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A Survey to Determine the Need for a Manual for the Preparation of School Psychologists' Reports

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A SURVEY TO DETERMINE THE NEED FOR A
MANUAL FOR THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS' REPORTS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

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

by
Edward Searle Schourup
August, 1967

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CHAPTER I

The Problem

The need for optimum communication between the classroom teacher and the school psychologist is essential to work with the referred child. An evaluation of a referred pupil, regardless of excellence of findings and recommendations, if not properly communicated, is of little value.

Importance of the Study

When a classroom teacher refers a pupil to a school psychologist for study and evaluation, it is prima-facie evidence that some sort of problem exists with that student in that teacher's classroom. The teacher wants the specialized assistance of the school psychologist in solving, or at least alleviating, the problem. For the teacher and the school psychologist to work together effectively in this situation, they must communicate their knowledge and findings to each other. Especially, the school psychologist must report his findings and recommendations back to the teacher in such a way that she knows what he is talking about and can use his findings and recommendations in her classroom situation. At this point it is obvious that the school psychologist must also know what he is talking about.

After the school psychologist has tested and evaluated a pupil referred to him by a teacher, he has the obligation to report his findings and recommendations back to the teacher. Unless the school psychologist can communicate meaningful and useful information on his evaluation of a referred student, the purpose of the referral and study of the pupil is not served. The teacher's time and work, the student's efforts--be they positive or negative, as well as the psychologist's study and evaluation are wasted. In fact if the school psychologist's role is heavily diagnostic and he does not communicate his findings to the teacher in a useful, realistic and meaningful manner, he is not justifying his position on the district's payroll.

The necessity of good reporting by the school psychologist is recognized by nearly all school districts utilizing the services of one or more school psychologists. Many districts have developed various report forms, formats, reporting policies, directives, and other materials designed to effect useful reporting by the school psychologist. Some examples of these will be examined and discussed in Chapter V.

The Problem

The major problem investigated was the feasibility of the development of a manual which would give guidance and

assistance to school psychologists in writing of reports to referring classroom teachers. It was assumed that such a manual would be used by many school psychologists if available to them. The survey questionnaires were also designed to gather information which would yield content for such a manual. These constituted the major empirical basis for proposing its development; and they were also the primary concern of the study, since it became apparent that the actual publication of such a manual was beyond its scope.

Limitations of the Study

The survey was limited to those school psychologists listed as members of the Division of School Psychology, Washington State Psychological Association, and to the classroom teachers personally interviewed by the investigator. All members listed in the directory of the Division of School Psychology were queried, except those who were known to no longer be in the direct practice of school psychology. Survey forms were mailed to 108 school psychologists, and 56 responses were received. Twenty-seven classroom teachers who have referred students to a school psychologist were interviewed in person.

Scope of the Study

Only the communications-reporting problem as it exists from school psychologists to referring classroom teachers was studied.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

As of December 31, 1966, the Library of Congress Catalogs did not list any guidance manuals or other books specifically written on the subject of report writing by and for school psychologists. Several authors in writing general books (on and/or) about school psychology have recognized this and have included some constructive information within their books. Most authors who have published a book on the subject of school psychology have included at least one chapter on the problem of report writing by the school psychologist. Most of the literature concerning report writing in psychology has a clinical frame of reference. Although the basic principles of good report writing are included in studies of the clinical report, this type of report is too technical in its terminology and usually its total content to be appropriate for the usual consumer in the school setting. Psychological reports have been discussed in a number of articles appearing in the various professional journals. Again these discussions have dealt principally with reports other than those written by school psychologists.

Books on School Psychology and Guidance

Marzolf (1956) devotes an entire chapter to recording and reporting. He emphasizes the need for a written report to the teacher that contains findings and practical recommendations written in language that the recipient can understand. He also states that the oral report or conference does not eliminate the need for a written report. "What is reported orally may be forgotten or misunderstood; a written record permits leisurely study and minimizes the chance of memory distortion." However, Marzolf does not present any specific content or format guidance.

Another author (Reger, 1965) in speaking of the interrelationship of written reports and oral conferences also cites the necessity for both as does Marzolf (1956). Reger (1965, p. 95) puts his emphasis on the purpose of reports; that they are only one means of communication, a means to an end, and not an end or goal themselves. His views of the purpose of writing reports follow:

The written report is only one way for psychologists to communicate with their associates. In fact, it is a relatively minor part of the total communication process. The written report never should take the place of interpersonal discussion, although it may sometimes provide the basis for discussion.

Nevertheless, with this limitation in mind, the primary purpose of the report on a psychological evaluation is to communicate information. Secondly, the purpose of the report is to provide a record of observations made on a child, his parents, and the school.

Reger (1965, p. 96) condemns the use of a standard form for reporting, as too restrictive and inflexible. He contends that:

If a standard form is used for reports, complete with checklists, the school psychologist may be forced to make comments that are irrelevant and confusing, or that fall far short of providing sufficient information. Such forms also imply to readers that children's problems all fall into the narrow categories contained within the confines of the form. The school psychologist himself may tend to organize his thinking in narrow terms that are convenient to the requirements of the form, thus often missing essential elements of problems.

The school psychologist should make a concerted effort to always keep in mind the intended audience of his reports. He is attempting to convey information and to influence programming. There should be as little emphasis as possible on the form of the report. It is necessary to be flexible enough to allow one report to be written in one way, and another report, covering different problems and different purposes, to be written in another manner. Sometimes little more than a brief note is required in a report. At other times, a lengthy outline of the problem presented, the methods used for its study, and detailed descriptions of possible solutions are necessary.

By deemphasizing form and, instead, emphasizing purpose, the school psychologist will have to carefully think through each problem that confronts him. He will not be able to close his mind and check off prepared lists that supposedly fulfill the requirements of organizing and communicating meaning. An emphasis on purpose rather than form is more demanding of the school psychologist, but at the same time it will bring out the best of his abilities.

In pursuing his theme of keeping the purposes of reporting in mind when making them, Reger (1965) also lists the different views of several purposes of psychological reports.

1. Communication with associates:
 - a. Answering specific questions
 - b. Presentation of diagnostic statements
 - c. Presentation of scores on tests
 - d. Conveying broad understandings or interpretations.
2. Keeping records:
 - a. Having organized notes and data to which later reference can be made by psychologists themselves
 - b. For ongoing, planned, or "probable" research.

Eiserer (1963, p. 40) also recognizes that the report is only a communications tool and not an end product in itself. His treatise on communications between the school psychologist and the teacher is short, practical and to the point:

The major purpose of reports is to transmit information for effective use by others. Effectiveness of communication is the goal. After a study has been completed, the results and recommendations are prepared for a report.

Psychologists are likely to have a strong preference for personal conferences with teachers as a method for communicating the results of a special study. The reasons for this preference are persuasive. In person-to-person discussion, misperceptions can be clarified and resistances to recommendations can be dealt with. The conference can be healthy for the psychologist in that it may compel him to be practical and realistic and to take the teacher's situation into account. He cannot escape so readily into vague generalizations or unrealistic suggestions. The conference provides a firsthand testing ground to determine whether or not the participants are getting across to one another. And they are likely to persist in working together until the problem is resolved.

Conferences and written reports are not mutually exclusive. In any event the psychologist will prepare a report for his permanent records. He may in some situations send a report to a teacher to be followed

later by discussion of it. He may, after a conference, prepare a report so that he and the teacher have a record of their combined effort.

