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AN ANALYSIS OF PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTS USED IN SELECTED
GRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF MONTANA

by

Edward G. Thomas

B. A., Montana State University, 1948

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1951

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Date August, 13, 1931

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem. One of the many problems in education today is reporting pupil progress to parents. To better understand this problem one must be aware of reporting practices used at this time. If there is created an awareness of the problem, its complexity and implications, then constructive research and experimentation might be stimulated.

The curriculum, in part, expresses the philosophy of many schools and the expression of the curriculum is often found in the progress reports sent to parents. Socio-economic changes of the past thirty years have been accelerated by war and technological discoveries. Many studies have attempted to fit, and are fitting our educational program to this new socio-economic pattern. In addition to the stimuli provided by the above concepts educators have had as resource material a wealth of knowledge concerning the child himself. A better insight into the psychological background and needs of the individual and group has provided this resource material. Curriculum revision has been a result of this better understanding of the many factors to be evaluated in setting up a worthwhile educational program.

If educators can not express to the parent and pupil their philosophy and objectives, if measurement of the child is in a traditional sense then curriculum revision is not a

reality. Educators can not express new reporting concepts with outmoded reporting instruments any better than they can express older concepts with newer reporting devices.

If this analysis stimulates further study such study might well be guided by the following statement of G. D. Brantley:

The solution of the problem does not lie in trying to improve the report card. It lies in first changing the educational policies of the school which the report card is designed to reflect.¹

Purposes of this study. The purposes of this study are (1) to determine common elements of reporting practices; (2) to make available a summary of reporting practices in graded elementary schools in Montana; and (3) to make comparisons with findings of other studies.

Delimitation of the study. This study is limited to an analysis of reports to parents of pupil progress. No attempt is made to evaluate them. Items to be analyzed include report cards and other reporting devices which may come to light.

Definition of terms. Graded elementary schools were taken to mean those schools of first, second, and third class districts administered by a superintendent or principal or both. Excluded from this study, but not by definition are

¹ Brantley, G. D., "An Analysis of Current Practices in the Use of the Report Card," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 26:103, January, 1942, p. 76.

private elementary schools and the additional schools of two or more rooms listed on page twenty-one of the 1950-1951 Montana Educational Directory.² In his choice of the number of schools to be considered the writer was guided by the following statement of Ross:

It is usually impractical to measure all the cases of a given type....Fortunately it is not necessary to do so. It has been found possible to estimate the range of errors within which the true measure may be expected to lie. But to do so, it is necessary to have a representative sampling of the total population. Against errors in a selected or "hand-picked" sampling there is no statistical protection.³

Pupil progress reports are taken to mean the methods or forms used by the school to inform parents of pupil progress as it is related to the philosophy and objectives of the educational program.

² State Department of Public Instruction, Montana Educational Directory, Helena, Montana, 1950-1951, p. 21.

³ Ross, C. C., Measurement in Today's Schools, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1946, p. 257.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Much of the written material concerning reporting practices has been of a corrective or experimental nature. This material has its value from a directional point of view and as such will be used in this study. Other literature provided information of a comparative value and will be useful in the presentation and interpretation of data.

Otto⁴ reported the following results of a survey made of thirty-one schools in a small area in northern Illinois. There were sixteen different methods of reporting progress in the thirty-one schools. In fourteen cases evaluation was made on the basis of the class average. In two cases marking was not on a competitive basis. The total number of schools using the competitive system was twenty-eight.

An analysis by Davis in 1935, limited to elementary report cards of 250 schools in cities having a population of 10,000 or more, reported the following:

Marked contrasts between report cards constructed from 1932 to 1935 and those in use before 1930 are revealed by even a cursory examination. Cards of 1935 are larger in size than those used before 1930; they contain more explanatory material for the progress rated or there is more vacant space left under captions for teachers' comments; and many cards are accompanied by supplementary diagnostic records and by introductory or explanatory letters addressed to parents. Furthermore, instead of the tendency apparent in 1930 for most of the newer

⁴Otto, Henry J., Elementary School Organization and Administration. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1944, p. 209.

