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An Experimental Study in Reporting Pupil Progress Through Parent-Teacher Conferences as a Supplement to Report Cards in the Wishram, Washington, Elementary School

Orville G. Ransford
Central Washington University

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AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY IN REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS THROUGH
PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES AS A SUPPLEMENT
TO REPORT CARDS IN THE WISHRAM,
WASHINGTON, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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
Orville G. Ransford
August 1959

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

E. E. Samuelson, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Edward K. Erickson

Everett A. Irish

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I am indebted to fellow faculty members who worked co-operatively and spent much time in making the parent-teacher conference program a reality and to the sixty-two parents who conscientiously returned the evaluative questionnaires.

My appreciation also goes to my graduate committee, Mr. Edward K. Erickson, Associate Professor Everett A. Irish, and especially to Professor E. E. Samuelson for encouragement and assistance in helping me complete this paper.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

During the past few years considerable discussion relative to reporting pupil progress to parents has arisen. In Wishram, Washington, where the investigator is principal-teacher of the elementary school, a few teachers and several parents were questioning whether the reporting system was as effective as it should be.

The school was using a system of quarterly reports, consisting of a card sent home with the child, with the conventional A, B, C, D, and F marks. In addition, space was allowed for an evaluation of the student's personal habits and a page for teachers' comments. Inadequacies sensed in such a reporting system, enthusiasm gained while attending summer school, and reading done about parent-teacher conferences prompted the investigator to make a preliminary study as to the feasibility of using conferences in reporting pupil progress.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It was the purpose of this study to determine if the values derived from parent-teacher conferences used as a supplement to report cards would be worth while in

the Wishram, Washington, Elementary School. Results of a questionnaire from the parents, another from the teachers, and an evaluation made by the district superintendent were used. From these and from the study of literature available, it was hoped that a more concrete reporting system might be developed.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study lies in the values received by parents, teachers, administration, community, and, especially, by the children. If parents can gain more insight into what the school is trying to do for their children, they may be more understanding and co-operative toward the total school program. When parent and teacher sit down and exchange information concerning the child, both parties should then be able to contribute more to his individual growth. In regard to this, Ada Shockley stated:

The home and school have a joint responsibility for a child's development. What happens to him in either place affects his total behavior. In order to help him develop a well-balanced personality structure, the home and the school must co-operate in working out a suitable program of activities and experiences. Individual parent-teacher conferences are one of the most satisfactory means of this co-operative planning possible (21:1).

Possible values of parent-teacher conferences to the community and the administrator are: (1) they

furnish a line of communication with parents, forming one line between school and home, (2) they develop good will by informing parents of their school and child, (3) the administrator feels the interview is of great help to a teacher in her teaching, (4) they bring about support in terms of good will and community awareness as well as in terms of funds, (5) when parents have some share in concrete school activities, they have a keen sense of belonging (16:14).

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The proposed objectives are: (1) to help children grow into productive human beings who would fit into our democratic society as good citizens, (2) to stimulate professional growth in the teaching staff, (3) to develop rapport between teachers and parents, (4) to help create better school-community relations, and (5) to develop a satisfactory method of reporting pupil progress to parents.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Parent-teacher conferences. A meeting between teacher and parent, or parents, usually held in a school classroom for the purpose of exchanging information concerning the child in school and the same child at home.

Reporting pupil progress. The term applied to a planned procedure used by the teacher to report a child's performance and growth at school.

Interview or visitation. Any conference between teacher and parent.

Experiment or project. The operation undertaken to discover methods of improving pupil reporting practices.

Evaluative questionnaire. A form used by teachers, another by parents, to evaluate the parent-teacher conferences.

V. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study was limited to parents, teachers, and administrators connected with the first six grades of the Wishram Elementary School. Their estimations of the project supplied the research data for evaluating the experiment.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

The remaining portion of this thesis has been organized into four chapters, a bibliography, and an appendix. A brief survey of the context of the remaining

chapters is given below.

Chapter Two reviews literature related to parent-teacher conferences. Excerpts from magazines, pamphlets, and books have been used in presenting the information. Since there has been an increased volume of written material on the subject, only enough was used to give an adequate sampling of recent trends and theories of reporting pupil progress.

Chapter Three discusses the research setting, and deals with materials and procedures used in conducting the experiment. The processes of introducing, organizing, and holding the conferences are also given in this chapter.

The findings from the evaluative questionnaires returned by the parents and by the teachers are found in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations. Included in this chapter are problems requiring further study if future pupil-reporting practices are to become more effective.

The thesis closes with the bibliography and appendix.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In recent years a considerable amount of writing about parent-teacher conferences has been done. A great portion of it appears in professional magazines and periodicals.

