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## Parent-Teacher Understanding of Problems Relating to Child Growth and Development in the Elementary School

Willie Mae Landren Wilson

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PARENT-TEACHER UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEMS  
RELATING TO CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



WILLIE MAE LANDREN WILSON

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PARENT-TEACHER UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEMS  
RELATING TO CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Prairie View A & M College

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

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by  
Willie Mae Landren Wilson  
August, 1959

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DEDICATED

To my husband  
Eddie Wilson, Jr.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her grateful appreciation for valuable assistance rendered by the persons cooperating in this study. She is particularly indebted to Miss D. Burdine, whose guidance and generous help made possible the completion of this study. Special appreciation is due the teachers and parents of Elroy Elementary School of Austin, Texas.

W.M.L.W.

August, 1959

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Current history is making us increasingly aware of the fact that those foundations which are laid in early childhood are the bulwark not only of the individual, but of the nation and the world as well.

Few people realize even now how important and demanding are the jobs of teachers. Yet few other jobs, short of parent-hood itself, are capable of influencing the lives of children so profoundly and lastingly. In the light of this, it has become necessary for parents and teachers to work cooperatively together for the total development of the child as he goes through school, including mental, physical, emotional and social growth. Whatever failures there have been in their relationship can be attributed not to a lack of desire for cooperation, but to a lack of knowledge about how to achieve it, and confusion about the nature of the obstacles and how to overcome them.

#### I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The complexity of modern living has not only brought about a wide gap between the home and the school,



but it has also brought about new and greater demands on education. Wortham has said that in former days the major purpose of the "book learning" schools was to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. For the schools to do that job, there was little need for a strong relationship between the home and the school.<sup>1</sup>

Today, education is striving to adapt the school program to fit the needs of the individual child. For this reason, any school program must contend with the tremendous variations in children's backgrounds, and consequently with the differences in their values and purposes.

The 1950 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has pointed out:

Schools usually follow a pattern of standards, behavior, and expectations different from those which the majority of children have learned. Because ours is a multi-group society, each child differs from every other child in his feelings and attitudes. Each child that comes to school has learned something different from his particular background, from his family, his neighborhood, his community, and from the children with whom he plays.

Teachers are more and more realizing that if they are to plan rich learning programs suited to the needs of the individual children, it is necessary

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<sup>1</sup>Josephine Wortham, "We the People," The Texas Parent-Teacher, 32:4-6, September, 1954.

for them to learn more about the child's living environment outside of school and to plan cooperatively with parents a suitable program of activities and experiences.<sup>2</sup>

That the total responsibility of a child's growth cannot rest entirely with the school has come to be the belief of many parents and teachers. That the home and the school have a joint responsibility in the development of children was expressed by Wortham thus:

There are many things important to a child's education that he learns from living in the home. Likewise, many of the things which he needs to be a successful member of society can best be learned at school. It is not possible for the home to do the work of the school, or for the school to take the place of the home. It is very important that they work together to provide for the child a consistency of living necessary for his maximum development.<sup>3</sup>

Mutual respect and understanding are essential between people who work together. It is, therefore, important that parents and teachers know each other. Teachers should know the home conditions of the parents, their relationships with their children, and their attitudes toward education. Parents expect certain things

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<sup>2</sup>Fostering Mental Health in Our Schools. 1950 Yearbook, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1950, p. 295.

<sup>3</sup>Wortham, op. cit., p. 5.

from the school. In the same way, they want to know what the school expects from the home. They want to understand better the growth and development of their children.

They have questions about the school program and about their children's progress in school. Many times, report cards do not tell everything that parents want to know, or parents find it difficult to interpret material reported through the medium of periodically issued cards.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to discover (1) the parents' knowledge of the school personnel, (2) the parents' knowledge of and interest in the school and school activities, and (3) the teachers' knowledge of the parents and the home. Through the pupils' evaluation of the teachers and the school, the study will attempt to show the extent to which good parent-teacher relations exist through the pupils. Suggestions will be made as to way in which information gathered through the study may be used to foster better parent-teacher understanding and relationships.

It is generally agreed that where there is a genuine concern for children there is no barrier so forbidding that it can separate parents and teachers for long. Certainly there are flaws in our homes and in our schools, but none are beyond correction. Thus, a means

of achieving the best possible parent-teacher understanding seems a significant goal toward which both parents and teachers should work.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purposes of the study are: (1) to explore the philosophy of and factors involved in a parent-teacher relationship relative to child growth and development; (2) to point out the barriers that stand between interested and uninterested parents and teachers and to suggest some of the best ways to bring about a closer relationship; (3) to determine the extent of parents' concern about the school's program and the parts on which they would like to become better informed; (4) to determine what methods may be used to inform parents; and (5) to widen and deepen the understanding of the growth and development of children in order that the vital task of helping to provide for their needs may be more adequately fulfilled.

## III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

In order to carry out this investigation, a questionnaire was devised. Since information getting activities may be regarded as research only when they are relatively

formal and carefully planned, many considerations entered into the making of the questionnaire. Suggestions concerning standards for a good inquiry blank presented in The Methodology of Educational Research were considered.<sup>4</sup>

The data for this study were secured through the use of questionnaires to parents and teachers. The persons questioned were asked not to sign their names to the questionnaires.

The questions were asked of parents and teachers in such way that they could answer by yes or no checking or checking of degrees of variation. Sufficient space was allowed for other answers--those which might differ somewhat in nature or degree of intensity from the suggested replies. The questions were designed to seek factual information. In April, 1959, the questionnaires were sent to the parents of children of the school.

The responses from the questionnaires of parents were tabulated and divided into the following categories:

1. Knowledge of parents concerning school personnel
2. Interest expressed by parents in the school and its operation

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<sup>4</sup>Carter V. Good, Arvil Sylvester Barr, and Douglas Edgar Scates, The Methodology of Educational Research. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1941, p. 286.

3. Knowledge of parents concerning the school and its operation
4. Evaluation of the teachers by parents
5. Opinions expressed by teachers regarding school practices
6. Knowledge of teachers concerning the parents and the home

As a supplement to the questionnaire, personal interviews were held with each parent. These data from the interviews were tabulated separately so as to eliminate irrelevant material.

#### IV. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study included the Elroy Elementary School, Austin, Texas, in which the study was made. Grades one through six are taught at this particular school. There is a faculty of six classroom teachers, and a music teacher. There were 180 children enrolled during the current year.

#### V. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

In order to give the reader a clear understanding of the general terminology used in this study, the following terms are defined:

Progress is defined as covering the whole developmental process which children go through as they move through school; social, emotional, physical and intellectual.

Conferences are meetings arranged between a parent and a teacher for the purpose of discussing the pupil's progress and for developing effective plans of cooperation between the home and the school, in order to promote the best interests of the child concerned.

Parent-school relations refer to those reciprocal dealings which parents have with one individual school; or, their mutual affairs with the school in which their child is enrolled.<sup>5</sup>

## VI. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE PROJECT

In the second chapter, a review is given of the literature dealing with parent-teacher relations. Reference is made to the importance of parent-teacher relations and how better relations between parent and teacher can be brought about. The third chapter contains an analysis of data. Chapter IV, the final chapter, consists of the

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<sup>5</sup>Carter V. Good and Winifred R. Merkel, Foundation in Education. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959, pp. 121, 384-385, 420.

summary of the findings, conclusions, and suggestions  
for further study.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

How do parents and teachers get along together? How do they feel toward each other and about each other's ability to understand children? What traits do parents think are important in teachers, and what traits do teachers think are important in parents? How can understanding of problems relating to child growth and development bring about changes in relationships between parents and teachers?

