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A STUDY OF THIRTY-FIVE PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES AT THE
ELEMENTARY TRAINING SCHOOL, UTAH STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

by

Thomas A. Taylor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Education

UTAH STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE
Logan, Utah

1955

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express appreciation to the entire staff at the Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School for their participation in recording parent-teacher conferences.

I also wish to thank the patrons of the School for their excellent cooperation in this study.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is an outgrowth of the cooperative efforts of the instructors at the Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School (Whittier). An attempt was made to show that the parent-teacher conference is one of the best possible means of reporting pupil progress and growth.

Although individual parent-teacher conferences had been used at the Whittier for many years, there had been no attempt to formalize the topics used in discussion, or to standardize the procedures. Through continued study, the instructors at the Whittier had gained an unusually good understanding of the several phases of child development. The conference has been an attempt to enlighten both the parent and the teacher as to the child's progress - - - physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally.

The study included the results of five conferences from each of seven teachers, or a total of thirty-five conferences. Although this was not a large sampling, every possible precaution was taken to eliminate inaccurate data growing out of unnatural conditions. Precautions were also taken to read, classify, and chart all material with the greatest possible accuracy. This paper, then, presents the items of discussion with an analysis of the various categories mentioned in parent-teacher consultation.

At present the parent-teacher conference has its place as an important part of the school philosophy. It is one of the processes

by which parents and teachers can help children. It is also one of the most effective methods of gaining assistance from the home in an attempt to do the most for children. An effort was made in this study not to over-rate the parent-teacher conference, for it is only one of the aids in carrying out the best possible program. Hymes (12) writes: "Some people think too highly of home-school relations. In their eyes it becomes a magical cure-all. They like to believe that as soon as they master the techniques, all their problems will roll away."

Moreover, it is realized that neither the parent-teacher conference, nor home-school relationship should be thought of as a final planned program. Grant (10) states: "At least one conference a year, more if possible, with every pupil's parents should be made a routine part of the school's program." (The underlining is by this writer for emphasis)

The objectives of the study were to determine the topics which were discussed in parent-teacher conferences with regard to child growth and development. In determining this, the most common parent and teacher interests, it was assumed, would be indicated through the number of times a certain phase of development was mentioned. This would likely indicate what instructors at the Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School considered important in parent-teacher conferences. From the study the thoroughness of the method could be determined. Suggestions could be made for further methods, procedures, and topics which, under certain circumstances, might be effective in making the parent-teacher conference a more efficient form of reporting pupil progress.

Accordingly, the following statement of hypotheses was formulated:-

Instructors at the Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School attempt, during parent-teacher conferences, to inquire

into all of the aspects that enter into the child's learning and development.

Certain aspects of child development change considerably, become more important or relatively unimportant, as the child grows from one age level to another. It was anticipated that these observations would be reflected in the parent-teacher conferences.

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STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to discover what items parents and teachers of the Training School (Whittier) consider important to the child's educational welfare.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reporting to Parents

The matter of reporting to parents has long been a subject of discussion and experimentation among educators. If there is any one best method, it has not been made universal to schools. Some teachers and parents still feel that the report card is the only true method of reporting pupil progress. There are numerous kinds of report cards. Some are essay type statements, others are subject grades, either A, B, C,; 1, 2, 3,; or plus and minus. Still others rely on "S" for satisfactory, and "U" for unsatisfactory.

More recently the parent-teacher conference has been used in some schools as a method of reporting pupil progress.

Whether the parent-teacher conference is used as a method for reporting pupil progress, to create better home school relationships, help form the basis for the teaching program, or to bring about better parent-teacher cooperation, it has become a part of school programs which warrant special attention.

Following are quoted excerpts from ten authors, all of which write concerning the importance of the parent teacher conference.