There is a variety of opinion among educators regarding trends in reporting pupil progress to parents. Parent-teacher conferences are usually mentioned as a promising solution. Whether a definite trend is developing toward the use of the conference plan is debatable, although it is difficult to find many school people who will deny that parent-teacher conferences, properly organized, are preferable to the traditional one way report card (18:101).

In regard to this, John A. Barr, noted educator and writer, states:

Parent-teacher conferences have been a part of the educational plan from time immemorial. However, the extension of the instrument has been a rapidly growing innovation of more recent times. Elementary schools have adopted the conference as one of their means of reporting pupil progress either as a supplement to or in lieu of the report card. Whether a planned program of conferences is scheduled in the school or not, it is very probable that every teacher at every grade level will have some type of conference with a parent during the year.

Educationally, the conference can be far superior

to any written materials in explaining the schools, the growth of the child, and in understanding the parent's attitudes. Many schools have accepted the importance of the parent-teacher conference as a tool in building a mutual understanding between the home and school (2:1).

Conflict is always distressing, but it can be useful. Recently it has helped earnest citizens and devoted teachers to agree that home and school must rebuild their unity. Home and school must supplement each other; they must make a consistent impact. The teacher should be a skilled team worker, in constant touch with his coeducators in the home (14:v).

Effective home school relations can bridge the gap created by lack of understanding between parents and teachers. They can also give parents peace of mind about their children's education and guarantee that today's knowledge will be used for the youngsters' well being (14:v).

If the time honored principle that home and schools should work together is accepted, educators are obligated to devise reporting systems to make such cooperation possible. The schools cannot do this alone. Parents must be involved in planning reporting systems if the systems are to do what they ought to do (5:274).

Probably the most effective way of reporting pupil progress to parents is through parent-teacher

conferences (12:358). The plan of conferencing can be successful and worthwhile only as the teacher is convinced of its value and desires to use it. Mary and Lawrence Frank state it this way:

This is quite a task, this job of communication, we have to learn to do it humanly, warmly, with genuine concern for parental difficulties and sensibilities, as well as those of children. When both groups are working in the direction of humanity, honesty, well being of children, mistakes made out of generosity, talked over together, will not hurt deeply or for very long (11:205).

The literature does not give evidence of the conference plan being used before 1930; however, it is quite likely that individual teachers had used them to supplement the regular report card. The elementary school systems in Highland Park, Michigan, and Aberdeen, South Dakota, were reported to have been using the conference plan before 1935 (8:6).

From 1945 to 1955 the conference plan appears to have spread rather rapidly and widely in the United States. A number of schools have experimented with them and have reported the results. The Wooldridge School of Austin, Texas, has made a thorough report of this kind which deals with the over all problems of grouping, marking, and reporting to parents. The Minneapolis, Minnesota, public elementary schools have found parent-teacher conferences quite feasible as means of reporting

pupil progress. Smaller elementary schools reporting favorable reaction by parents and teachers to the use of the conference plan are Newhall, Iowa, and McCook, Nebraska (18:102).

In Richmond, California, where parent-teacher conferences have been a part of the instructional program in elementary schools for several years, an extensive study of the conferences was recently completed. The analysis was based on tape recordings of sixty actual conferences held during one of the regularly scheduled semiannual conference periods. It became clear during this research that the performance of parents and teachers in the conferences could be separated in two groups, one group of high-level performances and the other of low-level performances (17:219).

When criticisms of parent-teacher conferences are based on the characteristics of conferences representing a low level of performance, it is clear that the criticisms are justified. The lack of communication between the participants and the failure of common planning for the child are all too apparent.

Conferences representative of a low level of performance can be improved with freer exchanges of information by the participants. The teacher must avoid direct questioning which fails to draw out response from

the parents and leaves the teacher in the dominant role. The items on a guide sheet should be limited in number and not followed too rigidly. Only a few points should be discussed, but these should be stressed. Specific illustrations and examples of work should be used to make the discussion meaningful, and purposeful planning should be done jointly by the teacher and the parent.

It is evident from the characteristics of parent-teacher conferences representing high level of performance that the conference is more than a pupil-progress report. It is an experience in co-operative human relationships. It offers an opportunity in communication between two persons vitally responsible for guiding a growing child in meeting his needs and the demands of democracy (17:219-224).

Maves states the value of good parent-teacher conferences to school community in the following manner:

Advocates of improved public relations for schools state that even the most causal [sic] contacts tend to influence the public attitudes toward schools, favorably or unfavorably. The parent-teacher conference, which can be used in any community, is dynamic potentiality for continuous publicity, educational interpretation, and co-operative endeavor. The conference must, however, reach a high level of performance if it is to be of the most value (17:224).