cards to be designed for small grade groups, the practice in 1935 seems about divided between having several cards for all the elementary schools. This general card is usually so arranged that a report can be adapted to the curriculum goals in any of the grades. Another contrast that is evident is the predominant elimination in 1935 of numerical rating symbols and the substitution of symbols or phrases designating degrees of success in the pupils' work.⁵

Otto's⁶ report of a survey made by Hartley in 1939 showed that out of 118 cities having a population of 2,500 or over, seven cities used and believed in the traditional card. In twenty-seven cities the traditional report card was being used for want of a better one. In two cities the traditional card was being used because school authorities did not believe patrons would approve a change. In forty-six schools the traditional card was being used in some grades while a new type card was being used in others. In forty-seven schools the report card was in an experimental-transitional stage. In thirty-five districts a new type card was believed in and being used. Only two schools had used a new type card and then returned to the old. Hartley concluded that the new-type report to parents is becoming firmly established in the western section of the country.

⁵ Davis, M. D., "Pupils' Progress Reports," School Life, 21:115, January, 1936, pp. 115, 132, 135.

⁶ Otto, op. cit. p. 246.

Burton⁷ pointed out the following trends in report card construction.

1. Marking by subjects is undergoing change.
2. Values such as social and emotional growth, attitudes, special interests, and habits are to be found more often.
3. Health habits, knowledge, and physical growth are included more than before.
4. Parent-teacher relationships and contacts are being encouraged.
5. Competitive marking is disappearing.
6. Letter form reports are increasing.
7. Parent-teacher conferences, in lieu of a report or to supplement a report, are increasing.
8. The format of the new card is more pleasing.
9. Supplemental reports of failure are increasing.
10. An effort to make the report more understandable to the parent and student is noted.
11. Separate cards for various grade levels and subjects are increasing.

Berman⁸ said that an effective reporting program

⁷ Burton, William H., The Guidance of Learning Activities, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1944, pp. 502-503.

⁸ Berman, Samuel, "Revising the Junior High-School Report Card," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 27:115, May, 1943, pp. 52-59.

should (1) interpret the school; (2) impart a sense of relative values; (3) prevent emotional disintegration or disturbance; (4) aid the child and his parent in better understanding school-child relationships; (5) improve instruction; (6) improve morale and co-operation; and (7) be executed in an understandable manner.

Berman⁹ found in his analysis of report cards that seventy per cent of the cards did not state the philosophy, goals, or ideals of the school, one third did not invite parents to school for future discussions concerning the progress of their children, ninety-six per cent of the cards did offer an explanation of the code or marking system, and ninety-two per cent of the cards made a request for home and school co-operation.

The author found that forty-nine per cent of the cards evaluated items other than subject matter alone, three per cent called attention to correctable physical defects, about three per cent called attention to special talents of the individual students, ninety-six per cent did not state the goals, objectives, or skills of subjects, but twenty-five per cent of the cards did indicate specific characteristics of traits. It was noted too, that most rating codes for subjects made use of alphabetical symbols, fifty-six per cent of the cards used a five point system, about one half indicated that seventy per

⁹ Ibid., pp. 55-59.

cent was considered failing, eleven per cent used ability rating, and in most cases a different system was used for rating subjects and traits. There was a definite trend towards measuring pupil growth in areas other than the academic and in rating traits a two point system seemed to be gaining favor. Space was left for teacher remarks on twenty per cent of the cards but only ten per cent had room for parent remarks. The format of the cards varied widely with one half being composed of four sheets and forty-four per cent composed of a single card or sheet.

One of the most recent publications devoted in its entirety to evaluating marking practices is Wrinkle's¹⁰ book. This book serves more as a guide to construction and evaluation of reporting practices than it does as a survey of forms, yet its value can not be overlooked. Some of his findings, which follow, will be used later in the interpretation of data.

According to the above author, six fallacies associated with A B C D F marks are (1) a single A B C D F mark can be understood by anyone; (2) student marks are based on desire to achieve; (3) out of school success is directly related to school success; (4) the report mark is to the student as the pay check is to the worker; (5) the competitive mark fits

¹⁰ Wrinkle, William L., Improving Marking and Reporting Practices, Rinehart and Company Inc., 1947, pp. 36-49.

the individual to a competitive world; and (6) the mark is more important than the outcome.

Learning outcomes of Wrinkle's study are listed below.

