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## Public interest concerning elementary school information in Ceres, California

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PUBLIC INTEREST CONCERNING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
INFORMATION IN CERES, CALIFORNIA

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Education  
College of the Pacific

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

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by  
Joseph Benton Stanford, Jr.  
June 1956

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

That the American public has had great faith in its schools is evidenced by the almost continual extension of the physical facilities for its educational system and the constant demand for a better trained and better paid teaching corps.

As long as the great majority of the people believe in and understand the public schools and their program, sporadic attacks in the press or from pressure groups will not defeat the program or even parts of the program. This conclusion is illustrated by the fact that schools that have enlightened the public regarding educational developments seldom suffer serious curtailment of program when demands are made for retrenchment.<sup>1</sup>

In some communities where programs have been developed without adequate explanations to parents, instances can be found in which progress was retarded and undesirable changes have been forced because of opposition from uninformed groups.

The interpretation of the schools to the public should not be deferred until a crisis occurs. In fact, there is con-

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<sup>1</sup> Paul B. Jacobson and Wm. C. Reavis, Duties of School Principals (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1941), p. 727.

siderable evidence to show that those school systems which have had continual programs of interpretation to the public have fared better than those which have resorted to publicity campaigns when crises have occurred. Some schools have had "whirlwind" campaigns when new buildings were needed, and have said nothing about the schools between times.<sup>2</sup> It is with this problem of "interpretation" or "publicity" of the elementary schools that this study is concerned.

### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The emphasis of this study will be centered in the search for answers to the following questions:

1. How accurately and extensively do adults of the community know their elementary schools?
2. What are the various sources by which adults of the community receive school information?
3. What types (categories) of school information do citizens desire most?
4. What types of school news items appear most frequently in the local newspaper, and how accurate and effective is it?

Objective. The objective in conducting this study is to gain an insight into the matter of communication between the elementary school and the community and to evaluate local school publicity.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Justification of the study. To justify the study, the investigator cites the experience of the San Diego School District in 1951.

San Diego enlisted the services of an outside agency to conduct a survey of "What San Diegans think of their schools", and much was learned which aided the schools to improve public relations. For one thing, they were pleased to learn that 90 per cent of all citizens were happy with the way the schools were being conducted and with the results they were achieving.

Another significant finding was the high percentage of "don't know" responses to many curriculum questions. For example:

1. Are the schools spending too much, too little, or about the right amount of time on music and art?

Answers. 61 per cent "don't know."

2. Are the schools doing a good, average, or poor job of developing devotion to American way of life?

Answers. 33 per cent "don't know."<sup>3</sup>

The survey brought out the fact that the "don't know" respondents to curriculum questions were persons who had not visited and observed classrooms in the schools nor attended more than two P.T.A. meetings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> W. C. Crawford, "Public Opinion Survey Shows How San Diegans Regard Their Schools," Nations Schools, 49:38, Feb. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

This gave San Diego the "key" for their action. Parent groups are being brought into the schools in numbers never before visualized so that the curriculum and instructional methods may be interpreted.<sup>5</sup>

It is information of the type discovered in the San Diego research that the investigator hopes to obtain for his local community, Ceres, California, by this study.

## II. METHODS USED AND ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Many of the data were obtained by conducting a survey by questionnaire. The total questionnaire appears in the Appendix. Chapter III presents the organization and development of the questionnaire. Individual chapters report the results of the various sections of the questionnaire.

The final chapter is a summary, stating or restating the important findings of the total study and presenting some of the limitations of the study and problems which warrant further study and interpretation.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOL INFORMATION MOST INTERESTING TO CITIZENS AND THE PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF SUCH INFORMATION

This chapter reviews literature relative to the study, and will be of value when attempting to apply some of the findings of the local survey.

Types of school information citizens desire most. One question that was of major concern in the recent Governor's Conference on Education, Sacramento, California, September 30 to October 1, 1955, was "How can we obtain a continuing public interest in education"?<sup>1</sup>

One basic principle of the educative process is that the development of new interests begins with the present interests of the individual, whatever they may be.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps, then, one of the first steps should be that of determining what types of school information represent the present interests of the citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Goodwin J. Knight, "How Can We Obtain A Continuing Interest in Public Education"? A Study Guide Prepared for the Governor's Conference on Education, September 30-October 1, 1955, Book #6 (Sacramento, California), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Jelinec, "Relative Importance of School News Topics," School and Society, August 9, 1952, p. 90.

There are many honest, reasoning adults in America, who, generally realizing that in 1914 only 8 per cent of our young people attended high school and last year 80 per cent attended high school, assume that such wholesale enrollments bring a "lowering" of standards to which the schools adhered in their day. They rely chiefly on the inaccurate memories of their own school days and their conception comes not from lack of faith or interest in public schools, but from lack of understanding.<sup>3</sup>

Another example of public desire for better understanding was noted by Roy E. Larsen's experience in North Carolina. In a public talk he tried to draw a parallel between growth of the school system in North Carolina and the state's economic social and cultural development. Larsen wrote:

I was pleased to find I had struck a rich vein of public interest. Many people who had seen printed copies of my speech expressed surprise that education can be shown to bear such a direct relationship to the general welfare of the state. Like many other people, they were aware that education improves individual opportunities and that in a general sense, it contributes to the life of the community. But they were not fully aware of how direct or how important the relationship is. I imagine that very few citizens would question school expenditures if they fully understood how the community benefits from its educational investment.<sup>4</sup>

There are many other things that the citizens want to know about the nation's educational commitment and goals.

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<sup>3</sup> Roy E. Larsen, "Some Questions Laymen Ask," Phi Delta Kappa, 35:1-53, October 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

They are curious about the changes that have taken place in the schools since they left them. They ask for the reasons behind the changes and about the effects these changes will have upon their own children. They ask "what does training for citizenship mean"? "Who is to decide what a good citizen is to believe"?<sup>5</sup>

The schools of Columbus, Ohio, recognized this desire for better understanding of public schools and realized that an informed public is essential to the progress of education.

Columbus school administrators decided to conduct "Operation Information."<sup>6</sup> One phase of the campaign included sending home a leaflet with each report card at each of the regular report card periods.

To determine what subject matter would be of most interest and value to parents, the persons planning the leaflets relied on the sensitiveness of the central office staff, principals, and teachers to identify the most persistent questions.

From the widespread range of concerns expressed, a priority list of topics for leaflets was established as follows:

- (a) Reading: For this question, the committee titled their leaflet "Throwing Light on Reading."
- (b) Writing: For this question, the committee titled their leaflet "Your Child Learns to Write."

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> N. G. Fawcett and P. R. Klohr, "Columbus Public Schools Plan Operation Information," Nations Schools, 48:65-7, October, 1951.

- (c) Arithmetic: Leaflet titled "Third 'R' in Columbus Schools."
- (d) Health: Leaflet titled "Together, We Guard Your Child's Health."
- (e) Citizenship: Leaflet titled "Citizenship Begins With Children."

In the above order, the leaflets were enclosed in each of the regular report cards for the year. The leaflets were made more impressive by pictures and sketches to dramatize the subject. Later, the five leaflets were compiled into pamphlet form and made available to the public.

In another instance, the findings of a state-wide Indiana study in 1952 by James J. Jelinec established the following conclusions about the relative importance of topics of high school news:<sup>7</sup>

1. Most important news topic: "Aims of the school"
  - (a) How schools form goals.
  - (b) What are the goals in teaching reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
  - (c) In teaching to earn and spend money.
  - (d) Goals in teaching children to get along with others.
  - (e) Goals in meeting community problems of health, law, safety, business, and cooperation.
2. Second most important high school news topic: "Guidance of Pupils"

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<sup>7</sup> Jelinec, op. cit., pp. 90-2.

- (a) How do children get advice about school work and personal problems?
  - (b) How does the school prepare children to earn a living?
  - (c) What do pupils do in H.R. Clubs, assemblies, and sports?
  - (d) How schools help children to build healthy minds and healthy bodies.
3. Third importance: "Instruction of Pupils"
- (a) How are pupils taught and what do they do in school?
  - (b) How are books, maps, pictures, and other things used to help children?
  - (c) How do pupils study?
  - (d) How do teachers grade and report pupil progress?
4. Fourth importance: "Organization and Management of School"
- (a) How does the school get its money, and how does it spend it?
  - (b) How well do the buildings, equipment, and supplies meet pupil needs?
  - (c) How many pupils go to school?
  - (d) How is the work of pupils planned and arranged?
  - (e) What are the jobs of teachers, principals, superintendents, and trustees?
5. Fifth importance: "School's Work With Outside Groups"
- (a) How does the school work with church groups, service clubs, farm, labor, and business groups?
  - (b) How does school work with parents and others in community?