Although there are situations in which the written report is the sole method of transmitting results of study and recommendations by the psychologist to the teacher, they must be viewed as second best in view of what we know generally about difficulties of communication even under optimum conditions. Reports should be clear, relevant to questions asked, practical and usable, and above all written with a particular reader in mind. A psychologist's knowledge of the particular teacher's situation, her interests, and her skills is vital if he is to make suggestions which can be implemented.

Hirst (1963) has written an excellent book designed to acquaint the teachers and administrators with the function and duties of the school psychologist. She devotes a chapter to public relations that has several pertinent observations regarding the areas of communications where school psychologists and teachers are involved. She cautions that good communication is not built upon a display of technical psychological jargon or by careful insulation of truth from reality. She points out the necessity that school psychologists be adept in the use of language. The translation of technical psychological jargon into the vernacular is fraught with dangers of misinterpretation by the reader. While it is easier, and more accurate to transmit accurate information by use of the appropriate technical psychological terminology, these terms may not be a part of the teacher's vocabulary. Therefore it is necessary that

the school psychologist also be familiar with the use of appropriate educational terminology. Even more important, the school psychologist must know the implications of the translated meanings. When technical information is too freely translated, some unusual concepts and misperceptions may emerge. Reports may be loaded with the "dynamite of misunderstanding." The teacher's frame of reference when reading the report may be far removed from that of the school psychologist when he wrote it.

Gray, (1963, ch. 13) in her chapter on organization and administration of school psychological services, places the basic responsibility for setting up an efficient reporting system upon the administrator. She says that time will be well spent in developing the kinds of forms needed. Of particular importance are referral forms and forms for reports of examinations. She cautions that periodic checking of these forms is necessary to keep them current and functional; they won't maintain themselves indefinitely.

Valett (1963, ch. 9) gives what is probably the most thorough coverage of the general problem of communication by any of the several authors currently available. He devotes one entire chapter to the written report, complete with sample case histories and example reports that were made from

them. He also stresses that the school psychologist must know who the reader is, and write for that reader:

The initial problem facing any report writer is to decide exactly to whom the report is to be directed, how it is to be used, and, consequently, the form that the report should take. It is unnecessary to point out the many differences which exist between psychological reports made in the clinical institutional setting such as the mental hospital, and those required by the schools. In both cases, however, the psychologist writes for his special audience in a language that they can understand. Within the mental hospital the use of technical psychological language and style is dictated by the demands of the hospital and the proficiency of the professional medical and psychological staff using the reports. In the same sense the public school dictates that reports be written for its personnel with due consideration to the unique educational setting in which the psychologist is employed. Within this setting, however, reports vary considerably.

Most reports are written for the use of elementary and secondary school teachers and school personnel such as principals, speech correctionists, and other special educators. Because of this fact the school psychologist finds that he must write in such a way as to translate technical psychological material into a more straightforward and simplified language, capable of being understood and used by those referring to him. He needs to be aware of the general level of psychological sophistication present in the teaching staff, as evidenced by such things as state certification requirements for teachers, with relevance to the degree of training required in psychology, tests and measurements, and other similar courses, through programs of in-service training available within the district services and their impact on the teaching staff. The following points must be kept in mind in writing for this group.

1. Since teachers represent all degrees of psychological sophistication from those with majors in psychology to those with no exposure to the field at all, it is best if the writer assumes that his readers are intelligent and motivated, but generally not interested in technical findings. The report should be clearly written as concisely and simply as possible.

2. In writing for teachers it is essential to state their reason for referral along with any questions specifically raised, and then to be sure to reply to these within the report. Perhaps nothing is more upsetting to a teacher than to receive a report which makes no attempt to answer those questions raised by her.
3. In most cases questions raised will be relative to the educational role of the person referring the child. Thus teachers are primarily concerned with classroom considerations, whereas speech therapists are interested in the psychological implications for individual speech correction, and the child-welfare counselor has other concerns. The psychologist must remember the differing role of those he writes for and gauge his reports and recommendations accordingly.

The teachers' responsibilities have not been overlooked. Fortunately, several authors of books treating the entire subject of guidance in the schools have aimed some positive suggestions at teachers regarding their responsibilities in the communications between teachers and the school psychologists.

In his description of the functions of guidance services, (Froelich, 1958, p. 279) stresses the case conference method of communication. He describes the conference as an intensive group cooperative study of the student by the teachers and staff concerned. He recommends the use of an outline to be sure that all significant data are covered. The psychologist contributes and interprets his data verbally.

Martinson and Smallenburg (1958, p. 30-31) in their descriptive book on elementary school guidance, are emphatic

in alerting teachers to their responsibilities in making communications and reporting between them and the school psychologist an accurate process:

It is important that teachers understand how to study children, and how to work with others in such study. All persons involved in child study respect one another and assume capability on the other's part to understand findings. The clinician who works with teachers in such an arrangement interprets studies completely to them on the assumption that they are important partners with the same goal as his--the adjustment of the child.

From this beginning they expand into a description of what the professional responsibility of the teacher is within the guidance function. The teacher initiates the collection of data and collaborates with others who may be of assistance in the study. The teacher works with them in carrying out recommended actions. The process is one of continuing partnership. The teacher is of primary importance in the school system.

The reporting system may resemble the following:

1. The teacher initiates the study; begins the collection of data.
2. Other persons who have had contact with the child supply requested data. (This may include the nurse, doctor, principal, parents, and other teachers).
3. The teacher requests the principal to refer the child to other consultants--which includes the school psychologist.

4. If the school psychologist needs assistance, he may contact community agencies.

5. These agencies report their actions and recommendations to the school psychologist, who in turn reports them to the principal and the teacher.

6. The teacher works with the child in terms of the recommendations made.

7. Continuous contact and follow-up is maintained by the consultant with the teacher through periodic progress conferences or check sheets.

The constant principle in the text by Martinson, et al. (1958) is that all resources are brought together to assist the teacher in the job that he or she is doing with the child. From their outline of the child study process it is obvious that communication between the school psychologist and the referring teachers is extremely important, and the teacher has the responsibility to be skilled professionally in order to enable the teacher to understand and carry out the consultant's recommendations in a competent and effective manner. If the communication is inadequate, the school psychologist's work and his report are ineffective and largely a waste of time and effort, and the teacher is co-responsible with the psychologist to see that their communication is effective.

Here again, the report is shown to be only one of the psychologist's communication devices, and not the goal or end product of his part of the study of the referred child.

They (Martinson et al., 1958, p. 62-63) also cite the use of the case conference with its face-to-face verbal interchange as the better method of communicating between the concerned school staff. This process is necessarily a cooperative operation. The responsibility for the conduct of case conferences is usually delegated to the school psychologist. By using group conferences, the persons concerned with the child are able to talk to each other directly and arrive at understandings; problem areas in communication can be clarified on the spot, plans can be made, and in the process the conferees can learn much from each other. They also agree with several foregoing authors that reports and recommendations, either written or oral, should be made in non-technical terms for use of the teacher. The teacher is not concerned with abstractions or fancy jargon, but with the child.

Recommendations should not have an air of finality, but should reflect the dynamics of growth itself. Recommendations that seem logical on present knowledge may change as the child changes or new knowledge comes to light. Child study is a longitudinal process by several people, and this necessitates a periodic follow-up of communication which can

best be accomplished by group conferences, and follow-up reports (Martinson, et al. 1958).

