

1959

## Parent-Teacher Conference Practices of the Elementary Schools in Chelan and Douglas Counties, Washington

Gene Anderson  
*Central Washington University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Methods Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Anderson, Gene, "Parent-Teacher Conference Practices of the Elementary Schools in Chelan and Douglas Counties, Washington" (1959). *All Master's Theses*. 206.  
<https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd/206>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@cwu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@cwu.edu).

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE PRACTICES OF THE ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOLS IN CHELAN AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES, 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  
Gene Anderson  
August 1959

STATE-LEVEL GOVERNMENT FACTORS OF THE ELEMENTARY

STUDIES IN COLORADO AND DOUGLAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

5771.3

A552p

SPECIAL  
COLLECTION

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

Central Washington College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

94147

by

Gene Anderson

August 1959

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

---

Eldon E. Jacobsen, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

---

Roy R. Wilson

---

M. L. Pettit

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The investigator wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Dr. Eldon E. Jacobsen for assistance and suggestions given during the planning and writing of this paper.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	3
Importance of the Study . . . . .	3
Limitation of the Study . . . . .	5
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	6
The Need for Parent-Teacher Conferences . . . . .	7
Difficulties with Parent-Teacher Conferences . . . . .	10
Types of Conferences . . . . .	12
Places for the Conference . . . . .	14
Time of the Conference . . . . .	19
The school-day conferences . . . . .	21
The after-school conference . . . . .	21
The home conference . . . . .	22
Length of the Conference . . . . .	23
Scheduling the Conference . . . . .	24
Guidelines for Conducting the Conference . . . . .	26
Evaluating and Recording the Conference . . . . .	34
III. RESEARCH PROCEDURE . . . . .	37
Questionnaire . . . . .	37
Distribution of the Questionnaire . . . . .	37
Tabulation of the Questionnaire . . . . .	38
IV. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE PRACTICES . . . . .	39

CHAPTER	PAGE
Item by Item Analysis . . . . .	39
Opinionnaire Results . . . . .	55
V. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS . . . . .	58
Literature Summary . . . . .	58
Research Summary . . . . .	59
Implications . . . . .	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	65
APPENDIX . . . . .	68
A. Parent-Teacher Conference Notification	
Bulletins . . . . .	68
B. Parent-Teacher Conference Scheduling Form . . . . .	73
C. Parent-Teacher Conference Records Form . . . . .	75

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

Parent-teacher conferences have been a part of the educational plan from time immemorial. Earlier in our educational history, parents and teacher talking together about the child was a natural thing. Each time there was a community gathering these informal conferences took place. The practice was discontinued after the rapid increase in school enrollment and the traditional type of reporting by report cards. Recently, however, this technique has returned to the education scene. It is now a standard part of the modern school program. In 1953 Barr (1:1) stated that schools had adopted the conference as one means of reporting to parents, either as a supplement to or in lieu of the report card.

More and more responsibility for the total development of the child is being turned over to outside agencies by the family. An untold number of activities formerly carried on by the family as a unit are now delegated to agencies such as the church, boy scouts, camp fire girls, service clubs, and the school. Of all the agencies, the school probably has the child the greater amount of time. D'Evelyn (7:92) says if the school accepts its responsibility for the personality growth of the child as well as for



his intellectual growth, close liaison with the parents becomes a necessity.

There is no wonder way of reporting pupil progress to parents. Whatever way or combination is used, everyone will not be satisfied all of the time. The parent who is concerned about his youngster's educational growth ordinarily wants many kinds of reports to come to him in many ways. Hymes (12:147) states that the face-to-face conference has many virtues.

The parent-teacher conference might well be education's answer to a need of closer home-school relations on a more personal basis. There is something very important to be gained by teacher and parents talking directly with each other. The home has the child, or the immediate direction of him, a greater percentage of the time than any other agency. The school, second to the home in the direction of the child, should maintain close relations with the home for optimal educational benefits. The total development of the child can be guided better with the teacher and the parents understanding the child as well as each other. Because of this, the parent-teacher conference becomes more than a mere technique to report pupil progress in his academic studies. A close relation between teacher and parents takes into account the child and his total development.

## I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Reporting pupil progress to parents has been a problem of major concern to educators for many years. The techniques and methods used have been many and varied. One of these, parent-teacher conference, is receiving recent emphasis.

The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to attempt to disclose how frequently and to what extent parent-teacher conferences are being used as a means of reporting to and counseling with parents in the elementary schools of Chelan and Douglas counties in Washington State; (2) to examine contemporary literature regarding parent-teacher conferences, and (3) to draw implications about current practices in Chelan and Douglas counties.

## II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The trend toward use of parent-teacher conferences is increasing, but schools are slow to put into practice new techniques. To the knowledge of the writer, there has been no research in Chelan and Douglas counties to determine the status of parent-teacher conferences. D'Evelyn stated that counseling is rapidly becoming a recognized responsibility of the teachers of young children and that for effective counseling with children understanding between

parents and teachers is an effective prerequisite (7:preface).

It was intended that this study reveal information about parent-teacher conferences that would be valuable to educators. It is important to the educators of Chelan and Douglas counties to know the status and implications of the parent-teacher conference activity in the two-county area. For three additional reasons, this is an important study: (1) interest in parent-teacher conferences is high; (2) several schools are already conducting conferences; (3) and a large number of schools are in the process of beginning a conference program.

Educators will have to carry on a program of continued study and evaluation for understanding and success of the conferences. A parent-teacher conference should never be mistaken for haphazard or superficial chit-chat. Langdon and Stout (13:4) explain that this talking together by the teacher and parents has a serious purpose, although one would hope that the seriousness would never preclude chuckles of enjoyment over the youngster's performances and satisfaction in his achievement.

For the following reasons, it is the opinion of the investigator that study of this problem would be beneficial: (1) inauguration of a parent-teacher conference program entails careful study and planning, and (2) continued

operation of a conference program entails constant evaluation and modification.

### III. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to a specific area, Chelan and Douglas counties. Because of school responsibilities on the part of the writer, it was impossible to visit every school and interview every educator concerned in the study. It was decided that a questionnaire would be used to gather pertinent data from the elementary principals in the area. The study was further limited by excluding the one-room schools of Winton, Wenatchee Heights, Stehekin, Douglas, Shiloh, Farmer, Palisades, and Withrow.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature in the area of parent-teacher conferences is becoming more abundant. Many books, theses, and articles have been written on the broad topic of reporting pupil progress to parents. It is sometimes thought that the parent-teacher conference is just another way of reporting pupil progress to parents. On the other hand, indications are that the parent-teacher conference is more than a new technique to report pupil progress. The conference is a two-way street where the parent can learn not only about academic progress but also the total development of the child. The teacher can begin to understand the child and the family. Four valuable by-products result from the parent-teacher conference: (1) the home and school are brought closer together, (2) home-school relations are improved, (3) the parents know the environment of the school where their child spends his school hours, and (4) the parent and teacher become better acquainted. Langdon and Stout contend that one of the purposes served by parent and teacher talking is their coming to think of each other as real people rather than just abstractions (13:12).

## I. THE NEED FOR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

With the introduction of the philosophy that the school is responsible for more than academic development of the child, report cards were modified to give account of social, emotional, and physical progress as well as academic. This new philosophy caused such an upheaval in the make-up of report cards that the reverberations are still with us. Many types of marks were tried, such as S and U; plus, check, and minus; A, B, C, D, and F; columns for checking normal progress, marked progress, and improvement needed, and many others. The confusion and diversity of reporting methods led to the need for better reporting and counseling.

The educator is now returning to the idea of the parents and the teacher talking together about the child. According to Langdon and Stout (13:1), it is a very natural thing for the teacher who lives with the child at school and the parent who lives with him at home to get together to compare notes. This is a parent-teacher conference. One of the practical features of the conference method is its adaptability to gradual change without sacrificing its original aims. D'Evelyn contends that the parent-teacher conference is not an adjunct to the school program or curriculum but an integral part of it (7:92). The child, for whom the school exists, is a part of the school and a part of the

home. If the child is a part of the school and a part of the home, then the natural conclusion follows that discussion about the child is a part of the curriculum.

Children want their parents and teacher to know each other. Take, for example, the enthusiasm of a child pointing out his teacher at a school affair or a chance meeting on the street in town. There are two main parts in a child's life. One is at home, and the other is at school. The parents and teacher talking together will bring these two parts closer together into a smoother running life for the child. It is possible that the teacher will pull the child this way and the parents will push him another. Without talking together, the parents and teacher run the risk of never getting together on their pushes and pulls. Hymes suggests a philosophy to aid the dilemma, "Accept people as they are, satisfy needs, and you open up the door to improvement" (12:153).

