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**AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE METHODS OF  
REPORTING PUPILS' PROGRESS IN THE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF UTAH**

by

**John W. Chadwick**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Master of Science**

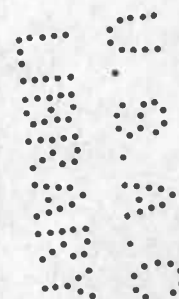
**in the**

**School of Education**

**Utah State Agricultural College**

**1945**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Summary of Literature.....	9
Discussion of Criteria.....	32
Summary of Criteria.....	44
Rating of Pupil-Progress Reports.....	46
Check Sheet for Rating Pupil-Progress Reports.....	47
Problems of this Study.....	48
Analysis and Evaluation of the Reporting Practices Used in Utah.....	50
Conclusion.....	66
Bibliography.....	70

FOREWORD

This study of the pupil-progress reports of the elementary schools of the state of Utah came about as the result of an assignment of the late Superintendent Keith Wahlquist. In answer to requests of local teachers and principals, a committee was assigned to make an investigation and recommendations for a revision of our reporting system. The work with the committee led to further study, which finally led to the writing of this thesis.

After a tentative formulation of the problem, a program of reading was outlined to ascertain current trends in pupil-progress reports. A request was mailed to all school districts of the state to obtain a sample of their reporting forms, or a statement describing the method they used in making their reports to parents. The material for this thesis has been obtained from extensive reading concerning educational practices, and the report forms and information obtained from the school districts of the state.

At the outset of this study, the author was aware that school reports to parents are common in all schools. The fact that each school has its own peculiar problems that must be worked out by the individual school district and local school was emphasized by surveys and experiments that have been carried on in several areas. Notable among these are: at the elementary training school at the University of Wyoming; the study made by teachers at Vancouver, Washington; a study made by a group of graduate students at Laramie, Wyoming; and another at Boulder, Colorado. These studies and many others throughout the United States reveal the facts that all schools have similar

problems to solve in reporting pupil's progress to parents.

*Problem*

It is evident that there is a general dissatisfaction among teachers and parents with the method of reporting pupil's progress, and from the many workable plans that have been presented after several years of experimentation there is no one solution to the problem. This problem is of such a nature that it needs constant study and occasional revision of methods of reporting to meet changing conditions and current educational philosophy.

## INTRODUCTION

( Among the many problems that are confronting the people who are interested in elementary education is that of reporting pupils' progress to parents. A survey of the home-school report shows that there is no uniformity in the matter; current practice extends all the way from no report at all to a most elaborate analysis of social, mental, physical, and emotional growth.<sup>1</sup> )

( There has been a definite movement throughout the states since about 1929 to improve the reporting and marking systems used in the schools to inform the parents of their children's progress. ) Since that time, many school districts have made extensive studies of the problems under the direction of experts and have come to some very definite conclusions as to the best methods of informing parents as to what their children are doing in school.

Where extensive thought has been put to the problem, consideration of the whole child in the whole situation has called attention to individual differences in the physical, social, emotional, and mental make-up of children, and the necessity for a broad program that would provide for all-around growth to fit individual needs and abilities. ) Wide-spread and extensive revision of curricula has been a noteworthy achievement in thousands of communities throughout the country. The revised curriculum with its adjustments to more nearly meet the individual needs and differences has provided an opportunity for the teacher to observe

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1. "Records and Reports", Bulletin of the Association of Childhood Education, p. 15.

many more aspects of behavior, social relationships, and creative expressions and learning in children. With these innovations in the school program, new methods of informing parents of child growth and development have necessarily followed.<sup>2)</sup>

(The periodic reports to parents are an attempt by the school to acquaint them with its objective in terms of attitudes, knowledges, and skills, and the child's progress in relation to these objectives.) Educators, realizing that the work of the school is limited by the lack of intelligent cooperation received from the homes, have used many different approaches to acquaint the parents with the functions of the school. (Those parents who are contacted, and take an interest in school work, learn the real significance of the reports on the child's progress in the various aspects of growth, and that their cooperation is essential for the child's best development.<sup>3)</sup>

(<sup>One of the</sup> The most widely used forms of report at present are those in booklet form, in which many aspects of the child's school activities, desirable social habits, work habits, and health habits are enumerated in detail.) Many reports define school subjects, health goals, social and emotional habits in order to explain to the parents the elements regarded as essential to satisfactory performance. (The teacher evaluates, then checks or marks the child's progress in all items or in those that pertain to the particular child under consideration.)

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2. Katherine Casinova. "Records and Reports." A Bulletin of the Association of Childhood Education, p. 15.

3. Oscar F. Weber, Problems in Public School Administration, Century Co. New York p. 315-317. 1930



(Reports vary widely in methods of checking, but each report carries an explanation of the symbols it uses. The reports also vary in length from very brief to extremely long itemized check lists of all pupil activities. Generally the report carries a space for comments by the teachers and parents.)

(The great differences in judgment among teachers in giving percent or letter grades have given rise to questions concerning the traditional methods of reporting pupil's progress. Scientific ways of measuring achievement in skill subjects have introduced standards which are superior to teachers' judgments.) But advancement in knowledge of child development has been the greatest factor in bringing about dissatisfaction with and change in the old forms of reporting child growth. Increased understanding of mental hygiene has substantiated many of the concepts of child development, pointed out the pernicious effects of competition, ranks, honors and the harmful effects of such practices on school children.<sup>4</sup>

(The present trend in reporting is rapidly moving away from the traditional report and the itemized check list to the informal letter type of report and to the personal visit. Many teachers have felt that if the list of school subjects and character traits to be checked is long, the time devoted to reporting is not worth the inadequate returns in parent cooperation. If the list is brief they feel that the report is incomplete and inadequate.) They also find a great

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<sup>4</sup>

Ruth Andrews, "What's New in Report Cards." Parent's Magazine 13 (2) p. 18-19. February, 1938.

difference in their judgments in evaluating individual growth. Although the items for evaluation on such reports are carefully selected from what teachers know about child development, many teachers feel that the report neither gives a clear picture nor carries a clear understanding of the individual child.

( In many cases the letter type of report has been an outgrowth of the old time report card. Some advantages are seen in the flexibility of the informal letter which, when properly written, deals more adequately with one individual only. ) Whether the teacher uses a letter form or writes an informal letter she touches upon those items that are listed on the printed report form as they apply to the particular child under consideration.

( The informal letter is undesirable to many of the teachers because of the teacher's lack of ability to explain what they wish regarding each child, and also consider that too much time is necessary to get out so many letters when each child is to be appraised in all the phases of his development. )

( The personal conference is replacing, in many schools, the other methods of reporting pupils' progress. It is found very desirable where teachers are able to meet and deal with parents tactfully. ) A great amount of planning and preparation is necessary before a personal conference can be handled successfully.

Although either of the written types of reports are being used by most of the schools, the personal conference is very desirable, and is being used extensively by <sup>are</sup> many schools to supplement <sup>ing</sup> and clarify <sup>ing</sup> the

written reports to the homes. *by the personal conference*

Simple as the problem of issuing pupil-progress reports may seem, the importance is yet large and has its foundation in the records kept in each individual class-room. No report can be valid that is made up of teachers' impressions. There must be tangible records kept of the child's day by day work. After the daily records have been summarized and the use of as many scientific measures has been made as possible, a report may be issued to parents. A permanent record of all reports sent to parents should be kept within the school for future reference.

Many and long have been the discussions entered into concerning the importance of pupil-progress reports. The importance of these reports might be measured by the extent to which known authorities disagree on the exact solution of the problem. A short survey will at once reveal that the decade just past has witnessed much controversy about the entire field of proper reports to parents of their child's progress in school. Some agreement on purpose is witnessed by certain marked and observable trends in the newer reports. An amicable agreement on this phase of the question is not only desirable but imperative.<sup>5</sup>

Reports from some of the school districts of Utah give evidence of much dissatisfaction with the results obtained from their reporting systems. Superintendents also explain many attempts to revise the types of reports they have used, or to formulate a new system of reporting that will be satisfactory.

Educators interested in the subject, are attempting to construct

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<sup>5</sup> Lyons, Don Chalmers. "School Report Cards." Hygeia. Vol. 13: No. 9, p. 176-177; September 1935.

a system of reporting that will meet the approval of the parents and be most effectively administered by the schools. In the revision, attempts are being made to present devices that will reflect the purposes of education and be in keeping with current educational practices and philosophy. It was with this thought in mind that this study was made.

After thoroughly analyzing the report forms and statements concerning other methods of reporting used by the various school districts in Utah, this study attempts to make an evaluation of the pupil-progress reporting practices in the elementary schools of Utah. The aim is:

- (1) to show the relationship of the pupil-progress report to the permanent records of the school,
- (2) to set up a criteria for pupil-progress reports,
- (3) to determine what reporting systems are being used by the elementary schools in the state of Utah,
- (4) to evaluate the reports in terms of the criteria,
- (5) to make recommendations for a program of reporting for our state.

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A SUMMARY OF THE EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE REGARDING  
THE PRACTICES FOUND THROUGHOUT THE NATION  
OF REPORTING PUPILS' PROGRESS TO PARENTS.  
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Many educators have interested themselves in the practice of reporting pupils' progress to parents, and many of these educators have written their ideas regarding this practice. Mr. Blaine Winters<sup>6</sup> wrote his thesis while at the University of Utah on the opinions of some prominent educators, throughout the United States, concerning the use of reports to parents of high school pupils.

