The Use of Parent Conferences as a Means of Reporting and Guiding Pupil Progress in the Elementary School

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THE USE OF PARENT CONFERENCES AS A MEANS
OF REPORTING AND GUIDING PUPIL PROGRESS
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Reports to parents are the school's official communication to the home on the child's progress. Before parents receive the report card they have been influenced by many other types of reports which have been garnered in impromptu fashion.

These first reports include the child's remarks after the first day of school modified by books and papers brought home, notes from the teacher, P. T. A. notices, school bulletins, and newspaper articles.

This point of view is brought out by the discussions of three California principals:

By the time the first official report to parents is scheduled, Mom and Dad have formed definite opinions about school policy, teaching personnel and the curriculum based entirely on a series of communications that were never intended for that purpose. They also have deep-rooted attitudes about "reporting," developed by their own traumatic school experiences when a report card meant that the dreaded day of judgment had arrived and each child was irrevocably branded as an A, B, C, D, or F student. The decision was final; there was no appeal. The dollars were collected for the A's and the shame, humiliation and emotional damage were endured for the C's, D's, F's. Whether Johnny's dad as a school boy was a "collector" or an "endurer" has a more profound influence on his personal attitude toward your system of reporting
than any of the factors that you as a school administrator can directly control.¹

Many of the plans for reporting are only a one-way report, teacher to parent, or provide very little and unsatisfactory correspondence between parent and teacher. Such plans are not to be encouraged as evidenced in this citation by Ruth Strang:

Adequate appraisal and adjustment of children may require the co-operation of many persons—teachers, administrators, specialists and supervisors of guidance, community agencies, parents, and last but not least, the child himself. It is not often a "one-man task."²

Even though a teacher may believe in more cooperative reporting, he may follow older practices because of tradition or lack of knowledge and experience with newer practices.

The author's own experiences in receiving grades while attending school, and later in giving grades to students while teaching, had been limited entirely to reports filled in by actual percentage grades, or by A B C D E grades representing various groupings of accomplishments. The writer, himself, had been quite satisfied with these methods since his reports quite consistently showed marks in the upper ranks of the grading systems being used. But he remembers very well the remarks of discouragement and dissatisfaction made by


². Strang, Ruth, Every Teacher's Records, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1936, p. 5.
his classmates, and later by his students who received grades in the lower brackets of these grading practices.

During courses pursued at Central Washington College of Education, such as Introduction to Guidance in the summer of 1949, and The Elementary Principal the following summer of 1950, the author was greatly intrigued by class comments and discussions and by personal readings on reporting practices and trends.

Reporting by parent-teacher conferences seemed to be one method which had obstacles to overcome but gave evidence of desirable results. This method of reporting was discussed with the author’s principal and he was encouraged to study still further the problem of reporting by conferences. The principal’s suggestion was prompted by a desire to find a satisfactory reporting program since the district program on reporting had been under study, and the committee’s suggested procedures were not practical for the entire district.

The author suggested that his own school, Duwamish Elementary School of the South Central District 406, King County, Washington, be allowed to prepare a reporting program on an experimental basis. The principal received permission from the superintendent of the district to prepare such a program. This paper tells of the work in this school.
Purpose of the Report

The primary purpose of this report is to explain how the principal and faculty of Duwamish School in King County, Washington, introduced, initiated, and followed up a change in the form of reporting to parents to include the use of parent-teacher conferences.

Also this work will review some of the literature and pertinent investigations which deal with reporting programs; a survey of reporting practices in King County Elementary Schools which provided information for the use of the conference program in the Duwamish School, and the plan actually used with evaluations and suggestions for further study.
Chapter II
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES
AS A MEANS OF REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

Reports and Investigations

Many different types of practices have been used with varying degrees of success in reporting pupil progress. Since the school in which the author taught includes parent-teacher conferences in its plan of reporting, this paper will attempt to show the values and limitations of such conferences as expressed by various authorities in their writings, and also as experienced in the Duwamish School.

One of the major tasks of successful school operation is the establishment of effective home-school relationships. The following quotation shows how the conference method of reporting helps to meet this responsibility:

The education of a very small boy is a shared responsibility in which the school, the home, and the child himself must co-operate. . . . Co-operation must be continuous and complete, not only in shared interests and determination of needs, but in planning, executing plans, and in evaluating results. . . . If Small Boy is to grow successfully in every area of development—physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally—the co-operation of his parents and his teachers must be real and effective.

Most children have a different teacher each year. Only as a friendly relationship is established between parents and school will there be continuity in the child's experience.
There are many means by which the goal of achieving home-school co-operation can be achieved. The school must assume the responsibility for planning a general public relations program to include not only the dissemination of information but also programs, teas, school demonstrations, classroom visitations, and parent-teacher conferences. . . . The foundation of parent-teacher co-operation lies in the mutual sharing of information, in thinking through together the behavior desired for a particular child, and in working out together methods that may be used at home and at school to obtain the desired results. Both have information necessary to the better understanding of the child and are thus on an equal basis. From the parent the teacher can best obtain facts concerning the child that will help her to understand the child's behavior and to enable her to give more effective guidance. . . . The teacher should visit the home if at all possible and should arrange conferences with the parent at school.

If the school accepts its responsibility for personality growth in the child, it will mean that the teacher must have frequent contact with the parent. Therefore it is obvious that individual parent-teacher conferences are not an adjunct to the school program or curriculum but an integral part of it and become the strongest link in the chain connecting home and school. Values of such conferences increase as parents and teachers become accustomed to working together; as they take place regularly and systematically; and as both parties are made to feel secure. The child benefits from the mutual exchange between the agencies most interested in him. The teacher knows the scientific principles of child development, and the mother supplies actual facts about Jerry's growth and characteristics. The exchange is a fair one and a better understanding of Jerry results both at school and at home.1

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The following explains how one of the requirements of good reporting is met:

A report card alone is not adaptable to the requirement that home-school communication is essentially a "two-way" system.

The personal conference between teacher and parent or principal and parent is becoming more widely used each year. It is true that some form of conference with parents has been in use since the origin of public schools. Most of these interviews were initiated by the irate parent prompted by the old-time school marking systems or by complaints from the boy or girl...this type has decreased.

The tendency at present is not to wait for intermittent visits...but for the school to solicit conferences. Through an accurate cumulative record system following the child's progress through the school, the principal and teacher have an excellent opportunity to evaluate the individual pupil's achievement. At intervals a frank discussion by the principal, guidance counselor, or teacher with the parent concerning the good as well as the poor qualities of a pupil's work is extremely beneficial...intelligent contact...keeps interested in work of the school...shows relation of the school program to the child...so all are better able to assist and co-operate.  

The growth of the child and how it may be facilitated is a shared interest of the school and the home. How this growth was planned for in one situation is expressed as follows:

Conferences with parents have largely replaced written reports to parents in all Minneapolis elementary schools.