Recognizing that we need to know more about the answers to these questions, an effort has been made in this chapter to select and summarize the literature most pertinent to the subject of parent and teacher understanding of problems relating to child growth and development in today's schools.

McDonald, speaking of parents and teachers understanding of problems said:

When parents and teachers and other agencies interested in the welfare of youth join together in cooperative efforts, one of the noblest of all partnerships is formed. The school needs the encouragement and above all the child needs the

understanding and guidance of both.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the above statement, educators realize how important it is that parents and teachers cooperate for the total development of the child. In fact, every teacher who is conscious of children's needs is constantly seeking better ways of bringing about a better understanding between parents and teachers on problems relative to child growth and development. According to Colwell:

Good relationships, wherever they exist, are not a matter of mechanics but of attitudes and understanding; not necessitating the expenditure of more time and effort, but calling for different use of time and effort. It actually takes no more time to be pleasant than to be irritable, to listen than to talk, to attempt to see another's point of view than to become irritated when he does not see ours or correct misconception with calmness and fact rather than with heat and argument.<sup>2</sup>

Colwell further stated that ninety per cent of the relation that exists between the home and the school is created by the things that are carried by the child from his school to his home. Children who are happy and getting along have a plus relationship for education. The reverse likewise is true.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Donald McDonald, "Partners in Education," Parent-Teacher, 36:4, January, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth Colwell, "Let's Get Acquainted," Parent-Teacher, 35:12, February, 1957.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

The home and the school are physically separated units, but in the social life of the community they are interrelated agents. The child's interest in school and his success as a member of the school society are affected by the relationships in his home. Similarly, the social meanings, interests, and attitudes he learns in school produce changes in the way he behaves at home. The kind of mental and emotional living experiences under the guidance of his parents and his teachers shapes the child's emerging personality. Thus, the safeguarding of his mental health is an important responsibility of both parents and teachers--one that requires continuous effort and operative understanding.

The home and the school form a two-way street in the education of a child. The things a child learns at home, before and during his school years--the language he hears, the attitudes he sees and imitates and the values that are stressed all come with him into the school room. By the same token, he takes home with him the new values, attitudes, and knowledges he acquires in school.

Teachers and parents are partners in the work of providing for the most wholesome development of children. Just as a good school requires a good community so the best teachers in school require the understanding and help of parents.

## I. NEED FOR PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONS PROGRAMS

What are the reasons for the importance of the teacher in parent-school relations? Is it his contact with the child, the report he sends to parents, the parent-teacher conference, his casual contact with parents, or the homeroom meetings? What do parents expect of the teacher?

There are many reasons why educators should take the initiative in forming parent-school relations. The schools need contact with parents to secure their confidence. That confidence is needed to obtain the support of the parents in the school programs and activities.

"What pupils think about a teacher or a school invariably becomes the thinking of parents and the community. No one else goes into the home as a school representative more often, and no one is listened to with greater interest and credulity."<sup>4</sup>

Rice thinks, however, that in many instances the parents may receive the wrong impression of the school if the only information received is from the child, since

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<sup>4</sup>National Education Association, Department of Public Relations, "It Starts in the Classroom," The Association, Washington, D. C., 1951, p. 21.

some children are inclined to blame their failures on the teacher or the school.<sup>5</sup>

The child is an important channel of information between the school and the home. However, this channel should be supplemented. The teacher must originate parent-school relations with his report to parents, the parent-teacher conference gives the teacher an opportunity to interpret personally any phase of the school program not clear to the parent, homeroom meetings will give the teacher an opportunity to exhibit the children's work, show the textbooks being used, and explain the program being followed.

A recent survey by Life magazine appearing in the Educational Digest indicated that as a whole parents are satisfied with education, but it also indicated that a majority of them feel that there is much room for improvement in our schools. Obviously something should be done, but there seems to be very little agreement as to just exactly what this something is.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Arthur H. Rice, Today's Techniques. Ann Arbor: The Ann Arbor Press, 1943, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup>"What the United States Thinks About Its Schools," Education Digest, 16:40-42, 1950, cited by Elmo Roper, Life, XXIX, October 16, 1950.

Goodykoontz made a study on parents' knowledge of the school. The study led to the conclusion that parents are deeply interested in what the purposes of our schools actually are. Parents have their own purposes and hopes for their children, and they wish to know what the school's purposes are and in what way both are related. A good program in school-home cooperation would answer this question.<sup>7</sup>

A description of school and community interaction in the 1947 Yearbook states that:

If schools attempt to cloister themselves from the public they serve, if they attempt to build the impression that the opinions of parents regarding education matters are valueless and unwanted, if they fail to see that ideal relationship can occur only when school and school community interact, then public education ceases to be public and becomes the proprietary interest of teachers. When the public feels that schools are consciously widening the gap between citizens and program, school support lessens and vital education becomes impossible.<sup>8</sup>

Bortner indicated the importance of a good parent-teacher relations program. He said that educators know that the public school as a democratic social institution

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<sup>7</sup>Bess Goodykoontz, "Parents Know What They Want for Their Children," Educational Leadership, 7:286-291, February, 1950.

<sup>8</sup>School Community Relations, 1947 Yearbook, New Jersey Secondary School and Secondary School Teachers, New Jersey: Secondary School Teachers Association, 1947, p. 68.

cannot advance beyond the will and attitude of the people. Teachers know that failure to establish effective public relations and to maintain the schools close to the people means static conditions in education, including inadequacies in financial support and teachers' salaries. It also means lack of respect for schools and their personnel, apathy regarding school needs and problems and misunderstanding concerning educational policies and methods.<sup>9</sup>

That educators feel a serious need for greater parent participation in the management of school affairs was discovered by Story in a survey. Over half of the educators participating indicated a belief that direct participation of citizens is desirable in certain areas of school planning. In the survey, more than half of the participants felt that an active citizens' advisory council is either "essential" or "important." The study indicated that educators are anxious to have regular lay participation with the circles of school administration.<sup>10</sup>

Hildreth is of the opinion that participation by

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<sup>9</sup>Doyle M. Bortner, "The Parent Teachers Association Can Help the School Public Relations Program," New York State Education, 41:520-21, April, 1951.

<sup>10</sup>M. L. Story, "What Part Should Parents Play in School Administration?" School Executive, 70:52-53, May, 1951.

the parents will develop the needed understanding. She says, "By participating in the planning of their children's education, parents come to learn more about it and lose their doubts concerning innovations in school procedure."<sup>11</sup>

Walker concurs in this opinion by saying, "Interest in common problems and working together for a common cause builds up a good-will and a mutual appreciation which go far to promote mutual understanding even when there is disagreement and difference of opinion."<sup>12</sup>

According to Misner, parents should be active partners in school programs because "Public education in a democracy should be conceived as a partnership between the home and the school. Too frequently the home has been a silent partner, except when the school did something of which the home did not approve."<sup>13</sup>

It must be remembered that parents want an opportunity to participate in the development of their children. They want to express themselves on school matters.

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<sup>11</sup>Gertrude Hildreth, Child Growth Through Education. New York: Ronald Press Company, 1948, p. 380.