The prime purpose in making a study of the literature written in a recent period of time is to ascertain present practices, and determine the trends these practices are taking, also to see if the trends are following the educational philosophy as set forth by prominent educators. Most of the literature reviewed has been articles written by educators setting forth their opinions regarding present practices of reporting pupils' progress to parents, or giving their recommendations as to how existing practices might be improved.

There are also some reports of the results obtained from the use of various recommended devices, however, those giving the results admit that they are difficult to determine due to the nature of that which they are trying to measure.

Every available book, article, and report pertaining to this and closely related subjects was read and listed, and in the following discussion, reference to as many as possible has been made.

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<sup>6</sup>Winters, N. Blaine. Thesis; A Study of Pupil Reports. 1936.

The literature sets forth that it is a common practice for schools to apprise parents of their children's progress in school activities, or school directed experiences which make up the school curriculum. These reports are made in a great many different ways. Many of the reports are more traditional than practical.<sup>7</sup> (The so-called "report card" has long been used as the most direct communication between the school and the home.<sup>8</sup> The reports are used for a variety of purposes, depending upon the policies of the school. Besides being used for reporting the pupils' scholastic standing, they are frequently used as the chief basis for interpreting the school and its program.)

( The early pupil-progress reports were very simple because the school program was very limited. But as the philosophy and practices in education have changed, so the school curriculum and purposes have changed and expanded year by year. There never has been any attempt to maintain any uniformity in any aspect of the reports sent to the parents by the schools. Each school or school district has formulated a system of reporting to suit its individual purposes.)

Robert Hill Lane says:

"In spite of the progressiveness, father and mother have a right to know (a) how Jimmy behaves in school; (b) how he is getting along in the more formal school subjects; (c) if his attendance is regular; (d) if he is having difficulty and where; and (e) if he is showing evidences of special abilities which have not been evidenced at home."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kavaraceus, W. C. "The Primary Report Card." Elementary School Journal, 747; June 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Beggs, V.L. "Reporting Pupil Progress without Report Cards." Education Digest, 2 (4): 50-51. December 1936.

<sup>9</sup> Lane, Robert Hill. The Teacher in the Modern Elementary School. Houghton Mifflin Company, Chicago, 1941.

(Educators are agreed that some means of informing parents of their children's progress in school is necessary. Comparatively few parents visit the schools often enough to observe the work being done, but yet are generally interested enough in what their children are doing to demand some sort of a report from the school.)

(One of the first reports required of the teacher is the report sent to parents, usually once each month or six weeks. The real intention of the report is to inform the parent of the child's status and to bespeak parental cooperation in approving effort and success.<sup>10</sup> What the school can do for the child is partly determined by the cooperation received from the home. The school life, home life, and play life are so interrelated that one depends a great deal upon the other. The pupil progress report is one means by which the school attempts to inform the parents of the child's successes and failures in school.<sup>11</sup>

(Grace Ball gives the following as the obvious objectives sought in home-school reports;

1. To inform parents as to the progress in school.
2. To assist children to evaluate their own progress.
3. To make children responsible for their own progress in school.
4. To assist parents in cooperating with the school to further the progress of children
5. To bring about more cordial relations between home and school.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cox, Philip W. L. and Duff, John Carr. Guidance by the Classroom Teacher. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York.

<sup>11</sup> Heck, Arch O. Administration of Pupil Personnel. Ginn and Company, Chicago, 1929. p. 275-297.

<sup>12</sup> Ball, I. Grace. "An Evolutionary Report Card." Progressive Education, 12 (2); 89-94. February, 1935.

( The traditional report has been used so long that it is approved by most parents, simply because they have not been educated to types of reports that are more informative. ) ( From the many thousands of schools in America come pupil-progress reports of all descriptions. ) For the purpose of this study, ( the pupil-progress reports used in the elementary schools may be placed in one of three general types. ) There are no definite lines of demarcation between these three types of reports. They are far overlapping. Some reports are a combination of two types, while some are a combination of all three types.

( One of the types of reports is very often termed: The traditional report card. This report, generally in booklet form, in which many aspects of the child's school activities, desirable social habits, work habits, and health habits are enumerated with a code for checking or marking each item, is the oldest form of report. )

( Another type of pupil-progress report takes the form of a friendly letter, very often called the informative letter. It is the intent of this report to be friendly in nature and deal with the activities of the individual child specifically. )

( The third type of report, the personal conference, brings the teacher and parent together for the purpose of discussing the school work of the child in order to bring about a cooperation of parents and teachers. ) ( Regardless of which of the three methods of reporting a school uses, there are certain fundamental guiding principles that should be followed. )

The following list has been offered as a guide:

( The plan of reporting should both make possible and encourage that emphasis upon each of the several phases of child development )



which is commensurate with the relative importance placed upon it by the objectives of education.

In reporting to parents the greatest care must be taken to avoid placing responsibility upon the child which properly rests upon the home or the school.

If it is believed that a particular family may use unwisely a certain item of information about their child, either that item should be withheld entirely until the parents' attitude becomes favorable or the point should be so handled and emphasized in presentation that the reasons for giving it may have the greatest opportunity of being realized and the danger of undesirable consequences be reduced to a minimum.

As a general thing, the contents of any one report should be concentrated upon a relatively few points in the development of the particular child being reported upon.

In reporting to parents major emphasis should be placed upon those phases of a child's development in which improvement is most possible.

Reports should include as sufficiently detailed information upon each point of development presented therein as may be necessary to make that particular point clear to the particular parents who are to receive it.

The form and language of the report should be conducive to a maximum of understanding with a minimum of effort.

Each report should offer the maximum of encouragement and commendation that is possible in view of the nature of the individual case being reported and the type of report being made.

Unscheduled communications made as significant change occurs in each child's development should constitute a large portion of a school's report.<sup>13</sup>

### The Traditional Report

Much is said about the "traditional report card." It is a type of report that is evolutionary and of no standard size nor content, the same as many of the report forms being used today. Most of the report

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<sup>13</sup> Casanova, Katherine. Modern Trends in Reporting to Parents. Bulletin of the Association for Childhood Education. p. 14.

forms being used at the present time have been copied from a form used by some other school district with some changes to fit the concepts of the ones making the report.

( The so-called "traditional report card" apparently has no bounds. It may be a very simple form with only the academic subjects listed, or it may be enlarged to also include a long list of character ratings with several subdivisions to be checked. )

( Investigation shows there was a time when the abbreviated card was used widely, but due to its briefness, and the fact that a clear message was not conveyed, it was claimed to be inadequate, so the trend has swung to the itemized report. It is the intent of the makers of this report to inform the parents in detail exactly what the child is doing in school.<sup>14</sup> Most of the report forms of this type carry the aim of the report, or the aims of the school.<sup>15</sup> The aims may be like the report form: very brief or comparatively long and inclusive.

Two such examples follow:

1. The aim stated briefly;

The report is not intended to compare the work of one child with that of another, but to acquaint the parents with the progress of the child.<sup>15</sup>

2. The aim stated more in detail;

The purpose of this growth report is to help all of us to gain better understanding of the growth needs of your child. This knowledge which is more important than "marks" in subjects is the evidence of growth in physical and mental well-being, in the ability and desire to cooperate with others, in good work habits, in basic skills and information, and in creative expression.

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<sup>14</sup> Norby, Theo J. "Records of Progress." The School Executive, 59, (3); November 1939.

<sup>15</sup> Pupil's Report. Fort Hall Public School, Idaho.

This report should point the ways in which home and school may cooperate in stimulating further growth. This joint responsibility of teachers and parents is recognized by the school. You are invited to visit the school and confer directly with the teachers and the principal regarding the well-being of your child. What we are at any one time is not so important as what we are becoming.<sup>16</sup>

From surveys that have been made we discover that very few parents expend the time to analyze a long report, much less one that contains sixty-six items to be considered and checked every six weeks.

( The paramount questions to be answered when formulating a device for informing parents of their childrens' progress in school are these: What do the parents want to know regarding their child; and what does the school wish to tell the parent.

Baruch says there are three sets of questions that are uppermost in the minds of the parents concerning their child. They are:

1. What parents admit they want to know.
2. What parents want even more to know.
3. What parents ultimately want to know.

They admit they want to know: How is he doing in his painting, his music, with wood and nails? Sometimes another question follows closely. It concerns their child's "Deportment". (Shade of their own report cards!), and sometimes a third kind of question comes: What can I do about lying, bed-wetting, not eating spinach, too-much-candy, nightmares, freshness, disobedience, not-wearing-rubbers, nail-biting, or the making of faces?

They want to know what kind of human being - what kind of person - the teacher considers their child to be.

Perhaps they do not put the matter into words, and yet it will be there. It always is there, confronting the parents with its weight. It concerns itself with the parents' relatedness to their child. It revolves around his bewilderment and anxiousness as to how he and his problems effect his child.