The Elementary School Planning Committee of 1946 recommended that conferences replace all but the year end reports in all early-elementary school grades, and that the privilege of conferences be given to all interested teachers in the upper grades; also suggested that in-service training help be made available to interested upper grade teachers as freely as they were offered to primary teachers.

Experience with informal notes constituted excellent preparation for conferences.

A 1946 workshop group listed these values of conferences:

- Better understanding of child's background.
- Opportunity presented for the teacher to get parent's reaction to the school and the child.
- Clearer understanding of what the teacher was attempting to do was obtained by the parent.
- Mutual respect for each other's problems, which contributed to the child's welfare.³

The Educational Policies Commission's study makes this report:

The results of these conferences (Vanport, Oregon, and Watertown, South Dakota) indicate that elementary schools are better if all teachers have some direct contact with the parents of all children in their rooms at least once each year.⁴

One reported investigation brings out the following facts and conclusions:

Potter's study of "Reporting to Parents" says in part:

The study revealed that in both counties and cities there is a tendency to avoid the three and five-point scale and

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substitute some method which would eliminate the comparisons and class standards which these scales have perpetrated.

A number of schools reported policies of home reporting which are more inclusive than a report card or letter report. These schools have come to consider the parents of the children as a partner in the task of education and proceed on that basis. . . . One superintendent writes: These conferences (teacher and parent) are encouraged by the teachers and administrators. Our tendency has been to do away with marks and substitute in their place concrete statements.

We have also endeavored in reporting the progress and development of children to have in mind the larger purposes of education. We are concerned more with the development rather than the learning of specified subject matter. Such reporting can best be done through individual conferences between teacher and parent. The child sometimes takes part in such conferences. Quite often the child and teacher will evaluate his (the child's) progress together. . . .

Criteria for reporting pupil progress to parents:

1. The method of reporting to parents should represent the philosophy and purposes of the school in which it is used.

2. The method of reporting should be thoroughly understood by children and parents.

3. The report card should include no items for rating which cannot be reported with considerable accuracy.

4. Any notice of unsatisfactory work should be accompanied by an explanation of causes of the difficulty and by suggestions for remedial measures.

5. The system of reporting should not make undue demands upon the time of the teachers.

6. Reports of pupil growth should be made in terms of the ability of the individual child. Comparisons with other children should be avoided.
7. The child should have an opportunity to assist in evaluating his own growth for the report to the parents.

8. The tone of the report should be warm and personal.

9. The report should include an estimate of the growth of the child in all its aspects, intellectual, physical, social, and emotional.

10. The reporting system should be flexible enough to meet the unusual demands of new standards or needs.

11. The report should be a confidential matter, the concern of the schools, the parents, and the child only.

12. The report card should be supplemented by at least one personal conference with the parent or parents (should be at school).

13. The reporting system should be a two-way communication between the home and the school.  

SURVEY OF KING COUNTY REPORTING PRACTICES

In order that the faculty of Duwamish School might have a knowledge of different types of reporting practices in operation, and trends where changes were being considered, a survey to elicit such information from King County Elementary School Principals was made.

The results of this survey follow.

Table I
FREQUENCY OF USE OF REPORTING PRACTICES
IN KING COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

(61 replies were received from 83 questionnaires)

1. Report card (alone) 6
   a. A B C D E marks 4
   b. S - U marks 1
   c. Check marks 1

2. Letters to parents (alone) 0

3. Parent-Teacher Conferences (alone) 0

4. Combination of practices 55
   a. Report card plus one or more conferences 23
   b. Report card and letters to parents 5
   c. Report card, letters, and conferences 8
   d. Report card plus letters and conferences as needed 9
   e. Report card with comments 1
   f. Report card with comments and conference 2
   g. Letter and one or more conferences 7

Total 61
Table I reveals that reporting practices of King County Elementary Schools are quite varied; however, certain groupings are evident as well as other information. Only six schools have no combination of practices; four of these six using only A B C D E marks. Fifty-five out of sixty-one, or ninety per cent plus, are using a combination of methods of reporting. The report card is used in all but seven schools, and the conference is used in all but six schools in the group using a combination of practices. The combination of the report card plus one or more conferences was most common, representing almost forty-two per cent of the group. The two groups using report card, letter, and conferences represented seventeen schools or almost thirty-one per cent.
Table II
FREQUENCIES OF PARENT CONTACTS IN REPORTING PRACTICES
OF KING COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As 1 or 2 or 3 or 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needed more more more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Report Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Primary</td>
<td>3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Intermediate</td>
<td>1 2 4 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. All</td>
<td>3 2 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Report Card with Comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Primary</td>
<td>1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Intermediate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. All</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Primary</td>
<td>2 1 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Intermediate</td>
<td>1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. All</td>
<td>4 5 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parent-Teacher Conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Primary</td>
<td>3 6 6 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Intermediate</td>
<td>8 3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. All</td>
<td>16 9 9 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>31 24 31 31 55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table II shows that report cards issued four times a year for all students was the most frequent practice with conferences for all as needed being second. Reporting four or more times was the most common practice, with parent-teacher conferences being the method of reporting most frequently used in combination with any other method.
Table III
PUPIL REPORTING PLANS PREFERRED BY PARENTS AND SCHOOL OFFICIALS
IN KING COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Faculties</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No definite preference</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABCDE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-U or H-M-L</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Report Card and one Conference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Report Cards and two Conferences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Formal Report</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter and Rating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase of Parent-Teacher Conferences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Teacher Conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66</td>
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Table III reveals that, of the group reporting, forty-two per cent plus are not definite as to the type of reporting they would consider satisfactory, sixteen and two-thirds per cent prefer A B C D E reports, and over thirteen and six-tenths per cent prefer conferences being used. From those who reported in each group, eighty per cent of the principals had definite preference, while the faculty groups had almost thirty-nine per cent, and the parent group had sixty-four per cent definite preference.
Other points of information contributed in the questionnaire showed the following. From the principal's standpoint of satisfaction with their reporting program the results showed that only four schools were not using conferences and were satisfied with their reporting program; that conferences called as needed were satisfactory to nine but unsatisfactory to eleven; and that planned conferences were satisfactory to twelve. (Five were unsatisfied with planned conferences but expressed a desire to extend their use in more grades or in number of conferences rather than omission of them.)

Teachers commented on reporting practices desired with these remarks: 1. No regulation report cards. 2. Eliminate note type report card. 3. Something more concrete for parents. 4. Not satisfied with primary reading level marks. 5. Get away from report cards. 6. Less in quantity of written comments.

