
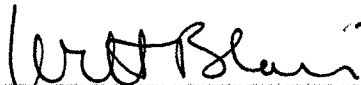



AN EVALUATION OF THE PUPIL RECORD AND REPORTING
SYSTEMS USED IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

APPROVED:


Major Professor


Minor Professor


Director of the Department of Education


Dean of the Graduate School

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SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

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By
180030
Etha Gilmore King, B. S.

Whitney, Texas

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180030

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

This study was an investigation and an evaluation of the pupil record and reporting systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County. The purposes of this study were:

1. To establish criteria for evaluating the pupil record and reporting systems of these elementary schools.
2. To determine the adequacy of the pupil record and reporting systems of these elementary schools in terms of the criteria set up.
3. To offer recommendations for changes that could be made for the improvement of the twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

The Necessity for Adequate Pupil Record and Reporting Systems

In a democratic situation where the whole child must grow, the whole child must be considered; therefore, the teacher must have a sufficient amount of accurate information concerning every phase of each child's previous development in order to do effective teaching. It is an accepted fact by many that the teacher should begin with the child

where he is and teach him in terms of that which she wishes him to become. For this to be accomplished, it is imperative that the teaching be individualistic, with the child's needs being met at that time. No child should have to suffer because of a lack of knowledge on the part of those in authority; hence, all sides of the child should be known. Education is a process of growth, and only an informed teacher can modify the learning procedure so as to meet individual needs. Without recorded evidence of the facts concerning the many aspects of the child's growth it can hardly be expected that the school's program will be made to fit him.

One phase of the elementary school program should be the process of determining to what extent each child has made progress.

No elementary school can have an efficient instructional program without knowing what it is accomplishing. It must know what is happening to boys and girls as well as what it is teaching them. Evaluation must be made in terms of the total development of the child.¹

Only through consistent use of information obtained from cumulative records can this measurement of progress be accepted as fair and reasonably accurate.

Acceptance as a criterion of evaluation that the child's progress must be measured in terms of his own growth requires a cumulative record. This record beginning when he enters school should follow him as long as he is in an educational institution.²

¹J. Murray Lee and Dorris May Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, p. 682.

²Ibid., p. 670.

A school's system of reporting child progress in the school is a necessity only to the extent to which it contributes to the development of the child. Any educational scheme having in mind the whole child must have the wholehearted cooperation of the parents. A satisfactory arrangement which involves every phase of child growth must bring together under desirable conditions those persons who are concerned about the child--the parents and the teacher. One means of establishing such cooperative relationship is through a system of reporting. Interested parents usually depend upon this as one way of ascertaining the facts of their child's progress. If the school is to meet all of the needs of the child, then it must provide some type of reporting to the parents.

Sources of Data

Information for this study has been obtained from several sources. From a study of the pupil record and reporting systems described and recommended by Pierce in his doctor's dissertation, The Organization of a Campus Laboratory Elementary School for the Texas State College for Women, criteria for the evaluation were established. Books written by authorities on the subject were read and studied, while articles from magazines and yearbooks served as another source of data.

Questionnaires were sent to principals of twenty

elementary schools of Hill County, and personal interviews with some of these twenty principals were also held.

Treatment of Data

After having read extensively on the subject, the writer made an attempt to determine the adequacy of the pupil record and reporting systems used in the twenty elementary schools using the information obtained through the questionnaires and interviews as facts on which to base the evaluation.

In Chapter II a criterion for evaluating the pupil record systems was set up.

Chapter III has to do with the evaluation of the pupil record systems.

In Chapter IV a criterion for evaluating the reporting systems was set up.

Chapter V deals with the evaluation of the reporting systems.

Chapter VI presents a summary of the problems, conclusions, and recommendations for improvements.

Limitations

This is a study and an evaluation of the pupil record and reporting systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County. The adequacy of these systems will be determined by means of criteria set up from data obtained through extensive reading of material on this subject. Interviews and questionnaires will be limited to the twenty elementary schools.

CHAPTER II

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PUPIL RECORDS

Introduction

A pupil record is of value only to the extent to which it is competently kept and wisely and frequently used. It contributes to child development only as it is utilized for that purpose; however, there is no other tool in the elementary school program which offers greater possibilities in serving as an aid to a teacher whose aim is to see that each child reaches maximum growth in every aspect of his development.

The effective teacher needs ample and accurate information about each of his pupils. This information should be about all phases of his growth. This calls for an up-to-date pupil record system.¹

Since education fosters and strengthens all of the intellectual and moral traits which are the substances of a democracy, it behooves the school to be interested in the continuous growth of the whole child. What he does at home, at school, or at any other place, is an integral part of his education; for he is educated only as he lives. "The more nearly the child's school life, home life, and play life

¹Thomas Earl Pierce, Organization of a Campus Laboratory Elementary School for the Texas State College for Women, p. 42.

coalesce--all become one living--the more nearly will the child be treading the path to true education."²

If the teacher is to render intelligent service in promoting maximum growth of each child, she must have access to unlimited information on his interests, his activities, his health, his social background, and any other factors involved in his learning and development. Only through well kept and adequate pupil records can a teacher hope to obtain such a vast amount of essential data. Personnel records containing this information about the pupil and his progress should be available in the school.

What constitutes well kept and adequate pupil records is an important question. Before records can be accepted as either well kept or adequate, there must be some criteria set up for their evaluation. Pierce has set up such criteria in his doctor's dissertation, Organization of a Campus Laboratory Elementary School for the Texas State College for Women.

Essential Qualities of Pupil Records

"To be of most value, records must be thoroughly accurate, record only pertinent data, be durable, understandable, and be permanent and cumulative."³ Pupil records, to be of greatest benefit in the promotion of child growth, must be

²Arch O. Heck, Administration of Pupil Personnel, p. 275.

³Pierce, op. cit., p. 42.

endowed with these named qualities. Each of the characteristics mentioned contribute to the efficiency of the records. Because of its importance, each one merits a brief discussion of its necessity to adequate records.

Records must be thoroughly accurate. Any data not precisely recorded might well be responsible for dangerous or detrimental procedures by both the teacher and the pupil. Information that is not worth the time and trouble required to record it accurately is hardly worth recording at all. Pupil records which really serve their purpose, that of a tool for promoting the development of the whole child, may influence the planning, the adjusting, or the operation of any part of the entire school program. Very important decisions having to do with some child's welfare may be the result of a careful study of the data contained in these records. It is imperative that all information entered be specific and reliable.

Record only pertinent data. Recording of details of no significant value means a waste of time, and it often proves misleading to the persons who are using the records. Skill in the ability to record only relevant material comes from experience both in observing and recording. Teachers should practice careful discriminations in recording any facts, but they should be especially cautious about entering facts based on their subjective judgment. Only information which is applicable in furthering the advantages and

happiness of the child should be recorded. "To the extent, however, to which the cumulative record form becomes an efficient tool for studying and working depends upon the kind of data it contains, the location and availability of the record, and how well it is maintained and kept up to date."⁴

Records should be durable. Since it is taken for granted that adequate pupil records are to be used frequently and extensively over a long period of time, it is necessary that they be of durable quality. Perhaps no other record kept for the child can furnish more accurate data that might contribute to both his present and his future welfare, than the pupil records kept in the school. Time sometimes increases, rather than decreases the value of such information.

To be of most value, pupil records must be understandable. Making records is only a minor part of the pupil record system. Using them efficiently is the desirable thing; however, for this to be possible, all forms on the cards should be defined in the minds of those using them. A record is only a tool, and as such, it is never an end in itself. Any recorded information that is not understandable is of little or no value. Interpretations of records require thought and insight; for although most of the data recorded is objective, much of the discernment in the use of

⁴Leo M. Chamberlain and Leslie W. Kindred, The Teacher and School Organization, p. 446.

the records must be subjective. Clear understandings and correct interpretations depend greatly upon the skill with which the records are made.

Pupil records should be permanent and cumulative. Not all kinds of information are of permanent value, but most of the relevant facts concerning the child as he makes continuous progress through the years, has the possibility of lasting value. The same type of recorded information might be available nowhere else. Not only should the records be permanent, but they should also be cumulative in nature, running from the kindergarten or first grade throughout the school life of the child. Each teacher's report should be complete in the area and for the period of time for which she is responsible for keeping the child's records. Teachers who assume a responsibility for the welfare of their pupils, not only while they are in their classes but for the future years as well, may well be classed as ideal in their profession. As the individual child makes continuous and varied changes as he passes from one group to another, or from one grade to another, only a well kept record of the growth of the entire child can furnish each new teacher with sufficient data to insure a continuous, all-round development of the whole child.

The effort to devise such a cumulative record system for the entire educational experience implies a conception of the pupil as an individual and continuous entity, whose developmental history is more

significant and revealing than his status at any one time, however accurate and complete our information showing his status at any one time.⁵

Contents of Pupil Records

Kinds of data contained in the records determine their efficiency and workable benefits. To be of greatest value the information must be as broad as are the life experiences of the pupil. There should be a complete and comprehensive picture of the whole child, beginning with the earliest obtainable data and continuing on throughout his school life. An adequate and complete record system is inclusive of such items as an admission card, a health card, anecdotal records, mental records, scholastic records, records of correspondence and conferences, and a summary card. Each of these divisions provides for vast amounts of recorded information.

The Admission Card

A fair conception of the child and his experiences previous to his entrance into the school may be gained through a study of the information contained in the admission card. Space is provided for a general picture of his physical background, including all of the necessary information pertaining to his former and present physical conditions. Because the source of problems arising with the child may be traced through facts in the family history, teachers should

⁵Cecil W. Fleming, Pupil Adjustment in the Modern School, p. 64.

have access to such information. The admission card gives the history of the child's family group. "Many problems which arise can be cared for more easily if certain data concerning the child and his family are available."⁶

Also in this division of the record are facts about the child and his past experiences with school groups. Attention is called to his special abilities and to his irregular habits which demand attention.

The Health Card

The health card is an essential part of the record, for the health needs of any child are largely an individual matter. Because the health of a pupil is so important that poor mental or physical health may be directly responsible for failure while success might be one result of good health, it is imperative that the health record be given a prominent place in the record system. "Objective data on child health and growth is as basic to a school program as information on mental, emotional, and educational matters."⁷

The records of many schools include a health record of some kind; however, many of them fail to give a complete and continuous report as does the card proposed by Pierce.

In this school provisions are being made for a cumulative health record and the report of an annual

⁶Pierce, op. cit., p. 45.

