

A STUDY OF PARENT TEACHER AND PUPIL ATTITUDES
TO THE CONFERENCE METHOD OF
REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The problem of this study is to obtain a cross section of thought of parents, teachers, and pupils concerning the practice in the Jefferson Elementary School, Sherman, Texas, of reporting pupil progress and growth by means of individual parent-teacher conferences.

The Source of Data

The source of the data is the attitudes and reactions of parents, teachers, and pupils to this new practice and to the philosophy underlying it.

The Purpose of the Study

The study was made for the purpose of ascertaining the real facts in regard to existing opinions and attitudes; to gain information about present activities while that information can be used as a guide in working out plans for the future. It was hoped that such objective data would help avoid regression or loss of ground in a progressive program of school activities, because of adverse opinions or attitudes not clearly in evidence.

Preparation for Collecting Data

Believing that "facts of opinion"¹ are facts because they represent the "leanings of a group,"² and that interviews give more valid returns than is possible in a hurriedly checked and a poorly understood list, the writer adopted a combination interview questionnaire technique for collecting data.

Two groups of parents were selected for interviews; the parents of first-grade pupils who had not participated in a formal parent-teacher conference but who had participated in the orientation activities preceding the conferences; and parents of third-grade children who had engaged in parent-teacher conferences for three years.

Third-grade pupils were chosen to determine pupil response and reaction because the immaturity of the beginners made their participation impractical.

The cooperation of all primary teachers was enlisted.

There was an examination of printed material to formulate a questionnaire to ask for opinions that would afford an insight into the attitudes and reactions of the members of the groups. Items were retained or deleted after an analysis

¹National Education Association, The Questionnaire, Research Bulletin, VIII (January, 1930), 18.

²Carter V. Good and A. S. Barr and Douglas E. Scates, Methodology of Educational Research, p. 332.

based on readings, discussions with professional people, and observation. An effort was made to form a pattern from which it would be possible to get responses that would indicate the degree to which the person being interviewed subscribed to the theory and practice under study. Finally, a set of questions was designed with forty items listed under four divisions to be used as a basis for interviews. Pedagogical or professional language was avoided in an effort to meet the understanding of people of varied education.

A modified questionnaire covering twenty-seven of the forty items was prepared for use with the children. These items, in some instances, were further divided into three or four short, simple statements or questions as an aid to the comprehension of the young students.

The Limitations of the Work

This study was limited to the responses of one hundred and twelve parents, twenty-four teachers, and sixty-four children.

Forty-six parents of third-grade children and fifty-five parents of first-grade children came to the school to be interviewed. The interview was not a haphazard affair or just a pleasant meeting. It was pleasant and, to some extent, informal, but underneath this social naturalness there was a thread of questions that gave the interviewer the information being sought. Responses were recorded on each item of the

questionnaire used as a guide for the interview.

Six third-grade patrons and five first-grade patrons who could not come to school checked and returned the questionnaire which had been mailed to them. Some of these parents also wrote additional comments.

Twenty-four primary teachers answered the questionnaire.

Sixty-four third-grade children responded in some degree to a modified form of the adult questionnaire.

Definitions and Explanations of Some Terms Used

Attitudes.--Any habitual mode of regarding anything; any settled behavior or conduct as indicating opinion or purpose regarding anything; a state of mental or emotional readiness for some form of activity.

Conference.--Act of consulting together formally; serious conversation or discussion; an interchange of views; a meeting for consultation, discussion or an interchange of opinion.

Cross-section.--A composite representation typifying the constituents of a thing in their relations.

Interview.--To visit each other; a mutual sight or view; a meeting face to face; a formal consultation.

Modern.--Of or characteristic of the present or recent times; new fashioned.

In this writing, the term "modern" is applied to the present day school. By modern school is meant a school cognizant of the needs of the growing child and his community.

Parents.--When this term is used it indicates the female parent since only mothers were interviewed.

Philosophy.--The science which investigates the facts and the principles of reality and of human nature and conduct; the body of principles underlying a given branch of learning or major discipline.

Philosophy means in this study, a body of principles or simply a way of thinking about things. All people have a philosophy of life, a philosophy of education, a philosophy of religion and so on, even though they may be unable to give expression to their beliefs.

Primary grades.--The first, second, and third years in school.

Progress.--Advance to an objective, a going or getting ahead; gradual betterment.

When using this term in relation to the child, child progress, it becomes synonymous with growth in all areas of child development.

Report card.--In this writing report card refers to a four by six inch card. On the front side are the child's name, his academic record, and a promotion blank. On the reverse side are a check list of characteristics and attitudes and space for the parent's signature.

Plan of Procedure

Chapter II is devoted to the educational theory and philosophy underlying the newer practices in the modern schools.

Viewpoints of some educators who advocate a changing school for a changing society will be included. Chapter III reviews some studies on problems related to the problem of this writing. Some conclusions are given. Chapter IV develops the background for the study. This chapter also points out the steps in the transition from the use of a traditional report card to the parent-teacher conference as a report technique. Chapter V contains the data obtained from parents, teachers, and pupils by means of planned interviews based on a prepared questionnaire. Included are forty items grouped under four divisions; namely, The Place of the school in society; Child Growth; Home and school cooperation; and Parent-teacher conferences.

This is a survey type of study which gathers and tabulates data regarding current attitudes and opinions. Information-getting activities were relatively formal and carefully planned, and an effort was made to organize and tabulate data in a scientific manner. The data are arranged to show the relationship of the attitudes of parents, teachers, and pupils. A comparison is made of the opinions of the various groups. A summary statement emphasizes some points of interest portrayed by the tables. Chapter VI draws some conclusions from the data presented in Chapter V and includes a statement of some insight into conditions not shown by the tables. Recommendations are made.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY UNDERLYING THE NEWER PRACTICES OF THE MODERN SCHOOL

An old legend tells that once there existed in the world two clans or tribes of people, one believed that life is like a wheel going around and around, never changing, except in speed of movement. The other group believed that life was like a tree, growing, changing, expanding, adjusting itself to different conditions.¹ Today men subscribe to one or the other of these two beliefs.

What is philosophy? The writer agrees with Hopkins when he exclaims, "An examination of the literature on philosophy rewards the searcher with almost as many different definitions as there are philosophies."² For the purpose of this writing a simple statement made by an uncouth, illiterate man and reported by Hopkins, seems adequate at this point. The old man observed, "Philosophy is just the way you look at anything."³ A body of beliefs so deeply ingrained into the personality of the individual that all behavior stems from them becomes the

¹Helen K. Mackintosh, "What Do We Mean," Childhood Education, XVIII (December, 1941), 154.

²Thomas L. Hopkins, Interaction, The Democratic Process, p. 173.

³Ibid.

philosophy of that individual, even though he may render lip service to a different set of principles and convictions. Hopkins points out that since philosophy represents beliefs and values, there is no right or wrong philosophy.⁴ (Our educational philosophy, then, right or wrong, is the way we look at education.)

Since, in America, education and democracy have developed together, the democratic way of life establishes the purposes of American education.⁵ Southall reminds us that democracy is not an institution which can be inherited from our forefathers but "it is a way of life which must be learned by each child of each succeeding generation."⁶ All educators will agree that the American people want good things for their children, "Not as an expedient to make us strong against the enemy but as a permanent public policy of a government and their welfare determines its course of action."⁷ Hopkins says, "In their efforts to satisfy needs people set up institutions, develop customs, build attitudes, and set processes. Since such habits, institutions, and beliefs are created out of the needs of a people, they are amenable to change whenever they fail to satisfy new needs as they occur."⁸

⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

⁵ National Education Association, Educational Policies Commission, The Purposes of Education in American Democracy, p. 9.

⁶ Maycie K. Southall, "Editorial," Childhood Education, XXII (September, 1945), 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hopkins, op. cit., p. 95.

