THE IMPROVEMENT OF REPORTS TO PARENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine an adequate and justifiable report to the parents regarding the progress of students in the public schools of the Colbert community, Colbert, Oklahoma. There have been voluminous writings in recent years concerning marking and reporting, but none of these studies solve the problems of any particular community.

The educational program of a community consists of the total range of experiences of individuals in the environment to which they are exposed. The school is the special agency set up by society to guide and direct the learning processes, but it can never be the connecting link between the home and a democracy except through a clearer understanding by the parents of the objectives sought by the school; through a clearer understanding by the pupil of the purposes of the teacher and the school; and through a more careful review and analysis by the teacher of his own objectives and purposes.
It is a commonly known and accepted fact that education is a social force, one that aims at social welfare and betterment as well as the fullest development of which each individual is capable. At the same time education aims to arouse and develop all the worthy interests and corresponding powers of each individual so far as his ability and stage of development permit. Finally, education aims at the cultivation of cooperation and good will among men, not so much through formulated precepts as through a kindly but firm discipline that gradually substitutes self direction and self initiative for external restraint and guidance, and that leads progressively to habits of achievement commensurate with ability and opportunity.

Teachers have always realized the necessity of employing reports that would meet the needs of this type of education. Even as early as 1800 the New England teacher invited his patrons to the closing exercises. In Home-School-Community Relations, Yeager says:

There seems to be little evidence that parents and patrons visited the early schools frequently while in session. Visits of parents to the school were occasioned by quarter day exercises, school picnics, literary and other school programs. By 1800 in many sections of New England, it was customary a day or two before the end of the term to invite the parents to attend a public exhibition. Public exercises were held consisting of reading, spelling, and speaking single pieces and dialogues. Anticipation of the event kept teacher, pupils, and parents on edge throughout the winter term. These were really community
affairs. Mothers brought their babies and grandmothers their knitting and wool to pick. It was the only form of reporting school progress.\(^1\)

Regardless of the importance of marks and reports, an argument can usually be started on a moment's notice with any group of teachers and parents. Indeed, there are few topics in the immense realm of teacher-parent relationship on which there is less agreement.

Many desirable objectives may be stimulated and accomplished and undesirable results avoided through an adequate report to the parent. It is proposed to center this study upon the role of perfecting such a method of reporting.

Definition of Terms

**Adequate.**--By adequate is meant that quality of a report which will tend to answer and satisfy any questions of the parents concerning the actual progress of the student in school, not only his progress in academic work but also in his co-curricular work as well as in his social relations.

**Justifiable.**--By justifiable is meant that the basis of the report can be defended according to democratic, psychological, and sociological ideals of living.

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Community.--By community is meant not only a geographical area but also a much more flexible area that changes from day to day. Cook defines the term "community" in these words:

Like other commonsense words, community needs careful definition. Even in technical usage it has come to mean a number of different things; it may be used to designate a special social group, such as a family, a gang, or a church. It may be applied to an inclusive racial or cultural group such as the far-flung Jewish people, or it may be used in reference to the world as an interacting whole. While these usages are different and hence confusing, they are rooted in one common element. In each instance the community indicates a number of persons who feel bound together by common objects of value.

For our purposes the community is simply a particular type of spatial group plus its culture, an activity circle which embraces the inhabitants of an area and functions in a specific manner. More concretely defined, a community is a population aggregate, inhabiting a contiguous territory, integrated through common experience, possessing a number of basic service institutions, conscious of its social unity, and able to act in a cooperate capacity.²

Cook's definition is used in order to impress upon the reader that the Colbert community is not only a specific section of land but that it also includes various types of people as well with their different problems, beliefs, and ideals.

Geographically speaking, the community is predominantly rural. The majority of the people are farmers, but because of the recreational facilities of nearby Lake Texoma a

²Lloyd Allen Cook, Community Backgrounds of Education, pp. 27–28.
portion of the population is comprised of transients and wealthy vacationers. This study, however, will be limited primarily to the questions and problems of the permanent residents concerning pupil reporting.

Sources of Data

Information on the present problem was secured from both primary and secondary sources. Data on recommendations of educators regarding the most effective means of reporting the child's progress in school to parents were determined from books, periodicals, courses of study, and bulletins. A partial evaluation of present practices was revealed by questionnaires answered by 110 parents. A copy of the questionnaire is included in this study. These data were used to set up criteria of soundness whereby possible procedures were analyzed and evaluated and from which conclusions and recommendations were drawn as a solution to the problem of perfecting an adequate and justifiable report to the parent.

Related Studies

Related studies include those studies that have been made in the broad field of marking and reporting practices. A brief resume of some of the more pertinent of these studies follows together with an explanation as to how they differ from the present study.
In a recent study on trends in reporting pupils' school progress, Davis evaluates present-day practices. He presents his findings in three ways: First, by making an analysis of the methods of reporting as recommended by the leading educators of today; second, by attempting to discover the prevailing trends and practices of reporting as described by former students of North Texas State College; and third, by making a comparison of the two methods just described.

Davis found that according to leading educators the purpose of the traditional report cards is twofold. In the first place, they furnish data for purposes of promotion and school records; and in the second place, they give the parent some indication of the child's achievement in school work. Davis also discovered that with the passing of time the purposes of the report card increase immensely. The traditional type of card is no longer satisfactory. One leading educator, P. M. Symonds, states:

"Many factors about John are much more important than an "Average of B in arithmetic." There is the fact that he stayed after school to help the teacher clean out some cupboards. There is the fact that he is the best baseball pitcher in his grade. There is..."

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the fact that he enjoyed a Victrola rendition of the Pilgrim's Chorus intensely and was surprised to find that he liked music so well.4

Davis points out that informal grading and the new type of report cards have grown out of the movement to make the child the center of the school and to help him to live in the present as well as to prepare him for the future.

