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Date August 2, 1974

A STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT CARD FOR HORACE MANN SCHOOL IN RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

by

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A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

with concentration in

Elementary Education

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

August, 1974

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to express her appreciation to the Horace Mann School staff, her family, and Dr. Franklin Greenough, her advisor, for their assistance and cooperation in developing this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
VITA	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	vi
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Background and Purpose of the Study	3
Questions to be Answered	6
General Procedures	7
Definitions of Terms	8
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	10
Purpose of Reporting Student Progress	10
To the student	11
To the parent	13
To the staff	16
Methods of Reporting Pupil Progress	16
Traditional Report Cards	17
Checklists and Narrative Forms	18
Conferences	21
Problems Encountered in Reporting Procedures	22
Trends in Reporting Student Progress	24
Summary	26

Chapter	Page
III. PROCEDURE	27
Collection of Data	27
Analysis of Data	29
Summary	30
IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY	31
Opinion Survey Results	31
Qusestions one through nine	32
Listing of Academic skills	35
Health Characteristics	37
Social Attitudes	37
Work Habits	37
Comments about current report card	38
Progress Report Card for Horace Mann School	40
Body of Report	41
Summary	45
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	46
Summary	46
Conclusions	48
Recommendations	50
REFERENCES	52
APPENDIX	55
Cover Letter	56
Opinion Questionnaire.	57

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to develop a student progress report for Horace Mann School in Rapid City, South Dakota. This school changed from a graded, self-contained curriculum to a continuous progress, team-teaching curriculum. The standard reporting form was no longer effectively communicating student progress to the clientele of that school. By reviewing recent, pertinent literature and surveying the opinions of the parents, students, and staff of Horace Mann School, information was gathered to construct a reporting form pertinent to the school's philiosophy and objectives.

Current literature indicated that reporting student progress served different purposes to those concerned. To the parents, it helps to inform them about their child both for long range and immediate planning and what his potential is as observed by the teacher. For the student, it serves as an evaluation of himself which helps to determine self-realization of the person he is or may become. To educators, it provides a direction to aid further student growth and development towards stated goals and objectives. Also noted were various methods of reporting student progress. Traditional report cards with letter or numerical grades, narrative reports, checklists, rating scales, and conferences, or a combination of these methods are currently practiced.

The opinion surveys of the clientele of Horace Mann School resulted in the following conclusions; the majority favored a listing of academic skills, health characteristics, social attitudes, and work habits on the report card. Most respondents also favored parent-teacher conferences when the reports are issued, although they had reservations concerning the presence of the student at these conferences. A majority of respondents also favored having the student's progress reported in accord with his own observed abilities rather than with others in the class. There was no specific agreement among those surveyed as to which method should be utilized to report student progress, or if the grade level of the student should be placed on the report card.

The report card resulting from this study was designed to incorporate the information gained by the author from the literature reviewed and the opinions of the staff members, students, and teachers who returned the questionnaire.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Communications are an integral part of human relationships. Without a form of satisfactory communication skills, relationships between and among peoples become stifled and unsatisfactory to those concerned. In a school situation, a significant form of communication among those concerned is the reporting system. Only to the degree that the reporting system has the same meaning for those who use it can the report serve the purpose of meaningfully and precisely communicating the student's progress.

The development of a satisfactory reporting system is dependent upon many factors within the school. Of primary consideration should be the educational philosophy and objectives to which the school subscribes. The reporting system should also be based upon consideration of physical, social, emotional, and academic growth and progress of the student; and it should facilitate clear and understandable reporting to those involved. To be effective a report card should be a careful and considerate evaluation of the progress of each student; it should tell the parents and the students what they want to know about the nature of

the student's progress; and it should give other educators the information they need to help further the student's development. If the report can satisfy all of these considerations, it can then serve the educational growth and development of each student.

As J. Stanley Ahmann and Marvin D. Glock summarized, composite evaluation of something so nebulous as human behavior is not a simple process because all evidence can not be completely objective. (Ahmann & Glock, 1959, p. 539) Evaluation of a student's progress requires careful reflection on many aspects of his personality and abilities. Much more than knowledge of subject matter is examined because a student's teachers should be concerned with personal and social adjustments, with the way he represents the school, and with the quality of his response to the learning situations he experiences. Since many intangible human factors are involved in evaluating student progress, there is currently no standard form or format to follow.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study will be to design a student progress report card directly related to the philosophy and organization of Horace Mann School, a continuous progress elementary school in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Background and Purpose of the Study

Horace Mann School in Rapid City, South Dakota, is composed of approximately four hundred sixty students with an instructional staff of one full-time principal and twenty-two teachers. The student population of this school comes from a variety of socio-economic levels and about one-third of the student body is of American Indian heritage. Five years ago the staff at Horace Mann School changed their curriculum design from a traditional program to a continuous progress program in order to better meet the developmental needs of the students. When the previous grade lines were omitted and students were to be evaluated on their own progress in relation to their own potential, it was no longer applicable to report this progress to the parents with the traditional letter grades which compared their progress to established standards.

The initial report cards issued to the parents were in the form of a rating checklist evaluating five attitudinal behavioral areas with short narrative evaluations in the areas of language arts and math. Each reporting period a new evaluative sheet was sent home with little, if any, feedback from the parents or continuity from one reporting period to the next. This report was discontinued when it

became apparent that the students and parents were confused about the evaluation form and often interpreted the rating scale into traditional concepts of reporting. Parent complaints frequently expressed an inability to understand the reporting system and the lack of knowledge as to what their child had accomplished in school.