1. The statement of any outcome or objective to be evaluated should be analyzed into its specific meanings so that its meaning is clearly stated.

2. The number of different forms should be kept at a minimum. If two or more short forms are to be used at the same time, they should be incorporated into a single form.

3. During a period of experimentation, unless there is plenty of money to spend on printing, forms should be produced by some inexpensive process such as mimeographing.

4. The basis for an evaluation of the student's achievement should be decided upon.

5. In the interpretation of a report the likelihood of misunderstanding by parents tends to increase in proportion to the number of details included in the report.

6. Students should have a real part in the development of new forms and practices.

7. The development by students of an understanding of and a favorable attitude toward new practices is a most effective approach to parent education.

8. The summarization of reports on a student in a departmentalized program by a guidance counselor, a homeroom teacher, a core teacher, or the principal involves too big a task and is not a workable plan.

9. The scale type evaluation form is unsatisfactory unless each scale item involves only a single outcome the achievement of which can be expressed in degrees by clearly distinguishable descriptions.

10. The check form is simpler than the scale for use in reporting evaluations and is more economical of space on a printed form.

11. The development of highly detailed, elaborate

cumulative record forms is uneconomical; if too detailed and lengthy, they will not be used by most teachers.

12. Although it has many real advantages, the conference plan is not a practical solution to the reporting problem, especially at the secondary-school level.

13. Whatever forms for use in reporting are developed, a separate report involving the use of a five-point scale should be maintained for administrative record purposes.

14. Check forms, unless they are carefully controlled, tend to become increasingly detailed and, therefore, increasingly impractical.

15. The best way to state objectives is in terms of desired behavior outcomes-what the learner should do.

16. Many teachers have difficulty in writing effective comments. A deliberate program for the improvement of the writing of informal comments is essential.

17. The most intelligible way to write supplementary comments in explaining evaluations is to tell what the student did.¹¹

The basic functions of the card are to provide data for the guidance program, to guide teaching, to appraise curriculum content, to provide information for administrative purposes, and to serve as a motivation or discipline factor. Liggitt¹² included teacher appraisal as a function of the report card; however, the tendency to overgrade to satisfy the administrator, parent, or student must be considered a

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 64-92.

¹² Liggitt, W. A., "Are There Better Ways of Evaluating, Recording and Reporting Pupil Progress in Junior and Senior High Schools?" The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 34:169, March, 1950, p. 80.

possibility.

Ross¹³ in summarizing his beliefs concerning the marking problem said that there must be consistency and uniformity in practice and that a well formulated plan of action with a sound marking technique would insure this consistency and uniformity.

The results of most studies indicate a gradual breaking away from the traditional method of reporting pupil progress. One major obstacle to be overcome is the practice of evaluating students on a competitive basis. Another major obstacle lies in the inability of schools to adequately express the objectives of the educational program; if educational objectives are not understood then evaluation is not valid. Desirable practices becoming more widely accepted are the sub-division of subjects into specific goals and objectives and the evaluation of learning outcomes in areas other than subject matter.

As there was no available information concerning reporting practices in Montana the writer believed a study to determine current practices would be valuable.

¹³ Ross, op. cit., p. 425.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Procurement of data. Report cards used in this study were secured from administrators in response to a letter.¹⁴ Using the list of schools found in the 1950-1951 Montana Educational Directory¹⁵ as a guide, requests for report cards were sent to all school systems in first class districts. The listed schools in second class districts were numbered from one to seventy-seven and requests were sent to odd numbered schools. In third class districts the listed schools were numbered from one to one-hundred and six and requests were sent to odd numbered schools. Responses to the requests for cards represented forty-five per cent of the school systems to whom letters were sent. The number of requests sent and responses made can be found in Table I.¹⁶

There were sixty-five usable returns from forty-three school systems; of the sixty-five usable forms four were of the letter type and treated individually. Three returns were inadequate. The number of responses from administrators in first and second class districts was much higher than that of administrators in third class districts. The variability may be somewhat indicative of the time the administrator in the

¹⁴ See appendix.

¹⁵ State Department of Public Instruction, op. cit., pp. 5-21.

¹⁶ See page 13.