From his study Davis draws the following conclusions:

1. The major portion of teachers still use the "A," "B," and "C" form of reporting pupil progress.

2. Many schools attempt to report on a child's personality adjustment and social characteristics with the same "A," "B," and "C" method.

3. Some few schools use a combination of methods to report pupil progress.

4. The most frequently mentioned desired improvement is the use of a friendly letter.

5. There is no definite trend toward the adoption of a standard form for reporting to parents.

Davis's study differs from the present one in that he merely evaluates the methods of reporting in various sections of the country. The writer's problem is to determine a satisfactory report for a given community.

In *Improving Marking and Reporting Practices*⁵ William L. Wrinkle of the Colorado State College of Education describes a trial-and-error method of experimentation covering a period of ten years. The material is presented in three parts. Part I discusses the problem at hand with arguments concerning the present practices of reporting. Part II gives the procedure or method of study that is used in the experimentations. Part III states the outcome and gives some practical advice as to what to do with these results.

The purpose of Wrinkle's study is to awaken the public to a realization of the fallacies in the use of the usual type of report card and to suggest a better method of reporting. Wrinkle accomplishes this purpose by testing the reader's point of view concerning marking and reporting. In this test the reader merely marks each statement with "A" or "D" for "agree" or "disagree." After the test has been scored and compared with the results of the same test taken by 128 administrators, the author gives a selected bibliography on "Marking and Reporting Practices." Over 100 authors are listed in this bibliography.

According to Wrinkle conventional marking might be classified under four headings representing four functions:

(1) Administration, (2) Guidance, (3) Information, and (4) Motivation. He points out several fallacies concerning these functions, the most pertinent one being the inability of marks to serve the various functions which they are supposed to serve because they do not represent fixed values in terms of which they may be interpreted.

In this study the author evaluates some of the departures from conventional practice. He points out the fact that the greatest change in marking practices since 1900 has been the manipulation of symbols.

One relatively new type of reporting is the parent-teacher conference. Wrinkle says that such a conference gets the parents and teachers together but it does not result in a record and schools must maintain records.

Still another departure from the typical report cards is the personal letter from the parent to the teacher. Two main objections to this form of report are that the teacher probably does not have time to write such a report and that a "type" form of letter will be the inevitable result.

Wrinkle concludes his study by listing some of the things he learned from his experiment. He points out the fact that one cannot report intelligently unless he first evaluates intelligently and that one cannot evaluate intelligently unless he knows what he is trying to do.
The chief outcome of this study was a complete change in the administrative organization of the school. This change featured the idea of having no grades, such as grade seven or eight, but merely presenting a unified study program to the younger students and a general educational program to the older ones.

Wrinkle's study differs with the present one in that it covers a period of ten years and that it tabulates the results of tests given to 123 administrators. Further background for the present study is furnished by the faculty of Colbert Public Schools in a series of workshop meetings and studies concerning records and reports.
CHAPTER II

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PUPIL REPORTS

Neither the layman nor the professional man needs to be told that in the field of education there are few accepted standards by which the efficiency of educational institutions can be measured. Educators are still largely dependent on educational opinion rather than on established truths which everybody must accept because they have been proved. The science of education is only in its beginning, and, therefore, in most cases, satisfactory standards of efficiency have not yet been attained.

It is fortunately also true that standards of efficiency are being developed, and public school systems the country over are making more or less use of them. Educators are no longer satisfied with general opinion and general impressions. It is the writer's intention to get back of general impressions and general opinions to see whether these opinions can be confirmed by indisputable and well-organized facts or whether they are refuted by those facts.

In establishing the criteria of soundness which will be used to evaluate possible procedures for reporting pupil progress, three types of criteria will be used under the general headings of sociological, democratic, and
psychological bases. An attempt will be made to validate these criteria by referring to what is considered to be accepted proofs arrived at by educators who in turn have been able to validate their theories both by precept and actual practice.

Democratic Soundness

The following criteria represent a set of beliefs which form the basis of the democratic way of life:

Criterion I.—Belief in the worth of the individual as a human being, belief in the essential dignity of man, faith in the potentialities of the individual man, respect for the personality of each individual, belief that every person can and should achieve a creative individuality.¹

This criterion can be validated democratically. Every student has the right to be considered as a distinct individual. His work as a student should be evaluated accordingly. Every personal trait should be carefully considered.

Criterion II.—Belief that everyone has the capacity to learn how to act on thinking, belief that everyone has the capacity, or under favorable conditions can develop the capacity, to manage his life with others through acting or thinking rather than through unguided impulse.²

¹ Thomas Hopkins, Interaction the Democratic Process, pp. 102-103.
² Ibid.
This criterion furtherly the proof that each student is a distinct individual, an individual who can easily become a leading citizen in a democratic world. The loyalties of a free man in a democracy can easily be applied to the student of a public school.

Every student is loyal:
1. To himself as a human being of dignity and worth;
2. To the principles of human equality and brotherhood;
3. To the process of untrammelled discussion, criticism, and group discussion;
4. To the ideal of honesty, fair-mindedness, and scientific spirit in the conduct of this process;
5. To the ideal of respect for and the appreciation of talent, training, and character, as well as excellence in all fields of socially useful endeavor;
6. To the obligation and the right to work;
7. To the obligation to be socially informed and intelligent.3

Educators should keep in mind that in all phases of his work the student must be guided and evaluated only as the one individual he represents, himself.

Criterion III.—Belief that a person who must abide by decisions should have a part in making them; belief that 'taxation without representation' is tyranny; belief that government rests on the consent of the governed.4

Any man in the United States has the right to voice his opinion concerning the government because he has had a part in making that government. In a manner of speaking,

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4 Hopkins, op. cit.
he is the government. Any student in school should have the same right because in reality he is the school. In the pupil progress report he should be considered first and all others second. He should be given the opportunity to criticize the present method of reporting and to make suggestions for a better one. This could be presented to him in various ways. A panel discussion is an effective method and often the results are quite gratifying. The questionnaire is an old reliable standby and the personal interview is one of the best methods.