The next effort of the staff was to adopt a completely narrative form on which the teacher described the attitudes and behaviors in five areas of social development and study habits, as well as a description of the student's progress in the areas of language arts and math. This report included room for recording each reporting period's progress so that continuity could be expressed more easily. This report eliminated the problem of students comparing themselves with others, and shifted the emphasis towards individual progress reporting and was much easier for the parents to understand. The problem which did occur was that because of the time necessary to complete the report, teachers often resorted to brief statements which did not necessarily reflect the student's progress in terms of his own capabilities. The parents still did not always indicate that they understood what their child was accomplishing in school.

The evaluative report to the parents which is currently being used has six categories of social development and seven categories of study habits which are checked if, in the teacher's opinion, the student is making progress or has satisfactorily accomplished these tasks. The academic areas of reading, math, social studies, and science are reported in the narrative form. Adequate space has been provided to record progress for the total year. These report cards seem to be more satisfactory to the parents than previous reports but do not indicate to the parents the goals of the learning program and are quite time consuming for the teachers to complete.

The purpose of this study will be to design a student progress report card which will incorporate the social attitudes and study habits evaluation of the previous reports and will also report the academic goals of the learning program and the assessment of each student's progress toward these stated goals. This will enable both the student and his parents to determine what has been accomplished in specific skills areas in terms of his own potential and in relation to what goals have been established. Thus, the report card developed by this study will describe goals of the school and the student's progress

toward these goals in a manner which is comprehensive and informative yet within the framework of the school's philosophy.

Questions to be Answered

1. What marking system should be used to report student progress to the parents of students at Horace Mann School?

2. What reporting form will best express the teacher's evaluation of the student's progress at Horace Mann School?

3. What do the students feel their parents should know about their school progress?

4. What does the Horace Mann School staff think is necessary to include in an evaluative progress report to the parents of their students?

5. What information do the parents feel they should receive concerning their child's progress in school?

6. What is the current trend in reporting student progress in continuous progress elementary schools?

7. What do the staff members of other schools in Rapid City which are beginning continuous progress programs consider to be important to include on a report card?

General Procedures

To begin this study, the investigator will review current literature which pertains to the philosophies and systems of reporting student progress. The primary source of the literature reviewed will be that which is available at the Montana State University Library and published in the last fifteen years.

A questionnaire will be constructed to survey the opinions concerning items the students, parents, and staff of Horace Mann School in Rapid City, South Dakota, think should be included in a student progress report. A pilot questionnaire will be distributed to one class of students and the Horace Mann School staff to identify any unclear statements, ambiguities, or faulty instructions. The final questionnaire will be distributed to all parents who attend a scheduled conference, all students in the Intermediate II classes, and staff members of the schools in the Rapid City Public School system which are beginning continuous progress programs. A form to report student progress will be designed incorporating the suggestions obtained from the opinions which were collected and the standards which current literature indicates necessary for a comprehensive, informative progress report.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to the design of a form to report student progress to the clientele of Horace Mann School in Rapid City, South Dakota. The population surveyed for opinions will be limited to the Intermediate II students, the parents that attend the conferences scheduled in January, 1974, and the staff members of the continuous progress elementary schools in the Rapid City Public School System. The literature reviewed for this study will be limited to material published between 1959 and 1974.

Definitions of Terms

Horace Mann School--A continuous progress elementary school in Rapid City, South Dakota, composed of Kindergarten, Primary I, Primary II, Intermediate I, and Intermediate II levels, students ranging in age from five to twelve.

Traditional report card--A symbol system used to report student progress in which the evaluation of students is summarized and reported to the parents through representative symbols.

Dual marking system--A variation of the traditional system in which the first mark represents a student's achievements in relation to established standards and the second mark represents the teacher's judgement of the

amount of effort put forth by the student.

Checklists--Criterion is listed on the reporting form and a check is placed in the respective category to rate the student's performance.

Narrative Report--A reporting system in which all evaluations are made in written summaries on the report to parents and no symbols are used.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An important factor of education in our nation is the assessment of student progress and the communication of this progress to the student and his parents. This communication is dependent upon the basic concepts and purposes of reporting to which the school subscribes and the methods by which these concepts are recorded and transmitted to the students and their parents. In the area of student evaluation, many of the sophisticated studies on effects of grading practices deal with high school or college levels and it is difficult to generalize their findings to the elementary schools; therefore, most current literature in the area of grading and reporting practices at the elementary level reflects a diversity of opinions both as to the proper methods of reporting and the purposes of the reporting procedures.

Purpose of Reporting Student Progress

The primary purpose of reporting student progress is to provide a systematic evaluation tool for the benefit of the teacher and student to assess progress towards stated goals, and to share this assessment with the parents on a

scheduled basis. Important aspects of this assessment are: to determine the student's growth toward certain educational objectives in terms of his own capacities; to serve as a system of communication for interpreting the school program; for securing cooperation between home and school; and for promoting pupil development. (Ahman & Glock, 1959, p. 565)

To the student. The student, who is the central figure and the most directly affected person, has often been overlooked in the actural reporting procedure. Important decisions about future educational courses are often determined by the reported evaluation, so it seems both rational and just that the students understand the system by which they are evaluated. (White & Boehm, 1968, p. 12)

More recently, emphasis has been placed on the evaluation procedures which involved student participation and focused the student's attention on the assessment of learning goals and his progress toward these goals. Both a summary to the student of his progress and the teacher's marks have then furnished a means by which learning is reinforced. Since success in school has frequently served to motivate and increase the student's efforts while failure has served to create anxiety and feelings of inadequacy, some educators have felt that it is important to actively include the student in the reporting procedure and that the

report be constructed to be both informative and conducive to the growth of the student's self concept. (Melby, 1966, p. 104) Being conscious of this situation, one school staff developed the following rationale and conclusions for a reporting system which directly involved the students:

> How can we help children to become truly involved in planning their own educational program, in assessing their own progress, making intelligent decisions about things that affect them and those around them if, after they've done their work, we sit down in the safety of our living room and decide that Johnny did what we consider "C" work this grading period?
>
> So we came up with our own system which involves, above all, continual conferring between individual students and the teacher. Each reporting period, the teachers and the students have an in-depth conference about the students' total school progress. The child checks the report card in answer to questions regarding his impressions of his progress in reaching his goals in the areas of attitude, basic skills, working with others, responsibility, and so on. The teacher then discusses his responses with him and makes written comments relative to his progress. (Mueller, 1974, p. 53)

The report card which has described the student's efforts, unique qualities, interests, attitudes, and behaviors has satisfied the purpose of allowing the student to become a self-determined learner. A need for awareness of these purposes is exemplified in the following statement:

> The evaluation must present to the child a realistic and acceptable picture of himself, a picture that gradually leads him to a realization of the person he is or may become. His strengths and weaknesses should be made clear. At the same time, he must see himself as a worthwhile member of society. Unless we can do this for each child, all else we attempt to do is largely a waste of time. (Chadwick, et al., 1966, p. 28)

To the parent. A thorough report of the student's progress to the parents serves to inform them about their child both for immediate and long range planning. Several opinions exist about what should be included in an effective report, but closer agreement has been noted in the fact that the report should be clear, easy to understand, and informative. As one article stated:

> The evaluation must present the child to the parent in the best possible light. This is, after all, the parent's most precious possession whom he has endowed with the best possible inheritance he could. (Chadwick, et al., 1966, p. 28)

According to Robert Anderson (1966), the parent needs to be informed of the child's potential as such, his relative standing in the class, and his potential as compared with other American children. Unless handled correctly by the teacher, however, the last two criteria may be more dangerous and less helpful to the parent; the most important criteria emphasized being whether the student is in fact doing the best work of which he is capable. He also states that the report should examine development of physical, social, and emotional growth. Such attitudes as those related to study habits, feelings towards self, attitudes towards school and peers, reactions to rewards and punishments, and the willingness to try new ideas, as well as many other aspects must be examined and mentioned on the report

form to keep from being overlooked. Following these principles, the Haxtun Public School in Haxtun, Colorado, has graded children in comparison with themselves and how they are doing in comparison with the group. In this school, the teacher sent home a fractional grade which indicated the goal and how much the child accomplished. On a separate sheet the average of the class was recorded along with the high and low of the class so the parents could see how their child fits into the entire group as well as determine the quality of the student's work. (Edling, 1970, p. 69) The staff at Barnsley Elementary School in Rockville, Maryland, redesigned their report card to a check sheet of skills with marks limited to "Satisfactory" or "Needs Encouragement". To facilitate this evaluation, they attempted to collect adequate test information by which they could measure and report how closely the students were working against their own potential. The students in this school were not compared or measured with others in the class or others of the same chronological age. (Edling, 1970, p. 74) Another report that was designed to communicate the student's acheivements in the skills areas indicated the sequence of skills which the child would be expected to master in various subject and attitudinal areas and which skills the child had

mastered at the time of the report. At that time, the staff felt they were meeting the parent's need in relation to their role in the child's education. (Chadwick, et al., 1966, p. 27)

In an article written for The National Elementary Principal, John Rothney states that an improvement in reporting to parents will be made when substance is put into the marking system, the language is clear, students are evaluated with analytical terms that lead to action, and evaluations employ longitudinal data so suggestions for next steps will be based on the developmental picture of the student that the records show. (Rothney, 1966, p. 53) When the reports evaluated students in terms of their own capacity and growth, teachers were enabled to engage with parents in a joint undertaking of helping the student grow as a self-actualizing person.

Julian Stanley and Kenneth Hopkins observed that parents want to know how their child is progressing in knowledge of each subject being studied as well as in observed affective and social characteristics; and, if their child is progressing at a rate commensurrate with his general ability. (Stanley & Hopkins, 1972, p. 313) Thus, effective reports should inform the parents of the goals of the school, the progress their child is making towards

these goals, and what the school is attempting to accomplish so that they can cooperate in promoting satisfactory development of the child. (Davis, 1964, p. 288)

To the staff. Teachers are constantly gathering data concerning the student's progress towards stated goals and objectives of the learning program. By means of the report, this data is summarized and formalized by setting aside a scheduled reporting time. Periodic formal evaluation helps the staff learn more about what the student is capable of; where he has reached his potential; what has been done to foster his learning; and, if it has been significant, it has provided a direction for future student growth. The report card then has given the staff information about the proper placement of the child and a basis for long range professional planning and evaluation. (Anderson, 1966)

Methods of Reporting Pupil Progress

The methods used to report student evaluations to the students and their parents are divided into three main categories; (1) the traditional report card, (2) the narrative or checklist report, and (3) conferences. Recent investigations have shown that most schools are still issuing traditional report cards, many are supplementing it with parent-teacher-student conferences or parent-teacher

conferences. Some schools have discarded the report card completely and relied on conferences alone; some schools have developed new and complex forms. (Edling, 1970) Research conducted by Joseph Halliwell has concluded that there was no significant differences between methods of marking in terms of motivating students to achieve and no relationship between learning efficiences and grading practices, therefore, the adopted procedure must best suit the goals and philosophies of the school utilizing the report card. (Halliwell, 1960)

Traditional Report Cards. The traditional report has been used in this nation since the turn of the century and is still widely used in contempory schools. On the traditional report a student's achievement has been summarized into symbols, most frequently ranging from "A" for excellent to "F" for failure. Schools which have used this type of reporting have often placed emphasis on subjects of curriculum rather than the learner. The current trend towards individualized instruction has intensified criticism of the traditional form on the premise that it is both unfortunate and unrealistic to evaluate students in the form of comparative, competitive marks. It has appeared to be no longer relevant to the needs and educational programs of our society and has stated nothing meaningful about a pupil.