In the Robert E. Lee Elementary School, Birmingham, Alabama, the teacher holds a group conference as early in the school year as possible and may have another one near

the close of the year. Individual conferences are used as the need arises for the individual child (7:230).

After experimenting in one of the local schools, the entire Sheboygan, Wisconsin, elementary school system has adopted parent-teacher conferences. The launching of this program involved the following: (1) preparing a bulletin explaining the nature and scope, (2) helping teachers prepare for conferences, (3) conducting a well planned inservice program for teachers and a study program for parents, (4) scheduling the different types of conferences, (5) finding ways to reach all parents, and (6) evaluating conferences (1:210-11).

In the many school systems which have adopted the parent-teacher conference plan as a regular report of pupil progress, conferences have been provided in most instances, twice during the school year, usually at the close of the first and third quarters of the school year. Fifteen minutes appears to be the popular time allotment for each individual conference, and it is common practice to use some school time for them. The report card has been continued in many of the schools which have adopted the conference plan of reporting, the most frequent reason being the necessity of making a record of the child's progress. Reluctance of parents to make the transition from a written report of pupil progress to the

conference method may well be another reason for continuing the use of the report card (18:102).

In some quarters doubt seems to exist concerning the adequacy of the parent-teacher conference method. If a written statement is not sent to the parents, no record may be kept for the school files. The child may not be kept informed of his school progress unless he has a report card with marks upon it. Some of the classroom teachers may not be competent and diplomatic in planning and conducting the conferences. However, these objections can be met and corrected and seem of lesser importance when weighed against the great values which seem to result from the conference method of reporting. Parents and teachers, given the opportunity to exchange pertinent information regarding the child, may make definite plans for improving his educational experience. If the classroom teacher cannot provide the parent with more complete information during a personal conference than by way of a report card with its traditional markings, there is room for question as the teacher's fitness for her position (18:103).

CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH SETTING

Wishram, Washington, in Klickitat County, is a small community of about eight hundred people located on the Columbia River, approximately eighteen miles southwest of Goldendale, Washington, on U. S. Highway 830. The economy of the community is stabilized by the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle Railroad Company which maintains a major switching station at Wishram. A large majority of the community's workers are employed by the railroad company. Most of the remaining workers are automobile service station attendants, store clerks, and school personnel.

The local school system is housed in one building serving elementary, junior high, and senior high levels. During the time of this investigation, approximately 190 children were in the three levels; 40 in high school, 25 in junior high school, grades seven and eight, and 125 in elementary grades one through six. Grade one had 32 children, grade two had 20, grades three and four each had 16, grade five had 18, and grade six 23. All students live within two miles of the school, approximately 70 per cent being closer than eight blocks.

The administration and supervision of the school

system were handled by the district superintendent-principal, whose office is in the same building. The elementary principal, who was also full-time sixth grade teacher and high school basketball coach, supervised the elementary grades.

Six teachers were employed for the first six grades. Each grade was self-contained except grades five and six, where two teachers co-operated in the areas of physical education, art, and music.

I. INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM

Upon realizing the possibility of using parent-teacher conferences as a part of the pupil reporting practices, the investigator discussed the plan with the district superintendent. He was very co-operative and gave his approval and support.

It was found through earlier contacts with numerous parents that their feelings about parent-teacher conferences were quite favorable.

The next and probably the most important step was to determine if all the teachers of the first six grades would be interested in developing a conferencing program. The investigator felt that the success or failure of such an undertaking hinged primarily upon the teachers' co-operation in planning the program and their role in

carrying it out.

After the first two weeks of school, each teacher was tactfully approached concerning his thoughts about parent-teacher conferences as a method of reporting pupil progress to parents. Reactions were varied. One teacher remarked that conferences would require a great deal of time and work, another had had experiences with them and felt they were very worthwhile, and one teacher expressed a desire to hold conferences with the parents of children in her room. In general, they all showed dissatisfaction with the reporting method being used at that time.

At the next teachers' meeting the topic for discussion was parent-teacher conferences. A brief history of their success in other schools, possible values to be derived, apparent need in the school, and the basic philosophy underlying parent-teacher conferences were presented by the investigator. The teachers were interested, some very much so. A suggestion to hold conferences was made. This was received quite favorably. Therefore, several excellent books and pamphlets about teacher-parent relations and techniques and methods of conferencing were circulated among the teachers.