Baruch explains the above statements with the following explanation:

All children have some difficulties, some troubles in the

process of growth toward maturity. In this day and age, parents have heard - from radio and reading, from gospel and gossip - that parents are to blame for their children's problems. We've had current as quite a popular axiom, "Problem parents make problem children." As a consequence most parents today are worried that something they are doing, or something vaguely "bad" in themselves, is causing whatever bothersome behavior their child is manifesting. All sorts of uncomfortable suspicions concerning themselves keep stirring. Many old inadequacies and insecurities dating back to the parents' own childhood keep being refueled, half-formed wonderings repeat themselves: What is wrong with me? What am I doing to make my child this way? All the things a parent has looked down on in himself rise up and smite him. What he really wants and needs most fundamentally to know is that in spite of all his frailties he, as a person, is still acceptable.<sup>17</sup>

*Summary* (A device for conveying all of the information a parent might wish about his child would indeed have to be an ingenious affair, and as far as the school is concerned it would be an impossibility.) However, some of these problems might be considered with the parents, in a personal interview which will be discussed later.

#### The Analytical Report

(The school has an obligation to inform the parents concerning their children's progress, and there is a certain amount of information that most schools desire to get to the parents. The amount of information and the character of information depend upon the aims of the individual school.)

(There are numerous claims that the report with its check list of subjects and character ratings cannot adequately convey the desired information to the parents. The individuality of pupils, parents, and teachers puts a wide range of interpretations on similar reports. Numerous attempts have been made to clarify these reports by adding more

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17. Baruch, Dorothy W. op. cit. p.10-12

items regarding skills, abilities and character ratings. Also by adding to the list of checks and letter number grades that might be given to each item to be given consideration.

Space has also been added to the report blank for parents' and teachers' comments, with enlarged messages printed on the report blank by the superintendents. Students have been required to rate and grade themselves. These enlarged reports have led to numerous reactions. There have been all sorts of revisions. Some have reverted to the simplified report and others have done away with this type of report altogether.)

There are many claims that the so-called "report card" must go.<sup>18</sup>  
Macomber states:

A device that has recorded failures of many pupils is now itself branded a failure.<sup>19</sup>

But due to the fact that many schools are still using report forms, and will continue to do so for many years, recommendations are given to make report forms so they will come nearer to meeting their purpose. After two years' study and experimenting, the teachers of Vancouver, Washington, make the following recommendations for reports for their schools.

For grade one:

1. Letters shall replace the report card.
2. A committee of teachers shall help make a guide sheet. (The guide sheet is needed to help make teachers comments more objective.)

<sup>18</sup> Poynter, J. W. "Blind Man's Buff." School Executive, Sept. 1939.

<sup>19</sup> Macomber, F.G. "Marking System Rates an 'E'." Journal of Education, 118 (2); 35-37. January 1935.

For grades two to seven inclusive;

1. Teachers are not ready to adopt the letter form of reporting.
2. Construct the card to serve the learner.
3. The card shall be under one cover.
4. A system of uniform evaluation should be worked out, of such a nature that it would be interpreted in the same way by the teachers, pupils and parents.
5. Growth only should be checked. ✓
6. As far as possible check the card with the pupil. ✓
7. Printing should be understood by grades two and three.
8. Statements should be easily understood.
9. The number of items should be reduced to a minimum. ✓
10. A card should serve a pupil for one entire year.<sup>20</sup>

At teachers' meetings of the Vancouver teachers, the following suggestions were brought out:

1. The aims of the school shall be brought out. ↙
2. Records shall contain an explanation of terminology and marks used. These should be simple and brief.
3. Personal and social traits as well as work or study habits shall be rated.
4. A general rating shall be given each subject, ratings shall be one of two points.
5. A guide booklet shall be provided for each teacher. The booklet shall include questions that can be covered or answered under the teacher's comments for each of the various subject matter fields.
6. The "records of progress" shall be teacher-pupil made. ✓  
Take time to do it. The child shall have a part in it.

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<sup>20</sup> Norby, Theo J. op. cit. 59 (3).

<sup>21</sup> Norby, Theo J. op. cit. 59 (3). 1939

7. In checking citizenship traits, a two-point plan with room for additional comments is recommended.
8. The superior child shall be given his share of attention. Unusual accomplishment should be recognized.
9. Have pupils select a satisfactory cover design.
10. Put the card in the pupils' hands at the beginning of the year. Be sure the pupils understand the significance of the card. Give the pupil an opportunity for self checking.
11. The citizenship part of the card is more important than the other. ✓
12. This revision is transitional and not perfect.
13. The teacher should check only units on which he has definite information.
14. Teachers' guide booklet should include under each subject-matter field suggestive questions to be answered in regard to study habits which are particularly applicable to that particular study.
15. Provision for stressing attendance.<sup>21</sup>

#### The Informative Letter

( The trend is from the printed report forms to various types of letters. The most common type of letter used is the informal letter dealing with each individual child. This type of report has received much approval because of its flexibility. It may be adjusted to meet the particular situation concerning the report that is to be sent, the pupil or the information desired by the parent.<sup>22</sup> )

There are many arguments for or against the informative letter to parents. In some cases parents must be educated to the value of the letter. An experiment was carried on for six years at the Elmhurst school. They started by inviting parents to the school to explain the

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<sup>21</sup> Norby, Theo J. *op. cit.* 59 (3). 1939.

<sup>22</sup> Beggs, V. L. *op. cit.* 2 (4): 50-51

plan. The school proposed to start with the diagnostic letter in the first grade. If it succeeded they would follow on through the grades, advancing one year at a time. They sent the letters only once a quarter. No form letter was used or formal guide was issued to the teachers; however, the principal read all of the letters before they were sent home.

After four years' trial, a survey was taken. The results obtained from the parents replying, of those having children in the first grade, showed ninety-one percent wanted the letter report, of the second grade eighty-seven percent, of the third grade eighty-six percent, and of the fourth grade sixty-four percent. After the experiment had been carried on for six years, most of the parents preferred the letter type of report and gave the following reasons for wanting it;

1. The diagnostic letter gives a much clearer picture of academic progress and personality growth than an abbreviated report card or check list.
2. Introduction of such a letter is entirely feasible if parents are taken into the complete confidence of the school.
3. Parents and children prefer the comprehensive report.
4. The letter fosters a much more cooperative relation between home and school.
5. Much of the "passing" complex and undesirable competition can be eliminated by use of the letter.
6. Teachers can be trained to give the results of their analysis in clear intelligible letters.
7. Most of the mechanical difficulties in issuing letters can be overcome by practice and the occasional employment of inexpensive stenographic help.<sup>23</sup>



It is true that more time is required to write a letter to parents giving definite information about their child's progress in school than it would be to check or grade a report form. But the idea to keep in mind is; do the results acquired justify the time consumed? If the aims of the reports to the parents are accomplished by the letter and are not by the report form then the extra time and effort are justified.

Extra care must be taken in the writing of the letters. Few teachers are sufficiently trained in the art of letter writing to adequately make such reports, so in most cases the teachers will need instruction in the preparation of the letters.

There are a great many different types of letters being used. The supplementary letter, to clarify the grades and checks or to give additional information that is not contained in the printed form, is used by many schools. Some report forms provide adequate space for comments by both the teacher and the parent. Some schools have eliminated the report form entirely and are using an informal, informative letter.

For several years the informative letter has been accepted by some schools as the better means of reporting to parents. However, there are some school districts that are not ready to accept the letter type of report. They have been accustomed to the traditional report form so long that they must be taught its merits before they can accept it.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Norby, Theo J. op. cit. 59 (3) 1939

### More Recent Trends In Reports

( A survey of school reports to parents reveals all stages of development from the old formal type of report still giving a mark for department, to brief notes giving a short statement of a child's progress and asking the parents to make an appointment for a conference with the teacher. All of these reports are an index of what the schools are attempting to do for the child, and to some extent serve the purpose for which they were made.

Teachers have become less sure of their ability to grade a child's progress in percents and tenths of a percent, and have shifted to the less rigid plan of using A. B. C. etc., or good, fair, poor and excellent. The vague descriptions of work do not make an allowance for the poor child who works hard and yet fails, nor the child who gets honors without exerting any effort, nor the child who has ability for things that are not taught in the school. Individual differences play the important part in listing a child's achievement. A teacher cannot report a child's development to his parents with a few symbols. There must be a closer relationship between teachers and parents. )

A comparatively recent survey made of school periodicals on school reports reveals the following trends;

1. There is general dissatisfaction with any scheme of grading that encourages the comparison of pupils with each other.
2. If any grades are used, a scale with fewer grade points is favored, and a three-point scale being most recommended.
3. There is a wide-spread feeling that the schools should evaluate traits other than mere subject-matter achievements.
4. There is a clear tendency to use descriptive rather than quantitative reports.

5. Report cards are being displaced by notes or letters to parents.
6. Cards, notes, or letters are being sent at less frequent intervals and in some schools only when there is specific occasion for such communication.
7. Attempts are being made to give more detailed diagnosis of pupils' achievements.
8. Parents are being asked to cooperate in building report forms.
9. Pupils are cooperating both in devising report cards and in evaluating their own accomplishments.<sup>25</sup>

(The desired relationship can only be accomplished in part by a correspondence between parents and teachers. There are too many understandings that must be arrived at, and too many individualities to be understood. The informative letter is superior to the check list, but it will not compare to a friendly conference between parents and teachers.)

We might easily say what is best and what is desirable by school executives, but there are a great many problems and difficulties to be overcome in order to profit by the best methods. Very few, if any, school districts could issue the order for schools to report pupils' progress by parent and teacher conferences. It may appear a simple procedure on the surface; however, there are very few teachers who are adequately trained to properly participate in parent-teacher conferences.<sup>26</sup>

(Where parent-teacher conferences have been used, they have been approved generally, but it has been found that in order to carry on conferences successfully a great amount of preparation has been necessary. Samples of a child's work, also records of his daily work must be kept.