⁷Henry J. Otto, Principles of Elementary Education, p. 366.

physical examination. In addition to the record of physical examinations, the health folder will contain a record of all illnesses, descriptions of accidents, vaccination certificate, readmission to school after illnesses or quarantines, health recommendations of the physician and the health education teacher, a description of corrective procedures and their progress which are being employed with the child, and any other observations by the teaching staff and the parents concerning the child's physical condition.⁸

Detailed facts concerning examinations made in the fall and the remedial measures that follow should be entered on special forms in the health record. "A campus physician will approve these forms."⁹

Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records are different from the other divisions of the pupil record in that they give an over-all picture of the child in action as from day to day he reacts and develops within the environment of life itself. They are of special use to the teacher who strives to know and understand each of her pupils.

Full development of the individual child is the primary concern of the school. Data from anecdotal records not only help to detect those children who have failed to make satisfactory personal adjustment but also give a good picture of all children. Such records should be of individual help to teachers in directing subsequent activities of the child.¹⁰

The anecdotal record has as its main purpose a means of providing a chronological record of the individual's significant behavior at various times and under varying

⁸Pierce, op. cit., p. 46.

⁹Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 47.

conditions and circumstances, and not of an isolated set of facts alone. A child may react to a given situation in a certain manner one time; but after a period of time or under other circumstances his reactions may change. Good pupil records are based on multiplicity of evidence, for it is through continued study and observations that an understanding of the individual is reached. "The use of controlled observation with anecdotal records has been found helpful to many teachers in evaluating those types of pupil growth which it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure objectively."¹¹

Since the child is the product of the home, the school, and the community, all of his interests in relation to each of these environments should be entered in the anecdotal record. If it were possible for the teacher to behold the child in the classroom in relation to each of his other environments, a better understanding of him as an individual would occur. He then would become more and more an individuality. All significant behavior, including favorable, unfavorable, typical or variations of behavior, should be noted and recorded. This, with no interpretations, offers an opportunity for a more complete study of the child as an individual and provides for a broader conception of his

¹¹Freeman Glenn Macomber, Guiding Child Development in the Elementary School, p. 278.

interests. "It is highly important that the teacher record only pure descriptions of behavior with no interpretations by anyone."¹²

The record should be so complete as to give a complete picture of the individual in all of the aspects of his development. Teachers now realize that education involves the whole integrated personality of the child, and they are no longer satisfied with records which are concerned with only certain phases of child growth.

Included in the folder of anecdotal records will be notes of personality and interest inventory including things which the child likes to do at school, at home, and during holidays; books and magazines he likes to read; types of boys and girls whom he likes; types of adults whom he admires; his wishes; social growth and anything else that tells significant facts about the individual child.¹³

To this record should be attached a photograph of the pupil.

Mental Records

Just as the school program must take care of the progress of the entire child, taking into consideration the fact that education is a process of growth through gradual development; so must the cumulative record serve that same purpose by providing ample accurate data on which to base the program. No two individuals should be expected to develop at the same rate of speed or in exactly the same channels of learning. In order that the program be adjustable to meet

¹²Pierce, op. cit., p. 47.

¹³Ibid., p. 47.

individual needs, there must be a record of each child's status, mentally as well as otherwise. Although no tests have been accepted as being perfect, there are not available objective tests which give a fairly accurate estimate of the child's mental ability. Certainly judgments based on the recorded results of a standard objective test are preferred to subjective judgments based on no records at all, but derived from mere implications and observations. Mental records are necessary to adequate record systems and should be entered fully and with precision.

If space permits, the mental tests in original forms will be filed in the cumulative folder. Otherwise a detailed summary of the tests will be made available. This summary will include such essential items for interpreting results as test used, examiner, date of giving the test, age of the child, and the like. Recommendations made as a result of the test will be filed with the test or the summary of the test. Any change in the usual procedure or corrective steps taken to help the child make an adjustment will be recorded. In addition, descriptive records of the child at work and at play and a note of the things the child does will be placed in the mental record folder.¹⁴

Scholastic Records

For the records to be complete there must be information on the pupil's academic progress. If the teacher is to know whether or not the objectives of the school and its educational program are being reached, she must have sufficient recorded objective data on which to base her evaluation.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 48.

Child growth in academic work is a vital part of the educational program, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to know whether or not each individual is making maximum progress in that phase of growth. It is now possible to administer various kinds of tests which give a rather accurate estimate of the pupil's progress, if it is measured in terms of his own growth. "Diagnostic and achievement tests, both standardized and non-standardized will be given."¹⁵

Competent teachers are constantly striving to better understand each individual pupil; and through their continued efforts to meet the immediate needs of each child, they use various means of discovering evidences of growth or lack of growth.

Teachers will be aware of growth or lack of growth by special abilities and disabilities that will be brought to light by special means. This with samples of work will be filed as evidence of progress of growth. This furnishes a fair picture of the developmental growth of the child.¹⁶

Correspondence and Conferences

Discipline practices, tardiness, and absences are noted in this section because anyone of them ordinarily calls for a conference with the child or with the child and the parent. Any record of conference that gives a picture of the child is recorded. So will anecdotes of home visits and copies of any correspondence relating to the child. All who deal with the child should be in a better position to look at the child's career impersonally if they have access to these records.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 48-49.

The Summary Cards

Summary cards are included for administrative use and are so constructed as to make the use of the whole pupil record easier and more convenient. "These cards will always be at hand for administrative use. The visible file of the flat book type will be used because of its convenience."¹⁸

On the face side of the card is one of the two forms making up the summary card. It consists of a code of letters representing the divisions of the pupil folder.

The letters are used to provide signals to warn the administrator of either desirable or undesirable facts concerning any aspect of the child's development. . . . Different colors of ink will indicate pupil, parent, and teacher conferences. The name of the teacher and the number of group to which pupil belongs will be penciled in and erased as occasion demands.¹⁹

Space is also provided in this form for a record of individual subject progress. On the reverse side of the summary card there is a form which "provides space for pertinent data which may be needed for conferences with parents, or the child. . . . They may save much time in getting at the heart of a problem or serve as a starting point for further investigation."²⁰

Filing Pupil Records

Filing cumulative records is one of the most important

¹⁸Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 49-50.

²⁰Charles D. Flory and James F. Webb, "Cumulative Records," Elementary School Journal, XXXVIII (December, 1937), 290.

factors involved in the pupil record system. One of the greatest problems having to do with records is getting them out of the file and into consistent use by the teachers who need them. Systematic filing in a convenient location, so that records may be easily and quickly utilized, will tend to motivate teachers to use them more often.

Records should be filed in such a way as to require minimum effort on the part of those filing and using them.

According to these authorities, a complete system of records must employ some type of individual, cumulative folder. A large folder containing several small manila folders to be used for filing various types of records should be provided for each child. The subdivision of the large folder into several smaller folders will increase the efficiency of the records. The letter assignments on the smaller folders are used as a code on the summary card. The order of the parts and the number of small folders used will depend upon the needs and the resources of the school.²¹

Where the records are filed usually determines to a great extent the amount of their practical use. To be of maximum benefit to those needing them, records should be kept in a place quickly accessible. "The plan of keeping the records in the classroom seems more workable in the campus school."²²

Who Decides on Items Contained in Records

Any person, whether a child or an adult, is inclined to be more interested in the things which he has a part in making or setting up. This is probably especially true with

²¹Pierce, op. cit., p. 45.

²²Ibid., p. 43.

the teacher and pupil records. If the teacher has a part in the decisions as to what items should be included, she has a more thorough understanding of their meaning. Since it is she who will use the records most, it is she who should help determine their necessary contents. Of course it is an accepted fact that the administrator will be the main authority in setting up the record system. "Since the teacher uses the records most, it is he who can be of great aid to the administrator in deciding those items which are most needed in the forms."²³

Pupil Records in Use

A criteria for evaluating a pupil record system must meet the need for the actual use of the records as a part of the educational guidance program. It is not only the recording of accurate facts, the kinds of data recorded, and the manner in which the records are filed, that constitute an adequate pupil record system; but it is the extent to which the recorded information is actually utilized in guiding and promoting child development that determines its worth.

A school is truly fortunate in having at its command a record of every child within its educational scope, so complete as to give an unbiased picture of the whole child in each of his environments and in every phase of his development. Such a record is a tool to be coveted by any competent

²³Ibid., p. 43.

teacher, for it offers possibilities without end; however, the possession of a vast amount of information is only the first step in an effective instructional and guidance program. Without the proper use and application of the recorded material in furthering the happiness and growth of the child, the record becomes worthless in spite of the time and effort required to compile it. The fundamental value of recorded data lies in their adaptiveness and their application to a more intelligent handling of the boys and girls in the school. Significant facts efficiently recorded can be intimately related to a sound instructional and guidance program.

Individual pupil records and reports should provide a picture of developmental tendencies in the child and be considered as powerful aids to the teacher in providing experiences necessary for continuous development each year.²⁴

Education is the process of interaction between an individual and his environment, through which ways of thinking and doing are acquired; and not until a teacher understands a child and his problems, can she modify her program to meet his needs and motivate his learning. If an experience is to be meaningful, it must be an interaction with the environment in which the child lives. While tests are of value in determining a few abilities, much more suitable data for use in promoting child development may be obtained from the cumulative records of his interests and achievements.

²⁴Ibid., p. 43.

Although the best possible cumulative record cannot in itself insure successful guidance in a school, no plan of counseling students can rise to the level of a thorough guidance program unless it includes a cumulative record which is understood and used by counselors and teachers alike.²⁵

Guidance is concerned with the whole child. What he is doing in every environment is a vital part of what he is becoming. He is the product of the home, the school, and the community; and teachers should know him in his total environment. Scientific approach to personality problems has shown the need for intensive case study through the use of adequate cumulative records.

Teachers are coming to see more clearly the essential concept that real education involves the whole integrated personality of the individual. They are no longer satisfied with a cross-section snap-shot view of an individual at a given time or in a given situation. The evaluation of a pupil's behavior must top all aspects of his physical, mental, moral, aesthetic, and emotional growth. . . . In order to provide anything approaching such a substantial basis for the evaluation of pupil behavior the cumulative record should carry continuing entries of pupil development in all significant aspects from physical growth to emotional security.²⁶

The needs for each child are different, and techniques for dealing with him individually must differ accordingly. A guidance program concerned with the maximum development of every individual requires the wise and frequent use of

²⁵Arthur E. Traxler, "The Cumulative Record in the Guidance Program," School Review, LIV (March, 1946), 155.

²⁶Philip A. Boyer, The Contribution of the Cumulative Record as a Whole to the Guidance of Pupils in Senior High School, p. 5.

accurate data in its pupil records. Any significant data on pupil growth have a definite place somewhere in an adequate pupil record, and no record system is complete without provisions for recorded information on all aspects of individual development.