Chamberlain and Kindred (4) point out the importance of parent's visits to the classroom:

In implementing the partnership concept of the home and school, every teacher should encourage parents to visit the school and to make them feel that it is available for assistance in discussing and solving problems related to their children. Invitations can be extended to parents through notes written by pupils or by means of formal announcements

mailed from the school. It is a good practice to set aside a definite time for parental visits and to make this an integral part of the school day. Such time should be used exclusively for conferences through which the parent and the teacher have an opportunity to exchange ideas and to develop plans for meeting child problems.

Parents should feel free to visit classes and to learn at first hand how the school functions in organizing and directing the learning process. When they enter a classroom, they should be received courteously by pupils selected for this purpose, seated comfortably, and provided with the instructional materials that will enable them to follow what is going on. A procedure of this kind usually impresses parents with the way the class is managed and removes any uncertainty of mind about whether or not their presence is wanted. Obviously, the teacher should extend a friendly welcome to parents when this can be done conveniently without interrupting the class.

Many schools have found that parents gain an understanding of instruction when they are invited to study exhibits of pupils' work and to observe school events in action.

The same authors (4) further write of the changes in reporting pupil progress:

Because the system of reporting pupil progress has undergone a change, the new teacher will do well to familiarize himself at the beginning of the school year with the form used and the practices followed in preparing home reports. Moreover, he will find that the nature of the reporting form itself offers suggestive leads to the philosophy of education which the school is trying to carry out. If the new teacher is employed in a modern school, he will discover that serious efforts are made to inform the parent about all aspects of the pupil's growth - physical, intellectual, social, and emotional. Positive statements will be made regarding specific habits, attitudes, appreciations, and achievements of the pupil. Parents will be asked to cooperate in stimulating further growth through their efforts in the home. In this respect, the report will be more diagnostic than any used in traditional schools.

The teacher in the modern school will base much of his report to the parent upon a carefully organized system of records, including anecdotal reports, classroom observations, records of interviews with the pupil, the analysis of materials contained in the cumulative folder, and self-appraisal records kept by the pupil. He will also utilize findings from tests he has constructed and the results he has obtained from some

of the newer evaluation instruments. These will produce evidence of the pupil's ability to interpret data, apply principles, generalize, and do critical and logical thinking. They will likewise indicate his work habits, study skills, social attitudes, social adjustment, and quality of social sensitivity.

Driscoll (9) writes:

Parent-teacher conferences provide a fertile source for gaining insight into the behavior of particular children. In these conferences are two people who are thoroughly familiar with the subject under discussion, namely, the child, and presumably both are interested in the subject. The parent has a cumulative picture of her child gathered over a period of years. The teacher has a cumulative picture gathered over a period of weeks or months. Because the parent's contact covers a longer period her knowledge has great significance. She therefore is the basic informant in the first conference, and a valuable contributor in succeeding conferences.

The information that parents give about their children frequently appears distorted to the teacher. This may be due to one of two reasons. First, the parent, or mother as is usually the case, is uncertain of the teacher's motive in asking for information. She describes the ideal child she wants, thus hoping to give the child a greater chance of securing the teacher's approval. Second, the child's response at home where he is certain of acceptance may be quite different from his response at school where he may feel constrained. The opportunities existing in a particular parent-teacher conference depend upon the ability of the teacher to obtain the confidence and cooperation of the mother.

Teachers often find that they are unable to get the cooperation of some parents. There may be any one of several reasons for this situation. Few teachers in their training were given experience in conducting parent-teacher conferences and in understanding basic techniques that may be used to obtain cooperation. Moreover, certain barriers exist between parent and teachers because of the opposition each holds in relation to the child and because of their respective positions in the community.

Strang (19) reports:

Reports to parents are summaries and analyses of the pupils progress written in a form that parents can understand and use. They answer the questions: What is the pupil's capacity for growth, i.e., what growth is appropriate for this individual? What progress has he made, physically,

intellectually, socially, and emotionally? Why has he failed to make the expected progress? How can he improve?