- (c) How does the H.S. work with the E.S., colleges and other schools?
- (d) How does the school work with groups that rate the schools?
- (e) How does the school work with city, county, state, and federal offices?

Farley, at the time of making his newspaper survey, also sent a questionnaire to 5,067 patrons in thirteen cities to determine which topics were of greatest interest. By overwhelming odds, parental interest was centered in topics related to the instructional program. The rank order of these topics of school news was:

- (1) Pupil progress and achievement.
- (2) Methods of instruction.
- (3) Health of pupils.
- (4) Course of study.
- (5) Value of education.
- (6) Discipline and behavior of pupils.
- (7) Teachers and school officers.
- (8) Attendance.
- (9) Buildings and building programs.
- (10) Business management and finance.
- (11) Board of education and administration.
- (12) Parent teacher association.
- (13) Extra curriculum activities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jacobson and Reavis, op. cit., p. 729.



Any discrepancy between news printed and news desired does not imply that news least desired should be minimized. It would rather mean that desired news should be provided regularly.<sup>9</sup>

In the study guide to the Governor's Conference on Education it was stated: "The public is not getting the kind of news it most wants about its schools from its local newspapers. And the public knows the kind of news it would like to be informed about."<sup>10</sup>

Where citizens receive their school information. Among the means of interpreting the school to the public may be mentioned reports to parents: newspaper releases in the commercial press and school newspapers; addresses over the radio and to school assemblies; observance of special days and exhibits of the products of the school; and interpretation of the school to pupils who in turn interpret it to their parents.<sup>11</sup>

Television has already proven to be a very effective means of interpreting the school to the public and could open a new era in school public relations.

One of the major functions of communication in a democratic society is to help keep residents informed on major issues affecting the community. All citizens have a stake in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Knight, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobson and Reavis, op. cit., p. 727.

education. To make democracy work, all channels of communication must be kept open.<sup>12</sup>

Mass media of communications through their constant and continuing impact on the individual are a powerful educational tool. One or more forms enter into each household every day.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of the efforts of the Advertising Council of America, there has been a noteworthy increase in the attention given to education by the various channels of mass media. During 1954, transportation advertisers put up about 90,000 car cards in support of public education. Approximately sixty-five household magazines ran full-page advertisements and daily newspapers contributed approximately 3,136,000 lines of space for education. In addition, daily newspapers contributed about 94,500 lines of front page space in part of the newspaper cooperation plan. Radio made 173,000,000 home impressions and television accounted for 238,000,000 home impressions. (A home impression is one message which is heard or seen once in the home.) In all, the Advertising Council of America campaign in the interest of education has contributed approximately 20 million dollars worth of time, space, talent, and effort to improve the schools of America. The motion picture

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<sup>12</sup> Knight, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

industry has contributed footage both nationally and locally.<sup>14</sup>

According to Farley's National Survey of Secondary Education, which was conducted prior to World War II, one of the most effective methods of interpreting the school to its patrons, and the most frequently used, is school exhibits. Seventy-nine per cent of the schools which were questioned used exhibits.<sup>15</sup>

One of the ways in which schools may display their work is in specially built cases in the corridors of the building. In addition to such displays, many schools have permanent or temporary exhibits in show windows of stores in the community at public fairs. Such displays are more effective if they are also reported in the local newspaper.<sup>16</sup>

Farley's survey found that the use of the local newspaper ranked second in frequency among the media of interpretation, being used by 72 per cent of the 160 schools studied.<sup>17</sup> Nearly one-third of the schools in Farley's study reported that some papers in the community contained a school page. About

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jacobson and Reavis, op. cit., p. 731.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 729.

one-third of the schools reported that a specially assigned reporter made intermittent calls at the school. At nearly one-half the schools, the pupils collected at least part of the news.<sup>18</sup>

In interpreting the school, the principal should avoid personal prominence and stress the school, individual teachers, or pupils who constitute the news. The principal's name is not important. If people of the community believe in the school, they will quickly learn the principal's name. If they do not believe in the school, the principal's name will add no weight to the news item.<sup>19</sup>

School news is sent to many homes through the school newspaper. A well-edited school paper, explaining changes in the services offered by the schools, describing the curriculum and extra-curriculum activities, noting honors or awards which have been earned by pupils, and listing professional activities of the staff, has been found to be very effective in the program of school interpretation. In addition, it provides an effective way of developing school spirit within the student body.

About one-third of the schools in the National Survey

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 730.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

of Secondary Education sent bulletins to the homes at intervals. Frequently, the form used was a mimeographed bulletin, although at times it was printed.

Over one-fourth of the schools inserted some type of news items, such as a graphic distribution of the local tax dollar, in the regular progress report sent home.<sup>20</sup>

In development of publicity information, there should always be the clearing committee or in most cases the superintendent himself should approve all printed material before it is distributed.<sup>21</sup>

A significant technique in the development of publicity is that teachers, administrators, and central office staff should be involved in the planning.<sup>22</sup>

Enough evidence now exists from experience of industry and education to validate the principle of personal involvement in group projects.<sup>23</sup>

Section Three of the Ceres questionnaire is concerned with the various sources of school news, and asked the respondent to indicate the sources that have been most satisfactory to him. Chapter VII presents the results of this section.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Fawcett and Klohr, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### A DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE CERES, CALIFORNIA SURVEY

To prepare the questionnaire, a review of previous studies in the field was made and three school administrators were consulted.

An outline for a questionnaire was made which included a superfluous number of questions combining many of the questions used in previous studies and many questions suggested by administrators in the field.

The next step was that of screening the questions, selecting only those that would serve the purpose of solving the problem. To do this, the district superintendent and his assistant, five board members, one faculty member and two adults of the community were asked to help decide which questions to use and to suggest any additional questions they felt would be of value in solving the problem.

The completed questionnaire was printed on one sheet of white paper, size 8-1/2" x 13-1/2", and a printed letter of introduction signed by the investigator was attached to each questionnaire.

The questionnaire contained five sections. Section One included questions pertaining to the respondent himself. Section Two listed types or categories of school information and

asked the respondent to indicate his chief interests in school information. Section Three listed the various common sources of school news, and asked the respondent to indicate the sources which have proven to be most meaningful and helpful to him. Sections Four and Five listed factual type questions concerning the local elementary schools and served to permit the investigator to determine the extent of the respondent's general knowledge about the local schools.

To distribute the questionnaire, it was decided to mail a copy to each family represented in the enrollment of the Ceres elementary schools. Permission to distribute the questionnaire in this manner was obtained from the superintendent of the school district and from the board of trustees of the district.

A total of 1061 questionnaires were mailed to parents of the school district and 372 parents responded. There were 26 questionnaires which did not reach the addressee because of changes of address and no forwarding directions established. In a period of four weeks, the 372 responses had been received by the investigator, 35.06 per cent response.

In the Appendix is one copy of the introductory letter and one copy of the questionnaire.

## CHAPTER IV

### ATTITUDES OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE CERES QUESTIONNAIRE

Section One of the Ceres questionnaire pertains to the respondent himself and the answers may give the investigator an opportunity to acquaint himself with the attitudes and habits of the adults of the community to better understand how the school may most satisfactorily communicate with them.

A copy of the questionnaire was mailed to each family registered in the pupil enrollment files of the school district. A total of 1061 homes received their copy and during a period of four weeks the response total reached 372 or 35.06 per cent.

Question 1 of Section One stated: "Are you a registered voter?" The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Yes	301	80.91
No	57	15.32
No Answer	14	3.76

Since only 35.06 per cent of the recipients responded, it is not possible to say that 80.91 per cent of the parents of the elementary school children in Ceres are registered voters. So the importance of this question is doubtful.

Question 2 of Section One stated: "In what grades do you have children in the Ceres elementary schools?"



The following table indicates the numbers of children and their grade levels represented by the 372 respondents:

Grade	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Mentally Retarded	Deaf
No. of children	71	84	73	84	74	63	60	65	50	3	2

In graphic form, the above results appear on the following page.

This graph represents a total of 626 children, 29.12 per cent of the total enrollment of the Ceres Elementary Schools.

The investigator believes the graph indicates that the respondents, though only 35.06 per cent of total, represent a fairly even distribution of the grade levels of the school district, and in a sense offsets the disadvantage of the low per cent of returns of the questionnaire.