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<sup>25</sup> Messenger, Helen R. and Watts, Winifred. "Summaries of Selected Articles on School Report Cards." Educational Administration and Supervision, 21 (7): 539. October 1935

<sup>26</sup> Kavaraceus, W. C. op. cit. p. 747.

Class scores and percentages are necessary and helpful but these do not go far in telling a convincing story. A teacher must keep anecdotal records of the pupils' class work, attitude, behavior, and reactions to a great many situations. The accumulative record plays an important part in the conference as well as in any written report.<sup>27</sup>)

The following list of characteristics was drawn up to be watched for in the child when writing the diagnostic letter:

A. Personality development.

Is he emotionally stable or unstable?

Can he work or play with other children in a harmonious relationship?

Is he a leader or follower in group activities?

Is he cheerfully and intelligently obedient?

Is he unselfish and considerate in his relations with other children?

Is he enthusiastic toward school activities or is he apathetic?

Is he truthful and honest?

Is he untruthful, are his falsehoods defensive, imaginative, or maliciously deceitful?

B. Methods of study.

Is he capable of sustained attention or is he easily distracted?

Is he independent or is he dependent upon the teacher or classmates for help?

Does he require an unusual amount of reteaching or does he retain well?

Can he follow directions accurately?

Is he fluent in oral expression?

Is his work carefully or carelessly done?

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<sup>27</sup> Andrus, Ruth. "What's New In Report Cards." Parents Magazine, 13 (2) p. 18-19. February 1938.

In comparison with his classmates does he work rapidly or slowly?

Does he possess any special abilities or aptitudes?

C. Academic achievement.

Is he acquiring a genuine reading adaptation?

Is his reading free from faulty devices, such as lip movement, diffusion of eye movement, pointing, memorization, etc?

Does he read mechanically or with understanding?

Does he do voluntary reading or only assigned lessons?

Is his number work on a par in rate and accuracy with accepted standards? With the remainder of the class?

Are his spelling and writing in keeping with accepted forms?

Does he show any special ability or disability in art or music?

Does he have any physical defect or lack of motor coordination that obstructs learning?<sup>28</sup>

( The schools are definitely leaving report cards and examinations. However, many different types of tests are being used: mental, personality, ability hobby, and home environment. )

There is a tendency among schools to lengthen the period of time between reports to parents. This is one of the many changes that is taking place with these reports. Informational "report cards" have been used in progressive elementary schools and in some private schools for twenty-five years or more, either to supplement or actually do away with report marks. )

Marks Used In School Reports

( The marks that have been used on the "report cards" have brought forth more dissatisfaction than any other feature of said reports. ) Some

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28 Report Cards; Chatty Letter Replaces Conventional Ratings. News Week, 8 (19) p. 33-34. November 1936.

authorities are very definite in their denunciation of all marks that are now being used, or have been used in making reports. Cox and Langfitt state:

School marks should be abolished along with all other paraphernalia of an antiquated, competitive, and artificial education machine.<sup>29</sup>

( Sets of symbols (marks) have been and are being used as a simplified, convenient, time-saving means of making reports. The intention in the use of the symbols was to make the report more compact and reveal at a glance the standing of the pupil in his respective classes. The brevity of the pupil report has brought about a clouding of the realities that the report should make so clear to the parents. Schools have shifted from one set of symbols to another in their attempt to clarify their message.)

A variety of symbols are now being used on report forms. Each school has its own code and interpretation of the code. Some of the most commonly used are: combinations of letters of the alphabet, combinations of digits, and various types of checks and mathematical symbols. These sets of symbols and codes have been chosen and arranged to simplify the work of informing parents of what their children are doing in school. ( Generally, however, instead of carrying a clear concise message, they only tend to lend a sense of mystery to the report.)

( One of the serious objections to using grades on a report is that investigation definitely proves that teachers with the same pupils will not give the same marks. Each teacher has her own interpretation of grades or marks, and also of the work that has been done.<sup>30</sup> Thus

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<sup>29</sup> Cox, Philip W. L. and Langfitt, Emerson R. High School Administration and Supervision, American Book Co., Chi. 1934

<sup>30</sup> Ross, C.C. Measurements in Today's School. p. 166, Prentice-Hall, Inc. New York. 1941

proving that grades are unreliable. Many attempts have been made to standardize marking systems by issuing standardized tests and examinations. These have failed because they are given under such very different situations, and each school has its own expected aims and policies.)

Many attacks have been made upon marks because of the psychological effect that report marks have upon the child. It is claimed that the mark placed upon the report is no less placed upon the child, and those marks have a definite effect upon the child for good or ill.<sup>31</sup> The grade that a child receives at report time may encourage or discourage the child especially when he compares them with those given to another child.)

This leads to another unsolved problem: upon what should a child be graded? Pupils have been refused promotion to the next grade because of poor 'deportment' even though he had completed his scholastic work. This again depends upon the policies of the school and its personnel.)

Grades are so variable that there can be no definite meaning attached to them. Very often pupils think of grades as pay checks, and strive to improve the grade rather than attempt to improve their own character or increase their fund of knowledge.)

That part of the report form which comes in for the greatest amount of discussion, and rouses the most dissatisfaction is the marking of the report. Like the methods of reporting, there are numerous ways of attempting to show in the report what the pupil is doing. This may be termed marking, grading, or checking, depending upon the group of teachers and

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<sup>31</sup> Ross, C.C. Measurements in Today's School. p. 426-429 Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York. 1941

what they have been accustomed to. The most common ones used are: various combinations of letters of the alphabet, numerals, geometric symbols, checks; terms such as satisfactory, good, fair, or poor, etc.

There are three general theories of marking school reports:

1. The absolute; that is, perfection is 100% or some symbol to signify the same meaning, and a child is graded according to how near he reaches the set standard. This is more or less a curriculum centered plan and has the appearance of being extremely simple and very easy to use, but in reality is subject to serious misinterpretation.

A mark of 100% does not mean that a pupil is perfect in the course, and an 0% does not mean the complete absence of knowledge. At best, the marks can mean only that the pupil was able to answer to the satisfaction of the teacher a certain percentage of the questions asked. Furthermore, such a system attempts a degree of refinement in educational measurement that is impossible of attainment today with the instruments available. In recent years there has been a definite trend away from the percentage system.<sup>32</sup>

2. The normal curve; most marking systems that make any pretense of being scientific are based upon the normal curve of probability. That there are no fixed percentages demanded by the normal curve is indicated by the fact that at least ten different distributions, each providing a five-point system, have been defended by educators. It is claimed by Ross that comparatively few teachers use this system.<sup>33</sup>

3. The child study; this method of marking is based upon the individual pupil's ability. Here the teacher attempts to mark the

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<sup>32</sup> Ross, C. C. Measurements in Today's Schools. p. 435, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1941.

<sup>33</sup> Ross, C. C. op. cit. p. 440



child's work according to how near he achieves to the maximum of his ability.

This theory is criticized severely because the mark given the child is based too much on the impression or judgment of the teacher. Ross claims a pupil's mark should be consistent with his learning capacity.<sup>34</sup> There is much to be said for this system of marking. It is desirable to determine the mark as objectively as possible.

One of the questions that constantly arises is: why give marks?

If there appear to the teaching staff and school administrators to be no good reasons for giving marks, the problem is not how to secure better marks but how to find a satisfactory substitute. On the other hand, if there appear to be valid reasons for marks under existing conditions, the problem then is how to devise a marking policy that will serve these functions to the maximum degree.<sup>35</sup>

It is important at the outset that everyone connected with the school understand as clearly as possible the purposes that marks are intended to serve. Marks are always means to ends, never ends in themselves. The marking policy should be a group policy in the determination of which all members of the staff have a voice.

There is as much criticism of marking reports as there is of making the reports themselves. However, a review of articles written concerning this phase of pupil reports points definitely to a trend away from the use of reports that use a grading system.

Burton Fowler in Education in Democracy says:

School marks should be abolished along with all other paraphernalia of an antiquated, competitive, and artificial education machine because they make the children feel inferior or superior,

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34 Ibid. p. 425

35 Ibid. p. 426

encourage dishonesty, give a feeling of insecurity, dull the edge of intellectual curiosity, make children course passers instead of learners and provide, in general, unworthy motives for hard work.<sup>36</sup>

Like all other practices in education, reporting pupils' progress to parents has come through a long evolutionary process. Having been used by such a great number of people under such varied conditions, it has established a variety of notions as to the construction and content of such reports. Studies and comparisons that have been made have resulted in a general agreement that certain practices have the greater chance of bringing better results. A custom that has been so thoroughly established and so universally used will continue indefinitely with the usual proposed recommendations for improvement.)

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<sup>36</sup> Fowler, Burton, Education in Democracy.

DERIVATION OF THE CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION  
OF PUPIL-PROGRESS REPORTS

While making a study of the literature concerning the subject of pupil-progress reports, the discussions brought out many criticisms of present practices, and also set forth recommendations for their improvement. The criticisms were based upon the results obtained in many schools, and also upon comparisons of the results of various reports being used.

In many parts of the United States groups of people working in the schools, feeling a need for more adequate reports have made extensive studies of the problem with the purpose of revising the reports being used, or devise reports that would accomplish the purposes they would find advisable from their study. These recommendations along with those of educators considered capable of making pronouncements regarding this subject were tabulated and from this tabulation the ones receiving the greater emphasis have been used in establishing a set of criteria for the evaluation of the reports being used. Several of these recommendations stand out by having been referred to again and again as being the best policies in this particular practice.