Parents have expressed themselves in regard to reporting as follows: 1. More understanding. 2. Majority satisfied with one letter and two conferences—few cry for A B C D. 3. Parents especially like conferences. 4. More frequent notification of poor work and recommendations for home study. 5. Something more definite on reports used. 6. Primary report of reading level has no meaning.

The above survey represents a 73.5 per cent return from all King County Elementary Schools and can be considered as showing the
general procedures and expressions of the King County Elementary Schools as a whole.

Study and Plans at Duwamish

Parents need and want helpful and understandable reports of their children's school life as is made evident in the above reports and surveys. Starting with a sure conviction that the reporting system could be more beneficial to teachers, parents, and children, and that the principal is the leader of his particular school community, the author worked in close co-operation with the principal in evolving a change in the reporting program at Duwamish.

Procedures of Introducing a Plan

After the principal and the author had acquired a background of information, the following general plan of procedure was decided upon: 1. introduction to the staff. 2. introduction to the parents. 3. initiation of the plan evolved on an experimental basis. 4. evaluations of the experiment.

This plan met at least partially the requirements for changing a school program as made by a group of superintendents who reported procedures by which report card changes were made in their school systems. The conclusions of the above-mentioned group are:

1. Committees of principals and teachers were often used to draw up suggested forms.
2. Letters to parents in advance of the introduction of new forms and in establishing them for use.

3. Group meetings of parents such as the P. T. A. are valuable mediums in making the change.

4. Individual conferences with parents prior to the change helps to acquaint the parent with the new form and the reasons for making the change.

5. Any change must have the support of the teaching staff if it is to be successful.

6. Children must be informed of the change, and it must be understood by them. This is especially true in the upper grades.

7. It is often easier to introduce new forms in the primary grades and gradually carry the change through the upper grades.

8. It is very evident that radical changes in reporting practices must be preceded by a careful policy of public relations which makes the public aware of the need for alterations. This policy must be carried on for some time before the change and must be continued afterward if the plan is to be successful. No change should be made without making these preparations if cordial relations are to be maintained with the school patrons.6

 Orientation of the Principal

In the orientation program of the principal and the author a wide background of knowledge concerning the program under study, its merits and defects, and how it compares to other possible programs was deemed necessary. The author prepared and presented

6. Ibid., pp. 147-48
an extensive bibliography for reading background. Much reading and study was done to inquire further into the merits and workings of conferences.

Before proceeding further it may be wise to say that any such change of program needs top administrative approval. This is how it came about in Duwanish. Through committee work of a previous year the superintendent and principal became interested in the possibilities of using parent-teacher conferences in reporting to parents.

This committee had attempted to revise the reporting program for the entire district. When some of the suggested procedures did not prove to be practical for all the schools in the district, the principal asked if he might work with his own faculty in preparing a reporting program for the Duwanish School. This consent was given and the plan proceeded with administrative backing.

In addition to the background gained from wide reading the principal visited school systems which were already organized for reporting through the use of parent-teacher conferences.

A visit to the Chelsea Park School in a neighboring district provided insights into a parent-teacher conference program being used in grades one through six. Other nearby schools were contacted.

Talks with teachers of the Boulevard Park School gave comparative information since their program of conferences extended through grade three only. A third visit took the principal to the McMicken Heights School where the program was similar to that of the Boulevard Park School. From them he received some record forms to use in conferencing, and information for an evaluational program.

After the principal had taken these steps to prepare himself and felt confident that the reporting plan he had studied was worthy of further consideration, he was ready to study it with his faculty.

Introduction to the Staff

Perhaps all principals and many teachers have had the experience of meeting parents, sometimes by request, to solve a definite problem that has risen and blocked future favorable progress. These meetings usually result in better understanding between teacher and parent, parent and child, and child and teacher, and also in marked progress on the part of the child. These situations give the Principal an opening wedge to discuss reporting practices and problems during casual conversations with the teachers.

Shortly after the faculty of the Duwamish School had been thus set to thinking about some change in the reporting program, the teacher's meeting bulletin contained this note:

"The agenda for this meeting will provide time for an informal discussion on evaluating and guiding pupils."
As a result of the above mentioned discussion in the teachers' meeting, it was suggested that materials which would give information for comparisons of reporting programs and trends were to be studied before the next meeting. Helps were found in references from the extended bibliography given in the Appendix.

Reports given during follow-up meetings are here summarized:

Fallacies in Use of A B C D E Marks

1. Anyone can tell from the mark assigned what the student's level of achievement is or what progress he has made.

2. A student can achieve any mark he wishes—if he is willing to make the effort.

3. The student's success in his after-school life compares favorably with his success in school. (School's concern should be that the student who has certain abilities should actually utilize those abilities.)

4. The student's mark is comparable to the worker's pay check.

5. The competitive marking system provides a worth-while and justifiable introduction to competitive adult life. (The school by its marking practices is doing much to promote the development of antisocial attitudes and practices. A desire to win even at the expense of others cannot be countenanced as a desirable educational attitude. The competition of unequals does not provide a fair basis for determining penalties or the granting of honors. There is plenty of opportunity for the utilization of competitive motives in a legitimate manner. The competition of the student with his previous record and attempts to achieve in terms of his ability provide opportunities for the application of competitive interests. The encouragement of competition by individuals of unequal ability, however, is unfair, does not conform to mental health practices, and is negative in many of its results.)
Although it is true that competition is a basic force in adult living, it would not be difficult, if we look at the results, to justify greater emphasis on the importance of cooperation—and the school would be a good place to begin. It might well be given greater emphasis in the school through the promotion of cooperative activities, planning, evaluation, and in many other ways.)

6. School marks can be used as a means to an end without their becoming thought of by students as ends in themselves. (The emphasis given to marks by most teachers in most schools tends ultimately to convince the student that the mark, rather than what it is supposed to represent, is the most important outcome of learning. To achieve a higher mark than might be otherwise assigned, some students who are normally honest do not hesitate to resort to dishonest practices.)

Further dissatisfaction with report cards using letter markings was brought out in this report.

Trends in Reports to Parents

1. Growing dissatisfaction of a system which compares one child with another.

2. Away from percentage markings to fewer groupings.

3. Reports to include traits other than subject matter.

4. Use of descriptive rather than quantitative (ABC) reports.

5. Formal reports being replaced by notes and letters.

6. Attempt to analyze objectives of school.

7. Reports sent less frequently.

8. Attendance continues to be an important item on cards.

9. Parents asked to take part in building report cards.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

If we were to limit our study exclusively to the reporting functions of marking and reporting, the conference plan would apparently be excellent, for the likelihood of misunderstanding is reduced in face-to-face conversation. The teacher and either or both of the student's parents, and perhaps at times even the student would get together, sit down and talk things over. If the teacher said "Johnny got a D," Johnny's mother could ask why didn't he get a C. If the teacher said "Johnny's citizenship needs to be improved," the parent could counter with "What has he been doing that he shouldn't do?" or "What should he do to improve his citizenship?"