The following table indicates the number of respondents with one, two, three, four, or five children presently enrolled in Ceres Elementary Schools:

Children	1 in school	2 in school	3 in school	4 in school	5 in school
No. of respondents	158	149	44	9	2
Per Cent	42.47	40.05	11.83	2.92	.54

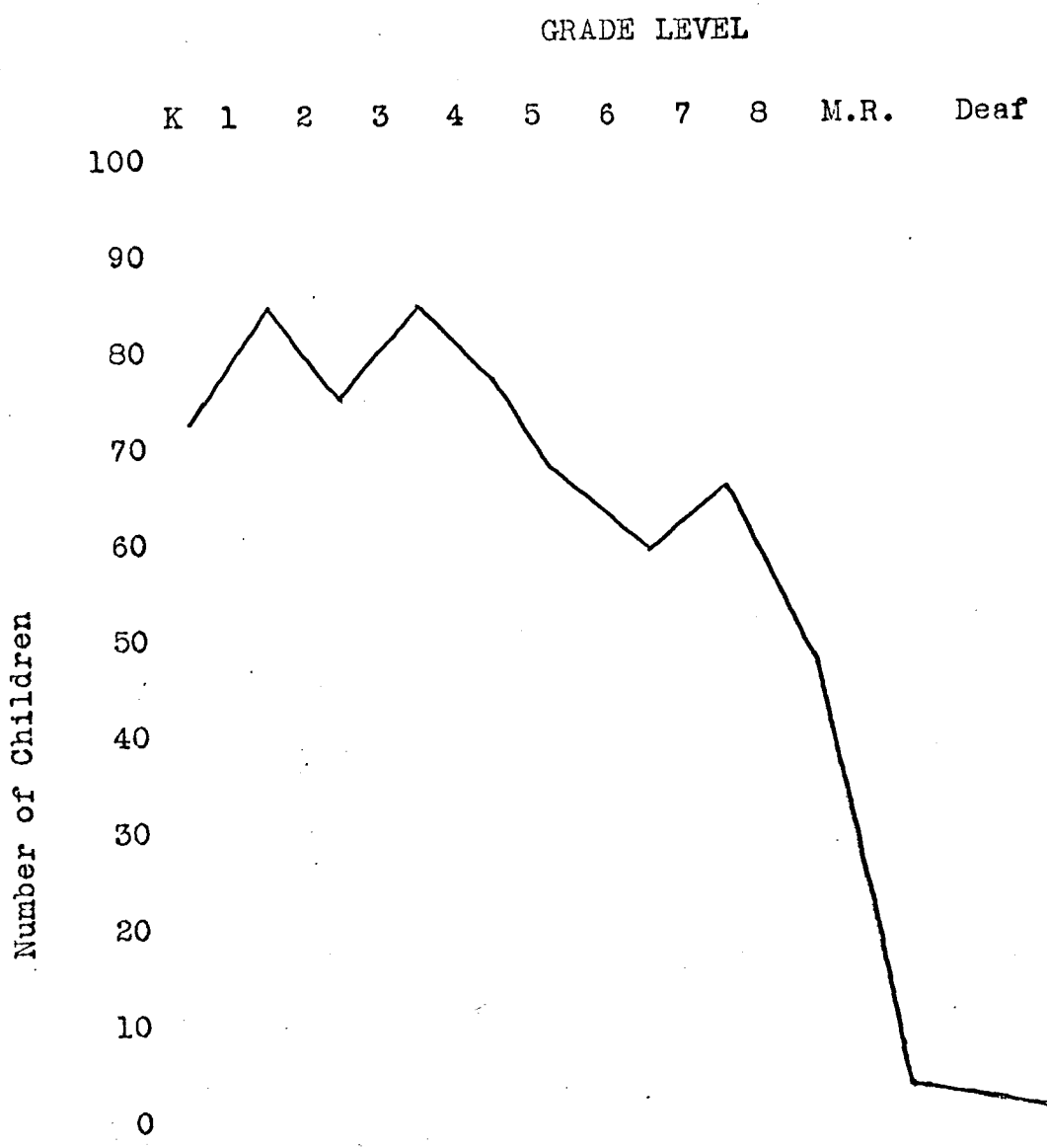


FIGURE 1  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN EACH GRADE LEVEL  
REPRESENTED BY THE RESPONDENTS  
OF THE CERES QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 3 of Section One stated: "How often did you visit and observe a Ceres elementary classroom last year?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	Once	Twice	More Than Twice	None	No Answer
No. of respondents	58	79	165	54	16
Per cent	15.59	21.24	44.35	14.52	4.30

The investigator is doubtful if the respondents have interpreted this question in the manner for which it was intended. To "visit and observe" was meant to be interpreted as having visited and observed a regular period of instruction. Obviously, there have not been 44.35 per cent of parents that have done so more than twice in the past year. Therefore, it is to be presumed that the respondents here have included such visits as teacher conferences or calling at the room for any purpose, not necessarily to observe instruction.

Question 4 of Section One stated: "How many P.T.A. meetings did you attend last year?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

No. of Meetings	One	Two	Three	Four	More Than Four	None	No Answer
No. of resp.	40	42	24	15	69	162	19
Per cent	10.75	11.29	6.45	4.03	18.52	43.55	5.11

A percentage of 48.66 of the respondents attended no P.T.A. meeting last year in Ceres and 18.52 per cent attended more than four P.T.A. meetings last year in Ceres. In general, P.T.A. attendance is not as high as would be desired.

Question 5 of Section One stated: "Did you attend 'Public Schools Week' last year in Ceres?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	Caswell School	Don Pedro School	Whitmore School	None	No Answer
No. of respondents	130	45	143	72	18
Per cent	34.95	12.10	38.44	19.35	4.84

Of the respondents 75.81 per cent attended "Public Schools Week" in Ceres last year. Some parents attended "Public Schools Week" at more than one school and 72 respondents indicated that they attended no exhibit of the event last year in Ceres.

Question 6 of Section One stated: "Are you a regular reader of the Modesto Bee?" "Ceres Courier?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	Modesto Bee	Ceres Courier	Both	None
No. of respondents	333	170	161	30
per cent	89.52	45.70	43.28	8.06

The Modesto Bee is a daily paper and 89.52 per cent of the respondents indicated that they are regular readers. The

Ceres Courier is a weekly paper and 45.70 per cent of the respondents indicated that they are regular readers.

Question 7 of Section One stated: "Are you a regular listener to local radio newscasts? If answer is yes, to which station do you generally listen?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	YES	NO	KTRB	KBOX	KMOD	KTUR	No Answer
No. of resp.	232	129	186	59	66	7	11
Per cent	62.37	34.68	50.00	15.86	17.74	1.88	2.96

A 62.37 per cent of the respondents indicated that they are regular listeners to local radio news casts. There are four local radio stations, and 50 per cent of the respondents claim to be regular listeners to KTRB.

Question 8 of Section One stated: "Do you think the Ceres Elementary Schools are doing a good, average, or poor job of teaching the basic 3-r's (Reading, writing, and arithmetic)?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	Good	Average	Poor	No Answer
No. of respondents	187	157	17	11
Per cent	50.27	42.20	4.73	3.06

Question 9 of Section One stated: "Do you think the

Ceres Elementary Schools are doing a good, average, or poor job with school publicity?"

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	Good	Average	Poor	No Answer
No. of respondents	156	179	19	20
Per cent	41.94	48.12	5.11	5.37

It is significant to learn that 92.47 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the teaching of the basic 3-r's and that 90.06 per cent of the respondents feel that school publicity is satisfactory.

The questionnaire provided space for comment concerning the basic 3-r's and school publicity. In the following lists are some sample comments on each question.

Comments concerning the teaching of basic 3-r's in Ceres:

1. "Eastern Schools are at least one year ahead of us."
2. "The teachers are wonderful."
3. "The first grades need more fundamental teaching in the 3-r's."
4. "I definitely do not like the reading methods."
5. "As far as our children have gone, they have been thoroughly taught by superior teachers."
6. "The teacher doesn't explain or make it clear about work-book assignments."
7. "Not stern enough."
8. "We're very satisfied with our child's progress."

9. "More time should be spent on 3-r's."
10. "Our children are doing quite nicely. Improvement in spelling during the past year remarkable."
11. "One child in fifth grade and one in eighth and neither one can say his multiplication tables."
12. "I like the interest the teachers show in my children. They seem to teach thoroughly."
13. "I believe more time should be given to writing."
14. "The work doesn't seem to be explained thoroughly, therefore I have to explain it at home."
15. "Well staffed and striving to do a good job with the 3-r's and more."