Criterion IV.--Belief that the process of living is an interactive process.\(^5\)

This particular criterion can best be validated by giving the aims of education in terms of those behaviors of persons which are believed to be best in a democratic society, as set forth by the National Society for the Study of Education as follows:

1. They respect the individual personality.
2. They consider the rights of others.
3. They cooperate with others.
4. They use their talents for both individual and social profit.
5. They discover and accept their own inadequacies and improve upon them if possible.
6. They lead or follow, according to their abilities, for the benefit of the group.
7. They assume responsibilities inherent in the freedom of a democracy.
8. They solve their problems by thinking them through rather than by resorting to force and emotion.

\(^5\)Ibid.
9. They govern themselves for the common good.
10. They accept the rule of the majority while respecting the rights of the minority.
11. They are tolerant.
12. They speak, think, and act freely with due regard for the rights of others.
13. They adopt themselves to changing conditions in a democracy, for individual and common good.
14. They are constantly seeking to achieve the most effective democratic way of living.
15. They seek by their own example to lead other persons to live democratically.

If one considers these aims of education as the "means" and a well-informed democratic citizen as the "end," it might well be said that the evaluation of a student and his work while he is in the process of becoming this democratic citizen is the connecting link between the two. It might also be well to remember that the final result is no stronger than the connecting link; therefore, this evaluation and pupil progress report is of primary importance to all concerned.

Psychological Soundness

According to Hopkins, "learning is any change in the behavior of an organism." This definition raises the question of what causes people to have a desire to change. If undesirable conditions exist in the present method of reporting pupil progress, and if they are to be eliminated, the answer must be sought in sound psychological reactions.

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6 Ibid., pp. 121-122.  
7 Ibid., p. 219.
of people. These reactions are primarily brought about by needs or pressures on the behavior of the individuals.

For many years school marks have been used for two purposes. In the first place, they furnish data for purposes of promotion and school record; and in the second place, they give the parent some indication of the pupil's achievement in school work. The injustice and inaccuracy of this standard report card have been attacked by parents and teachers alike within recent years. These individuals have felt a need for change. "A need represents any disturbance within an individual which he feels so keenly about that he wants to resolve it in order to achieve a new equilibrium." An individual interacting with his environment will inevitably feel a disturbance called a "need."

In order to satisfy these needs

1. Solutions must begin with and continue to grow out of the real felt needs of individuals.

2. The experiences must be managed by all of the learners concerned—pupils, teachers, parents, and others—through a process of cooperative democratic interaction.

3. They must be unified through evolving purposes of all people concerned.

4. The results must furnish a satisfactory emotional feeling for each participant.

Criterion I.--A new method of reporting pupil progress should be developed when the need for it is shown, not merely because other schools are making such changes. 9

Criterion II.--A child inherits a tendency toward physical characteristics; he inherits susceptibility to certain diseases; and he also inherits a capacity to learn. 10

Usually a long-time program for the full development of the child can be planned and successfully carried out; however, in addition to this program a plan should be made for dealing with emergency cases. No learning is isolated. It is always continuous, and from each problem solved will come others which have grown from it. 11

Criterion III.--As much knowledge as is available and practicable should be brought to bear upon the problem by the people who will engage in its solution. 12

Every student in school and every parent in the community should be considered and consulted in preparing a new method of reporting pupil progress. Once again the panel discussion, the questionnaire, and the personal interview may be brought to light and used advantageously. Morrisett reported a study in which a list of forty items was submitted to parents in a junior high school. The

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9Edward G. Olsen, School and Community Programs, p. 437.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., p. 439.
12Ibid.
parents were asked to check the items in which they were most interested and about which they would like to know more. An analysis of the answers showed that the item "What parents can do to promote pupil accomplishment" ranked as number one. Morrisett declares that this report is one indication of the weakness of the traditional report card.¹³

Sociological Soundness

The present-day community, national, and world pattern requires the knowledge and practice of techniques and of cooperative behavior as never before. It takes the best thinking and efforts of many individuals and groups to solve the problems of today. Even in the problem of perfecting a method of reporting pupil progress one must remember that every person in a given community should be included.

Criterion I.--Help from all available and outside sources should be solicited and utilized.¹⁴

Criterion II.--Both indirect and direct methods of attack on the problem should be used. This will lead to a

¹³ L. N. Morrisett, "Interpreting the School to the Public," Clearing House, VII (April, 1933), 480-485.
¹⁴ Lloyd Allen Cook, Community Backgrounds of Education, p. 78.
feeling of community awareness and of being an actual working part in the solving of the problem.\textsuperscript{15}

Criterion III.--The head of the school must be willing to recognize that the job not only belongs to the teachers but to the students, parents, and citizens of the community as well.\textsuperscript{16}

Supplementary Criteria

With the advent of modern educational philosophy and the accompanying scientific movement, it has become apparent that radical improvements in grading and reporting pupil progress are imperative. Educators, school administrators, and classroom teachers have united their efforts. The following program by Green for eliminating many of the unsatisfactory features of the traditional methods is an example of the trend of thought:

1. Discard the practice of marking pupils in percentages.
2. Each mark assigned to a pupil should be a symbol designed to indicate his power to do.
3. Each teacher should give objective examinations or quizzes frequently throughout the term, and the scores from these tests should afford the major basis for his marks.
4. Require teachers to prepare in advance for each six-weeks period carefully worded statements of the objectives of each subject for that period.
5. Work prepared for daily assignments should be treated as a requirement of the course, but marks assigned should be determined by numerous brief objective quizzes or tests over the work assigned.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 19. \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 52.
6. Notebook and laboratory work should be treated as a requirement of the course, and credit should be deducted or withheld for work which is unsatisfactory or incomplete.