The form of report should vary with the parents' background. However, the personal conference is applicable to all parents because it can be adapted to their language ability and to their attitudes toward school and toward their children. It is especially desirable that conversation with the parents should precede the sending of any written report, especially a new form. The advantages of such initial parent conferences are:

1. Parents and teachers become better acquainted.
2. Teachers have an opportunity to explain the philosophy and objectives of the school, and give some idea of their approach to education.
3. Parents are able to give valuable information about the background of the pupil, his needs, his interests, and his school and home problems. They can also help the teacher interpret these facts.
4. Teachers are able to emphasize their concern with aspects of a pupil's development other than marks in a much more convincing manner than is possible on a written report.

The disadvantage of parent conferences lies in the burden they impose on teachers unless time is definitely scheduled for them. Each interview, if it is to include adequate preparation and summary, takes from forty-five minutes to one hour. Each teacher-conference varies as the need arises. Each teacher-counselor needs to participate in thirty or forty of these conferences. This responsibility, added to a full teaching schedule, makes adequate preparation for classes impossible during the period of interviewing.

The most accurate reports to parents are based on a combination of (1) data from the cumulative personnel records, (2) the teacher's impressions and notes made during the year, and (3) the pupil's own folder containing evidence of his development and self-evaluation. The most comprehensive reports show the pupil's progress in all the important phases of school achievement in relation to his own ability and to that of a large number of pupils of his own age. The reports that are most valuable from the standpoint of guidance summarize the pupil's progress and include suggestions with respect to his development: physical, social, emotional and intellectual.

Duplicates of descriptive reports to parents should be included in the pupil's cumulative record folder. Thus the teacher contributes both to the parents' understanding of their children and to the school's understanding of the

development of each pupil.

Reports to parents involve the whole educational process - curriculum, instruction, and guidance. If the curriculum and instruction are formal and narrow, the kinds of reports to parents recommended in this study cannot be used effectively. If teachers do not have the guidance point of view and a command of guidance techniques, they will fail to report the information most useful and significant from the standpoint of child development.

Teachers can grow in ability to interpret the report to parents and to use it for guidance purposes. This takes time and skillful leadership, but it is well worth the effort. Reports to parents are one of the most important means of guiding children and adolescents toward their best development.

Leonard, Van Deman and Miles (15) report:

By the very nature of its function, the individual teacher-parent conference is at the heart of the counseling program. My responsibility in individual conferences is threefold: I need to gain an understanding of the home situation in order to know better how to work out long term guidance for the individual child at school; I stand ready to counsel with the parents who come to me for help in understanding their children; I am also ready and eager to talk over a child's development with his parents in order that home and school together may contribute to a clearer picture of his need for guidance.

Gone are the days when the child lived in fear that his teacher might talk to his parents. Many a child was terrified when his parents went to school to see the teacher because it forewarned his impending disaster. Today, an individual conference means more than the exchange of ideas. Through the conference, teacher and parent, and often teacher, parent and child compare views, each from his own vantage point. Ideally, if there is to be "counsel" in any direction there must be "mutual advising or deliberating together."

Grant (1) states:

Parent-teacher conferences

What are some of the methods by which parents and teachers can work together more productively? No single instrument is more important in building mutual understanding than the personal conferences between individual parent and teacher. In these conferences, the two can exchange information, become better acquainted, and feel freer to give and take suggestions. Such private talks are essential if parents and teachers are to understand the child's rate of growth, his interests, whether he is working at capacity,

and whether or not his emotional needs are being met.

At least one conference a year, more if possible, with every pupil's parents should be made a routine part of the school's program. It can be done. It is being done in both urban and rural areas throughout the country.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1):

In a school which has a sound guidance program, provision is made for a friendly conference between the teacher and the parents of each child who is entering school for the first time. As soon as the teacher has had a chance to become acquainted with the new pupil, a friendly interview with the mother, or preferably both of his parents, makes a good first step in trying to know and understand the child and in furnishing data with which to start the pupil's individual cumulative record. Such an interview is very important in initiating a friendly, cooperative relationship between the school and the home -- a relationship which, it is to be hoped, will continue throughout the child's school years. Traditionally, a parent came to school only upon request, and usually when a child presented a learning or behavior problem. This arrangement put both parent and teacher on the defensive and everyone concerned got off to a bad start. When a friendly contact between parent and teacher has been made before there are any signs of difficulty, tension is less likely to arise in those cases in which the teacher later must make an approach to the parent regarding specific problems which have arisen in the child's school progress or adjustment.