It is believed that the foregoing system of records and reports will furnish the information thought to be of value for guidance purposes by Ruch and Segel when they listed the following points:

- "1. Family and cultural background
2. Physical and medical history
3. Marks in the school subjects
4. Extra-curricular activities
5. Mental test scores, including diagnosis of weaknesses, strengths in different traits
6. Achievement test scores
7. Interests
8. Special talent as evidenced by accomplishments."

Too, the system will satisfy the criteria set up for judging personnel records set up by Strang in the following statements:

- "1. Personnel records should consist of items significant in the all-round development of the student--attitudes, habits, in short, all pertinent aspects of his personality.
2. They should show trends in the individual development, not merely a cross-section of his personality; for a person is too complex an entity to justify an interpretation of his past or a prediction of his future from one snapshot.
3. They should be vivid and dynamic so that they will surely be used in the guidance of students. They should utilize the normal process of school life--as well as the special test situations.
4. They must provide means of recording results of tests and observations in comparable and meaningful terms. The detailed records should be summarized and interpreted by persons who know the students and have had a large part in the collection of data.
5. They should be convenient to file.
6. They should involve a minimum of clerical work.

7. They should be easily read. Records that are intricate and crowded with lines and writing are difficult to keep and interpret.
8. They should be reproducible, inexpensively and accurately.
9. They should be kept for every student, not for problem cases only.
10. They should be available to all who can use them for the guidance of the student. Records should have therapeutic as well as diagnostic value. A central file has proved satisfactory in many situations, but one of the most difficult and puzzling problems in the whole administration of personnel work is that of getting the information out of the files and into the minds of those who come in contact with the student."²⁷

Criteria for Adequate Pupil Record Systems

From a thorough study and summarization of what constitutes an adequate pupil record system according to the one described and commended by Pierce, and from an extensive study of other materials on the subject, the following outstanding points brought out by Pierce have been accepted as criteria for evaluating the pupil record systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

1. There must be a pupil record for every child.
2. Pupil records should contain information on all phases of child growth.
3. The records must be thoroughly accurate.
4. They should contain only pertinent data.
5. To be of greatest value, pupil records must be durable.

²⁷Pierce, op. cit., pp. 50-52.

6. Records should be permanent and cumulative.
7. They must be understandable.
8. There should be an admission card giving a general picture of the child previous to his entrance of the school.
9. There should be a health card with a complete record of present and past experiences having anything to do with the child's physical condition.
10. A physician should approve the items in the health card on examinations and remedial measures as a result of examinations.
11. There should be an anecdotal record.
12. Data entered in the anecdotal record must be purely descriptive with no interpretations.
13. Anecdotal records should contain facts on the child's interests, personality, likes and dislikes, social growth, and any other significant information about him as an individual.
14. There should be mental records including either original forms of mental tests or a detailed summary; recommendations as a result of the tests; records of procedures, adjustments, or corrective steps taken; and a descriptive record of the child at work and at play, with a note of the things he does.
15. Scholastic records should include results of diagnostic and achievement tests, results of other means of determining progress, and samples of the child's work.

16. There should be provisions for records of conferences, home visits, and correspondence relating to the child.

17. A record of discipline practices, tardiness, and absences should be kept.

18. There should be a summary card for administrative use.

19. Pupil records should be filed in a large individual cumulative folder with smaller manila folders for filing different types of records.

20. Records should be kept in a safe place that is easily reached by persons needing them.

21. Teachers should aid the administrator in selecting the items to be included in the pupil records.

22. Pupil records should be such that they can be used profitably in a guidance program.

23. Records should be of both diagnostic and therapeutic value.

24. Records should be available to all who need to use them for the good of the student.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF THE PUPIL RECORD SYSTEMS USED IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Purpose of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the pupil record systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County to determine their adequacy according to the criteria set up in Chapter II.

Evaluation Data

Data for this evaluation were obtained through both questionnaires and personal interviews. Seventeen elementary school principals either responded to questionnaires or were interviewed personally. Because it was impossible to obtain information from the elementary principals of the other three schools, one superintendent and two elementary teachers were interviewed. A copy of the questionnaire is attached to the study in the Appendix. Reference to it will show the information solicited.

The twenty schools included in this evaluation were elementary schools of more than one teacher. Since there are only twenty-three elementary schools of two or more teachers in Hill County, this is considered a fair representation of the pupil record systems in that county.

Facts obtained through this study are indicative of varying and limited practices in the twenty record systems surveyed. Values accruing from pupil records are dependent upon the nature of the recorded data and the extent to which they are given a place in the educational process. They are essential tools in the school program, and like any other phase of the program, they should contribute to the ultimate purpose of education, namely pupil growth.

Effective cumulative records are one means through which the teacher can come to know the learner. Contributed to by all persons concerned with the learner's growth and development, including the learner himself, they are a valuable resource.¹

As schools become more concerned about fitting the educational program to the individual child in the light of his needs, aptitudes, and interests, the growing need for both curricular and individual analysis becomes greater. In this process there is no substitute equally as valuable as pupil records containing essential data about the pupil and his progress.

The information obtained through the questionnaires and interviews showed that there was a pupil record for every child in each of the twenty elementary schools of Hill County. The fact that one hundred per cent of the answers to this question were in the affirmative indicates some progress.

— ¹Florence B. Stratemeyer, Hamden L. Forkner, Margaret G. McKim, and Associates, Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living, p. 310.

Modern schools are emphasizing the need for a cumulative record for every child. Many instruments and techniques for securing varied and continuous information about the learner have evolved, and schools are increasingly making use of them. Since one of the values derived from adequate records is that they provide data for diagnosing individual difficulties and open the way for remedial measures, it is imperative that there be a record for every pupil. "It is necessary to have adequate information on each child, for without it the teacher cannot locate those who really need special attention."²

In Table 1 the phases of growth included in the recorded data of the twenty elementary schools are shown.

TABLE 1
PHASES OF GROWTH INCLUDED IN RECORDED DATA OF
TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Phases of Growth Included	Number	Per Cent
Mental growth.....	5	25
Physical growth.....	11	55
Emotional growth.....	3	15
Social growth.....	5	25
Scholastic progress.....	20	100

Only five of the twenty records studied were inclusive of information on mental growth. Eleven included physical

²Lee and Lee, op. cit., p. 130.

growth; three, emotional growth; and five, social growth. One hundred per cent included scholastic progress.

Education is a process of the development of the whole child, including mental, social, physical, and emotional growth; and the design of education is an ever-changing, ever-growing, dynamic process. These facts imply the need for a record of information on every aspect of a child's growth, not just a record of scholastic progress.

Neither can goals be set nor teaching procedures be organized without accurate knowledge of pupil needs, abilities, ambitions, interest, rates of maturation, previous school and life experience, health, general home and cultural background, and many other phases of the pupils' lives.³

In Table 2 the desirable qualities of the pupil records are given.

TABLE 2
OPINIONS OF PRINCIPALS CONCERNING DESIRABLE QUALITIES
OF PUPIL RECORDS IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Do the Records Adhere to These Qualities	Number	Per Cent
Thoroughly accurate.....	15	75
Contain only pertinent data.....	16	80
Durable.....	20	100
Cumulative.....	20	100
Permanent.....	20	100
Understandable.....	12	60
Diagnostic value.....	11	55
Therapeutic value.....	11	55

³William H. Burton, The Guidance of Learning Activities, p. 514.

Fifteen of the principals interviewed said that their records were known to be thoroughly accurate, and sixteen said that only pertinent data were entered. All of the twenty stated that their records were durable, cumulative, and permanent. The fact that only twelve answered that their records were understandable indicates that some of the schools have failed to acquire the right conception of effective pupil records. Eleven principals said that their records were of both diagnostic and therapeutic value.

Table 3 gives the number of systems including an admission card and its data contents.

TABLE 3
DATA CONTENTS OF ADMISSION CARD IN PUPIL RECORDS
OF TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Data Contents	Number	Per Cent
None.....	15	75
Physical background.....	1	5
Family history.....	2	10
School experiences.....	2	10
Specific abilities.....	0	0
Irregular habits.....	0	0
Date of birth.....	5	25
Family name and residence.....	5	25

Five of the persons interviewed said that their record system was inclusive of an admission card, but fifteen said that their record systems contained no such card. As shown in Table 3 there was a variation in the data contents. One

included physical background; two, family history and school experiences; none, specific abilities and irregular habits; five, date of birth; and five, family name and residence.

If existing conditions are to be bettered and the school program made more efficient, there must be broader knowledge of the child in all of his aspects of living. "The time has arrived when the school should know more than the date of a child's birth and his legal residence."⁴ All available information on the child's present and his past should be obtained on his entrance into the school. This is the purpose of an admission card.

Data recorded in the health cards of the twenty record systems studied are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
DATA RECORDED IN HEALTH CARD OF TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Items Included	Number	Per Cent
None.....	6	30
Immunizations.....	14	70
Communicable diseases.....	9	45
Physical check-ups.....	5	25
Corrections.....	2	10

Thirty per cent of the pupil record systems made no provision for data on health. Fourteen records contained

⁴Flory and Webb, op. cit., p. 381.

information on immunizations, and nine contained data on communicable diseases. Only five included physical check-ups; one, a dental record; five, physical defects; and two, corrections.

Without some knowledge of a pupil's health, both past and present, a teacher can hardly hope to treat him justly.

Health factors make a difference in individual needs. Estimate of probably learning rate or intellectual status give guidance as to the nature of the activities from which he is likely to profit.⁵

Much of the success of teaching depends upon how much the teacher knows about the individual in his many diverse aspects of living. A health record should be a part of every pupil record. It is a vital necessity that a health record, giving the pupil's complete health history, be accessible to his teachers, thereby, serving as a guide in their ascertainment of his needs.

When asked if any part of the health card was approved by a physician, only three of the fourteen principals whose records contained a health card, answered, "Yes." The other eleven said that none of the items in their health card were approved by a physician. Each of the three who answered in the affirmative explained that a physician approved the items having to do with immunizations.

Anecdotal records were not contained in any of the twenty cumulative records examined. This implies a weakness

⁵Stratemeyer, Forkner, and McKim, op. cit., p. 310.

in the pupil record systems; for in order to give a complete picture of the child, a record must contain a chronological account of his significant behavior at different times and under varying circumstances as he lives from day to day. Schools with effective guidance service should organize the anecdotal record around the development of the pupil in consolidating his abilities and strengths and in overcoming his weaknesses.

Table 5 shows the contents of the mental records kept.