Faith in the potentialities of the individual is one of the corner stones on which democracy was founded, and our people have always had a profound faith in the worth of the individual as being possessed of the capacity to grow, develop, and learn.⁹ Reading the purposes of education in a democracy as outlined by the Educational Policies Commission, we are reminded that democracy prizes a broad humanitarianism and observes and accords to every individual certain "inalienable" rights. In short, democracy sets a high value on the attainment of human happiness.¹⁰ When we examine these ideals of democratic conduct, the flexibility of institutions and beliefs, the respect for personality, the feeling of kinship to other people, the inherent rights of the individual, and the "pursuit of" human happiness, we derive from them a general understanding of the philosophy and purposes of education in America. These ideals express a changing, growing society. Caswell affirms his opinion with these words:

Since 1900 the elementary school has reflected ... its integral relationship to the deep-rooted developments in American culture. During this period a philosophic view of life and education has come into prominence and has had a distinctive interpretation and emphasis in America. This view is variously referred to, the more common designations being "pragmatism" and "experimentalism"; "the Dewey philosophy" may be the more enlightening term. This philosophic position is a fundamental expression of values, relationships, and processes flowing directly out of the American experience The influence of

⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁰ National Education Association, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

European philosophers . . . was very great but Dewey points out that "It is beyond doubt that the progressive and unstable character of American life and civilization have facilitated the birth of a philosophy which regards the world as being in continuous formation, where there is still place for indeterminism, for the now and for a real future."¹¹

Like the tree in the old legend the democratic or the American way of life is a changing, growing, expanding way of life. Those who would have the modern school in our modern world be merely a duplicate of the traditional, book-centered school which they themselves attended are thinking of the child life and experiences as the "turning wheel whose spokes mark off boundaries of arithmetic, spelling, reading, and other subject fields."¹² But those who believe that, like the tree, a school program is capable of change, that living for the child must embrace many new and different experiences adapted to a changing society, conceive of education as being a flexible and compliant process.¹³ A democratic school program seeks to meet the needs of boys and girls living in a rapidly changing situation.

Washburne believes that the first essential of such a program is "an educational philosophy that is based on real experiences with living growing children."¹⁴ He describes them as "quarreling, teasing, scrapping children; meek,

¹¹ Hollis L. Caswell, Education in the Elementary School, p. 24.

¹² Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 154

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Carleton Washburne, A Living Philosophy of Education, Introduction, p. xv.

docile, children; brooding, sullen children; puzzled, wondering, questioning children; gay, ever active, irrepressible children."¹⁵ There is no end to the list of adjectives because children are alive and growing. All modern educators seem to agree that the task of the modern school is to help living children grow in the right direction. Hopkins expresses his philosophy by saying:

The school deals with living things, pupils, teachers, parents, citizens of the community and all other persons. It is an institution set up by living beings, organized into what is sometimes called a society to further growth of all these living things. More especially it is concerned of the young - - the members of a new generation. But the children grow up in a culture . . . the adults carry on their lives in a culture Yet cultures are not all alike So the problem of the school is to promote the growth of living things of the particular culture which it serves.¹⁶

Washburne enlarges his statement that our educational philosophy should be based on the experiences of the children, with whom our public schools are concerned:

A philosophy of education evolved by those who are living among children, helping them and being taught and guided by them, is itself living and, like all living things, it is ever changing, never complete, never final. Living things draw their nourishment from many sources; but they assimilate the diverse elements and make them over into a part of themselves; so a living philosophy of education is one which has drawn upon the thoughts of philosophers . . .; from those who have, to a greater or lesser degree, perceived children's needs . . .; from the educational scientists and psychologists of the last three quarters of a century; and from those who more recently have penetrated to children's emotional lives . . .; and all the current American workers in mental hygiene and child development. The sources are innumerable;

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Hopkins, op. cit., p. 93.

yet if philosophy is living, all these elements are re-combined and assimilated and made over into a part of itself.¹⁷

The Little Red School House in New York through its practices testified to its acceptance of the philosophy of growth. DeLima, director, tells why the school was established. She says, "We believed . . . that children can be happy in school, that education must be thought of in terms of growth and comes by experiencing rather than by mere learning and that life does not begin when school ends but rather . . . that school is life."¹⁸

Speaking for the members of the Association for Childhood Education and setting forth the basic beliefs for a plan of action for that organization, Leeper stated that beliefs are convictions that drive us to action and enumerated these principles:

Children are important as people, now and for the future of the world.

Children have potentialities for development beyond our usual expectations.

Children are dependent upon adults for environment and guidance.¹⁹

Broome warns "that it is too late now to conform to old accepted practices, to deal with past living, and to polish traditional patterns when present living is moving along so

¹⁷ Washburne, op. cit., p. xv.

¹⁸ Agnes DeLima, The Little Red School House, p. 5.

¹⁹ Mary Leeper, "We Believe," Childhood Education, XXII (September, 1945), 5.

rapidly."²⁰ Broome further believes that "education is of life and for life" and that since children are in the unfinished business of growing, the modern school must provide conditions favorable to growth.²¹

However, Olson reassures the modern educator by declaring that the "growing body of data and principles about human growth and development offers secure foundation for the adaptations of the philosophies of growth in the classrooms of the nation."²² Otto recognizes the importance of this research data to those engaged in child guidance. He says:

Research in child growth and development is gradually accumulating a sufficient body of data so that reasonably reliable generalizations can be formulated on a number of aspects of child life. These research contributions have aided greatly in exploding many notions previously considered sound and in bringing to the fore many previously overlooked factors about the child in the educative process. As a result school curricula are becoming much more realistic about what children need in their educational journey and what seems appropriate and within children's capabilities at various age levels. Coupled with research in child development are the clearer insights into the nature of the educative process. "Learning to do by doing", "the whole child", symmetrical growth", "the organism as a whole", "pupil purposes", "teacher-pupil planning", and many other catch phrases have deeper and clearer meanings than they had even a few years ago.²³

²⁰ Edwin W. Broome, "Planning for Growth," Childhood Education, XXI (October, 1944), 72.

²¹ Ibid., p. 64.

²² Willard C. Olson and Byron O. Hughes, "Concepts of Growth - Their Significance for Teachers," Childhood Education, XXI (October, 1944), 53.

²³ Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration, p. 93.

According to Olson and his co-worker Hughes, investigators of growth at the University of Michigan, the literature that attempts to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the classroom is meager. Consequently, the statements made by these scientists will be quoted extensively in an attempt to present the growth concept as a tenet of the philosophy of modern educators.²⁴ Discussing the meaning of growth, Olson explains:

The point of view of growth offers a possibility of optimum development for all, while eliminating the most destructive features of the selective and competitive practices that are cultural survivals from the time when education was concerned with the development of small groups of the more gifted.²⁵

The implications to teachers of the new concepts of growth are stressed by Olson:

Every classroom teacher is impressed with the fact that children are not alike. . . . Research in child development gives added knowledge of the nature of these differences and how they persist through time.

Children differ in their rate and level of growth and in their pattern of growth.²⁷ Olson cautions teachers that the reasons for differences in growth are deep-seated, for instance, membership in a given family is influential in determining the pattern of growth; and that they, the teachers

²⁴ Olson and Hughes, op. cit., p. 52.

²⁵ Willard C. Olson, The Meaning of Growth, reprint from Child Growth in an Era of Conflict, fifteenth yearbook of the N.E.A. Department of Elementary School Principals, Michigan Education Association, (1944), p. 176.

²⁶ Olson and Hughes, op. cit., p. 53.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 53-55.

"should not expect the same effects from the same instruction from the best possible adaptation of instruction to the individual." The folly of a common expectancy on the part of teacher and parent is obvious, since achievement is only partially under control of the educational process.²⁸ Furthermore, the facts that growth has stability and continuity and that individual differences in total growth are highly predictable are reiterated by Olson as having particular significance to the educator.²⁹

Not only does an individual differ greatly from other individuals, but each person varies widely in his abilities and characteristics.³⁰ To focus attention on only one phase of growth is to form a distorted conclusion concerning the strength or the weakness of the individual. Children grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially; and only when the total organism is taken into account, does the true measure of ability and potentiality emerge. Olson says, "Capitalize on strength is an essential aspect of the philosophy and practice of a growth point of view in a classroom."³¹ The physical and social assets of an individual may be adequate to insure success in life, when intellectual factors, if considered in isolation, would indicate a

²⁸Ibid., p. 60.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Caswell, op. cit., p. 101.

³¹Olson and Hughes, op. cit., p. 56.

retarded development and little hope for success. The diversity of attributes necessary for a happy, well-adjusted, contributing life in a democratic society minimizes the importance of any particular phase of development.