<sup>12</sup>Flint J. Walker, Public Relations for Public Schools. Trenton: MacCrellish Quigley Company, 1933, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup>Paul J. Misner, Together We Learn. Glencoe, Illinois: Board of Education, 1942, "Foreword."



When given this opportunity, they can become creative contributors to the school's program and can become towers of strength in interpreting the curriculum to the uninformed public.

## II. INFORMATION DESIRED BY PARENTS AND BY TEACHERS

The public is ultimately responsible for the success of the schools. The parents, who are vital segments of the public, have some very definite opinions about their children's education. They are primarily concerned about ways in which the three R's are taught. They want to find out more about their children's progress in school. Many parents do not understand report cards. They interpret them in the light of their own understanding. Many times the report cards do not tell parents all they want to know. Parents also want to find out what kind of teachers are guiding and teaching their children.

The survey by Life magazine showed that parents thought the most important attribute in a teacher is her ability to handle children. Of parents responding, 38 per cent seemed to value this factor over the teacher's education experience.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>"What the United States Thinks About Its School," op. cit., pp. 40-42.

The survey also showed that, whereas, in olden days the main function of the school was to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, 90 per cent of the general public felt that it was also the school's business to train the "whole" child. This training of the child as a total organism extends to the expectancy of the school as an agency for teaching him honesty, fair play, consideration of others, and a sense of right and wrong.

In discussing the attitudes of the parents toward the school, Overstreet said:

Most parents went to very different schools from the ones their children now attend. The discipline was more severe, and the teachers were less friendly. Also, school activities were not as interesting.<sup>15</sup>

These attitudes have their effects on the parents' outlook on the school. They feel that when children enjoy going to school, something is wrong. They think perhaps they are not working. A lot of parents did not feel at home in the schools they attended; and, many of them have carried over into adult life attitudes of uneasiness and even antagonism toward teachers, principals, and schools

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<sup>15</sup>Harry A. Overstreet, "Keeping the Community Mind Alive," National Parent-Teacher, 48:25-27, April, 1954.

because they felt inferior.

The teachers and the school must see to it that parents feel welcome at school. The teachers have the responsibility of going more than half-way in meeting them. Many teachers, however, invite parents to school only when something has gone wrong. Others only put on a program designed for favorable publicity, not for accurately informing parents about school activities.

It will be wise for teachers to understand and seek to operate in such a way as to utilize the parents' emotional attachment to the child toward the end of securing better parent-teacher relations. Some parents find it very difficult to share their children with the teacher. In cases where parents are hesitant to cooperate with the teacher, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher and the school to provide opportunities where the parent can cooperate.

Goodykoontz concluded from her survey that many parents carry over into adultlife some of the attitudes toward teachers and schools which they had as students. Many of them believe that the teacher knows the answers, that the schools have their own ways and are not to be changed by the wishes of outsiders. Parents have the attitude that the schools will tell them what they should

know. They also feel that the schools have a right to do as they think best. When these attitudes persist, possibly parents do not seek explanations of schools' programs as often as they should. This makes parent-school cooperation all the more important.<sup>16</sup>

### III. PARENTS AND TEACHERS AS PARTNERS

Where there is understanding of and interest in child growth and development on the part of parents, excellent partners in the educational enterprise result. Understanding this, the modern educator welcomes and actively solicits the parents' cooperation in building support for the school. The parents of the children of the school should have a close acquaintance with school programs, problems, and needs.<sup>17</sup>

The thinking of Sowers on parents and teachers as partners is expressed thus:

Parents and teachers are partners whether they wish it or not. How effective this partnership is depends upon a common understanding of their goal,

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<sup>16</sup>Goodykoontz, op. cit., p. 286.

<sup>17</sup>Bortner, op. cit., p. 521.

upon the resources each brings to the partnership and upon the way they pool these resources to strengthen the contributions of each.<sup>18</sup>

The attitudes of teachers toward the home and the parents can be very detrimental in building a strong unity between parents and teachers. In this connection, Kaplan has said:

Some teachers feel that their years of professional training and experience have prepared them to teach children and that parents are laymen who are not qualified to participate in the school program.<sup>19</sup>

He has listed the following as factors influencing strained relationships between parents and teachers: (1) misunderstandings or lack of agreement over school program, (2) efforts of parents and teachers to protect their vested interests, and (3) the personal inadequacies of parents and teachers.<sup>20</sup>

Inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings have been created due to this close interdependency of home and school. Well-meaning parents and teachers permit their emotional reactions to interfere with good judgment and tolerance of one another's point of view.

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<sup>18</sup>Alice Sowers, "Parents and Teachers as Partners," The Christian Home, 23:31-32, November, 1947.

<sup>19</sup>Louis Kaplan, "Tensions in Parent-Teacher Relationships," Elementary School Journal, 51:190-195, December, 1950.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

Meigs indicated that parents like a teacher who can recognize the role that the home plays, for better or for worse, in making children what they are. They do not want the teacher to use such insight either to blame or to reform them as parents. They like a teacher who meets them as fellow grownups, not as grown-up children.<sup>21</sup>

Hymes has pointed out that parents feel uneasy unless they can, each in his own way, come more closely in contact with what goes on in school. Teachers need to know that parents are in love with their children, and they want to be in touch with their children's lives. They want to participate in the development of their children.<sup>22</sup>

#### IV. RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

That the home and the school have a joint responsibility for a child's growth was indicated by Wortham when he said:

There are many things important to a child's education that he learns from living in the home. Likewise, many of the things which he needs to be a successful member of society can best be learned at school. It is not possible for the home to do the

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<sup>21</sup>Margaret Meigs, "The Kind of Teachers Parents Like," National Parent-Teacher, 45:7-9, October, 1950.

<sup>22</sup>James L. Hymes, Effective Home Relations. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), p, 80.

work of the school or for the school to take the place of the home. It is very important that both work together to provide for the child a consistency of living necessary for his maximum development.<sup>23</sup>

However, the teachers as a group invest a great deal of time and effort in their attempt to understand children better and to help children understand and accept themselves. Yet, we are not able to rest comfortably in the feeling our results attain.<sup>24</sup>

In regard to the thinking of parents as to this responsibility, Gobbard has stated:

Parents have observed that the climate in which children live greatly influences their learning and behavior. Parents see that home and school should present a unified front, that they cannot operate in two separate worlds or each will negate the work of the other.<sup>25</sup>

With reference to this necessity for home and school cooperative action, Hymes has pointed out that parents and teachers have had to create an instrument which is called home-school relations in order to link the home and the school together. This is a man-made bridge, a modern inven-

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<sup>23</sup>Wortham, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>24</sup>Fostering Mental Health in Our Schools, 1950 Yearbook, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, D. C., National Education Association, 1950, p. 300.

<sup>25</sup>Hazel F. Gobbard, Working With Parents, p. 25.

tion that tries through various techniques to achieve a unity that once came naturally.<sup>26</sup>

Goodykoontz in discussing the role of parents and teachers in the education of children, pointed out what different schools are doing in regard to the responsibilities of home and school. Some schools appear to act on a sort of assembly line theory; that is, if homes will deliver the raw product to them, they will fashion some sort of finished article with as much finish as the material will take, and then will send it on for distribution.<sup>27</sup>

Another school of thought might be designated as the "take-your-parents-with-you school." These educators think that parents should have the school program explained to them carefully, that letters or news notes should go out periodically to parents. They think that the public press should carry articles about different aspects of the school program and any extreme change in procedure should be explained to the public.