This initial conference gives the teacher a background for helping the child make his first important adjustments to the school. The young child's teacher should be familiar with his developmental history; he should know whether the child's development has been "normal" or whether it has been unusual in any way. Slowness in walking or talking may or may not be of special significance in knowing what to expect of a child, but in any event it is information which the school should have. It is equally important to know whether the child has seemed to be precocious in his early development. Knowledge of a child's physical history will help a teacher to maintain and protect the youngster's health. Serious diseases of early childhood may have affected the child in ways which it will be helpful to have the school understand.

The conference will help the teacher to get a picture of the family background, to know what kind of parents, sisters and brothers the youngster may have. For example, the child who has been deprived of either his mother or his father during infancy or the early years may come to school

with feelings of insecurity which the understanding teacher can help to alleviate. A child's position in the family may be an important factor in helping the teacher understand his school behavior. Research has indicated that oldest, youngest, and "only" children, and even a "middle child" in the family may tend to react in certain ways that appear to be caused by his particular place in the family constellation.

The parent's report of the child's progress in mental development and in habit training, the range of his previous social experience and his reaction to other children, and his play activities, including those related to radio and movie programs, will all help the teacher in understanding the child's school behavior and in making the child's transition from home to school easier and more comfortable. For example, many children come to school with very little previous play experience with other children, and the understanding teacher who knows this will arrange the environment to help them play first with one or two other children, and gradually to extend this experience as each child becomes ready to participate in larger groupings.

The understanding teacher and the alert parent will want to exchange information regarding any behavior problem which the child may present at home and in school. One of the greatest values of this initial teacher-parent conference is that both parents and teachers have an opportunity to learn whether the child tends to behave quite differently at home from the way he behaves in school, or vice versa. This is mutually helpful to the teacher and the parent in their efforts to find causes of the behavior trends which they seek to modify. Each may be helpful to the other in developing more appropriate ways of guiding the child so that the desired changes in behavior may be effected.

From its beginnings in this routine teacher-parent conference designed to establish a friendly relationship between parents and teachers when the child enters school, the teacher-parent conference has developed to serve other very important purposes. From having been almost unknown as a routine part of the school program two decades ago, the teacher-parent conference has now reached a place of great importance.

Harris (11) suggests the following list as a guide to improve parent-teacher conferences:

The Parent Conference at School

It is usually best to have both parents present for conferences at school. Most of the time it is not necessary that the child be present, and sometimes it is best that the child not be present. The conference period should not be too long. One teacher operated a conference series by meet-

ing with the parents of his classroom on a rotation basis for fifteen or twenty minutes after school each day. Where parent transportation is a problem, the teacher would need to have fewer conferences, but take more time for each.

The teacher must always be sure to have adequate professional data for the conference.

The following suggestions were used by one group of experienced teachers to improve their conference periods.

1. Listen to the parents in the conference. Give them the opportunity to talk freely. This will provide data which may not be available otherwise.

2. Complete confidence is required of each participant. Some parents may require the same sympathetic understanding as do children.

3. Be very cautious of making broad generalizations regarding the child; use a professional approach. Do not make it easy to be misquoted.

4. Do not offer any criticisms of outside of school practices until the parent is ready to receive and use them in a constructive way.

5. It is unethical to criticize another teacher in discussions with parents. There is a proper place for this action, if it ever becomes necessary.

6. Watch the time element. Do not spend too much time on one point.

7. Be sure each parent is aware of the purposes of the conference.

8. Summarize carefully.

9. Use the conference period to make the parents feel that your school is their school. Invite cooperation through your attitude and by direct request.