It was decided by the teachers at the next faculty meeting that the Wishram Elementary School faculty would begin planning and organizing individual parent-teacher

conferences. A conference at the end of the first reporting period and again at the end of the third reporting period, plus conferences concerning children with unusual problems was felt by the group to be satisfactory. A letter of introduction concerning the conferencing plan, found in Appendix B, was sent to all parents having children in any of the first six grades.

Since the Parent Teacher Association executive board had already planned a "Meet The Teachers Night" for the second Monday of October, a date for group conferences was already established. All of the teachers were introduced at the large group meeting, before the parents divided into smaller groups to visit the various classrooms. During the group conferences each teacher was in her classroom for four fifteen-minute periods. If some parents had more than one child enrolled in the school, this gave them an opportunity to visit the classrooms of all their children. General information concerning classroom procedures and curriculum was presented by the teacher. Parents had the opportunity at this time to ask questions of the teachers.

II. PLANNING THE PROGRAM

Upon determining when and how many individual parent-teacher conferences were to be used as a

supplement to report cards in reporting pupil progress, the teachers' next steps were to decide: (1) time of day to conduct interviews, (2) length of time for each interview, (3) number of conferences to hold in one day, (4) scheduling of parents, (5) means of making appointments with parents, (6) type of guide to use during conference, (7) recording form, and (8) evaluation of conferences.

Time of day to conduct interviews. Most teachers definitely wanted to hold conferences during school time. The district superintendent agreed that one hour early dismissal of the first six grades for enough days to allow teachers to visit with all the parents would be feasible.

Length of time for each interview. The group decided that each individual conference should be allowed a maximum of twenty minutes. If more than twenty minutes was necessary, a supplementary conference could be scheduled for a later date.

Number of conferences to hold in one day. It was the general feeling of the group that a teacher is frequently not at her best near the end of the teaching day. On that account it was resolved that only three

conferences a day would be scheduled.

Scheduling of parents. Because many parents had more than one child in the elementary school, it was felt that the schedule should convenience them as much as possible. Therefore, it was planned so that these parents could take part in all their conferences in one day.

Means of making appointments with parents. After looking over various types of forms used in other schools, the group devised an appointment slip used by all the teachers. This form is shown in Appendix C.

Type of guide to use during conference. A considerable amount of reading and discussion was done by the teachers before reaching a decision as to what type of guide was to be used. The guide sheet appears in Appendix D. Some teachers used the report card, shown in Appendix E, as a supplementary guide.

Recording form. The guide sheet referred to in the above paragraph also served as the record of the conference. After completion it was placed in the child's permanent record file.

Evaluation of conferences. After completion of

the conferencing program, an evaluative questionnaire, found in Appendix F, was completed and returned by each teacher in the elementary grades. Eighty-eight and five tenths per cent of the parents taking part in the conference also responded to a questionnaire, which appears in Appendix G. A written statement of evaluation from the district superintendent is shown in Appendix A. These evaluations constitute in part the basis for future planning of parent-teacher conferences in the Wishram Elementary School.

As the teachers were planning individuality for their visitations with parents, the elementary principal provided them with materials beneficial to their efforts and attempted to answer questions peculiar to the conference program.

The parents proved their degree of interest in this form of reporting pupil progress by their active participation in the conferences. Over 97 per cent of the parents of all children in grades one through six took part in the fall conferences. Their reactions to the conferences, following this outstanding display of co-operation, are part of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

I. PARENTS' EVALUATION

In the hope of obtaining the parental viewpoint concerning the parent-teacher conferences, the seventy families who had taken part in the visitations were asked to answer an evaluative questionnaire. They received the questionnaire a few days after taking part in their last conference of the school year. It was assumed that the parents gave more consideration and thought to the questions after they had had some time to think back over what values the conferences had had for them and their children.

In order to insure the highest possible return, telephone visitations and personal contacts were made with a number of parents. Sixty-two or 88.5 per cent of the questionnaires were returned. Through further investigation it was learned that the other eight questionnaires were not returned because of neglect or indifference. Two families had moved away. However, it is felt that inclusion of the eight missing questionnaires would have made very little difference in the character of responses shown in Table I. Because previous contacts

with the parents involved had occurred, it was felt that their responses would have followed approximately the pattern set by the sixty-two who returned questionnaires.

A quick survey of the figures in Table I, page 23, indicates that the parents overwhelmingly approved the parent-teacher conferences and gained a great amount of information from them. Items one and two reveal over 90 per cent positive answers; items three and four are very close to 85 per cent "yes"; five, six and seven are more than 75 per cent favorable.

On the other hand, a more thorough analysis of the data in Table I indicates weaknesses in the program. More than two out of ten parents were not sure they gained knowledge about how subject matter was presented. Over 22 per cent were doubtful as to whether their child had benefited from the conferences. Almost one fourth of the parents were not sure they had learned more about the subject matter taught.