TABLE I
 NUMBER AND PER CENT OF RESPONSES TO
 REQUESTS FOR REPORT CARDS

Type of district	Number of schools	Number of requests	Number of responses	Per cent responding
First class	7	7	7	100
Second class	77	39	30	77
Third class	106	53	9	17

third class district can devote to administrative duties.

Recording data. To record the data a check sheet was designed and used. Items appraised were similar to those used in Berman's¹⁷ analysis; it was hoped that a comparative study would be facilitated by such organization. The questions considered in the list were devised in such a manner that in sixteen cases yes and no answers could be used as the situation indicated. Four inquiries were answerable by the use of numbers and one was of a general nature.

Check list items. The following questions were used in the check list:

1. Is there a general statement of the philosophy, goals, or ideals of the school?
2. Is there an invitation to visit the school?
3. Is the rating code explained?
4. Is there a request for co-operation between the home and school?
5. Are subjects alone rated?
6. Are subjects sub-divided into specific goals, skills, or habits? Below are illustrative examples.
 - a. Language Arts:
 1. Spelling
 2. Penmanship
 3. Rules of grammar
 4. Composition

¹⁷ Berman, op. cit., pp. 52-59.

b. Reading

1. Vocabulary
2. Comprehension
3. Oral reading

7. Are traits sub-divided into specific goals, skills, or habits? Below is an illustrative example.

a. Co-operation. Does the child:

1. Recognize other's rights and property?
2. Work and play well with others?
3. Show willingness to be a leader?
4. Show willingness to share privileges?

8. Is there mention of special skill, talents, or interests?

9. Is the rating code alphabetical?

10. Are ratings competitive? Is it evident from the information on the card that the student grade is based on a class average rather than upon ability and effort?

11. Is a different rating system used to rate traits and subjects?

12. Is provision made for calling attention to apparent physical defects of the child?

13. Is there space provided for teacher comments?

14. Is there space provided for parent comments?

15. Is student appraisal indicated? Does the student have a part in making the report?

16. How many forms are used? Are different forms used

to rate traits and subjects?

17. How often are reports sent to parents?

18. How many steps are found in the rating scale?

19. How many sides are there to the report form?

20. What is the general description of the format?

Specific information, pertinent to the analysis, was noted and will be included in the study.

Interpretation of check list results. The treatment of results follows the same sequence as did the check list items of the master list. Further explanation and clarification of the questions will be necessary in some instances to make the results more understandable.

Of the sixty progress reports examined not one had a well formulated statement of the philosophy, goals, or ideals of the school. It was evident, that in many instances, what supposedly passed as general objectives were merely specific objectives or learning outcomes of a particular subject, characteristic, or trait. This may be more clearly understood if one considers a general objective as being a modification of the individuals behavior; a modification that is brought about by the sum total of all school experiences. One of Wrinkle's general objectives is stated in the following manner:

HE DIRECTS HIS INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES EFFECTIVELY () begins work promptly () makes good use of time () requires minimum of supervision () does more than the least that will be accepted () meets responsibilities promptly.¹⁸

¹⁸ Wrinkle, op. cit., p. 108.

Three cards did not explain the rating code being used. In all three cases the code was alphabetical. There was no way of telling whether the A grade, for example, was excellent or failing; possibly the rating code had been explained previously by a different method. Sixteen cards rated subject matter alone. For the purposes of this study expression of traits, habits, or characteristics by the single word effort, effort, or co-operation was not considered as being an adequate title for behavior outcomes. Forty-six cards used an alphabetical method of rating subjects. The codes showed great variations as will be brought out later.

Forty-five cards did not have subjects sub-divided into specific goals, skills, or objectives. Reading, for example, was a unit within itself. There was no way of determining what particular phases of the individual's reading program had improved or were progressing satisfactorily. On forty-two cards traits were not sub-divided into specific goals, skills, or objectives. None of the cards indicated a good or manner by which parents could be informed of special talents, talents, or interests of the child. Fifteen cards did not express a desire for co-operation between home and school. Seven cards did not express an invitation to visit school.