Getting parents and teachers together, of course, is a good practice entirely apart from reporting. The teacher can work more effectively with a youngster if he knows the youngster's home background, his parents, what he does outside of school, what problems the parents have, and a dozen other things. And the parents can help the school if they know what it is trying to do and what successes and difficulties it is having.

Although the conference plan is effective for reporting purposes and is highly desirable entirely apart from the reporting function, it does not result in a record. And the school has to maintain records. Therefore, it cannot be thought of as a substitute for conventional reporting practices. Reports for school record purposes would still have to be made by the teacher.

The conference plan is workable only in situations in which one teacher, the one who is having the conference with the student's parents works with the student all of the day or most of it. The plan is, therefore, practical.

only in undepartmentalized school programs, which means generally the lower eleven grades. Of course, the grade teacher or the core teacher could prepare for a conference by talking with the student's other teachers. If this is done the time expenditure is increased.

The most serious objection to the conference plan is that it demands a heavy time investment. Even though the time spent is well spent, reporting is regarded as a regular part of the teacher's day in addition to his regular teaching load. Of course, if conferences with parents could be included as a part of his day's work, the conference plan would be practical.

A fourth obstacle in the effective working of the conference plan is that not many parents would take time for conferences with their youngster's teacher. True, in the lower elementary grades parents do, or generally the mother does. But as the youngster gets older and moves on up in the school organization, for a number of reasons visiting the school seems to become less important.\footnote{Wrinkle, W. L., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 53-54.}

The report on Parent-Teacher Conferences by Hubert C. Armstrong is as follows:

Discussions between teachers and parents of the aims and methods of education in general, and of the welfare of their own children in particular, is an essential part of public education in a self-ruling society.

Both the teacher and his parents interpret the child to themselves in terms of their own experiences. Parents cannot know what sort of person the teacher thinks the child is unless they talk with the teacher; and teachers can learn to know the child through the parents' eyes only by talking with and becoming aware of the attitudes of parents.

The focus of parent-teacher conferences is the relationship of the teacher, child and parents. Almost anything can be accomplished for the child if those relationships are such that friendliness and understanding predominate.
If the teacher knows and can state simply in terms of a very few points the results she hopes to secure in the children, and how she expects to do so, most parents will welcome the discussion.

Parents are particularly sensitive to the talents, shortcomings, and behavior of their own children. Usually their opinion of education in general is affected by what and how their children are taught.

Parents should know what teachers expect of children. This is especially true if a child is difficult to manage, or if he is conspicuously different in some other way. Frequently a discussion of practices will result in the parents' understanding of methods used at school, and the teacher's understanding, in turn, of what disciplinary methods are used at home.

Parents should know what a child is doing at school. This can be done most easily if examples of the child's work, books he uses, the projects he has had a part in, things he has made, committees he is on, other children he is working with—not the section he is working in—are brought out in a matter-of-fact way during the visit of a parent to the school.

Parents should know the teacher's opinion of what the child needs for further development. A teacher can indicate what types of work will be encountered in the next grade, what are the child's needs for improvement, and particularly what are the child's most promising possibilities.

The teacher should be helped to see the child as a member of a family, and a community. In this area a teacher cannot press inquiries without trespassing. She may, however, inspire an unlimited amount of well-placed confidence. The attitude of one parent toward being questioned was stated thus, "I don't mind telling almost anything, but I don't want to be asked." A teacher may learn of very important factors that are affecting a child's playmates, relatives, gangs, close friendships, may be discovered that are worth discussing in some detail. The interest, abilities, skills, activities that characterize a child's daily life need to be known in a general way so that his school life may help him to think through some of his own matters of concern.
Good public relations are a result rather than an aim of conferences. When parents inquire about school matters which are not known, a cordial gesture would be to secure information oneself and later inform the parent. (Don't send to someone else.)

It should be one of the major purposes of school-parent conferences to help parents know and understand not only ideas of education; but also the facts, conditions, problems, rights, and limitations that characterize education today. Parents should feel that they are on the inside of the situation, if we are to have community schools and really democratic education. They should feel that they are a part of the schools. Occasionally a parent gives the impression he wishes to dictate to the schools. It is his defense against professional authoritarianism and administrative dictatorial policy.\textsuperscript{11}

After the Duwamish faculty had discussed these reports they agreed to try out the conference plan of reporting, provided that parents could be informed well enough so that they would be willing to participate in this experimental program.

We realized that many problems were yet to be solved and that many questions would be asked us such as when conferences could be held, the time they would consume, what would be discussed, and many more.

Samplings of what other schools were doing gave us some ideas.

The Maury School, Richmond, Virginia, evaluates its teaching and learning at weekly teacher-parent conference periods. A preliminary group meeting to which all are invited is held in the auditorium. Here community problems as well as child development problems are discussed. This is followed by meeting in the classroom with those who have appointments. . . . During these private conferences, they discuss the progress and needs of the child. Discussion of

\textsuperscript{11} Bristow, N. S., "Variety in Reporting to Parents," \textit{California Journal of Elementary Education, XL} (August, 1942) pp. 31-36.
this type brings about much better understanding of the child's development—physical, mental, and social, than report cards have been able to do.\textsuperscript{12}

Another helpful reference gave us information on several problems. It states:

A recent survey showed that more than one-half of the teachers held all of their conferences when the children were not at school. The remainder had some during school time. It also showed thirty minutes is the average amount of time consumed per conference.

Some parents expressed concern about the conferences for fear that they would not know their child's status in reading, writing, and arithmetic. This problem has been met easily. The results of standardized tests are always available to parents. They give a more definite answer regarding the child's placement than could a traditional report card.

Three in-service programs were presented: study groups and workshops; recordings; and work study programs.\textsuperscript{13}

Information about reasons for conferences and how often they were held was gathered from the following reference:

Feeling that a better understanding emerges and a happier relationship between home and school can be fostered by this means, an increasing number of educators are favoring the teacher-parent conference method of reporting pupil progress to parents.

Inglewood City uses conferences with a final report form. ... San Bernardino County uses teacher-parent conferences the first and third quarters with written reports (checks and teacher notes) the second and fourth quarters.

\textsuperscript{12} N. E. A., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 186.

\textsuperscript{13} Cutright, P. B., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 266-69.
They emphasize use of a Teacher's conference guide—a bulletin prepared by a joint committee of supervisors and teachers summarizing goals and objectives in each area of a child's total school experiences.\(^{14}\)

In reading from the extended bibliography the author found two books that he thought would be very helpful to the faculty in preparing themselves for conferencing regardless of whether the reporting by conference plan was adopted or not. He suggested that the principal purchase copies for the faculty library to facilitate the teachers' preparation for their part in the conference plan. These purchases were made:


From the latter book mimeographed copies of "General Guides for Conferences" were made and placed in the hands of each teacher for constant and quick reference. The list follows:

**General Guide for Conferences**

1. Responsibility for the success or failure of a conference rests primarily with the teacher. It is well to remember that success is relative, and each conference must be judged according to its own circumstances and results.