Another shortcoming in reporting pupil progress by the conference method is shown in part one, Table II, page 25, where five parents suggest the continuation of parent-teacher conferences but definitely want report cards to be continued also.

Even though faults may appear in almost all forms of human endeavor, several values resulted from parent-

teacher conferences. It would appear that parents, teachers, students, school administration, school board of directors, and the community in general received benefits from the program.

Considerable rapport was established between parents and teachers. In Table I, page 23, item two reveals that over nine out of ten parents found it easier to talk with teachers after having had a conference. Further emphasis is shown in item four, Table III, page 28. Four teachers out of six felt they had become better acquainted with parents. Three teachers indicated that rapport with parents was developed. A higher rate of positive answers might have been shown except for the fact that three parents said they had never had difficulty talking with teachers.

The parent-teacher conferences not only improved relationships between parents and teachers, but as a result of the establishment of rapport, school community relations were also improved. Part three, Table II, Parents' Appraisals of Conferences, page 25, contains four statements illustrating this point. Further emphasis of the value of conferences to good school community relations is stated in the school district superintendent's evaluation of the conferencing program found in Appendix A: "Anything that builds better public

TABLE I
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF CONFERENCES HELD
IN WISHRAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	PERCENTAGE		
	Yes	No	Undecided
1. Gained information concerning child, report cards did not give.	90.3	3.2	6.5
2. Found it easier to talk to teacher after having conference.	90.3	8.1	1.6
3. Know more about what is expected of child.	85.5	3.2	11.3
4. Would like to have conferences next year.	83.9	3.2	12.9
5. Gained knowledge about how subject matter was presented.	79.0	9.7	11.3
6. Felt child had benefited from conferences.	77.4	8.1	14.5
7. Learned more about subject matter taught.	75.8	12.9	11.3
8. Think conferences are a waste of time.	00.0	93.5	6.5
9. Had suggestions or criticisms of conference.	32.3	62.9	4.8

relations for the school is very worthwhile and without a doubt these conferences did much of that."

Although it is recognized that reporting pupil progress by this method is not the final solution, most parents apparently agree that parent teacher visitations are steps in the direction of educating children in the best manner society is capable of doing. Table I, page 23, shows that 84 per cent of the parents want conferences next year and over 93 per cent feel that the conferences were not a waste of time. Further emphases on this point are stated in part three, Table II, page 25.

II. TEACHERS' EVALUATION

Parental interest and co-operation are very important segments of productive parent-teacher conferences; however, the teachers' role is of equal, if not more, importance to the success of a good parent-teacher conference program. An attempt was made to secure the teachers' attitudes concerning the experiment. The six teachers involved in conducting the conferences were asked to make an evaluation of the total project. The evaluative questionnaires were given to them approximately six weeks after completion of the last conference. It was hoped that the benefits and values of the total project would be more apparent to the

TABLE II
PARENTS' SUGGESTIONS, CRITICISMS, AND
APPRAISALS OF THE CONFERENCES

1.	Suggestions	15
	Continue holding conferences but do not delete report cards. (5)	
	Continue conferences if they help the teachers. (1)	
	Teachers should ask the parents more leading questions. (1)	
	Continue conferences by all means. (3)	
	Conferences should be held in high school. (2)	
	Hold conferences in the evenings. (1)	
	Send daily work home with child. (1)	
	Do away with report cards and have conferences. (1)	
2.	Criticisms	10
	Conferences are more benefit to those needing improvement. (1)	
	Comments on report card sufficient for the students with no problems. (1)	
	Conference is valuable if child is having difficulty in school. (1)	
	Found it difficult to present questions to the teacher. (1)	
	Conference with one teacher was quite enlightening whereas the conference with another teacher was quite the contrary. (1)	
	Gained knowledge as to how reading was presented, only. (1)	

TABLE II (Continued)

Have never had any trouble talking to the teachers. (3)

Receive no satisfaction looking over a great pile of work at end of the year. (1)

3. Appraisals

15

Child felt the parents were really interested in his school work and therefore put forth more effort. (1)

Help us understand how our children are doing in school. (1)

Develop closer relationships between parent and teacher. (1)

Gives parents and teachers an opportunity to visit and become acquainted whereas otherwise they may not do so. (2)

Have done a lot of good for me and my children. (1)

Have been able to know and like the teachers. (1)

Appreciate the opportunity for conferences very much. (1)

One of the best ways to become acquainted with teachers and know exactly what is going on. (1)

Calls parents attention to report cards. (1)

Child had no problems but if he had I am sure he would have benefited. (1)

Conferences are a wonderful thing and a great help. (2)

I am enthusiastic about conferences. (2)

teachers after a lapse of time. All six questionnaires were answered and returned within one week.