7. Assign marks on accomplishments or performance rather than on indefinite subjective factors such as effort, attitude, ability, etc.

8. Final marks summarizing all of the quiz and test scores for the course can be obtained quite readily by assigning point values to each letter mark, computing the actual average for each pupil, and then assigning the final class marks on the basis of these averages. 17

William L. Wrinkle of Colorado State College has set up the following criteria for the evaluation of report cards:

1. Have the objectives of the program been identified?
2. Are they clearly stated?
3. Do they have specific meaning?
4. Can the teacher evaluate the achievement and growth of the student with reference to the objectives which have been set up?
5. Are different objectives evaluated and reported separately?
6. Are different forms provided to serve different purposes?
7. Are the bases for evaluation appropriate to objectives?
8. Can the reports be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort?
9. Does the form make provisions for special information of value in guidance?
10. Is the provision made for the reporting of evidence and comments relative to the evaluation?
11. Are the forms so constructed as to facilitate recording?
12. Can the evaluation be easily translated into various symbols used in different forms of marking? 18

17 Harry A. Green, Measurement and Evaluation in the Elementary School, pp. 592-596.

Teachers have come to recognize the necessity of employing reports that will meet the needs of the particular situation at hand. In other words, it is essential that the reports to parents, if they are to be of maximum effectiveness, should be based upon the specific needs of the individual pupil concerned. Not only this, but they should accomplish the following things:

I. Improvement of the results produced by the school
   A. Through a clearer understanding by the parents
      1. Of the chief objectives sought by the school
      2. Of the most important items of subject matter and experiences used by the school
      3. Of the significant changes taking place in the pupil's
         a. Appreciation of values
         b. Attitudes
         c. Habits
         d. Knowledge of useful processes
      4. Of the particular things which they should do to encourage the child in making the desired adjustments
   B. Through a clearer understanding by the pupils
      1. Of the purpose of the teacher and the school
      2. Of the pupil's evaluation of his efforts, attitudes, and activities
      3. Of the actual changes taking place within himself
   C. Through a more careful review and analysis by the teachers
      1. Of their own objectives and purposes
      2. Of the means they are employing to obtain the desired results

II. Improvement in the relationship between the parent and the school
   A. By presenting all things clearly and distinctly
   B. By leaving no room for misunderstanding and misguided acts
   C. By taking the parent into consideration and by answering all the things that he would like to know

III. Improvement in the relationship between the community and the school
   A. By including the needs of all the citizens of the community instead of a selected few in preparing the report to the parents
B. By making every person feel that he has had a part in making the report a success.\textsuperscript{19}

It is well to keep in mind that whatever method is developed it must be usable in a given locality and by a particular group of teachers.

Summary

The criteria of democratic soundness include:

1. Every person is a distinct individual and should be treated as such.

2. Every person has sufficient capacity to manage his life with others through acting or thinking rather than through unguided and unrestrained impulse.

3. Every person who must abide by decisions should have a part in making them.

4. Living is an interactive process rather than an isolated affair.

The criteria of psychological soundness include:

1. A new method of reporting pupil progress should be developed when the need for it is shown, not just because other areas are doing it.

2. A plan of reporting should be made both for emergency cases and also for a long-term program.

3. Every person concerned should be taken into consideration when this program is planned.

\textsuperscript{19}School Records and Reports, Research Bulletin of the National Education Association, pp. 268-269.
The criteria of sociological soundness include:

1. Help from all available and outside sources should be solicited and utilized.

2. Both indirect and direct methods of attack on the problem should be used.

3. The head of the school must recognize the fact that the problem not only belongs to the faculty but to the students and parents as well.

The supplementary criteria of soundness include:

1. The objectives of the program should be well identified and clearly stated.

2. These objectives should have specific meaning and should be of the type that could be easily applied to the evaluation of the achievement and growth of the student.

3. Are there different forms for different purposes and can they be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort?

4. The pupil progress report should give the parents a clearer understanding of the objectives of the school, thus leaving no room for misunderstanding. This inevitably brings about an improvement in the relationship between the parent and the school.

5. The progress report should help the pupil to understand the purposes of the teacher and the school
and to realize the actual changes taking place within himself.

6. The report should include the needs of all people concerned rather than just a selected few.

7. Are the forms so constructed as to facilitate recording?

8. Can the evaluation be easily translated into various symbols used in different forms of marking?
CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF THE REPORTING SYSTEMS USED
IN THE COLBERT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the reporting systems used in the public schools of Colbert, Oklahoma. An attempt will be made to determine the adequacy of these reporting systems according to the criteria set up in Chapter II.

During the school year 1950-1951, there were three distinct methods of reporting pupil progress used in the Colbert Public Schools. Each of these methods in varying degrees meet the criteria. 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. Helping a child to live a wholesome and satisfying life in a democratic society is the pre-eminent goal to be attained through the use of progress reports to parents. There are many other objectives involved but they may be considered merely as a means to this end.

The report card has been the most commonly used means of informing the parents of their children's standing and progress in school work. It is, indeed, a valuable tool
but not until it can be interpreted correctly by all whom it concerns can it be intelligently used for the optimum growth of the pupil.

Although it is hard to reconcile a plan of teaching in terms of individual growth with a marking system that sets a single standard of performance for all members of a class, this very thing has been attempted for many years. In *Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living*, the authors say, "If the evaluative process is to be used so as to make its maximum contribution, it must be looked at not only in the terms it is used by the teacher but also to its parts in growth of the learner."¹

Table 1 shows the methods used in reporting pupil progress to parents in the public schools of Colbert, Oklahoma.

