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## **Simplified Record-Keeping Project for the Yelm School District Elementary Schools**

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SIMPLIFIED RECORD-KEEPING PROJECT  
FOR THE YELM SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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A Project Report  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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

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by  
Jerry L. Higgins  
July, 1984

SIMPLIFIED RECORD-KEEPING PROJECT  
FOR THE YELM SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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June, 1984

The relationships of student record-keeping, student learning objective tracking, and student progress reporting were studied. The management problems of these record-keeping processes, such as teacher time spent on paperwork, the overabundance of paperwork, and the duplication of labor were studied. The results of the study provided information for the design of a simplified record-keeping project for the Yelm School District elementary schools.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Lloyd Gabriel, Byron DeShaw, and Frank Carlson for their concern, suggestions and patience.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Recording-keeping has been a legal educational duty for some time. Horace Mann has been given the recognition of creating the permanent record when he introduced the school register in 1838. (Wilson: 33) Since the origin of Horace Mann's school register, the amount of work and time required to complete record-keeping tasks have substantially increased.

Teachers in the Yelm School District have experienced, as have teachers all over the nation, an increase of required paperwork. The paperwork duties such as form filling, record-keeping, and student progress reporting have increased considerably over the past twenty years and are a major source of job frustration in education. (Robinson: 125)

#### Background

The Yelm School District not unlike every other public school district in Washington State was affected by Senate Bill 3026. SB 3026 was passed in 1975-76 and became RCW 28A.58.090, the Student Learning Objective Law. It is referred to as the SLO Law.

The Yelm School District, under the direction of its school board and superintendent, authorized a steering committee of teachers and administrators to supervise and manage the implementation of the SLO Law. Following the

timeline the law prescribed, the steering committee worked with the Yelm teaching staff members to write and organize the district's student learning objectives. Since the initial writing and implementation of the SLO's, the Yelm School District has modified and expanded its SLO's as prescribed by law. The SLO's encompass grades K-12 in the disciplines of Reading, Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Health.

Each discipline at each grade level had considerable amounts of SLO's to manage. The inherent problem for the classroom teacher was that too much information was required to be recorded.

Prior to the 1981-82 school year, the steering committee approved the implementation of Student Learning Objective categories for the 1981-82 school year for grades K-8. The classroom teacher was no longer required to report each student's progress on each SLO, but was required to report each student's progress by SLO categories.

This project was designed and developed to provide teachers appropriate tracking and reporting instruments that correspond to the district's modification of reporting SLO's by categories.

#### Statement of the Problem

Elementary teachers in the Yelm School District have the responsibility of managing excessive amounts of paperwork, a problem not unique to Yelm teachers. The list of paperwork-related tasks seems almost endless. In addition to student

record keeping and student progress reporting, many teachers fill out daily or hourly attendance sheets, lunch count reports, supply requisitions, film orders, surveys, discipline procedure forms, other miscellaneous forms, and write letters home to parents.

For the purpose of this project, the key areas of concern as they relate to the problems of managing paperwork are the teacher tasks of student record keeping, SLO tracking, and student progress reporting.

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide the Yelm School District a design for a simplified record-keeping system. The significance of the project was to reduce teacher time spent on record-keeping tasks by reducing amounts of paperwork required and by eliminating the unnecessary duplication of labor as related to student record keeping, SLO tracking, and student progress reporting.

#### Definition of Terms

The following definitions are in context with the scope of this project and the efforts of the Yelm School District to upgrade its level of compliance with RCW 28A.58.090, the SLO Law. The definitions reflect the district's revision of the previously used SLO tracking system in the Yelm School District.

### Student Learning Objective

A Student Learning Objective is specific in nature, is basically responsible for one student learning outcome, and is measurable. Student Learning Objectives are referred to as SLO's in this project.

### Student Learning Objective Category

A Student Learning Objective category is a division of a discipline which organizes the discipline's related SLO's into one category of responsibility, i.e., the Reading discipline, SLO's of a comprehension skill level would be categorized together in the SLO category, Comprehension.