2. It is well to arrange for no interruptions during a conference. Nothing is more disturbing to the serious efforts of trying to think through a problem than to be interrupted at a crucial moment.

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3. It is easier to build a cooperative relationship if the teacher is not seated behind a desk. Behind a desk the teacher is in the place of authority, not partnership.

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

5. Listen, and then listen some more. The teacher did not invite the parent in order to deliver a lecture to him, but to get, as well as to give, help. Encourage the parent to talk, and then listen to what he has to say.

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

7. If a parent says he is worried about his child's behavior, follow through. Find out why he is worried. The teacher should not assume that he knows why. He and the parent may not feel the same way about the child.

8. If a parent gives what he thinks is the reason for a child's behavior, accept it, and lead the discussion on to the consideration of other possible causes. Behavior is the result of many causative factors, not one.

9. If a parent suggests a plan of action, accept it if at all possible to do so. It is better for the parent to try it than for the teacher to force one of his own. One of the goals in parent counseling is to try to get the parent to take the initiative. If the parent's plan fails, it is always possible to suggest others that may strike nearer to the root of the difficulty.

10. If the parent cannot suggest reasons for a child's behavior, or plans of action to deal with it, the teacher might suggest alternatives for joint consideration. "This might be a possibility. What do you think? You know all the facts of the situation better
than I do." Or, "We might try this and see what happens. It may take us awhile to find the source of the difficulty." Such an approach makes the parent a participator in the final decision for tentative plans, and leads to discussion that helps him to accept the plan as his own.

11. It does not help to argue with a parent. Arguing will arouse resentment and resistance.

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

13. Most Parents cannot be objective about their own children. Therefore, do not criticize, either directly or indirectly. Criticism is fatal to the building of a cooperative relationship.

14. Avoid giving direct advice when the parent gives a statement of his problem and then leans back, saying, "Tell me what to do." Let any advice or suggestions grow out of mutual discussion and a growing insight on the part of the parent into the reasons for the behavior.

15. Do not get ahead of the parent in his thinking. In other words, the teacher should not try to push his thinking onto a parent before the parent is ready to see it through a process of discussion and mutual thinking.

16. Try to be aware of sensitive spots, and avoid embarrassing the parent by noting facial expressions, gestures, and voice. These all give a clue to the parent's emotions.

17. Be accepting. That is, accept anything the parent tells you without showing surprise or disapproval. If the teacher cannot do this, he will not get an honest picture of the parent's attitudes and feelings.

18. The teacher should be ready to recognize problems that are so difficult as to prevent him from giving sufficient help to the parent. Parents with complex emotional problems should be referred to the consulting psychologist or guidance specialist on the staff, who in turn
will refer the individual to a psychiatrist if there is such need. If there is no one on the school staff to whom the teacher can refer, he should try to have available the names of specialists in the community. In referring, it is easy to say, "I wish I could help you, but I feel you need more help than I can give you. I have the names of two or three consultants if you wish them, or you may know someone yourself."

If the teacher is in a community where there is no one to whom he can refer the parent, he can do his best in easing the troublesome behavior symptoms in the child, but he should not let the parent become involved in pouring out his emotions repeatedly. It will not help the parent beyond giving the temporary relief of tension that comes from telling your troubles to any good listener. This relief is necessary, but unless the teacher can help the parent go on to constructive planning, he is not giving real help.

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

If it is possible to state one basic implication brought out by the various counseling techniques, it is this: Successful counseling depends on the relationship between the parent and the teacher. It must be a relationship that permits the parent to express his thoughts and feelings with the knowledge that he will be listened to and understood by a sympathetic and accepting person, who in understanding and accepting helps him in turn to understand and accept both himself and his child. In those instances where such a relationship was established that the parent and the teacher moved on together to intelligent and constructive planning for the child.15

15. Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences by D'Evelyn; Practical Suggestions for Teaching—Hollis Caswell, Editor; Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, pp. 95-97.
A very helpful contribution to teacher understanding of the parent-teacher conference program resulted from the author's visit to the View Ridge School of the Bremerton School District.

A talk with Mr. Paschal, Principal of the school, revealed the plan of work in his school. He also pointed out some public relations values which he felt were quite directly a result of their conferencing program. It was expressed that, because the people of the community knew about the school and felt they were a part of it, these results accrued: (1) in the last millage election, of five hundred registered voters, four hundred three voted of which only three were against the levy; (2) the average P. T. A. attendance was increased and more fathers were in attendance; (3) no malicious destruction of school property had occurred since the program had been in operation; and (4) parents having students go on into junior high asked how they might get the same type of conferencing started there.

In meetings with several of the View Ridge teachers, each expressed her great satisfaction with the program and told how the program operated in her room. A pamphlet for parents on "Parent-Teacher Conferences" was submitted for the author's approval and use.16 The ideas and materials were brought back to the Duwamish School and many were incorporated in the program which developed there.

16. Pamphlet reproduced and placed in the appendix.
Introduction to the Parents

Following this preparation on the part of the faculty, the program chairman of the P. T. A. was contacted and asked to give time in some of the monthly meetings for reports and discussion on the proposed change in reporting practices. Time was granted and the announcement was made through the P. T. A. newsletter which is sent to each family in the community.

In the September, 1951, P. T. A. meeting, parents of the children of each grade met with the room teacher in the classroom of each grade. The report card then in use and some samples from other schools were examined and explained. Advantages and disadvantages were discussed. The teacher explained the conference plan and expressed a desire for the parents to study and think with them during the year about the advisability of using the conference to some extent in their school.

The attendance at this first parents' meeting was proportionately small but those who were there carried the idea to others in the community. Conferences became a topic of study and conversation with pros and cons, during the following months.

The use of the P. T. A. to help contact parents and spread understanding was felt to be a good plan. This idea is supported in the following references:
There is no agency which can be more valuable in bringing the home and school into closer relationship than the P. T. A. Its primary purpose is to co-ordinate the work of the home and school for the welfare of the child.

The educated parent is in most cases the best parent, and the school will gain from a program which keeps parents informed.17

The procedure of developing report cards cooperatively is sound, for then they will be understood and approved by all concerned.18

After thinking and studying about the program of conferencing from the September meeting until March, this latter P. T. A. meeting was given over to reports, discussions and planning.

At the P. T. A. meeting the Principal made a report on the proposed program stating that the teachers were willing to participate in the conference program in spite of the fact it would require much more of their time. Also it was suggested that, if the parents elected to try the conference technique, it be used in conjunction with the present report card. Thus, they, the parents, could compare the results and decide more intelligently on future practices desired.