TABLE 5
CONTENTS OF MENTAL RECORDS KEPT BY TWENTY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Items Included	Number	Per Cent
None.....	12	60
Mental test results.....	8	40
Recommendations.....	0	0
Corrections made.....	0	0
Descriptions of child in work and play.....	0	0

Twelve of the twenty systems studied had no provision for mental records. The other eight systems confined their mental records to results of mental tests. None of the other items considered essential to an adequate mental record were included.

Every child, ranging from the gifted child to the one whose intelligence is limited, should receive a type of

education adapted to his ability and specific needs. Before an educational offering can be sufficiently broadened to meet individual needs, however, the abilities and needs of the pupils must be determined. "It is futile to present curriculum material before the child has an adequate background of experience and mental maturity."⁶ To enable a teacher to adjust instruction to the needs of individuals, essential data on each child should be available to serve as a helpful basis of guidance.

The contents of scholastic records kept by the twenty elementary schools are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6
CONTENTS OF SCHOLASTIC RECORDS KEPT BY TWENTY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Items Included	Number	Per Cent
Results of diagnostic tests.....	0	0
Results of achievement tests.....	5	5
Results of academic evaluations....	20	100
Samples of work.....	0	0

None of the pupil record systems surveyed had results of diagnostic tests in the scholastic records. Five had the results of achievement tests, and one hundred per cent had results of academic evaluations. None of the scholastic records contained samples of work.

⁶Burton, op. cit., p. 173.

Replies in the questionnaires showed that only two of the twenty cumulative records studied contained information pertaining to conferences, correspondence, and home visits relating to the pupil. Eighteen included no data on these types of communications with parents.

For a pupil record to be adequate in its contributions to child development, it must cover the entire program of the educational process. Communications with parents are considered among the more important services of the school. They offer opportunities for parents and teacher to work together in an earnest endeavor toward a mutual goal. The efficiency of the educational program is limited by the amount of intelligent cooperation it receives from the home; and as the school program enlarges, this cooperation becomes more and more essential.

Table 7 gives the number of records including data on discipline practices, tardiness, and absences.

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF RECORDS INCLUDING DATA ON DISCIPLINE PRACTICES,
TARDINESS, AND ABSENCES IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Items for Recorded Data	Number	Per Cent
None.....	8	40
Discipline practices.....	8	40
Tardiness.....	10	50
Absences.....	12	60

Eight principals said that no record of discipline practices, tardiness, and absences was kept in their cumulative records. Eight said that their records included data on discipline practices; ten, on tardiness; and twelve, on absences.

Since each of these in its last analysis is usually a home and parent problem, its proper place is in the division provided for conferences, correspondence, and home visits. Including it somewhere in the record, however, seems the vital thing. Discipline practices, tardiness, and absences usually grow out of other factors affecting child development. They are important, therefore, and should be considered so. "Problem cases should be studied and every effort made to coordinate the special services in the school system to the desired end of pupil adjustment."⁷ This requires necessary amounts of recorded information.

Only four of the twenty records examined contained a summary card for administrative use. The extent to which significant data in cumulative records are utilized is usually dependent upon the time required and the difficulty involved in locating needed information. The summary card simplifies these two factors and adds to the efficiency of the pupil record as a whole.

Ways of filing pupil records in twenty elementary schools of Hill County are shown in Table 8.

⁷William A. Yeager, Administration and the Pupil, p. 100.

TABLE 8
WAYS OF FILING PUPIL RECORDS IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Systems Used	Number	Per Cent
Large individual cumulative folders with smaller folders.....	0	0
Plain individual folders.....	3	15
Single card type.....	17	85

None of the schools used the large individual cumulative folders with smaller folders for different types of information. Three of the elementary principals said that their records were filed in plain individual folders. The other seventeen systems examined used the large card type of record and filed all of their elementary school records together in alphabetical order.

Systematic filing of records has many values. A record that is sufficiently broad to be usable should require some type of individual folder. Only records of the simple card or folder type could be filed safely in large numbers. Large individual folders with smaller folders for different divisions of the record not only provide space for a more complete record, but they simplify both the recording of data and the use of the cards.

Table 9 shows where the pupil records are filed in twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

TABLE 9

WHERE PUPIL RECORDS ARE FILED IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Where the Records Are Filed	Number	Per Cent
In classrooms.....	0	0
In elementary principal's office...	6	30
In superintendent's office.....	7	35
In county superintendent's office..	7	35

The elementary principal's office was said to be the place for filing pupil records by six of the persons interviewed. Seven said that their records were filed in the superintendent's office and seven said that their records were filed in the county superintendent's office.

"The location of all recorded material should be such that it is accessible to those directly concerned."⁸ The usefulness of records is materially diminished when getting them from the files requires great effort. The record should be accessible at the exact time that it is needed.

Table 10 tells who determines the items included in the pupil records in twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

Teachers and administrators decided on the items to be included in the pupil record in five of the elementary school systems. Only the administrators made the decisions

⁸Ibid., p. 334.

TABLE 10

WHO DETERMINES ITEMS INCLUDED IN PUPIL RECORDS IN
 TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Persons Determining Items Included	Number	Per Cent
Teachers and administrators.....	5	25
Administrators.....	8	40
County superintendent.....	6	30
State Department of Education.....	1	5

in eight schools, and in six systems the county superintendent determined the items included. One school used a record card that was recommended by the State Department of Education.

Those who are to use the records should have a part in determining their make-up. A better understanding of the meaning of each item can be established through the teachers' helping in the selection of items to be included. Too, persons not using the data recorded are hardly in a position to know what is needed. "It is the conviction of the writer that a record system must be developed rather than adopted if efficiency, utility, and satisfaction are to be insured in a given school situation."⁹

When asked if their cumulative records were used in a guidance program, twelve of the persons interviewed stated that they were. Five of the twelve explained that theirs

⁹Flory and Webb, op. cit., p. 290.

were used only in a very small way. Eight other principals said that their cumulative records had no place in a guidance program.

The value of pupil records is determined by the place they are given in the educational program. As teachers increase their practices in utilizing the recorded data, the value of the records mounts. Adequacy of pupil records is insignificant when considered apart from their actual use in the promotion of child development.

Table 11 shows who has access to the pupil records in twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

TABLE 11
WHO HAS ACCESS TO PUPIL RECORDS IN TWENTY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Persons Having Access to Records	Number	Per Cent
All who need them in helping pupils.....	8	40
Teachers and administrators.....	10	50
Teachers, administrators, and county superintendent.....	2	10

In eight of the schools the pupil records are accessible to anyone who needs them in helping pupils. Teachers and administrators may use the records in ten schools; and in the other two schools, teachers, administrators, and the county superintendent have access to the pupil records.

Pupil records should be available to any person needing them for the purpose of furthering child development. They should be used extensively and continuously. The extent to which they are used determines their real worth.

CHAPTER IV

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING REPORTING SYSTEMS

Introduction

Reporting pupil progress to parents is one of the integral functions of the elementary school program, and this study has revealed the fact that the opinions as to what constitutes an adequate reporting system vary as widely as do the beliefs concerning the school program itself. The search for a satisfactory method of reporting pupil progress has been the concern of teachers, administrators, and supervisors for years. Although they seem to be agreed on the fact that most existing practices do not meet the needs of schools having in mind the total development of every child, few have found that which suffices their needs.

Methods in education have changed materially without an accompanying change in reporting to parents, until recently. Messenger and Watts after a survey of eighty-three articles written for educational periodicals from 1917 to 1934, revealed that in the main all are agreed that there is dissatisfaction in reporting.¹

Since the sole purpose of the elementary school is to foster and promote the maximum growth of individuals, it must have as its ultimate goal the achievement of this objective. The possibilities of the adequate reporting system

¹Pierce, op. cit., p. 52.

as a tool in such a process are many; however, the values of its contributions are dependent upon the extent to which it is put to use. It is an accepted fact that the whole child goes to school; therefore, any written or oral account of the appraisal of his progress, to be of any value, must be inclusive of the child in his entirety. Such an accurate report is an outgrowth of other phases of the school program, for the reporting system may well be thought of as a mirror reflecting the school in its total endeavors.

The problem of communication mounts, of course as soon as the school goes beyond a report card that shows whether a child is excellent, good, or fair in arithmetic, spelling, etc., and tries to give an appraisal of other matters, such as work habits, emotional adjustment, ability to get along with others, and the like.²

The values of a reporting system and the efficiency of a pupil record system are interdependent. For the information in a report to be accepted as authentic, there must be sufficient recorded evidence of the validity of its contents. "Diagnosis begins with a collection of information related in any way to a problem under consideration."³ For a teacher to relate an appraisal to a parent without sufficient proof of the wisdom of her conclusions is not only unfair to all concerned, but it is unprofessional as well. Then, it will be assumed that any adequate procedure used in

²Arthur T. Jersild, Child Development and the Curriculum, p. 142.

³Chamberlain and Kindred, op. cit., p. 397.

conveying information to parents is sufficiently supported by an equally efficient pupil record system.

In the appraisal of any part of the school program, its adequacy can be determined only through the acceptance of some other system of its kind as criteria for the evaluation. In this study the writer is using the reporting system described and recommended by Pierce in his doctor's dissertation, Organization of a Campus Laboratory Elementary School for the Texas State College for Women,⁴ as criteria for evaluating the reporting systems of twenty elementary schools of Hill County. Data from many other readings substantiate the worth of this type of report.

Trends toward Changes

Teachers, administrators, and supervisors seeking to render profitable service in the field of education, must consider it a professional necessity to carry on a broad and continuous study of ways and means of improving the educational program. Merely making a change does not insure improvement; however, when any phase of a school program fails to be an asset in meeting the objective of promoting child growth, it behooves those in authority to make a thorough and conscientious study of something better for a replacement. Evidence of the need for a change in most reporting systems of the elementary schools has been furnished, and

⁴Pierce, op. cit., pp. 52-56.

the fact that there is a growing interest in an improvement over most present-day methods of reporting has been established.

Jones who sent a questionnaire to every state in the union concluded, "The traditional report card is doomed because it has failed to pass the test in the light of modern research and knowledge advanced in the fields of psychology, mental hygiene, and social philosophy."⁵

Many changes are now in progress; however, some have been so slight as to render little or no service. A change for the better is not a simple matter of alternating symbols; for it is not the mark used in reporting an appraisal that is important, but what is evaluated and the use made of the results, determine its true worth. Any effective reporting system involves the formulation of the objectives of the school program, acquisition of knowledge pertaining to the potential abilities and the total achievement of each child, and the evaluation of the growth evidenced. However purposeful it may be intended, a report which gives data on progress in the academic subjects only is of little or no value in meeting the needs of students.