Schools use a workable plan to help parents understand and to secure cooperation. They use a number of devices,

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<sup>26</sup>Hymes, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>27</sup>Goodykoontz, op. cit., p. 29.



such as: room meetings of parents, parents' night at school, a public relations department, and a school newspaper. It is hoped that such understanding and support will help to reduce the amount of criticism from parents or the public generally, to prevent the development of opposition groups, and to create in general a favorable community feeling within which modern programs can develop as well as to insure adequate financial support.

There is, of course, another chronologically later concept of parent-school relationships. Simply stated, it is that homes and schools together with other community agencies make a team to plan cooperatively and to carry out the plan, each in the way appropriate to his resources and abilities. This kind of team relationship invalidates many of the better-known public relations techniques of selling an idea and convincing the crowd. It is probably a much harder theory to live by, but it has the sound advantage of appropriateness to the facts educators face in their profession.<sup>28</sup>

That the home-school organization provides the best means for parents and teachers to work cooperatively on problems relating to the welfare of the children has been

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

indicated by Miller.<sup>29</sup> Cooperative planning gives both teachers and parents a chance to come to common agreement on certain matters. Without a close parent-school relationship, it often happens that the administration holds back from making changes, thinking that the parents are not prepared for them, while at the same time the parents complain of the school's slowness in adopting new ideas and practices.

#### V. PARENT VISITS

There is no more effective way of making a community acquainted with the school than by having parents visit the school. Reading about and hearing about the school may be helpful, but there is no substitute for seeing the school in action. Parents should be encouraged to visit the school. Invitations to parents should be made more specific and more personal.

According to Lane, parents often do not want to visit the schools because they feel that schools have changed so much since their day that they would not know what to look for. Lane related that one school sent out a mimeographed letter with spaces left blank. A bulletin entitled, "Things to Look for When Visiting an Elementary School," was enclosed.

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<sup>29</sup>Edith F. Miller, "Home and School Can Work Together," The Instructor, 58:34, November, 1948.

Each teacher filled in the space in the letter and sent it to parents--one, two or three parents at a time, as he wished. Listed as things to look for were several items listed under these headings: (1) Personality of the school; (2) the teacher or teachers; (3) the children; (4) the curriculum or programs; and (5) equipment, supplies, and buildings.<sup>30</sup>

Teachers can benefit much from visiting in homes of their pupils. One of the big things that a home visit can do for the teacher is to make a child come alive.

#### VI. INDIVIDUAL PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

One of the most satisfactory means for parents and teachers to plan cooperatively a suitable program of activities and experiences is the use of individual Parent-Teacher conferences.<sup>31</sup> According to Hildreth:

The friendly conferences between parent and teacher or principal appears to be the best method so far devised for avoiding misunderstanding and promoting good feelings between the home and the school, and that the chief values of parent-teacher conferences are:

1. The parent can be made to feel that he is a participant in the child's education.

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<sup>30</sup>Bess B. Lane, "Corralling Parents," National Education Association Journal, 43:402-403, October, 1954.

<sup>31</sup>Wortham, op. cit., p. 104.

2. The parent can be informed in a personal way about the school program.
3. The parent can learn directly from the teacher about the child's behavior and his adjustment at school.
4. The parent can furnish the school with information about the child's behavior and his adjustment at school.
5. Teachers and parents can work together toward agreement on the best plan for dealing with the child both at home and at school.<sup>32</sup>

#### VII. INFORMAL LETTERS

Bristow stated that the informal letter should reveal to parents that a careful study of the child has been made, that certain definite improvements are going on, the extent to which the growth has characterized the work of the pupil and other related information, both with regard to success of the school or group and the individual pupil.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Hildreth, op. cit., pp. 380-381.

<sup>33</sup>W. H. Bristow, "Report Pupil Progress," Nation's Schools, 17:23, June, 1936.

## VIII. USE OF THE PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The Parent-Teacher Association is an excellent medium through which parents and teachers may become acquainted. The association can make a most important contribution by interpreting the school and its personnel to the community in a favorable light. However, many parents are discouraged many times by uninteresting meetings.

Hymes in commenting on Parent-Teacher Association, has said that teachers do not put into practice the methods of teaching at meetings. The lecture is used in most cases, and most of the parents do not take an active part. The teachers themselves can do a better job of organizing meetings instead of leaving them in the hands of one or two parents.<sup>34</sup>

Parents have questions about the school program which should be answered in order to enable them to understand their children's growth and development better. They want an opportunity to work out agreements affecting all the children who work and play together, the amount of spending money, or hours of television viewing, movies, bedtimes, etc. Parents are concerned with the wider community

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<sup>34</sup>  
Hymes, op. cit., p. 288.

which touches the child, the school, and family living. Educators everywhere are realizing that operating good schools and planning for better ones are not just problems for educators, but are a community undertaking.

Overstreet emphasized that it is impossible to have a complete swing from home-centered education to school-centered education. If children are to be prepared to live intelligently and well in modern society, their education must be guided by all the experiences and wisdom that can be mastered. Social adjustment is affected definitely by home and school experiences. Recreational needs can best be met by joint effort; and children's achievement in school subjects is influenced to a large degree by the experiences, interest, and understanding, which parents do or do not provide.<sup>35</sup>

Parents and teachers must have in mind a clear picture of what the achievement of children should be. According to Foster:

They can moralize until they are hoarse, but it doesn't make much of an impression unless they are responsible people themselves. If they act like

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<sup>35</sup>Harry A. Overstreet, "Keeping the Community Mind Alive," National Parent-Teacher, 48:25-27, April, 1954.

adults themselves and assume their obligations with reasonable cheerfulness, there will be no need for preaching or high pronouncements. Feelings, ideas, and emotions are readily communicated by parents and teachers to children.<sup>36</sup>

It is, therefore, evident that if parents and teachers work together in harmony, if they continue their protest against all that retard the progress of America's children, they will have a better chance to make the most of their capabilities, morally and spiritually, as well as physically and intellectually.

Parents and teachers have learned through experience to face the facts and face them together. Home-school cooperation has not reached the height it can attain, but it is moving steadily and surely in that direction. The only way this can be done is for the parents and the teachers to know each other and to work cooperatively together.

#### IX. SUMMARY

Chapter II has presented a brief survey of pertinent literature in the field of school-community and parent-teacher understandings of problems relating to child growth

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<sup>36</sup>Constance J. Foster, Developing Responsibility in Children. Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1953, p. 40.

and development. Chapter III will present data secured by questionnaires from teachers and parents in the Elroy Elementary school, together with an analysis and evaluation of this data.



## CHAPTER III

### INTERPRETATION OF STUDY OF PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

The relations that exist between parents and teachers has been of profound interest for a long time in the Elroy Elementary Schools, Austin, Texas. It was hoped that the findings of this study would help the school to improve parent-teacher relations, and thus bring about a closer unity between the home and the school. In this way, better programs to guide the growth of children may be planned, with consideration of greater expectations of parents and the community as well as the teachers.

The responses submitted by parents and teachers were compiled under different categories. These categories were devised to include questions with related purposes.

#### I. CATEGORIES OF MAJOR CONCERN

The categories under which the responses were compiled are as follows:

1. Feelings of parents toward administrators and other teachers
2. Teachers' knowledge of and contact with the parents

3. Interest of parents in the school
4. Feelings of pupils toward teachers and the school

Effort has been made to report and interpret the findings from questionnaires submitted by parents and teachers on this study.