The attitudes and relationships learned at home are manifest in school. Likewise, the expectations and learnings of the school are taken home. This can be illustrated by either problem situation or appropriate behavior. The fifth grader who is heard cursing on the playground doesn't turn off the language that is common usage at home the minute he arrives at school. The father of a second grader is appalled to find his son finger painting with a pan of

oil freshly drained from the family car. All of these things, appropriate or inappropriate to the setting, are a part of the child's living. The greater understanding a teacher has of family attitudes and human relationships, the more effectively he can teach the youngster. Teachers can tell parents about happenings at school when the child can not sufficiently interpret them. This will give the parents a better understanding of the school and their child in relationship to the school.

Most parents appreciate a teacher's interest in their child, the fact that someone besides themselves are concerned and care about what happens to him. Of course, it is a different type of concern. Nevertheless, the concern is present, and that is important to the parents. The parents may pick up some minute idea of school from the child and their own memory of their school days. With the constant change in education, however, the parents will be confused by little bits of information brought home by the child. The teacher, talking with the parents, can fill in the gaps left by the youngster. The teacher is in a position to give more information than the child as well as to tell about things the child would not have thought important.

In speaking of the need of the parent-teacher conference, Langdon and Stout (13:9) stated that one wonders whether a teacher can possibly understand a child without



knowing and talking with his parents. The "parents" are just a list of names until the teacher begins to know them and match Johnny with Mr. and Mrs. Jones or Margie with Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox. All the bits of information picked up help the teacher to know why Johnny does what he does and why Margie doesn't want to do certain things. Billy watches television from the time he gets home until midnight every night. He is supposed to do his chores but never gets around to them. Mike cannot watch television until his chores are finished and must go to bed at a reasonable time, although not the same time every night. Jennie gets an allowance but has to account for every penny of it. Tom gets no allowance but earns his own money, spending it as he pleases, with parents giving friendly advice once in a while. The personal fund of knowledge acquired by the teacher is invaluable in helping relate the child's reading, writing, and arithmetic to his out-of-school experiences. Talking together is a very important part of the curriculum and can be helpful to child, parents, teacher, and administrator.

## II. DIFFICULTIES WITH PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Like any other type of reporting, the parent-teacher conference is not without its disadvantages. It is expensive in time, energy, and money. D'Evelyn states:

There are three main difficulties in the way of successful individual parent-teacher conferences in many schools today. One is lack of training for this work on the part of the teachers; another is lack of understanding of the meaning of the parent-teacher on the part of administrators; and third is a lack of time and energy on the part of teachers because of heavy class loads and inadequate provision for such conferences in the regular school program (7:93-94).

Along the same lines, Strang mentions that:

Most of the disadvantages of the parent-teacher conferences arise from faults in the guidance program--teachers who are poorly qualified or unprepared for their guidance responsibilities, a heavy teaching load that leaves no free time for conference, inadequate pupil personnel records, and lack of opportunity to learn the guidance technique they need (16:32).

Parents, too, find weaknesses in the parent-teacher conference method of reporting and counseling. Barr lists eight faults that parents find:

1. Teachers interrupt before the parent is finished telling something.
2. Teachers "tell" the parents what to do.
3. Teachers are patronizing.
4. Teachers build attitudes of resistance in the parents.
5. Parents did not know how long to stay.
6. Parents could have been better prepared.
7. Teachers need more training in conferences.
8. Conference lacks specifics, e. g. "Child is doing all right" (1:11).

Many different types of parent-teacher conferences are held. Despite their difficulties, all are important; some are more valuable than others.

### III. TYPES OF CONFERENCES

Langdon and Stout (13:Ch.XII), among others, mention that conferences could be classified into three types: (1) planned or scheduled conferences, (2) incidental conferences, and (3) telephone conferences.

The planned or scheduled conference is the type that happens because of a conscious intent that the teacher and parents should talk together about the child. A certain time and place are designated and some thought is given as to what will be talked about and what is hoped to be accomplished. This type of conference may serve as a get-acquainted meeting or it may be used to report pupil progress or exchange information about some problem that has come up. Whatever the reason for the teacher and parent talking together, it is important enough to be thoughtfully planned. A great number of planned conferences take place in schools not purporting to conduct a full scale conference program. These conferences are valuable and must not be overlooked when thinking of the frequency of parent-teacher conference activity. It may be initiated by parents, teacher, administrator, and even the child. In most cases, however, the incidental conference is initiated by the parents or child.

The incidental conference has no set time or place.

The parents may plan to talk with the teacher at Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, but no previous arrangements or notifications are made. This is still classified as an incidental conference. Usually the parents and teacher are on some other mission when a chance meeting opens the door for a chat. It may be at a super-market, social affair, or church meeting.

Third is the telephone conference. This is sometimes not even thought of as a conference. Conversely, however, it is more a planned conference than the incidental conference. Either the teacher, parent, or principal deemed it necessary to plan and execute a phone call. The teacher is usually the one who initiates this type of conference. The parents would be hesitant to call for the teacher at school because it would take her away from her classroom. The face-to-face relationship is absent from this type of conference. This can be an asset or a liability, depending on the circumstances. Shy parents (or a shy teacher) may initiate a conference over the telephone when otherwise the thing discussed would have been put off or never discussed at all. After the call, the face-to-face conference may be a more pleasant meeting than first thought. The warm cordiality and interest of the teacher may cause the parent to even look forward to meeting him. It is also true that the telephone serves a more useful purpose after a face-to-

face meeting of the parents and teacher. They know what each other look like, and this is helpful. Facial expressions are gestures, often telling more than words, only possible in the face-to-face conference. For this reason the absence of the person is a liability.

Another asset of the telephone conference is that parents will voice a complaint over the telephone when they might not in person. Since they cannot see facial expressions while complaining, they are not affected by possible teacher disapproval. When complaints exist, they should be expressed, whether by telephone or otherwise.

#### IV. PLACES FOR THE CONFERENCE

For the most part, conferences seem to be held in three places: (1) the school, (2) the home, and (3) chance meeting places. This is because of the three types of conferences. There is a definite relationship between the type of conference and the place where they are held.

First, the school conference will be discussed. Having the conference at school is a big time saver for the teacher. When a teacher has twenty-five to thirty-five conferences, time becomes very valuable. If these conferences are scheduled during the afternoon over a three-day period, the teacher can be most efficient. On the other hand, if home visits are used, it may take several weeks to complete

thirty-five conferences. There is the advantage, also, of parents becoming familiar with the school. For this reason, it is best to hold the conference in the child's classroom. The parents can see many details, adding to their understanding of the school. They can see the place where their child hangs his coat, where his desk is located, the library books, bulletin boards, record player, blocks, and many other things their child has the opportunity to use. All this goes to help make up the atmosphere of the school. If the conference were held elsewhere, this important aspect would be missed. Parents of children new to the school or just beginning school should see where their child will spend many of his waking hours. A conference room in a relaxed atmosphere would also be a pleasant place to talk with the parents. An informal attitude could be acquired, and the parent, not to mention the teacher, could be put at ease. But from a practical point of view most conferences will be held in the classroom.

In spite of the convenience and advantages of the conference at school, there are, likewise, disadvantages. First, the father is usually excluded. He is working, or the distance from work to home for a change of clothes, then to school is too great. Second, there may be a large family at home, preventing the mother from coming to school. She may be detained by illness, caring for small children, or by

many other responsibilities requiring her time. Consequently, the school conference becomes just one thing too many and is easily put off or avoided. Third, some parents may feel that they do not have clothes good enough to wear to school or they may feel self-conscious and uneasy in a strange place. Even so, state Langdon and Stout (13:269), the teacher may feel that the school is the place for the conference and may make every effort to have it there.

Next, the home conference will be considered. Hymes contends:

The big thing a home conference can do for the teacher is to make a child come alive. It can give the teacher the information needed to tailor-fit the program to every single child--his interests, his strengths, his needs (12:135).

A child may be anxious to have his teacher come to his home. The child may have many "treasures" to show his teacher. There could be a collection, a new room of his own, pets, a special play place he is proud of and wishes to share. In a situation such as this the teacher has a great opportunity to study the child. On the other hand, and equally valuable in gaining understanding, the child may withdraw in shyness and self-consciousness. He may be ashamed of his environment or fearful of why the teacher is at home talking to his parents. At home, the teacher sees the child in a different setting, one where he is often a completely different person than at school. His interests,

strengths, and needs can be studied by the teacher.