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Approximately one half of the students involved received a card that uses symbols to report pupil progress. The progress of one eighth of the pupils involved was reported by the use of an informal letter, and the progress of the remainder of the pupils of the school was reported through the typical comparative or percentage report card.

The first report card to be taken into consideration is the one that involves a large portion of the students; namely, the card that uses comparative grades for reporting pupil progress. An example of this type of report card is found in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 illustrates the report card used in the Colbert High School and Figure 2 illustrates the report card used in the Colbert Junior High School. For the remainder of this study the type of card shown in Figures 1 and 2 will be referred to as the comparative report card.

The first criterion of democratic soundness listed in this study is that every person is a distinct individual and should be treated as such. Present-day reports to parents should not be confined to ratings on subjects of instruction. Increasing significance is being attached to the importance of attitudes and behavior in relation to learning and in relation to social adjustment. An adequate appraisal of a student's achievements and development should present a fairly inclusive picture of the
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**FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE SUBJECTS**

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**JUNIOR AND SENIOR SUBJECTS**
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### PART II. CITIZENSHIP

(Personal Note from Teacher or Principal)

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### PART III. HEALTH

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**SECOND SEMESTER**

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<td>B—Above Average</td>
<td>E—Failing</td>
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<tr>
<td>C—Average</td>
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**NOTE:** Report card used for reporting the progress of 75 students of the Colbert Junior High School.
individual student, not as he compares with others in his group, but as he actually has made progress during a period of time. Respect for individual differences conforms to the consideration of each pupil in every aspect of his development. 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 school adhering to the original democratic principles concerning general welfare and the development of individual personalities.\(^2\) The comparative report card takes individual differences into consideration, but it is impossible to accomplish very much by merely checking the child's characteristics and not offering any suggestions concerning them.

The second democratic criterion that further emphasizes the rights of a student as an individual is almost completely ignored in this typical report card. One of the items from The Education of Free Men in American Democracy best illustrates this point.

Every man is loyal to himself as a human being of dignity and worth. . . . Every man is loyal to

the ideal of honesty and fair-mindedness, and to the obligation to be socially informed and intelligent.\textsuperscript{3}

A student should be treated as a distinct individual. (It would approach the impossible to give a child a percentage grade in a particular field and still consider him for his own worth and not in comparison with others.) The question might be asked, "Does 90 mean satisfactory on the basis of grade standards or the child's ability or the teacher's ideals?" Too many parents have a blind and unintelligent faith in the infallibility of the teacher's marks. When a teacher is asked directly the meaning of a certain percentage grade, it is very doubtful if he can give an intelligent and definite answer. What constitutes a mark is indeed a major question. How does one determine which mark or symbol to use is still another issue.

The following are a few of the meanings assigned to marks by the teacher:

I. The child's present status as compared with perfection
   A. In the amount of knowledge possessed
   B. In the degree of skill or mastery of a subject
   C. In attitude
      1. Toward the subject
      2. Toward the teacher or the school
   D. In efforts
      1. To master the subject
      2. To please the teacher

\textsuperscript{3}Educational Policies Commission, \textit{The Education of Free Men in American Democracy}, pp. 55-56.
II. Present status compared with his own previous status
   A. In amount of knowledge of the subject
   B. In degree of skill or mastery
   C. In attitudes
   D. In efforts

III. Present status compared with all other pupils
   A. In the same class or recitation
   B. In the same room
   C. Of the same age.

It can easily be seen that the comparative card is not satisfactory because it does not represent the ideals of American democracy.

Criterion III, belief that a person who must abide by decisions should have a part in making them, is also ignored in the comparative report card. For the person who wants power, the schoolroom offers a wonderful opportunity. It is one of the frightening things in education. The teacher of boys and girls is the shaper of the nation. The teacher's responsibility is enormous. According to one teacher,

If it is power a person wants to wield, there is no more vulnerable spot than in the classroom. The preacher helps only those he can gather in, the doctor only those who come after they are ill, the lawyer only those who are in legal difficulties; but the teacher has power unlimited if he directs it in the right channel. He can bring life to the sleeping powers; he can conquer evil before it first attacks; he can give a lighted candle to many a wondering soul who will never pass another door.

4 School Records and Reports, Research Bulletin of the National Education Association, p. 268.

5 Philip Peak, "I Love to Teach," The Phi Delta Kappan, IV (December, 1950), 143.
In view of the facts presented, it seems that with the use of the comparative report card the teacher is wielding his unlimited power in the wrong way. It is possible for him to snuff out a child's candle as well as make it burn brighter.

During the school year 1949-1950 the faculty of the Colbert Public Schools met regularly twice a month for the purpose of discussing and attempting to solve various school problems. One of the questions considered was: "Is the comparative card that is used here an adequate method of reporting pupil progress to parents?"

Committees were appointed to study this question. After several meetings of study and discussion these committees recommended to the faculty that a change should be made; however, no new method was selected during this series of meetings. This procedure somewhat conforms to the first criterion of psychological soundness; that is, a new method of reporting pupil progress should be developed when the need for it is shown, not just because other areas are doing it.

According to the minutes of the secretary of the Colbert Parent-Teachers Association, the parents were also taken into consideration when a new method of reporting pupil progress was contemplated. The following is an excerpt from the minutes recorded by the secretary:
After much discussion and due consideration the parents agreed that a change should be made from the comparative report card to a better and newer type of reporting pupil progress. It was further suggested that several methods be tried for a year; however, no definite type was suggested.

This manner of deciding to change to a new type or method of reporting pupil progress agrees with the second and third items listed under sound psychological criteria. These are: (1) A plan should be made for handling the situation both for emergency cases and also a long-term program, and (2) every person concerned should be taken into consideration when this program is planned. It also agrees with the three criteria of sociological soundness given in Chapter II, which are: (1) Help from all sources, both indirect and direct attack; and (2) the head of the school must recognize the fact that the problem not only belongs to the faculty but to the students and teachers as well.