Olson illustrates further the differences of rate, level, and pattern of growth by saying that - according to the growth philosophy and data - it is incorrect to call a child a "reading disability" when in reality "he has rejected reading experiences violently during a period of plateau and will seek them avidly during a period of spurt."³² The child tends to reject the experiences for which he is not ready.³³ Caswell makes this statement:

Readiness is an important concept for workers with children Readiness is conditioned both by biological factors and by the culture The worker in the . . . school has ever to be aware of the growth possibilities of children. He must understand the common growth sequence so as to anticipate when children will most likely be ready for certain types of experiences.³⁴

This "living philosophy", then, is the belief that optimum development of the individual takes place in an environment that is conducive to luxuriant growth, that permits each individual to follow his own growth pattern, to mature at his own rate, and to attack problems and encounter experiences when he is ready and the belief that each individual should be at all ages a worthy member of a democratic society.

³² Ibid., p. 58.

³³ Caswell, op. cit., p. 94.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 95.

Gaswell emphasizes the relation between individual differences and the worth of each individual when he says:

Much of the richness of living and many of the important achievements rise out of their differences in capacity, ability, and outlook. Where there are leaders, there must be followers; where there are producers of art, there must be consumers of art The problem of differences is not, in most cases, to eliminate them but rather to develop and use them for the greater good of all.³⁵

Broome broadens the implications of the concept of human growth by injecting a different emphasis into the discussion.

He states:

All living is in some stage of growth. Everyone expects children to grow However, growth is no longer thought of as being confined to children only. All persons grow at all stages. Thus, teachers, too, (and parents) are persons who grow and who need to grow. Growth . . . on the part of those who work with children is as essential as any other condition affecting children. The greatest influence on the growth of children is the growth of the adults who work - and live - with them.³⁶

Hopkins concurs in this opinion thus:

The education of a child is an inclusive, continuous process. It goes on all the time, anywhere and everywhere he may be This education takes place through his environment, . . . human, physical, institutional and ideological. Of these educative aspects of the environment, other human beings are the most important. The physical institutions and ideological conditions operate in the child's life more through others than directly by themselves. Thus, the way that other individuals place themselves and the culture which they represent into the expanding field of the child's life determines the quality of his education. This process of relationships among individuals young and old is clearly defined as the democratic way of life.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

³⁶ Broome, op. cit., p. 67.

³⁷ Hopkins, op. cit., p. 67.

The modern school, imbued with the philosophy of living, will maintain a program so inclusive that parents will find themselves vitally important to the school. In the words of DeLima, the present day school will "discover its parents." She reminds us that

In the pioneer school the father sawed the wood and hauled it, mended the roof when it leaked, rode beside the teacher and children when the trip to school was too hazardous Education was to them a vital necessity achieved only through cooperation Such experiences are the essence of democracy.³⁸

Taylor makes the observation that for the schools "to attempt the all around education of the child without close cooperation with the home is a frustrating and at times a hopeless task."³⁹ Taylor accords the home and the school equal recognition as educative agencies concerned with child growth. She says:

To be successful the schools must accept these facts: the parents are primarily responsible for the child's education. The schools are simply auxiliaries to build upon, amplify, and extend the basic lessons learned at home. On the other hand, the present day family cannot provide adequately for the development of the whole child even in the primary years. It takes both the home and the school to insure the growth of personality that is mature, poised, socialized, and with rich potentialities for service.⁴⁰

The home and the school are supplementary one to the other, and yet too often they operate in total ignorance of one another's problems and goals. Walecka declares that this

³⁸ DeLima, op. cit., p. 68.

³⁹ Katharine W. Taylor, "It Takes Both Home and School," Childhood Education, XXII (October, 1945), p. 80.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

"lack of unity of purpose and clearness of understanding between the home and the school will be reflected in the conflict which will confront the child." Thus he is deprived of his sense of security, a basic need of all human beings.⁴¹

Parents, too often relying on their childhood memories for their concept of the school, need to understand the present day or modern school; they need new experiences and new contacts with a school geared to a changing, challenging social order. Intimate contacts with the school environment will help to broaden their concepts and to give real insight into what the children are experiencing. Few parents have had any preparation or training for child rearing, and as the basic factor in the growing child's human environment, their need becomes the responsibility of the school. No one knows all the answers. There will be some children and some parents whom the school cannot help to any great extent. D'Evelyn offers a solution for this situation when she says, "When the schools recognize their responsibility for all children and for their total development then they will provide adequate psychological or psychiatric personnel to give help"⁴² School personnel should never try to tell parents but should search with them for better ways of guidance.

⁴¹ John A. Walecka, "Parent-teacher Conferences, A Basic Need in a Democratic Program," National Elementary Principal, (February, 1941), p. 31.

⁴² Katherine E. D'Evelyn, Individual Parent Teacher Conferences, a manual, p. 3.

Parents know more than they are accustomed to expressing. When the school can gain their confidence, a gold mine of understanding is found that is invaluable to the welfare of the growing child. Parents want to be accepted "not only as parents but as human beings"⁴³ and to be assured that their child is an acceptable person in his own right, in spite of his shortcomings. As a rule, a parent's understanding of and interest in a particular child exceeds that of any other person and, to the extent to which his parents and his school see him as the living, growing person that he really is, to that extent will they be able to guide his development.

Respect for the parent's job, on the part of both parents and school personnel, is the natural outcome of a philosophy based on living and growing children and is the foundation of all relationships in the school of today. Parents need to understand the child as a developing, unfolding, learning person following a growth pattern that is conditioned by family membership, yet is all his own. The school needs to see the child as a contributing member of a family and a community. Otto points out that:

To discover in a realistic way that the child brings his whole family and all his previous experiences with him when he comes to school and much of what he learns in school is selected by him in terms of that background gave educators an entirely different notion of the child's total curriculum. . . . The whole child

⁴³Taylor, op. cit., p. 82.

began to appear in the teacher's eyes . . . the organism as a whole, reacting in every situation.⁴⁴

Clarification of the position of home and school in the developmental history of the child is made by Bridwell:

The school sees the child as he is today - - a person to be educated on this particular date. Parents of necessity see their children in a process of continuous growth. The teacher is faced with the immediate situation while the parent must take the long view . . . teachers and parents working together co-operatively on both the immediate and the long time planning for children's growth is the goal⁴⁵

A full acceptance of the growth philosophy, not only as it concerns children but also as it concerns the adults who comprise the child's human environment, involves the belief in the importance of the educative role of the home and the family and necessitates a revolution of school practices. There must be curriculum changes. There must be provided a school environment in which children find suitable experiences of a wide variety in kind and difficulty.⁴⁶ In the modern classroom the approach to the curriculum will be in terms of giving each child work and activities for which he realizes a need, and for which he is ready. He will achieve success and satisfaction according to his potentialities and his effort. "No narrowly conceived curriculum of fixed content can attain this goal."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Otto, op. cit., p. 94.

⁴⁵ Mabel M. Bridwell, "From Dependence to Independence," Childhood Education, XXIV (January, 1948), p. 220.

⁴⁶ Olson, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The growth philosophy tends to bring children through school without failure. The criteria for placement will be found "in the growth of the individual and in his social life rather than by arbitrary grade standards."⁴⁸ The modern school based on the theory of continuous and varied growth will practice continuous classification.

The need of this living school for an objective cumulative record is expressed by Allen:

Complexity in education as well as in the lives of individuals points to the need of gathering together and maintaining in a form conducive to constructive use those facts about each person in school which will, when reviewed, give a reasonably well-rounded and correct impression of his personal development. For this purpose a cumulative record is necessary.⁴⁹

Kawin in emphasizing the value of objective records to the school in its relationships to parents quotes Wofford as follows, "Once the record is made, it should help interpret the individual child to many people; first of all, to himself and to his parents; second, to his teachers"⁵⁰ In this instance, Wofford puts the child and his parents before the school.

Reviewing the many aspects of a living philosophy and their significance to the practices of the school of today leads to the conclusion that if the school and the home are

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁹Wendell C. Allen, "Development of a Cumulative Record System," Handbook of Cumulative Records, Bulletin, 1944, Number 5, p. 10.

⁵⁰Ethel Kawin, "Use of Records with Parents," Ibid., p. 53.

to arrive at a mutually accepted goal, they must confer frequently and on many issues. Parent-teacher conferences become a basic need in a democratic school program. D'Evelyn remarks:

Parent counselling is rapidly becoming a recognized responsibility of the teachers of . . . children. This trend is an outcome of the modern theories of child psychology and researches in child development which emphasizes that the learning process is a function of the whole child and not solely of his mind.⁵¹

Casanova believes that

Consideration of the whole child, in the whole situation called attention to individual differences in the emotional, mental, social, and physical make up of children . . . new methods of informing parents of child growth and development have necessarily followed.⁵²

Hildreth places the progress report in its proper position in the school program by saying, "Reporting to parents is now recognized as only one phase of a larger obligation, that of building closely knit relationships between home and school."⁵³ If the home and the school have a joint responsibility for a growing child's development, and if what happens to him in either place affects his total behavior, and if a conference means a sharing, the individual parent-teacher conference seems to be one of the most satisfactory means of making co-operative planning possible.⁵⁴ The

⁵¹D'Evelyn, op. cit., preface.