On the assumption that learning should be stressed over grades, John Rothney makes the following statements in opposition to the use of the traditional report card:

> . . . letter grades represent an averaging out of judgements about various elements in a pupil's performance so that the meaning of the separate factors is lost in the total. The marks tend to direct the attention of all concerned away from the real purposes of education and focuses it instead on symbols which are designed to represent success or lack of it but do not emphasize its elements or meanings. (Rothney, 1966, p. 51)

Although the traditional form of reporting has been the most frequently used, it has appeared to be the least ideal because of the social and emotional damage it can do to the student, particularly in the rejection it can cause the below average student. It has also adversely affected all children because they are induced to seek the wrong goals since they are satisfied when they reach a given level rather than when they have done their best. Students have often learned to dislike subjects where they get low grades.

Checklists and narrative forms. Written checklists or behavior descriptions have appeared to be the most promising method of supplementing letter grades. These forms are intended to measure growth toward specifically stated goals and make an effort to cast off failure and the stigma of failure from the school experiences of a student. (Brodinsky, 1972) Narrative reports are well suited to

discuss the particular facts of a child's progress and his individual attitudes and social adjustment. Important aspects of this type of assessment are that the determination of the student's growth towards achieving certain educational objectives are measured in terms of his own capacities; and it served as a system of communication for interpreting the school program, for securing cooperation between home and school, and for promoting student development. (Ahman & Glock, 1959, p. 565)

Because of the human factors involved, there has appeared to be a great diversity in forms and formats for this method of reporting. In a survey conducted by the editors of Education U. S. A., more than half of the educators that responded stated that they felt the best way to evaluate student achievement was by assessing specific behavioral objectives in relation to what skills or knowledge the student has learned. (Brodinsky, 1972) In another survey, teachers who were asked to rate reporting devices in terms of evaluating familiar goals for the elementary school gave the highest rating to the cards which evaluated subject matter, social adjustment, work habits, and health. (Chansky, 1973) The cards favored by these teachers stimulated a description of the student's achievement in many facets of learning. An important

consideration made in developing this type of reporting system was that it be understood by all concerned. To be effective, it required that educational objectives be clarified and communicated so as to reflect the goals of these objectives. Clear cut definitive standards had to be established to make it understood by all members of the faculty and student body and then communicated to the parents so they knew what had been measured and what the evaluation meant.

Several factors must be considered as disadvantages to the narrative form of reporting student progress. The major disadvantage is that anecdotal reporting requires that the teacher take time to meditate about each student, a disadvantage only by the fact that it is very tiring and time consuming. (Dufay, 1966, p. 144) These reports can become stereotyped and meaningless or degenerate into repetitions of cliches if teachers do not keep adequate evaluation data or are unable to express their thoughts adequately. (Thomas, 1971, p. 367) Additionally, informal reporting methods limit cumulative reports of the student's progress because different aspects of his development are apt to be stressed from one report to another. (Gronlund, 1971, p. 486)

Conferences. Conferences are considered the ideal form of communicating student progress. A face to face conference has represented the most fruitful and effective reporting procedure because a more detailed accounting of the subject matter in which the child is involved and the degree of success in each, as well as the attitudes he displays can be openly discussed and misinterpretations immediately clarified. A three way conference which included the student, parent, and teacher has had the advantage of keeping the reports of success, failure, or difficulties in the open so that all persons involved can function on the same frequency.

The importance of conferences as a form of reporting student progress is illustrated by the new policy on grading and reporting adopted by the National Council of Teachers of English in their 1971 conference. This policy states in part:

> Reporting a child's progress in the early years should be done through methods other than the assignment of a letter or numerical grade. Rather, the reporting of a child's progress should be through regular conferences between student and teacher based upon anecdotal records, comparative samples of the child's own work, the teachers estimate of the child's growth towards achieving other goals that the community and schools have set. . . (Brodinsky, 1972, p. 59)

Guidelines must be established before conferences are conducted. To be fruitful, conferences should revolve

around the past performances of the student, his current performance, and project ways in which all concerned can work cooperatively in the future toward mutually acceptable goals. To do this effectively, the teacher must use caution to avoid censorial terms and use language which is clearly descriptive and diagnostic, and suggests next steps in working with the student. Appreciation must be shown of the student's positive qualities and openness used in pointing out the student's weaknesses. The conference also enables teachers to gather significant data about the home environment and past history of the child. Teachers can find out the child's needs and interests as revealed outside of school and his reactions to the school program. (Anderson, 1966, p. 8) Information offered by the parents at conferences can help the teacher to better see and understand the needs and problems of the child.

Time considerations restrict the effectiveness and must be emphasized when conferences are used as the means of reporting student progress. Scheduling appointments when parents are able and willing to meet with the teachers becomes an imperative and limiting factor.