Comments concerning Ceres Elementary School publicity:

1. "The Ceres Elementary Schools are not publicized as much as Modesto schools, at least in the Modesto Bee."
2. "Many more Media could be improved to alert parents of their role."
3. "Too short of time ahead with notices."
4. "Good coverage of P. T. A. activities."
5. "We appreciate the circulars of events sent home with the children."

Summary describing the respondents of the Ceres questionnaire. In general, the respondents of the Ceres questionnaire qualify as follows:

1. There were 80.91 per cent of the respondents registered voters.
2. They represent a fairly even distribution of children in all grade levels.

3. There were 22.55 per cent of the respondents attended four or more P. T. A. meetings last year in Ceres - 48.66 per cent attended no P. T. A. meeting.
4. There were 75.81 per cent of the respondents attended "Public Schools Week" last year in Ceres.
5. There were 89.52 per cent of the respondents read the Modesto Bee - 44.70 read the Ceres Courier.
6. There were 62.37 per cent of the respondents listening to local radio news casts with 50 per cent listening to KTRB.
7. There were 50.27 per cent of the respondents that rate the Ceres Elementary Schools doing a "good" job in teaching the basic 3-r's, 42.20 per cent rate them doing an "average" job. In all, 92.47 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the teaching.
8. There were 41.94 per cent of the respondents that rate the Ceres Elementary Schools doing a "good" job with school publicity - 48.12 per cent rate publicity "average".



## CHAPTER V

### SCHOOL NEWS OF GREATEST INTEREST TO CITIZENS OF CERES, CALIFORNIA

Section Two of the Ceres questionnaire presented a list of the various types of school information, and asked the respondent to mark number one (1) for the type that interests him most, and mark number two (2) for the type of information of his second choice, and number three (3) for his third choice, and so on as far as possible.

Table I reports the results of Section Two of the questionnaire and lists the various types of school information in order, starting with the type receiving the greatest number of first choices and so on down to the last type which received the lowest number of first choices. One exception to this rank and order appears in the choice of "curriculum and methods of teaching" and is explained in a later paragraph.

The overwhelming first choice in school information was that of "your child's progress and achievement," with 285 respondents, 76.60 per cent rating it first. The wording used in the questionnaire specified "your child's progress and achievement," instead of merely "progress and achievement."

TABLE I  
 TYPES OF SCHOOL INFORMATION OF GREATEST INTEREST  
 TO CITIZENS OF CERES

	Choice									
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
(1) Your child's progress and achievement	285	36	7	4	2	-	-	-	-	-
(2) Curriculum and methods of instruction	64	110	58	39	12	4	4	2	1	2
(3) Health of pupils	72	56	38	48	42	19	9	6	3	1
(4) Discipline and behavior of pupils	58	70	69	50	28	11	7	3	2	1
(5) Teachers and school officials	51	49	70	42	46	18	11	5	-	1
(6) Attendance and enrollment	26	29	14	10	24	48	40	20	20	18
(7) Building programs, finance, and administration	26	35	22	15	20	52	40	26	5	13
(8) School calendar for the year	18	23	21	9	8	12	12	24	53	67
(9) P. T. A.	11	28	24	10	18	19	32	53	28	24
(10) Extracurricular activities	7	24	22	7	13	10	27	39	60	28

It may be that the particular wording altered the results, but the respondents left no doubt that their first and utmost interest is their child's progress and achievement.

The analysis of local newspaper articles of school news revealed that no news items were printed during the first semester classified as "pupil progress and achievement."

The second choice in desired school information was "curriculum and methods of teaching." This rating was given on the basis that 110 Ceres respondents, 29.56 per cent, rated it their second choice. This rating represents the exception in the rank and order of the types of school news most desired. But, the investigator decided it was justified with such a great number of second choices.

In the local newspaper analysis only one "curriculum" article with 106 lines appeared in the paper during the first semester of school. The 106 lines represent 4.41 per cent of all school news printed during the period.

The type of school information receiving third rank of interest to citizens was "health of pupils," with 72 parents making the selection, 19.35 per cent. No news items appeared in local papers on this topic during the period.

"Discipline and behavior" rated fourth greatest interest to Ceres citizens with 58 respondents, 15.59 per cent selecting it. No news items appeared on this subject in local papers during the period.

"Teachers and school officials" was the fifth greatest interest in school news, according to Ceres parents, with 51 respondents, 13.70 per cent making the selection. There were 13 articles in the local newspapers on this subject with 422 lines which represented 17.56 per cent of all school news published during the period. This means that "teachers and school officials" ranked second in amount of school news printed.

"Attendance and enrollment" was the sixth greatest school news interest of Ceres parents, with 26 respondents, 6.96 per cent, making the selection. There were 4 articles in the local newspapers on the subject with 190 lines totaling 7.91 per cent of all school news published during the period. This means that "attendance and enrollment" ranked fourth in amount of school news printed during the period.

"Building programs, finance, and administration" was the seventh choice of Ceres parents in school news, with 26 respondents, 6.96 per cent, making the selection. There were 7 articles of news on this subject printed in the local papers with 312 lines totaling 12.99 per cent of all school news printed during the period. This means that "building programs, finance, and administration ranked third in amount of school news printed during the period.

"School calendar for the year" was the eighth choice in school news among Ceres parents with 18 respondents, 4.84 per cent, making the selection. No news items on this subject

appeared in the local newspapers. School holidays are usually announced in school bulletins sent home with children.

"P. T. A." news was ninth choice among Ceres parents with 11 respondents, 2.96 per cent, making the selection. There were 34 news items in local papers on this subject with 863 lines totaling 35.93 per cent of all school news printed during the period. This means that "P. T. A." ranked first in quantity of school news printed during the period.

"Extra-curricular activities" was tenth choice in school news among Ceres parents, with 7 respondents, 1.88 per cent making the selection. There were no news items classified as "extra-curricular activities" printed during the period. This phase of the report on newspaper analysis is in error because there were news items about athletic events of the Ceres Elementary Schools, but these were unintentionally not tallied in the study.

The lists on the following page show Farley's rank order of interests in school news items compared to the interests of the Ceres parents. A remarkable thing about the two lists of school news interests is that the rank order is almost identical in both studies.

Ceres rank order of school news interest.	Farley's rank order of school news interest.
(1) Your child's progress and achievement	(1) Pupil progress and achievement
(2) Curriculum and methods of instruction	(2) Methods of instruc- tion
(3) Health of pupils	(3) Health of pupils
(4) Discipline and behavior of pupils	(4) Course of study
(5) Teachers and school officials	(5) Value of education
(6) Attendance and enroll- ment	(6) Discipline and behavior of pupils
(7) Building programs, fin- ance, and administration	(7) Teachers and school officers
(8) School calendar for the year	(8) Attendance
(9) P. T. A.	(9) Buildings and building programs
(10) Extra-curricular activities	(10) Business management and administration
	(11) Board of education and administration
	(12) Parent teacher association
	(13) Extra curriculum activities

## CHAPTER VI

### BEST SOURCES OF SCHOOL INFORMATION FOR CITIZENS OF CERES, CALIFORNIA

Section Three of the Ceres questionnaire listed the various sources of school information and asked the respondent to mark number one (1) for the source that had been most satisfactory for him, to mark number two (2) for the source of his second choice, number three (3) for his third choice, and so on as far as possible.

Table II reports the results of Section Three of the questionnaire listed in order ranging from the most satisfactory news source to the least satisfactory as reported by the Ceres respondents.

"School news bulletins that are sent home" was the overwhelming first choice as most satisfactory school news source reported by Ceres parents. A number of 203 respondents, 54.57 per cent, selected it as their most satisfactory source of school information.

"Pupils" were selected as second best source of school information with 82 Ceres respondents, 22.04 per cent, making the selection.

"School exhibits" rated third best source of school news by 47 Ceres respondents, 12.63 per cent making the selection.

TABLE II  
 SOURCES OF SCHOOL NEWS  
 MOST SATISFACTORY TO RESPONDENTS  
 OF THE CERES QUESTIONNAIRE

	Best Sources						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(1) School bulletins that are sent home	203	78	25	11	7	3	2
(2) Pupils	82	106	67	26	15	3	1
(3) School exhibits	47	26	48	37	43	29	15
(4) Commercial newspapers	32	52	52	39	22	44	10
(5) Teachers	31	56	67	38	37	14	5
(6) P. T. A.	23	45	45	36	31	31	15
(7) Radio	7	20	33	12	10	30	87



The "commercial press" rated fourth best source of school news by 32 Ceres respondents, 8.60 per cent, making the selection.