With reference upon Table I and Table I-A on the following pages, the responses of parents to questionnaires have been classified according to categories previously indicated. In order to report clearly on the answers of the parents, the questionnaires have been broken down in accordance with these guiding categories.

#### Feelings of Parents Toward Administrators and Teachers

In response to the questions as to whether the parents knew the principal of the school, whether they had met the children's teacher, and whether they liked their children's teacher, all respondents answered positively. Twenty-seven per cent thought their children were always treated fairly by their teachers; 22.2 per cent indicated that they were sometimes treated fairly; and 2.5 per cent indicated that they were never treated fairly by the teachers. Relative to whether the parents

TABLE I  
GENERAL INFORMATION RELATING TO HOME AND SCHOOL

	Yes		No	
	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent
1. Do you know the principal of your school?	35	100.0	0	0
2. Have you met your children's teacher?	35	100.0	0	0
3. Do you like your child's teacher?	35	100.0	0	0
4. Have you been to visit your children's school this year?	33	94.3	2	5.7
5. Have you been invited by the teachers to visit the school this year?	35	100.0	0	0
*6. Have you been to a school program this year?	31	88.5	3	8.6
7. Are you a member of the P.T.A.?	31	88.6	4	16.4
8. Do you attend P.T.A. meetings regularly?	26	74.3	9	25.7
9. Do you think your children have to study too much at home?	0	0	35	100.0
10. Do you teach your children to respect school and other public property?	35	100.0	0	0
*11. Do you think children should be allowed to play on the school ground before and after school hours with no supervision?	0	0	34	97.1
12. Do you think the home is partly responsible for the education of a child?	34	97.3	1	2.7
13. Do you have TV in your home? Radio?	33	94.3	2	5.7

\* 2.9 per cent of the parents failed to answer both yes and no.

TABLE I-A  
PROBLEMS AFFECTING PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

	Sometimes		Always		Seldom		Never	
	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent
1. Do you think your child's teacher deals fairly with your child?	8	22.2	27	75.0	-	--	1	2.7
2. Do you ever invite your child's teacher to visit in your home?	18	52.9	14	41.1	1	2.9	1	2.9
3. Do you like for teachers to visit in your home?	16	44.4	18	50.0	2	5.5	-	--
4. Do you think the P.T.A. meetings are beneficial?	11	30.1	25	69.4	-	--	-	--
5. Do you cooperate in school activities?	10	27.7	26	72.7	-	--	-	--
6. Does the teacher ever ask you to help in school activities?	14	39.4	22	61.0	-	--	-	--
7. Do you understand your child's report card?	14	39.4	22	61.0	-	--	-	--
8. Do you examine your child's report card and discuss it with him?	12	33.3	22	61.0	2	5.5	-	--
9. When your child receives failing marks in his subjects, do you ask his teacher for a conference?	9	25.0	19	52.7	4	11.1	4	11.1
10. Do you think your child have too little home work?	24	66.6	4	11.1	3	16.2	5	13.8
11. Do you think children should be punished at school when they disobey?	5	3.8	30	82.5	1	2.7	-	--
12. Has your child ever been punished unfairly at school?	3	8.3	5	13.8	6	16.6	22	61.1
13. When your child receives a low grade in conduct do you speak to the teacher about it?	11	30.1	18	50.0	3	8.3	4	11.1
14. Do you speak to the teacher when your child makes a low grade in his school work?	12	33.3	17	47.2	4	11.1	3	8.3
15. Has your child ever been embarrassed by a teacher?	2	5.5	-	--	10	27.7	24	66.6
16. Do you think children are allowed to play too much in school?	17	47.2	-	--	7	19.4	12	33.3
17. Are you familiar with your child's subjects in school?	15	41.6	21	38.3	-	--	-	--
18. Do you think that teaching children to get along together is more important than subject matter?	21	38.3	8	22.2	4	11.1	3	8.3

TABLE I-A (Continued)  
 PROBLEMS AFFECTING PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

	Sometimes		Always		Seldom		Never	
	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent
19. Do you take your child to your family doctor for physical examinations?	18	50.0	14	39.4	3	8.3	1	2.7
20. Does your child enjoy going to school?	4	11.1	32	88.9	-	--	-	--
21. Does your child talk about the activities carried on in the classroom?	5	13.8	26	72.2	3	8.3	2	5.5
22. Do your children always get to bed earlier than 9:30 p.m.?	27	75.1	6	16.6	3	8.3	-	--
23. Do television programs ever interfere with your children's school studies?	26	72.2	1	2.7	9	25.0	-	--
24. Do you think television programs that your children watch have educational values?	32	89.0	1	2.7	3	8.3	-	--
25. Do you allow your children to go to the movies after school hours?	15	42.2	2	5.5	11	30.1	8	22.2

liked for teachers to visit the homes, 50 per cent stated that they always liked for teachers to visit their home; 44.4 per cent stated that they sometimes liked for the teachers to visit the home; and 3.5 per cent stated that they seldom liked for teachers to visit the homes.

The second task under the category of present consideration is that of interpreting the responses of the parents to questions having to do with their feelings toward administrators and teachers who have to do with their children. With respect to the category under study, we have for the particular kind of school studied, to rely mainly on the answers of the parents and on such insights as teachers themselves have.

In interpreting the answers of the respondents, it is observed that while 100 per cent of the parent respondents stated that they were acquainted with the principal and the teacher of their children, and a 100 per cent of the parents stated that they liked the teachers of their children, nevertheless, 44.4 per cent of the respondents would not go further than to state that they sometimes liked to have teachers of their children visit their homes, and 5.5 per cent answered the question with seldom. Only 50 per cent of the parents stated that they always liked for the teachers of their children visit

their homes. The investigator does not find at hand research sufficient to explain how it is that in the school of study all 100 per cent of the respondents stated that they liked the teachers of their children while 22.2 per cent answered that sometimes their children were treated fairly by the teachers, and 2.7 per cent that their children were never treated fairly; but the fact that as many as 25 per cent of the parents believed that their children were at times or always treated unfairly by the teachers is enough to cause teachers to give serious consideration to the subject of parent-teacher relationships.

In consequence of insufficient research in the field of attitudes of parents of schools of the kind under study, it is to be observed that the outcome of the present study shows significant dissatisfaction on the part of parents with respect to the treatment of their children. A totally satisfactory account of all matters concerned with this fact would no doubt call for extensive research.

With regard to the extent to which 100 per cent of the parents of the school under study "know the principal" of the school, common knowledge of the teachers of this school show that a considerable number of parents are not well acquainted with the principal. In much the same

sense, it is known by personal experience that many of the parents have met the teachers only casually, and only know the teachers to such extent as to have formed an attitude of liking the teachers personally.

Colwell states that good Parent-Teacher relationship can be improved if parents and teachers will become fully acquainted, plan together, understand and work together, and study the children together.<sup>1</sup> She further states that the home and school form a two-way street, and that both are important.