The usual report tells us very little about the child, what he can do, what he has done successfully, what he has difficulty with, whether he gets along well with other children and with adults with whom he associates, and whether marked personality difficulties have come to light. In short the emphasis is on the subject matter accomplishment rather than on human attributes.⁶

⁵Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁶Ibid., p. 53.

As schools increase their interest in the all-round growth and personality development of children, the use of the traditional letter and numerical marks is gradually becoming obsolete. Something more adequate is in demand. Research has proved that most methods now in use do not meet the standard of excellence required by desirable educational institutes because of their failure to coincide with an educational program purposing to foster maximum individual growth.

Emphasis in the changes has shifted from quantitative to qualitative, diagnostic reporting; and results to the method of growth; negative to positive methods; formal cards to informal notes or conferences; from getting skills only to acquiring necessary skills and at the same time building social traits; more emphasis on physical well being; fewer reports and those in the form of progress reports; and pupils and parents participating in making the reports.⁷

The Informal Letter

The recommended informal notes and interviews as a type of reporting pupil progress to parents is in accord with the underlying aims and objectives of the campus school. These will not occur at any specific time but when the occasion demands.⁸

An informal letter or note whose assimilation is based on the results of a consistent study of a child and his progress, is much more accurate and comprehensive in its value as an appraisal of individual growth than a card made up of symbols which stand for as many different things as there are schools. One of the major objections to many practices

⁷Ibid., p. 54.

⁸Ibid., p. 55.

now in use is that they fail to give an over-all picture of the child.

In the more progressive schools, letters to parents or even home visits have taken the place of the tabulated card, so that the parent can receive a more well-rounded picture of a child's school life. It has become a record of personality development rather than a record in terms of reading, writing, and arithmetic.⁹

Lack of clarity, incompleteness, and lack of remedial contributions render many reports almost worthless. Symbols have no intrinsic value in estimating a person's social, physical, or mental advancement. It is impossible to draw a line of demarcation between the meaning of a numeral or letter and the one above or below it. Pierce quotes Streitz in pointing out these

Three major defects of the usual type of report:
 "First, teachers are not agreed as to the standards of excellence to be used. . . . Second, we know no way of interpreting a child's marks. . . . Third, the report tells us nothing about the behavior patterns that go along with his subject matter."¹⁰

The informal letter accompanied by interviews or conferences, has many advantages in overcoming these defects.

In the grade schools, "parent conferences" are fast replacing the traditional report cards. Two or three conferences a year provide a two-way educational experience for both parent and teacher. (In California they believe that teachers can learn from parents, too). Parent and teacher are brought closer together so that both can understand and plan for all of Junior's needs. With this system, Junior is on the winning end, as his

⁹Victor Johnson, "What a Report Card Can Tell You," Parents' Magazine, XX (April, 1945), 26.

¹⁰Pierce, op. cit., p. 53.

parents become interested in his growth instead of his grades.¹¹

An accurate and meaningful account of a student's progress is of inestimable significance to the child, the parent, and the teacher.

The Child

Too many children have the habit of working for grades. Misconceptions of the true meaning of education are responsible for such tragic practices. Grades are insignificant, in that they have no meaning when it comes to the growth of human beings; however, many pupils have been led to accept them as a goal, unaware of the fact that they are an end within themselves. Any report on pupil progress, which is not inclusive of comprehensive and constructive information for both the child and the parent, is an end within itself rather than a means to an end.

The child whose grades indicate superior work, without any further explanation as to whether or not he is capable of doing better, may not have made as much progress as a slower child whose grades show failure just because he has failed to reach certain standards. The meanings of grades are usually so obscure that they furnish little incentive for further effort. They fail to reveal to the student his need for certain learning or his need for acquiring certain

¹¹Stella B. Applebaum, "A Way to Build Happier Families," Parents' Magazine, XXV (January, 1950), 36.

abilities. "When pupils feel the need for knowing certain facts or acquiring certain abilities, not only is the learning much more effective but much more rapid as well."¹²

On the other hand a report to parents, whether it be by informal letter or by interview, can serve as a guide to both the parents and the child. Every normal child desires to advance, more in some directions than in others, depending upon his likes and dislikes. An appraisal which reveals to him the ways in which he is failing to make maximum use of his abilities, and at the same time recognizes the progress which he is making, tends to stimulate within him an interest toward greater endeavor. "If interest is developed, there will be learning, and no important learning can take place without interest."¹³

Every person appreciates being commended for his efforts. Even though a student is utilizing his potential abilities, recognition of that fact by others adds to his happiness--an essential quality in a democracy. To the pupil who is failing to make maximum use of his potential abilities, an encouraging commendation might change his attitudes and increase his interest. Attitudes are basic in promotion of individual development. The one reward "which motivates all of us though life is the approval of the person in authority and of our own group."¹⁴

¹²Lee and Lee, op. cit., p. 173.

¹³Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 178.

Education is concerned with training the pupil so as to help him do the most possible good for himself and society. Only in so far as he sees a need for improvement and only to the extent to which he sees value in increased efforts will he be motivated to learn and to grow to his limitations. The key to learning is effort; the key to effort is motivation; and the key to motivation is value.

In his chapter on reporting to parents, Pierce lists some comments from pupils in the California school, which verify the fact that the informal type of reporting student progress has the possibility of conveying more helpful information than do the traditional marking systems.

A fair report card would tell what part of each subject we are good in, and where we need to improve. A makes you and everybody think that you are good in everything about the thing, but you may be good in one thing about it and poor in another. It would tell how well we work together.¹⁵

It is the opinion of many in the field of education that the schools which still emphasize the value of grades in their reporting systems and fail to evaluate the total achievement made, are depriving students of an opportunity to realize maximum benefits in educational offerings and at the same time are giving them wrong concepts of true values. Since human life is the most highly developed and intricate phenomenon which the child experiences, he should be given ample opportunity to develop it to its fullest.

¹⁵Pierce, op. cit., p. 54.

The Parent

Parents are no longer content with confining their communications with the school to formal report cards. Fortunately, they are realizing more and more that their child's educational advantages are partially dependent upon their cooperation with, and understanding of the educational program. They want to be informed as to what the school is doing, for such knowledge is basic to sound parent-teacher relationship. The wise teacher solicits the parents' full partnership and participation in helping to further and broaden their children's growth. "Home and school relations stand or fall on the skill of the teacher in working with parents and children."¹⁶

Home-school relationships broaden the perspective of a child's behaviors, his attitudes, and his abilities. Adequate methods used in reporting to parents is one means of communications between the home and the school. Whether contacts are made by an interview or letter, they give the parent a chance to ascertain the definite achievement of his child and at the same time an opportunity to help in wise guidance and understanding. It is a kind of two-way experience in which the parent and the teacher work with a common interest.

These letters assist in helping recognize the many factors which condition learning outside the

¹⁶Otto, op. cit., p. 368.

schoolroom. Letters which are constructive bring about better understanding. Misbehavior is played down and progress is played up. Parent comes to learn and appreciate objectives of the school and teacher, can envision child in his environmental situation.¹⁷

Building wholesome lives for a democratic society is the sum total of the functions of American schools. Any information on factors affecting any one of these lives is of vital importance to the school as well as to the parents. "It is essential that the parents as well as the teacher understand the child's abilities, needs, and interests."¹⁸

Most parents desire the best in education for their children. Although an overwrought parent may sometimes appear a little arbitrary in his beliefs about certain practices of the school, it can usually be traced to lack of understanding. Much parent education on child development is obtained through trial and error; therefore, the average parent welcomes the school's help in finding solutions to problems confronting his child.

Greater love hath no parent than this: that he lay down his pride, desires, aspirations, hates, prejudices, fears, hopes, that his child may find his own inmost center, confidence, self-control, and self-respect.¹⁹

¹⁷William A. Yeager, Home-School-Community Relationship, p. 180.

¹⁸Macomber, op. cit., p. 257.

¹⁹Bertha Wood Barron, "What Can I Do about Junior?" Parents' Magazine, XXIV (September, 1949), 30.

The Teacher

It is probably even more important to the teacher that the report to parents consist of an accurate and complete account of the appraisal of individual growth than it is to either the child or the parent, for it gives her an opportunity for evaluating her own objectives and procedures. Every conscientious teacher constantly appraises her program and strives to determine its efficiency in meeting individual needs. An invaluable tool in this evaluation is the report to parents. The vast amount of information from which she formulates her decisions and climaxes her conclusions furnishes a basis for the teacher's constant adjustments necessary for fitting the curriculum to the child. In his article in Occupations, Davis emphasizes the relevant need for a teacher's consistent study of the pupil and his advancement.

Surely no reputable physician would attempt to prescribe for a patient whom he knew only as "someone" who complained of not feeling well. He would use every possible means of learning the patient's medical history and present condition before presuming to treat him. So every intelligent teacher will study the pupils in order to help each one to develop to the limit of his ability.¹⁹

The amount of reporting is unimportant, for it is the effectiveness of the communication which determines its value. Getting to the point in acquisition of needed data for the solution of recognized problems is the important factor to the teacher. The quickest and surest way to obtaining

¹⁹Frank G. Davis, "Capacity Achievement," Occupations, XXIII (April, 1945), 395.

the information is usually through some type of communication with the parent. Sometimes a conference or a home visit may be better, depending upon the purpose of the report.

The more the school makes a policy of giving parents a report of each pupil's personal and social characteristics, the more important it becomes for the teacher, as far as is practicable, to see the child through the eyes of the parents as well as through the eyes of the school. It is valuable also for parents to have first-hand glimpses of the ways in which their child functions and behaves at school.²⁰

More Democratic Practices

Democracy and education are inseparable, for democracy is a way of life and education is life. In adhering to desirable changes in the reporting systems, schools are putting into practice democratic ideals relevant to any educational system embracing the aims of a true democracy.

Many changes are still in the experimental stage; however, the movement toward improvement indicates progress. Change of stress from autocratic to more democratic practices indicate a broad step forward in the reporting system.²¹

Many schools claiming to cherish the ideals of a democracy, denounce the sincerity of their claim through the practice of autocratic principles. On the other hand, other schools exemplify their belief in a democratic way of life through daily use of its attributes in an educational system so flexible as to conform to both immediate and remote adjustments needed in the promotion of maximum individual

²⁰Jersild, op. cit., p. 143.

²¹Pierce, op. cit., p. 53.

growth. An appreciation for democracy is acquired through living it. Being democratic in name only does not confer upon the pupil the things a democracy symbolizes. He must be permitted to live it.