"Teachers" ranked fifth in sources of school news with 31 Ceres respondents, 8.33 per cent, making the selection.

"P. T. A." ranked sixth in sources of school news with 23 Ceres respondents, 6.18 per cent, making the selection.

"Radio" ranked seventh among the sources of school news to Ceres parents, with 7 respondents, 1.88 per cent, making the selection.

There are many possible ideas that could be suggested from these findings. Perhaps P. T. A. could be a more satisfactory source if more parents attended the meetings. Probably the commercial press could rate higher if school administrators maintained a greater program of school publicity for the news publishers, since 89.52 per cent of the respondents read the Modesto Bee and 44.70 per cent read the Ceres Courier.

Since 75.81 per cent of the Ceres respondents attend "Public Schools Week," and Ceres parents rate "school exhibits" third best source, perhaps more advantage could be taken of this annual event.

Teachers and administrators should always consider the pupils as a continuous medium of school to home communication.

Parents rate pupils as their second best source of school information, so pupils represent a great potential means of accurate school to home communication.

## CHAPTER VII

### CERES CITIZENS' GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Sections Four and Five of the questionnaire were concerned with factual information about the local elementary schools. Section Four attempted to determine the extent of general knowledge the respondent has about the Ceres Elementary Schools. Section Five attempted to determine the respondents' knowledge about special services provided by Ceres Elementary Schools.

In the two sections, four and five, there were twenty-four correct answers possible. Some of the answers were estimations. For example,

Question 1 of Section Four stated: "Estimate the number of children attending Ceres Elementary Schools:

1,000 (     )    1,200 (     )    1,700 (     )  
                  2,000 (     )    2,200 (     )."

The precise answer would be somewhere between 2,100 and 2,200 children. If a respondent marked either 2,000 or 2,200 it was considered a correct answer.

In scoring Sections Four and Five, if the respondent answered all twenty-four questions correctly, his score would be 24. His score would be indicated by the total number of correct answers he gave. The following graph displays the curve of distribution of scores among the 372 respondents.



FIGURE 2

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS RECEIVING EACH POSSIBLE SCORE ON THE COMBINED SECTIONS FOUR AND FIVE OF THE CERES QUESTIONNAIRE



Question 3 of Section Four stated: "Estimate the average number of pupils in each elementary classroom in Ceres:

25 ( ) 30 ( ) 35 ( ) 40 ( ) 45 ( )."

The correct answer is 35. The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	187	50.27	14

Question 4 of Section Four stated: "How often do Ceres Elementary Schools send home report cards per year?

Once ( ) Twice ( ) Three ( ) Four ( )  
Five ( ) Six ( )."

The correct answer is four. The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	278	74.73	16

Question 5 of Section Four stated: "How are the Ceres Elementary Schools supported? Local funds only ( )  
State funds only ( ) Federal funds only ( ) Local plus  
state funds ( ) Local plus state plus federal funds ( )."

The correct answer is local plus state funds. The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	184	49.46	32

Question 6 of Section Four stated: "Which statement is true?"

- (a) All children in the Ceres Elementary Schools are insured in case of accidental injury ( ).
- (b) All children in the Ceres Elementary Schools are insured in case of accidental injury caused by faulty equipment or negligent staff ( ).

The correct answer is (b). The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	<u>269</u>	<u>72.31</u>	<u>31</u>

Question 7 of Section Four stated: "Which statement is true?"

- (a) The Ceres Elementary School District chiefly maintains its own library of supplementary and resources materials ( ).
- (b) The Ceres Elementary School District chiefly contributes funds to the county schools library for supplementary and resource materials ( )."

The correct answer is (b). The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	<u>237</u>	<u>63.71</u>	<u>57</u>

Question 8 of Section Four stated: "How many members serve on the Ceres Elementary School Board?"

Three ( ) Four ( ) Five ( ) Six ( ) Seven ( )."

The correct answer is five. The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	<u>132</u>	<u>35.48</u>	<u>46</u>

Question 9 of Section Four stated: "Which of the following describes the program of the Ceres Elementary Schools?"

Kindergarten through sixth (\_\_\_) Kindergarten through seventh (\_\_\_) Kindergarten through eighth (\_\_\_) Kindergarten through ninth (\_\_\_)."

The correct answer is Kindergarten through eighth. The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	<u>276</u>	<u>74.19</u>	<u>20</u>

Question 10 of Section Four stated: "Which of the Ceres Elementary Schools operate cafeterias?

Caswell (\_\_\_) Don Pedro (\_\_\_) Whitmore (\_\_\_)"

The correct answer is none. The correct response would be to leave all choices blank.

The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	<u>263</u>	<u>70.69</u>	

Question 11 of Section Four stated: "California school law requires that a child to enter kindergarten in September must be five years old on or before what date?

Sept. 1st (\_\_\_) Sept. 2nd (\_\_\_) Dec. 1st (\_\_\_)  
Dec. 2nd (\_\_\_) Jan. 1st (\_\_\_) Jan. 2nd (\_\_\_)"

The correct answer is December 2nd. The 372 respondents answered as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Correct	<u>78</u>	<u>20.96</u>	<u>32</u>

Section Five of the questionnaire listed special services provided by some school districts and asked the respond-



ent to indicate the services provided by Ceres Elementary School District.

The list of services that appeared in the questionnaire and the number of correct answers by the 372 respondents follows:

	Correct Answer	Number of Correct Responses	Per cent
(a) Special classes for deaf and hard of hearing children	Yes	263	70.69
(b) Special classes for mentally retarded children	Yes	216	58.06
(c) Special classes for children with speech problems	Yes	295	79.30
(d) Special training for visually handicapped children	Yes	83	22.31
(e) Private instructions for children interested in instrumental music	Yes	135	36.29
(f) Home teachers for children who because of disability or long illness cannot attend school	Yes	156	41.94
(g) School nurse	Yes	349	93.81
(h) School doctor	No	124	33.33
(i) Special art teacher	Yes	253	68.01
(j) Special vocal music teacher	Yes	242	65.05
(k) Elementary school band	Yes	299	80.38
(l) School psychologist	Yes	157	42.20
(m) School dentist	No	139	37.37

Sections Four and Five of the questionnaire were intended to help determine how extensively the adults of Ceres, California are informed about local school matters.

In Section Four of the questionnaire the three questions that rated the highest number of correct responses were:

- (1) How often do Ceres Elementary Schools send home report cards per year?  
With 278 correct answers: 74.73 per cent.
- (2) Which of the following describes the program of the Ceres Elementary Schools? Kindergarten through sixth - Kindergarten through seventh - Kindergarten through eighth - Kindergarten through ninth?  
With 276 correct answers: 74.19 per cent.
- (3) Which of the Ceres Elementary Schools operate cafeterias? Caswell - Don Pedro - Whitmore.  
With 263 correct answers: 70.69 per cent.

The three questions of Section Four that rated the least number of correct answers were:

- (1) California school law requires that a child to enter Kindergarten in September must be five years old on or before what date?  
September 1st - September 2nd  
December 1st - December 2nd  
January 1st - January 2nd  
With 78 correct answers: 20.96 per cent.
- (2) Estimate the number of teachers employed by Ceres Elementary Schools.  
50 - 55 - 60 - 65 - 70 - 75 - 80  
With 117 correct answers: 31.45 per cent.
- (3) How many members serve on the Ceres Elementary School Board?  
Three - Four - Five - Six - Seven.  
With 132 correct answers: 35.48 per cent.

Section Five of the questionnaire listed special services and asked the respondent to indicate the ones he

believed were provided by the Ceres Elementary Schools.

The three special services which rated the highest number of correct answers were:

- (1) School nurse. With 349 correct answers: 93.81 per cent.
- (2) Elementary school band.  
With 299 correct answers: 80.38 per cent.
- (3) Special classes for children with speech difficulties.  
With 295 correct answers: 79.30 per cent.

All three services above are provided by Ceres Elementary Schools.

The three special services which parents seemed least aware of were:

- (1) Special training for visually handicapped children.  
With 83 correct answers: 22.31 per cent.

This vision service is a county office service provided in Ceres Elementary Schools as often as it is needed.

- (2) Private instruction for children interested in instrumental music. With 135 correct answers: 36.29 per cent.
- (3) School psychologist. With 157 correct answers: 42.20 per cent.

Ceres Elementary School District has a psychologist two days per week.