In view of the fact that numbers of the parents of the school under study have little or no acquaintance directly with the teachers, there is expressed by Arthur H. Rice--the danger of the parents' receiving the wrong impression of the school if their only information is received from the children.<sup>2</sup> According to Rice, some children are inclined to blame their failures on the teacher or school. He advocates that teachers have conferences with parents, so that the teachers will have opportunity to interpret

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth Colwell, "Let's Get Acquainted," Parent-Teacher, 35:12, February, 1957.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur H. Rice, Today's Techniques. Ann Arbor: The Ann Arbor Press, 1945, p. 181.



personally any phase of the school's program. He also advocates home-room meetings at which the teacher has opportunity to exhibit the children's work, show the text-books being used, and explain the program being followed.

The findings of the investigation by use of the questionnaires reveal that there is something to be desired in the field of parent-teacher relationships, and that the findings of Colwell and Rice might well be taken into account toward the improvement of such relationships.

#### Teachers' Knowledge of and Contact with the Parents

As has already been indicated, 100 per cent of the parents state that they had met their children's teacher. This would suggest contact of all teachers with parents to one extent or other. The fact that 94.3 per cent of the parents state that they have visited the children's school during the year suggests high probability that the teachers met at least most of the parents of the children they teach. The fact that 74.3 per cent of the parents state that they attend the Parent-Teacher Association "regularly" would certainly suggest more frequent opportunities for teachers to learn and be associated with the parents of the children they teach. According to Table II on page 43, teachers of the Elroy Elementary School stated that they knew

TABLE II  
RESPONSES OF TEACHERS ON PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

	Yes		No	
	Num- ber	Per Cent	Num- ber	Per Cent
1. Do you know the parents of your pupils?	6	100.0	-	--
2. Do you ever visit in your pupils' homes?	5	83.4	1	16.1
3. Do any of your parents ever visit in your home?	5	83.4	1	16.1
4. Have you invited the parents to visit the school this year?	6	100.0	-	--
5. Do you have classroom parties for parents, children, and the teacher?	4	66.6	2	33.3
6. Do the majority of the parents of your pupils come to P.T.A. meetings?	4	66.6	2	33.3
7. Do you think P.T.A. meetings are beneficial?	6	100.0	-	--
8. Do most of the parents of your children cooperate in school activities?	5	83.4	1	16.1
9. Do you ever ask the parents to help in school activities?	6	100.0	-	--
10. Do you and your parents discuss problems pertaining to the children?	6	100.0	-	--

the parents of their pupils. This would suggest at least minimal contact with the parents. Five of the teachers stated that they visited the home of the pupils. This would suggest a more intimate contact than might be the case at a casual meeting at some other place. Four of the teachers stated that they had classroom parties for parents, children, and teachers, a fact which would increase contact with those parents attending. Moreover, four of the six teachers stated that the majority of the parents of their pupils came to the Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Such meetings would certainly make possible a larger number of contacts of teachers with parents. Six of the teachers stated that they discussed with the parents problems pertaining to their children.

On the whole, the picture of contacts with parents presented here is high, reflected by the fact that the matter of knowledge of and contact with the parents of the children is looked upon by educationists as of great importance in the field of parent-teacher relationships. Prescott maintains that home visits and conferences with parents at the school "are perhaps the most important sources of significant information about the child."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Daniel A. Prescott, The Child in the Educative Process. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957, p. 161.

The importance of the home visit as found by Prescott, who has trained many teachers in methods of the home visit, is seen from his long and detailed account of this subject, including samples of meticulous reports that teachers should write soon after a visit.<sup>4</sup>

The data gathered from the questionnaire with respect to the teachers' knowledge of and contact with the parents of the children indicate fair diligence on the part of the teachers, and the school can no doubt profit in the future by careful attention to the realistic details of procedure called for by experts. Prescott, for example, is realistic in showing that the teacher should "learn much about the social status and cultural background of the family...."<sup>5</sup>

While it is not possible to settle the problem in this study, it may be observed that 74.3 per cent of the parents stated that they attended the Parent-Teacher Association "regularly." There is one point of hope in this answer; namely, that it reveals the fact that the parents recognize the Parent-Teacher Association as important

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 161 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

in parent-teacher relationships, although it is a matter of knowledge from the observation of the investigator that the figure on regular attendance of the meetings of the Parent-Teacher's association is an overstatement.

Teachers of the school of study should give attention to the activities the parents consider to be of advantage to the children as revealed in their answers to the questions of reference. In any further studies, caution.

#### Interest of Parents in the School

Ninety-four and three tenths per cent of the parents indicated that they had visited their children's school during the year indicates at least a minimal interest in the school. The same may be said for the 88.5 per cent who stated that they had been to a school program during the year. Although the figure of 74.3 per cent as "regular" attendants at the Parent-Teacher Association meetings has been considerably exaggerated, the figure at least shows a recognition on the part of the parents that their participation in school affairs is desirable. The same may be said for the 69.4 per cent who took the view that the Parent-Teacher Association meetings are beneficial.

In answer to the question as to whether they examined their children's report cards, 61.8 per cent of the respondents stated that they always did, 33.3 per cent that they sometimes did, and 5.5 per cent that they seldom did. This suggests considerable concern of the parents in the accomplishments of their children, although the fact that 33.3 per cent of the parents stated that they only sometimes examined the report cards, and two that they seldom examined them shows that a disturbing number of the parents showed little concern about the accomplishments of their children as reflected in the report cards.

In answer to the questions as to whether the parents spoke to the children's teachers in case grades in conduct were low or in case grades were low, 50 per cent answered always, 30.1 per cent, sometimes, 8.3 per cent, seldom, and 11.1 per cent, never in the first instance; and 47.2 per cent always, 33.3 per cent sometimes, 11.1 per cent seldom, and 8.3 per cent never in the second instance. This means that 50 per cent out of the parents were somewhat careless in dealing with the teachers in case of low grades and 47.2 per cent in cases of low grades on conduct.

While the answers of parents to questionnaires in connection with this study showed that there is impressive

recognition of the importance of beneficial teacher-parent relationships, the answers to questions having to do with the interest of parents in schools do not show that their interest measures up to that usually called for by educational specialists.

Davis states that parents, teachers, and scientists have made the behavior of children an object of systematic study, a kind of study that could not be possible except with strong mutual parent-teacher interests.<sup>6</sup> Davis made an effort to secure information about the causes and effects of behavior traits of children in order to discover their seriousness or importance to the future welfare of the child and society. The primary purpose of her study was to influence the attitudes, behavior, and practices of the adults in the direction believed most desirable by the contemporary opinion.

With respect to the interest of parents in the behavior of their children, Solar finds this subject of great importance to the children and of special interest to parents.<sup>7</sup> According to Solar, the social situation of

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<sup>6</sup>Edith A. Davis, Parent Education. The Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1949, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>Charlotte Del Solar, Parents and Teachers' View of the Child. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949, pp. 29-30.

the child involves his manners and understanding of the needs and wishes of others.

The importance of the interest and participation of parents in school affairs seems almost universal among educationists writing on this subject. McDonald states that when parents and teachers join together in cooperative effort toward the welfare of youth, "one of the noblest of all partnerships is formed."<sup>8</sup>

Colwell states that proper attitudes rather than mechanics are most important with relation to parents and teachers.<sup>9</sup>

Goodykoontz believes that there should be an actual program of school-home cooperation because parents are much interested in their children and the purposes of the schools as they relate to the hopes and purposes of the children.<sup>10</sup> In view of the fairly impressive interest in the study as shown by the questionnaires to parents, the conviction of Goodykoontz suggests that the school of our concern and similar schools should give serious consideration to the

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<sup>8</sup>Donald McDonald, "Partners in Education," Parent-Teacher, 36:4, January, 1958.