The comparative report card is in direct contrast to most of the items listed in the supplementary criteria of soundness for the following reasons:

1. It does not well identify and clearly state the objectives of the school.

2. It does not give the parents a clearer understanding of the objectives of the school.

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6 Minutes of the Parent-Teacher Association, Colbert, Oklahoma, February 17, 1950, p. 11.
3. It does not help the pupil to understand the purposes of the teacher.

4. It does not include the needs of all people concerned.

The comparative report card does agree with the following items listed in the supplementary criteria:

1. Can the forms be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and expense?

2. Are they so constructed as to facilitate recording?

3. Can the evaluations be easily translated into various symbols used in different forms of marking?

The next report card to be taken into consideration is the card used for 200 elementary students. An example of this card is shown in Figures 3 and 4. For the sake of convenience this card will be referred to as the check card in the remainder of this study.

The criterion of democratic soundness, that every person should be treated as an individual, can well be emphasized by quoting from an address by Harry S. Truman.

This country of ours, together with other members of the United Nations, is engaged in a critical struggle to uphold the values of peace and justice and freedom. We are struggling to preserve our own liberty as a nation. As we engage in that struggle we must preserve the elements of our American way of life. We must find ways to help our children and young people to become mentally and morally stronger, and to make them better citizens. Our problem and
Fig. 3.—Outside of report card used for reporting the progress of 200 students of the elementary school of Colbert, Oklahoma.
Fig. 4.—Inside of report card used for reporting the progress of 200 students of the elementary school of Colbert, Oklahoma.
our objective is to build a world order based on freedom and justice.\(^7\)

Although it is true that the check card does partly consider every student as a distinct individual, it is still of no value as it merely checks a desired characteristic and offers no suggestions concerning it.

The second democratic criterion, every person has sufficient capacity to manage his life with others through acting or thinking rather than through unguided and unrestrained impulse, is not taken into consideration in the check card. A parent can usually determine every item that is mentioned on this card by the child's actions at home. Nothing is presented that he probably does not already know.

Criterion III, every person who must abide by decisions should have a part in making them, is entirely omitted in this check type of card. It stands to reason that probably only a few teachers and perhaps no students were consulted before this card was made or selected. Nothing could be in a more direct contrast to a democracy than this.

The check report card is also in direct contrast to Criterion IV, living is an interactive process rather than an isolated affair. When the check card is used every student is considered in isolation. It has no way of

respecting the individual personality other than by a few check marks concerning his study habits. Even then the special talents of the child are almost completely ignored. It offers no encouragement for a pupil to achieve the most democratic way of living, neither does it encourage any individual initiative toward the pupil's adapting himself to changing conditions in a democracy for both individual and common good.

The first criterion of psychological soundness, a new method of pupil progress should be developed when the need for it is shown, not just because other areas are doing it, was taken into consideration when this method of reporting was selected. Prior to the school year 1950 the conventional type of card, illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, was used in all of the grades of the Colbert Public Schools. Because of the constant discussion and study of reporting systems through teacher-training courses and Parent-Teacher Association meetings the need was felt for a change of some kind; consequently, a change was made. This change was definitely a step toward the improvement of the method used in reporting pupil progress; but Criterion III, every person who must abide by decisions should have a part in making them, should have been taken into consideration before a long-time program was planned. The change was actually made because of the need, but the method of reporting selected was chosen at random, not because of the report card itself
or of the results in view, but because it would be a change from the old conventional type of reporting pupil progress to a newer method of reporting.

The first criterion of sociological soundness, help from all available and outside sources should be solicited and utilized, was partly taken into consideration when the change was made from the typical report card to the check card. As previously stated in this study, there was a definite need for a change as was shown in the teacher-training courses and in the Parent-Teacher Association meetings. At these informal meetings the teachers and the parents agreed that the conventional type of card was not meeting the needs of all concerned; however, no suggestions were made as to what type of card would be adequate. The teachers selected the card with no help from the parents. The most important individuals at stake, the pupils, were not consulted; therefore, it is the writer's opinion that the method of selecting this card almost completely ignores the first criterion of sociological soundness. Because of this fact, it is the writer's further belief that the second criterion of sociological soundness, indirect and direct methods of attack should be used, was also completely disregarded in the selection of this card.

The check card conforms to a portion of the supplementary criteria set up in Chapter II. It can be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort, as found
in Criterion III; the forms are constructed so as to facilitate recording, as stated in Criterion VII; and evaluation can be translated into various symbols used in different forms of marking, as given in Criterion VII. Regardless of the fact that the check card does conform to the ideas set forth by these three criteria, it is in direct contrast to the remainder of the supplementary criteria.

According to Criterion I, the objectives of the program should be well identified and clearly stated. In an obscure corner on the reverse side of the check card one of the objectives of the school is mentioned; that is, "We believe that the home and the school must cooperate if the greatest good is to be realized." It is the belief of the writer that the principal objectives of the school are not clearly stated, that there is room for misunderstanding, and that consequently the relationship between parent and school may be impaired rather than improved.

In connection with this card a form letter and a questionnaire, shown in the Appendix, were sent to sixty of the parents involved. The tabulation of this questionnaire is shown in Table 2.