There were 126 respondents, 33.87 per cent, that earned 17 points or higher for their score on Sections Four and Five, indicating that they represent the best informed one-third of all respondents.

To attempt to determine if there is any particular fact about these best informed respondents, the investigator has established the following information about them.

In the total response to question 2 of Section One of the questionnaire, ("In what grades do you have children in Ceres Elementary Schools?"), there was a total of 626 pupils represented. For this top third group of respondents, there were 218 pupils represented, or 34.82 per cent of the total response. Thus, the top 33.87 per cent of the respondents represent 34.82 per cent of the pupils represented.

The following list indicates the numbers of pupils in each grade level, represented by this top 33.87 per cent of respondents, as compared to numbers of pupils in each grade represented by all respondents:

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Number of pupils represented by all respondents	71	84	73	84	74	63	60	65	50	626
Number of pupils represented by top 33.87 per cent	20	27	28	27	30	25	16	24	21	218
Per cent	28	32	38	32	40	40	27	37	42	34.82

This means that the respondents, generally best informed about school matters, have more children in Grades 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 than most other respondents. This could be

understandable that parents who have had dealings with the school for the most number of years are best informed.

The following outline indicates the numbers of respondents from the top 33.87 per cent group that attended "Public Schools Week" exhibits last year in Ceres, as compared to the number of total respondents attending the same exhibits:

	Caswell	Don Pedro	Whitmore	Total
Number of total respondents attending "Public Schools Week"	130	45	143	318
Number of respondents in the top 33.87 per cent group attending "Public Schools Week"	41	18	66	125
Per cent	31.54	40.00	46.15	39.31

From the above it is learned that the top 33.87 per cent group represents 39.31 per cent of the "Public Schools Week" attendance. It is also learned that of the parents that attended Whitmore "Public Schools Week," 46.15 per cent fall into the top 33.87 per cent group.

Continuing to identify this top 33.87 per cent group of the respondents, the following outline indicates the numbers of respondents of this group attending various numbers of P.T.A. meetings last year in Ceres, as compared with the numbers of

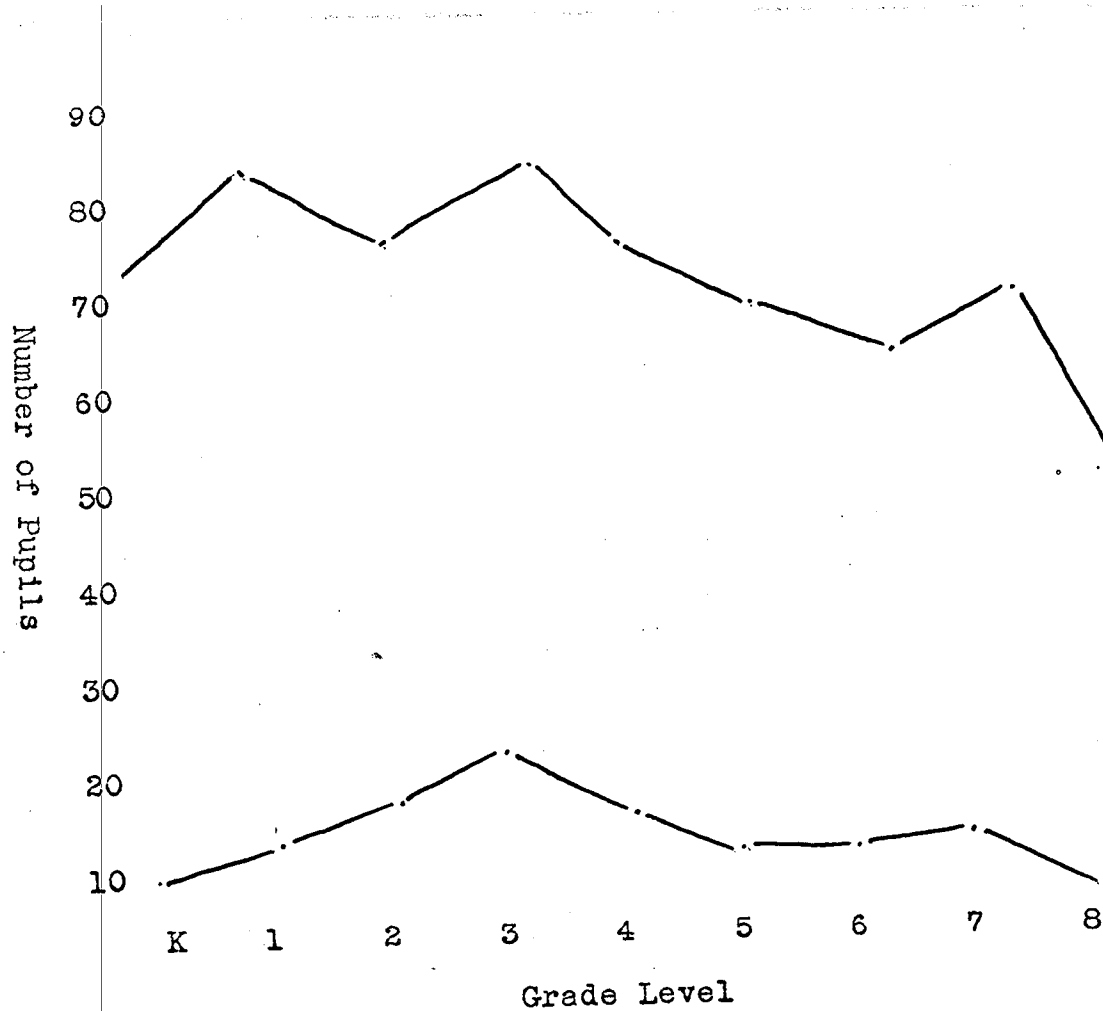
all respondents attending the same number of P. T. A. meetings:

Number of P. T. A. meetings attended last year								Total
1	2	3	4	More Than 4	None	No Ans.		
Number of the total respondents attending P.T.A. meetings	40	42	24	15	69	162	19	371
Number of 33.87 per cent group attending P.T.A. meetings	16	15	7	5	37	43	3	126
Per cent	40	36	29	33	54	27	16	33.96

From the above it is learned that the 33.87 per cent top group represents 33.96 per cent of all P. T. A. attenders. This may mean that P. T. A. attenders, generally, are no better informed than non-attenders. But, there is significance in that 53.62 per cent of the group that attended more than four P. T. A. meetings are among the best informed 33.87 per cent group.

Since this seems to be of considerable significance, let us attempt to learn who these parents are that attended more than four P. T. A. meetings last year.

The following graph indicates the number of pupils in each grade represented by all respondents, as compared with the numbers of pupils in each grade represented by those parents attending more than four P. T. A. meetings last year.



Number of pupils in each grade represented by all respondents.

Number of pupils represented by parents attending more than four P.T.A. meetings last year.

FIGURE 3

NUMBER OF PUPILS IN EACH GRADE REPRESENTED BY ALL RESPONDENTS AS COMPARED WITH NUMBER OF PUPILS REPRESENTED BY RESPONDENTS ATTENDING P. T. A. MEETINGS

This curve in Figure 3 may mean that those parents attending more than four P. T. A. meetings are largely representing pupils from Grades two, three, and four.

Pupils of kindergarten, first, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are less represented among P. T. A. attenders.

The following illustration indicates the number of respondents in the top 33.87 per cent group that read the Modesto Bee and the Ceres Courier, as compared with the total respondents that read the same papers.

	Modesto Bee	Ceres Courier
Number of total respondents that read the newspapers	321	163
Number of the top 33.87 per cent group that read the newspapers	107	82
Per cent	33.33	50.31

From the above it is learned that the 33.87 per cent top group represents 33.33 per cent of the Modesto Bee readers. It is also learned that the same 33.87 per cent group represents 50.31 per cent of the Ceres Courier readers that responded to the questionnaire.

In an effort to reach some generalizations about this best informed group of 33.87 per cent of the respondents, let us summarize the following information:



- (1) The best informed group, 33.87 per cent of the respondents, represent 34.82 per cent of all children represented.
- (2) Parents best informed generally represent pupils in fourth grade to eighth grade.
- (3) Of the parents that attended more than four P.T.A. meetings last year 53.62 per cent fall into this 33.87 per cent group.
- (4) The parents that attended more than four P.T.A. meetings last year largely represent pupils from Grades two, three, and four.
- (5) Of the respondents that read Ceres Courier, 50.31 per cent fall into this 33.87 per cent group.

From the foregoing information, the investigator attempts to venture some generalizations to identify the parents generally best informed about local school matters.