### Limitations of the Project

Although the context of this project is applicable at all levels of K-12 instruction, the project is designed for the K-4 levels of the Yelm School District elementary schools. The project will serve as a model of simplified record keeping for grades 5-8.

The second concern is that a judgment, about the grading system used in the Yelm School District, will not be made. A checkoff system is used in grades K-3. The A, B, C, D, F letter grade system is used in grades 4-12. These grading systems were prescribed for district use by a committee of parents, community members, teachers and administrators of Yelm School District.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Time spent on record-keeping tasks has become a key concern of educators at all levels. District administrators, principals and teachers have all felt the impact of increased paperwork loads. "School administrators now say that filling out reports is their most time-consuming activity." (Pogrow: 345)

The excessive amount of paperwork required to be managed consumes inappropriate amounts of valuable teacher time. "Increased paperwork substantially reduces the time that professional educators can dedicate to the job of teaching. Teachers are forced to shorten the time they formerly allocated to instruction, planning and evaluation to complete forms." (Robinson: 125)

The increase of required paperwork has become obvious. "The increase could easily be detected by any measure--number of pages, word count or sheer weight." (Wilson: 33)

The emphasis for more data on students has escalated the record-keeping load. Fifty years ago a student record might have simply contained data such as "student name, dates of enrollment and withdrawal, promotion and perhaps some comments about discipline." (Wilson: 33) Today's student records can

receive input from principals, classroom teachers, teaching specialists, counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, and from other qualified professional positions.

Record keeping is not only expensive in teacher time, but also costs financially. The costs of collecting, storing and processing information takes large amounts of money away from the purpose of education. "One survey estimated the cost of an excess of 230.2 million dollars for school districts nationally to report federally mandated information."

(Pogrow: 345)

At the state level in Washington during the 1980-81 school year, Dr. Frank Brouillet, Superintendent of Public Instruction, addressed the problems of increased paperwork for instructors. In a speech to the Washington State School Directors Association, he questioned the Federal Government's policy mandating the collection of data. "I seriously challenge the assumption that collecting data is more important than providing funds to students for programs." (Brouillet: 1)

In an attempt to reduce paperwork at the district level, Dr. Brouillet called for the 1981 Washington State Legislature to repeal the Student Learning Objective Law, RCW 28A.58.090. The SLO Law was not repealed.

The cost to education is extreme in the loss of teachers' time and effort that is required to complete record-keeping tasks. "Is the end result of this paperwork really worth the trouble?" (Armstrong: 8)

The answer to this question is complex and can be responded to depending on the circumstances in a positive or negative vein. The purpose was to satisfy the "need to achieve an equilibrium between our desire to have as much information as possible available and our desire not to spend all our time keeping records." (Armstrong: 8)

A review of literature for this project was addressed to three topic areas in how they are related to simplified record keeping. The topic areas researched were:

- 1) Student Record Keeping
- 2) Student Learning Objective Tracking
- 3) Student Progress Reporting

#### Student Record Keeping

The classroom teacher is responsible for managing large quantities of student academic data. Teachers are responsible for maintaining records of student performance in the disciplines they instruct. "To do a good job, teachers must keep specific records on each child in each curriculum area about which they report." (Miles:11)

"The most common record keeping in education is done in the teacher's gradebook." (Gorth:42) The gradebook serves the purpose of recording letter grades and test scores. This style of recording is mandated by the format of a typical teacher's gradebook. "Small spaces, barely big enough for a letter grade or numerical score, make it difficult to record

anything but numbers or letter grades." (TenBrink: 178)

A letter grade or a score without other information is of little use. Additional information is needed to make the grade or score a useful tool in evaluation.