Another big advantage of the home conference is the greater likelihood of inclusion of the father and perhaps other members of the family. Their participation in the conference could be beneficial, depending on what was being discussed. This also can be a disadvantage. The home may be charged with emotion, or the duties of preparing an evening meal may be pressing, or other children can cause distractions. The parent may be uneasy about the teacher's thoughts about the home. Furnishings may be meager or the rooms untidy. A parent may be more concerned about whether to invite the teacher to stay for dinner than about the conference concerning the child.

A dinner invitation can be good and bad. Some parents feel free and easy about having the teacher as a dinner guest. Others will run competition with each other in providing a special dinner and an excellent, but unnatural, environment. Still other parents will not wish to invite the teacher for dinner, but are pressured by the local customs. Some teachers accept and enjoy this social approach to a conference. Other teachers do not think it is good and accept no invitations in order to be fair to all and cause no parental conflicts or anxieties. Langdon and Stout give this advice: "Whatever one can do easily and naturally and whatever makes for the best relationships is



the thing to do" (13:271).

For two reasons, the home conference is disadvantageous from the teacher's standpoint: (1) the vast amount of materials and records are not available, and (2) the teacher is on less secure ground than at school. Barr (1:2) maintains that the home conference should be for "get-acquainted" purposes primarily. The home conference may lead to one at school, but then a school conference may open the door to one at home. Only those planning the conference can decide which should come first or if both should be held. The practices will, and probably should, vary from community to community.

Finally, the chance meeting place also has good and bad features. A chance meeting place may be anywhere: a filling station, bus stop, church, club, PTA meeting, social affair, and many more. Four good features of the chance meeting place are: (1) shy parents who are not likely to attend a scheduled conference may relax and become better acquainted with the teacher, (2) it is an opportune time to plan a conference where and when more suitable circumstances exist, (3) the parents or teacher may have a bit of information or a question that would not justify a full appointment for a planned conference, and (4) many times the parents and teacher will talk more freely and get better acquainted when

there is no necessity to talk at all. Two bad features of the chance meeting place are that (1) the lack of privacy prevents the teacher and parents from discussing some problem fully and (2) the lack of time prevents any required lengthy discussion on a topic. The parent is on some errand and cannot talk long. Likewise, the teacher may be in a hurry.

The writer repeats, this chance meeting is an opportune time to plan a conference when and where more suitable circumstances exist. This is the chief advantage of the chance meeting. Langdon and Stout observed that:

The actual place is of less moment than that it be convenient for those concerned and that all should be comfortable and at ease. Wherever this is best accomplished is the place to be chosen. Both school and home have advantages and disadvantages. After one considers the pros and cons, it boils down to doing what seems best in the school where one is teaching and for the particular interview one is going to have (13:267).

#### V. TIME OF THE CONFERENCE

Several ways have been devised in arranging time for the parent-teacher conference. According to D'Evelyn, "The conference must become a part of the regular program, and time must be set aside for the various school activities" (7:92). Some ways of providing time in the school day are: (1) a "floating" teacher, regularly appointed for special scheduled substitution, will take the class for the regular

teacher, (2) a preparation and counseling period is provided at some grade levels in school, (3) the class may go to industrial arts or physical education class with another teacher, and (4) school can be dismissed early for several afternoons during conference time. The conference held during the day is the most satisfactory from the teacher's standpoint as to time, environment, availability of materials and records. Nevertheless, disadvantages exist. Schools may not be able to afford a "floating" teacher on the staff. Transportation schedules may not permit early dismissal. Pupil load may not permit preparation periods and, as such, becomes an important determinant in parent-teacher conferences. A teacher with an overload may find conferences quite a burden.

The best counseling with parents can be done when the child is still in the formative years accompanying kindergarten and primary attendance. The optimum class size is a debatable subject, but for these years D'Evelyn says:

No class should exceed twenty pupils if the teacher is to gain a thorough knowledge of the individual needs of each pupil and do a satisfactory job of parent counseling (7:92).

Valuable conference time can be saved, however, if a preview group conference is held at a PTA meeting or at a special meeting. Room-level group conference techniques may be used to discuss such items as curriculum, marking, room

routine, and the purpose of the conference itself. Here is the opportunity for adult education on school policy and practices. These meetings held at the beginning of the year provide a good time to tell parents about the plans for this grade. Sometimes teachers hesitate to have these fact-giving meetings because they do not want to do all the talking. But Hymes claims, "A straight story right from the shoulder, spelled out in all of its detail, is exactly what people want and need" (12:96).

The school-day conferences. These are sometimes telescoped into a tight schedule of fifteen to thirty-minute duration, one right after the other. This conservative use of time is usually utilized with the afternoon dismissal technique. There is a danger that the teacher's responses will become stereotyped by the rapid progression of the conferences. On the contrary, this might be overcome by the differences in parent personalities and by the teacher refraining from doing all the talking. It will also help avoid stereotype if the group conferences have been held over many of the common problems, leaving the school-day conference more clear for unique, individual points of discussion.

The after-school conference. This is the most common. This conference is held immediately after the regular

dismissal time. Two or three may be scheduled each day. From the teacher's standpoint, it is not a good time. She has just finished with a full day of teaching. She is tired and possibly still has planning to do for the next school day. From the parent's standpoint, it is not a good time. The parent may have kept the conference appointment on the way home from work, with home responsibilities immediately at hand and pressing. The environment of the school is not at its best at this time of the day. Disturbances could be frequent by students or custodial help entering and leaving the room.

The home conference. When this conference is used, the time is set according to the convenience of the parents. This will usually be in the evening or on Saturdays. The advantages and disadvantages of the home conference were discussed earlier. This conference will cause the teacher to sacrifice personal time, but some schools require at least one home visit per pupil during the year. The knowledge of the child and his home gained is so extensive that teachers will usually be willing to use personal time for the home conference when necessary.

As the conference programs gain acceptance and the rich dividends are recognized, "sacrifice" of time by teachers and administrators will become more usual.

## VI. LENGTH OF THE CONFERENCE

Directly connected with the time for the conference is its length. The practice seems to be that conferences vary from fifteen minutes to an hour, the average being about thirty minutes. If it is up to the teacher to terminate the conference, tact should be used. A hurried feeling should not exist. This will cause a parent to be uneasy and hesitant about asking questions and giving information. Likewise, the conference should not be extended so long that it becomes wasteful of time. If the teacher is responsible for terminating the conference, she soon learns to detect all the little cues enabling a timely and tactful conclusion.

A "cushion of time," is recommended by Langdon and Stout (13:276) between closely scheduled conferences. This allows a teacher to conclude a conference with poise.

Teachers frequently imply that time is a premium on their jobs. The writer has experienced a technique that saves time and also relieves the termination responsibility from both teacher and parents. It is this. The parent is encouraged to come for the appointment a half hour early for coffee in the library. A PTA committee handles this responsibility, freeing all teachers to be in their rooms. A PTA member, having a schedule of all conferences, escorts the parents to the teacher. Both teacher and parent know the

time the conference should end to make way for the next parent who is also escorted to the teacher. Thus, the PTA member, usually knowing most parents, is actually the one terminating the conference. After a little experience with this type of conferencing, the teacher becomes skilled at putting the parent at ease and very quickly getting to pertinent points. The teacher also becomes skilled at judging the time, without clock watching, and makes sure of covering all required points. Parents seem to enjoy the social coffee hour before the conference and appreciate the professionalism surrounding the conference program.

One could set up standards for the length of the conference, but it all boils down to doing what the teaching staff, parents, and administrators mutually agree should be done in each particular community.

## VII. SCHEDULING THE CONFERENCE

Scheduling techniques will naturally vary from community to community. The first step in scheduling is preparing the parents for appointment notices. The second step is the actual notification of the appointment.

First, the appointment should not be a surprise to the parents. A note sent home with the child for a conference to be held in the next day or two will not meet with much success. One must be considerate and thoughtful of the

parent's time and obligations. A good way to prepare parents is for the principal to speak about them at an early PTA meeting, or tell of their importance and imminence in an opening-of-school bulletin, or in a weekly bulletin if there is one. If the conference program is not school-wide, a teacher can send a letter to all of the parents a few weeks before the beginning of the conferences in her room. Whatever the method, parents should be forewarned about actual appointments.