<sup>9</sup>Ruth Colwell, "Let's Get Acquainted," Parent-Teacher, 35:12, February, 1957.

<sup>10</sup>Bess Goodykoontz, "Parents Know What They Want for Their Children," Educational Leadership, 7:286-291, February, 1950.



possible need of a better program of home-school cooperation in consideration of all matters of the welfare of the students.

There is a concensus of opinion of educators on the importance of the interest of parents in the schools of their children and their contacts with the teachers. Kaplan, however, does point out that after long years of professional training, some teachers feel that "parents are laymen who are not qualified to participate in the school program."<sup>11</sup> In view of the findings of Kaplan, it would be well for teachers to be alert with respect to their own attitudes, less they entertain such attitudes of self-sufficiency as to discourage interest in the school by the parents.

Goodykoontz points out another danger toward lowering the interest of parents in the schools. She concludes that many parents carry over into adult life from their youth such notions that the teachers know the answers, and that the schools know what they are doing and are not to be interfered with by the wishes of outsiders. Such parents think the schools have the right to do what they think

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<sup>11</sup>Louis Kaplan, "Tensions in Parent-Teacher Relationships," Elementary School Journal, 51:190-195, December, 1950.

best, and that the schools will tell them what they ought to know. In the instances of such parents, the whole burden is left to the schools, and there is no such thing as actual cooperation between parents and teachers.<sup>12</sup>

The findings of Goodykoontz in this connection are of sufficient significance to alert educators to the question as to the extent to which parents are resting the whole burden of education of children on the schools themselves. Certainly, the burden of opinion on the part of educationists is in favor of a strong interest in the schools on the part of parents.

#### Feelings of Pupils Toward Teachers and the School

Findings of the educationists on the subject of the attitudes of children toward their teachers and schools have been quite extensive, and it is a matter of human nature that this subject is of importance to the teachers. Rice emphasizes the point that what pupils think of a teacher or a school invariably becomes the thinking of the parents.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Goodykoontz, op. cit., p. 286.

<sup>13</sup>Rice, op. cit., p. 181.

Rice finds that many misunderstandings arise because parents depend so heavily upon the reports about teachers and schools. At times the parents get the wrong impressions. It has been recognized that the child as the most important channel of information between the home and the school. He considers this channel quite insufficient and believes that the teachers themselves should establish parent-teacher conferences, teacher reports to parents, homeroom meetings where the parents can observe the daily process of teaching. In addition to the findings of such authorities as Rice, it is frequently expressed that in some cases children do not report factually to their parents. The findings of Rice and the professional teachers are approximately identical. This is not to deny that, as Rice says, that the children afford major means of communication between the home and school. Rice indicates that the reports of children to parents concerning teachers and schools should be extensively supplemented by visits of teachers at the homes and visits of parents at the school.

## II. OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN AS RELATED TO INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES

The investigation submitted to the parents concerned with the occupations of the parents and the number of children as related to individual families indicated additional sources

for determination to some extent parent-teacher relationships related to these facts. There is need of collaboration between sociologists specializing in population problems and educationists for full enlightenment on the subjects at hand, and it is the hope of the investigator that in the future such collaboration will take place with careful method and on extensive scale.

This investigation, however, points out the facts gained from the questionnaires, and proposes that the probability of a need of future research, will lead to greater benefits in the field of parent-teacher relationships. It is possible, of course, for one to make surmises or guesses as to the influence of the occupational identification of the parents of the children under consideration. It has not been the purpose of this thesis to solve completely all problems that might come to mind in this connection. The facts derived from the questionnaires will be presented, together with a salient trend of relevant research.

It has been indicated from the answers in Table III that four fathers are skilled workers, ten unskilled workers, four semi-skilled workers, and one professional.. Of the mothers, fourteen are housewives, thirteen domestic servants, seven skilled workers, six unskilled workers, four semi-

TABLE III  
OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS

Sex	House- wives	Domes- tic	Skilled	Un- skilled	Semi- skilled	Profes- sional
Male	-	-	4	10	4	1
Female	14	13	7	6	7	2
Total	14	13	11	16	11	3

TABLE IV  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN AS RELATED TO INDIVIDUAL  
FAMILIES

Number of Families	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Number of Children	7	6	10	5	4	6	2	3
Total Families =	36							
Total Children =	166 *							

\*Two families with a total of eight children failed to answer the questionnaire, and six children moved from the area.

skilled workers, and two professionals.

The primary observation is that the respondents are not of what is frequently called the "middle class"; that is, professional people such as physicians, lawyers, engineers, professors, business men, editors of large newspapers, research scientists, and the like. It is clear that the trend of research, as shown by the 1950 Yearbook of The National Education Association,<sup>14</sup> is in the direction of a consideration of the effects of "social status" and its concomitants on parent-teacher relationships. The cited text emphasizes, however, that the subject is complex and that one factor, such as "social status" may not be determinant. Consideration of the complexity of the subject at hand and careful detailed research on effect of social status with suggestions for solutions to many needs may increase the welfare of pupils and communities and the nation as a whole.

From the questionnaires, it is possible to report that in the first place the respondents are not people of wealth while at the same time, they as a whole have a fairly large number of children. Research to the present time is insufficient for certain knowledge or high probability

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<sup>14</sup>Fostering Mental Health in Our Schools. 1950 Yearbook, op. cit., pp. 24 ff.

as to detailed conclusions based on the facts shown by the questionnaires. Again, therefore, the investigator looks forward to careful and detailed research touching these subjects, which research, it is believed, will call for all possible data of sociologists and educationists. Otherwise, the investigator will be left to surmise or guess; and in view of the complexities of the subject at hand, it is believed that this study can make best contribution by pointing up a phase of insufficient research, and look forward to research that will be of benefit to children and communities. In the meantime this can report from experience best results with students from families with few children, more especially in the case of the professional families.

The present chapter has been devoted to a report upon the answers to questionnaires submitted by respondents of the school under study; an interpretation of the answers in accordance with the classifications signified by several categories; and a recognition of salient research as related to the outcome of questionnaires. The next chapter will be devoted to a summary of the present study, and to certain recommendations which seem to be justified by the study itself.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

A summary of findings in this study and a listing of several recommendations will be seen to be relevant upon recalling the purpose of the study itself. The purpose was to consider parent-teacher understanding of problems relating to child growth and development in the elementary school.

A review of salient literature concerning parent-teacher relationships was provided. To summarize, it was found that the trend in education is toward a unity of home and school for the development and growth of children. Although it was found that some teachers take the view that parents are laymen and are not qualified to have much to say about school policies, it appears that the educational authorities are almost at one in favoring a close relationship between parents and teachers in the conduct of school affairs.

Questionnaires concerning parent-teacher relationships in the Elroy Elementary School of Austin, Texas were completed by thirty-six parents and six teachers. Tabulations of these responses were the data used in a significant portion of the study.



The answers to the questionnaires showed that the feelings of the parents toward the teachers were significantly favorable. It was observed, it is true, that of the thirty-six parents who answered the questionnaire, as many as eight answered to the effect that their children were at times treated unjustly at the school; and this figure was sufficient to alert the investigator.