The last method of reporting pupil progress to be taken into consideration is the personal letter. This particular form of reporting involves only fifty of the 400 students in the Colbert Public Schools.
TABLE 2
CRITERIA OF SOUNDNESS AS EXPRESSED BY SIXTY PARENTS CONCERNING THE COMPARATIVE REPORT CARD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Omit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Enlightening</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Clearness</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Presents teachers' objectives</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Presents school's objectives</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Democratic Soundness

| 9               | Easy to interpret                   | 6   | 3 | 37 | 4    |
| 18              | Favorable comment                   | 34  | 5 | 9  | 2    |
| 19              | Unfavorable comment                 | 3   | 2 | 3  | 6    |

Sociological Soundness

| 3               | Specific                            | 34  | 5 | 7  | 4    |
| 5               | Suitable                            | 42  | 5 | 1  | 2    |
| 11              | Presents students' problems         | 36  | 3 | 3  | 3    |
| 12              | Helpful                             | 38  | 5 | 3  | 4    |
| 13              | Shows actual progress               | 48  |   |    |      |
| 14              | Encouraging to students             | 38  | 8 | 2  | 2    |
| 15              | Stimulating to students             | 36  | 10| 2  | 2    |

Psychological Soundness

| 4               | Definite                            | 40  | 5 | 2  | 3    |
| 7               | Reliable                            | 44  | 3 | 3  |      |
| 8               | Simple                              | 42  | 5 | 1  | 2    |
| 2               | Understandable                      | 43  | 3 | 2  | 2    |

Supplementary Criteria of Soundness
The personal letter is used to establish cordial relations and friendly cooperative attitudes between the school and the home. These letters assist in helping the parent to recognize the many factors which condition learning outside the classroom. In addition, the pupil takes a renewed interest in the work of the school. Letters, which are constructive, establish a better understanding between parent and teacher. The parent comes to learn the objectives of the school whereas the teacher can envision the child in his environmental situation. Misbehavior is played down and progress is played up. More often it is the teacher rather than the parent who should be informed. 8

Any form of reporting pupil progress should be in conformity with the democratic principles set forth in Chapter II under the criteria of democratic soundness. The personal letter conforms with many of these criteria; however, in order for it to be highly successful the following things must be taken into consideration:

1. The community must be thoroughly prepared in advance if letters are to supplant the time-honored competitive marks.
2. Begin the letter with encouraging news.
3. Close with an attitude of optimism.
4. Solicit the cooperation of parents in solving the problem if one exists.
5. Speak of the child's growth; social, physical, and academic.
6. Avoid comparisons.

7. Speak of the child's advancement in terms of his own ability.
8. Compare the child's efforts with his own ability and not with that of others.
9. Send a few letters at a time.
10. Be brief.
11. Use a language that the parents will easily understand.
12. Invite the parents to visit the school.  

If these suggestions are followed the whole life of the child will be considered at all times; consequently, the individual differences of each student will always be recognized and considered by every person concerned.

As in the case of the check card, the change to the personal letter was brought about by discussions in teacher-training courses and Parent-Teacher Association meetings. This type of change is in conformity with the criteria of psychological and sociological soundness as found in Chapter II except in one instance; that is, neither the parents nor the students were consulted when the new method was selected.

The personal letter agrees with the supplementary criteria of soundness in the following ways:

1. The objectives of the program can be well identified and clearly stated.
2. These objectives may have specific meaning.
3. There may be different forms for different purposes and it is possible for them to be prepared with a

---

reasonable expenditure of both time and effort since they may be brief as well as complete.

4. The parents are given a clearer understanding of the objectives of the school; thus, there is no room for misunderstanding.

5. The pupil can better understand the purposes of the teacher and the school.

6. The letter may include the needs of all people concerned.

7. The forms may be constructed so as to insure easy recording.

8. The evaluations may be easily translated into various symbols used in different forms of marking.

As in the case of the check card, the form letter and a questionnaire, as shown in the Appendix, were sent to all of the parents concerned in this method of reporting. The tabulation of this questionnaire is shown in Table 3.

The fifty students who were involved in this method of reporting were asked individually to give their personal opinion concerning these letters. Forty-five of the students were in favor of the letters and five were opposed to them. Out of these five, only one had a reason. According to his statement, "he had to stay at home at night until he could truthfully say that he was accomplishing something worthwhile at school." According to the
**TABLE 3**

CRITERIA OF SOUNDNESS AS EXPRESSED BY FIFTY PARENTS CONCERNING THE PERSONAL LETTER REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Item</th>
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<th>No</th>
<th>Omit</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Enlightening</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Presents school's objectives</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Shows actual progress</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Stimulating to students</td>
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</table>
faculty of the Colbert High School, these fifty students seemed to be more interested in their work and they definitely had a better attitude in their classes after this method of reporting was introduced.

Summary

During the school year 1950-1951 three distinct methods of reporting pupil progress were used in the public schools of Colbert, Oklahoma. Each of the methods met the criteria of soundness set up in Chapter II in varying degrees. The traditional or comparative card was perhaps the least effective of the three. It told very little about the child and what it did divulge was not very meaningful to the parents. Moreover, the reports were likely to cause a bad effect upon the children.

Because of various teacher-training courses and Parent-Teacher Association meetings, a change was brought about in the method of reporting. The elementary grades used a check type of report card and one half of the high school used a personal letter.

It was found that the check card was better than the traditional card but that it fell short in the criteria of democratic soundness. The individuality of a student was not taken into consideration.

The personal letter, provided it meets certain desirable criteria, proved that it had obvious advantages.
For example, it established happy relationships between the parent and the teacher, as shown in Table 3, and it left no room for misunderstanding on the part of the student, teacher, or parent.

The students were asked individually for their personal opinion of the check card. Almost 100 per cent of the students were enthusiastic. Only a few objected to the check card, giving no reason.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In this study to determine an adequate report to the parent, there is shown a need for cooperation and coordination of all the people concerned. This need is present in all communities, large or small, and can be aroused by the use of a scientific approach. A summary of the findings in this study is as follows:

I. According to various related studies,
   A. The traditional method of reporting pupil progress by the time-honored system of competitive marks is still being widely used although many schools have modified it somewhat by the addition of a check list.
   B. The practice of grading by the letters, A, B, C, D, and F, is being slowly replaced by the check-list type of report which is undoubtedly more in keeping with modern educational theory.
   C. Some of the more progressive schools are using informal letters instead of the report card. This practice seems to be in general agreement with the thinking of progressive educators.
The chief weakness of this type of report is that it may tend to become stereotyped for the busy teacher rather than remain purely personal and diagnostic.