Due to the great number of people connected with our educational system, and the many differences in the philosophies of education there is not a total agreement on all points set forth by the criteria. We are all agreed that the aims of education are constantly changing, and with these changes new purposes of education are being proposed, thus calling for a change in some aspects of many established practices.

The general nature of this problem will establish the fact that any set of criteria must be flexible and be considered as being

tentative. A change in local or nation-wide conditions will in time call for a revision of the criteria.

Perhaps some criteria are more important and carry more weight than others, but there has been no effort to arrange these according to importance or their relationship to each other.

Morgan makes the statement that few teachers are prepared to make reports to parents.<sup>37</sup> Thus suggesting that training is necessary to be able to intelligently make such reports. The question might be asked: What training is necessary? The teacher must be able to make adequate records, make a diagnosis of the child's record, his work, and his character. There are a great many phases to a pupil's school experiences, all of which should be considered when making the report.

One of the most necessary qualifications a teacher should have is to be able to meet the parents and make a verbal report of the child's activities and progress. It is reported that many schools are adopting this method of reporting and eliminating the written reports.

Educational history reveals that the principles and practices of education are constantly changing in order to meet existing needs and conditions. The practice of making a report of pupils' progress to parents is observed by most schools. In some schools the practice follows along with other educational practices. The following principles are generally approved:

First and second principles

A good report will in some manner state the philosophy and aims

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<sup>37</sup> Morgan, A. B. "Modern Report Cards." The Grade Teacher, Vol. 58. 56, April 1941.

of education.<sup>38</sup>

This does not imply, however, that every time some new practice in the education program is accepted, a change in the pupil-progress reports will follow.

Many parents, and teachers as well, are determined to hold on to traditional practices.

Bennett gives as one of the concepts found in a desirable report:

It must not be static but should change in accord with educational standards and philosophy. Careful planning should precede every change.<sup>39</sup>

It is agreed by many that the ideal method to inform parents of their children's progress in school is by personal conversations in visits to the home or at school. But in the majority of cases this is not done. Instead, a written report in some form is sent to the parents. The report is used to carry, not only the information of the child's progress in school, but general information about the school's policies and practices.

### Third Principle

The aims of the school and the report should be so carefully stated that there will be no mistake in the purpose of the report. The contention is: No two people will give the same interpretation of a report.

Oscar F. Weber states:

The report card of the teacher to the parent must do much more than tell the parent what the school is doing for the child.

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<sup>38</sup> Gripe, H.E. "On the Other Side of the Report Card." *Hygeia*. Vol. 19; 10 October 1941

<sup>39</sup> Bennett, C. R. "A Practical Report." School Executive, 60 (1): p. 35 September 1940

It must give the parent a clear conception of the aims and the functions of school as they are conceived in modern education. It must convey to him some notion of techniques by means of which these aims are sought to be attained. It must give some ideas of the ways in which the school can pass judgment on the extent to which the pupil himself has attained the goals the school has set in the acquisition of specific knowledges, definite skills, acceptable abilities, appreciations, attitudes and ideals. It must solicit the sympathetic cooperation of the parent in all these aspects of achievement that are short of the requisite standard of attainment the pupil should be able to reach. It must moreover make the pupil himself cognizant of those purposes and of his own contribution toward the attainment thereof. If the report of the teacher to the parent does all of these things it will also clarify the teachers' aims and purposes, lead him to a realization of his part in this cooperative enterprise. <sup>40</sup>

#### Fourth principle

All of the educational activities or experiences within the school program should be a part of the educational process. Many school activities that were once considered to be extra curricular are now known as curricular. Thus showing a great change in the philosophy of education.

If the pupil-progress reports are to be used in the school program to inform parents and pupils of the aims of the school, then it should be considered as a vital part of the educative process.

C. R. Bennett makes the following statements:

A desirable report should result in the improvement of the quality and increase the quantity of a pupil's work. In the interest and growth of the child it should attempt to bring about a closer cooperation and a greater mutual understanding of home and school. <sup>41</sup>

#### Fifth and sixth principles

Due to the many and varying conditions under which schools operate a uniform method of reporting would not be advisable. Where the groups are large and the parents are away from home during the day, it would be

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<sup>40</sup> Weber, Oscar F. Problems in Public School Administration. Century Company, New York, 1930. p. 315-317.

<sup>41</sup> Bennett, C. R. op. cit. p.35

quite impossible for a teacher to visit all of the homes, or the parents to visit the school. Inadequate transportation is another item that might prohibit home visits in some localities.

The differences in the school program would likewise require different reports. The differences in abilities of pupils and their varied reactions to the school and its program will require very different reports, if the child's school progress is to be properly reported.

Norby makes the following statement:

"Construct the card (report) to serve the learner."<sup>42</sup>

C. R. Bennett reports the recommendations made by a group studying this problem. Among them are the following:

A. "It (the report) should be flexible enough to account for individual differences and abilities."

B. "It should reveal to the parents the strengths and weaknesses of their child."<sup>43</sup>

The report of the pupil's progress, like the school curriculum, should be flexible enough to meet existing needs and conditions.

William L. Wrinkle maintains in answer to the question: Does the newer practice adequately solve the problems of marking and reporting?

The problem of marking is not a problem of what letter to use. It is rather the problem of what should be the objectives of the educational experiences of the student, what are his abilities, what is his progress? In case of the curriculum it would be conceded that no one curriculum is adequate for all students; neither in marking and reporting is there any one form or any one practice which may be adequate or best for all schools.<sup>44</sup>

Shailer A. Peterson states emphatically:

Last, but not least, let the reporting system be flexible. If you find that one type of conference, or one type of handling works

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<sup>42</sup> Norby, Theo J. "Records of Progress" The School Executive, 60 (1), p. 35 September 1940

<sup>43</sup> Bennett, C. R. op. cit. p. 35

<sup>44</sup> Wrinkle, Wm. L. "School Marks - Why? What? and How?" Educational Administration and Supervision, 21(3): 218 March 1935.

well for one individual or even a group of pupils, use it on them. But why model the whole system to fit one or two? Let it be flexible.<sup>45</sup>

Seventh and eighth principles

Some school districts have invited parents to assist in the construction of pupil-progress reports. Through this method they obtain the parent's cooperation and interpretation of what the report should be. They also build up a common interpretation of all elements of the report. This method eliminates much of the dissatisfaction among parents with the type of report that is used. It also tends to limit the number of interpretations placed on the marking or grading systems used. No report will serve its intended purpose unless there is a common understanding of all phases of the report.

Theo J. Norby asserts:

A system of uniform evaluation should be worked out, of such a nature that it would be interpreted in the same way by teachers, pupils and parents.

As far as possible, check the card with the pupils. Statements should be easily understood.<sup>46</sup>

William L. Wrinkle makes the following statement concerning the interpretation of school marks:

Parents and students seldom know how to interpret report card marks.<sup>47</sup>

The pupil-progress report is the principal means of communication between the school and the home and if it is properly organized, may serve as a device to enlist the cooperation of the parents.

Some reports contain a statement inviting the parents to visit the

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<sup>45</sup> Peterson, Shailer A. "Reports to the Home." Clearing House, 13 (2); 67-72 October 1938

<sup>46</sup> Norby, Theo J. op. cit. 60 (1); p.35 September 1940

<sup>47</sup> Wrinkle, William L. op. cit. 21 (3); 218 March 1935



school. Other reports are so organized that the parents are required to make a section of it regarding a certain phase of the child's activities. Report forms generally have a space for parents to write comments concerning the child and his activities, so that the teacher may more fully understand the pupil. In some districts, parents are invited to assist the school in formulating new reports.

The importance of having the cooperation of the parents is stressed by many educators. The success of school and its work depends upon the cooperation of the parents.

Arch O. Heck states:

What the schools can do for the child is partly determined by the cooperation derived from the home.<sup>48</sup>

The education of the child is accomplished best through the cooperation of parents and teachers. In order to do this there needs be communication between the home and the school. If the pupil-progress report is to be used as a means of communication it should be so organized that there will be a two-way flow of information concerning the child's activities.

Many of our present report forms have a limited space for teacher's and parent's comments. The space provided for this purpose is generally very limited, but the fact that it is there invites a correspondence between parents and teachers.

Agnes Samuelson suggests:

"General acceptance and utilization of new report cards will depend upon the cooperation extended by parents; After all, reporting systems should be two-way communication systems."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Heck, Arch O. op. cit. p. 275-297

<sup>49</sup> Samuelson, Agnes. Schools for Democracy Chicago, Ill. p.205 1939

V. L. Beggs further agrees:

"Report cards have long furnished the most direct communication between school and home. Frequently they provide the chief basis for interpretation of the school and its program."<sup>50</sup>

#### Ninth principle

There is no agreement among schools concerning the frequency of issuing pupil's reports. They vary from once a month to once a year. Most schools follow local traditional practices. There are those who advocate more frequent reports, while others argue the same results may be accomplished with fewer reports.

Ward G. Reeder asserts:

The school should report to the parents whenever a report would seem to have any chance of being helpful in the educational development of the pupil concerned.<sup>51</sup>

An editorial in the Journal of Education contains the following statements:

Substitutes for report card will be semi-annual notes to parents.