Problems Encountered in Reporting Procedures

Educators have not reached a consensus as to the best

method of marking a child's progress through school. The human element which enters into the reporting procedure is the basis for most of the problems encountered. No matter how great the effort to keep the marking system objective, it invaribly ends up as a subjective evaluation. Teachers are humans and thus have their own hang-ups, preferences, biases, prejudices, and fears. Teacher's opinions are heavily influenced by their own value systems and attitudes. The students are also human, and do in fact differ widely in rates and levels of development, in health, causes and levels of anxiety, in learning styles, and in environmental advantage.

Educational research in this area has been slight and also affected by the human factors. There is less agreement, less teacher preparation, and less helpful professional literature to aid teachers in reporting on children than there is about any other phase of the educational program. (Chadwick et al., 1966) Another concern has been the reaction of the parents if they have been unable to understand the report. One advantage to the traditional report was that parents thought they understood it. Reports written in terms of behavioral objectives or free written letters to the parents have presented language problems or were not comprehensible to the parents.

The bases on which student's progress is evaluated and recorded affects the meaning of the report. Unless it is clearly defined, the recepient of the report may not be able to determine if the evaluation defines the achievement of the student towards instructional objectives, his progress in relation to his ability, or the amount of effort applied towards his schoolwork. This problem is complicated further if more than one basis is utilized in the process for it is likely to fail to communicate what was intended. (Sawin, 1969, p. 225)

Trends in Reporting Student Progress

Evaluation techniques and marking systems are a concern of all who rely on them as a basis of communicating student progress, and are frequent subjects of educational controversy because the process is difficult; also, varied educational philosophies exist which demand different marking systems and the task is sometimes disagreeable. (Ebel, 1972, p. 354) For these reasons, no one report card can be offered as a model and each school must devise a reporting system to suit its own situation. Since the report card is a direct link between school and home, a noted trend now is to develop report cards that convey the idea that school is interesting and that reports to the

home are nothing to be feared. (NEA Research, 1970, p. 56) Surveys conducted of the desires of parents have led to the conclusion that parents want the following three basic types of information:

1. How well their child is doing in relation to his own abilities.

2. How well he compares with others in his grade.

3. How well is he progressing toward the accomplishment of major academic and personal goals. (Austin, 1965, pp. 661, 662)

As a result, the trend is for reports to include descriptions and interpretations of grading standards, explanations of reasons for achievement and difficulty, subject headings followed by items descriptive of related skills, and space provided for comments by parents and teachers. Emphasis is placed mostly upon the learner with evaluation of physical, social, emotional, and academic growth. (Austin, 1965, p. 661) As an alternative to an arbitrary form for reporting to parents, many schools develop their reporting systems utilizing cooperative efforts of parents, students, and school personnel guided by the functions to be served. (Gronlund, 1971, p. 487) Even the term "report card" is gradually being changed to "progress report" and some schools have chosen to completely eliminate formal reports.

Summary

The reporting to parents and students of the student's progress in school is an essential part of the educational program. The needs of the student, parent, and staff must be considered in the evaluation process, but it should be presented in the most informative, clear manner possible. Reporting has been done through the use of traditional report cards, checklists or narrative reports, and conferences. The current trend has been to evaluate the student in terms of his own potential and within the framework of the educational objectives.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

When Horace Mann School changed the curriculum design to a continuous progress program, the traditional letter grades report card was no longer suitable for reporting evaluations of student progress. Understanding this fact, the staff has undertaken the development of three different types of report cards to report student progress to the parents. Discontent has been expressed by both parents and teachers concerning the format of these reports. This study was planned to develop a report card which can satisfactorily meet the needs of students, staff, and parents for reporting progress.

Collection of Data

To begin this study, a review of current literature was conducted to enable the writer to determine those factors which are considered necessary for effective student progress reporting procedures. It was found in the literature that most report cards were in the forms of narrative reports, checklists of skills, and traditional reports combined with, or replaced by, parent conferences;

and there seems to be no consensus as to which method is best. The literature also indicated that since goals and objectives of schools vary and since evaluations of student progress at the elementary level are mostly subjective opinions of this progress by the teacher, of necessity the report card must be designed to fulfill the specific needs of the student, parents, and the staff of that particular school.

Therefore, it has been determined that a sampling of opinions of other educators in local continuous progress elementary schools, and the opinions of the staff, parents, and students at Horace Mann School should be surveyed to determine the structure and contents of the report card to be developed. A questionnaire will be designed to survey opinions of the clientele of this school as to what they wish reported on a report card. Opinions concerning subject matter evaluations in terms of skills developed in academic areas, attitudes, study habits, and physical health characteristics will be surveyed. This questionnaire will be issued initially to a sampling of teachers and students to identify any misunderstandings, ambiguities, or unclear terms used in the survey instrument. This revised form will then be distributed to the staff, students, parents, and other educators with minor wording changes to suit the

nature of the group being surveyed.

Analysis of Data

Data from the questionnaires returned will be recorded both in terms of the number of respondents and the percentages of responses for each item. The respondent's answers will be categorized by the group which they represent, and totals from the combined groups will be also reported. This information will be utilized by the writer to help define and describe the needs of the clientele of Horace Mann School in regard to their report card. A review of practices and concerns in the current literature will be combined with the opinions of the people it will serve to formulate the basis for the development of a report card.

If the opinions so indicate, the report card will be developed by listing academic areas taught in the school, and the skills required to attain mastery of the subjects. Also listings of social attitudes and study habits will be included. The additional comments will be studied to determine any other areas which should be included to meet the needs of reporting student progress. Suggestions and recommendations for the report card's use will also be formulated by the writer.