⁵²Katherine Casanova, "Modern Trends in Reporting to Parents," Records and Reports, Bulletin of the Association for Childhood Education, p. 13.

⁵³Gertrude Hildreth, Child Growth Through Education, p. 373.

⁵⁴D'Evelyn, op. cit., p. 1.

influence of the attitudes of adults on the welfare of the child is recognized by Bossard in the following statement:

. . . the really significant changes in human history are those which occur, not in the mechanical gadgets which men use nor in the institutionalized arrangements by which we live but in their attitudes and in the values we accept. The revolutions in the past which have had the greatest meaning are those which have taken place in the minds of men.

To apply this theory to children means that the great changes in their status have been wrought because of changes in the way in which their elders, particularly parents and educators, have conceived of children, their nature, their role, and their purpose in the cosmic scheme of things.⁵⁵

A changing, expanding school serving changing, growing children in a changing, dynamic society is full evidence of a living, growing philosophy of education among those whose privilege it is to direct the development of the boys and girls of the nation.

⁵⁵ James H. S. Bossard, "Children are Human Beings," Childhood Education, XXI (September, 1944), p. 6.

CHAPTER III

SOME RELATED STUDIES

An examination of educational literature reveals that the subject of the need for a more adequate, more comprehensive reporting technique is a vital one. Current professional periodicals and bulletins seem to be the richest source of information. School people everywhere are seeking the "best way". A few of the studies which are similar to this study in interest and content are reported here.

In August, 1938, an analysis was made by Phillips of ways of reporting child progress to parents. He made a survey of reporting practices in certain selected groups of schools, City schools and Country systems employing a supervisor. A questionnaire was mailed to fifty schools and thirty-nine were returned. Examination of the questionnaires indicated that reporting is in a period of transition and that there is much variation in the types of reporting. The progress reports of today are representative of a newer philosophy of education. Reporting has changed and is continuing to change.

A tabulation and study of the data led to the following conclusions.

1. The basic principles underlying the present practices of reporting in Texas are still traditional; however, schools are in a period of transition from emphasis on traditional

subjects to personality growth.

2. The majority of the schools surveyed employ competitive marking symbols in their reporting of child progress, yet the trend is toward the use of progress checks as a means of evaluating children's growth.

Phillips recommended that reporting should be a technique bringing about close cooperation between the school and the home, since the child's life at school and at home make up his whole life. He suggests further that the teacher in the modern school uses records and reports in a professional way. Much material in the form of anecdotal reports, case studies, data from intelligence tests and achievement tests, and all strictly technical matter must be treated just as the physician treats his records. These records are used by professional workers for one purpose only -- to help the child.

It is observed that progressive education and frontier thinkers have voiced the opinion that the best report card is no card at all, but an intelligent conference of parents and teachers on the all around development and growth of the child. Three of the newer ways of reporting child progress were found to be parent-teacher conferences, informal letters, and progress sheets.¹

Walecka, Lincoln School, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin reports that, because the administration believed that all schools

¹David Shelby Phillips, "An Analysis of Ways of Reporting Child Progress to Parents" (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Department of Education, North Texas State College, 1938).

should be concerned with providing an environment enabling any child to make the maximum growth of which he is capable, there were instituted in the schools two new practices, the continuing teacher and the conference method of reporting. Later, they sought to evaluate parents' attitudes toward the conference plan by means of a questionnaire. The results were as follows:

	Per cent agreeing
1. Parents have a better understanding of school because of their more frequent contacts. - -	94
2. The teacher has better understanding of the nature of the child and the life of the child in home and neighborhood after sharing a parent's point of view through conferences. - - - - -	93
3. Parents can secure comprehensive understanding of child's growth in the school environment. - - - - -	93
4. Closer relations result in fewer misunderstandings. - - - - -	90
5. Conferences should be replaced by report cards. - - - - -	6
6. Advantages do not warrant the additional time given by the parent and the teacher. ²	4

"'Growing into conferences' has been a slow process", reports Cutright of the Minneapolis elementary schools. In 1946 conference reporting was officially adapted in Minneapolis as a result of studies made by the faculty in child development. The workshop and the questionnaire

² John Walecka, "Improving Pupil-Teacher and Parent-Teacher Relations," Elementary School Journal, XXI (September, 1942), 10.

method of determining attitudes of the teachers were used.

They concluded:

1. The conference plan would be successful or worthwhile only as the teacher was convinced of its value, desired to use it, had a broad understanding of child growth and development, and possessed skill in conducting conferences with parents.

2. That conferences are time consuming and time is the chief problem in the administration of a conference program.³

Elementary and secondary teachers joined in a study of reporting to parents in Portland, Oregon. Following a parent survey on the subject, a study was set up on Records and Reports. After nine months work, which included a study of the literature in the field and of a collection of report cards, some general principles concerning an adequate report were enumerated. They were:

1. The report to parents should represent the philosophy and purpose of the school system in which it is used.

2. The report should be so constructed that it is easily understood by child and parents.

3. Any notice of unsatisfactory work should be accompanied by an explanation.

4. The report should include an estimate of the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional aspects of the child's growth.

After a trial use of a tentative card evaluation questionnaires were sent out. Returns from fifteen thousand parents, ten thousand students, and 745 teachers were received. A study of these data led to the following conclusions:

1. Parents want an analyzed picture of what

³Prudence Cutright, "Planning for Child Growth Through Parent-Teacher Conferences," Childhood Education, XXIV (February, 1948), 266-269.

students actually do in different school situations.

2. Parents approve of marking on a basis of the progress which the child makes in relation to what he is able to do.

3. Parents approved of the new report card.⁴

A study based on "recording sheets" kept by teachers in the Glen Rock, New Jersey elementary school, who were engaged in reporting by conferences is related by Coulter. As the teachers carried on a program of working with the individual child and of holding parent-teacher conferences, they were required to keep "recording sheets" regarding parent reaction to the program. Summarizing the data on these recording sheets for the first half of the school year 1945-46, Coulter came to these conclusions:

1. Parents are interested in the welfare of children, as is proved by their willingness to come to school to talk to the teachers.

2. Parents recognize their children can be disturbed by other than physical ills.

3. Teachers who are aware of problems of child development can do a great deal to assist parents.

4. Parents are not opposed to newer methods and procedures of education. They are unwilling to give up a type of education that was suitable for them for a type they do not understand.

5. Wise teachers will realize that time spent on a parent conference is really time saved because it helps eliminate many problems in the classroom.

6. Children are best served by constant cooperation between the two institutions most concerned with child welfare - home and school.

7. One way to determine whether or not teachers are really working with children as individuals is to use a procedure of recording parent-teacher conferences.⁵

⁴ Olin J. Wills, "New Reports for Old," Educational Leadership, IV (April, 1947), 435-438.

⁵ Kenneth C. Coulter, "Parent Teacher Conferences," Elementary School Journal, XLVIII (March, 1947), 67.

In August, 1946, Davis conducted a comparative study of trends in reporting pupils' school progress. He sought to discover trends in methods of reporting as revealed in educational literature and in school practice and to make a comparison of the two. A questionnaire on current methods was prepared and it was answered by twenty-three secondary teachers, two Junior High teachers, fifteen elementary teachers, and six teachers who taught some combination of grades. These people represented four states and thirty-four counties in Texas.

Findings concerning the frequency of reports to the home, methods of reporting, symbols used in reporting, and the number desiring a standard form of reporting formulated by the State Department of Education were tabulated. The data seems to indicate the following existing conditions and trends regarding reports:

1. All but one school sent out some type of report.
2. The A, B, C, D, F, method is used more widely than any other method of reporting pupil's personality development. The use of descriptive terms such as "good," "average," "poor," "failing," or "excellent" ranked second. A combination of methods ranked third.
3. The A, B, C, D, F method is the most widely used medium for reporting academic achievement, although a combination method is being used by some schools, while the traditional percentage method is used by a few.
4. A change from the present form of reporting to the friendly letter method was desired by a larger number of participants than any other change. The use of descriptive terms, including S and U, ranked second, and conferences ranked third.
5. Reports to parents are issued every six weeks by practically all schools considered in the study. A few reported quarterly which indicated a slight tendency toward less frequent reports.