The following are types of questions that are needed to be answered to make grade and score information meaningful:

- 1) "Who or what is the information about?
- 2) What instrument was used to obtain the information?
- 3) When was the information obtained?
- 4) Is the information related to any instructional objective or learning outcome?" (TenBrink: 178)

There is a need to incorporate learning objective data into student record keeping. "Noticeably missing from most record-keeping procedures are data about specific learning objectives." (Gorth: 43)

Learning objectives are instructional components that make up the curriculum. They can be structured into a hierarchy of skills that provides the curriculum a scope and sequence. Information recorded about student learning outcomes based on the curriculum's learning objectives could provide, "information of value for decision making at all levels of the program." (Gorth: 43)

To be an effective tool in reporting student progress, the record-keeping system must make the connection of the value of the score with the learning objective evaluated. "Records relating to objectives must be kept in such a way that they are useful for evaluation. Similarly, record-keeping procedures that focus on the evaluation component of

the instructional model must be keyed to objectives."

(Armstrong: 13)

With evaluation in synchronization with the learning objective format, record-keeping procedures can become the key in detecting strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

The record-keeping system should provide information that answers two basic questions educators encounter:

- 1) "What should our learners have accomplished as a result of instruction?
- 2) What, in fact, did our learners accomplish as a result of instruction?" (Armstrong: 13)

The format of the record-keeping system should be consistent with that of the curriculum format of the learning objectives. The curriculum format that breaks down into subdivisions of program goals, course goals and learning goals should have this format reflected by the record-keeping system. "A good record-keeping system reflects the relationship among course goals, objectives and learning experiences derived from the objectives." (Armstrong: 14)

The record-keeping system should have a high degree of usability. In addition to being accurate in recording student outcomes, it should be convenient for teachers to use. "The system must be easy to use and update. A record-keeping system must be very detailed at some levels and highly aggregated at others. It must also be concise enough to retain its purpose of providing specific information rapidly and succinctly." (Groth: 43)

Student Learning Objectives Tracking

The Student Learning Objective Law in Washington State, RCW 28A.58.090 was enacted in 1975-76. The law prescribes for local districts to produce learning objectives that measure student attainment on an annual basis. "The law does not call for information gathered on students to be disbursed to any group or individuals, but it would be helpful to give the information to parents." (SPI SLO Assessment: 34)

Results of a survey conducted by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction were printed in a paper prepared by Gary Ruel, Supervisor of Student Learning Objectives in March of 1980. The following are questions from the survey and responses from educators:

"Question: In your opinion what positive outcomes of the SLO Law do you foresee? (Open-ended question/teacher response only).

Response: 34.8% Has organized the curriculum and has given direction.

Response: 20.9% No answer.

Question: In your opinion, what negative outcomes of the SLO Law do you foresee? (Open-ended question/teacher response only).

Response: 55.8% Paperwork has increased.

Response: 20.6% No answer." (SPI SLO Survey: 4, 11)

The SLO Law has presented difficulties for districts in Washington State in implementing the law.

"It is important to recognize that even with the control

and flexibility at the local district level, implementation of the SLO Law has experienced some difficulties. The amount of record keeping and paperwork, the timeline for implementation and the uncertainty as to minimum compliance standards are a few of the problems with which districts are struggling." (SLO Task Force Report SPI: 7)

A problem that evolved for some districts in Washington State in the implementation of the SLO Law has been the duplication of labor in tracking and reporting SLO information. Teachers in some districts, such as Yelm, have been required to track and report SLO's while concurrently keeping a grade-book and reporting student achievement on report cards. These practices do not only cause duplication of labor, but can also cause confusion between the two tracking and reporting systems.

The Auburn School District in Washington State has dealt with the problem of having two reporting systems. The Auburn District has combined their regular report card with their SLO card into one reporting document "to avoid confusion." (Auburn School District: 1)

The Kent Public Schools in Washington State also have come out with one reporting device to parents. The following is printed on the Kent School District's report cards.