D. Several schools are experimenting with the teacher-conference method. It has proved satisfactory where it has been used with discrimination after suitable preparation has been made in advance of its adoption.

E. A majority of the methods of reporting pupil progress are not sufficiently broad to include the development of the whole child.

F. Most of the reports convey little meaningful information for they cannot be interpreted correctly.

G. Certain factors essential to training for wholesome living are given either minor or no consideration in the formulation of many of the progress reports.

1. The typical card does not treat every student as a distinct individual.

2. The method of selecting a report usually does not conform to the standards of a democracy.
3. Special talents of a student are neither recognized nor encouraged.

4. Most check-list cards point out the desired results but offer no suggestions or programs to follow.

II. Most schools conform to the static procedure of sending out reports at definite and regular intervals instead of a time when the need arises.

II. According to the study made in the Colbert Public Schools,

A. Three distinct cards are used.
   1. Check card
   2. Percentage and comparative card
   3. Informal letter

B. These reports are sent to the parents every nine weeks.

C. Two of these methods are used because of a felt need for a change of some type.

D. The parents of the community especially like the informal letter.

E. The students of the high school also favor the informal letter.

F. The attitude of the students rated by the typical card is entirely different from that of the students whose parents received letters.
G. There was a distinct movement toward better cooperation between the students and the teachers after the informal letter was first used.

Conclusions

The American people are becoming increasingly aware that the problem of making an adequate report to the parents concerning pupil progress is growing more important. Its solution can be found only through the cooperation and coordination of all the people concerned.

No informed person would not question the fact that there have always been individual differences among school pupils, although those in charge of the schools a generation ago were probably far from being so aware of these differences as are the teachers of today. This increased consciousness of individual differences is in all probability one of the results of the scientific movement in education which has helped in revealing these differences to teachers. A given individual possesses almost innumerable traits. Since psychological terminology has not sufficiently advanced to delimit the meaning of every trait, an attempt to mark or to make a report to the parents on each trait would approach the impossible; therefore, the typical or standard methods of reporting pupil progress are highly inadequate. These methods do not conform to the
standards set forth by a democracy; they also fail to set forth the objectives of the school. The inevitable result is not a better home-school relationship but rather a gross misunderstanding by all concerned.

Evaluation is and must remain an important aspect of supervision and instruction, and it is necessary that some reliable method be used to report this evaluation to the parents. The informal letter is also inadequate in its scope but according to the findings of this study it is by far superior to the other two methods used in the Colbert Public Schools. It not only meets the requirements of the criteria of democratic, psychological, and sociological soundness as listed in Chapter II, but it also meets with the approval of the parents as indicated in Table 3. In view of these facts, it seems that with the use of the personal letter a happy relationship between the parents and the teacher is almost inevitable.

Recommendations

Because of the findings and conclusions derived from this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since evaluation is an important aspect of supervision and instruction, a reliable method of reporting this evaluation should be used in every school system.
2. Markings should cease to be based exclusively on comparative competition and should become chiefly significant for the given individual.

3. Any change that is made in reporting pupil progress should be made because a felt need is recognized and not because other areas are doing it.

4. If the personal letter is used, it is suggested that

   a. The community should be ready for such a method before it is introduced.

   b. The letter should be brief.

   c. It should be in simple language.

   d. It should contain items of interest.

   e. It should point out some of the outstanding good points of a child as well as some of the undesirable characteristics.

   f. It should leave no room for misunderstanding.

5. Regardless of the type of report used, it should be made only when the occasion demands it rather than at regular intervals.
APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1. Do you like this type of report card?  Yes  ?  No

2. Is it easy for you to understand?  __  __  __

3. Does it point out any specific things that you would like to know about your boy or girl?  __  __  __

4. Does it actually tell you anything definite concerning the student?  __  __  __

5. Do you think that this type of card would fit the needs of most boys and girls?  __  __  __

6. Does it tell you all that you would like to know about your boy or girl?  __  __  __

7. Do you feel that the information is reliable?  __  __  __

8. Do you believe that it is simple enough in form that every parent should be able to understand it?  __  __  __

9. Is there room for any misunderstanding on the part of the teacher, the student, or the parent?  __  __  __

10. Does this report give you a clear picture of the student and his activities in the school?  __  __  __

11. Does it give you a better opportunity to help the student solve those problems?  __  __  __

12. Does it help you to understand any problems that the boy or girl might have in school?  __  __  __
13. Does this report give you a good understanding of the actual progress that your boy or girl is making in school?

14. Do you think that this report will help the student to become more interested in school work?

15. Do you believe that it will encourage him to do his best in his school work?

16. Does this type of report help you to get a better understanding of the purposes of the teacher?

17. Does it give you a better understanding of the general purposes or aims of Colbert High School?

18. Did this report cause any favorable comment from the students?

19. Did this report cause any unfavorable comment from the students?

20. Would you like another type of report card better?

If you have any suggestions concerning the cards or the school in general, please feel free to offer them, either on this questionnaire or to me personally.

Parent's Suggestions
Form Letter

Number 1

Colbert High School

Dear Parent:

Enclosed you will find your child's report card and also a questionnaire concerning it. Please give it your very careful attention. You will be doing me a great favor if you will sign the card, answer the questions on the questionnaire, and mail them to me at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Elmer Mantooth, Principal
Dear Parent:

Enclosed you will find a personal letter from your child's teacher and also a questionnaire concerning it. Please give them your very careful attention. You will be doing me a great favor if you will answer these questions and mail the questionnaire to me at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Elmer Mantooth, Principal
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