Forty-six cards indicated that marking was on a comparative basis. The use of such terminology as above class average, average, and below average were the criteria used for

determining this practice. Twenty-eight cards used different methods for rating subjects and traits. A two point method of evaluation was used on twenty-three of the twenty-eight cards. About twenty-five per cent of the twenty-three cards evaluated by inference; if the student was not conforming to accepted standards the trait was checked, if he was conforming to accepted standards the marking space was left blank.

Only three cards had a method of calling attention to correctable physical defects. Many cards, however, made some effort to evaluate health habits or understandings. On twenty cards space was provided for teacher comments. In a number of cases teacher comments could be made by the use of supplemental letters or notes. One card indicated that student self-appraisal was part of the evaluation program. The introductory phrase taken from the card and found below may give the reader a better understanding of the concept of self-appraisal.

Dear Parent—This report is to tell you how I am getting along in school and some of the things I am learning. My teacher and I have marked the card. Please study it carefully so we can talk about it together.

Progress reports were sent to parents four times a year in thirteen cases and six times a year in forty-five cases. One school used report cards four times during the year and parent-teacher conferences twice, another used report cards three times during the school term and letters to parents three

times. None of the schools used monthly reports.

Twelve cards used a three point check list or three point code as a rating scale. Four cards used a two point rating scale, eight cards used a four point check list or four point code as the rating scale, twenty used a five point scale, ten used a six point scale, and six used a seven point scale.¹⁹

The formats and contents of two cards were the same. The size of the cards varied from those which were five and one half inches by eight and one half inches to one which measured three inches by five inches. There were few cards showing a great deviation from a white, gray, tan, or similar mode of coloration. Four cards were mimeographed. Generally the printed material was easily read; however, two of the mimeographed forms were not too legible. The paper used was generally of light or medium weight although some cards were composed of heavy-weight material.

One mimeographed card was expendable; the following words of the superintendent explain the reason for its use, "Reports to parents are mailed. Reports to parents are not returned. Children do not stand in halls comparing cards."

Information not developed by use of the check list. In the use of per cent scales, or modifications of them, numerous variations were noted. It was apparent that in one school

¹⁹ See page 20.

TABLE II
 NUMBER AND PER CENT OF CARDS USING
 VARIOUS RATING SCALES*

Number of points in rating scale	Number of cards using	Per cent of cards using
2	4	7
3	12	20
4	8	13
5	20	33
6	10	17
7	6	10

* The percentage figures have been rounded off.

the child would fail if his grades were below seventy-five per cent while in another school he would get a C grade for doing the same work. In other schools ninety-five per cent could be interpreted as being either an A or B. The span between the highest and lowest extremes for letter grades on one card ranged from five to fifteen points; an A or (1)²⁰ grade varied from ninety-five to one-hundred per cent while a C or (3) grade varied from seventy to eighty five per cent.

For the cards as a whole the range for an A or (1) grade was from five to ten points, for a B or (2) grade four to ten points, for a C or (3) grade five to fifteen points, for a D or (4) grade four to ten points, and for an F or (5) grade eight cards indicated that below seventy-five per cent was failing, four cards considered below seventy per cent as failing, and one card considered below sixty per cent as failing.²¹

On the four letter type cards the general objectives of the subject matter areas were defined and space was provided for teacher comments in each of these areas. One school reported pupil progress through the medium of the parent-teacher conference.

The rating code most often used was the A B C D F scale.

²⁰ 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 grades are, in the same order, equivalent to A, B, C, D, and F grades.

²¹ See page 22.

TABLE III
PER CENT RANGE OF ALPHABETICAL OR NUMBER GRADES

Cards*	Grade A (1)	Grade B (2)	Grade C (3)	Grade D (4)	Grade F (5)
1	94-100	85-93	78-84	70-77	Below 70
2	95-100	90-95	80-90	75-80	Below 75
3	95-100	90-94	81-89	70-80	Below 70
4	95-100	85-94	75-84	70-74	Below 70
5	93-100	85-92	75-84	70-74	Below 70
6	93-100	87-92	81-86	75-80	Below 75
7	94-100	88-93	81-87	75-80	Below 75
8	95-100	90-95	80-89	75-80	Below 75
9	90-100	85-90	80-85	75-80	Below 75
10	94-100	87-93	80-86	75-79	Below 75
11	95-100	90-95	80-90	75-80	Below 75
12	95-100	90-94	80-90	75-80	Below 75
13	95-100	85-95	70-85	60-70	Below 60

* These cards were those using a combination per cent and alphabetical rating code.