Summary

In order to develop a report card for Horace Mann School, a study will be conducted by reviewing current literature and surveying opinions concerning the reporting of student progress. This information will be utilized by describing the needs which the report card should satisfy and the resulting form will be designed to meet these needs.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

An elementary school child lives in several worlds, the two most important being his home and his school. To provide for all aspects of his growth and development, it is necessary that they work together. One means to serve this end is an understanding of the purpose and content of the progress reporting procedure. When the progress report can communicate effectively what the teacher has evaluated in terms of what the parents and students want to know about the student's progress, it serves to support and supplement the educational program for the child.

Opinion Survey Results

Since the report card designed will be recommended specifically for use at Horace Mann School in Rapid City, South Dakota, the opinions were solicited from the parents, staff, and Intermediate II students at that school. Opinions were also solicited from four neighboring school staffs in the Rapid City Public School System which are changing to continuous progress programs.

The total number of questionnaires completed and returned are as follows:

Horace Mann School staff--14

Horace Mann School students--71

Horace Mann School parents--49

Neighboring schools staff--36

The preceeding totals were converted to percentages for reporting the results. Hereafter in this presentation, the Horace Mann School clientele shall be referred to as staff, students, and parents; the neighboring schools staff shall be referred to as other educators.

Questions one through nine. The first nine questions were designed to solicit a specific response, and the results are as follows:

1. Do you think the grade level of the student should be placed on the report card?

parents	yes 84%	no 16%	
students	yes 89%	no 11%	
staff	yes 36%	no 64%	
other educators	yes 27%	no 64%	undecided 9%

2. Do you think a list of skills which the student is working on should be recorded on the report card?

parents	yes 90%	no 10%
students	yes 84%	no 16%
staff	yes 71%	no 29%
other educators	yes 97%	no 3%

3. Do you think physical health characteristics should be on the report card?

parents	yes 65%	no 35%
students	yes 75%	no 25%
staff	yes 100%	no 0%
other educators	yes 88%	no 12%

4. Do you think the student's social attitude should be evaluated?

parents	yes 96%	no 4%
students	yes 65%	no 35%
staff	yes 100%	no 0%
other educators	yes 88%	no 12%

5. Do you think work habits should be evaluated?

parents	yes 94%	no 6%
students	yes 76%	no 24%
staff	yes 100%	no 0%
other educators	yes 97%	no 3%

6. Do you think parent conferences are worthwhile when the report cards are issued?

parents	yes 96%	no 4%
students	yes 75%	no 25%
staff	yes 100%	no 0%
other educators	yes 94%	no 6%

If yes, do you think the student should be included?

parents	yes 13%	no 71%	sometimes 16%
students	yes 68%	no 21%	sometimes 2%
staff	yes 57%	no 21%	sometimes 22%
other educators	yes 55%	no 13%	sometimes 32%

7. Do you think the report card should show how the student's work compares with others in the class?

parents	yes 32%	no 68%	
students	yes 14%	no 86%	
staff	yes 0%	no 100%	
other educators	yes 3%	no 94%	sometimes 3%

8. Do you think the student should be marked according to his own abilities?

parents	yes 98%	no 2%	
students	yes 75%	no 25%	
staff	yes 92%	no 8%	
other educators	yes 100%	no 0%	

9. How do you think progress should be indicated on the report card? (Check as many as you feel appropriate.)

letter grades

parents 41%	students 73%
staff 7%	other educators 3%

number grades

parents 2% students 4%

staff 0% other educators 0%

checks on a rating scale indicating performance

parents 31% students 7%

staff 21% other educators 30%

checks by a skill or attitude indicating progress

parents 27% students 15%

staff 57% other educators 82%

written statements by the teacher

parents 39% students 25%

staff 79% other educators 67%

Listing of academic skills. On the questionnaire, those persons who responded affirmatively to recording academic skills on the report card were asked to specify which skills they preferred. The results obtained indicated that each of the following skills was favored by over half of the respondents:

Reading--reads with understanding
reads independently
able to unlock new words

Language Arts--expresses own thoughts
applies language skills

Spelling--accurate in all work

Writing--forms letters legibly

writes neatly in all work

Math--applies basic facts

works with accuracy

Science--understands concepts

participates

Social Studies--shows respect for how others live

Music--participates in music

Art--enjoys art

expresses own ideas

Physical Education--participates

practices good sportsmanship

The following comments are those which fewer than half of the respondents preferred:

reads well orally, and enjoys reading

strives for correct speech

understands basic math facts

accurate in assigned spelling work

has good writing position

applies observation skills

understands facts (Social Studies)

has an appreciation for social problems

enjoys music

shows coordination

Health Characteristics. Of those who responded affirmatively to the reporting of physical health characteristics, more than half preferred a listing of absences, tardiness, personal cleanliness, and height and weight. Less than half preferred the inclusion of the evaluation of posture. Other comments which were written in are as follows: practices good health habits; appears to get adequate rest; displays normal vitality; and observed physical problems.

Social Attitudes. All but two categories of social attitudes were favored by more than half of the respondents. Those accepted were: courteous; uses self-confidence; relates well with others; accepts responsibility; cooperative; and accepts criticism well. The two not generally accepted were: uses good judgement, and practices good safety habits. Other suggestions offered by the respondents in this area were: accepts praise well, and respects property.

Work Habits. Of the respondents who replied affirmatively to this question, it was generally accepted that all the noted work habits should be evaluated. This list was comprised of the following: listens attentively; follows directions; works well with others, shows

initiative; completes work promptly; uses materials wisely; and works well alone. Other suggestions were completed by the respondents and included: good use of individual time, and displays creativity.