Strong and Morris in Guidance in the Classroom, (1964, p. 21-24) also lean heavily on the verbal conference as the better communications method. They say:

The psychologist should use child study groups and case conferences as important tools in the in-service education of teachers and administrators. Most effective are the personal contacts with the psychologist that the teacher experiences when she works with him on a case she has referred. After the psychologist has studied the student he talks with the teacher about his finding and then reports their joint decisions about treatment. The psychologist works extensively with teachers to help them sharpen their skill in observing pupils. As teachers improve their ability to write more accurate and detailed descriptions of pupils' behavior, their referrals become more helpful to the psychologist. He is handicapped by referrals that are too sketchy or too general.

Conversely, the psychologist is responsible for reporting and interpreting the results of his testing to the teacher in a clear and understandable manner if he is to be an effective member of the team. If the team is to be successful, each member must understand his role and know what special contribution he can make--and do his job competently. He must also appreciate the points of view and contributions of the other members of the team. And he must also understand the teacher. The psychologist needs to understand the teacher's point of view as much as the teacher needs the interpretations and insights, (skills - knowledge) of the psychologist. The teacher and the psychologist are

as mutually interdependent as the psychologist and the other specialists.

Many school districts have directives requiring the school psychologist to prepare a report. In their text on guidance services Crow and Crow (1965, p. 186-187) have reproduced some examples of school policy directives that delineate the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists for reporting to their referring teachers. The Canton Public Schools, Canton, Ohio, have a succinct directive requiring the preparation of reports:

The psychologist will prepare a report of all tests given. Copies will be available to all Canton Public Schools persons concerned in helping the child. This will be written in language that is understood by the person using it.

For illustrative purposes the Crows' text also contains the then current directive description of the role of the school psychologist in the Seattle Public Schools:

The pupil--referred by the school principal or counselor--is interviewed by the psychologist at the school, at which time a psychological study is made. Administration of standardized mental and personality tests, together with observation of the child, constitute the study. The results of the study are analyzed and interpreted to the appropriate school staff and, on occasion, to the pupil, parents, speech and medical staff, community agencies, doctors or any other authorized persons working with the child. Ordinarily, conferences precede and follow the studies. Written report of findings and recommendations is made to the school.

On March 21, 1965, Seattle School District published a revised role description and flow chart of the referral/

reporting procedure. The flow chart indicates the procedure used for the entire referral process from inception to final disposition of the various copies of the required final report. Throughout the procedure there is an emphasis on communication between the persons involved. See Appendix E.

The use of language that is familiar to the person receiving the report, and the making of practical recommendations is the major theme of most of the authors studied. White and Harris (1961) express it as "danger points":

There are two major danger points in the psychologist's written communications with teachers. The first of these is the tendency to use psychological jargon; the second is the application of lofty generalizations Even more distressing to the teacher faced with a problem are worthless generalizations: 'needs more affection' (who doesn't); 'give him a chance to express himself' (he has been expressing himself by pounding the child next to him).

Peter (1963, 1965) has conducted extensive evaluation research on the effects of school psychologists' reports to teachers. His doctoral study was for the purpose of determining if the written report contributed significantly to the communication of diagnostic findings and recommendations to teachers. His method was as follows: Fifty reports were communicated to the teachers verbally and 50 were communicated both verbally and in writing. Two weeks after the teachers have received the reports, the teachers were given a test which included questions about the recommendations in the reports. He compared verbal reports and written reports

used alone. The test scores for the two groups established the statistical significance of the differences. The responses to the test by the teachers receiving written reports showed a significantly higher recall score than those who received only a verbal report. The combination of the case conference with a verbal summary and recommendations, followed by a written report was considered by the teachers to be the most effective.

Peter emphasizes that the report is only one part of the communication system between the teacher and the school psychologist. He sees this communication system as consisting of four principal phases--referral, report, implementation, and follow-up. Two-way communication is essential.

He discusses these four phases and how they interrelate. He uses several case studies with their example reports to demonstrate the total two-way communication process.

Peter's views and use of the report is discussed in greater detail in Appendix A, Content of a Manual. Of the several currently available school psychology oriented books that have something to say about reports the investigator considers Peter's book to be the most useful as a reference source on report writing. His report writing method, techniques of use, semantics, and purposes are based upon planned research rather than only theory or administrative fiat.

Journal Articles

One study (Tallen and Reiss, 1959) that encompassed multidisciplinary views on written psychological reports cited instances of reports lacking clear language, being too vague, lacking practicality, containing jargon, and too much raw data. This study was primarily concerned with reports in the clinical setting, but the complaints are equally applicable to school psychologists' reports.

In a recent investigation of report writing in school psychology, (Rucker, 1967) teachers' comparative evaluations of reports written by inexperienced vs experienced school psychologists, and school psychologists without previous teaching experience vs those with previous teaching experience were analyzed. Neither length of service nor teaching experience tended to produce better report writing. The teachers, who judged the reports used in this study, unanimously designated the quality of the report recommendations as the most important factor in evaluating the utility of the reports. They felt the reports which presented a variety of specific suggestions to aid the teacher were the "better" reports. The referral questions were answered in a clear and concise manner.

Another investigator (Mussman, 1964) also found that teachers considered the "quality" (utility, feasibility) of the psychologist's recommendations to be the most important factor in evaluating the utility of a report.

Both investigators (Mussman, 1964; Rucker, 1967) conclude that it is essential that the school psychologist realize that his primary audience is the teacher and write his report accordingly.

Other studies (Cason, 1945; Merrill, 1947) indicate the negative aspects of poor report writing. These include: use of jargon, vague and pompous verbosity, recommendations that vary from impractical or too generalized to none at all, ignoring the reader, having no plan, and writing hurriedly.

Clinical Reporting

There are two current texts which are specifically concerned with psychological reports in the clinical setting. While this type of report is so often too technical in its terminology and intent for practical use in the schools, these two books do have applicable material. Both of these books are manual-like in nature, and contain a number of exemplary case histories, forms, formats, sample reports, and "how to" writing helps useful to the school psychologist. However, the clinical situation is sufficiently different as to not serve the complete purpose of a manual on school psychological report writing.

Huber (1961, p. 2) instructs: "The first question to ask when beginning a report is: what specifically does the reader want to know about the patient?"

Klopfer (1960) stresses that the purpose of the psychological report is dependent upon the participants involved. According to Klopfer: . . . "the referent requires information which will help him in practical ways and which the clinician should be prepared to give him."

Both of these authors (Klopfer, 1960; Huber, 1961) stress that the report is communication from the clinician to the recipient. Klopfer specifically holds that the report should not presume to teach the reader. The clinician's report assumes that the reader has the technical knowledge necessary to use the information in the report.

In contrast, one of the previously cited authors (Reger, 1965, p. 95) contends that the school psychologist has an in-service training responsibility in his reporting. He contends that:

Whenever possible, which perhaps may not be too often, the report of a psychological evaluation should be an essay that has meaning beyond the specific problems of the particular child with which it is immediately concerned. The evaluation of a child's problems should be specific enough to meet the demands of the here and now, but it also should, at least occasionally, be general enough to have meaning for other problems and other children. For example, if the school psychologist feels that anxiety plays a large part in the disturbances presented by the child with whom a report is concerned, it may be possible to discuss anxiety in such a way that teachers and others who read the report will be encouraged to think about anxiety as a general problem.

There are dangers of overly long reports, which convey already known material if the school psychologist

proceeds to attempt unsolicited or unwanted training via his reports.