6. No specific trend toward adoption of a standard form of report as formulated by the State Department of Education was noted.

Davis further concluded that the new type of reports are supplanting the traditional card in many sections of the country. The revision has followed the progressive movement in education, and is an integral part of the concept that the child is the center of the curriculum and that the school program should be of, by, and for him.

The observation, "Because no satisfactory method of reporting has been worked out which is acceptable to all persons concerned, some educators have suggested that reporting grades to parents be discontinued" is well documented by statements from educational leaders and writers.

After a summary of data and a comparison of present practices and the recommendations of educators on reporting, Davis says, "It may be said, that the samplings of present practices regarding the problem of effectively reporting child progress to parents do not harmonize completely with the recommendations of educators."⁶

This study differs from the related studies in that it attempts to obtain a more inclusive, comprehensive view of the attitudes concerning the new practice of the modern school, elimination of formal report cards in favor of

⁶ Kirvin Kade Davis, "A Comparative Study of Trends in Reporting Pupils' School Progress," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Department of Education, North Texas State College, 1946).

conferences, by including in the study the responses of parents, teachers, and pupils. In addition, it seeks evidence that will give an insight into the understanding of the members of the groups of the theory and philosophy from which this practice evolves. A comparison of the attitudes and opinions of the several groups is made.

This writing differs also in the fact that it deals with only one method of reporting pupil progress to parents, the individual parent-teacher conference.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORY OF THE TRANSITION FROM FORMAL REPORT CARDS TO THE CONFERENCE METHOD OF REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

The Background of the Study

Sherman, Texas, a small city of approximately twenty-seven thousand population, is the county seat of a rich agricultural and industrial region in North Texas.

The city maintains five elementary schools and one secondary school for white children. The elementary schools include grades one through seven; the secondary school, grades eight through twelve. Sherman supports various educative agencies such as the Sherman Town Forum and the Sherman Cooperative Concert Association. It is the home of one of the oldest colleges in the state, Austin College, a four-year school owned and operated by the Presbyterian Church.

This study was conducted at Jefferson Elementary School in northeast Sherman one block from the Austin College campus and two blocks from a large industrial plant, commonly known as Mrs. Tucker's Shortening Plant.

This school serves the people of the largest district in the city and draws its five hundred scholastics from homes of varied economical, social, and cultural backgrounds. Three large industries; namely, Mead-o-lake Foods, Incorporated,

Interstate Oil Refining Company (Mrs. Tucker's), and the Frisco Railroad Shops furnish employment to the parents of the Jefferson children. A small per cent of the enrollment are the children of the Austin College faculty and of business people. The Jefferson patrons exhibit a high degree of loyalty to and cooperation with their school. Attendance at meetings of the Parent-Teacher Association and at other school activities is good.

The results of a standardized psychological test show that the students are largely of average intelligence, the majority of the scores falling into the 90 to 110 I. Q. bracket.

Jefferson school has a staff of sixteen teachers, not including the principal. It is a double-unit school and is organized on the home-room plan. With the exception of art in grades six and seven, and music in grades four, five, six, and seven, there is no departmentalization.

In the first three grades, the area chosen for this study, the enrollment in the classrooms is between thirty-five and forty-three pupils, and the teacher directs all activities.

The library is also on a home-room basis. The primary schedule is extremely flexible, the children being dismissed at 2:45 in the afternoon. The teachers hold conferences and collect and prepare materials until four o'clock. The curriculum is of the unit-activity type which allows freedom for planning and experiencing by the teachers and the

children together. Wide use of films, film strips, field trips, and community resources enrich the learning environment of the school.

In the principal's office a library of approximately fifty volumes and numerous bulletins and pamphlets is accessible at all times to the faculty.

Children in grades four, five, six and seven receive a report card every six weeks. Reporting pupil progress in the primary grades is done by means of individual parent-teacher conferences, periodical delivery to the home of samples of the pupil's work, descriptive letters and home visits.

The Transition from the Use of Formal Report
Cards to the Parent-Teacher Conference
Method of Reporting to Parents in the
Primary Grades

In-service teacher training.--Perhaps the primary source of the movement in Sherman for better ways of reporting pupil-progress to parents was a study by the faculty of curriculum construction under the direction of J. C. Matthews, North Texas State College, in 1938. Curriculum revision changed the emphasis from the textbook to the individual needs and differences of children. At that time, all children were issued a report card every six weeks made up of letter marks of A, B, C, D, and E assigned to each school subject, an attendance record, and a check list of certain character traits, such as industry and courtesy. The development of a more functional type of curriculum and of an understanding of the

philosophy underlying the experience curriculum led to a dissatisfaction with certain policies and practices of the school. An aroused and inspired faculty sought ways of continuing their study together and of translating theory into the daily life of the school.

During the war years the Sherman Board of Education sponsored each year a program of teacher in-service training and brought to Sherman eminent educators to direct the efforts of the teachers. Under the leadership of J. C. Matthews, James H. Dougherty, North Texas State College, and Henry J. Otto, University of Texas, the Sherman faculty studied together for several years. Activities took the form of lectures, conferences, classroom demonstrations, book reviews, and a well-organized reading program. The study was organized around the work of faculty committees. Such consistent effort brought about administrative and organizational changes and produced among the teachers a more scientific attitude and approach to the problem of meeting the needs of the "whole child" in education.

In 1945, the faculty published a statement of the purposes and the philosophy of education in Sherman. They developed a cumulative record card featuring the developmental ages of children, set up a program of standardized testing, and issued a handbook containing the reports of the faculty committees on subjects pertinent to the changing curriculum. Four committees had studied and compiled reports on grouping,

grading, promotion, and records; teaching reading to non-readers; making a daily schedule; and caring for individual differences. By this time, the report card had been improved somewhat. The school subjects had been replaced by the five-core areas of language arts, social science, arithmetic, science, and music and art. Marks were still A, B, C, D, and E, but more specific attitudes were listed on the check list. For instance, the vague term "industry" had been replaced by "does not try". However, as the study moved along, teachers felt keenly the restrictions and limitations of reporting to the parents by means of the traditional card. They felt that no mark was a true account of the child's progress and that marks had become so competitive that great harm was being done to the emotional health of the children and, in some instances, to the health of the parents.

Individually and in grade groups, they had attacked the problem each year. The traditional card was wholly inadequate to interpret the work of the school. Teachers, who were now more concerned with providing the environment that would enable every child to make the maximum growth that was consistent with his potentialities, felt the need for more and closer contacts with the parents of the children. The need for a method of reporting that was in keeping with their concept of child accounting became more pressing. Consequently, they listed in the handbook as items for further study the following:

1. The use of the developmental data required by

the cumulative record card as an aid for providing for individual differences.

2. Techniques to use in conferences with parents
3. Techniques to use in writing descriptive letters
4. Techniques to use in keeping a behavior journal.

Adoption of the Conference Technique.--Thus, an effort to revise a curriculum to meet the needs of children and a consideration of the "whole child" led to newer methods of reporting. It had been the custom in Sherman to issue report cards to the first-grade children at the end of twelve weeks in school. During this interval of the school year 1945-46, the decision was made to eliminate the report cards in the first grade and to adopt a method of reporting that included the parent-teacher conference and the descriptive letter. This was done by a vote of the teachers of first-grade children and the elementary principals, meeting with the superintendent.

The Jefferson teachers and principal, believing that no school can progress faster than its community is willing to go, started a campaign of parent education concerning conferences. Care was taken to avoid any sudden or drastic changes.

Orientation program.--The parents of the children involved were invited to a meeting with the principal for explanations and discussion of the new practice. Later, they met with the home-room teacher for more discussions, questions, and answers. The teachers were alert at all times and places to make explanations and to correct misconceptions. The

faculty reports in the handbook were used by the Parent-Teacher Association for the topics on their regular monthly programs. Throughout the school year these policies and procedures were presented to the parents by both professional and lay speakers.

The teachers, with the help of the principal, compiled a bibliography on the techniques of conference reporting and the related subjects of child growth and parent-teacher, home-room cooperation. They met together often to help each other to clarify their thinking.

From these discussions developed two lists: "Do's and Dont's in Conference Reporting" and "Points of Emphasis". Each teacher made an outline pertinent to her own needs which was used as a guide in the conferences.