The following outline indicates the general results of the attempt.

Group I

- |                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| 8<br>7<br>6<br>5 | } | Best informed group of parents, largely because they have had association with the schools for a greater number of years than other parents.                        |
|                  |   | They are not particularly P.T.A. attenders, they read the Ceres Courier, they represent more pupils per family, and attend Whitmore "Public Schools Week" exhibits. |

Group II

- |             |   |  |
|-------------|---|--|
| 4<br>3<br>2 | } | Second best informed group of parents, they have not been associated with schools as long as Group I, but they are the P.T.A. attenders. |
|-------------|---|--|

Group III

- |        |   |   |
|--------|---|---|
| 1<br>K | } | Third best informed parents. They have not been associated with schools as long as Group I or II, they are not particularly P.T.A. attenders. |
|--------|---|---|

GRADE LEVEL

## CHAPTER VIII

### LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF CERES

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEWS

During the first semester of the school year, all local school news published in the two local papers was recorded and classified to attempt an evaluation of the news and compare news printed with news most desired by the patrons. One of the local papers is a daily and the other is a weekly.

In the questionnaire used in this study, the investigator classified school news in the following categories:

- (a) Your child's progress and achievement.
- (b) Curriculum and methods of instructions.
- (c) Health of pupils.
- (d) Discipline and behavior of pupils.
- (e) Teachers and school officials.
- (f) Attendance and enrollment.
- (g) Building programs, finance, and administration.
- (h) P. T. A.
- (i) Extra curriculum activities.
- (j) School calendar for the year.

During the semester a total of 70 news items with 2402 lines of Ceres Elementary School news appeared in the local papers and the following table indicates the number of lines devoted to the various categories:

TABLE III

NUMBER OF LINES OF CERES SCHOOL NEWS  
 APPEARING IN LOCAL PAPERS DURING FIRST  
 SEMESTER OF 1955-56 SCHOOL YEAR

	Number Articles	Lines	Per cent
(1) P. T. A.	34	863	35.928
(2) Teachers and school officials	13	422	17.56
(3) Building programs, finance and administration	7	312	12.989
(4) Attendance and enrollment	4	190	7.91
(5) Curriculum and methods of instruction	1	106	4.412
(6) Your child's progress and achievement	0	0	0
(7) Health of pupils	0	0	0
(8) Discipline and behavior of pupils	0	0	0
(9) Extra-curricular activities	0	0	0
(10) School calendar for the year	0	0	0
	<u>70</u>	<u>2402</u>	<u>99.989</u>

By way of comparison, the following lists show the rank order of Ceres school news published in local papers and the rank order of school news most desired by Ceres parents:

Rank order of school news desired by Ceres parents	Rank order of all Ceres school news published in local papers
(1) Your child's progress and achievement 76.60 per cent	(1) P. T. A. 35.93 per cent
(2) Curriculum and methods of teaching 29.56 per cent	(2) Teachers and school officials 17.56 per cent
(3) Health of pupils 19.35 per cent	(3) Building programs, finance, and administration 12.99 per cent
(4) Discipline and behavior 15.59 per cent	(4) Attendance and enrollment 7.91 per cent
(5) Teachers and school officials 13.70 per cent	(5) Curriculum and methods of instruction 4.41 per cent
(6) Attendance and enrollment 6.96 per cent	(6) Your child's progress and achievement zero per cent
(7) Building programs, finance, and administration 6.96 per cent	(7) Health of pupils zero per cent
(8) School calendar for the year 4.84 per cent	(8) Discipline and behavior of pupils zero per cent
(9) P. T. A. 2.96 per cent	(9) Extra-curricular activities zero per cent
(10) Extra-curricular for the year 1.88 per cent	(10) School calendar for the year zero per cent

Jacobson and Reavis stated that "any discrepancy between news printed and news desired does not imply that news least desired should be minimized. It would rather mean that desired news should be provided regularly."<sup>1</sup>

In a speech to Modesto teachers Dr. Clark Robinson stated, "It is the responsibility of the school administration to provide a continuous flow of school news to the local papers. It is not the responsibility of the press to root out school news for itself."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Robinson stated further, "School news should be simple, understandable, yet accurate."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobson and Reavis, op. cit., p. 729.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Clark Robinson in a speech to Modesto teachers, Modesto, California, February 28, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summarizing this report about school-to-home communication, it is well to review the objectives of the study:

1. How accurately and extensively do adults of the community know their elementary schools?
2. What are the various sources by which adults of the community receive school information?
3. What types (categories) of school information do citizens desire most?
4. What types of school news items appear most frequently in the local newspapers, and how accurate and effective are they?

How accurately and extensively do adults of the community, Ceres, California, know their elementary schools? Generally speaking, the adults of Ceres were rather well informed about their elementary schools. More than one-third of the adults answered 70 per cent or more of the factual questions correctly on the Ceres questionnaire.

The areas of school information in which parents seemed to be best informed were:

- (a) Report cards.
- (b) School nurse program.
- (c) Elementary school band.
- (d) Speech correction program.

The areas of school information in which parents seemed

to be least informed were:

- (a) School law.
- (b) School board organization.
- (c) School psychologist's program.
- (d) Training of visually handicapped.
- (e) Curriculum materials.

Parents of children in fifth grade to eighth grade were generally best informed. This could be due to their longer association with school affairs than in the case of parents of younger children. The parents of fifth grade children also represented the largest per cent of the readers of Ceres Courier. They were not the P. T. A. attenders.

Parents of children in grades two, three, and four, were generally the second best informed about school matters. They represented the largest per cent of P. T. A. attenders. These parents, generally, represented a smaller per cent of the Ceres Courier readers.

The least informed were the parents of kindergarten and first grade children. These had been associated with the school for the shortest period of time, and generally, were not the leading P. T. A. attenders, nor did they represent a high per cent of the Ceres Courier readers.

There were 92.47 per cent of the respondents to the Ceres questionnaire who were satisfied with the teaching of the basic 3-r's in the Ceres Elementary Schools.

There were 90.06 per cent of the respondents who were satisfied with Ceres Elementary School publicity as it had been provided.

There were 80.91 per cent of the respondents who were registered voters.

There were 22.55 per cent of the respondents who attended more than four P. T. A. meetings last year in Ceres, and 48.66 per cent who attended no P. T. A. meetings.

There were 75.81 per cent of the respondents who attended "Public Schools Week" at one or more Ceres schools in 1954-55.

There were 89.52 per cent of the respondents who read the Modesto Bee; 44.70 per cent read the Ceres Courier.

There were 62.37 per cent of the respondents who listened to local radio newscasts, with 50 per cent listening to KTRB.

Of the 1,061 questionnaires mailed out to parents of Ceres, 372 responses were received, or 35.06 per cent.

What are the various sources by which adults of Ceres, California, receive their school information? The rank order of the most satisfactory sources of school information as reported by the respondents of the Ceres questionnaires is as follows:

- (1) School bulletins that are sent home - 54.57 per cent.
- (2) Pupils - 22.04 per cent.



- (3) School exhibits - 12.63 per cent.
- (4) Commercial press - 8.60 per cent.
- (5) Teachers - 8.33 per cent.
- (6) P. T. A. - 6.18 per cent.
- (7) Radio - 1.88 per cent.

From the above findings it is noted that parents rated "Pupils" as their second best source; therefore, teachers and administrators should take full advantage of this medium and provide pupils with accurate information about the schools regularly.

The findings also suggest that with "school exhibits" third in the rank, and with 75.81 per cent of the respondents attending "Public Schools Week," perhaps much advantage may be derived from these annual events.

Perhaps "commercial press" would rate higher if Ceres school administrators would maintain a greater flow of school news to the press.

As reported in Chapter VIII, it is the responsibility of the school to provide regular school news, and not the responsibility of the press to seek out the news for itself.

What types of school information do citizens of Ceres, California desire most? The rank order of most desired school news as reported by the respondents to the Ceres questionnaire is as follows:

- (1) Your child's progress - 76.60 per cent.
- (2) Curriculum and methods of instruction - 29.56 per cent.
- (3) Health of pupils - 19.35 per cent.
- (4) Discipline and behavior of pupils - 15.59 per cent.
- (5) Teachers and school officials - 13.70 per cent.
- (6) Attendance and enrollment - 6.96 per cent.
- (7) Building programs, finance, and administration - 6.96 per cent.
- (8) School calendar for the year - 4.84 per cent.
- (9) P. T. A. - 2.96 per cent.
- (10) Extra-curricular activities - 1.88 per cent.