Summary

The Library of Congress Catalogs do not list any books or guidance manuals specifically written on the subject of school psychologists' reports to referring teachers. There are, however, several texts and informative books in the field of clinical psychology, school psychology, and guidance services that contain helpful information about reports and report writing. These appear as a part of the discussions of the communication problem within the school staff concerned with studies and evaluations of individual students who are referred to a school psychologist. There are points of commonality in all of these publications:

1. The purpose of a report is to communicate to its recipient, and

2. It must be written so that the recipient can understand it and use it.

3. The recipient teacher has a responsibility to be technically competent enough to understand and use the report. The school psychologist has an in-service training responsibility to teach the recipient how to understand and use the report.

4. A report is only one way of communicating, and that is all it is. It is not an end product by itself.

CHAPTER III

Survey of School Psychologists and Teachers

Survey Method for School Psychologists

A four-question form was developed for surveying the sample of school psychologists. A copy of the form is attached as Appendix C. This form was reproduced by ditto. In content and purpose it was as follows:

Question 1: Do you make a written report to the referrent?, was designed to elicit principally a "yes" or "no" response, but sufficient answering space was included to allow for a qualifying comment.

Question 2: What do you use for guidance in preparing your report?, was designed to determine what kinds of preparation aids are being used by school psychologists in their report writing.

Question 3: If available, do you think that a guidance manual for report writing would be useful to you?, was designed to elicit responses that would reveal attitudes and opinions regarding the use of such a manual.

Question 4: What do you think such a manual should contain?, was designed to obtain information and material for inclusion in a possible manual.

A survey form was mailed to each school psychologist listed in the Division of School Psychology, Washington

State Psychological Association, employed by a school district as a school psychologist. Survey forms were mailed to 108 school psychologists. Replies were received from 56 (55%). An individually typed cover letter and a stamped self-addressed return envelope accompanied each survey form. An example letter is attached as Appendix B.

The surveyed school psychologists were also requested to forward one or more copies of illustrative reports for analysis and later generalization. Sample reports were received from 12 of the responding school psychologists. Seven illustrative reports are evaluated in Chapter IV. In addition, eight respondents forwarded samples of the various forms used in their districts for referrals and reporting.

Survey Method for Teachers

A five-question form was developed for surveying the sample of teachers. A copy of this dittoed form is attached as Appendix D. Its content (and purpose) was as follows:

Question 1: Did you receive a written report in response to your referral?, was designed to elicit principally "yes" or "no" responses, with space allowed for a qualifying comment.

Question 2: Did the report contain information and/or recommendations useful to you in relation to the referral?, was designed to elicit responses that would reveal

general attitudes and opinions regarding the quality and/or practicality of information and recommendations. (In use the question as phrased was found to be too restrictive, and the words "to you" were deleted. This posed no problem with verbal queries and it was not necessary to revise the form.)

Question 3: Did the report contain unfamiliar terminology?, was designed to indicate if the surveyed teachers had received reports that were too technical or contained jargon.

Question 4: Was the content and meaning of the report clear to you?, was designed to assess the overall clarity of the report. (In use it was found that there was some overlap of responses between questions 3 and 4, and it was more practical to ask question 4 than question 3.)

Question 5: In what way, if any, could the report have been better for your purpose?, was designed to develop a broad range of responses and stimulate some critical dialogue regarding report content. (This was the most informatively productive question.)

All of the teachers who were surveyed were interviewed in person by the investigator. The sample was limited to four school districts: Seattle, 16 teachers; Issaquah, 7 teachers; Mercer Island, 2 teachers; and Ellensburg, 2 teachers.

Evaluation of School Psychologists' Responses

The responses to Question 1 of the School Psychologist Survey Form: "Do you make a written report to the referrent?" are quantitatively shown in Table 1. The responses indicate that a preponderance of school psychologists do make a written report to the referrent.

Table 1

School Psychologists' Responses to Question 1 of Survey Form

Types of Responses	School Psychologists Responding	
	Number	Percent of Total
Yes	40	71%
Conditional yes	7	13%
Occasionally (usually verbal)	6	10%
Record only	1	2%
Question not answered	2	4%

Nine of the respondents stated that they relied principally on verbal conferences to communicate their findings and recommendations to their referrents. Eight of these added the following information to their replies:

One psychologist stated that his reports are filed separately in the principal's office and are available to the referring teacher only via the staffing process. Another responding psychologist said substantially the same thing,

adding that it is a form report and is stamped "CONFIDENTIAL" in red across the face and is to stay in the principal's office.

Another school psychologist qualified his "yes" with the statement that, in all cases, personal contact is the primary vehicle of communication. He also added that his report format is dependent upon who the referrent is, and accordingly, varies greatly. Another respondent also said that most of his findings are verbally communicated back to the referring teacher and other concerned school personnel. He prepares a writeup when outside agencies are reported to, or when time permits. A second respondent from the same district, simply replied that he occasionally makes a report, but did not clarify when he does or does not. Both of these psychologists indicated that they use a topic outline, and stressed the value of oral communication in reporting their findings and recommendations to concerned school personnel.

The school psychologist of one large district, makes a report only if a direct contact evaluative interview is made with the subject.

A former school psychologist said he usually made a report if testing was done.

Another school psychologist serving a medium sized district, does, or does not, make a written report, dependent

upon the nature of each individual case. His written reports are patterned according to whom the reports are addressed.

Responses to Question 2: "What do you use for guidance in preparing your report?" are quantitatively shown in Table 2.

Table 2

School Psychologists' Responses to Question 2
of Survey Form

Categories of Responses	School Psychologists Responding	
	Number	Percent of Total
Conditions of case (includes consideration of who is recipient	18	32%
Written policy or dept. manual/guide	12	21%
Experience/training	10	19%
Prepared blank forms	8	14%
Verbal policy/supervisory direction	5	9%
None, blank	3	5%

The categories of responses to Question 2 were not sharply differentiated. There tended to be overlap on several of the forms in the areas of considering the unique conditions of the case and relying upon experience and training. On five of the replies a subjective classification was made based upon the apparent emphasis that the respondent had placed upon one factor over the other.

Eleven of the 54 responding school psychologists (20%) said that they considered to whom they are writing. They are guided in their report preparation by their knowledge of the person with whom they are communicating about a specific client-situation. Seven of these 11 who made a definite statement that they consider their recipient, also stated in their replies to Question 3, that a manual would be of no, or doubtful, use to them in the writing of their reports.

There were other qualitative overlaps in some of the responses. By inference, experience is a factor in preparing a report based upon the conditions of the case, and also in knowing how to consider a particular report recipient in order to write to that person. Further, the sample forms and departmental manuals received indicated that districts having a "manual" or some type of written directive, also use reporting forms. Personal experience of the investigator and associate beginning school psychologists has shown that supervisory direction and assistance, verbal or unofficial policy, local custom and tradition, and the occasional unique situation not covered by departmental directives or existing forms are all modifying variables that influence the preparation of written reports.

Responses to Question 3: "If available, do you think that a guidance manual would be useful to you?" are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

School Psychologists' Responses to Question 3
of Survey Form

Types of Responses	School Psychologists Responding	
	Number	Percent of Total
Conditional (perhaps)	18	32%
No	13	23%
Yes	11	20%
For new or beginning school psychologists	11	20%
None, blank	3	5%

The conditional responses all indicated that respondents would want to examine such a manual before making an evaluative opinion regarding its possible usefulness to them. All expressed varying degrees of positive interest in a manual.