Security is one democratic quality which every successful person must experience. There is within the act of reporting to parents the power of aid in establishing that quality within the mind of individuals. Self confidence evolving from a sense of belonging has tremendous effect in conditioning learning, behavior, and personality. "Democracy in its fullest sense--democracy as a way of life--can survive any number of errors in judgment, but it cannot survive if the people have not learned to think and to have confidence in their own ability."²²

An informal appraisal should emphasize at least some progress in every student, for every child in the public school is capable of growth in some capacity. Either the student of superior ability or the one less capable finds solace in a higher estimate of his achievements and is usually stimulated to greater efforts. Recognition develops willingness to try.

There is no learning without the will to learn, because the will to learn is the only factor that, in human life, satisfies the procedure demanded by the laws of dynamics. The will to learn is the

²²Ralph Adams Brown and Kenneth C. Coulter, "Smothering Pupil Initiative," School Review, LII (May, 1944), 309.

energy of the total organism conditioning the activities of its parts.²³

Basic security is not a gift of the gods, but the result of a building process. It is a "must" in a well-rounded life, for insecurity breeds negativism and develops into biased ideas and emotional instability. Attitudes, concepts, and ideals are being built all of the time; and although good mental ability does contribute to the richness of living if properly used, too often it is confused with scholastic ability. In this case book learning is valued above other ways of showing intelligence. Because of this some children become insecure in the estimation of their own worth and develop complexes. Almost invariably those persons with the most difficult problems are insecure children who feel themselves lost causes.

School marks should be abolished along with all other paraphernalia of an antiquated competitive and artificial educational machine because they make children feel inferior or superior, encourage dishonesty, dull the edge of intellectual curiosity, make children course-passers instead of learners, and provide in general unworthy motives for hard work.²⁴

Thorough knowledge of each child is a staunch aid to the establishment of security, and coupled with it is the ability to ask of him what he might be expected to do successfully. Each person should be guided toward tasks he can

²³Raymond Holder Wheeler and Frances Theodore Perkins, Principles of Mental Development, p. 276.

²⁴Alonzo F. Meyers and Clarence O. Williams, Education in a Democracy, p. 50.

reasonably expect to attain. No two should necessarily be expected to reach the same heights of success. "Democracy does not make one man as good as another, it merely seeks to remove all artificial barriers and to assist every man to amount to as much as his ability, character, and industry permit."²⁵

Fair-dealing is also an essential quality in stabilizing security in the minds of the pupils. A report is fair when it is accurate and understandable to the extent that the child can interpret its meaning and accepts it as an impartial estimate of his actual achievement. "The child must feel the teacher is fair, sincerely helpful, and truly his friend."²⁶

A certain amount of freedom is another democratic element involved in the informal type of report of pupil progress. American schools cannot afford to overlook autocratic practices which embody creation of fears, lack of right to participate, and force of acceptance without understanding. In many cases children's reactions evidence the fact that the grading method hinders rather than encourages learning. It is the groundwork for fears and inhibitions having to do with such factors as failure, inability to meet certain

²⁵Educational Policies Commission, The Purpose of Education in American Democracy, p. 25.

²⁶Lee and Lee, op. cit., p. 179.

standards, and not being superior. From one's self a person can never escape; hence, self-esteem and self-assurance are most desirable parts of every personality. Through use of knowledge based on psychiatric and thorough understanding of the child and his development, a teacher can erase much of the anxiety of the pupil whose well-being is her primary charge. Fears multiply--one grows out of another, until the child infested with them ceases to be a human individual and becomes more and more a peg fitted into a designated place.

Freedom to participate disposes of certain fears, and at the same time it places increased value on the report. Participation in arriving at decisions and conclusions makes the individual aware of his true status. The details of the report become clearly understood facts, and he is no longer being forced to accept that which he does not understand. Proper exercise of freedom in the reporting system tends to remove hindering obstacles and motivates the student toward further and higher aspirations. "No problem in child development, or in the control of the learning process is more vital than motivation, and more in need, at the present time of careful investigation and analysis."²⁷

When other desirable and democratic qualities of the recommended type of report are summed up, they are inclusive of these, and more; a respect for individuality; concern for the whole child; and diagnostic in nature.

²⁷Wheeler and Perkins, op. cit., p. 408.

Respect for Individuality

Democracy provides for the individual, places value on individuality. Democracy says that each individual has the right to develop to the maximum of his ability. The shift of emphasis from competitive to individual development may be thought of as a step toward installation of other democratic principles in the public school. Individuality and equality are inseparable, for there is no such thing as equality without individuality. No two people are identical, nor do any two progress in the same manner or at the same rate of speed.

Furthermore, not only are there infinite variations among individuals, but each differs from himself from time to time. So vitally do these variations affect mental and emotional growth, that their existence must never be ignored by anyone who works with youth.²⁸

Equality does not imply uniformity. Since individuals do not grow alike, growth need not be determined by the same measuring stick, but rather evaluate each child's achievements in terms of his own growth in relation to his abilities. "Basic to all other considerations is that of seeing each learner as an individual who has needs and problems not exactly like those of others in the same group."²⁹

Respect for individuality and concern for the whole child are practically synonymous. In striving toward

²⁸Robert Floyd Cromwell, "A Basic Program of Guidance," Maryland School Bulletin, XXV (November, 1943), 9.

²⁹Stratemeyer, Forkner, and McKim, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

development of the whole child, individual abilities, characteristics, and habits are included. The increasing change from emphasis on academic progress only to that of total growth is an improvement to be commended. Coinciding and inclusive within this adjustment is the change from the traditional practice of confining or stretching the child to fit the curriculum to adjusting the program to meet the total needs of the individual. Fixed plans do not contribute to education; hence, they do not denote concern for the whole child.

Diagnostic in Nature

The shortest route to the solution of any problem is through a thorough knowledge and understanding of its source. Teachers are now becoming skilled and professionally trained in the ability to recognize early stages of emotional and social disturbances and difficulties. With the cooperation of the parents they work through such problems before they become acute. A preventive is always preferred to a cure. Reports to parents are probably the surest and quickest means of getting at the core of a difficulty and removing its cause.

An alert teacher is ever on guard for symptoms of some underlying difficulty. Symptoms are often very deceptive and may present themselves in ways which may be mistaken for such objectionable qualities as impudence, disinterest, superiority, or arrogance. Logical thinking and acting on

the part of the teacher and parent are invaluable in diagnosing cases pertaining to the child's development and in setting him aright on the right track of progress.

Criteria for Adequate Reporting Systems

Strang sums up the qualities of the desirable informal note thus:

"The letter to parents should not be formal or stereotyped, but should give an accurate description and appraisal of the student's progress. Before the letter is written, the homeroom teacher or person who knows the student best should collect comments from all the teachers regarding his achievement, physical health, mental health, social attitude, and work habits. On the basis of all the significant information the teacher can gather, he writes his letter to the parents, commenting on the student's progress in the tool subjects, in the habits of cooperation, and other personal and social habits. He calls attention to weak points and to the abilities to be developed."³⁰

From this summary and from other desirable qualities of the adequate reporting system recommended by Pierce, these criteria have been derived for the evaluation to determine the adequacy of the reporting systems of twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

1. Reports to parents should be made in the form of informal letters and conferences.

2. A report on pupil progress should be made in terms of individual growth rather than on competitive bases.

3. In a report to parents emphasis should be placed on human attributes rather than on academic progress.

³⁰Pierce, op. cit., p. 55.

4. The report should be based on accurate information concerning the child's achievement, mental health, physical health, social attitudes, and work habits.

5. The report should include information on the child's progress in the tool subjects, habits of cooperation, and other social and personal habits.

6. A report should include such information as whether or not a child gets along well with others.

7. It should name the things the pupil is doing successfully.

8. Attention should be called to abilities to be developed.

9. Attention should be called to individual weaknesses to be strengthened.

10. A report to parents should include comments on marked personality difficulties that have come to light.

11. A report should give an accurate and descriptive appraisal of a pupil's total progress.

12. Reports should be less autocratic and more democratic.

13. Reports should be made when there is a need for them.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF THE REPORTING SYSTEMS OF TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Purpose of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the reporting systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County. An attempt will be made to determine the adequacy of the reporting systems according to the criteria set up in Chapter IV.

Evaluation of Data

The reporting systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County meet the adequacy of the criteria set up in varying degrees. In the evaluation of any part of an educational program the purposes of that phase of the program must be kept in mind and the appraisal made in accordance with its efficiency in meeting those aims. Promotion of maximum child development is the preeminent goal to be attained through the use of progress reports to parents. Its other objectives are only means to that accomplishment as an end.

The report to parents is an invaluable tool, and when used as such, it is never an end in itself. Not until it can be interpreted correctly by all whom it concerns, however, can it be intelligently used for the optimum growth of the

pupil. "If the evaluative process is to be used so as to make its maximum contribution, it must be looked at not only in terms it is used by the teacher, but also with reference to its parts in growth of the learner."¹

Table 12 shows the methods used in reporting pupil progress to parents in twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

TABLE 12

METHODS USED IN REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS TO PARENTS
IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Methods Used in Reporting Progress	Number	Per Cent
Informal letter and conferences....	0	0
Report cards, conferences, and notes.....	11	55
Report cards and conferences.....	5	25
Report cards.....	4	20

None of the schools used the informal letter and conferences as a method of reporting. Eleven used report cards, conferences, and notes; and five used report cards and conferences. Only four indicated that they used only report cards.

The method used in conveying information to parents is probably the dominant factor involved in making adequate progress reports, since it determines the extent to which

¹Stratemeyer, Forkner, and McKim, op. cit., p. 398.

parents and teachers are given the opportunity of working together. If it is to produce understanding and secure cooperation between the home and the school, the report must give a complete picture of the child in his many different phases of development. It must provide ways of sharing and planning with the parents in the task of promoting and guiding the child's growth. To meet these requirements it must not only provide for a two-way communication, but it must be clear and understandable to each person whom it concerns. An adequate report opens vistas of opportunities for continued cooperative procedures in furthering the pupil's welfare.

Probably the element next in importance in giving an accurate and effective account of a student's progress is the first principles used in arriving at the information contained in the report. Table 13 gives the bases used in formulating data for progress reports in twenty elementary schools in Hill County.

Only five principals said that they formulated the data for their reports in terms of individual growth. Fifteen made their reports on the basis of a standard set up for the group. An adequate appraisal of a student's achievements and development should present a fairly inclusive picture of the individual student, not as he compares with others in his group, but as he has actually made progress during a period of time. The practice of accepting standards for a

TABLE 13

BASES USED IN FORMULATING DATA FOR PROGRESS REPORTS
IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Bases Used	Number	Per Cent
Individual growth.....	5	25
Standard set up for group.....	15	75

group and measuring each child according to those standards implies an inadequate conception of individual differences. A true sense of individuality stresses uniqueness of each person.