10. In case of unusual criticism of the school or school program, request the parent to be specific. Arrange for another conference period for the parent with the school administrator.

11. Make a written report on the conference. File the material in the child's folder.

12. It is usually better to have shorter conferences and to have them more often.

13. Especially in the first conference it is better not to have any objectives which you must reach. Move slowly.

14. Watch your voice, tension-level, and humor.

15. Allow the conference situation to develop normally. Within a conference period, objectives are needed but it is better that they not be so distinct as to make you feel that direct teaching of the parents is necessary.

16. Plan a follow-up report to the parents on plans discussed in the conferences.

Harris (11) gives the following generalizations:

Summary

In this chapter the following generalizations have been developed:

- ✓ 1. Poor reporting practices have an adverse effect upon the entire school program and complicate the processes involving human relations.
- ✓ 2. The basic function of reports to parents is to improve the child's life experiences for which the school is responsible.
- ✓ 3. Reports to parents are made more effective by using adequate curriculum records within the school.
- ✓ 4. The frequency of reporting is determined by the kind of school program that is involved. Undeveloped programs tend to require more formal reports; developed programs tend to require fewer formal reports.
5. Building forms should be used where the building is the basic administrative unit. In systems where everything tends to be uniform, report forms should be uniform.
6. Some impersonal evidence on the quality of instruction that is responsible for at least a part of the quality of the report should be made available to parents.
7. The content of report forms has become somewhat uniform, but many changes are constantly being made by fast-developing school systems.
8. Many check lists present items that are basically developmental and subject to little change. This suggests the possibility of replacing report cards with developmental charts in at least the elementary grades.

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✓ 9. Parent reports to the teacher can provide basic data for changes in the curriculum and in instruction.

10. Cumulative records are essential to a good reporting system.

11. Letters, or narrative type reports to parents, may be effective or ineffective; when well done, they are economical and effective.

✓ 12. The value of home visits depends upon the other ways used to communicate with parents. In some instances, they are essential.

✓ 13. The parent conference at school should be executed in a completely professional manner. It can be one of the most useful techniques for improving the school program.

14. The annual summary report to parents merits more attention from educators.

✓ 15. Parents should be fully informed about the handicaps in the program and lack of facilities in the school as well as about the strong points that traditionally have been stressed.

D'Evelyn (8) suggests points of importance which might be helpful as guides in parent-teacher conferences:

General Guides for Conferences

Not forgetting that each parent is unique in his personality and his problems, it may be helpful to list a few guides to conferences in general.

1. Responsibility for the success or failure of a conference rests primarily with the teacher. It is well to remember that success is relative, and each conference must be judged according to its own circumstances and results.

2. It is well to arrange for no interruptions during a conference. Nothing is more disturbing to the serious efforts of trying to think through a problem than to be interrupted at a crucial moment.

3. It is easier to build a cooperative relationship if the teacher is not seated behind a desk. Behind a desk the teacher is in the place of authority, not partnership.

4. The teacher's greeting should be friendly and relaxed. If he is hurried or tense, the parent will know it. It is difficult to discuss a problem with someone who looks

as if he wished you were not there, or would soon leave.

5. Listen, and then listen some more. The teacher did not invite the parent in to deliver a lecture to him, but to get, as well as to give, help. Encourage the parent to talk, and then listen to what he has to say.

6. Find out how the parent is thinking and feeling about his child. This is important, because the teacher cannot understand the child's behavior until he knows the parent attitude.

7. If a parent says he is worried about his child's behavior, follow through. Find out why he is worried. The teacher should not assume that he knows why. He and the parent may not feel the same way about the child.

8. If a parent gives what he thinks is the reason for a child's behavior, accept it, and lead the discussion on to the consideration of other possible causes. Behavior is the result of many causative factors, not of one.