When circumstances require, more frequent reports and consultations will be arranged.<sup>52</sup>

F. G. Macomber emphasizes:

At least once a year a complete report of pupil-progress should be sent to the parents.<sup>53</sup>

#### Tenth principle

All reports should be made from records compiled from the results of a pupil's daily work, or other periodic achievements.

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50 Beggs, V. L. op. cit. p. 60-61

51 Reeder, Ward G. The Fundamentals of Public School Administration. McMillan Co., New York, 1941. 707-710

52 "Report Cards Abandoned by Newton Public Schools". Journal of Education Vol. 116; p. 452. November 1933.

53 Macomber, F. C. op. cit. p. 35-37.

Many educators are agreed that one of the greatest evils in making pupil-progress reports is: that they are too often made from the teacher's impressions at the moment, with no consideration of what the child has done in his daily recitation.

F. G. Macomber emphasizes:

The school needs not less, but more records of mental, physical, and social growth of the child in order to better its duty to the child.<sup>54</sup>

It has been stated previously that the pupil's report should show the progress of the whole child in the whole situation. This can be done only after a careful study of the child and his work has been made.

It is advocated that teachers keep periodic records of a pupil's progress. This may be done adequately by keeping anecdotal and other records of a child's work and behavior. At intervals the records should be analyzed and the reports made should be a summary of all the records. If reports are going to be reliable there must be a definite basis from which to make the report.

#### Eleventh principle

A good report should show at least two phases of a pupil's work.

1. A sampling of the work that is most typical - all of the details of a pupil's work cannot be shown, so the sampling should be an accurate cross section.

2. That which is most exceptional - the unusually good qualities of school work should be reported along with those aspects of the child's development that need correction or stimulation.

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<sup>54</sup> Macomber, F. C. op. cit. p. 35-37

Twelfth principle

The reports sent to the parents will be the findings after a diagnosis of the child's school experiences has been made.<sup>55</sup>

As educational philosophy and practices change, the practice of issuing pupil-progress reports is also due for a change. However, these reports are generally the last educational practice to come in for revision.

It is the common custom when methods of reporting are found to be inadequate, to borrow a method that is working satisfactorily in another district.

William L. Wrinkle gives the following suggestions:

"Study the whole problem of diagnosis for the purpose of discovering the abilities, needs, and interests of students and to evaluate their experiences relative to the objectives of the educational program."

"Educate the students and the public relative to the new philosophy and the need for changes in the conventional practices."

He further states:

"The adoption of practices that are satisfactory in other situations will not solve the problem."

"The procedure to be followed should be one of experimentation."<sup>56</sup>

Thirteenth principle

School districts might make periodic studies to determine to what extent their current practices are meeting their existing situations, and make a change only when it is found there is a definite need for it. Change just for the sake of a change has small chance of solving the problem.

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<sup>55</sup> Jones, J. Norris. "Is the Report Card Doomed?" School Executive, 54: 291-294. June 1935

<sup>56</sup> Wrinkle, William L. op. cit. p. 218

#### Fourteenth principle

Regardless of the type of pupil-progress report that is used, the teacher should thoroughly understand the aims of the report, the significance of the marking code, or the scope of the informative letter or personal conference, and be able to intelligently make the report in a comprehensive manner to parents and pupils.

The trend in reporting practices is toward the informative letter and the personal interview, and as they come into use in the schools, teachers will necessarily have to prepare themselves to use them.

Ayres discussion is most pertinent and his treatise furnishes what appears to be the most logical summary of discussions regarding marking and reporting practices:

The case for marks grants the misuses which have been made of them, but presents evidence of their essential value to our educational program. Experiments prove that learners make the best progress when they are aware of the rate of their improvement. Quantitative marks are essential for purposes of classification, educational guidance and educational research. The elimination or debilitating of teacher's marks does not do away with failure; this merely covers up poor work. The thing to do is to change the type of work so that the pupil can secure satisfactory marks. In the meantime, the marks themselves should be made more reliable, more specific, and more discriminating. They should be used as checks and guides rather than rewards or punishments.

The importance of a problem is often measured by the extent to which known authorities disagree on the exact solution of the problem. Logic will at once reveal the decade just past has witnessed much controversy about the entire field of proper home reporting. Some agreement on purpose is witnessed by certain marked and observable trends in the newer reports. Much controversy still exists, however, on the form these report cards should take. An amicable agreement on this phase of the question is not only desirable but imperative.<sup>57</sup>

#### Fifteenth principle

The facility with which a report might be made or used will determine

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<sup>57</sup> Cripe, H. E. "On the Other Side of the Report Card." Hygeia  
Vol. 19 (10). October 1941

its value to a great extent. School administrators have reported that they have done away with detailed report forms, because they are too difficult for teachers to use. The time element in making a report is another factor that determines how much consideration all contributing factors will receive. Personal conferences with the parents of a large class would curtail the number of reports to a minimum due to the time required.

SUMMARY OF CRITERIA

1. Pupil-progress reports should reflect the philosophy and practices of education. ✓
2. Changes in the reports being used, or in the methods of reporting should come only when there is a vital need for them. ✓
3. The aims of the school making the report, also the aims of the report should be stated in clear unmistakable terms. ✓
4. Pupil-progress reports might well be an integral part of the educative process.
5. Reports need not be uniform, they may differ in accordance with the individual differences in pupil's abilities and progress. Flexibility in the method of reporting to meet varied situations will strengthen the report.
6. The approval of the type of pupil progress report to be used, by the majority of parents, will improve the results obtained.
7. A common interpretation by teachers, parents, and pupils of all terms used in the report will eliminate many misunderstandings.
8. Pupil-progress reports should be organized and made so as to enlist the cooperation of the parents. If properly organized, the pupil-progress reports will provide for a two-way flow of information concerning the child - from the school to the home, and from the home to the school. ✓
9. A report should be made to the home whenever it would seem to have any chance of assisting in the child's school progress.
10. Accumulated records should form the basis from which all reports are made.

11. The pupil-progress report can only show a sampling of the child's work. It should show that which is most typical and most exceptional. ✓
12. The report to parents should be the results of a diagnosis of the pupil and his work.
13. A periodic study of the method of reporting being used by the school, should be made by selected groups of teachers, in order to determine to what extent the one they are using is meeting the existing needs. ✓
14. If grades or marks are used in making reports to parents, they must be fair, impartial, impersonal, uniform, and entirely comprehensible to the pupils and parents.
15. The facility with which a report might be made or used will determine its value to a great extent.



### Rating Pupil-Progress Reports

There may be a desire by some teachers to compare their methods of making a report of pupils' work to parents with other methods being used, or with suggestions for better reports by those who have made some study of the problem and have had their ideas published.

Statements have been collected, from the literature referred to in this study, and arranged into a check sheet for evaluating methods of reporting. The following list, by no means, contains all of the recommendations published, nor has any attempt been made to arrange them in an order of their importance. They may be accepted as some of the standards referred to by those interested in school reports.

### Check Sheet for Rating Pupil-Progress Reports

Does the pupil-progress report measure up to the following?

	yes	no	in part
Meets educational standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Interpreted the same by all members of the faculty and the parents			
Easily used	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
In keeping with educational philosophy			
Correlated with permanent records			
Flexible and adequate for local needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Contains adequate information		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gives positive information			
Meets the approval of parents and faculty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Is an aid to instruction			
Made from reliable records			
Provides for a two-way report (School to home - home to school)			
States its purpose clearly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Is attractive			
Reflects functions of the school			
Reveals strengths and weaknesses of pupils			
Assists in maintaining cooperation of the school and the home			
Gives accurate information			
Assists in certain administrative problems			
Is broad in scope			
Is understood by the pupils			

### PROBLEMS OF THIS STUDY

#### An Analysis and Evaluation of Pupil-Progress Reports In The State of Utah Based on Current Practices.

It was the purpose of this study through a review of educational literature to;

1. Find out what the practices of reporting pupils' progress were.
2. Find what trends these practices were taking.
3. Collect opinions of those qualified to make pronouncements.
4. Establish criteria in terms of which reported practices might be evaluated.
5. Determine the practices used in the state of Utah.
6. Make comparisons of these with national practices.
7. Evaluate them in terms of the criteria.

In the attempt to find out what were the practices in Utah, there was a desire to know;

1. The construction and content of the report forms.
2. Which part was receiving the greater emphasis.
3. What were the marking codes?
4. The aims of the reports.
5. How often the reports were sent to the parents.
6. Which types were being used most?

To aid in the answer of these questions a request was sent to all of the superintendents of the school districts about April 1943 for samples of the report forms used in their districts, or a statement describing the methods they used in making such reports to the parents. Forty-two different elementary report forms were returned from the forty districts. Three districts replied that they used no report form for making their reports.

AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE REPORTING PRACTICE  
USED IN THE STATE OF UTAH

After reviewing the literature concerning pupil-progress reports, it was observed that certain characteristics of this practice predominated. In making comparisons of the practices used in the Utah elementary schools with those discussed in educational literature, a close likeness was found in construction and content: scholastic, citizenship, and character ratings; statement of aims, messages to parents, marking codes and frequency of issuing reports. However, it was also observed that the analytical reports used in Utah tended to avoid the very long, detailed ratings suggested by some writers.

CONSTRUCTION AND CONTENT OF REPORT FORMS USED IN UTAH'S SCHOOLS

From the requests for samples of report forms or explanations of the type of report sent to parents, forty-two report forms were received. A small number of the superintendents replied that the teachers wrote letters to the parents or made personal visits to the homes of the pupils in which the pupil's problems were discussed. Fourteen percent of the forms received were for teachers comments only concerning the pupil's work in general. The other report forms were to be graded by use of a code or short statement. Fifty percent of this group provided a small space for comments by the teachers.