Comments about current report card. The last question was prepared to survey opinions of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the report card currently being used by their school. Representative comments of those who were satisfied state:

"present system is satisfactory"

"Generally satisfactory--It is rather difficult to write but seems more fair to the child than most."

Other respondents qualified their satisfaction by stating the feeling of the necessity for conferences, or additional reported information. Representative samples of these comments are:

"For the parents who don't attend conferences, the report card makes it difficult to specifically describe a child's progress or lack of it."

"It shows where you are at but not how you are doing in your school work."

"I like the report card being used as long as they are accompanied with the opportunity for a conference with

the teachers."

"If the child shows a weakness in a subject, I feel the teacher should state this and maybe tell the parent how they can help."

"I am satisfied with them, but think all parents should attend the conferences."

"I like the teacher comment portion, but we still do not have any idea how this particular child is being evaluated scholastically. Something definitely should be added to the report currently being used."

Several respondents objected to the form currently being used. Following are statements displaying this attitude:

"I think you should have grades so you know how well you are doing. And so you are ready for junior and senior high."

"It is ok, but I wish we had grades so we'd know how well we would do in another school."

"I think a child is prouder of a grade on a subject than a check mark on an attitude."

"Guess I am old fashioned, but it seems that numbers or letters would make the parents understand better."

"I think the child is prouder of a grade on a subject than a check mark on an attitude."

"I would rather have grade letters because the children understand them better and work harder to raise the grade the next nine weeks."

"My objection to the report now used is that it shows whether progress has been made but fails to show how much progress in relation to what he can do."

"They are too much work and really do not give a true picture of work and progress."

"I feel some of the comments under Social Development and Work Habits are too vague and difficult to apply to all the students. They are fine if the student is a good student but I have found it hard to justify on the less apt child."

One educator summed up the problem by stating:

"I presently have mixed feelings about this in that grades are still strong indicators of college success as used presently by college entrance people. Until a significant number of colleges do change, it seems to me that all the way down the line we have resistance by parents and some teachers to the concept of no grades."

Progress Report Card for Horace Mann School

The report card for Horace Mann School shall be printed on standard legal size paper (8½" x 14") that is

self-duplicating. The report for each child will consist of a tablet of five sheets of paper; one for each of the four reporting periods and the final copy for the student's cumulative record.

The heading shall read:

HORACE MANN SCHOOL

Individualized Report to Parents

Teachers _____ Student _____

_____ Level _____

_____ Year _____

Philosophy: We believe that children vary greatly in their learning process; therefore, this evaluation does not try to compare students, rather its purpose is to inform you of your child's progress. We also believe that optimum development takes place when the home and school work together in the process of education, so please feel free to arrange a conference with your child's teachers if you have any questions or desire further information.

Body of Report. The body of the report card will list the academic skills, the social attitudes, and the work habits which are to be evaluated each reporting period. Space will be provided for teacher's written comments for each area. It appears as follows:

This evaluation is based upon this child's performance as observed by the teaching team.

0 indicates little, if any, progress noted

/ indicates improvement is needed

X indicates satisfactory progress

Academic Skills:	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Comments:
Reading					
reads with understanding					
reads independently					
applies word attack skills					
Language Arts					
expresses own thoughts					
applies language skills					
Spelling					
accurate in all work					
Writing					
forms letters legibly					
writes neatly in all work					

Math					
applies basic facts					
works with accuracy					
Science					
understands concepts					
participates					
Social Studies					
shows respect for how others live					
Fine Arts					
participates in music					
enjoys art					
expresses own ideas					
Physical Education					
participates					
practices good sportsmanship					
Social Attitudes:					
courteous					
shows self-confidence					
accepts responsibility					
cooperative					

accepts criticism well				
relates well with others				
respects property				

Work Habits:

listens attentively				
follows directions				
completes work				
shows initiative				
uses materials wisely				
works well alone				
works well with others				
displays creativity				

Physical Characteristics:

Attendance days present				
days absent				
times tardy				
displays normal vitality				
appears to get adequate rest				
practices good health habits				
Height and Weight				

Your child will be placed in the ____ level of our Continuous Progress Program next year.

Summary

In this chapter, a progress report was designed utilizing information gathered from a review of current literature and opinions of those who will be using the report card. An effort was made to incorporate the suggestions from these sources and also allow adequate room for written comments as well as inclusion of other areas agreed upon by the student, teacher, and parent for evaluation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Failure to communicate student progress effectively is a problem often encountered by reporting systems in elementary schools. Such a problem has existed at Horace Mann School in Rapid City, South Dakota. Therefore, this study was developed to investigate what current literature, the parents, students, and staff of Horace Mann School expressed as important to include in a student progress report, and to develop a progress report card based on these findings.

Current literature indicated that reporting student progress serves different purposes to those concerned. To the parents, it helps to inform them about their child both for immediate and long range planning and his potential as observed by the teachers. For the student, it is an evaluation of himself which helps to determine self-realization of the person he is or may become. To educators, it can provide a direction to aid further student growth and development towards stated goals and objectives of the learning program.

The study also reviewed the various methods of reporting student progress and the trends currently observed in elementary schools. Traditional report cards with letter or numerical grades, narrative reports, checklists, rating scales, and conferences, or a combination of these methods are currently practiced. Although a uniform method has not been agreed upon it appeared to be a consensus of parent surveys that reports should include descriptions and interpretations of grading standards, explanations of reasons for achievement or difficulty, and evaluations of their child's progress in academic, social, physical, and emotional growth. All reporting procedures are invaribly subjective measures because of the human element involved and thus must be designed for specific situations.