Conferences.--Conferences with the parents, lasting usually about thirty minutes, were held by the teachers after 2:45 o'clock in the afternoon and between 8 and 8:30 o'clock in the morning. Patrons came at a time designated by the teacher, but an effort was made to meet the convenience of the patron. During the conference, a very definite report was made on the academic progress of the child, the social adjustment, and on the emotional status of the child, if the attitude of the parent permitted it. If the rapport between teacher and parent was not sufficient for a full report, then the teacher postponed the report to another conference and turned all her efforts to establishing

understanding and confidence in the mind of the parent. Parents were encouraged to talk. When concern was expressed over conference reporting for fear that they would not know the child's status in the three "R's", then the results of standardized tests proved helpful in dispelling these fears. In fact, the teacher was adequately fortified by the information on the cumulative record kept for each child. This record included the family history, the testing record, test results, medical, social, and personal history, educational factors, and physical factors, including weight, height, and dental age. The anecdotal records or behavior journals kept by some of the teachers were another valuable source of information.

Response to the invitations and to the conferences was good, and teachers and parents alike expressed their feeling of growth and satisfaction. No records of conferences were filed in the superintendent's office the first year, but teachers reported every home contacted. Home visits were made by the teacher when a conference at school was impossible.

At the end of the year the pupils were given a certificate of classification which assigned them to the second grade. Children transferring to another school system were given a descriptive letter which covered all areas of child growth.

Expansion of the new practice.--In May, a meeting of all teachers of grades one and two was called by the superintendent

and James H. Dougherty, director of the in-service program for that year. The first-grade teachers told of their experiences with conference reporting. After a full discussion of the merits and demerits of the new method, the second-grade teachers, together with the five elementary principals, voted to adopt the new report technique in the second grade for the school year 1946-47.

In October, 1946, a committee of primary teachers met with the superintendent and agreed on one personal conference and one descriptive letter as a minimum requirement for home contacts during the school year. A check list for reporting the date and the nature of contacts to the home was developed. These lists were to be filed in the superintendent's office at the close of each year.

Later, letters which stated the policy and procedure of conference reporting and acquainted the parents with the report they could expect from the school were sent from the superintendent's office. During the school year 1946-47, the same program of reading, meetings, outlines, and publicity as had been used the previous year with first-grade teachers and parents was followed by the second-grade teachers and parents, and similar results were observed.

In April, 1947, third-grade teachers met with teachers of the first and second grades and discussed with them the results of two years' experience with parent-teacher conferences. It soon became evident that it was the wish of the

third-grade teachers to dispense with the report card. Their action was not announced at that time because of a change in superintendents, but in September, 1947, the third-grade parents and teachers entered the program. The procedure of the two previous years was carried on by the third-grade participants.

After three years' trial, at the end of which the first three grades were included in the program, it was decided to try to determine the attitudes and reactions of parents, teachers, and, to some degree, of the pupils of Jefferson School to the practice of reporting pupil progress to parents by the conference method and to the theory underlying this practice.

All teachers reported a total of 1,110 formal parent-teacher conferences held during the school year 1947-48. Jefferson teachers held a total of 261 conferences. This number does not include visits or contacts made aside from and in addition to the teacher-planned and -scheduled, formal conference.

CHAPTER V

DETERMINING AND COMPARING ATTITUDES OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN

The attitudes and opinions of the parents and the children concerning the theory and the practice of parent-teacher conferences were determined by responses made in personal interviews based on the questionnaire prepared for that purpose. Forty items were listed under four headings as follows: The Place of the school in society, Home school cooperation, Child growth, and Parent-teacher conferences.

Teachers checked the questionnaire to indicate their attitudes and opinions. The data obtained from these responses were collected and tabulated. The tables are grouped, first, to show the relationships of the responses of all members of all groups. A further arrangement lends itself to comparison of the attitudes of first-grade and third-grade parents, of the attitudes of parents and children, and of the attitudes of children and teachers.

Because of the varied number of persons in each group represented in the study; fifty-one first-grade parents, sixty-one third-grade parents, twenty-four teachers, and sixty-four pupils; all tables are summaries and comparisons expressed in per cents of the total response of the members of a group.

The tables show three columns marked, respectively, "yes" for agreement, "no" for disagreement, and a question mark to indicate no opinion or indecision.

Table 1 shows, to a limited degree, the thought concerning the status of the public school in a changing society.

There seems to be some degree of indecision among the parents regarding a changing school, as evidenced by the 13.5 per cent first-grade parents and 24.2 per cent third-grade parents who reported "no opinion" when asked if the school should change as society changes.

Included in the 48.4 per cent of the pupils answering "no" to the statement, "The schools belong to the people," were various opinions and attitudes; such as, The school belongs to the principal, The school belongs to the superintendent, The school belongs to the city, and others.

Table 2 portrays attitudes concerning the theory and the principles of child growth.

In this table, the item showing the highest degree of harmony of opinion in this division is the belief expressed by all groups that children should be happy at school. Responses to all items show a fair degree of harmony, even when they are at variance with the accepted principles of growth. The point at which attitudes and opinions deviate most sharply from the theory held by the best thinkers is item 10 -- "The whole child is present and active in every experience."

TABLE 1

ATTITUDES OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN
 CONCERNING THE PLACE OF THE SCHOOL IN
 SOCIETY EXPRESSED IN PER CENTS
 OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you believe that:								
1. the schools belong	97.1	2.8	100	...	96.2	3.7	45.3	48.4
to the people?	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6.2
2. the schools must								
change their ob-								
jectives and								
method of in-								
struction as								
society changes?	85.7	...	60.6	15.1	24.2	100	...	...

TABLE 2

ATTITUDES OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN CONCERNING CHILD GROWTH
EXPRESSED IN PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
I. Do you believe that:								
1. children should grow physically, mentally, emotionally and socially?	100	...	87.8	3.0	9.0	100	...	...
2. all education takes place at school?	15.7	82.0	8.1	12.1	72.7	15.1	...	29.6
3. all children are alike?	8.5	85.7	5.7	...	96.9	...	67.1	31.2
4. all beginners should be given the same program of school activities?	5.7	94.2	8.5	12.1	72.7	15.1	...	78.1
5. emotional growth of the child is as important as intellectual growth?	97.1	...	2.8	84.8	3.0	12.1	92.5	...
6. a child needs a fair balance between success and failure	97.1	...	2.8	96.9	...	3.0	92.5	...

TABLE 2 - Continued

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III				
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No			
	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?			
7. a feeling of belonging to a social group is important to a young child?	88.5	2.8	8.5	81.8	6.0	12.1	92.5	7.4	89.0	10.9	...
8. achieving maximum growth in size means that maximum growth in all areas has been obtained?	25.7	71.4	2.8	6.0	72.7	21.2	...	92.5	7.4	...	...
9. achievement in school is dependent on emotional and physical status of the child?	91.4	2.8	5.7	93.9	...	6.0	66.6	18.5	75.0	23.4	15.0
10. the whole child is present and active in every experience?	40.0	51.4	8.5	54.5	39.3	6.0	55.5	37.0	...	...	...
11. children should be happy at school?	100	...	...	100	...	...	100	...	95.3	...	4.6
12. learning to live with others is a basic need to the child?	97.1	...	2.8	100	...	...	88.9	11.1	96.8	3.1	...

TABLE 2 - Continued

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?		
13. human growth can be graded or marked?	42.8	28.5	45.4	33.3	21.2	29.6	62.9	7.4	...	...
14. human growth can be measured?	71.4	5.7	22.8	69.6	15.1	62.9	29.6	7.4	...	...
15. progress in self-reliance is of prime importance?	85.7	8.5	5.7	75.7	3.0	74.0	11.1	14.8	90.6	9.3
16. all kinds of growth are equally important?	74.2	17.1	8.5	66.6	18.1	70.3	22.2	7.4	...	...

Table 3 deals with the co-operation between the home and the school.

The interesting fact about Table 3 is the extreme difference of opinion expressed by the children as compared to all other groups. Only 7.1 per cent of the pupils think that it is necessary for the teacher to know the "home child"; 90.6 per cent of them say that there is misunderstanding between teachers and parents as compared to 55.1 per cent tabulated for parents and teachers; all groups agree that what the child does at home concerns the school, except the children, 92 per cent of whom say "no" to that question; 100 per cent of the parents and the teachers are of the opinion that the teacher is honestly trying to understand the children, but only 60.9 per cent of the children concur in that opinion.