9. If a parent suggests a plan of action, accept it if at all possible to do so. It is better for the parent to try it than for the teacher to force one of his own. One of the goals in parent counseling is to try to get the parent to take the initiative. If the parent's plan fails, it is always possible to suggest others that may strike nearer to the root of the difficulty.

10. If the parent cannot suggest reasons for a child's behavior, or plans of action to deal with it, the teacher might suggest alternatives for joint consideration. "This might be a possibility. What do you think? You know all the facts of the situation better than I do." Or, "We might try this and see what happens. It may take us a while to find the source of the difficulty." Such an approach makes the parent a participator in the final decision for tentative plans, and leads to discussion that helps him to accept the plan as his own.

11. It does not help to argue with a parent. Arguing will arouse resentment and resistance.

12. It is better not to assume that a parent wants help or advice. Such assumptions usually brings resistance, because it implies a form of criticism.

13. Most parents cannot be objective about their own children. Therefore, do not criticize, either directly or indirectly. Criticism is fatal to the building of a cooperative relationship.

14. Avoid giving direct advice when the parent gives a

statement of his problem and then leans back, saying, "Tell me what to do." Let any advice or suggestions grow out of mutual discussion and a growing insight on the part of the parent into the reasons for the behavior.

15. Do not get ahead of the parent in his thinking. In other words, the teacher should not try to push his thinking onto a parent before the parent is ready to see it through a process of discussion and mutual thinking.

16. Try to be aware of sensitive spots, and avoid embarrassing the parent by noting facial expressions, gestures, and voice. These all give a clue to the parent's emotions.

17. Be accepting. That is, accept anything the parent tells you without showing surprise or disapproval. If the teacher cannot do this, he will not get an honest picture of the parent's attitudes and feelings.

18. The teacher should be ready to recognize problems that are so difficult as to prevent him from giving sufficient help to the parent. Parents with complex emotional problems should be referred to the consulting psychologist or guidance specialist on the staff, who in turn will refer the individual to a psychiatrist if there is such need. If there is no one on the school staff to whom the teacher can refer, he should try to have available the names of specialists in the community. In referring, it is easy to say, "I wish I could help you, but I feel you need more help than I can give you. I have the names of two or three consultants if you wish them, or you may know someone yourself."

If the teacher is in a community where there is no one to whom he can refer the parent, he can do his best in easing the troublesome behavior symptoms in the child, but he should not let the parent become involved in pouring out his emotions repeatedly. It will not help the parent beyond giving the temporary relief of tension that comes from telling your troubles to any good listener. This relief is necessary, but unless the teacher can help the parent go on to constructive planning, he is not giving real help.

19. It is helpful to try to close the conference on a constructive, a pleasant, or a forward-going note, such as a plan for further consultation, a definite date for the next conference, a statement of encouragement or reassurance, a statement of a plan for cooperative action.

If it is possible to state one basic implication brought out through the counseling technics illustrated in this manual, it is this: Successful counseling depends on the relationship between the parent and the teacher. It must be a relationship that permits the parent to express his thoughts and his feelings with the knowledge that he will be listened to and under-

stood by a sympathetic and accepting person, who in understanding and accepting helps him in turn to understand and accept both himself and his child. In looking back over the reported conferences, it will be seen that it was in those instances where such a relationship was established that the parent and the teacher moved on together to intelligent and constructive planning for the child.

PROCEDURES

Arrangements were made with the instructors at Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School (Whittier) to record parent-teacher conferences from each instructor. The recordings were made on the tape recorder. Five recordings were taken of each instructor at the Whittier, - kindergarten through the sixth grade, - or a total of thirty-five conferences. Instructors were asked not to choose any certain parents for these recordings. This helped eliminate the possibility of insincere conferences. Moreover, it gave a more general cross section of the entire problem.

After each conference the tape recording was played back and typed exactly as it has been recorded. It was necessary to re-edit these typed conferences in order to clarify questionable, unfinished, and interrupted statements. Repeated statements were also eliminated where the repetition had little or no bearing on the actual meaning of the conversation.