The first choice, "your child's progress," is information of the type generally relayed to parents via report cards and by parent teacher conference. It would not be expected that newspapers or bulletins would play a significant roll in this communication. School exhibits, however, could be effective in this matter.

"Curriculum and methods of instruction," being the second greatest interest of Ceres parents, could be presented through many channels of communication. One very effective medium for this would be P. T. A. programs. P. T. A. was not rated as a highly satisfactory source of school information, but a relatively small percentage of parents participated. However, the Ceres Elementary School District is planning to

build multi-purpose rooms at each of its schools, and this may have a stimulating effect on P. T. A. attendance. In reality, the P. T. A. has presented many programs devoted to curriculum and methods of instruction, but few parents have attended the meetings to reap the benefits. The new rooms for parent gatherings will see a great improvement in the effectiveness of this medium of communication.

Health of pupils is another favorite type of school information, and, to present this to parents, many media of communication can effectively be used such as the local press, leaflets or bulletins, P. T. A. programs, school exhibits, and pupils themselves.

What types of school news items appear most frequently in the school newspapers? The rank order of quantity of Ceres Elementary School news printed in the local newspapers, as determined by analysis of all school news published during the first semester of the school year 1955-56 is as follows:

	No. of items	Lines	Per cent
(1) P. T. A.	34	863	35.928
(2) Teachers and school officials	13	422	17.56
(3) Building programs, finance administration	7	312	12.989
(4) Attendance & enrollment	4	190	7.91
(5) Curriculum and methods of instruction	1	106	4.412

This list pertaining to school news printed, page 61, is not complete. A more detailed classification of the news articles is necessary for several reasons. For example:

1. Athletic news was not included and should fall into extra-curricular class.
2. Some articles contained several types of school news but were classified according to the main topic only.

As reported in Chapter II, any discrepancy between news printed and news most desired does not imply that news least desired should be minimized. It would rather mean that desired news should be provided regularly.

According to the study guide prepared for the California Conference on Education, the public is not getting the kind of news it most wants about its schools from its local newspapers, and the public knows the kind of news it would like to have published.

The findings of the local survey indicate that "curriculum and methods of instruction" along with curriculum materials, ranked high in the order of parent interest, but low in the extent of parents' knowledge about the schools. The analysis of school news printed indicated that this subject accounted for only 4.41 per cent of the total school news in the press. Therefore, it is suggested by the investigator that the school provide the local press with more information of this type without detracting from other types of school news.

### Recommendations

In view of the various findings of the survey, the following recommendations are presented.

With the current problems of school financing, it is more important than ever in history that the public understand the school and its program. The P. T. A. is capable of presenting well-planned programs of interpretation to its many members if the school and its staff will provide the facilities, the information, and the materials necessary for the program. The schools should provide the meeting place, the printing facilities needed, the services of its professional staff, curriculum materials, and should cooperate in every way possible with this most important parent group.

The school should provide desired school news regularly to the press. In Ceres, nearly all of the respondents in the survey read the daily paper and nearly one-half read the weekly paper.

The parents indicated that the local press and P. T. A. were not their most satisfactory sources of school news, but the investigator suggests that these two agencies could be more effective if given every possible opportunity by the school. The national and state P. T. A. organizations provide adequate training courses for local officers and members.

The press has professional editors capable and ready to serve the school to the extent that the school will allow them.

The school should make full use of the effectiveness of "school exhibits" regularly and especially at "Public Schools Week" events.

School bulletins, which may be in the form of leaflets, school news letter or newspaper were rated most satisfactory by many of the respondents, and should be prepared regularly. The P. T. A. may help in this department, too, by their monthly "Newsette."

Teachers and administrators should regularly provide pupils with certain school information since parents rated the pupils as their second most satisfactory source of school information.

The investigator suggests that the school continue to give the same regular news it has always provided to the community with particular emphasis on "curriculum and methods of instruction" and "pupil health." The school should do everything possible to improve continuously the effectiveness of its program of reporting "pupil progress" to parents.

This study has the weaknesses and limitations of the questionnaire technique, but the data, as collected, have been categorized and interpreted as objectively as possible. It is believed that the findings may be of value to elementary school staffs who are seeking better methods for keeping the public informed about its schools.

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APPENDIX

JOSEPH B. STANFORD  
Ceres, California

November 2, 1955

Dear Reader:

Attached you will find a list of questions, the purpose of which is to determine (1) how adequate the publicity program has been for the Ceres Elementary Schools, (2) where citizens of the community receive most of their local school information and (3) what types of school information interests citizens the most.

It would be of great help to me if you would fill in the questionnaire and return it to me, in the enclosed stamped envelope as soon as possible.

You are not expected to know all the correct answers. Just check the answers you believe are most nearly correct, and feel free to insert any comment you care to.

The questionnaire is to be used in connection with a thesis project in partial fulfillment of a Master's Degree program undertaken by me at the College of the Pacific, Stockton, California.

I have received full permission from the Superintendent of the Ceres Elementary School District and from the Board of Trustees of the school district, to send out this questionnaire.

You are not required to sign the questionnaire, all questionnaires are identical and there is no way for me to determine who answered the questions.

Sincerely yours,  
Joe Stanford

SECTION ONE

1. Are you a registered voter? Yes (....) No(....)
2. In what grades do you have children in the Ceres Elementary Schools?  
.....  
.....
3. How often did you visit and observe a Ceres Elementary classroom last year? Once (....) Twice (....) More than twice (....) None (....)
4. How many PTA meetings did you attend last year? One (....) Two (....) Three (....) Four (....) More than four (....) None (....)
5. Did you attend "Public Schools Week" last year in Ceres?  

Caswell	Yes (....) No (....)
Don Pedro	Yes (....) No (....)
Whitmore	Yes (....) No (....)
6. Are you a regular reader of:  

Modesto Bee?	Yes (....) No (....)
Ceres Courier?	Yes (....) No (....)
7. Are you a regular listener to local radio newscasts? Yes (....) No (....)  
 If the answer is yes, to which station do you generally listen? KTRB (....) KBOX (....) KMOD (....) KTUR (....)
8. Do you think the Ceres Elementary Schools are doing a good, average or poor job of teaching the basic 3-R's, (reading, writing and arithmetic)?  
 Good (....) Average (....) Poor (....)  
 Comment .....
9. Do you think the Ceres Elementary Schools are doing a good, average or poor job with school publicity?  
 Good (....) Average (....) Poor (....)  
 Comment .....

SECTION TWO

The following is a list of the various types of school information. Attempt to rate them according to the type of information that interests you most. Mark number one (1) for the type that interests you most. Mark number two (2) for the type of information of your second choice, and number three (3) for third interest, and so on as far as possible:

SECTION FOUR

1. Estimate the number of children attending the Ceres Elementary Schools: 1,000 (....) 1,200 (....) 1,500 (....) 1,700 (....) 2,000 (....) 2,200 (....).
2. Estimate the number of teachers employed in the Ceres Elementary Schools: 50 (....) 55 (....) 60 (....) 65 (....) 70 (....) 75 (....) 80 (....).
3. Estimate the average number of pupils in each elementary classroom in Ceres: 25 (....) 30 (....) 35 (....) 40 (....) 45 (....).
4. How often do Ceres Elementary Schools send home report cards per year? Once (....) Twice (....) Three (....) Four (....) Five (....) Six (....).
5. How are the Ceres Elementary Schools supported? Local Funds only (....) State funds only (....) Federal funds only (....) Local plus state funds (....) Local plus state plus federal funds (....).
6. Which statement is true?  
 (a) All children in the Ceres Elementary Schools are insured in case of accidental injury (....).  
 (b) All children in the Ceres Elementary Schools are insured in case of accidental injury caused by faulty equipment or negligent staff (....).
7. Which statement is true?  
 (a) The Ceres Elementary School District chiefly maintains its own library of supplementary and resource materials (....)  
 (b) The Ceres Elementary School District chiefly contributes funds to the county schools library for supplementary and resource materials (....).
8. How many members serve on the Ceres Elementary School Board? Three (....) Four (....) Five (....) Six (....) Seven (....).
9. Which of the following describes the program of the Ceres Elementary Schools? Kindergarten through sixth (....) Kindergarten through seventh (....) Kindergarten through eighth (....) Kindergarten through ninth (....).
10. Which of the Ceres Elementary Schools operate cafeterias?  
 Caswell (....) Don Pedro (....) Whitmore (....).
11. California school law requires that a child to enter kindergarten in September must be five years old on or before what date?