Second, the actual notification of the appointment is usually done in four ways. (1) A note can be sent with the child giving the parents a few choices of times to come. A confirmation should be asked. (2) A letter somewhat similar to the first method is mailed home and a confirmation asked by mail, phone, or note. (3) The telephone and chance meetings are another way of making an appointment. The teacher should be careful to write down the time when making this type of notification. It would be embarrassing to have a parent show up, the teacher having forgotten the appointment. (4) Bulletin appointments are most commonly used when all parents are to be scheduled. This is handled by the principal who coordinates the overall schedule and gives the teachers' appointment sheets to them. As in the other three methods, a confirmation is asked for the assigned time or an alternate time suggested by the parents.



This method of scheduling is particularly suited to those parents having several children in school. The principal, in preparing his teachers' schedules, can give simultaneous appointments to these parents, thus rendering a real service. For example, families with five or six children are scheduled first, families with four are scheduled next, and so on until the two's and one's are used to fill out the schedules. Having all parents come to school gets rid of the old stigma that a call to school means the child is in trouble. Much is to be gained when a teacher can talk with the parents of a child who is "doing all right." Everyone can stand improvement, and this may well open the door with a potentially difficult parent. Also, a sincere compliment never hurts anyone and often does wonders for home-school relations. These and other techniques of conducting the conference are valuable aids to a teacher or a whole staff beginning a conference program.

#### VIII. GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING THE CONFERENCE

A well-prepared teacher will usually have successful conferences. A well-groomed, well-poised teacher leaves a favorable impression on the parent. A quantity of information about each child should be available. The information will include his quality of performance, his ability level, examples of his work, interests, an indication of his ability

in relation to the rest of the class, anecdotal records, test data, and other items of information pertaining to the child. The teacher should know other information the parent may want. Questions may arise about bus routine, absences, school lunch, curriculum and teaching methods. It is important that teachers be able to satisfactorily answer such questions. Staff meetings held before conference time can put teachers on secure ground and assure a common philosophy.

The last contact some parents have had with teachers was as a pupil, and they may still have the pupil-teacher relationship within them. Whatever their contacts, the parents need to know the exact nature of the conference. The old fear of trouble when one is called to school by the teacher or principal has not been completely dispelled. The parents should not approach the conference with fear.

As was mentioned in the section on Time of the conference, the group conference technique is an effective method of preparing parents for the individual conference. At this group conference, prior to individual conference time, a groundwork should be laid. The teacher can explain such things as what the scope of work will be for the year, how standardized tests are used, and the general routine of the day. The idea should be instilled in the parents that the individual parent-teacher conference is a two-way process. Barr states that parents can make the conference more

useful by furnishing some of the following information:

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 reaction in the home to frustrating experiences.
5. Emotional reactions to other experiences such as radio, television, visitors in the home.
6. Expressed attitude toward school.
7. Hobbies and interests of all members of the family.
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 help.
10. Other institutions which may have an affect on the child, such as church, community play groups, or Y.M.C.A.
11. General neighborhood in which the child lives (1:5).

A teacher can improve the conference and become skilled in conferencing by following a set of guidelines. Some schools provide teachers with a guidebook on conference techniques. D'Evelyn says:

Successful counseling depends on the relationship between the parent and the teacher. 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 (7:97).

In order to establish this relationship between parents and teacher, D'Evelyn lists several guidelines for teachers in conducting the conference. They are:

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 the place of authority, not partnership.
4. The teacher's greeting should be friendly and relaxed. If he is hurried or tense, the parent will know it. It is difficult to discuss a problem with someone who looks as if he wished you were not there, or would soon leave.
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 (7:95).

Listening is an important skill, one that more teachers should improve. Because of the nature of the teachers' work, it is hard to cultivate this skill. Barr (1:11) says that lack of listening by the teacher is one of the weaknesses parents find in the parent-teacher conference program. D'Evelyn continues:

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

7. If a parent says he is worried about his child's behavior, follow through. Find out why he is worried. The teacher should not assume that he knows why. He and the parent may not feel the same about the child.
8. If a parent gives what he thinks is the reason for a child's behavior, accept it, and lead the discussion on to the consideration of other possible causes. Behavior is the result of many causative factors, not of one.
9. If a parent suggests a plan of action, accept it if at all possible to do so. It is better for the parent to try it than for the teacher to force one of his own. One of the goals in parent counseling is to try to get the parent to take the initiative. If the parent's plan fails, it's always possible to suggest others that may strike nearer to the root of the difficulty.
10. If the parent cannot suggest reasons for the child's behavior, or plans of action to deal with it, the teacher might suggest alternatives for joint consideration, "This might be a possibility, What do you think? You know all the facts of the situation better than I do." Or, "We might try this and see what happens. It may take us a while to find the source of the difficulty." Such an approach makes the parent a participator in the final decision for tentative plans, and leads to discussion that helps him to accept the plan as his own.
11. It does not help to argue with a parent. Arguing will arouse resentment and resistance (7:96).

Cooperation, good home-school relations, and the interests of the child are the main objectives of the parent-teacher conference. An argument between the parents and teacher usually loses sight of these objectives and serves no constructive purpose. D'Evelyn lists additional guidelines, saying:

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

13. Most parents cannot be objective about their own children. Therefore, do not criticize, either directly or indirectly. Criticism is fatal to the building of a cooperative relationship.
14. Avoid giving direct advice when the parent gives a statement of his problem and then leans back, saying, "Tell me what to do." Let any advice or suggestions grow out of mutual discussion and a growing insight on the part of the parent into the reasons for the behavior.
15. Do not get ahead of the parent in his thinking. In other words, the teacher should not try to push his thinking onto a parent before the parent is ready to see it through a process of discussion and mutual thinking.
16. Try to be aware of sensitive spots, and avoid embarrassing the parent by noting facial expressions, gestures, and voice. These all give a clue to the parent's 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 parent's attitudes and feelings (7:96).

This is an especially good point. Parents usually want the approval of their child's teacher. They watch the teacher closely to see if approval is being reflected by her. A teacher who overuses facial expressions or gestures might lead her conferees to reveal only those things she wants to hear and not those things she needs to know to better understand the child. D'Evelyn concludes with the two following guidelines for teachers in conducting the conference:

18. The teacher should be ready to recognize problems that are so difficult as to prevent him from giving sufficient help to the parent. Parents with complex emotional problems should be referred to the consulting psychologist or guidance specialist on the

staff, who in turn will refer the individual to a psychiatrist if there is such need. If there is no one on the school staff to whom the teacher can refer, he should try to have available the names of specialists in the community. In referring, it is easy to say, "I wish I could help you, but I feel you need more help than I can give you. I have the names of two or three consultants if you wish them, or you may know someone yourself." If the teacher is in a community where there is no one to whom he can refer the parent, he can do his best in easing the troublesome behavior symptoms in the child, but he should not let the parent become involved in pouring out his emotions repeatedly. It will not help the parent beyond giving the temporary relief of tension that comes from telling your troubles to any good listener. This relief is necessary, but unless the teacher can help the parent go on to constructive planning, he is not giving real help.

19. It is helpful to try to close the conference on a constructive, a pleasant, or a forward-going note, such as a plan for further consultation, a definite date for the next conference, a statement of encouragement or reassurance, a statement of a plan for cooperative action (7:97).

It would be well to note that the control of the conference rests with the teacher. The skillful counselor will recognize points of digression from the conference subject. Talk about neighbors, relatives, and other extraneous subjects can be avoided if recognized early. Areas such as this may be permitted if they have a direct connection with the child being discussed. Each problem of this type must be judged on an individual basis. It is the mark of a good teacher and counselor to be able to make such judgements. A parent who is reluctant to talk or perhaps shy can be encouraged by leading questions such as, "How does Johnny feel about school?" rather than "Does Johnny like school?"

When a parent does give an amount of valuable information, the question of taking notes during the conference arises.

Memory is sometimes faulty, especially with one conference following another, and note taking becomes necessary. Parents may be disturbed if they think a record is being made of their comments. Therefore, explaining at the beginning of the conference that the notes are being taken to be used for summary toward the end of the conference or for some mutual use, usually will put the parents at ease. The parents may also be furnished with a note pad and pencil if so desired. A comment like, "Shall we summarize the points we have discussed and make some plans?" is a good way to use the notes and also draw the conference to a natural close.

During the conference the teacher should be careful to interpret information to the parents in a vocabulary understandable to them. Such professional terms as "core curriculum" and "homogeneous grouping" may not mean much to the parents. Strang, reporting on the advantages of the parent-teacher conference says:

In this face-to-face relationship the pupil's progress can be more adequately interpreted; the report can be personalized still more fully (16:32).