The "No" and "blank" respondents were all school psychologists of some years' experience. Most of the "No's" indicated that a manual could not be an adequate guide, that only the skills acquired with experience and/or supervision are useful. Three of these "No" respondents felt that a manual would tend to stultify reports and make them format-uniform and, therefore, rather meaningless. This is in accord with Reger's (1965) criticism that reports which attempt to follow a constricted format do not leave the reporting psychologist enough leeway to communicate really

meaningful information. That there is often a requirement to put in irrelevant information simply because the form, or format, has blank spaces calling for certain types of check-marks, or short comments--and all the blanks have to be filled in or the report is not complete. In spite of their opposition to a manual, three of the "No's" included some specific suggestions and content recommendations for use in preparation of a manual.

The eleven "Yes" responses were unequivocal. And all included various content suggestions in response to Question 4.

Eleven respondents indicated that a manual would be useful to new or beginning school psychologists and of lesser value as experience and skills in reporting are acquired. These eleven responses were all from school psychologists who stated or implied some, or considerable, experience.

Responses to question number 4: "What do you think such a manual should contain?" varied considerably. Most of the responding school psychologists had some content recommendations. Only two left this portion of the questionnaire blank. There were several common items of content recommendations that appeared in varying forms in many of the replies.

Sixteen respondents suggested the inclusion of various ways in which recommendations and suggestions could be

phrased, and some specific prescriptive recommendations that are commonly used.

Fourteen of the school psychologists who answered recommended that a manual contain examples of different types of reports. They recognized that reports to various recipients would be couched in different terminology and contain different types of information. For example: a report to a mental health clinic, a psychiatrist, or some such similar agency or specialist the child was being referred to for study, would properly be written in much more technical language and have a more detailed presentation of data than would a report on the same child to the child's teacher.

Ten advocated an emphasis on clarity, brevity, and avoidance of jargon.

Six thought that a manual should include a warning against the possibility of writing stereotyped "cookbook" reports when a manual is used too literally.

Four included in their suggestions that a code of ethics regarding confidentiality of report information be incorporated into the manual.

Four commented that teachers and administrators should also be surveyed to determine what they considered to be useful and important information in the reports that they receive. (The school psychologists were not informed that the study would also include a survey of teachers' criticisms

and recommendations regarding reports that they had received from school psychologists).

Summary of School Psychologists' Responses

The general tone of the school psychologists' replies indicated that a manual which was restricted to the preparation of reports to teacher and principal would be too limited in scope. Most of the school psychologists who would use such a manual to help them in their report writing would like to see one that covers all aspects of their report writing, not only to referring teachers but to all other concerned persons who may require a written report; the agencies, specialists, and/or parents. Some went so far as to recommend inclusion of such broad information as defining the role of the school psychologist, a code of ethics, lists of available resource agencies in the state, technical data on commonly-used tests. These would include conversion tables of raw scores to standard scores, grade equivalents, I.Q.'s, percentiles, and norms for ready reference in selection and use of tests and presenting the results in their reports. In short, they seemed to request almost another book on the total function of the school psychologist, with an emphasis on his reporting responsibilities.

Analysis of Teacher Responses

The teacher sample was too limited in the number of school districts represented to be free of bias. Only four districts are represented, and the sample obtained in each district was small. However, some interesting and tentatively useful responses were received.

Each of the Issaquah teachers who were interviewed had failed to receive written reports on "most" of their referrals. One teacher had referred to four different school psychologists, (one in a previous district of employment) and had not received written reports from three of the psychologists. These three had used only the verbal conference method to communicate their findings and recommendations. She felt that this was inadequate and unsatisfactory. In the case of the fourth psychologist, she had referred two students to him, and had received written reports, plus verbal conferences and parent conferences in both cases. She felt that communication on these two referrals had been efficient and thorough, and was satisfied with the results. The other Issaquah teachers expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the lack of written reports.

All of the other teachers in the sample had received written reports when their referrals had been acted upon with an evaluative study by a school psychologist. The most

useful information was obtained from the teachers in the Seattle sample. Twelve of the teachers in the Seattle group were experienced elementary teachers who had referred pupils to more than one psychologist. (A written report is an administrative requirement in the Seattle School District.)

In general, all of these teachers commented in conversation that quality of reports tended to vary between school psychologists; that some psychologists tended to write more useful reports than others. The most frequently-voiced complaint concerned the practicality of recommendations. As teachers, they wanted specific recommendations and suggestions that they could use in the classroom situation to alleviate (hopefully) the problem that had prompted the referral. Too often the recommendations were too impractical to attempt in classes of over 30 children, and with limited facilities and classroom materials.

Another complaint was a total lack of recommendations, suggestions, or helpful evaluation. All some reports did was to verify the teachers' reasons for referral by echoing what the teachers had put on the referral form.

The use of jargon seems to be a diminishing problem. The sampled teachers stated that in general, school psychologists are tending toward use of plainer English, and terminology in common academic usage. (This may also reflect

an increasing psychological sophistication on the part of teachers).

All teachers interviewed preferred personal discussions with the school psychologist, plus a written report. This is in accord with the findings and recommendations of Peter (1963, 1965) in his doctoral study and subsequent book.

Summary of Teacher Responses

Reports which answer the reasons for referral in clear, plain language, and make specific recommendations which can be effected in the classroom, are most useful to teachers. Communication involving both oral conference and a written report is the most satisfactory as perceived by the teachers sampled.

CHAPTER IV

Illustrative Reports

The surveyed school psychologists were asked to furnish one or more copies of illustrative reports for purposes of making comparative generalizations as to their probable effectiveness of communication. Actual reports illustrate how the evaluation, findings, and recommendations in real referrals were reported to the referents by various school psychologists serving in different districts.

Twelve of the 54 responding school psychologists furnished copies of reports as requested. All of the respondents who sent illustrative reports gave their permission for the reports to be evaluated and included in the study. In addition to "good" reports, three respondents furnished "poor" reports that they offered specifically for criticism. Fifteen other respondents acknowledged the request, but stated in effect that their district policies and/or procedures regarding confidentiality of psychological reports precluded their furnishing copies of reports.

Criteria for Evaluating Reports

The criteria used to evaluate the content of the reports were developed principally from the criteria used by Peter (1963, 1965) in his studies of the effectiveness of

the written report. Additional thoughts about readability and use of jargon were derived from Flesch (1949) and generally from Hayakawa (1964). Flesch's "reading ease" scale (Appendix E) was used to score the readability of the reports.

Report Evaluation Criteria

1. Does the report contain required identification information?
 - a. Subject's full name.
 - b. Date of birth.
 - c. Name of school.
 - d. Grade or class status.
 - e. Date of report.
2. Is the reason for the referral clearly stated?
3. Does the report answer the referring teacher's reasons for requesting the psychological evaluation?
4. Does the report aid in the teacher's understanding of:
 - a. The child?
 - b. His problem?
5. Does the report contain recommendations that appear to be pertinent to the referral problem?
6. What is the "reading ease" classification of style? (Flesch, 1949).

7. Is the report free of jargon? The word "jargon" is used as defined in Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1964), to mean "pretentious or unnecessarily obscure and esoteric terminology."