The rating codes below serve to illustrate some methods now in use in Montana.

1. U-Unsatisfactory-Should demand attention of parents
S-Satisfactory growth and progress
S-(Red Ink) Satisfactory in group, but group is below average achievement
2. E-Above average
C-Average
D-Below average
3. S-Satisfactory progress
SS-More than satisfactory progress
U-Unsatisfactory progress
4. (++) Commendable progress being made
(+) Satisfactory progress being made by this pupil
(-) Progress not satisfactory. A conference with teacher desired
(✓) This skill needs strengthening.
5. Black S-Is working up to his own ability and up to grade standard
Red S-Is working up to his own ability but not up to grade standard
Black U-Is working up to grade standard but not up to his own ability
Red U-Is not working up to his own ability nor up to grade standard

X-Indicates help is needed

6. Explanation of checkmark headings:

Commendation-For special effort and achievement

Satisfactory-Progress consistent with ability

Effort lacking-Work not consistent with estimated ability

7. A-(95-100) Superior in scholarship, exceeding requirements of instructor

B-(90-95) Above average in scholarship. Work accurate and complete, meeting all requirements of instructor

C-(80-90) Average. Barely meeting assignments and showing evidence of need of encouragement

D-(75-80) Below average. Failing to meet all the requirements of instructor. Lacking in interest and initiative.

F-Below 75

8. A-Excellent-about 10% receive this grade

B-Above the average-usually about 20% receive this grade

C-Average-45% receive this grade

D-Below average, but passing; about 20% receive this grade

F-Failing-fails to accomplish minimum essentials for continued progress; not over 5% usually receive this grade

9. Check list headings:

Satisfactory progress

Shows improvement

Needs to improve

10. "A" Pupil-Is careful, thorough, and prompt in the preparation of all required work. Is independent and resourceful. Has sufficient interest and initiative to undertake tasks beyond the assigned work. Has superior understanding

"B" Pupil-Prepares all assignments carefully (satisfactorily) and promptly. Makes some use of suggestions for extra work. Shows consistent interest. Has good understanding

"C" Pupil-Meets minimum requirements. Requires considerable direction and stimulation from the teacher. Has adequate understanding

"D" Pupil-Is irregular in meeting assignments. Constantly requires special help and stimulation

"F" Pupil-Work unsatisfactory. Needs to spend more time on the subject because: (a) lack of effort; (b) poor attitude; (c) ineffective study habits; (d) mental immaturity; or (e) frequent absence

11. 1-Means that the pupil does excellent work consistently; grasps ideas readily; retains and uses knowledge intelligently; expresses ideas clearly and concisely;

works independently; follows directions closely and carefully and does more than the required work; does work of a high quality; and shows initiative and enthusiasm. (94-100%)

2-Does the required work with very good achievement; does work above the average level of his class. (85-93%)

3-Meets the minimum requirements satisfactorily; does average work, which is similar to that done by approximately fifty per cent of his class. (78-84%)

4-Does poor work, barely passing; below average achievement. (70-77%)

5-Failing work. Does not meet satisfactory requirements because of work of very poor quality or an insufficient amount of work done; indicates the necessity to repeat the work of a subject. (Below 70%)

In twenty-four school systems two different report cards were used at the elementary level. Table IV²² shows the point at which division was made.

Comparison of results with other studies. Davis²³ reported that the practice of having one or two cards at the elementary level was about evenly divided. The results of this study showed the situation to be approximately the same today.

²² See page 27.

²³ Davis, loc. cit.

TABLE IV

THE POINT AT WHICH SOME ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ARE DIVIDED
FOR THE PURPOSE OF USING DIFFERENT TYPE PROGRESS REPORTS*

School	Between grades one and two	Between grades two and three	Between grades three and four
1			x
2			x
3			x
4		x	
5		x	
6			x
7			x
8			x
9			x
10	x		
11	x		
12			x
13	x		
14	x		
15			x
16			x
17			x
18		x	
19			x
20		x	
21		x	
22		x	
23	x		
24			x

* Nineteen schools used the same report card throughout grades one to six.