This will be true only if the teacher accurately interprets the information to the parents.



## IX. EVALUATING AND RECORDING THE CONFERENCE

After greeting the parents, conducting the conference, taking the notes, summarizing the discussion, making plans, and after the parents have left, some evaluation should be made. Barr suggests a seven-point check list for evaluating a parent-teacher conference:

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 techniques of the conference observed?
4. Did both teacher and parents 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? (1:10).

When an evaluation has been made, it should be recorded for future use. Often a form is provided for this purpose. The form should not be too elaborate or it will hinder and not aid in recording the conference. A form containing the name of child, name of teacher, date, with whom the conference was held, and four main topics is all that is necessary. The four topic headings are: (1) points discussed, (2) information received, (3) plans made with parents, and (4) attitude of parents. It is not contended

that these are the only topic headings that can be used, but they seem to cover what should be recorded about a parent-teacher conference.

Recording is not an end in itself, only a means to an end--better understanding of the child and thereby better teaching. According to Langdon and Stout (13:329), a phrase or a few cue words under the proper heading will suffice for the teacher's own use. For cumulative records complete sentences would be preferred when communicating to others who may be reading the report months or even years later. Under some headings, even in the cumulative record, a phrase or descriptive word would be all right. A pen should be used in recording because penciled notes tend to smudge and become hard to read. It is best if the teacher can record the conference as soon as the parents leave. Since the main points of the discussion are still fresh in the teacher's mind, with the aid of her notes a good record can be made. Often this ideal situation does not exist because of other conferences. Therefore, the notes become more valuable than ever. When time becomes available to record the conferences of the day or week, the teacher can reconstruct the discussion and pick out the main points. Langdon and Stout (13:331) describe a teacher looking back over some recent conferences with these quotations: "I am glad I did this," or "I wonder if it would have been better if I had done thus

and so," or "I wish I had done that." It is during this time of recording the conference that real evaluation takes place. Evaluation and recording, therefore, are so closely tied together that it is hard to say where one stops and the other begins.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH PROCEDURE

#### I. QUESTIONNAIRE

A survey-type questionnaire was devised to gather pertinent data regarding parent-teacher conferences from Chelan and Douglas counties, Washington. The information desired could not be well adapted to the "yes-no" type of questions, although it was necessary to use some. In order to answer the questionnaire, a respondent was required to write a word, phrase, or comment on the question. At the end of the questionnaire were three questions devised to indicate the opinion of the respondent in regard to three types of reporting methods. With this type of organization, the investigator was able to discover what is actually being done and the respondent's opinions as to what should be done about parent-teacher conferences.

#### II. DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was distributed and discussed by the writer at a regular monthly meeting of the Chelan-Douglas County Elementary Principal's Association. This group was very cooperative and their sincere help and concern added to the validity of the study. Personal interviews were held

with some principals in regard to the questionnaire. Other principals, because of great travel distance, do not regularly meet with this group. The questionnaire was mailed to these principals. Twenty-six questionnaires were distributed. All questions asked appear in the context of the results.

### III. TABULATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

When the questionnaires were returned, the responses were tabulated and the comments studied by the investigator. The principals returned 92.3 per cent of the questionnaires distributed. A discussion of the questions and responses is given in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE PRACTICES

As already indicated, this study was conducted to discover the existing practices regarding parent-teacher conferences in Chelan and Douglas counties. In addition to practices, the opinions of administrators were acquired. For the sake of clarity in presentation of results, each paragraph will begin by stating a question from the questionnaire. The percentage figures used throughout the analysis will be for the schools responding to the questionnaire.

#### I. ITEM BY ITEM ANALYSIS

Are report cards the only regular means used in reporting pupil progress to parents? (Question One).

Responses were: "Yes," 62.5 per cent; "No," 37.5 per cent. This would seem to indicate that the most schools use only report cards while a large minority use additional means of reporting to parents.

Do you have parent-teacher conferences as a part of your system of reporting pupil progress to parents? (Question Two). This elicited: "Yes," 62.5 per cent; "No," 37.5 per cent. One's first thought in comparing this with Question One is that there has been a mistake in reporting or tabulating. One would think that this answer should be the reverse

of the first question. No mistake has been made, but this non-reversal needs explanation. The key is in the word "regular" in Question One. Some principals marked "Yes" in both questions because parent-teacher conferences are used only on an occasional basis as needed. This was clarified through telephone or personal interview with the respondents. The results to Question Two could be more accurately stated as follows: "Yes," 37.5 per cent; "Occasionally," 25 per cent; and "No," 37.5 per cent. The coincidence of non-reversal of percentages expected from these two questions should not confuse the reader.

How many years have you been using parent-teacher conferences in your school? (Question Three). Responses varied within these years as follows:

One year,	4.6 per cent;
Two to four years,	12.5 per cent;
Eight to eleven years,	8.3 per cent;
None,	41.6 per cent;
and Occasional,	20.8 per cent.

These statistics indicate that 37.9 per cent have been using conferences from one to eleven years while an additional 20.8 per cent have used them occasionally. Parent-teacher conferences are not new to Chelan and Douglas counties. This also indicates an upward trend in use because 17.1 per cent have begun their programs during the last four years.

Another fact to support the trend is that 20.8 per cent now on an occasional basis planned to install the conference program in the fall of 1959 on a regular released-time basis.

At what grade levels are parent-teacher conferences used as a means of reporting to parents? (Question Four). On the basis of answers to the question, one could say that 62.7 per cent of the schools conduct conferences in various grades from kindergarten through the eighth grade. A substantial minority (25 per cent) conduct conferences through grade six while an additional 16.6 per cent continue the practice through the eighth grade. A conference program from grade one through grade five is carried on in 4.6 per cent of the schools. Some schools conduct conferences on the kindergarten and primary levels only. They responded as follows: Kindergarten through grade three, 4.6 per cent; kindergarten through grade one, 4.6 per cent; and kindergarten only, 8.3 per cent. The remainder of the respondents (37.5 per cent) did not indicate their practices.

How often do you have parent-teacher conferences during the school year? (Question Five). Answers included:

One time,	8.3 per cent;
Two times,	20.8 per cent;
Six times,	4.6 per cent;
When needed,	20.8 per cent;



and Not indicated, 41.6 per cent.

The question also asked, "What time of year are the conferences held?" The majority (20.8 per cent) of schools conducting a regular program hold conferences two times a year, close to the first and third issuance of report cards. An additional 8.3 per cent hold conferences in the fall only. A substantial percentage (29.1 per cent) hold individual conferences when needed while 41.6 per cent of the respondents did not indicate when conferences were held.

When are conferences held? During school day?

(Question Six). Responses were: "Yes," 12.5 per cent; "No," 87.5 per cent. The "No" answers fell into three categories as follows:

After school hours,	37.5 per cent;
Evenings,	8.3 per cent;
and Not indicated,	41.6 per cent.

Comparing the time conferences are held in Chelan and Douglas counties with practices reported in current literature suggests that their time is about the same as elsewhere.

Most conferences are held after school, while a few schools have succeeded in getting released time for teachers during the school day. An additional 20.8 per cent of the schools will be added to the released-time category in the fall of 1959, making a total of 33.3 per cent of the schools on the released-time basis.

If conferences are conducted during the regular school day, what provisions are made for the teachers with class responsibility? (Question Seven). "Early dismissal of the entire school and the principal acting as substitute teacher," was in essence the answer written on 12.5 per cent of the returns. The children are dismissed about 1:30 P.M. and the conferences conducted on a closely scheduled basis. This practice takes place two or three days in succession, thereby permitting the teacher to see the parents of practically every child in his room within a relatively brief period.

In what way does a teacher prepare for a conference? (Question Eight). The answers received in response to this question can be divided into two categories: (1) teachers' collection of child's work and records, 54.2 per cent; and (2) respondents that did not indicate how the teacher prepares for the conference, 45.8 per cent. The first approach requires that the teacher take samples of work periodically, keep anecdotal records, observe the child in different settings, and study the cumulative record folder. These and other less tangible ways prepare the teacher for conferences. When respondents did not indicate their practice, one can only speculate. This category probably includes those not using parent-teacher conferences or, if they were used, perhaps they did not prepare or it is even possible that

they may have followed some of the first procedures but failed to report this practice.

What is the average duration of a conference?

(Question Nine). Conference practices in Chelan and Douglas county schools varied as follows:

Fifteen minutes,	16.6 per cent;
Twenty minutes,	12.5 per cent;
Thirty minutes,	20.8 per cent;
and Not indicated,	45.8 per cent.