It would be impractical here to give the details of each report. It is the author's purpose to discuss those phases of the report that will show what trends the reports are following.

The report forms received were made up of one or more divisions, and no two of them were exactly alike. Twenty-eight of the forms gave

scholarship ratings while only two provided space for parents' comments.

The following are the divisions found in the various reports:

1. Messages to parents;

A. Most of the report forms contained some form of a message, generally from the superintendent to the parents. These messages briefly stated the purpose of the report.

2. Attendance;

A. This part of the reports provided space to give the number of days school was in session, days the pupil was in school, and days he was absent.

3. Marking code;

A. The type of reports made to parents, being used by the greater number of districts, was made up of a list of items to be marked by a code. The significance of the marking symbols were briefly defined.

4. Scholarship;

A. Every report form submitted had a space containing one or more class subject or items pertaining to the pupil's school work to be rated. Many reports listed the school subjects with subdivisions so that several elements of each might be rated, such as: reading; oral, silent; and thought comprehension.

5. Citizenship:

- A. The part of a report form set aside for citizenship rating varied from a single item to a list of items that referred to most every school activity, such as: neatness of work, effort, obedience, dependability, courtesy, cleanliness, thrift, cooperation, initiative, adaptability, creativeness, care of materials, and a great many others of a similar nature.

6. Health:

- A. The item labeled health in some reports referred to the formal study of health; in others it was for the rating of cleanliness of clothes or person, or other activities pertaining to a child's personal well being.

7. Character development:

- A. On some report forms character development was listed, perhaps, rather than citizenship. On some others, it was listed as an item under the general head of citizenship. Many of the same items to be rated appeared under one of the three general divisions of the report form of: development, citizenship, or personality development.

8. Parents' and teachers' comments:

- A. Some report forms provide space where parents or teachers may write further information concerning the pupil or his work.

9. Transfer:

- A. The transfer is a verification by the principal of the school that the pupil has left his school. It usually

contains some information about the pupil that the new school needs to know.

10. Promotion:

- A. Most report forms contain a form that certifies the grade placement of the child for the following year.

The report forms were made up to inform the parents regarding some of the following items:

Table 1. Parts of the various reports.

Divisions found in the various reports	No. reports containing the different divisions.	Percent
Message to parents	25	74
Attendance	40	95
Marking code	31	91
Scholarship	28	77
Citizenship	17	47
Health	10	32
Character development	12	28
Teacher's comments	9	28
Parents' comments	2	6
Transfers	16	47
Promotion	18	53

Scholarship report

In the matter of reporting a pupil's scholarship rating, there was no uniformity. Each expressed individuality in the matter of what should be reported and also how it should be reported. Of the twenty-eight reports giving scholarship ratings, the number of items listed under scholarship varied from one to fourteen.

Table 2. Number of items for rating scholarship and their frequency.

Number of items for rating scholarship.	Frequency
1	1
2	1
4	2
5	1
7	3
8	3
9	2
10	7
11	1
12	4
13	2
14	1
	<hr/> 28

Four reports gave progress ratings in place of scholastic ratings.

The class subjects listed in the foregoing tabulation were:

- Arithmetic - Numbers
- Arts - Drawing
- Fine and Industrial Arts
- Health - Hygiene
- Language - English - Oral Language
- Library
- Literature
- Music - Music and Rhythms
- Physical Education
- Reading
- Science - Elementary Science - General Science
- Nature
- Spelling
- Social Studies - Geography - History
- Writing

All of the subjects listed appeared at least once on the report forms. Where the same related subject material appeared under different titles, they have been grouped together, such as: Arithmetic - numbers, etc.



In rating the subject material more than half of the reports gave one rating only for each subject, while the others rated various abilities pertaining to each subject to be developed, such as;

1. Arithmetic.

- a. Mastery of fundamental processes.
- b. Conception of mathematical usage in everyday situations.
- c. Accuracy in computation.
- d. Applications in situations which arise.

An item of interest, which has a very limited amount of bearing on this report, was the fact that across the face of one of the report forms with eight subject divisions of the scholastic report, and an average of four ability ratings for each, was this statement: "Too difficult for teachers to administer. Are changing at the end of year." The report form just referred to would be considered by many as one of the better types, because it is analytical and does away with the single subject matter rating. This particular report listed its rating as being of "growth in interests and activities."

Marking code

Here again the local practice generally follows the trend as reported by those writing concerning this subject, and helps explain the reason for some of the many misunderstandings between teachers, parents, and pupils. Among these reports the letter "A" has five different meanings: very good, 90 to 100, highest grade, excellent, and represents about 95. The little check mark "✓" has two different meanings absolutely opposite to each other; shows improvement, and improvement is desired. No information was given as to what the brief comments should be.

The codes used for marking or grading the class subjects were:

1. A - Very Good  
B - Good  
C - Average  
D - Below Average
2. A - 90 to 100  
B - 80 to 90  
C - 70 to 80 (Average for class)  
D - 60 to 70 (Below Average, Passing.)  
E - 50 to 60 (Failure)  
Inc - Incomplete, opportunity to make up work.
3. "S" - Means Satisfactory  
"N.I." - Means Needs Improvement  
" / " - Indicates Need of Specific Help
4. S - means that achievement is Satisfactory  
NS - means that achievement is Not Satisfactory
5. A - Highest Grade, Excellent  
B - Above Average, Good  
C - Average, Fair  
D - Below Average, Poor  
E - Condition  
F - Failure  
I - Incomplete
6. A represents about 95%  
B represents about 85%  
C represents about 75%  
D represents about 65%  
E represents Condition  
F represents Failure
7. S - Satisfactory  
N - Improvement Needed
8. S - Satisfactory  
N - Need for Improvement
9. A mark like " / " means that improvement is desirable in the study of trait checked.  
"X" indicates improvement.  
Unchecked means work is satisfactory.
10.  $\frac{1}{2}$  - Satisfactory  
✓ - Improvement is desirable

11. X - indicated that the student is working to the best of his ability.
12. A check ( ✓ ) shows that improvement is desirable; no check indicates progress is satisfactory.
13. + - Commendable development.  
✓ - Satisfactory progress.
14. S - Satisfactory.  
✓ - Improvement desirable.  
X - Improving.
15. A symbol (X) opposite any of the items listed indicates that improvement is desirable.
16. No student is satisfactory whose work is incomplete. Satisfactory means that the student seems to be working to the level of his ability.
17. + - Satisfactory  
✓ - Shows improvement  
✓/- - Could do better
18. No mark in scholarship means that progress is satisfactory. A mark like this ( ✓ ) means that improvement is desired in the subject or trait checked. A mark like this (-1-) shows improvement during the current period.
19. S - Indicates that the student has made a definite contribution to his group above the required standard of work, and in citizenship.  
(-) - Indicates completion of the required or minimum course as outlined for group, and satisfactory in Citizenship and Participation.  
U - Unsatisfactory in Citizenship and Unfinished in Achievement.  
Citizenship - Indicates student's attitudes, Ideals and Conduct.

The marking codes used for grading the citizenship and character reports were generally a check mark, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory - the same as used for scholarship rating. They were never rated in terms of percent nor "A" "B" "C", etc.

Citizenship and other character ratings

At a first glance at the report forms, it appeared that only one-third of the reports gave a citizenship rating. Other reports gave ratings on similar characteristics only under different headings. These headings were: attitudes, work habits, social living, and personality development. The items to be rated under these headings were practically the same as those of the citizenship reports. So, for practical purposes, these parts of the reports were discussed together as character ratings.

All of the report forms that made any attempt to make an analysis of the pupil's development in school contained some form of a character rating. Some were very much in detail, others were very brief, listing application and conduct only. The analytical reports contained lists of items similar to the following:

Habits and attitudes desirable for good citizenship:

- Neatness of work.
- Self reliance.
- Obedience:
  - To teacher.
  - Respect for law and order.
- Dependableness:
  - Honesty.
  - Promptness.
  - Self Control.
- Courtesy:
  - Politeness.
  - Fair play.
  - Cheerfulness.
- Cleanliness:
  - Of person.
  - Of behavior.
  - Of speech.
- Thrift:
  - Care of personal property.
  - Care of school property.
  - Use of time.

In making comparisons of the parts of the reports with the scholastic ratings, there was very little difference in space given to each, prominence on the report, and number of items in each. The marking codes were the same as those used for the scholastic rating except in a very few cases the check mark was used for character ratings in place of the letters A, B, C, D, and percentages.

#### Attendance report

The fact that all report forms except two provided space for a record of attendance gave evidence that it was considered important. The following items were called for:

- School days
- Days present or days absent
- Times tardy

This was one part of a pupil's report in which there was general uniformity. Parents should know how many days their child was in school. Some do not realize how many days have been missed until their attention is called to it.

#### Health report

A health report appeared on approximately one-third of the report forms. Very often health and safety were listed together. The health rating in this particular part of the report was not directly connected with the formal study of health, that phase of a pupil's work was generally listed in the scholastic report. Some of the following items are rated in each health report:

- Age
- Height
- Weight
- Standard weight
- Cleanliness
- Posture
- Health habits

Teeth  
Observes safety rules  
Tries to maintain good posture  
Participates in health activities

The value of the report on health by the parents and the teachers of the school can only be conjectured. It is a part of the child's life that the schools are vitally interested in.