"The report card used by the Kent Public Schools is based on the following Student Learning Objectives. Each area of instruction in the basic skills has an identified set of objectives which describe the essential knowledge and skills that students need to learn as they progress through the

subjects. This report card is an indication of your child's progress in relation to these essential areas of instruction. More detailed breakdown of each Student Learning Objective is available in the teacher's curriculum guide." (Kent Public Schools' 1980-81 Report Card)

### Student Progress Reporting

While student record keeping is the mode for accurately tracking student performance, student progress reporting provides the means of communicating information on student progress to interested parties. Report cards, check lists, letters to parents, parent and student conferences are some of the commonly used ways of reporting student progress.

The report card traditionally is the most frequently used medium for reporting student progress. In 1931 the Department of the Interior identified the report card as "the most commonly used means of informing parents of their children's standing and progress in school work. It is accepted as an administrative device to serve the double purpose of informing the home of pupil achievement and of acting as a record for both home and the school." (Hansen: 1)

The report card should be informative but yet concise. "Reporting pupil progress should be objective, continuous, reliable, and valid. They should be simple for parents and students to understand and not too time consuming for teachers to prepare. Furthermore, they should provide enough information to help students, teachers, and parents make important educational decisions." (Sax: 521)

To make important educational decisions teachers, parents and students should understand what learning outcomes the curriculum places as expectations on the student. Also, the student progress being made towards meeting those expectations has to be known. "By knowing what the school is attempting to do, parents are better able to cooperate with school personnel in promoting the development of their child."

(Gronlund: 510)

The report card in conveying information to parents and students uses a variety of systems that use symbols for rating. The grading system symbols used have to be clear in how they represent student achievement in the curriculum. Grades should inform the student and parent with minimum error. Grades should inform rather than conceal or confuse, and be concise without loss or waste of information.

(Hills: 184)

Teachers often use educational terms in describing student achievement when reporting to parents and students. Terminology, if not clearly defined, could mislead the parent or student into misinterpreting the report. "Objectivity or agreement among individuals on the meaning of terms used on report cards is important. Reliability can be increased by using specific terms on report cards rather than vague generalities." (Sax: 549)

There are several types of report cards. "Some only report course marks while others have extensive check lists." (Green: 327) Some report cards rely on teacher comments and

written reports. "There is no one report card that can serve as a model. The local system must devise the type that best serves its needs." (Karmel: 424)

#### Summary

Record keeping and progress reporting are the modes by which the tracking and communicating of student achievement is expressed. The importance of quality student record keeping and student progress reporting is paramount in ensuring that the educational goals of our school are communicated accurately and precisely to students and parents.

## Chapter III

### PROCEDURES FOR THE PROJECT

The procedures used for the development of this project were based on research and input from staff. After reviewing the literature and studying the district's needs for simplified student record keeping and reporting procedures, the following process was used.

The district steering committee decided that the writer would develop the project for district use. At the conclusion of the study and the development of the student record-keeping sheets and the SLO category reporting sections the instruments were presented to the elementary faculties for their perusal and feedback.

The instruments were accepted by the faculties and adopted by the steering committee. Inservice was provided to the elementary staffs to promote full understanding and utilization of the instruments during implementation. The record-keeping pages and the student learning objective category reporting sections officially went into district use during the 1981-82 school year.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

The two key components of the simplified record-keeping project are the record-keeping page and the Student Learning Objective category reporting section of the student report card. Both components were designed to correlate information of student progress as it pertains to instructional activities prescribed by the curriculum's student learning objectives.

#### Record-Keeping Page

The record-keeping page is generic in appearance and traditional in design. Spaces labeled "Subject" and "Quarter" are the only headings on the 8½" X 11" page. (See App. A)

The page design consists of horizontal numbered lines and vertical columns. The numbered lines are designed to list student names and to record corresponding scores and grades of instructional activities earned by the students. There are three different pages designed with numbered lines for 25, 33, and 50 students.

A ½" horizontal space at the top of the record-keeping page and 5/15" vertical columns are the key modifications in the design of the record-keeping page.