Research in psychology has established the basic principle of individual differences among pupils. . . . In evaluating achievement, therefore, it is essential to consider achievement in terms of each individual's general or social aptitudes.²

Respect for individual differences conforms to the consideration of each pupil in every aspect of his development. Children vary not only in physical characteristics, but in their limitations to learn as well as in their capacities for learning in various fields. In a democratic society social progress is dependent upon the development of the individual differences of people. To secure individual expression, to direct and guide it, and to promote its development to the limit should be the function of a

²J. Wayne Wrightsone, "Evaluating Achievement," Childhood Education, XXIV (February, 1948), 253.

school adhering to the original democratic principles concerning general welfare and the development of individual personalities.

Table 14 shows the placement of emphases in the reports to parents.

TABLE 14
PLACEMENT OF EMPHASES IN REPORTS TO PARENTS IN
TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Where Are Emphases Placed in Reports to Parents?	Number	Per Cent
Development of human attributes....	1	5
Academic progress.....	14	70
Both human attributes and academic progress.....	5	25

One school placed greater emphasis on the development of human attributes, but fourteen emphasized academic progress. The fact that five schools placed equal value on human attributes and academic progress indicates a gradual change toward concern for the whole child. An educational program which fails to regard essential personal qualities in its promotion of pupil progress cannot be inclusive of concern for the whole child.

The struggle for academic advancement is often encouraged by appraisal procedures at the expense of personal values which schools should cling to because they contribute to life some of its richest meanings and most endearing

satisfactions. In a democracy academic-bound practices should give way in face of the different individual needs and problems. Stress should be placed on the student and his wholesome living rather than on subject matter, grades, and scholarship.

It is not impractical to suggest that some educational appraisals do help the student build responsive attitudes toward values worth living by; however, some reports appear too narrow to be inclusive of such desirable attributes. Although progress in the tool subjects is to be desired, education means much more than just that. It means training for wholesome living.

Table 15 shows some of the basic factors considered in the formulation of the reports.

TABLE 15
BASIC FACTORS CONSIDERED IN FORMULATION OF REPORTS
TO PARENTS IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
OF HILL COUNTY

Basic Factors Considered	Number	Per Cent
Achievement.....	20	100
Mental health.....	12	60
Physical health.....	12	60
Social attitudes.....	15	75
Work habits.....	18	90

All twenty of the schools included achievement as a basic factor considered in the formulation of data for their

reports. Only twelve, or sixty per cent, considered information on mental health. Twelve considered physical health, and fifteen included social attitudes. Ninety per cent listed work habits as a basic factor.

Every phase of pupil development is important, and equally important are the factors that influence that progress. If maximum growth of the whole child is fostered, anything that might be a help or a hindrance should be investigated. Each of the factors listed could be instrumental in either the creation or the solution of problems. They should be considered basic factors on which information for a report to parents should be collected.

Achievement should be the desired result of an educational program; however, it should be sought in every phase of child growth. The greater and broader the achievement, the better are the results. Achievement should never be thought of in terms of academic progress only. Possibilities for achievement are as broad as the offerings of an educational program and the potentialities of the pupils involved.

Mental health and physical health are two of the determining points for educational advancement. A thorough knowledge of each pupil's mental and physical condition should form the ground work for the procedures of every teacher. They are basic factors in a child's growth and

should always be considered as such in an appraisal of his progress.

Social attitudes should also be thought of as an element in the human make-up to be treated with thoughtfulness. An understanding teacher should realize that every person has both desirable and undesirable qualities in his social arrangement, and she should strive to develop proper social attitudes in order to preserve the desirable qualities and eliminate the undesirable ones. This cannot be done through autocratic practices in teaching. Social maladjustments are often the result of aggressive practices in working for recognition, grades, or honors. Finer motives for effort are crowded out when pupils are encouraged in contending for preferred places instead of being taught to work on a non-competitive basis.

Although work habits are essential factors within themselves, they are probably more important as indicators of different symptoms. They are usually the result of other factors, such as interest, value, motivation, and physical and mental health. The efficient teacher is ever on the alert for symptoms of problems or difficulties, and sometimes she is more interested in symptoms of new interests or earnest effort among her students, which she may find in their work habits.

Work habits should not be thought of as just good or bad. They should be considered from the viewpoint of their

effect upon the promotion of child growth. If they are unsatisfactory, the reasons for their being so should be determined.

Table 16 shows items on which reports to parents were made.

TABLE 16
ITEMS ON WHICH REPORTS TO PARENTS WERE MADE IN
TWENTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Items Reported on	Number	Per Cent
Progress in the tool subjects.....	20	100
Habits of cooperation.....	15	75
Other personal habits.....	13	65
Other social habits.....	15	75
Ability to get along with others...	11	55
Things done successfully.....	16	80

All twenty of the schools reported on progress in the tool subjects. Fifteen reported on habits of cooperation; thirteen, on personal habits; fifteen, on social habits; eleven, on ability to get along with others; and sixteen, on things done successfully. The variation in the things on which reports were made indicates a variation in opinions as to what education involves. That all of the twenty schools placed value on progress in the tool subjects was evidenced by the one hundred per cent stating that it was included in their report.

Progress in the tool subjects does not suffice for

wholesome growth; however, it does contribute to that aim. It should not be sought at the expense of other desirable qualities, nor should it be thought of as a goal within itself. It is only one essential means in reaching a goal in the educational program.

Habits of cooperation should be given a prominent place in the appraisal of a student's advancement. Willingness to cooperate and the ability to do so are not synonymous. Freedom to work and act jointly for a common interest is granted only in a democracy; however, freedom is acquired, not meted out, and democracy is learned. Intelligent cooperation should be one of the many qualities to be firmly established in the learning and living of every pupil.

Personal habits are usually the result of personal attitudes, and personal attitudes play a major part in making a person what he is. This is ample proof that personal habits should be accepted as essential influences on student progress. Satisfaction for basic life needs are necessary for personality adjustments which are involved in personal habits.

Social habits, like personal habits, help to make a pupil the kind of child he is. A child is usually accepted or rejected by the group because of his social or personal habits. Happiness is dependent upon being accepted by the group. Social habits can be directed and modified; therefore, it should be the duty of the school to promote the development

of desirable social and personal habits along with its other phases of education.

The ability to get along with others is a desirable quality in the life of any person.* That its true value is not accepted by many is evidenced in the fact that only fifty-five per cent of the schools included it in their reports to parents. Ability to get along with others is comprised of other qualities of worth, such as cooperation, tolerance, understanding, and friendship. It is too valuable to be overlooked; for it is not only an individual problem, but a world problem as well.

A report to parents is incomplete unless it tells what the student is doing successfully. It should not be on a competitive basis, but it should be individualistic and sincere. Every child should realize some measure of success when his growth is evaluated in terms of his own abilities. Knowledge of success is one motive for greater effort, and effort is essential to maximum learning.

Ways of pointing out weaknesses to be strengthened are shown in Table 17.

In two schools no provision was made for pointing out individual weaknesses to be strengthened. Six used conferences with parents for that purpose, and three schools conveyed the information through informal notes to the parents. Nine schools pointed out the weaknesses to be strengthened by checking certain items on the report card.

TABLE 17

PROVISIONS FOR POINTING OUT WEAKNESSES TO BE
STRENGTHENED IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Ways of Pointing Out Weaknesses To Be Strengthened	Number	Per Cent
None.....	2	10
Conferences.....	6	30
Informal notes.....	3	15
Checking list on report cards.....	9	45

There is a vast difference between weaknesses to be strengthened and permanent inabilities. If there are sufficient recorded data available, the teacher can be fairly accurate in differentiating between the two. Constant reference to something that can hardly be expected to be improved discourages both the child and the parent. On the other hand, the student may be encouraged by learning that he is rightly expected to do better. Recognition of ability stimulates effort. Ways of pointing out weaknesses are inadequate unless there are clarified explanations to serve as guides in the improvement that is expected to follow.

Parents and teachers must work together as partners in helping the pupil develop emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually. Reports should be a means of communication through which mutual understandings of the child's needs might be established. Too often the teacher determines

the course of a pupil's advancement without reference to his particular needs for wholesome growth. In such cases weaknesses that could be overcome to at least some extent are often mistaken for a lack of interest or inability to learn. Teachers' conclusions should not be based on suspicions or surmisings when a child's welfare is at stake. The case should not be considered closed when a weakness has been determined and pointed out. That should be only the first step toward continued planning and procedures in remedial efforts.

Ways of calling attention to potential abilities to be developed are shown in Table 18.

TABLE 18
PROVISIONS FOR CALLING ATTENTION TO ABILITIES TO
BE DEVELOPED IN TWENTY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

Ways of Calling Attention to Abilities To Be Developed	Number	Per Cent
None.....	12	60
Conferences.....	3	15
Notes.....	2	10
Conferences and notes.....	3	15

Twelve schools made no mention of potential abilities to be developed. Eight did include this in their report, one by conference, two by notes, and three by conferences and notes. Interest in this phase of the report was in the

minority. It is discernible that those schools using conferences, notes, or both, in making their reports to parents embrace a much broader reporting program than those using only the report card.

Promotion of maximum individual growth is impossible without some knowledge of abilities to be developed. Often it is assumed that the children making good grades are also making maximum progress; but, actually, they may be making minimum use of their abilities. Determining a student's progress means more than comparison of scholastic averages. He should be expected to grow socially and emotionally as well as intellectually, and none of these can be measured by a set standard.

Facing the facts of individual differences in endowment, drive, interests, maturity, and background we should surely recognize the unfairness and inappropriateness of evaluative measures which emphasize competitive achievement instead of concerning themselves with the encouragement and development of each person in terms of his own potentialities and his own growth pattern.³

Usually it is the pupil who willingly conforms to a pattern of procedure set up by the teacher who receives the best rating. The child with an inquisitive mind who seeks to exercise his abilities through various exploitations not included in the prescribed list of activities and assignments has little chance of a superior rating. Each of the two

³Laura Zirbes, "Evaluation," Childhood Education, XXIV (February, 1948), 251.

children is having his abilities squelched rather than developed; and, although neither one is making maximum progress, the child with a lower rating has probably advanced farther than the other. Stress on academic achievement is usually found in schools with set standards. Development of potential abilities does not lie within the realm of academic progress. Continuous study of children to determine their capacities for learning is a professional necessity for teachers seeking to train children to live wholesomely in an ever changing society. Helping them find and develop their abilities is the heart of the reporting system. "A system is needed that will challenge and motivate each pupil to greater effort and at the same time furnish him guidance in how to improve himself."⁴

In answer to the question as to whether or not the report included comments on marked personality difficulties that had come to light, thirteen, or sixty-five per cent, of the replies were in the affirmative while seven were in the negative. In the interviews with the principals of these the writer learned that only five of the thirteen including comments on marked personality difficulties did it through notes or conferences. The other eight did it through the report cards.