Questions asked in the conference, and answers given to the questions were then classified as to the phase of child development referred to. Four of these categorical phases were taken from Torgerson (21) "Studying Children". They are: physical, emotional, social, and intellectual life. These four phases of child development are also mentioned in "These are Your Children" by Jenkins, et al (13), "The Teacher and School Organization" by Chamberlain and Kindred (4), and "Reporting to Parents" by Strang (19).

Since it was impractical to place all statements and questions

under these four categories, a fifth category was used in this classification, namely, topics unclassified.

The questions and statements from the conferences were then charted under the five categories - physical, mental, social and emotional development, and topics unclassified, to show their importance as determined by the number of times they were referred to in the thirty-five conferences.

Conclusions were drawn as a result of the findings in the study. Suggested procedures in parent-teacher conferences were made to assist in special cases during future conferences. Check lists were prepared of ninety-five special subjects discussed in this study.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Hymes (12) writes: "Some people think too highly of home-school relations. In their eyes it becomes a magical cure-all. They like to believe that as soon as they master the techniques, all their problems will roll away."

In the quotation above, Hymes has indicated that some false notions have been developed concerning the parent-teacher conference. These have not all come from the parent, but often the teacher has the wrong impression of the reason for and results of the conference. The reasons for holding the conference are to allow time for both parents and teacher to share their knowledge about the child and for the purpose of aiding and stimulating the child to achieve his maximum progress.

Both parents should welcome the opportunity to talk with their child's teacher. In return they should be welcomed at the school by the teacher; for the teacher, too, can profit greatly by this exchange of ideas in wisely-planned conferences. Neither the parent nor the teacher should feel that the other is not prepared, nor that they do not have valuable offerings to share in the matter of the child and his welfare. Grant (10) states: "In the past, teachers have felt their added education gave them an advantage, while parents have felt only those who have had children of their own can appreciate the practical problems of bringing them up."

There is no substitute for the actual first-hand knowledge the parent has of his or her child. On the other hand, teachers are

trained in human relationships and group reactions. The teacher, through study and experience, has learned to recognize many features of development which often escape untrained parents. Here is one field of exploratory talk where the parent-teacher conference has meaning, value, and purpose. It is important that both parents and teacher understand this purpose before the conference can be of the greatest possible value.

The importance of the exchange of viewpoints cannot be over-emphasized. Bush (3) says: "Important as curriculum, methods, materials, buildings, administrative organization, and finances, for example, may be, they are but the instruments whose effectiveness depends upon the human beings who work together to provide education for children."

Whittier parent-teacher conferences

The type of conference to be used is a matter of choice, however, the following description is characteristic of the parent-teacher conferences at the Whittier School.

The teacher usually invites the parents to the school at the convenience of both the parents and the teacher. After the date has been confirmed, the teacher makes note of it, but makes no special preparation for this particular conference. In addition to this invitation to a conference, parents are urged to visit their child's room while a class is in session.

When the parents arrive at the school for the conference, they are invited into the room to observe the child, the class, and the teacher under normal class operation. This visit into the classroom may precede or follow the conference, whichever is more convenient

in view of the time or building facilities available. For the actual conference, the teacher and the parents, usually the mother, retire from the classroom to one of the available rooms where teacher and parent may chat informally. It is customary for the teacher to take with him some data which might be of interest and value during the conversation period. These records are kept at a minimum, and reference to them is made only when necessary to clarify or explain experiences with relation to the child's program.

Every effort is made to effect an informal conversation. The experienced teacher endeavors to draw out those ideas and suggestions which express the feelings of the parents. While no check list, as such, is used, the teacher keeps in mind those features pertinent to the physical, mental, social, and emotional growth of the child. It is the teacher's intention to learn as much of the child's out-of-school background and activities as possible, in order that his relationships to school experiences may be better studied. It is also the teacher's intention to give the parent as much of the school's philosophy of education and relate as many of the child's activities and relationships as possible at the time of the conference, in order that the parent may have a clearer understanding of what the teacher is attempting to do for the child.