The fact that 94.3 per cent of the parents stated that they had visited their childrens' school during the year, and 74.3 per cent that they attended the Parent-Teacher Association regularly, was observed by the investigator, and interpreted as a recognition of the importance of parent participation in school affairs, although it was necessary for the investigator to observe that the figure 74.3 per cent for "regular" attendance upon the Parent-Teacher Association was, as a matter of strict fact, an exaggeration. The extent of knowledge of the teachers by the parents, and association with teachers, as reported in the questionnaire, was medial, and, from the viewpoint of the findings of the educational experts, left something to be desired.

In answer to the questionnaires, 94.3 per cent of the parents stated that during the year they had visited the school of their children, and 88.5 per cent stated that

they had been to at least one school program during the year. It is observed that these high figures reveal recognition on the part of the parents of the importance of participation in school affairs by the parents. On the other hand, the fact that fourteen of the thirty-six respondents agreed that they examined the report cards of their children only sometimes or seldom suggested a lesser concern with the actual study accomplishments of the children. The fact that only eighteen of the thirty-six respondents were alert in consulting with teachers when their children got low grades in behavior and accomplishment in study indicates an even less active concern with school affairs.

Communication between home and school exists mainly in what the children tell the parents about the school was evidenced from the answers to the questionnaires and from writings of educational specialists. The fact that parents listen extensively to what children have to say about teachers and school is interpreted as indicating an interest of parents in the school of their children, but not necessarily a close parent-teacher relationship.

Questionnaires were submitted to parents concerning the occupations of parents and the number of children as related to individual families with a view to pointing

up fields calling for future research. The investigator was convinced that these subjects would call for very extensive, detailed, and careful research, with collaboration of sociologists and educationists, so much so that it was not a part of the purpose of this thesis to settle all the problems concerning these subjects. However, the investigator cited research which seems clearly to indicate the trends of research in the fields with which these questionnaires were concerned.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

It may be concluded from the review of literature that the trend of education is toward a unity of home and school, with a view to understanding the development and growth of the child.

From the results of questionnaires, it may be concluded that both parents and teachers feel that there is definitely a need for closer relationship of parents and teachers. It is therefore concluded that both parents and teachers should exhaust every possible effort to bring about a closer relationship, and various recommendations will now be provided toward fulfilling the needs indicated by these major conclusions.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

That every effort be made toward the development of a real partnership between home and school.

That the development of mothers' clubs for the mothers of children of the several grades would increase closer parent-teacher relationships, knowledge of the mothers of educational principles, opportunity for the mothers to make suggestions and provide information, and the likelihood of improved home-school feelings.

That an increased number of home visits by teachers, especially teachers of the first grade be made. While, at an early stage, there is at times a tendency toward embarrassment on the part of parents or children upon a visit of the teacher, it is believed that an attitude of mutuality and friendliness beneficial to parent-teacher relations will rapidly develop.

That conferences between teachers and parents at the school are to be encouraged. Such conferences may be accomplished by a kind invitation by the teacher, and the conference provide the teacher opportunity to inform the parents about the school procedures, the work of the children, and discuss with the parents any problems concerning the children that present themselves.

That classroom Parent-Teacher Association meetings provide a group situation in which the teacher could discuss with parents the procedures and problems of the particular class, arouse the enthusiasm of parents in work being done, and provide the parents the gratification of participation.

That insofar as possible, the school should be a community center for the families of children and other citizens interested in the school. Production of plays and other programs by the children are almost certain to arouse the interest of parents. As a corollary matter, at gatherings at the school, parents have opportunity to meet each other, meet the teachers, and see all the children. When possible it is a benefit to parent-teacher relationships if programs provide more opportunity in which the parents themselves can participate.

That every effort possible be made in the community toward arousing in the parents a pride in their school both for what it is and what it can be. Nothing should be neglected in the field of public relations that will arouse interest of the parents in their children, their childrens' school, and in continuing hope and expectation for improvement in the school and advancement in the welfare of the children and the community. The normal feelings of pride

on the part of the parents in their children and their children's school by no means should be neglected.

That future research at schools of the type be made with due realism and precaution for the benefit of the children and their communities.

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A P P E N D I X

PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Fill in the blanks below. We do not need your name, but these facts about the person who gives the information are needed:

Wife's Occupation is \_\_\_\_\_ Husband's Occupation is \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children in family \_\_\_\_\_

Grades of Children \_\_\_\_\_  
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

Training of person filling out form (check) Elementary school \_\_\_\_\_ High school \_\_\_\_\_ College \_\_\_\_\_

Please check Yes or No:

1. Do you know the principal of your school? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Have you met your children's teacher? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Do you like your child's teacher? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Have you been to visit your children's school this year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. Have you been invited by the teachers to visit the school this year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. Have you been to a school program this year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. Are you a member of the P.T.A.? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. Do you attend P.T.A. meetings regularly? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. Do you think your children have to study too much at home. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Do you teach your children to respect school and other public property? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
11. Do you think children should be allowed to play on the school ground before and after school yours with no supervision? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
12. Do you think the home is partly responsible for the education of a child? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
13. Do you have TV in your home? Radio? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Please check one of the following:

	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
14. Do you think your child's teacher deals fairly with your child?	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Do you ever invite your child's teacher to visit in your home?	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Do you like for teachers to visit in your home?	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Do you think the P.T.A. meetings are beneficial?	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. Do you cooperate in school activities?	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. Does the teacher ever ask you to help in school activities?	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. Do you understand your child's report card?	_____	_____	_____	_____
21. Do you examine your child's report card and discuss it with him?	_____	_____	_____	_____
22. When your child receives failing marks in his subjects, do you ask his teacher for a conference?	_____	_____	_____	_____
23. Do you think your children have too little home work?	_____	_____	_____	_____
24. Do you think children should be punished at school when they disobey?	_____	_____	_____	_____
25. Has your child ever been punished unfairly at school?	_____	_____	_____	_____

	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
26. When your child receives a low grade in conduct, do you speak to the teacher about it?	_____	_____	_____	_____
27. Do you speak to the teacher when your child makes a low grade in his school work?	_____	_____	_____	_____
28. Has your child ever been embarrassed by a teacher?	_____	_____	_____	_____
29. Do you think children are allowed to play too much in school?	_____	_____	_____	_____
30. Are you familiar with your child's subjects in school?	_____	_____	_____	_____
31. Do you think that teaching children to get along together is more important than subject matter?	_____	_____	_____	_____
32. Do you take your child to your family doctor for physical examinations?	_____	_____	_____	_____
33. Does your child enjoy going to school?	_____	_____	_____	_____
34. Does your child talk about the activities carried on in the classroom?	_____	_____	_____	_____
35. Do your children always get to bed earlier than 9:30 p.m.?	_____	_____	_____	_____
36. Do television programs ever interfere with your children's school activities?	_____	_____	_____	_____

Always      Sometimes      Seldom      Never

37. Do you think television programs that your children watch have educational values?

\_\_\_\_\_

38. Do you allow your children to go to the movies after school hours?

\_\_\_\_\_

## TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check Yes or No:

1. Do you know the parents of your pupils? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Do you ever visit in your pupils' homes? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Do any of your parents ever visit in your home? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Have you invited the parents to visit the school this year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. Do you have classroom parties for parents, children, and the teachers? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. Do the majority of the parents of your pupils come to P.T.A. meetings? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. Do you think P.T.A. meetings are beneficial? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. Do most of the parents of your children cooperate in school activities? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. Do you ever ask the parents to help in school activities? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Do you and your parents discuss problems pertaining to the children? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Give reasons \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_