The SLO category is indicated by the teacher in the ½" horizontal space at the top of the page. The teacher

has the capability to record data of each SLO category separately for each student. The teacher still has the capability to average all scores of a discipline together by running a total of the scores of the SLO categories of the discipline.

The 5/16" vertical column provides the teacher enough space to describe each activity. The specific instructional objective can be identified and placed under the appropriate SLO category.

The purpose of the design of the record-keeping page is to provide the teacher the capability to record student data in an organized way. The page is designed to provide information on student progress at three levels: instructional objectives, SLO categories, and the subject area or discipline.

Student Learning Objective Category  
Reporting Section

Student progress on SLO categories is recorded on the report card. The report card is designed to show student data on SLO categories on a quarterly basis instead of an end-of-the-year report. (See App. B)

The report card has sections for the subject areas: Reading, Language, Math, Social Studies, Science, Health, Music, Art, and P.E. Listed under each discipline are the SLO categories.

The design allows the teacher to indicate by grade overall student performance in a discipline. The teacher

can also concurrently indicate progress in each SLO category that collectively make up the discipline. Student weaknesses and strengths in each discipline can be more graphically shown by SLO category reporting.

## Chapter V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Yelm School District identified that it had problems with too much teacher time being spent on record-keeping tasks, and that there was a substantial amount of duplication of labor. Much of the teacher time was used to keep grade books, fill out report cards, and track student learning objectives.

The purpose of this project was to reduce teacher time spent on record keeping and to reduce substantially the duplication of labor that existed. The project also had to insure that the record keeping and reporting system would be accurate and the information it presented would be communicated clearly and efficiently to students and parents.

The Yelm School District has employed for the past three years the record keeping and SLO category reporting instruments proposed by this project. The project has been useful to teachers by reducing time spent on record keeping and unnecessary duplication of labor, by eliminating the need to fill out Student Learning Objective cards.

Beginning with the 1984-85 school year, the Yelm School District will open a new grade school and shift the fifth and sixth grades from the middle school to the three elementary

schools. The district has adopted new text programs in Math, Spelling and Science.

It has been recommended that the record-keeping page and SLO category report card be adopted for use by the fifth and sixth grades. It has been recommended that the SLO categories be modified to reflect the content of the new text adoptions.

Record keeping and progress reporting are the means by which evaluation is documented and expressed. Additional research would be appropriate to study the relationship of recording and reporting procedures to the evaluation process.