From follow-up interviews with respondents it was found that the length of conferences is predetermined in 29.1 per cent of the schools. Coincidentally, these schools schedule fifteen or twenty-minute conferences. The thirty-minute conferences, comprising 20.8 per cent, were found not to be closely scheduled. This was the average length for a conference. Some conferences, however, last up to an hour, depending on circumstances.

Does the pupil participate in the conference?

(Question Ten). This question brought responses revealing:

Yes,	0.0 per cent;
Sometimes,	4.6 per cent;
No,	54.2 per cent;
and Not indicated,	41.6 per cent.

These answers indicate that most conferences are between the teacher and parents with the child playing little or no part.

The child is sometimes brought in to do some joint planning and may know the general content of a parent-teacher conference. He surely knows its content after parent and child are together following the conference. Pupil participation is somewhat below the trend indicated from reading about practices in other areas.

Is the teacher provided with a printed conference guide? (Question Eleven). This gave the following answers:

Yes,	20.8 per cent;
No,	37.5 per cent;
and Not indicated,	41.6 per cent.

A printed conference guide in the hands of a teacher, suggested by many writers as a good thing, can be used as a part of in-service training. Literature indicates that there is a lack of guidelines for the teacher to use in conducting the parent-teacher conference. Some schools, 16.6 per cent, seem to be following the practice of providing conference guides. The somewhat consistent appearance of 41.6 per cent "not indicated" might be explained by schools not using parent-teacher conferences and therefore failing to indicate a practice.

How do you record parent-teacher conferences? (Question Twelve). The following three breakdowns describe responses to recording practices:

Printed form,	25.0 per cent;
---------------	----------------

Not recorded, 29.1 per cent;  
and Not indicated, 45.8 per cent.

While a large percentage of schools do not record the conference, 29.1 per cent, over half of these reported that they expect to have a form for this purpose by the fall of 1959. This number added to those presently recording the conference would make a total of 41.6 per cent recording the conference.

How are records used? (Question Thirteen). Responses could be classified into only two categories: (1) those used with cumulative records, 25.0 per cent; and (2) those not indicating use, 75.0 per cent. From notations made on the questionnaires, it was found that the 25 per cent using cumulative records file the conference report there for reference throughout the remainder of the school year. It is also maintained there for future teachers to study in their understanding of the child as he progresses in school. Comparing this answer with the previous answer (Question Twelve) would indicate that schools who make records and use forms are fulfilling their obligation in using the records after they have been made.

Approximately what per cent of parent participation do you have? (Question Fourteen). Responses fell into either relatively small amounts or relatively large amounts of participation as follows:

Five (per cent of parents),	4.6 per cent (of schools);
Twenty-five,	4.6 per cent;
Seventy-five,	4.6 per cent;
Eighty-five,	8.3 per cent;
Ninety-five,	12.5 per cent;
and One hundred,	4.6 per cent.

This range in parent participation is wide. It can be explained with reference to Questions Four and Five. The grade level where conferences are conducted influenced participation. Through follow-up it was found that the school conducting only kindergarten conferences had 100 per cent. The school using conferences only "when needed" considered themselves to have only five per cent participation, but interpretation modifies this when they later reported, "We hold conferences with only about five per cent of the students' parents and all of these participate." There is a considerable grouping of participation between eighty-five and ninety-five per cent, with 25 per cent of the schools being placed in this category.

Have you carried on a local survey to determine parent opinion of the parent-teacher conference program?

(Question Fifteen). Respondents reported:

Yes,	16.6 per cent;
No,	41.6 per cent;
and Not indicated,	41.6 per cent.

If so, how did the parents like the program? If their estimates could be judged in terms of Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor, please indicate. (Question Sixteen).

The replies broke down into:

Excellent,	50.0 per cent;
Good,	25.0 per cent;
Fair,	0.0 per cent;
and Poor,	25.0 per cent.

These percentages of parent opinion are based on the 16.6 per cent of the schools having carried on a local survey, not on the total questionnaires returned. Seventy-five per cent of the parents surveyed think the parent-teacher conferences very worthwhile. The "25 per cent--poor" figure represents only 4.6 per cent of the total schools. Reducing this figure, the 4.6 per cent becomes one school. As was the one having only five per cent parent participation, it could represent the opinions of very few parents. The other "75 per cent--good or excellent" figure contained opinions of parents in schools having 85 to 95 per cent of the parents participating. After a logical breakdown it would appear that a figure well above the 75 per cent of parents favored conferences. Caution is reserved because of the small number of schools who have assessed parent opinion.

Are report cards used in addition to conferences? (Question Seventeen). The answers to this question were:

Yes,	54.2 per cent;
No,	0.0 per cent;
In lieu (of report card),	8.3 per cent;
and Not indicated,	37.5 per cent.

Almost all of the schools conducting conferences use a report card as a supplement. The conference is used in lieu of report cards in 8.3 per cent of the schools, but even here the practice is alternated with a report card on every other reporting period. Since the practice of issuing report cards was used first, it could be said that the parent-teacher conferences are being used as a compliment to them and not as a substitute for them.

Do you have or would you estimate the per cent of parents who prefer parent-teacher conferences? (Question Eighteen). Preference percentages were expressed as follows:

Three,	4.6 per cent;
Fifty,	12.5 per cent;
Sixty,	4.6 per cent;
Ninety,	4.6 per cent;
No estimate,	16.6 per cent;
and Not indicated,	58.3 per cent.

Preference for the conference is spread over a wide range with great variability existing from community to community. An indication towards preferring the conference is suggested where they have been utilized extensively. From the returns



and follow-up there is reason to hypothesize that parent preference is strongly affected by administrative attitude. This leads one to believe that still more could be done in respect to adult education (both educators and parents) as to the objectives of the parent-teacher conferences.

Do you have or would you estimate the per cent of parents who prefer report cards? (Question Nineteen).

Results were:

Forty (per cent of parents),	4.6 per cent (of schools);
Fifty,	12.5 per cent;
Ninety,	4.6 per cent;
One hundred,	4.6 per cent;
No estimate,	16.6 per cent;
and Not indicated,	58.3 per cent.

From those responding, the traditional type of reporting (report cards) still seems to lead over the conference. Conclusions are difficult because of the large number that give no estimate of preference or do not indicate a preference for one over the other.

Do you have or would you estimate the per cent of parents who prefer a combination of parent-teacher conferences and report cards? (Question Twenty). This question revealed the following parent preferences from the various schools:

Fifty,	4.6 per cent;
--------	---------------

Seventy-five,	4.6 per cent;
Ninety,	12.5 per cent;
One hundred,	4.6 per cent;
No estimate,	16.6 per cent;
and Not indicated,	58.3 per cent.

When the report card is maintained and the conference added, there is a definite indication of approval by the schools, 26.3 per cent stating that from fifty to one hundred per cent of the parents favored a combination of the two methods of reporting. People are apparently reluctant to let go of what they have for something new. They are, however, willing to try a new method of reporting so long as the older method is maintained. Parents like to have "something" with marks on it to take home. One could say, however, that a combination of parent-teacher conferences and report cards is preferred.

Give a brief description of how parent-teacher conferences are combined with report cards as a way of reporting to parents. (Question Twenty-one). Teachers and parents individually combine or coordinate the conferences and report cards in 4.6 per cent of the schools. In this instance, all parents were not scheduled for conferences and an individual interview might well be coordinated with the issuance of report cards by the teacher. Likewise, a parent may wish to talk with the teacher for clarification of a

report card immediately after issuance. It is not implied that individual conferences always take place close to report card issuance dates. However, in 33.3 per cent of the schools scheduling many parents for conferences and cards, they are coordinated by holding them near the report card time.

The conference is alternated with the report card in 8.3 per cent of the schools. These schools conduct a conference in lieu of the first report card in the fall. On the next reporting period a card is issued. At the end of the third reporting period, the second conference is held and another report card is then issued at the close of school. Respondents indicated that this particular technique seems to work well. The fall conference allows the teacher to become better acquainted with the parents and plan for the remaining three-fourths of the school year. The spring conference allows a follow-up and is conveniently timed to discuss such things as retention, promotion, and additional plans for the child for the following year.

Another 4.6 per cent of the schools are working on the coordination of conferences and cards. Fifty per cent did not indicate their practices in regard to this question.

Do you have a sample of your way of notifying the parents of their conference appointment that the writer may have? (Question Twenty-two). The respondents indicated

their notification practices by the following answers:

Yes,	12.5 per cent;
No,	41.6 per cent;
and Not indicated,	45.8 per cent.