Children under the strain of personality difficulties

⁴W. Carman Lucas, "Appraisal Cards More Helpful Than Report Cards," Nation's Schools, XXXIV (August, 1944), 31.

should not be expected to make maximum progress in other phases of their development. One purpose of reporting to parents should be to help locate the source of interferences in order that adjustments might be made to meet existing needs. A need is anything that helps an individual meet demands that a wholesome life makes upon him in a way that is satisfactory to himself and to society in general.

Recognizing symptoms of personality difficulties is important; however, recognition without remedial adjustment is without value. Constructive information cannot be conveyed through the process of checking comments on a report card, for the comments should be made according to the needs of the individual. Even less effective is the practice of grading personality traits. Personality cannot be graded. "The teacher must not think of the child as 'passing' or 'failing' in a personality rating; the child is merely on his way to maturity."⁵

Personality disturbances modify the whole learning process and thereby condition any specialized learning process being promoted. "It devolves upon the teacher, therefore, to facilitate and direct development of personality in the pupil."⁶ A real solution to the teacher's problem can hardly be found except through a close contact and consistent cooperation with the parents. There is no way of meeting the

⁵Flory and Webb, op. cit., p. 280.

⁶Wheeler and Perkins, op. cit., p. 2.

needs of a child without first ascertaining what the needs are. When asked whether or not their reports to parents gave an accurate and descriptive appraisal of the total progress of the pupil, only four of the persons interviewed answered, "Yes"; and the other sixteen answered, "No."

These replies reveal the fact that most of these twenty elementary schools of Hill County do not put into practice maximum concern for whole child development. This should not be the case in a democratic school. Preparation for the art of living wholesomely demands regard and respect for the development of the individual in his entirety, and nothing short of that will suffice. Schools that emphasize subject matter in their organization and practices cannot attain pure pupil-centeredness, for "education should offer every child the best possible preparation for living a life as nearly normal and as fully expressive of his personality as his biological nature will allow."⁷ The abilities to think, to initiate, and to act wisely evolve from experiences; however, learning experiences cannot be properly provided unless there is knowledge of a need for them. Teachers are more inclined to detect disturbing factors in the life of the child who is not well-behaved and fails to respond to certain fixed principles and practices. To be of value, however, the recognition should be only the first step

⁷Ruth Strang, Personnel and Guidance, p. 2.

toward corrective adjustments. Misbehavior is not the only symptom of needed adjustments, however. It is often the child who willingly and anxiously conforms to rules, regulations, and assignments that is neglected most.

Appraisals based on meager phases of an acceptable educational program cannot give a true picture of such a child's growth. Actually, he may be making less progress according to his abilities and may be suffering more severely from maladjustment than the child who misbehaves and receives low ratings in his academic progress. Teachers who set group standards and teach within their realms limit the possibilities of child growth and help to mold human lives permanently. According to Brody, an assistant professor in psychiatry at Temple University School, "the most serious form of mental sickness, schizophrenia, claims as its victims persons who as children were described as over-conscientious, painfully good, obedient, shy persons."⁸ With the power of molding human lives invested in them, schools and teachers should leave no stone unturned in their efforts to further the total development of every pupil.

Table 19 shows when reports to parents were made in twenty elementary schools of Hill County.

Sixteen schools reported to parents only every six weeks. Four schools reported every six weeks, but they also

⁸Morris W. Brody, "Teaching a Child to Behave," Parents' Magazine, XXIV (September, 1949), 112.

TABLE 19

WHEN REPORTS TO PARENTS ARE MADE IN TWENTY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HILL COUNTY

When Reports Are Made	Number	Per Cent
Only when they are needed.....	0	0
Each six weeks only.....	16	80
Each six weeks and conferences when needed.....	4	20

reported through conferences at other times when there was a need for it. None of the twenty schools confined their reporting to times when a need for reporting arose.

Since a child's growth is a continued process which does not conform to definite periods of time, it hardly seems suggestive that reports on his achievement should be so static either. Over-anxiety over grades, cramming, and over-work are often encouraged by such practice. A dynamic educational program is concerned with long-range and unlimited development of the child and, therefore, uses the reporting system only as a tool when it is needed as a means to that end. The amount of reporting should not be emphasized, but value should be placed on the kind of report that is made and the way in which it is done.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the adequacy of the pupil record and reporting systems used in twenty elementary schools of Hill County. A summary of the findings is as follows:

1. Each of the twenty elementary schools has a pupil record for every child.
2. The pupil records vary in their degree of adequacy. Only a few contain data on all phases of child growth, and that information is very limited.
3. In many of the schools there seems to be a tendency toward placing more emphasis on the quality and existence of the record cards themselves rather than on their contents.
4. The contents of most of the records studied are not sufficiently valuable in nature to be of much immediate or lasting value in contributing to the educational process.
5. Not enough data about the pupil are obtained and recorded upon his first entrance of the school. Without sufficient knowledge of the child, the teacher is unable to adjust her program to meet his needs.

6. Failure to include an anecdotal record limits the value of the records considerably.

7. Because of their failure to record data on conferences, correspondence, and home visits, a large majority of the schools do not receive maximum benefits from these communications.

8. Apparently the full significance of discipline practices, tardiness, and absences is not recognized by those in authority in many of the schools.

9. Only a small percentage of the schools use methods of filing that lead to minimum effort in the use of their pupil records. Some records are too far from the school to be used frequently and extensively.

10. Autocratic principles are practiced in determining the items included on the records in most of the schools.

11. Pupil records are of little or no value as an aid in the guidance program in a majority of the schools.

12. Most of the pupil records are available to those who need them in the promotion of pupil development.

13. Most of the reports to parents convey little meaningful information, for they cannot be interpreted correctly.

14. A majority of the schools do not make their reports sufficiently broad to include the development of the whole child.

15. Certain factors essential to training for wholesome

living are given either minor or no consideration in the formulation of many of the progress reports.

16. All of the schools conform to the static procedure of sending out reports at definite and regular intervals; however, some of the systems do show indications of more dynamic practices in that they also report to parents by conference or informal notes when there is a need for them.

Conclusions

From a careful examination of the data in this study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Most of the pupil record systems used in the elementary schools of Hill County are not adequate as an aid in the promotion of maximum child development. Their lack of sufficient data on individual pupils renders them of little value in an effective educational program.

2. Pupil records are not given a prominent place in the school programs of the elementary schools of Hill County. Many of the administrators and teachers apparently are not aware of the true worth of adequate pupil records.

3. In many cases the record systems are not democratically set up in such a manner as to meet pupil needs. Many of the practices in the development and maintenance of the records do not contribute to a more desirable educational set-up.

4. The reporting systems used in the elementary schools

of Hill County do not meet the standard of adequacy in their support of an effective educational program.

5. Methods used in reporting to parents do not contribute to better home-school relationships. They do not promote intelligent cooperation and mutual understandings.

6. The reports are too narrow in their scope and too indefinite in their meanings to meet individual needs and to promote maximum individual growth.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered in the light of data developed in the study:

1. The pupil records should include significant data on every phase of child development.

2. Merely filing a record for every child should not suffice, but the value of the contents should be emphasized.

3. All data included in the pupil records should be of such quality as to contribute to furthering pupil progress.

4. Immediately upon the entrance of a child into the school all available data about the child should be acquired and added to the cumulative record.

5. Anecdotal records should be added to the pupil records.

6. Records of conferences, correspondence, and home visits should be kept in order that continuous use of data obtained through them might be made.

7. Discipline practices, tardiness, and absences should be recorded and studied as symptoms of underlying problems.

8. Pupil records should be filed in cumulative individual folders in a place where they can be quickly and easily utilized.

9. Teachers using the records should help determine the items to be included in the records.

10. Pupil records should be made a valuable tool in the guidance program.

11. Reports to parents should be made in such a way that meaningful information is conveyed and cooperative understandings are established.

12. The report should be formulated from compiled information on all phases of child development.

13. Factors contributing to wholesome living should be emphasized in the report.

14. All reports should be made in terms of individual growth.

15. A report should be made only when an occasion demands it.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1. Do you keep a pupil record for every child?
2. On what phases of child development do your records contain information?
3. Are the data in your records known to be thoroughly accurate?
4. Do the records contain only pertinent data?
5. Are the records of durable quality?
6. Are they cumulative? Permanent?
7. Is the information understandable to all persons who need to use the records?
8. Is there an admission card? If so, what data are obtained through it?
9. Do the pupil records include a health card? If so, what data are entered in the health card?
10. What items in the health card are approved by a physician?
11. Is there an anecdotal record?
12. If so, what kinds of information are contained in the anecdotal record?
13. Are the facts given in the anecdotal record purely descriptive with no interpretations?
14. What data are included in your mental records?

15. What data are included in your scholastic records?
16. Does your pupil record have a division that is used for records of conferences, correspondence, and home visits relating to the pupil?
17. Do you record data on discipline practices, tardiness, and absences?
18. Is there a summary card for administrative use?
19. How are your pupil records filed?
20. Where are they filed?
21. Who decides on the items to be included in the records?
22. Are your records actually used in a guidance program?
23. Are they of diagnostic value? Therapeutic value?
24. Who has access to the records?
25. What methods of reporting to parents are used in your elementary school?
26. Is the report made in terms of individual growth or in terms of a standard set up for the group?
27. Does the report place greater emphasis on human attributes or on academic progress?
28. Is the report based on accurate information concerning these factors:
 - a. Achievement?
 - b. Mental health?
 - c. Physical health?
 - d. Social attitudes?
 - e. Work habits?

29. Does your report to parents include information on these:
 - a. Progress in the tool subjects?
 - b. Habits of cooperation?
 - c. Other personal habits?
 - d. Other social habits?
30. Does the report include information on the child's ability to get along with others?
31. Is there information on the things he is doing successfully?
32. How are individual weaknesses to be strengthened pointed out?
33. How is attention called to the abilities to be developed?
34. Does the report include comments on personality difficulties that have come to light?
35. Does your report give an accurate and descriptive appraisal of the pupil's total progress?
36. When are your reports to parents made?

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