Another report was given on "Records and Reports." This report was taken from material prepared by Miss A. Hebeler of the College Elementary School, Ellensburg, Washington. The report was as follows:

Purpose of Records and Reports

Records should be viewed as a part of childhood education, not as an end in themselves. Their only help lies in the value they may give directly to the children who share in the making and using of records.

"Not for judging of child but for guiding him" -- not for comparing him with others -- this encourages competition, how he compares with others.

Forms of Records

A. Old Forms

Negative emphasis
Gave general information on level of achievement in letters or percents.
Emphasized subject matter and neglected social and emotional adjustment of the child.
Competitive, compared child with others in the group.
Developed extrinsic motives for study, interest in superficial goals, grades.
Ignored ideals of democracy, initiative, freedom, independent thinking, worked for group welfare.

B. Newer Forms

Positive emphasis. First consideration is child welfare. Report is considered as an aid in building character and personality.
Diagnostic, tells why more progress was not made and how child may improve unsatisfactory achievement.
Shows strengths on which to build as well as faults to correct.
Space to write descriptive accounts of child's development, to include most significant accomplishments.
All phases of learning given consideration: information, understandings, concepts, attitudes, ideals, appreciations, and skills.
Cooperation is invited. Parents, teachers, and children all have a share in making the modern record. Parent traces development in home. Children appraise progress along many lines. In a conference, teacher, parent, and child may discuss records they have made and what they mean in terms of future progress. New records are more humane, more personal, more astute, more concerned with future than with the past.

G. Reports to Parents

Modern record is constructive in intent. It encourages comparison with the child's own progress with reference to his ability.

The most important one factor in building the security of the teacher, the child, and the parent, is the contacts which the teacher makes with parents through parents' discussion group meetings or visits to the children's homes or through parent conferences for reporting children's growth. Such conferences develop understanding in the parent and the teacher and a feeling of security in the child.19

The Principal then asked the entire group to divide into sections for discussion. Parents and teachers of grades one through three met in one group; while those of grades four through seven met in a second group. Those parents having children in both groups had a choice of sitting with either group. Questions of the value of a change, of the value of the proposed program, and of how the program would operate were asked and discussed. The parents were

enthusiastic about the program especially since it was to be comparative in nature and their decisions of its value were to be considered.

As a plan of action each group appointed a committee to work with the teachers in scheduling appointments and making any suggestions that would seem advantageous in getting the conference program actually in operation. These committees were to participate in planning conferences the following year beginning September, 1952.

Conferences Initiated and Carried Out April, 1952

In faculty meetings following the March P. T. A. meeting plans were laid to carry out our first attempt at conferencing as a way of reporting pupil progress to parents.

It was agreed to limit each conference to thirty minutes, and to notify the parents of such a limit when they were asked to come. If necessary a second conference would be preferred rather than extending one conference beyond the thirty-minute limit.

Forms for appointments were shown and discussed and the decision was made to have one of them printed for use for those teachers desiring them. A case history form was used also.20

Since time was getting short and the remaining days were quite filled with final reports, inventories, testing, and getting our

20. Forms used are reproduced in the Appendix.
regular report cards ready, it was agreed that families having children in more than one grade be asked in by only one teacher to facilitate making the program reach as many different homes as possible.

In scheduling, the author found it helpful to prepare an inventory sheet which gave each student's name and phone number or address, the hours mother was away from home working, her days off, and similar data for the father. As conferences were scheduled the date and time was inserted on the inventory sheet under the mother's or father's column, whichever one could come. (It is hoped time can be arranged next year when both parents can come.)

The author arranged conferences by telephone. Other teachers sent forms home or used the telephone.

A unified schedule of conferences for the entire faculty would conserve time and effort of both teachers and parents.

The teachers found the following reference helpful in planning for conferences. It states:

The teacher should plan carefully for each conference, determining the significant point to be discussed with the parent, familiarizing herself with the child's cumulative record information, reviewing, mentally, behavior characteristics both in the classroom and on the playground. She will have on hand a folder of the child's work or copies of study material actually used by the children.
During the time of the conference, parent and teacher will agree on goals for the child. The kindly thoughtful teacher will inform the mother first of the child's strengths in ability, his interests, and his achievements. Every parent enjoys hearing the little amusing incidents centering around her child. When the mother seems entirely at ease the teacher might present tactfully the child's problems and weaknesses.

Through materials already cited the teacher has studied many techniques of conferencing. Another reference the author wishes to suggest at this point is one which gives the interviewer many pointers in interviewing or conferencing is "Interviewing: Its Principles and Methods" by Annette Garrett.

Each teacher (seven) met with from one third to three fourths of the parents represented in his or her classroom. The inexperience, shortness of time, number in the class, and home representation in other rooms accounted in large part for this variation.

Conferences were held in the classrooms (in private) during the time before school, the noon period, and after school. The matter of time is a point which will not be settled definitely since the feeling of the importance of this program will change the time allotted for conferencing. Suggestions for conferencing time may be obtained from the following reference:

Parent-teacher conferences, vital as they are, should not be relegated to after-school hours. Time for these conferences should be set aside in the regular schedule. Various schools have tried interesting and effective plans.

One school includes on the teaching staff a "floating teacher" who can take over the classroom while the teacher is holding a conference. Another plan is to reserve one afternoon a week for conferences. At this time no classes are scheduled and the entire afternoon is used for conferences. In other schools, a class works in the shop or the art room for an hour while the teacher is released for conferences. Some schools observe a minimum day schedule during the two weeks reserved for parent conferences. A planned time for conferences is necessary to the success of this way of building closer relationship between home and school.22

Evaluation of the Experiment

Our first experiences in conferencing for reporting and guiding pupil growth was quite abbreviated and came in conjunction with the issuance of a final written report card. This was perhaps good in the sense that the two methods could be more sharply brought to focus for comparison; but it had drawbacks in that the time each teacher could allocate to conference preparation might have been hurried and thus a less valuable experience realized from the conference period. This obstacle was met realistically by the teachers in most cases since it seemed to be the practice of doing as well as possible the conferences that were done, and doing fewer in number until the program would get into full swing in the school year of 1952-53.

Regardless of the limitations of these first efforts our work was evaluated to provide guidance for future efforts.

22. Ibid., pp. 166-67.
The principal and the author developed a letter to be sent to each home represented in the school.\textsuperscript{23}

Returns were received from about two-thirds of the homes. This low percentage probably was due to the fact that many parents of our sixth and seventh graders would no longer have children in the school. (The top grade next year will be the sixth.) Few returns from these two grades seemed to bear out this conclusion.

The reaction of ninety-six parents as to the degree in which they considered the parent-teacher conferences successful were tabulated:

- Excellent 31;
- Good 32;
- All right 25;
- Mediocre 3;
- No Good 5;
- Comments 0.