Samples from 12.5 per cent of the schools using standardized forms may be seen in Appendix A. Where the respondents answered "No," one can only speculate that they did not have a copy of their method of notifying parents or that their method is other than a bulletin or printed form. The samples received were duplicated bulletins explaining the desirability of keeping the conference appointment and other pertinent information. The bottom portion of the bulletin was designed to be used as a signed confirmation slip to be returned. The top portion, which contained a reminder of the appointment date, was to be retained by the parents.

Do you have a sample of the form or technique you use for scheduling conferences, for the convenience of parents with several children in different rooms, that the writer may have? (Question Twenty-three). The responses to this question indicate that only 4.6 per cent of the schools use such a technique. The form for this purpose may be seen in Appendix B and is fully explained in the section of Scheduling the Conference, Chapter III. This technique of giving simultaneous appointments to parents having several children in different rooms is best utilized in the school-day

conferences that are closely scheduled. Definite implications can be seen here for the 20.8 per cent of the schools planning to provide released time for the school-day conferences (indicated in the answers to Question Six).

Do you have a written plan or guide for carrying on the conference that the writer may have? (Question Twenty-four). Responses were:

Yes,	12.5 per cent;
No,	37.5 per cent;
and Not indicated,	50.0 per cent.

By referring to Question Eleven and its responses, one can see that the 12.5 per cent "Yes" answers to this question (twenty-four) is over half of the 20.8 per cent of schools providing a written guide for conducting the conference.

The guides provided the investigator are in the nature of a form used to record the conference. Each of these forms is well organized and sufficiently brief to be practical.

However, a set of guidelines should be in the hands of every teacher to assist her in conference techniques and to provide her with some "do's" and "don't's" while conducting the conference. One might assume that the 37.5 per cent of the schools reporting have no written guide or form for conducting the conference, or that if they have a form it is not considered to be a guide for the conference. Again, of course, the "Not indicated" category is highly probable from

the group of schools who do not use the conference technique.

## II. OPINIONNAIRE RESULTS

The opinions of the principals were desired on three specific statements. It was felt that the principal of the school would be in a better position than any one person in his given community to give the most informed opinion concerning report cards and conferences. The investigator made a special effort to get all respondents to indicate their opinions on these statements. He did so by making a personalized request to each principal in red pencil at the top of questionnaires mailed. Specific reference was made to opinion statements at the meeting of the Chelan-Douglas County Elementary Principal's Association. Ninety-two per cent gave their opinions in the light of what they believe and what they think their communities would accept.

The respondents were asked to answer statements according to this scale: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

The parent-teacher conference "alone" is the best way to report pupil progress to parent. (Statement one).

Opinions were expressed as follows:

Strongly agree,	0.0 per cent;
Agree,	8.3 per cent;
Neutral,	8.3 per cent;

Disagree,	75.0 per cent;
Strongly disagree,	4.6 per cent;
and Not indicated,	4.6 per cent.

Since 75 per cent disagree with this statement, it is definite that Chelan and Douglas county principals do not think the parent-teacher conference "alone" is the best means of reporting, and it can be inferred they will not substitute conferencing for their current practices.

The report card "alone" is the best way to report pupil progress to parents. (Statement Two). This statement reflected these opinions:

Strongly agree,	0.0 per cent;
Agree,	0.0 per cent;
Neutral,	8.3 per cent;
Disagree,	75.0 per cent;
Strongly disagree,	8.3 per cent;
and Not indicated,	8.3 per cent.

Here again the consensus of opinion is to "Disagree." In spite of the fact that 62.5 per cent of the schools use report cards as their only regular means of reporting, 75 per cent of all schools do not believe it is the best "single" method to use.

A "combination" of parent-teacher conferences and report cards is the best way of reporting pupil progress to parents. (Statement Three). Opinions elicited were:

Strongly agree,	75.0 per cent;
Agree,	20.8 per cent;
Neutral,	0.0 per cent;
Disagree,	0.0 per cent;
Strongly disagree,	0.0 per cent;
and Not indicated,	4.6 per cent.

The fact that 75 per cent strongly agree with the statement and an additional 20.8 per cent agree, coupled with no respondents who disagree, leads to definite favorable implications about this combination technique for reporting and counseling with parents.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

#### I. LITERATURE SUMMARY

More and more is being written about the parent-teacher conference as its use is showing merit and gaining recognition. There are several strong advocates of the conference: D'Evelyn (7), Barr (1), Langdon and Stout (13), to mention a few. The school has been given the responsibility, within a new philosophy of education, of developing more than the academic potentials of the pupils. This calls for a newer method of reporting to parents. This new method is the parent-teacher conference, more than simple reporting to parents. It is reporting plus counseling, a two-way process of give and take, information and understanding being acquired by teacher and parents alike. The conference method, however, is not without disadvantages. The three main drawbacks seem to be: (1) lack of teacher training in conferencing, (2) lack of time and energy on the part of teachers, and (3) lack of understanding of the parent-teacher conference on the part of parents and administrators.

There are usually three types of conferences: (1) planned or scheduled, (2) incidental, and (3) by telephone. These conferences are held at school, home, and at chance

meeting places in the community. The most common time of the conference is after regular school hours, but the best and recommended time is during the regular school day. Length varies from fifteen minutes to one hour. Schools have devised several ways of releasing teachers for conferences. This is one of the hardest problems to overcome, but through careful planning, study, and cooperation, it can be done.

Teacher-training institutions and school districts, through summer classes and in-service training programs, are endeavoring to better train teachers for conferencing. Guidelines for conducting the conference are becoming more abundant.

Evaluating and recording the individual conference is an important part of its value. Also constant study and modification of the continuing conference program are needed. One of the practical features of the conference method is its adaptability to gradual change without sacrificing its original aims.

The literature would seem to indicate that the parent-teacher conference is well on its way to becoming a part of the school curriculum.

## II. RESEARCH SUMMARY

The parent-teacher conference is playing an

increasingly important role in Chelan and Douglas counties, Washington. Some schools have been using the conferences for eleven years; others have used them only one year. This trend is also supported by the fact that several more schools will install the conference program in the fall of 1959. By the year 1960, as determined by questionnaires and follow-up interviews, 58.7 per cent of the Chelan and Douglas county schools will be using parent-teacher conferences, either on a school-wide basis or occasionally as needed.

More conferencing is carried on from kindergarten through third grade than from fourth through eighth grade. This practice is in keeping with D'Evelyn's (7:92) recommendation that the best counseling with parents can be done when the child is in the formative years during kindergarten and primary grades. This, however, does not lessen the value of conferences in grades four through eight.

Conferences are usually held two times a year, close to the first and third reporting periods. The length of conferences varies from fifteen minutes to one hour. Most conferences are held after school, while a few schools provide released time by early dismissal. An additional 20.8 per cent plan to provide released time beginning in the fall of 1959. A large majority of the schools reported that the pupil does not participate in the actual talking together of the teacher and parents; however, he might well be aware of

the contents of the conference.

A printed conference guide for the teacher to study is considered a good thing; a few schools provide them but the majority do not. Teachers generally prepare for conferences by collecting samples of the child's work, studying cumulative records, and in other less tangible ways. These conferences are recorded in the cumulative folder by the teacher for her own use and future use by other teachers.

Parents have shown good participation in and acceptance of the parent-teacher conferences. The average parent participation during the scheduled conference time is between eighty-five and ninety-five per cent. Teachers usually endeavor to make special appointments with parents unable to attend at the regular time. This acceptance of the conference program may be attributed to the fact that report cards are being used in coordination with the conferences. Most schools issue a report card four times a year. Two schools (8.3 per cent) alternate the report card and conference, giving cards twice and holding conferences twice. If a choice had to be made, the cards would be preferred over the conferences, but there is a strong indication that a combination is most desirable.

Ways of notifying parents of conference appointments are about the same. A bulletin is usually sent home with pertinent information and a confirmation request slip. One

school, by a simple technique, makes it very convenient for parents having several children in school by giving them simultaneous appointments.

Principals of the schools in Chelan and Douglas counties, in a three-question opinionnaire, indicated overwhelmingly that neither the conference "alone" nor the report card "alone" was the best way of reporting to parents. The majority did, however, strongly agree that a combination of the parent-teacher conference and report card was the best way of reporting to parents.

### III. IMPLICATIONS

Through reading contemporary literature and through study of parent-teacher conference practices in the elementary schools of Chelan and Douglas counties, the investigator's attention has been led to several implications here presented in abbreviated form.