Evaluation of Report Number 1

1. Necessary identification is indicated.
2. The reason for referral is stated in the "Background" paragraph.
3. The test results answer the reason for referral.
4. The test results, test behavior description, and history are indicative of the bases of the subject's problems.
5. Special education placement was appropriately recommended.
6. "Fairly difficult" reading according to Flesch's reading ease scoring (1949). This report can be read and understood by the average person who has completed some high school; about 54% of the general population. This report can be easily read and understood by the average college trained teacher.
7. The report is free of jargon. There is technical terminology, but it is appropriate to the case.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Pages 41 - 43, which include the Psychological Report and Summary and Recommendations, have been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Evaluation of Report Number 2

1. Necessary identification information is indicated.
2. The reason for referral states only that the subject is a problem student. No substantiating academic or behavior description is given.
3. By inference from the report context, the report probably gives some general answers to the reason for referral. The lack of a clearly stated reason for referral makes it difficult to determine if the report answers the teachers' or counselor's questions. "Answer type" statements are scattered through the report.
4. A teacher who is familiar with psychological terminology could gain a better understanding of the child's problems.
5. The recommendation concerning the guidance counselor appears pertinent to the situation. The recommendation for a parent conference is vague as to who will conduct it, and what the parents are to be told. No recommendations or suggestions are made for the teachers to use yet, subject has a poor academic record with above average intellectual functioning.
6. "Fairly difficult" reading according to sentence length. "Very difficult" according to average number of syllables per 100 words.

7. The report does contain psychological jargon.

Diagnostic nomenclature is used where behavior descriptions would be more meaningful to a lay reader. Considerable psychological background is required to understand the meaning of this report.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Pages 46 - 47, which include the Psychological Report and Conclusions and Recommendations, have been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Evaluation of Report Number 3

1. Provision for necessary identification is indicated.
2. The reason for referral is clearly and completely stated.
3. The teacher's reasons for requesting the evaluation are answered.
4. Considerable evaluative material and behavior description are present in the report that can aid the teacher's understanding of the child and his problems.
5. The report offers several pertinent and specific recommendations to the teacher.
6. The reading style is "very difficult," based on average sentence length. The average number of syllables per 100 words yields a "fairly difficult" reading style. The writer of this report used ordinary words, but tended to write long sentences.
7. The report is free of jargon.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Pages 49 - 53, which is the Report of Psychological Study Report, has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Evaluation of Report Number 4

1. No provision for name of school or grade appears in the identification data.
2. The reason for referral is stated.
3. The report answers the reason for referral.
4. The report does aid the teacher's understanding of the child and his problem.
5. The recommendation appears appropriate to the situation.
6. The reading style is "fairly easy" in both sentence length and average number of syllables per 100 words.
7. The report is free of jargon.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Page 55, which is the School Psychologist Report, has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Evaluation of Report Number 5

1. All necessary identification data are indicated.
2. The reason for referral is stated as quotes from the original referral.
3. The report does not clearly answer the reason for referral. It indicates the probable cause factors, but also indicates that further evaluation and treatment outside of the school setting is required.
4. There are not any definite comments in the report that would explain the subject's behavior, other than that the subject needs "help" with his emotional problems.
5. There are no recommendations made for the school. The recommendation made to the family that they seek counseling assistance is appropriate.
6. The reading style is "fairly difficult," according to Flesch's "reading ease" scale (1949). The intended audience for the report should have no difficulty reading it.
7. There are some adjectives used in the "report" paragraph that are not classifiable as jargon, but they tend to obscure the report writer's explanation of the subject's behavior, i.e., "a very poignant cry for help." The use may have been deliberate.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Pages 57 - 59, Psychological Report, has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Evaluation of Report Number 6

1. All necessary identification data are indicated.
2. The reasons for the referral are clearly stated.
3. The report answers the reasons for referral.
4. The teacher's understanding of the child and his problems should be aided by this report.
5. Specific, pertinent recommendations are made to the school.
6. The evaluative summary was used to score the reading ease of the report. These two paragraphs appear to be the most difficult to read. The reading style of these two paragraphs is "difficult", but should be easily understood by the average teacher.
7. The report is free of jargon. Technical terminology is at a minimum, and is appropriately used.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Pages 61 - 63, Psychologist's Report, has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Evaluation of Report Number 7

1. All necessary identification data are indicated.
2. The reason for referral is stated in one short comment.
3. The report does answer the reason for referral.
4. A fairly complete picture of the subject is presented in the report. The referring teacher should have been able to understand the subject and her problems better from this report.
5. The recommendations are pertinent to the problem.
6. The reading style is "easy" for this report. Sentences are short and to the point.
7. Jargon was not used in the report. The technical terminology is appropriate to the academic environment.

Please note: Personal information has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Pages 65 - 66, Psychological Report, has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Summary

The seven illustrative reports included in the study were selected from a submission of 26 reports from 12 different districts. These seven were selected to give as wide a range of types as possible from the furnished reports.

There was a similarity in content of most of the 26 reports, particularly within a district and in reports written by the same school psychologist. Almost all districts use the same identification data for the pupil. The similarity of report format is not surprising considering that school psychologists are working within the same general frame of reference of studying learning and behavior problems in schools, using standardized tests, and reporting to a similar audience.

Greater differences appeared in the content of various reports. No two cases were exactly alike, and differences in test results, behavior, family backgrounds, learning problems, school facilities, special service agencies, and other variables affected the content of the reports. Apparent too were varying writing styles and skills between report writers. Some writers were direct and to the point. Others tended to use superfluous words and "fancy" adjectives. The excess adjectives and sometimes, jargon, tended to appear more in those reports where there was not as much factual or exact information.

The more directly worded, easier-to-read reports, conveyed more useful information than did the more deviously phrased, harder-to-read reports.

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

The intent of the investigation reported here was to study the written report from the school psychologist to the referring classroom teacher, and to develop content material for a tentative manual on the preparation of reports. This is an important part of the communication between the school psychologist and the teacher, but it is only one part of the total communication structure between them. The quality of the referral, verbal conferences, and follow-up are also important for effective service. The school psychologist is also called upon to prepare written reports for administrative records, psychiatrists, physicians, child study clinics, social service agencies, and other professional and non-professional recipients. He needs a wide skill-range in writing to various audiences. The need suggests that training in communication skills could profitably be expanded in the preparation of school psychologists.

Additional Study Needs

There is an indicated need for further study of the other aspects of the school psychologist's responsibilities in written communication.

One of these aspects is the use of forms. Most school districts have various forms that they use for referrals, reports of various kinds, records, work sheets, intake interviews, and other purposes. Often the school psychologist is responsible for the development and currency of the forms he uses. Several authorities have included something in their books about the development, use, and control of forms. (White and Harris, 1961; Gray, 1963; Valett, 1963; Peter, 1965; Reger, 1965). Good forms can materially improve the efficiency of written communications and records. Poor forms increase the work involved and hinder communications. Several of the blank forms that were acquired during the course of this study appeared to need improvement. This is a subject that needs further study.

The types of information that teachers do or do not consider useful in a report should also be investigated more fully. In one recent study, (Rucker, 1967) the four teachers involved were unanimous in designating the quality — of the report recommendations as the most important factor in evaluating the utility of the reports studied. The information obtained from the small teacher sample in the study here reported indicated that teachers consider the quality — of the report recommendations as one of the important factors in the overall usefulness of a report.