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APPENDIX A

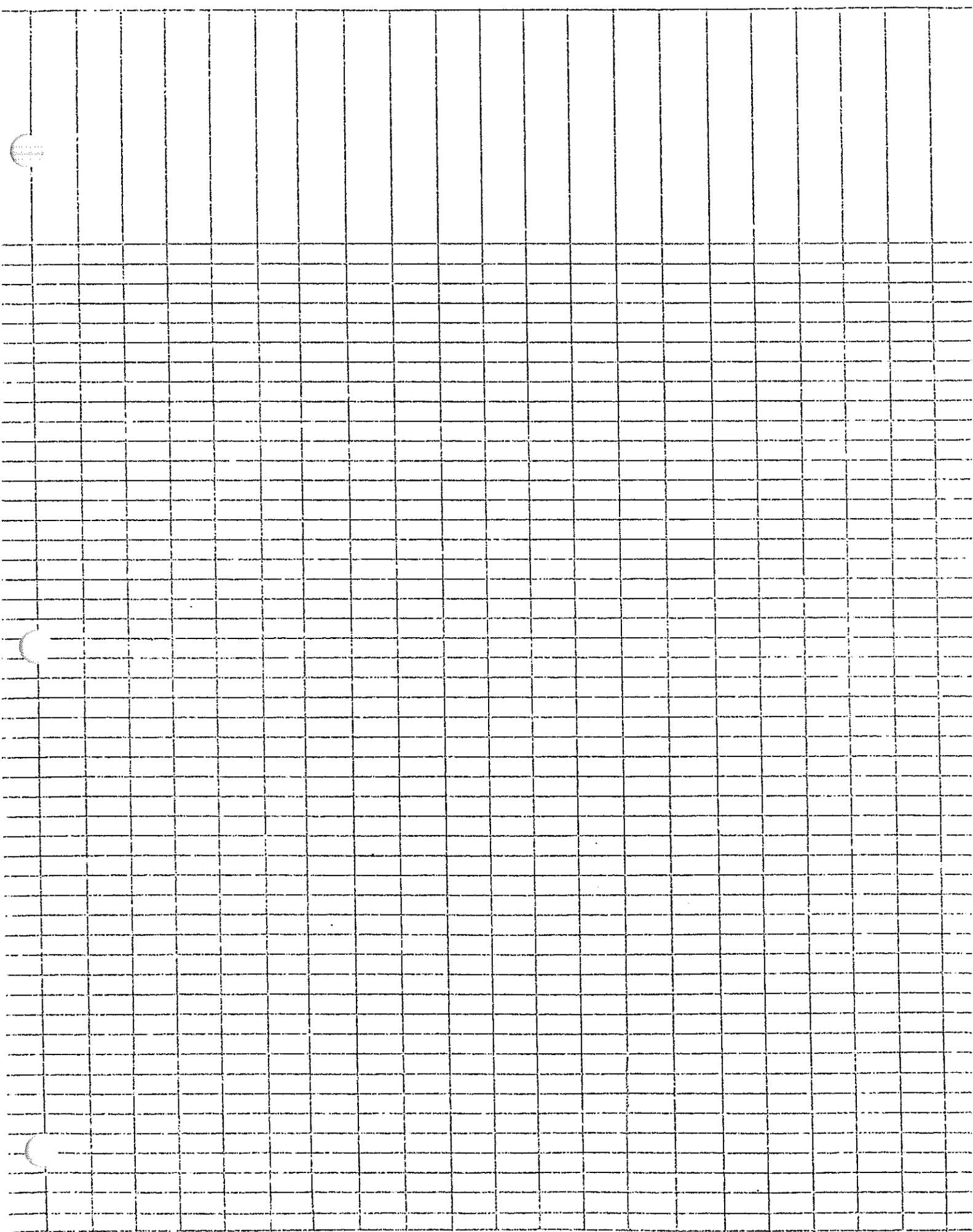












APPENDIX B

**Student Name**

<p>This report of your child's progress is only a small part of your child's total school program. You may wish to contact your child's teacher for further explanation of the report or you may wish to examine a comprehensive set of learning objectives for your child's grade level which is available in the school office.</p>																									
<p><b>Explanation of Marking System</b>                  Academic Performance grades are used for the subject headings printed in capital letters. Skill Performance marks are used for the skills supporting the academic area. LP, limited participation, is used when your child's classroom instruction has been limited because of assignment to a special program. Areas not marked do not apply at this time.</p>																									
<p><b>Academic Performance</b>                  5 Outstanding                  4 Above Average                  3 Average                  2 Below Average                  1 Below Minimum Requirements                  LP Limited Participation</p>					<p><b>Skill Performance</b>                  + Outstanding                  ✓ Satisfactory                  N Needs Attention                  LP Limited Participation</p>																				
<b>Grading Levels</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>																	
Grade	Level	Level	Unit	Level	Unit	Level	Unit	Level	Unit																
K	1																								
1-2	2-10																								
3-4	11-13																								
										<b>1</b>				<b>2</b>				<b>3</b>				<b>4</b>			
<b>Reading</b>																									
Phonetic Analysis																									
Structural Analysis																									
Vocabulary																									
Comprehension																									
Study Skills																									
Oral Reading																									
Language																									
Composition																									
Grammar																									
Mechanics																									
Speaking and Performing																									
Spelling																									
Penmanship																									
										<b>Math</b>				<b>Personal Traits and Habits</b>											
										Number Systems				Begins promptly, completes assignments											
										Numeration				Works independently											
										Operations				Listens attentively											
										Addition				Follows directions											
										Subtraction				Controls talking											
										Multiplication				Makes good use of free time											
										Division				Participates in group discussions											
										Computations				Works and plays well with others											
										Geometry				Respects property											
										Measurement				Respects authority and follows rules											
										Graphs				Shows positive attitude											
										<b>Social Studies</b>															
										History															
										Social Science															
										Geography															
										<b>Science</b>															
										Earth Science															
										Biology															
										General Science															
										<b>Health</b>															
										Mental Health															
										Physical Health															
										Safe Living															
										Drug Education															
										Disease Prevention															
										<b>Music</b>															
										<b>Art</b>															
										<b>PE</b>															
																		<b>Your Child is Participating In:</b>							
																		Special Reading							
																		Resource Room							
																		Speech Therapy							