Tabulations were made also of the type of reporting practice preferred for the next school year:

- Two report cards plus two conferences 74
- Just conferences 5
- Report card only as in past 20
- No experience with conference but willing to try them for next year 32 Yes
- No 4

From comments received, this summary statement may be drawn:

The majority felt that the conferences were beneficial and they understood much better what the school was doing.

\textsuperscript{23} Form appears in Appendix.
The teacher's formal evaluation of the conference program would have been of interest for this report, but school was out and the teachers were scattered for vacations before the author could get such an evaluation made. However, the following opinions were most commonly expressed in conversations: parents were glad to cooperate in planning for a better school life for their child; they (the teachers) were interested in meeting more of their students' parents and could better understand the child as a result of the conference, and students with the more serious problems seemed to be making greater improvement following the conference.

The author became aware of pupil evaluation from his personal experiences with his own sixth grade students.

When the program was explained and discussed with them, the students who were doing well seemed pleased that their parents would get to know more about their school program. Those who were slower were a little doubtful, thinking the plan might be to find fault with them, but after reassurance that being helpful was the thing we most desired, the majority of them tried to improve their work and the materials they were going to show to their parents.

Those students (few in number) who were slightly on the "I don't care" side soon were completing more work and doing a neater job than formerly. They seemed to get considerable enjoyment out of trying to improve, particularly when they received extra
recognition from the teacher and their classmates.

As a result of the program with its evaluations, Duwamish School was given administrative approval to continue with parent-teacher conferences during the succeeding year. The tentative plan is to have conferences during the first and third quarters, and regular report cards second and fourth quarters.
Chapter III

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND USE
OF CONFERENCES FOR REPORTING

The work of reporting, like all other phases of school work, needs to be in a process of continuous development and change. The faculty of Duwamish School hope this will characterize their reporting program. The author was encouraged on this point by the following reference: "One of the practical features of the conference method is its adaptability to gradual change without sacrificing its original aims."

To study the Duwamish program further, continuous surveys will need to be made. These surveys may be made by questionnaires prepared separately for teachers, parents, and pupils; by reports in P. T. A. meetings; personal evaluations; or by any method deemed reliable.

The following may provide a valuable teacher self-evaluation list:

These practices are important.

Do I --

1. Attempt to have a conference with every parent?

2. Try to be a good listener so that I too may learn from the conference?

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3. Try to be a good leader and encourage discussion so the parent feels that the problems are neither his nor mine, but ours?

4. Use lay language as much as possible and make clear any professional terms I may use?

5. Include all the favorable reports for each child, but give parents a true picture of the child's performance in relation to his ability?

6. Make every parent feel that his child is in good hands?

7. Treat every parent as a friend?

8. Show parents that I like my work?

The surveys will need to point up information about the reporting program which will show how closely it meets some of the following criteria: "Do the forms and practices serve the various functions which they were designed to serve, that is, give information, stimulate interest in improvement, facilitate guidance, provide a basis for college recommendations, etc.?"

To keep the changed plan of reporting progressing and operating efficiently an in-service program is recommended by the author. This recommendation is supported in the following reference:

As the chief administrator of the local school, the principal has the responsibility for making teachers aware of the important place reporting occupies in the development

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3. From notes in class on The Elementary Principal at Central Washington College of Education, 1950.
of successful home-school relationships. As part of the program of supervision and appraisal, the effectiveness of this reporting must be evaluated and the positive and negative results determined in terms of home-school cooperation.

Having developed in teachers an awareness of the far-reaching implications of any type of communication to parents, the principal must make provision for in-service education of teachers in this area.4

A further suggestion for helping carry out a successful reporting program is to know what materials are needed and have them available.

The Principal will need to provide individual folders for each child in which will be anecdotal records, copies of work, and other information deemed pertinent to good reporting. Forms for recording conference information such as time, problems discussed, plans made, evaluation, and follow-up should be available, used, and filed in the child's folder. The anecdotal record should include information or facts on:

1. Quality of the pupil's achievement in relation to his ability; for example, whether the achievement is creative and original or imitative and evoked only by prodding; whether it is the result of high interest and effort, low interest and effort, or other combinations.

2. Functioning of the pupil's ability in daily activities, as, for example, when he is solving a problem or meeting a new situation; the quality of his thinking in class or in individual conferences; his unusual insights and ability to grasp explanations and draw

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inferences and conclusions; his talents of a verbal, scientific, artistic, and social nature.

3. The pupil's social sensitivity as observed in his relationships with persons of his own age and with adults.

4. Details about the pupil's personality, his emotional responses to criticism, failure, or difficulty, and other conditions which are affecting his personality development.

5. Interests revealed by the pupil's casual conversation and by his voluntary activities.

6. Records of his experiences and achievements, kept by the pupil himself.

7. The pupil's attitude toward his health; his energy output as observed on the playground, in the classroom, and at club meetings.

8. Emotional relation between the parents and the child; the parents' ambition for the child; methods of discipline in the home; relation of the child to his brothers and sisters.

9. The pupil's purpose and goals; his level of aspiration; his pattern of values as indicated by his behavior—for example: is self-centered, aggressive; values personal power and prestige above everything; values and respects people and has a constructive influence on them.

10. Follow-up data after the pupil has left the school.

The final suggestion of the author would be that studies be made of more conference programs in operation, and of the comparative values and place of group and individual conferences in reporting to parents.

Chapter IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The background of the study showed the need for changes in reporting programs, and expressed the author's own interest and desire to do something about a change in his local situation.

The purpose of the report was to explain how the principal and faculty of Duwamish School in King County, Washington, introduced, initiated, and followed up a change to include the use of parent-teacher conferences as a means of reporting pupil progress.

The use of conferences for reporting and guiding pupil progress was appraised through study of their use in other school situations. This appraisal brought out how conferences helped the school in its responsibility of establishing effective home-school relationships and how they met the requirements of good reporting.

One of the author's surveys showed the use of reporting practices and the probable influences of conferences on such practices in King County Elementary Schools.

The way in which the plan of using parent-teacher conferences was introduced and used at Duwamish School was then presented.

It was shown how the principal gained a wide background of information about the new program by study and visitation, and how he was responsible for leadership in attempting a change in established procedure.
The next step was the introduction to the staff and follow-up study. This was followed by a similar program with the parents which resulted in their consent to try conferences experimentally. The faculty then prepared for conferences, scheduled them, and carried them through.

An important part of the work was an evaluation showing how parents responded to the program. This evaluation showed a very favorable response and as a result conferences are to be used for one-half of the reports for the following school year.

Suggestions for further study and use of conferences for reporting brought out these points:

1. Need for employment of frequent and various kinds of surveys.
3. Need for further suggestions for materials in reporting.
4. Need for study of presently operating conference programs and of other types of conferences for reporting.
5. Need for arrangement and use of an in-service program.