Conclusions

A manual restricted to the preparation of school psychologists' reports to referring classroom teachers appears to be too limited in its scope to be practical for commercial publication. The majority of the school psychologists who participated in this survey expressed interest in a manual or book with a much broader range of information. Many of the responding school psychologists expressed a need, or interest in, a one-volume ready reference that would contain much, or all, of the information for use in their report-writing and record-keeping. What many of them wanted would seem to be an eclectic anthology of most of the frequently used statistical information and normative tables from the manuals of the more popular tests used by school psychologists, plus a treatise on the general total function (role, ethics, ---) of the school psychologist; and then a statement of the functional relationship of such an eclectic anthology to the school psychologists' reporting responsibilities. In the investigator's opinion, the magnitude of such specific statistical and normative information on tests, plus the rapid obsolescence of much statistical material, make it impractical to attempt to compile and publish such a book. There are available several books written by recognized authorities that cover the role, function, and *raison d'etre* of the school psychologist. All of these books

studied by the investigator contain some useful information relating to the report-writing function of the school psychologist. Most everyone connected with the discipline recognizes that the school psychologist has a responsibility to communicate the results of his work to other involved persons. The report-writing usefulness of the different books varies considerably. In the investigator's opinion, the most useful book currently available is, "Prescriptive Teaching," by Lawrence J. Peter. His orientation is based upon intensive personal research in the area of report-writing by the school psychologist. And it may have to be sufficient until a more ambitious work is available.

There is a probability that a well-written manual or book covering the total communication responsibility of the school psychologist would find acceptance in the field. The responding school psychologists and teachers in this survey all recognized the need for good communications, with many of them expressing some degree of dissatisfaction, either as writers or recipients, with the quality of their present communications via the report. The feasibility of a more extensive book or manual than originally proposed or realized warrants further study.

The limited-scope "manual" which was developed out of this study appears to have some value as a training tool

and reference which could be adapted for use within particular school districts and for use as a groundwork-vehicle for subsequent development and expansion into a textbook covering the total communications responsibility of the school psychologist. For that reason, such a "manual" was drafted and is appended as a part of this thesis (Appendix A).

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APPENDIX A
CONTENT OF A MANUAL

Content of a Manual

Purpose of a report

The primary purpose of a report is to communicate meaningful and useful information from the school psychologist to the referring teacher. If a report fails to communicate, it fails in its purpose and is a rather useless expenditure of time, effort, and material. To communicate adequately a report must both tell the reader what his questions were when he made the referral and then, tell him the answers to those questions.

The secondary purpose of the report is record-keeping. The report consolidates into one ready reference-document the school psychologist's findings and recommendations.

Know the reader

In order to write the most effective report that will communicate to a particular teacher, the school psychologist must know that teacher. First, the school psychologist must know what specifically does the teacher want to know about the referred student. This may, or may not, be adequately stated in the referral so he may need to talk with the teacher to get a clearer delineation. Also, the in-school problems of the referred student involves not only the student but, also, the pupil's teacher. The teacher is a part of the problem too. The school

psychologist should get to know the teacher and find out what part the teacher is playing in the problem and how the teacher affects the problem. If the school psychologist knows these things, he can write a more useful and meaningful report to that particular teacher.

The teacher is a variable in a problem just as much as is the pupil. In fact, the teacher is the most important factor for she is the person to whom the school psychologist is going to make specific recommendations for modifying factors of behavior. The teacher is the most important factor in a classroom environment. Teachers are individuals, and there are no two teachers exactly alike, just as students are individuals and no two are exactly alike. Therefore, it is just as important for the school psychologist to know the teacher as to know the referred student. In essence, when a referral is made, both teacher and student become clients. The school psychologist becomes an expert advisor to the teacher, and the written part of this advice is the report.

Importance of the report

Peter, (1963) in his study of the effectiveness of school psychologists' reports, arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Either the combined written and verbal psychological report or the written psychological report appeared to increase the teacher's acceptance of the school psychologist's recommendations.

2. The satisfaction of the teachers with the contents of the communication seemed to increase when the written report was received. When the written report and the verbal report were compared, the teacher's satisfaction with the content of the report appeared to increase.

3. The teacher showed a preference for a written report, whether or not it was used in conjunction with a verbal report.

4. The use of a written report resulted in teacher's correctly recalling with greater frequency the school psychologist's recommendations.

5. The elementary school principal in Peter's study indicated that the written report was a useful record and that it was referred to when making decisions about the child.

Based on his study, Peter (1963) recommended that school psychologists involved in the individual evaluation of children should develop written reports appropriate to the program and the school, or schools, they serve.

Language and style

Of primary importance for writing good, communicating psychological reports the school psychologist needs a good working knowledge of informal, everyday, practical English. He needs to be oriented to the educational philosophy, training, and vocabulary of the classroom teachers and principals. He needs to know the exact information about what kind of language will communicate with his readers.

The report should be written in concise phrases, simple sentences, and brief paragraphs. In the justification of simplified writing, Flesch (1949, p. 160) states

that, "Not only will your readers read you faster but they will enjoy it more, understand better, and remember longer. In fact, if someone cannot understand a piece of writing, the trouble is rarely that this vocabulary is too small; usually, he can't cope with the way the words are used." The use of technical, psychological jargon should be avoided. One of the often-heard complaints by teachers of psychological reports is that they contain jargon and are, therefore, difficult or impossible to understand.

Suggested format for a comprehensive psychological report

Heading. All psychological reports written by the psychologists in a particular school system should use a standardized heading. This heading should include:

1. Name of the school district.
2. Name of the department or division to which the psychologist is assigned.
3. Mailing address of the office.
4. Title of the report.
5. Date of the report.

Identifying data. The format for this part of the report should also be standardized. These data should include:

1. The evaluated child's name.
2. The child's birthdate, chronological age, and sex.

3. The name of the child's school and grade.
4. The source and date of referral.
5. The date of the evaluation.

Distribution. This portion of the report should include:

- a. The name and/or title of the person, or persons, to whom the report is directed.
- b. A brief statement concerning the confidential nature of the report and restricting distribution.

Reason for referral. This should be a brief statement of the reason given for the referral, and identify the cause or motivating factors behind the referral. A short paragraph should suffice to explain why the evaluation was requested and what information was asked for.

Evaluation. This portion of the report is usually divided into several paragraphs, each pertaining to a definite topic. The number of paragraphs and their arrangement will vary with different evaluative studies. Some of the paragraph headings which will probably appear in most reports are:

1. Tests administered. This will include the names of the tests, and date and place of administration.
2. Test interpretation. This portion of the report should contain a discussion of the child's intellectual

functioning and the child's achievement in the basic academic areas. Some reports will also include a discussion of the child's personality and its impact on the child's intellectual functioning. The way in which personality data is included will be largely dependent upon each psychologist's background, training and experience. Since school psychologists vary in their approaches to personality theory, as well as clinical experience, variations in how the test data are seen and interpreted can also be expected.

Intelligence tests: the titles of the tests administered should be given. The quantitative data yielded by the test as measured intelligence, in terms of I.Q., M.A., grade-placement norms, stanines, percentiles, or other descriptive classifications should be given but in terms best understood by the teacher. The child's performance on specific types of test items should be analyzed. The range and pattern of abilities, including basic strengths and weaknesses, should be described. The child's expected level of academic achievement on the basis of measured intelligence should be indicated. (In a sophisticated fashion recognizing regression between measured intelligence and measured achievement).

Achievement tests: the titles of the tests administered should be given. The skill areas tested and the

results, in terms of grade-placement norms, standard scores and/or percentiles should be made. The types of errors committed should be analyzed and discussed for their implications for remedial classroom instructional techniques. The child's achievement scores should be compared with his actual grade-placement. This comparison should be discussed in regard to its implications for selection of the level and types of instructional material. The achievement scores in relation to measured intelligence should be discussed for its implications concerning classroom instruction and types of materials and grade-level placement.