If we assume the traditional card evaluates on a competitive basis, then, thirty-nine school systems are using a traditional card throughout their elementary systems, and three are evaluating in a traditional manner in at least some of the grades. Otto²³ reported that out of thirty-one school systems in northern Illinois twenty-eight were evaluating on a traditional basis.

Table V²⁴ shows the results, in part, of Berman's²⁵ survey and this study. A comprehensive comparison between the two studies will not be attempted because the items analyzed were not similar in all instances.

A basis for evaluating progress reports is Wrinkle's criteria for evaluating reporting practices. Inadequate information made the use of the criteria impractical in this study but it is given here for the reader's personal use should he desire to analyze progress reports used in his schools.

1. Have the objectives of the educational program been identified?
2. Are the objectives clearly stated?
3. Are the objectives sufficiently analyzed so that they have specific meaning?
4. Are the objectives understood, accepted and

²³ See page 29.

²⁴ Otto, op. cit., p. 209.

²⁵ Berman, op. cit., pp. 52-59.

TABLE V
COMPARABLE DATA OF BERMAN'S SURVEY
AND THIS STUDY

Item analyzed*	Berman's study	This study
Is there a statement of the philosophy, goals, or ideals of the school?	30% Yes	None
Was there an invitation to visit school?	66% Yes	75% Yes
Was the rating code explained?	96% Yes	95% Yes
Was there a request for cooperation between home and school?	92% Yes	75% Yes
Were subjects alone rated?	51% Yes	26% Yes
Were subjects divided into specific goals, objectives, or skills?	4% Yes	25% Yes
Were traits divided into specific goals, objectives, or skills?	25% Yes	47% Yes
How many used a five point rating scale?	56% Did	37% Did
Was attention called to special talents, interests, or skills of the student?	3% Yes	None
Was there space for teacher comments?	20% Yes	33% Yes
Was student rating based on ability?	11% Yes	11% Yes

* The items used in this Table were selected from the check list on page 14.

recognized as important by the students, teachers, and parents?

5. Are different objectives evaluated and reported separately?

6. Are different forms provided to serve different purposes?

7. Are different bases for evaluation utilized which are appropriate to the purposes involved?

8. Can the teacher evaluate with sufficient reliability the achievement and growth of the student with respect to the objectives which have been set up?

9. Can the reports be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort?

10. Do the evaluation procedures make provision for student self-evaluation?

11. Is provision made for the reporting of evidence and comments relative to the evaluations?

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

13. Can the evaluations be easily translated into other symbols if the evaluations may have to be stated in terms of other systems of marking?

14. Do the forms and practices serve the various functions which they are designed to serve, that is, give information, stimulate interest in improvement, facilitate guidance, provide a basis for college entrance recommendations, etc.?²⁶

The above criteria can best be utilized when teacher attitudes and understandings are known.

Administrators are concerned with the problem of improving reporting practices as is evident from statements such as these which were found on the materials returned:

²⁶ Wrinkle, op. cit., pp. 107-110.

"I shall be interested to see a resume of the results of your tabulations."

"We wanted to make a change and found there was too much opposition to it, so we had to drop the idea completely."

"We are not entirely pleased with our method of reporting so I am especially glad that you are doing some work along this line."

"We did try the U and S for grades one and two but the parents didn't like it so we did away with it."

"We are engaged in a similar study."

"I am interested in your survey and would appreciate a copy of the results."

The tendency to deviate from the traditional card was most evident in the larger school systems. The smaller schools, in a number of cases, were using standard forms secured from a school supply company. Statements such as those appearing above usually came from administrators in larger schools.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Re-statement of the problem. The changing curriculum has necessitated improved methods of evaluating educational outcomes. As a result of this change studies and experiments have been undertaken to improve the report card. On the other side of the picture has been the spectacle of indifference or lack of knowledge on the part of many educators. It was the purpose of this study to create an awareness of the problem, its complexity and implications, so that further research and experimentation would be stimulated. By determining common elements of report cards and making this information available along with the results of similar studies it was hoped the above mentioned awareness could be created.

Limitations of the study. This study was not intended to be a critical analysis of report cards nor was it intended that it should analyze in great detail. The items reviewed were similar to those of other works to make comparisons meaningful. The report cards analyzed were those of a selected group of graded elementary schools of Montana.