The attitudes and opinions of all groups concerning the parent-teacher conference are recorded in Table 4. This table shows among other things that most of the parents were interested in knowing their child's progress according to his ability and opportunities. Only a small per cent were interested in a comparative rating. However, the singular evidence shown here is the fact that 66.6 per cent of the teachers and 96.8 per cent of the children wanted to know both individual progress and the rating as compared to the group as a whole, while only 31.4 per cent of the first-grade parents and 15.1 per cent of the third-grade parents asked for both types of reports.

TABLE 3

ATTITUDES OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN CONCERNING HOME-SCHOOL COOPERATION EXPRESSED IN PER CENT OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
I. Do you believe that:								
1. a teacher needs to know the needs of every child with whom she works?	97.1	...	2.8	96.9	...	3.0	100	...
2. traits exhibited by child at school may be very different from those exhibited at home?	80.0	20.0	...	66.6	27.2	6.0	96.2	3.7
3. it is important for the teacher to know the "home child"?	100	...	...	93.9	6.0	...	92.5	3.7
4. there is much misunderstanding between parents and teachers?	62.8	22.8	14.2	54.5	42.4	3.0	48.1	44.4
							64.0	35.9
							7.1	8.9
							90.6	9.3

TABLE 3 Continued

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III					
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No				
	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?				
5. what the child does at home concerns the school?	65.7	28.5	5.7	81.8	18.1	...	88.8	11.1	...	7.8	92.1	...
6. the parent needs to know the "school child"?	100	...	...	90.9	9.0	...	88.8	3.7	7.4	93.7	6.2	...
7. parents are often confused about what the school is trying to do?	91.4	5.7	2.8	63.6	36.3	...	81.4	18.5	...	...	...	...
8. the teacher is honestly trying to understand the child in order to provide for his growth?	100	...	...	100	...	...	100	...	...	60.9	37.5	1.5

TABLE 4
 ATTITUDES OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN CONCERNING PARENT-TEACHER
 CONFERENCES EXPRESSED IN PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
I Do you believe that:								
1. the conference method is an effort by the modern school to make a more comprehensive report to parents?	97.1	2.8	100	...	100	...	...	...
2. the new method is used for the purpose of saving time for the teacher?	37.1	62.8	45.4	54.5	...	96.2	3.7	46.8
3. going to school to talk to the teacher is a waste of time for the parent?	...	100	...	100	...	96.2	3.7	4.6
4. the conference is a less difficult method of reporting for teachers?	28.5	68.5	57.5	33.3	9.0	7.4	92.5	...
5. reporting child growth should go two ways; parent to teacher and teacher to parent?	94.2	5.7	100	...	100	...	95.3	4.6

TABLE 4 - Continued

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grades I-III		Per cent Children Grade III		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
6. a mark of A, B, or C on a card tells you all that you need to know about your child's progress?	...	94.2	5.7	...	...	100	...	84.3	15.6
7. your child likes for you to come to school?	100	...	...	100	...	100	...	100	...
8. talking face to face helps the parent and the teacher understand the child and provide for his needs?	100	...	...	96.9	3.0	...	100	84.3	15.6
II Do you want to know your child's progress in relation to his capacity and potentialities?	62.8	31.4	5.7	51.5	27.2	21.2	29.6	66.6	3.7
III Do you want to know his rating as compared to other members of the group?	...	100	...	12.1	66.6	21.2	...	96.2	3.7
IV Do you want to know both progress and rating of your child?	31.4	62.8	5.7	15.1	63.6	21.2	66.6	29.6	3.7
V Would you like to continue parent-teacher conference?	91.4	...	8.5	100	...	...	100	...	...
								78.1	10.9
								10.9	10.9

In a survey that is seeking to determine attitudes as a basis for future activity, a striking point in Table 4 is that 97.1 per cent of the parents and teachers wish to continue conference reporting.

Table 5 shows that almost 15 per cent of the parents and nearly 30 per cent of the teachers have changed their opinions recently. An aspect of this change that does not appear on the table, but which was made clear in the interviews, is that the change is toward the new theory and philosophy underlying the new practices.

Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 are arranged for comparing the attitudes of the members of the several groups, in the light of their agreement with the accepted thought of the day as expressed in statements by leaders in the field of child study and education. For instance, educational authorities rather generally concur in their opinion that the schools belong to the people and that they should assume a more active role in the school program, that the whole child is present and active in every experience, and that a knowledge of the child's home life is essential to the work of the modern school. The following tables show the per cent of each group in agreement with these principles in comparison with the per cent of agreement in other groups.

Table 6 makes a comparison of the attitudes of the two groups of parents included in the study.

TABLE 5

CHANGES IN ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF FIRST AND THIRD
GRADE PARENTS AND PRIMARY TEACHERS WITHIN
THE LAST TWO YEARS EXPRESSED IN
PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Parents Grade I		Per cent Parents Grade III		Per cent Teachers Grade I-III	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Have you changed your opinion about conference reporting in the last two years?	11.4	82.8	18.1	72.7	25.9	74.0
Has your educational philosophy changed in the last two years?	31.4	62.8	21.2	69.6	25.9	74.0

TABLE 6

A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF PARENTS
OF FIRST-GRADE CHILDREN AND PARENTS OF
THIRD-GRADE CHILDREN EXPRESSED IN
PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Agreement Parents Grade I	Per cent Agreement Parents Grade III	Per cent Difference of Opinion
Schools in society	91.4	83.3	8.1
Child growth	78.7	78.7	...
Home-school co-operation	98.3	81.0	17.3
Conferences	85.7	78.8	6.9
Desire to continue	91.4	100	8.6

The greatest difference of opinion between first and third-grade parents shown by Table 6 concerns home and school co-operation. The table shows a 17.3 per cent difference of opinion as compared with only 6.9 per cent difference of opinion regarding parent-teacher conferences.

The difference of opinions between parents and teachers is shown by Table 7. In contrast to Table 6, this table shows the least differences of opinion about home and school co-operation. There is a high degree of concurrence in all divisions, but the parent's hesitancy to agree to a changing school in a changing society shows up again in the 12.8 per cent difference of opinion between teachers and parents concerning this item.

TABLE 7

A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF
PARENTS AND TEACHERS EXPRESSED IN
PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Agreement Parents Grade I-III	Per cent Agreement Teachers Grade I-III	Per cent Difference of Opinion
School in society	85.3	98.1	12.8
Child growth	80.1	83.5	3.4
Home-school cooperation	84.0	87.0	3.0
Conferences	82.2	85.9	3.7
Desire to continue	95.7	100	4.3

Table 8 compares the attitude of parents and children.

TABLE 8

A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF
PARENTS AND CHILDREN EXPRESSED IN
PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Agreement Parents Grade I-III	Per cent Agreement Children Grade III	Per cent Difference of Opinion
School in society 1 item*	96.6	45.3	51.3
Child growth 9 items*	89.6	63.3	26.3
Home-school cooperation 6 items*	83.9	64.6	19.3
Conferences 9 items*	84.6	69.6	15.0
Desire to continue	95.7	78.1	17.6

*see appendix A

The percentages on this table are based on items as indicated by the asterisks. This modification was necessary in order to get comparable responses from immature children.

This table and the following one show a wide divergence of opinion. Again, it is interesting to note that the least amount of disagreement is in the matter of parent-teacher conferences.

The highest per cent of differences concerns the school in the community, in this case, the ownership of the school, since that was the only response in this division made by the children.

Table 9 also compares the attitudes of the children, this time to the attitudes of the teacher.

TABLE 9
A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF
TEACHERS AND CHILDREN EXPRESSED IN
PER CENTS OF TOTAL RESPONSES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	Per cent Agreement Teachers Grade I-III	Per cent Agreement Children Grade III	Per cent Difference of Opinion
School in society 1 item*	96.2	45.3	50.9
Child growth 9 items*	88.8	63.3	25.5
Home-school cooperation 6 items*	85.7	64.6	21.1
Conferences 9 items*	83.1	69.6	13.5
Desire to continue	100	78.1	21.9

*see appendix A

The differences in this table coincide closely with the differences between pupil and parent attitudes except in the division, "Desire to continue conferences." Here the divergence is greater because of the 100 per cent "yes" recorded by the teachers.