**Student Name**

This report of your child's progress is only a small part of your child's total school program. You may wish to contact your child's teacher for further explanation of the report or you may wish to examine a comprehensive set of learning objectives for your child's grade level which is available in the school office.

**Explanation of Marking System**

Academic Performance grades are used for the subject headings printed in capital letters. Skill Performance marks are used for the skills supporting the academic area. LP, limited participation, is used when your child's classroom instruction has been limited because of assignment to a special program. Areas not marked do not apply at this time.

**Academic Performance**

- 5 Outstanding
- 4 Above Average
- 3 Average
- 2 Below Average
- 1 Below Minimum Requirements
- LP Limited Participation

**Skill Performance**

- + Outstanding
- ✓ Satisfactory
- N Needs Attention
- LP Limited Participation

**Grading Levels**

Grade Level	1		2		3		4	
	Level	Unit	Level	Unit	Level	Unit	Level	Unit
K	1							
1-2	2-10							
3-4	11-13							

**Reading**

**Readiness**

**Phonetic Analysis**

**Structural Analysis**

**Vocabulary**

**Comprehension**

**Study Skills**

**Oral Reading**

**Language**

**Composition**

**Grammar**

**Mechanics**

**Speaking and Performing**

**Spelling**

**Penmanship**

**Math**

**Number Systems**

**Numeration**

**Operations**

**Addition**

**Subtraction**

**Computations**

**Geometry**

**Measurement**

**Graphs**

**Social Studies**

**Social Science**

**Geography**

**Science**

**Earth Science**

**Biology**

**General Science**

**Health**

**Mental Health**

**Physical Health**

**Safe Living**

**Drug Education**

**Disease Prevention**

**Music**

**Art**

**PE**

**Personal Traits and Habits**

**Begins promptly, completes assignments**

**Works independently**

**Listens attentively**

**Follows directions**

**Controls talking**

**Makes good use of free time**

**Participates in group discussions**

**Works and plays well with others**

**Respects property**

**Respects authority and follows rules**

**Shows positive attitude**

**Your Child Is Participating In:**

**Special Reading**

**Resource Room**

**Speech Therapy**

	1	2	3	4
Math				
Number Systems				
Numeration				
Operations				
Addition				
Subtraction				
Computations				
Geometry				
Measurement				
Graphs				
Social Studies				
Social Science				
Geography				
Science				
Earth Science				
Biology				
General Science				
Health				
Mental Health				
Physical Health				
Safe Living				
Drug Education				
Disease Prevention				
Music				
Art				
PE				

	1	2	3	4
Personal Traits and Habits				
Begins promptly, completes assignments				
Works independently				
Listens attentively				
Follows directions				
Controls talking				
Makes good use of free time				
Participates in group discussions				
Works and plays well with others				
Respects property				
Respects authority and follows rules				
Shows positive attitude				
Your Child Is Participating In:				
Special Reading				
Resource Room				
Speech Therapy				