The number of responses to the requests for report cards was a limiting factor in this analysis. The use of a questionnaire might have produced additional information of value to the study but it would most likely have reduced the number of responses.

Conclusions and recommendations. The findings of this

study indicate many schools are not using adequate methods for reporting pupil progress. Further work in creating better reporting instruments is needed. These findings indicate our educational philosophy is somewhat traditional; a re-examination of that philosophy should be undertaken.

Many schools in Montana are grading students on a competitive basis; a much smaller number are rating students according to ability. The method used to determine individual ability was not indicated; whether it was through the use of standardized tests and norms, through teacher observation, or by other means.

About one fourth of the schools failed to utilize the report card as a method of improving relationships between the home and school; there was no attempt made to encourage parent co-operation or to have parents visit the school and confer with teachers.

In all schools, considered by this study, there was a complete failure to adequately express the philosophy, goals, or objectives of the educational program.

Many cards do not sub-divide subjects or traits into goals, skills, or objectives; parents and students do not have an adequate understanding as to what specific learning outcomes of a particular subject or trait are in need of more concentrated effort or remedial work.

There was a complete lack of uniformity among report

cards; in size, in structure, in general makeup, and in the use of rating codes. The rating codes and titles of characteristics or traits showed the greatest variation. The five point rating code was used on about one third of the cards. This was especially true in the smaller schools. In the larger schools a three point check list or three point scale was most often utilized as the rating code.

The numerous interpretations of the value of a grade on the per cent scale indicates a need for a greater degree of uniformity than now exists. The transfer of students from one school to another is not facilitated by this lack of uniformity.

There is considerable disagreement as to what traits or characteristics are to be evaluated as part of the educational program. Approximately three fourths of the schools using quarterly reports were schools in first class districts. There was almost a complete absence of pupil self-evaluation. The report card is evidently a matter for teacher concern alone. Teacher comments could be made on about one third of the cards while on the remaining cards reporting was an objective process. Few cards provided space for parent comments.

In general, the larger schools seemed to be much more interested in the reporting problem. From the comments made and from the type of card used it was evident that a sincere effort is being made in these larger schools to solve the

problem.

The use of a standardized card is not advisable according to most educational authorities. The writer believes, however, that the use of the following suggestions will aid in the construction of an adequate reporting instrument.

1. A co-operative effort should be made to clearly define the goals and objectives of the educational program.

2. Subjects and traits should be sub-divided into specific learning outcomes.

3. Greater effort should be made to encourage home and school co-operation.

4. Greater effort should be made to encourage parents to visit the school.

5. Pupil evaluation should be on the basis of individual ability. The use of standardized tests and norms would facilitate the determination of that ability.

6. The rating code or check list should be simple and easily understood. A minimum number of points on the rating scale or check list is desirable. The per cent or combination per cent and alphabetical scales should not be used.

7. A quarterly report would be most efficient in that it would provide a longer period upon which to base evaluations and it would ease the clerical load of the teacher and the administrator.

8. One card, so constructed as to fit both the primary and intermediate levels, should be used.

9. The card should be constructed so the transfer of information from the card to other records would not be cumbersome.

10. The card should provide ample space for teacher and parent comments.

11. Student self-evaluation should be included in the reporting process.

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APPENDIX .

REQUEST FOR REPORT CARDS

Fort Benton, Montana
February 6, 1951

Dear Sir:

I will be making a survey of reporting practices of graded elementary schools of Montana in the near future and I would appreciate your help in this matter if at all possible. This study will be relatively simple and involve an analysis and tabulation of cards or other reporting devices which you and other administrators might be using in your schools.

I feel that this work may give me a basis upon which to make a comparative evaluation with other sections of the country. In addition it might be of value to you as I will send a resume of results as soon as my work has been completed.

If you can help me the materials should be any reporting devices used in grades one to six. Here in Fort Benton we use letters to parents in grades one and two and lettered cards in grades three to six; if such a condition exists in your school would you please send both. Forward your materials to Edward G. Thomas, Fort Benton Schools, Fort Benton, Montana.

I will start my tabulations on or about March 1.

Respectfully yours,

Edward G. Thomas