child's first grade experience in Terrace Heights is to be treasured. With _____ guidance she adjusted exceptionally well. She was a first grader with nursery and kindergarten experience and because of her previous opportunities could well have found herself unhappy with children who had led more sheltered lives. More than that, she might have developed social traits which would have proved unsatisfactory throughout her schooling experience. Through love and patience _____ helped her channel her energies and abilities in the right direction--and now, in the fifth grade--and a wonderful child, as well as an excellent student--she enjoys school tremendously. She makes friends easily, and she has developed a sympathetic understanding for people and situations, whomever or whatever they may be. These things are surely the result, not only of interested parents--but of interested teachers as well . . ." (10)

"I think they are educational for parents. Are these to be used instead of report cards in the future? Can more helps be suggested for children who are poor readers?" (11)

"My only criticism I'd have would be that there is only one _____. Every first grader should have the opportunity of perfect combination of mother love and teacher abilities." (12)

"If the conference could be held to as short (a time) as possible--even to two visits if not too long. Sometimes father will attend two short ones, but doesn't like long ones." (13)

"I wonder if too much time would be taken introducing parents to each other. Many details such as the year's work cannot be retained by the parent and should be in writing rather than an oral presentation. We sat too long the last time. It might be valuable at a group conference to spend some time in discussing individual problems as presented by the parents. Parents are helped by knowing that others have similar problems." (14)

"A group conference at the time of registration in the spring was helpful. Also, if teacher's time permitted, an individual conference by appointment would help even though there are no special problems." (15)

"I think they have made a better parent and teacher relation--and speaking as a parent, made me feel easier to discuss my child and his problems." (17)

Verbally, this person said she wished that the same feeling could continue over into high school work and that she had talked it over with many other parents who said the same thing.

"We need to assume that the parents know nothing in planning for the initial first grade conferences." (20)

"We think that conferences are important and yet when the teacher has a large class they must be held to a minimum. Group discussion would help conserve the teacher's time." (21)

"My only suggestion would be that there might be a follow-up group conference in the spring to discuss progress and accomplishments during the year." (22)

"Again I say teachers should get together with the parents as often as they can in the home or otherwise so as to get better acquainted with them. It works both ways. I find this is so true." (25)

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The work done in Yakima County on parent reporting is synonymous with the progress of good education. In general, the educators of the eighteen districts represented in the survey are analytically checking the present reporting methods to validate their worth in presenting information to parents. They have shown a trend toward making the use of more than one method of reporting the rule rather than the exception. They are constantly alert to new methods that may be successful and commensurate with the objectives they have set forth in their philosophy of education.

In the instances where progress in parent reporting has not been rapid as a guidance method of motivating the children in the elementary schools of the county, there have been excellent reasons set forth that parent conferences particularly are not good methods to use in these particular situations.

There has been proof that the parents are willing to assume their share of the responsibility in guiding the children they have reared. They seem anxious and ready to do so if they know where

and how to begin. The schools of Yakima County are showing the parents how they may become partners in education.

There are many excellent indications that Yakima County shall continue to be analytical about the subject of parent reporting in terms of better student motivation and growth.

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