Personality screening and tests: the names of the tests administered should be given. Within the frame of reference of the report-writer's personality theory and level of experience, the personality structure and dynamics of the child should be discussed. Items that may be covered in this portion of the report are self-concept and perception of others, interpersonal relationships, inner conflicts, defense-mechanisms and techniques for dealing with frustration and their impact upon the child's intellectual functioning, behavior, and school performance. The possible causes for emotional or social disturbances should be discussed. An estimate should be made of the seriousness of the problem. A prediction on the direction and intensity

of future adjustment of maladjustment may also be appropriate.

3. Test observations. The content of this paragraph should focus primarily on the unusual or deviant aspects of the child's behavior. This is appropriate material for the psychologist and is utilized in his total evaluation of the child. Observations of the following characteristics should be included:

- a. The child's physical appearance; such as, is he large or small for his age? Is parental neglect and/or poor economic circumstances suggested by his appearance? Does the child have any physical handicap?
- b. Speech and language characteristics; is the child's speech well-developed for his age, or is he difficult to understand? Does he express himself conversationally in grammatically-complete thoughts? Is his conversational vocabulary better or worse than the test results would suggest?
- c. Physical activity and motor coordination; is the child right- or left-handed? Is there any evidence of impairment or defect in motor coordination?
- d. General Psychological Factors which may have affected the test results, such as, but not

limited to: the child's interpersonal relationship with the psychologist, emotional control, degree of cooperation, interest, attention, effort, self-concept of confidence, or the lack of it, anxiety, emotional control, method of operation, situation adaptability, and rate of performance.

4. Summary. The summary should, in a few concise sentences, answer the reason for referral. It should assist the classroom teacher who made the referral to understand the meaning and significance of the child's behavior.

5. Recommendations. Recommendations should be based upon the reality of existing school and community resources. The major emphasis should be on practical courses of action which are possible. One of the most frequent criticisms that teachers made of the school psychologists' reports is that the recommendations are not practical and they cannot carry them out; although ideal courses of action should also be indicated, even though local resources may not be available to effect them. Teachers also show a preference for recommendations that are concrete and specific in wording. Teachers are more comfortable with a recommendation if it spells out exactly what they should do, or try. Teachers

are prone to complain when the recommendations are couched in vague generalities, such as, "needs more affection," or "needs more individual attention." Teachers want specific information that will tell them what to do and how to do it, in order to develop an optimum educational program in accordance with the child's abilities and needs. Some specific suggestions which may be made are:

- a. A particular method, or methods, of instruction which may be more effective.
- b. The type and level of instructional materials which are needed.
- c. Some suggestion on how the classroom environment may be modified with the behavioral changes which may be expected from the modification.
- d. Reclassification and placement into a particular specialized educational program which may exist within the school system; such as, classes for the emotionally-disturbed, or classes for the intellectually-impaired.
- e. Utilization of other special teaching or special pupil services, which may exist within the school system; such as, social worker service, speech therapy, or reading remediation.

To aid them in being more specific with their recommendations in their reports to referring classroom teachers, school psychologists may find the "Prescriptive Teaching" program developed by Peter (1965, p. 62-102, 186-209) to be useful. He found that certain consistent approaches recommended to the teacher on a prescriptive basis were highly effective in modifying and improving the behavior of referred students.

Recommendations may also appropriately include suggestions for further referral and/or utilization of available community agencies, medical facilities, and other resources outside of the school system for diagnostic or treatment services for the child and the family. Each school psychologist should know and/or have available for ready reference all resources that are available within the community.

A date for future re-evaluation and/or follow-up should be suggested when the need for such is indicated.

Signature and title. The school psychologist should personally sign all reports he makes in response to referrals.

In Conclusion

The foregoing suggested report format and content should not be regarded as all-encompassing or all-inclusive.

It represents a consensus of several sources, and is only tentative in nature. Information derived from suggested content information made by school psychologists and teachers in response to the survey, was used. The studies reported by Peter (1963, 1965) and Rucker (1967), yielded valuable ideas. The arrangement of report format came principally from the report guide used in the Guidance Department of the Seattle School District, and from a mimeographed guide published by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Ohio, (Bonham & Smith, 1960). Ideas from the several books cited in the body of the study were also used. Each report will vary with the individual situation, and should be so written. A good report will answer the reasons for the referral with relevant findings and practical recommendations, presented in clear, easy to understand language. Jargon, irrelevant information, impractical recommendations, and stereotyping should be avoided.

APPENDIX B

**COVER LETTER FOR SURVEY FORM
MAILED TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

Date

Business Heading

Dear :

Your professional help is needed.

As a master's thesis study under the supervision of Doctor Eldon E. Jacobsen, Mr. Darwin Goody, and Mr. Howard B. Robinson, Central Washington State College, I am surveying the need for a manual for the preparation of school psychologists' reports to referent school personnel. No such exclusive manual exists in the field at present, yet every school psychologist is required to record and to communicate his findings and recommendations to teachers and administrators.

Needed is the benefit of your professional experience on the attached survey form.

Needed also are one or more copies of illustrative reports for generalizations in the discussion chapter of the thesis. No individual report will be criticized unless you specifically approve. Please delete or obliterate the client's and writer's names from illustrative reports that you send.

A stamped self-addressed envelope is included for your convenience.

Thank you in advance for your participation and help.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD SCHOURUP
Route 1, Box 4055
Issaquah, Washington
98027

APPENDIX C

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST SURVEY FORM

School Psychologist Interviews

Name: _____ Date: _____

School District: _____

1. Do you make a written report to the referrent? _____

2. What do you use for guidance in preparing your report?

3. If available, do you think that a guidance manual for report writing would be useful to you? _____

4. What do you think such a manual should contain?

APPENDIX D
TEACHER SURVEY FORM

Teacher Interviews

Name: _____ Date: _____

Position: _____ School: _____

1. Did you receive a written report in response to your referral? _____

2. Did the report contain information and/or recommendations useful to you in relation to the referral?

3. Did the report contain unfamiliar terminology?

4. Was the content and meaning of the report clear to you?

5. In what way, if any, could the report have been better for your purpose? _____

APPENDIX E

FLOW CHART - REFERRAL PROCESS

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FLOW CHART - REFERRAL PROCESS
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES - SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Elementary Schools

Teacher:

1. Submits referral on Form E-58



Principal:

1. Assembles all needed information
2. Screens referral
3. Submits completed form (3 copies) to Area office. 2 weeks before psych. next school visit.
4. May confer with teacher and other concerned school personnel, parents.

Secondary Schools

Counselor:

1. Acting on complaint of teacher, may consult with other teachers, obtain a consensus of opinion.
2. Assembles all needed information.
3. Submits completed Referral Form (3 copies) E-58 to Area Office 2 weeks before psych. next visit to school.
4. May consult with parents.

Area Secretarial Pool:

1. All referrals checked against:
 - a. Current) Files
 - b. Inactive)
2. Old master card and Guidance folder pulled on Former cases: new materials made for New cases.
3. School psychologist assigned to case and folder placed in school drawer,



or



4. If case to be handled from Area Office, Guidance folder and photostat of master card sent to Area Office. Psych. operating from Area Office pick up referrals there.



Psychologist: (on next office day)

1. Picks up referred cases in school drawers.