This report was limited in presenting problems of introduction, since there were relatively few, because of a small faculty of seven teachers who had learned to work cooperatively in experiments which seemed to have value, because of good leadership on the part of the principal, and finally because of an active, enthusiastic, and cooperative P. T. A.
There is much to be done in refining and evaluating the program, and teachers need to know more varying techniques of conferencing. These can be accomplished through hard work and future experiences.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
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Books


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Bulletins


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Notes

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APPENDIX
EXTENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF READING MATERIALS

Books


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Periodicals


Bolmeier, E. C., "What's in a Mark?" School Executive, 62 (May, 1943) p. 25 (Evidence that A B C D F marks do not have common meanings.)


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Dishron, Joseph F., "The Forgotten Child," Texas Outlook, 25 (August, 1941), pp. 41-42 (Fallacies of conventional marking. Advocates special emphasis on child rather than records.)

Driscoll, G. P., "Parent-Teacher Conferences," Teachers College Record, XL (April, 1944), pp. 463-76.


Mecham, George, "Parent-Teacher Conferences as a Report Technique," Texas Outlook, 26 (May, 1942), pp. 18-20.


Wrinkle, Wm. L., "Reporting Pupil Progress," Educational Leadership, 2 (April, 1945), pp. 293-95 (12 criteria for use in developing reporting forms and practices.)
PARENT-THEACHER

CONFERENCES!

PARENTS! 

Information about 

Parent-Teacher Conferences 

written especially 

for you.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
WHAT ARE PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES?

Parent-Teacher conferences are friendly meetings between you and the teacher discussing the mental, social, and physical developments of your child.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
WHY ARE CONFERENCES TAKING THE PLACE OF THE TRADITIONAL REPORT CARDS?

Each child develops at his own rate of speed; therefore, the evaluation of every child's development should be based on improvement over his previous work rather than comparing his work with that of his classmates.

Most of you will agree that each child learns to walk or talk when he is ready; some at 10 months, others at a later time. That doesn't seem to mean that the child who learns later will not walk or talk as well as the child who learned at 10 months. This is also true of your child and his development physically, mentally, and socially.

Parents and teachers are finding that by working together, they are better able to guide the child into a happier and more successful life in school.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
GROUP CONFERENCES

Group conferences will be held early in the fall to acquaint you in what the school is attempting to accomplish. This type of conference is not designed to answer specific questions about specific children but to give you the general over-all view of your school.

HOW OFTEN WILL INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES BE HELD?

At least two individual conferences will be held with you during the school year. Times will be arranged for them in the fall and again in the spring. The average conference lasts 30 minutes.
INFORMATION YOU WILL RECEIVE
FROM THESE CONFERENCES

Social Development

Your child's willingness to share with others in work and play, and to assume responsibilities in group activities and for himself. His growth in self-control and leadership. His ability to follow directions, and to accept decisions of the group.

Physical Growth

Your child's practice of good health habits and posture. His growth in height, weight, and muscular control.

Mental Development

His ability to make decisions and to listen. His growth in self-direction and in recognizing ways of improving his work. Your child's growth in the understanding and use of number, in expressing his ideas, in acquiring new word meanings, in participating in musical and physical activities. Whether he is working up to the best of his ability, using his time well, and completing his work. Whether he is creative in his work, enjoys stories and poems, and speaks clearly and naturally in group or individual situations.

The teachers are keeping folders of each child's work so that you may examine your child's work during the conference. Your child enjoys the interest you take in his work.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
INFORMATION THE TEACHER WILL NEED

Your child's teacher will need to know about his physical condition; if you have problems in thumb sucking, nail biting, etc.; if he sees a doctor and a dentist regularly, and if he has had an illness or physical handicap of which she should become aware.

She will wish to know how your child gets along with others at home and at play. The qualities he has that help him to get along with others; or the habits and attitudes that make it difficult for him to get along with others.

Special interests or hobbies of your child, what the family does together and his home responsibilities will interest her.

Your child's attitude towards school in the fall and at present will be valuable to her.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
FINAL REPORT

At the end of the school year each child will receive the regular report card for grade assignment.

VISITING YOUR SCHOOL

A visit to observe your child at work with his classmates is very desirable and welcomed. Since some times are better to visit than at other times, the teachers would appreciate it if you would notify them in advance.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
TIPS ON CONFERENCES

Since conferences are time consuming for both you and the teachers, promptness in beginning and ending conferences is helpful.

The conference is between you and the teacher. It is best not to have children or other adults present during this time.

It is often helpful for you to jot down questions that you would like to ask the teacher.

If you wish more information, please ask your child’s teacher for a list of articles covering this topic.

Drawings may be used to illustrate and enliven this booklet.
Duwamish Elementary School

Dear Mr. and/or Mrs. ____________________________

Would it be possible for you to come for a parent-teacher conference to discuss ____________________ progress on ____________________ at ____________ o'clock?

If you cannot come at this time return this immediately with another time which would be more convenient to you. If it is more convenient to phone, you may contact me at La. 2351.

Sincerely,

I can come on ____________________ at ________________.

(Sign and Return) __________________________
CASE HISTORY

Name of Child______________________________

Informant ______________ Relationship __________ Date ________

Family__________ Brothers__________ Sisters__________

Divorced______________ Remarried______________

Deceased______________ Foster parents______________

Number residing in home ________________

Unusual home conditions, i.e. frequent movings, illness, death, broken home

With whom does the child play? ________________________________

Does he play happily with others? ________________________________

Does he have a pet? ________________________________

What home responsibilities does he have? ________________________________

What does the family enjoy together? ________________________________

Radio_____ Television______ Movies______ Books______

Music______ Hobbies______ Types of Magazines______

Special lessons______________

For what is the child most frequently punished?______________________

Health habits

Sleeping______________________

Eating______________________

Bathroom______________________

Any physical handicap__________

What was his attitude toward coming to school this fall?__________

What is it now? __________

Allowance? ________________
Dear Parents:

We are nearing the end of the school year and would like to have your evaluation of our parent-teacher conference method of reporting. Will you please indicate your opinions below?

1. What do you think of the parent-teacher conference method of reporting pupil growth? (Check one)
   - Excellent
   - Good
   - All Right
   - Mediocre
   - No Good

   Comments

2. Check your choice of the following proposed reporting methods:

   A. Issue two report cards per year, at the end of each semester and have two parent-teacher conferences per child (more if needed) during the first and third quarters.

   B. Eliminate the regular report card and use only parent-teacher conferences; each child having at least two conferences per year.

   C. Use only the present report card as in the past.

   D. In case you haven't had any experience with the parent-teacher conferences, would you be willing to try them for next year?

3. Please give any comments you may have.