#### Messages to parents

Very few report forms failed to carry in some manner a message to the parents. Most generally it was from the superintendent's messages. These messages were varied in all aspects. Some were very short; perhaps further supporting the theory that the brief report was best. The following is an example of the brief messages:

Parents' comments are desired each quarter. Signature merely indicates that this report has been examined by the parent. It does not mean approval or disapproval.

This message in no way explains the purpose of the report, nor does it clarify the rating that is given the pupil.

The purposes of the report were rather clearly explained by some of the messages, thus giving the parents adequate information to prevent misunderstanding that often arises in their minds concerning the grades given their child. A change in the type of report being sent often needs an explanation such as the following:

This card is a departure from the old subject matter type of report. It reflects current trends in pupil measurement as used by progressive schools throughout the nation. Yesterday's schools measured subject matter progress - today's schools endeavor to measure the entire growth of the child with increasing stress on citizenship, desirable social qualities and environmental adaptation.

Parents are requested to examine each report and confer with the teacher when the pupil's progress does not appear to be satisfactory. While the parent is requested to sign the report, this does not necessarily mean endorsement of the record. Your signature merely indicates that the report has been examined.

The majority of the messages to the parents state that the report is sent to show the progress of the pupil. If there is any disapproval the teacher will be glad to discuss the pupil's work with the parent. It is desired that the parents sign the report and return it. Perhaps little attention is given to anything on the report except the grading marks, or the statements regarding the child's school progress. There are a very few, however, that were so stated, and placed on the report that they attracted attention and might be read. Such as one giving the aims of the school:

The purpose of the school is to develop good citizenship. In the formation of character, the school and the home must cooperate to the end that the children now enrolled in the school must:

1. Be readers of good books and ready writers of business and friendship letters.
2. Form habits of regular working hours, acquire power to earn money, to save money, and to spend money judiciously.
3. Appreciate a good home and help to make a happy home life.
4. Have a proper regard for oneself personally - care of teeth, regular bathing, proper clean clothing, fresh air, exercise and recreation.
5. Be observant to others - manners, rights, cooperation, kindness and helpfulness.
6. Be observant of duties - to mother, father, home and community.
7. Form character - obedience, promptness, truthfulness, honesty and integrity.
8. Be regular and prompt in attendance. "The Steady Plodder Wins the Race."
9. Parents are invited to visit the school and parent-teacher meetings. It is too late at the close of the school year to remedy failing conditions

Friendly conferences encourage teachers, give confidence to the parent, and help the children. Should you at any time discover anything of an unsatisfactory character, it is earnestly desired that you consult the teacher at once.

Examine this report at once, sign it and return to the teacher. Your signature indicates that you have read the pupil's report, but does not indicate that you approve of it. An active interest on your part will insure results for your child.

The majority of the messages to the parents were for the purpose of informing the parents they were expected to examine the report and return it after they had signed it. One form contained a message from the supervisor on the same order as those from the superintendent, and another had a short message to the pupil explaining briefly what was expected of him throughout his school work.

#### Teachers' and Parents' comments

The small space, on some forms only a line after each subject, was provided for the teacher to make comments concerning the pupil's progress, or for explanations concerning the rating that had been given the child in the various subjects. The space provided on most of the reports was not sufficient to allow for much of a message. However, the fact that provision was made for the parent's comments might suggest that a note be attached, or a letter be written to the parents.

It is rather surprising that only two report forms provided for parents' comments. Another report was so constructed that the parents were to check certain health and home study activities of the pupil. Most of the schools were failing to use one of the best methods of encouraging parents to actively participate in the one of the school activities so highly recommended by many educators. Here again the schools were failing to use one of the best methods they have to enlist the active cooperation and interest of the parents.



Other parts of the report

Some parts of school report forms received little attention, yet were incorporated in sufficient number of reports to demand consideration. Approximately fifty percent of the report forms have a record of transfer also of promotion. It is the custom in some schools to issue a certificate of promotion. The record of promotion on the report form might be more convenient and considered very important by the parents. The record of transfer is one method of officially transferring a pupil to another school. The records gave the age of the child, grade, scholastic standing, days attended, the old address and the name of the school the pupil was going to.

This is a very brief description of the divisions and contents of the various report forms used by the schools in the state of Utah. They are not wholly in keeping with the pupil-progress reports as suggested by educators who have written regarding this subject. Perhaps they suited the local situation where they were being used. Yet, they might be improved, as has been suggested by the teachers making a thorough study of their local problems and needs concerning reporting pupils' progress.

There are several phases of the reporting practices in Utah that are in keeping with the practices that are approved generally by a sufficient number of writers to permit us to accept them as a criteria for appraisal of other reporting practices.

REPORTING PRACTICES IN WHICH UTAH SCHOOLS DO NOT SEEM TO BE WHOLLY  
IN ACCORD WITH THE CRITERIA

1. Generally the aims and purposes of the report were not clearly and definitely set forth in the report.
2. Provisions were not always made for the parents to write comments concerning the pupil's school work, nor to criticize the report concerning the child.
3. The majority of the reports stated they were to be sent to the parents at certain specified times, not providing for a report to the parents when it might help the child most.
4. Many marking codes did not clearly explain the progress being made by the child.

REPORTING PRACTICES OF UTAH SCHOOLS THAT APPEAR TO BE IN ACCORD  
WITH THE FOREGOING CRITERIA

1. There are a variety of methods of reporting being used which might indicate that the report that fits the situation is being used.
2. Several report forms were organized to report the development of the whole child.
3. Report forms for informative messages concerning pupil's progress are in keeping with recent recommendations.

### CONCLUSION

From the pronouncements of people, who are considered competent to make such statements, and who are vitally interested in the field of education, certain conclusions may be drawn, and general trends in the practice of reporting elementary pupils' progress to their parents may be traced. Due to the extent of the scope of this problem, only those practices receiving the greater amount of attention have been considered here.

From the writings of people considered qualified to make statements concerning pupil-progress reports, opinions have been collected that may serve as guiding principles with regard to policies and practices in the formulating and use of such reports. These principles may serve as a criteria, if regarded as tentative and flexible, in the evaluation of existing practices.

*Here* General characteristics of practices on which authorities are in accord are: cooperation between school and home in formulating methods and aims of reporting, many existing practices are inadequate and do not harmonize with present philosophy and aims of education, flexibility in practice and form to meet local and individual pupil needs, the report to parents should be a diagnosis of records kept of the pupil's school experiences, pupil-progress reports have a place in present educational practice, training of teachers is essential to properly formulate and use pupil-reports, and the reports are to be an evaluation of the whole child in the whole situation. X

Although pupils' progress reports come in for a great amount of discussion and criticism, and many school people claim they are on their way out, it may be a long time before they completely disappear from our school systems. It is true that there are some types of reports that are gradually changing and may eventually not be used, but parents are very hesitant to abandon the custom of receiving some form of report from the school.

Parents are also very slow in accepting any radical change in the type of report they have been accustomed to. According to authorities there is no one best pupil-progress report. A type of report that is very satisfactory in one school district may fail to serve its purpose in another. Each group of schools should make a study of their needs and demands and formulate a method of reporting that best suits its local situations.

*Here I have* All pupil-progress reports may be classed under one of four general heads:

1. The "Traditional" report : a very brief report form with only the class subjects listed. *Letter grades given*
2. The analytical report: a printed form made up of a long list of subject matter, citizenship, and character traits to be rated.
3. The informative letter: a friendly letter written by the teacher concerning the progress and problems of the individual pupil.
4. The personal conference: on this conference the principal of the school or the class teacher meets with the parent and they discuss the pupil's school problems. *X*

There are no definite lines of demarcation between these types of reports. They are far overlapping, and some of them are made up of a combination of two or more of these types.

Many teachers are unable to properly use certain types of reports

because of lack of ability and training. Comparatively few teachers are properly trained to use the informative letter report. Many schools have discarded the analytical report form because it has been too difficult for their teachers to use, and there are those who are unable to make personal interviews.

Formulating and making pupil-progress reports demands constant study. Teachers should always be aware of the best methods and practices being used and what reports would best suit the individuals of their groups. The teacher's report that is to be sent to the parents should fit into the educative process of the child and not be held before the child as a threat in an attempt to force greater effort.

Some of the school districts in the state of Utah have made a study of the methods of reporting pupils' progress, and have formulated methods of reporting to fit their local situation. These report forms referred to are in keeping with what is regarded as being the better practices in reporting. However, approximately half of the report forms used by our school districts might not be considered as meeting the requirements of a progressive educational system. After making a study of the methods of reporting, they give evidence of following traditional practices rather than the educational needs of the schools and the pupils.

A comparison of the report forms used in the elementary schools of Utah with the criteria set forth, indicate the following:

1. A program of instruction regarding the value and use of pupils'-progress reports throughout the state would improve the efficiency.
2. Less than half of the report forms being used might be

considered as meeting the standards set forth in the criteria.

3. Generally the schools do not clearly state the purposes and aims of the report.
4. A majority of the report forms make no provision for, nor ask the parents to give any information concerning the pupils and factors that might aid or impede his progress in school.
5. Of all the report forms being used, very few are so constructed that they are readily adapted to the specific needs of the individual child.
6. Evidence points to the need of a revision of the methods of marking and grading systems.

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