As shown in Table III, Teachers' Evaluation of the Conferences, page 28, some teachers were not as enthusiastic over the project as were many parents. One of the six teachers indicates no enjoyment in conferencing with parents because it was felt that a mutual interest in the children's welfare had been established in previous contacts with the parents. One teacher felt that no advantages worth mentioning had been received. It is quite doubtful if two of the teachers feel conferences are worth the time and effort required to make them successful. Item three, Table III, reveals two negative responses in regard to holding conferences next year and a comment stating that they were a waste of time in some cases. It is interesting to note in Table III that two teachers definitely feel the project had not improved their teaching.

On the other hand, a more critical analysis of Table III, page 28, shows that the majority of teachers said they had gained various benefits from the project. Three teachers increased their personal status by receiving feelings of achievement and satisfaction in a job well done. Four of the six teachers appear to have developed convictions that professional growth took place

TABLE III
TEACHERS' EVALUATIONS OF CONFERENCES HELD
IN WISHRAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1. Enjoyed having conferences with parents. Why or why not?

5 Yes
0 No
0 Undecided
1 Unanswered

Comments:

Parents appeared to be very grateful that we teachers were taking an unusual interest in their children. (1)

Became more aware of and gained insight into students' problems which arose from home conditions. (2)

Parents were friendly and willing to talk about their children. (2)

Enjoyed showing parents the children's written work and talking with them was pleasant. (1)

Expressions of satisfaction were appreciated. (1)

Received a feeling of achievement. (3)

Since having previously met most of the children's parents, the mutual interest in the child's welfare had already been established. (1)

2. Conference project made me a better teacher.

4 Yes
2 No
0 Undecided
0 Unanswered

3. Would like to hold conferences next year.

TABLE III (Continued)

4 Yes
 0 No
 1 Undecided
 1 Unanswered

Comments:

I will cooperate with whatever plans are made by the administration regarding conferences. (1)

Work might have been done in the time used that would have been of some benefit to the child. (1)

One conference per year should be sufficient. (2)

4. Received specific advantages as result of conferences.

5 Yes
 1 No
 0 Undecided
 0 Unanswered

Comments:

No advantages received. (1)

Became better acquainted with parents. (4)

Conferences caused me to make a more thorough evaluation of students' performances and behavior. (1)

Developed rapport with parents. (3)

Gained confidence in talking with parents. (1)

Gained a wider and clearer knowledge of children's capacities and handicaps. (4)

An understanding of what help to expect from home. (3)

Noticed a temporary improvement in one child's work. (1)

Better understanding of individual attitudes and ideas. (2)

TABLE III (Continued)

Parental interest in type of motivation used. (1)

Opportunity to note similarities between parent and child. (1)

An "all in this together" feeling. (2)

Parents gained an understanding of P. E. rhythms. (1)

within them. This is indicated throughout their evaluations of the program but particularly by their responses to items two and three, Table III. They feel that the conference project made them better teachers; moreover, they would like to hold conferences next year. Five teachers feel they gained specific advantages. Mentioned most frequently are development of rapport and better acquaintance with parents.

This chapter has attempted to point out the results of the experiment in reporting pupil progress by parent-teacher conferences, as shown through evaluation made by parents, teachers, and school administration. In summarization it can be said that the project contained several weaknesses plus numerous benefits. However, the values overweigh and de-emphasize the faults.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine if the values derived from parent-teacher conferences, used as a supplement to report cards, would be worthwhile in the Wishram, Washington, Elementary School. To obtain data for this study, the investigator petitioned information from the seventy parents involved in the conferences, the six teachers who conducted the conferences, and the district superintendent. Evaluative questionnaires were used for this purpose.

The steps involved in setting up the program were, introducing the program to the administration, the teachers, and the parents; and co-operative planning of the following steps by the teachers and elementary principal: (1) time of day to conduct interviews, (2) length of time for each interview, (3) number of conferences to hold in one day, (4) scheduling of parents, (5) type of guide to use during conference, (6) recording form to use, and (7) evaluation of conferences.

This study also reviewed current trends and theories found in recent literature. More and more

schools are developing parent-teacher conferences as part of their reporting systems. A number of educators stated that parent-teacher conferences, properly planned and conducted, are the most satisfactory method of reporting pupil progress yet devised.