A general summation of the tabulated data reveals interesting facts. Of all forty items listed under the four divisions, only one shows 100 per cent agreement of the attitudes and opinions of all members of all groups. In Table 5, item 7, "Do you believe that your child likes for you to come to school?"; and on the child's questionnaire, "Do you like for your parents to come to school?," parents, teachers, and pupils concur in their opinions 100 per cent.

On Table 2, item 11, and Table 3, item 8, all members of three groups, two groups of parents and the teachers, are 100 per cent in agreement. These items are: "Children should be happy at school" and "The teacher is honestly trying to understand the child in order to provide for his growth."

In Table 4, Attitudes Concerning Parent-teacher Conferences, items 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8, all members of two groups, one group of parents and the teachers, are 100 per cent in agreement. The question, "Would you like to continue parent-teacher conferences?" shows 100 per cent agreement by two groups, third-grade parents and the teachers.

A study of the responses made shows that most members of the groups had definite opinions concerning the points under discussion. The first-grade parents indicated that they had no opinion concerning seventy per cent of the forty items listed; the third-grade parents marked 52.5 per cent of the items, "no opinion." Some teachers indicated indecision on fifty per cent of the items, and the children recorded, "I don't know," for 58.8 per cent of the thirty-six items used to obtain their responses. However, the per cent of members of the various groups having no definite opinion was not excessive. The highest per cent was 28.5 per cent of the third-grade parents who reported, "no opinion" on the item, "Can human growth be graded?" Next in line was again the third-grade parents, 22.8 per cent of whom had no answer for the question, "Can human growth be measured?" The lowest per cent was a 1.5 per cent, "I don't know," response made by the children to three items concerning child growth.

The tables show a similarity of attitudes and opinions of the two groups of parents, the teachers, and the children. The teachers' responses indicate to a slight degree a superior understanding of the theory responsible for the newer practices in the public school, but the amount of comprehension displayed by the parents and revealed by the survey is satisfactory.

A review of some of the typical comments and remarks of the parents recorded during the interviews affords an increased

insight into parental attitudes. The eagerness and voluminousness with which some of the responses were made and, conversely, the reticence and the hesitancy with which other questions were met was within itself, revealing.

A third-grade mother, the wife of a college professor, when asked, "Have you changed your opinion about conference reporting within the last two years?" replied, "Yes, indeed. When you first began to talk about it, I was quite impatient and was entirely opposed to it. I said to my husband, 'What on earth will they think of next?' Now, I think it is the only way." The question, "Do you believe that parents are confused about what the school is trying to do?" brought the same response from many of the mothers. They said, "They will not be confused if they will come to school and find out what is going on. My husband can't come, but I will tell him."

A third-grade parent responded to the question, "Do you wish to continue conferences as a means of reporting pupil progress?" by inquiring, "Do you have these records for my boy in the sixth grade? Do you know all these things about him?" When assured that every child in school had a cumulative record card, she exclaimed, "Well, why don't we have conferences in the sixth grade?" Another parent said, "I never had much schooling myself, but I understand better when I talk to the teacher. She sure is smart." "Yes, I would like to continue the conference," agreed another

patron, "but couldn't Marion have a card, too?" When asked why she wanted a report card, she explained, "Well, when Fred, an older brother, brings his card home, Marion, he feels left out."

When parents displayed an unusual understanding of the principles of child growth and of the importance of home and school cooperation, they were asked to account for this knowledge. Parent-Teacher Association meetings, meetings with the home-room teacher, the radio, current periodicals, and "just living with the children" were given as factors in developing this understanding.

CHAPTER VI

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRESS

Solutions do not lie in data; they must result from thinking, with the help of the increased insight which grows out of the study of data. . . . a mechanical tabulation of questionnaire results concerning practices and conditions . . . will miss many opportunities for real insight into conditions.¹

Conclusions

An assimilation of attitudes and ideas represented in the data would seem to lead to the following conclusions:

1. The parents, teachers, and pupils of Jefferson School concur to a large degree in their opinion that the conference method of reporting pupil progress in all areas of growth is satisfactory.
2. The parents, teachers, and pupils display a common attitude of amenability to change, and of readiness for seeking newer and better ways of attaining goals.
3. The parents of Jefferson School, as a group, are fairly well informed as to the theory and philosophy underlying the change from the traditional report card to the individual parent-teacher conference.

¹Carter V. Good and A. S. Barr and Douglas E. Scates, Methodology of Educational Research, pp. 334-335.

4. Even though parents are still, to some degree, pre-occupied with academic achievement, there is evidence to show that there is a dawning appreciation of other values in education.

5. Most parents are eager to assume for the home its responsibility as an educative agency in the development of the whole child.

6. Teachers are developing an attitude of respect for the role of the home in the educative process.

7. Teachers are willing to devote long hours of effort to serve the growing child.

8. In spite of consistent efforts to inform them, the parents are not as favorable to conference reporting as the teachers are.

9. There is a need to continue the explanations and publicity about the newer methods.

10. Some progress has been made in obtaining full home-school cooperation in an effort to understand children, but much more needs to be done.

11. One of the basic needs of a child-centered and life-centered school is a continuous and well-planned program of instruction in child growth and development for both teachers and parents.

The wealth of impressions, attitudes, and opinions valuable to educators in the planning of future activities received from the interviews and not shown by the tabulated

data is reported by a few representative inferences as follows:

1. Modern day parents have daily access to information concerning child rearing through current periodicals, the radio, study clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations, and other agencies.
2. Parents realize the value of visiting the school often and of participating in various school activities.
3. Parents, as a whole, are inclined to have an almost fanatical faith in the ability of the public school to provide for the needs of the child.

Recommendations

As a result of the year's study the following recommendations are made:

1. A vigorous and unified program of child study in the elementary schools in Sherman in two divisions; first, an in-service teacher training course dealing with the nature of child growth and development and its implications under the guidance of an expert consultant; second, a well organized and continuing program of information concerning child growth for the parents.
2. Continuing teachers for the first two or three grades in school. It is believed that the teacher who lives with the same children and parents for two or three years will have a better opportunity to understand children and to make better use of cumulative data.

3. The development of some form of written report consistent with the philosophy of the school, possibly a graph showing such developmental ages as the parent can understand. This will provide adequate reporting for the children of the grades not included in the program of conference reporting and will satisfy those patrons who wish both an oral and a written report.

4. A revision of the cumulative record.

5. Some plan for releasing more time to teachers for parent counseling.

APPENDIX

MODIFICATION IN QUESTIONNAIRE NECESSARY
TO OBTAIN PUPIL RESPONSE

Table 1

Attitudes Concerning the Place of the School in Society

1. To whom does your school belong?
2. No response.

Table 2

Attitudes Concerning Child Growth

1. No response.
2. Do you learn anywhere except at school?
3. Are there children in your room who are alike?
Are all children alike?
4. Do you think all children at school should do the same work?
5. Do you try to control your emotions?
6. Do you need to win all of the time?
Do you need to lose some of the time?
Do you always succeed?
What do you do when you fail?
7. Do you want your class mates to like you?
8. No response.
9. Can a boy or girl do good work when he doesn't feel well or when he is angry or frightened?

10. No response.
11. Should children be happy at school?
12. Do you like other children?
Can you be happy with other boys and girls at school?
Do you want to live happily with all the children?
13. No response.
14. No response.
15. Do you ask your teacher and your mother to do many things for you?
Do you do things for yourself?
Do you like to depend on yourself?
16. No response.

Table 3

Attitudes Concerning Home-School Cooperation

1. No response.
2. Do you behave at school like you behave at home?
3. Do you think that the teacher needs to know about your life at home?
4. Do you think that your teacher and mother like each other?
5. Do you think that what you do at home concerns the school?
Do they understand each other?
6. Do you think that your parents should know how you live at school?
7. No response.

8. Is your teacher trying to help you grow?

Table 4

Attitudes Concerning Parent-Teacher Conferences

1. No response.
2. Do you think that talking to mother saves time for the teacher?
3. Do you think that going to school to talk to the teacher is a waste of time for mother?
4. No response.
5. Do you think that mother can help the teacher understand you?
Do you think that the teacher can help mother?
6. Do you think that your mother learns more about you from talking to the teacher than a card could tell?
7. Do you like for your parents to come to school?
8. Do you think that mother and teacher talking face to face can help you?
9. Do you want to know how you, compared only to yourself, are doing in school?
10. Do you want to know whether you are best or poorest in the class?
11. Do you want to know both?
12. No response.
13. No response.
14. Would you like to continue having mother come to school to talk to the teacher instead of taking home a card to be signed?

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