The opinions of the parents, students, and staff of Horace Mann School were surveyed by using a questionnaire to elicit their preferences for a student progress reporting form. The majority of all groups responding considered it important to include a listing of academic skills, health characteristics, social attitudes, and work habits on the progress report. Over two-thirds of those responding also indicated that parent-teacher conferences were worthwhile when report cards were issued, although they had

reservations concerning the attendance of the student at these conferences. A large majority was also in agreement that a student should be evaluated in accord with his own observed abilities rather than in comparison with others in the class. Agreement was not obtained on how progress should be indicated; educators preferred checks by a skill or attitude and written statements by the teachers, while parents and students preferred letter grades and written statements by the teacher. Another area of disagreement was in stating the grade level of the student on the reporting form; over 80% of the parents and students preferred that it be placed on the report card, while only 36% of the educators surveyed felt it should be included.

The resulting report card was then designed incorporating the information from the literature reviewed and the opinions of those who returned the survey questionnaire.

Conclusions

As a result of this study the author has come to the following conclusions:

A reporting form should not be static, but a constantly changing form suited to the purposes of those who will be using it. Updating should occur when a form no longer satisfies the needs of the parents, students, or

teachers of the specific school for which it was developed. Revising should be done by a representative committee of parents, students, and staff.

Reporting forms should be stated in clear language, understandable to all who will utilize the information contained in them.

Report cards should be used as a tool to promote student growth and development by assessing, as objectively as possible, what has been accomplished. It should serve as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.

The report card for an elementary school should state the philosophy and goals of the school and the evaluations recorded should be directly related to the philosophy and goals.

Most of those responding to the opinion survey at Horace Mann School considered written statements and conferences as the most informative means used to evaluate student progress.

Most parents, students, and teachers at Horace Mann School consider it necessary to report the student's achievements in academic skills, social attitudes, health characteristics, and work habits on their report card.

Recommendations

The report card designed in this study should be adopted at Horace Mann School for the 1974-1975 school year.

Staff meetings should be conducted in the fall to develop uniform standards for evaluations of student progress.

A committee should be established at the beginning of each school year to review, and if necessary, revise or rewrite the report card to best serve the needs of the Horace Mann School clientele. This committee should be composed of a representative group of parents, staff, and students of the school.

A bulletin should be developed which describes the philosophy and purposes of the reporting system to be distributed to all parents, particularly those new to the school.

Conferences should be an integral part of the reporting procedure and scheduled at the conclusion of each reporting period.

In order to promote home-school cooperation and develop adequate communication concerning each student's educational development, the author also recommends that the reporting of student progress be a continual process and not

limited to the reporting periods. Since parents expressed a desire to know specific information concerning academic growth, the author suggests that a list of objectives be developed and notices sent to the parent when the student has attained specific objectives.

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APPENDIX

Cover Letter

January 24, 1974

Dear Parents,

I am currently doing research concerning the development of a report card for Horace Mann School, which will be submitted for graduate credit at Montana State University. Since, as a parent, you are directly affected by the report card which indicates your child's progress in school, I would appreciate your opinions as to what you feel should be included on a report card.

Would you please take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire and leave it with your child's teacher or bring it to Mrs. Anderson in Room 10-12. Thank you for your opinions and your time.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Ann Anderson

Opinion Questionnaire

Please place a check in front of each response which expresses your opinion about each question.

1. Do you think the grade level of the student should be placed on the report card?

___yes
___no

2. Do you think a list of skills which the student is working on should be recorded on the report card?

___yes
___no

If yes, please check which of the following should be included.

___Reading
__reads with understanding
__reads well orally
__reads independently
__able to unlock new words
__enjoys reading

___Language Arts
__strives for correct speech
__expresses own thoughts
__applies language skills

___Science
__understands concepts
__applies observation skills
__participates

___Music
__enjoys music
__participates in music

___Art
__enjoys art
__expresses own ideas

___Writing
__forms letters legibly
__writes neatly in all work
__has good writing position

___Spelling
__accurate in assigned work
__accurate in all work

___Math
__understands basic facts
__applies basic facts
__works with accuracy

___Social Studies
__understands facts
__shows respect for how others live
__has an appreciation for social problems

___Physical Education
__participates
__shows coordination

___Other; please specify

__practices good sportsmanship

3. Do you think physical health characteristics should be on the report card?

___yes
___no

If yes, which of the following?

___absences
___tardiness
___personal cleanliness
___other; please specify

___height and weight
___posture

_____

4. Do you think the student's social attitudes should be included?

___yes
___no

If yes, which of the following?

___courteous
___uses self-control
___cooperative
___obeys school rules
___accepts criticism
___other; please specify

___uses good judgement
___accepts responsibility
___shows self-confidence
___relates will with others
___practices good safety habits

_____

5. Do you think work habits should be evaluated?

___yes
___no

If yes, which of the following?

___listens attentively
___follows directions
___works well alone
___works well with others
___other; please specify

___completes work promptly
___uses materials wisely
___shows initiative

_____

6. Do you think parent conferences are worthwhile when the report cards are issued?

___yes
___no

If yes, do you think the student should be included?

___yes
___no

7. Do you think the report card should show how the student's work compares with others in the class?

___yes
___no

8. Do you think the student should be marked according to his own abilities?

___yes
___no

9. How do you think progress should be indicated on the report card?

___letter grades (A, B, C, etc.)
___number grades (1, 2, 3, etc.)
___checks on a rating scale indicating performance
___checks by a skill or attitude indicating performance
___written statements by the teacher
___other; please specify

_____

10. Do you have any comments about the report currently being used at your school? Please state them here or on the back of this sheet.