Analysis of the research data revealed some weaknesses in the conference program; however, the positive responses indicated greater strengths. Weaknesses appeared to lie in a theory maintained by some parents and a few teachers. If the child is receiving high marks and not having trouble in school, what value is received in talking with the teacher? Weaknesses are also shown by an indication of a shortage of teacher enthusiasm and in remarks that the conferences may have been a waste of time in certain instances.

On the other hand, 84 per cent of the parents pointed out that they would like conferences next year and 93 per cent felt that the conferences were not time wasted. The greater portion of the teachers also felt thus, as the program had many advantages for them, they would like to continue the conferences next year.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Wishram, Washington, being quite small, remotely situated, and having little to offer as a desirable place

to live, somewhat limits the superintendent's selection of teachers. Therefore, the results of this study may not be applicable to larger school systems.

From the results of this study and the investigator's personal experience, the conclusions are as follows:

1. A successful parent-teacher conference program depends primarily on the amount of desire and ability possessed by the teachers involved.

2. The teachers involved must possess the ability to confer with parents or be willing to take measures to alleviate their incapacibilities.

3. A thorough in-service training program to enlighten the teachers about techniques, methods, procedures, and values of conferences should help solve the problem previously stated.

4. Teachers involved in conferences should be allowed time from teaching duties so they can properly plan and conduct them.

5. A good conferencing program also requires good positive leadership, co-operative planning, and continuous cooperation from the administration.

6. Parents should be drawn into the planning of the program.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to insure the greatest degree of success in using parent-teacher conferences for reporting pupil progress to parents, several prerequisites should be considered. They are:

1. The conference program should be planned by parents, teachers, and administration on a co-operative basis.
2. The program should be entered into as a regular report of pupil progress rather than as a new fad in education which may be used or disregarded by teachers according to their whims.
3. Adequate time should be provided for them. Fifteen or twenty minutes appears to be sufficient. After-school sessions should be avoided when possible because teachers may not be at their best after a day of teaching.
4. A summary of the conference should be placed in the pupil's permanent record.
5. Report cards may best be continued, at least until the conference plan has been well developed and accepted by parents and teachers.
6. A continuous plan should be made for orientation of new teachers and parents.

7. Continuous evaluation should be a project for a parent-teacher group.

8. Meetings with parents in groups should be considered in order to take care of problems of general interest outside of the individual conference sessions, reserved for confidential reporting and exchange of information concerning the individual child.

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A P P E N D I X

APPENDIX A
SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION
OF CONFERENCES

41

WISHRAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Wishram, Washington

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

James E. Jackson, Chairman
Walter R. Larson, Clerk
R. W. Leachman
Dolly L. Graham
Charmaine L. Cox

Claude O. Case
Superintendent

Orville Ransford
Elementary Principal

May 13, 1959

RE PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

From my own observation and from comments I have heard from a number of people I believe the parent teacher conferences held this year were highly successful. I think they did much to not only give parents a better view of what the teachers are trying to do but in a larger sense what the school as a whole is trying to do. Anything that builds better public relations for the school is very worthwhile and without a doubt these conferences did much of that.

It is possible that they might be held at a more advantageous time or perhaps one might have been enough, I really have no opinion on that at all. I would hope that they might be continued in the future in some form.

(signed) Claude O. Case

APPENDIX B
LETTER TO PARENTS

42

Wishram, Washington
October 2, 1958

Dear Parents,

Beginning this fall we are planning to hold a series of scheduled parent-teacher conferences as a supplement to report cards.

The plan is to visit with all the parents of children in grades one through six.

Frequently there is information a teacher would like to offer the parent, and the conventional report card cannot carry it. Also, you may be able to give valuable information concerning your child which can help the teacher a great deal in working with him or her.

It has been proven that parent-teacher conferences are of great value if all concerned do their part in carrying out the plan. I am sure we can depend on your support.

Our main objective is to help your child to learn and to grow toward maturity in a more satisfactory manner, and with your cooperation we will be able to do a better job.

I sincerely invite you to the P. T. A. meeting Monday, October 13 at 7:30 P. M. at which time we will present more details concerning the program and attempt to answer questions you may have.

You will also have the opportunity to meet the teachers at this time.

Respectfully,

Elementary Principal

APPENDIX C
CONFERENCE APPOINTMENT FORM

Dear Mr. and/or 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 is unsuitable, please indicate below when you could come.

Sincerely,

I (can, can not) come on _____ at _____.

Other preference _____

Signed _____

APPENDIX D

A GUIDE SHEET FOR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE
OF PUPIL PROGRESS

This guide is intended to direct the discussion between the parent and the teacher regarding the child's progress in school and to aid the teacher in planning for the conference. Space is allowed for teacher's comments regarding conference and information which might be pertinent to the child's progress.