1. There is a need for careful planning, study, and evaluation when installing or operating a conference program.
2. Adult education about the purposes and objectives of conferences is necessary.
3. Released time should be provided if the conference program is to continue to succeed and be of its greatest value.
4. Regularly scheduled conferences should be held

twice a year, preferably near the end of the first and third reporting periods.

5. There is definite need for college and in-service training of teachers in conference techniques.

6. Printed conference guides should be in the hands of every teacher.

7. Teachers should assume the responsibility for special appointments.

8. Principals believe a combination of the conference and report card is the best way of reporting to parents, but most of their schools are not doing this now. They should assume their leadership and guide their communities in the way they believe the reporting system should go.

9. The principal is the person to coordinate the conference, set the schedule, and make the appointments for the regular school-wide conferences.

10. A parent-teacher conference program takes time, effort, and money. If conducted correctly, it is worth it.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barr, John A. Parent-Teacher Conferences. University of Washington: College of Education Record, Vol. XX, Number 1, November, 1953.
2. Barunch, Dorothy W. "Parents and Teachers Work Together," National Education Association Journal, 30:259, December, 1941.
3. Bennett, Grace I. "Making the Most of Our Contracts With Parents," Progressive Education, 11:207, March, 1934.
4. Brown, Muriel W. "A Guide to Better Home-School Relationship," Bulletin of the Association of Childhood Education, June, 1950.
5. Carey, Ann Mullin. "The Parent-Teacher Problem," Understanding the Child, 8:3-7, June, 1950.
6. Chambers, Alma S. "Parent Participation in Early Childhood Education," California Journal of Elementary Education, 7:228, May, 1939.
7. D'Evelyn, Katherine E. Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945.
8. Druggins, Lydia A., and Verna L. Vickery. "Parent-Teacher Conferences," The Journal of Education, 134:220-21, November, 1951.
9. Driscoll, G. P. "Parent-Teacher Conference," Teachers College Record, 45:463-70, April, 1944.
10. Garrett, Annette. Interviewing Its Principles and Methods. New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1942.
11. Hildreth, Gertrude. Readiness for School Beginners. New York: The World Book Company, 1950.
12. Hymes, James L. Effective Home-School Relations. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954.
13. Langdon, Grace and Irving W. Stout. Teacher-Parent Interviews. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954.



14. Meek, Lois H. "Parents and Teachers Together,"  
Parents' Magazine, September, 1932.
15. Raymond, Anne. "The Teacher Reports to Parents,"  
The National Elementary Principal Reporting Pupil Progress, Vol. XXXI, Number 6, June, 1952.
16. Strang, Ruth. Reporting to Parents. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1952.

**APPENDIX A**

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE NOTIFICATION BULLETIN

SCHOOL A

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The eighth fall series of individual parent-teacher conferences will be held at the school on the afternoons of November 7-8 as announced in the October "Skoldaz." School will be dismissed early on both afternoons to give the teachers free time for the conferences. The first report cards of this 1957-58 school year will be out on November 7th; some of the time of each conference will be centered on them.

It is very desirable for both parents to come, but each family should be represented by at least one parent or guardian. If Mother is working a day shift but Dad happens to be on swing or graveyard, please see that Dad keeps the appointment. If both are working a day shift, a later time will be arranged, at your request.

Your appointment is on \_\_\_\_\_, starting at \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

Teacher _____	Child _____	Time _____	P.M.
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please come a half hour early for refreshments in the library.

Please return the slip below, not later than Monday, November 4.

-----

Please check either item 1 or 2 below:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Appointment will be kept on \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Unable to keep appointment.

If item 2 above is checked, please state here a convenient time when you would be able to come to school for a conference.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time of day \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE NOTIFICATION BULLETIN

## SCHOOL B

Dear Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_:

Would it be possible for you to come to school for your conference with me regarding \_\_\_\_\_ progress on \_\_\_\_\_, from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock?

If this time is unsuitable please indicate below when you could come or you may call me.

Sincerely,

I (can, cannot) come on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Other preference \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed,

## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE NOTIFICATION BULLETIN

SCHOOL C

Dear Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_

You are invited to Washington School to confer with the teacher concerning \_\_\_\_\_'s progress in school.

Since the teacher has many conferences with other parents, it is necessary to schedule the time quite closely and to limit the conference to \_\_\_\_\_ minutes. Will you please come to room \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock p.m. If you are unable to meet this appointment, please call the school tomorrow so another parent may be scheduled for your time and we will try again for an appointment with you. We certainly encourage both parents to come for the conference.

We feel that the development of the child into a dependable, self-directed citizen is the joint responsibility of the home and the school. What happens to him in either place will affect his total behavior. It is, therefore, our aim to develop with the parent ways which will result in a maximum of success in individual growth for each child.

The attached sheet is designed to help direct your thinking before you come to school for the conference.

Sincerely,

Principal

--- Tear off here and return to school tomorrow ---

Teacher and Parent Conference

We will be able to come to school for the conference on

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent

## TEACHER-PARENT CONFERENCE AREAS

### I. General Health Habits as Observed at Home

The physical health of a child is of utmost importance, so we'd like to discuss your child's eating, sleeping, and safety habits, his general growth and physical well-being, or any particular health problem he may have.

### II. Attitudes and Habits

Children establish lifelong attitudes and habits at an early age. We'd like to share plans for helping your child develop a sense of responsibility, or self-discipline, or courtesy, and of co-operation. We'd appreciate knowing his special interests, hobbies, and activities.

### III. School Progress

You will want to know how your child is progressing in learning the fundamental skills or reading, writing, speaking, and arithmetic; how he is beginning to learn about the world around him through science and social studies; and how he is expressing himself through music, art, and rhythms. You will be interested in the kinds of study habits your youngster is starting to use, and in his interest in school activities. Since there will be many things the home and school can do together to foster and encourage learning, this may be an important part of your conference.

### IV. Your conference may be a brief visit so that you and your child's teacher can become acquainted and can work together for his welfare. However, if your child has particular needs or problems, we may wish to meet several times to give him as much help as possible.

**APPENDIX B**

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE SCHEDULING FORM

SCHOOL A

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday

Thursday

1:00 \_\_\_\_\_

1:00 \_\_\_\_\_

1:15 \_\_\_\_\_

1:15 \_\_\_\_\_

1:30 \_\_\_\_\_

1:30 \_\_\_\_\_

1:45 \_\_\_\_\_

1:45 \_\_\_\_\_

2:00 \_\_\_\_\_

2:00 \_\_\_\_\_

2:15 \_\_\_\_\_

2:15 \_\_\_\_\_

2:30 \_\_\_\_\_

2:30 \_\_\_\_\_

2:45 \_\_\_\_\_

2:45 \_\_\_\_\_

3:00 \_\_\_\_\_

3:00 \_\_\_\_\_

3:15 \_\_\_\_\_

3:15 \_\_\_\_\_

3:30 \_\_\_\_\_

3:30 \_\_\_\_\_

3:45 \_\_\_\_\_

3:45 \_\_\_\_\_

4:00 \_\_\_\_\_

4:00 \_\_\_\_\_

4:15 \_\_\_\_\_

4:15 \_\_\_\_\_

4:30 \_\_\_\_\_

4:30 \_\_\_\_\_

4:45 \_\_\_\_\_

4:45 \_\_\_\_\_

Special appointments

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX C

## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE RECORD FORM

SCHOOL A

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Conference with \_\_\_\_\_ Relation with child \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Please make at least one comment under each heading.  
 Use reverse side if more room is needed. If this  
 form is used for more than one conference, please  
 date each conference separately.

POINTS DISCUSSED:

INFORMATION RECEIVED:

PLANS MADE WITH PARENTS:

ATTITUDE OF PARENTS:

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE RECORD FORM

SCHOOL B

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Room \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

When were parents contacted? \_\_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_\_

How did parents respond? \_\_\_\_\_

Where was conference held? \_\_\_\_\_

People present at conference: \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR CONFERENCE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DECISION REACHED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ATTITUDE OF PARENTS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DATES FOR FUTURE CONFERENCES:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

FOLLOW-UP CONCLUSIONS:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE RECORD FORM

SCHOOL C

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_ Parent \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Progress:

Scholastic \_\_\_\_\_

Social \_\_\_\_\_

Ability \_\_\_\_\_

Improvement Areas \_\_\_\_\_

Improvement Methods \_\_\_\_\_

Special Points \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Participation:

Attitude \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperation \_\_\_\_\_

Criticism \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_