This guide sheet should become a part of the child's permanent record.

School _____ Date _____

Child's Name _____ Grade _____

Conference Held With _____

Relationship to Child _____

Teacher _____

Growth in Specific Areas

Language or English _____

Arithmetic _____

Social Studies _____

Reading _____

Spelling _____

Science _____

Writing _____

Music _____

APPENDIX D

Art _____

P. E. _____

Social Growth and Habits

Work Habits _____

Social Habits _____

Health Habits _____

Teacher's comments regarding conference can be written below.

Klickitat County Public Schools

Klickitat County, Washington

MRS. GRACE M. FORRY, County Superintendent

ELEMENTARY GRADES

Report of

..... Grade

For the school year ending, 195.....

Teacher

To Parents:

The purpose of this report is to give parents information concerning the work done and improvement being accomplished by their child, so that they may co-operate with the teacher in securing the best results possible. Parents are cordially invited to visit the school as often as possible.

GRADE ASSIGNMENT

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| 1. Promoted | (...) | } | Grade |
| 2. On Trial | (...) | | |
| 3. Retained..... | (...) | | |

.....Teacher

APPENDIX E

REPORT ON SCHOLARSHIP

	Six Week Periods						Av.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
LANGUAGE OR ENGLISH							
1. Expresses thoughts satisfactorily							
Oral							
Written							
ARITHMETIC							
1. Knows basic number of facts and processes							
2. Solves problems of grade level							
GEOGRAPHY							
HISTORY OR SOCIAL SCIENCE							
READING							
1. Oral							
2. Written							
SPELLING							
1. Spells correctly in daily written work							
2. Spells correctly required lists of words							
SCIENCE							
HEALTH							
WRITING							
1. Uses good form in written work							
2. Meets grade standards							
MUSIC							
1. Enjoys singing							
2. True voice pitch							
3. Shows interest in good music							
ART							
.....							
.....							
.....							

EXPLANATION OF GRADING MARKS

.....

.....

.....

.....

REPORT ON HABITS

WORK HABITS	Six Week Periods					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gives best efforts to work						
2. Works independently						
3. Does accurate work						
4. Does neat work						
5. Finishes what is started						
6. Is careful in use of materials and supplies						
7. Is on time with work						
8. Makes good use of free time						

SOCIAL HABITS

1. Controls unnecessary whispering						
2. Keeps desk clean						
3. Co-operates in work and play						
4. Keeps personal belongings in proper place						
5. Is responsible for playground equipment						
6. Controls temper						
7. Shows initiative						
8. Is dependable						

HEALTH

1. Has good posture						
2. Has good lunch room habits						
3. Comes to school clean						
4. Keeps hands and materials from mouth						
5. Keeps teeth clean.....						
6. Weight						

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Six-Week Period	1	2	3	4	5	6
Days Present						
Days Absent						
Times Tardy						

TEACHER'S COMMENTS

1st Six Weeks:
.....
.....
.....

2nd Six Weeks:
.....
.....
.....

3rd Six Weeks:
.....
.....
.....

4th Six Weeks:
.....
.....
.....

5th Six Weeks:
.....
.....
.....

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

1st Six Weeks:
2nd Six Weeks:
3rd Six Weeks:
4th Six Weeks:
5th Six Weeks:

APPENDIX F

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS

Please fill this out as accurately as you can and return to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

1. Did you enjoy having conferences with the parents?

Yes No

Why or why not?

2. Do you think this project has made you a better teacher?

Yes No

3. Would you like to hold conferences next year?

Yes No

4. What specific advantages have come to you as a result of this project?

APPENDIX G

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS

51

Dear Parents,

As part of our efforts to evaluate and improve our Parent Teacher Conferences I would like for you to answer the following questions and return this form to me as soon as possible. Please be sincere and give each question serious thought. Your signature is not necessary unless you prefer.

Thank you,

Underline your response,

- | | | | | |
|-----|----|-----------|----|--|
| Yes | No | Undecided | 1. | Have you gained information concerning your child which our report cards do not give? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 2. | Do you feel your child has benefited from these conferences? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 3. | Do you feel you know more about what is expected of your child? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 4. | Have you learned more about the subject matter taught to your child? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 5. | Have you gained any knowledge about how subject matter is presented to your child? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 6. | Do you find it easier to talk to your child's teacher since having the conferences? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 7. | Would you like to have the conferences held next year? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 8. | Do you think the conferences are a waste of time? |
| Yes | No | Undecided | 9. | Do you have any suggestions or criticisms concerning the conferences? If so write them below or on the back of this sheet. |