It has not been the custom of the Training School to place any exact time limit, minimum or maximum, on the parent-teacher conference. It seems to be the general consensus of opinion that twenty minutes may be adequate in some cases, while others may require as much as an hour. Certainly the individual differences in children and the different

personalities of parents would greatly affect the length of time necessary to complete conferences. It is further noteworthy that some teachers may conduct conferences in less time than others, due to training, experience and personality. Realizing that under some circumstances it may be necessary to limit the conference to fifteen or twenty minutes as a maximum, the writer believes a greater degree of success can be attained if this limit does not exist. Such limits might tend to worry both the teacher and the parent, and could cause the conference to be hurried, sketchy, and less meaningful.

As previously mentioned, the teacher attempts to keep the conference on an informal, free discussion basis. For this reason the Training School does not use a check list of those subjects about which the teacher wishes to confer. The teacher, through knowledge of the child's activities, strengths, and weaknesses, attempts to keep in mind those points of greatest interest or need, however, in the absence of check lists there is less anxiety on the part of the parent and more freedom in the conference. If check lists are to be used, it might be much more effective if the teacher has their contents well in mind prior to the conference, and does not exhibit them during the conference. Undoubtedly, the check list would bring many points of interest into the thinking, and if used correctly could be of great assistance, especially to the young and inexperienced teacher.

Near the end of the conference the teacher usually reviews those points which seem to be of the greatest importance in that particular conference. He may wish to emphasize one or two points which need immediate attention, or which appear to be unduly out of proportion. He may pinpoint several weaknesses or strengths in an attempt to gain

home assistance and guidance.

It is hoped in each case that both the teacher and the parents have gained a better knowledge of the child in his environment, and that through the parent-teacher conference, the school and the home can stimulate the child to greater challenge, strengthen his feeling of stability, security, love and the desire to achieve success and belonging.

A SAMPLE PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE

To further expedite this analysis, one of the thirty-five conferences used in this study has been chosen as a typical sample and is included herein. The sample conference will assist readers in understanding exactly what was discussed during parent-teacher conferences at the Whittier. Some of the more pertinent questions and answers to those questions appear in this conference.

All names of parents, child, and teacher have been deleted from this sample. All of the thirty-five parent-teacher conferences, on which this study is based, can be found in the "Supplement to This Thesis" at the Utah State Agricultural College Library.

In order to show how the conferences were analyzed, as part of the study, five numbers are used as follows: (I) Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to Physical Development, grades K-6, (II) Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to Mental Development, grades K-6, (III) Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to Social Development, grades K-6, (IV) Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to Emotional Development, and (V) Frequency of mention of fifteen topics not covered in Tables I-IV. The Arabic numerals 1-20 refer to the phase of development numbered thus on each table.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE T5B

In the report of a sample parent-teacher conference below, the appropriate number is used at the end of each sentence where the writer

felt an aspect of growth was considered.

Teacher: Well, Mrs. B---, as you realize, we are trying to help your child. We feel that we need you to help us in helping him. The little briefing that we have given you, shows where your child is and what he does, what we think he needs and some of the ways in which we might be able to help him. As I told you, and I have told your husband, also, Br--- has been somewhat of a social problem. (III)14 I don't think there's anything serious, but at the first part of the year, he just wouldn't play with other children. (III)13 We feel that we've made quite a large stride in that. He is playing with other boys and he's mixing better, (V)15 taking a little better part in his subjects than he did at the first part of the year. (III)2 Now, I want to find out what your opinion of your own boy is, and what happens in the home, (V)4 in the church, and in the community. It always helps us if we can know how he is there. How does he participate in the home, and in things that are to be done there? (III)7 Or in the church when there are things to be done, or in the community when there is something to do in a cooperative way? (III)4

Mother: Well, in the home, to begin with, he is very, very much the extrovert. (IV)1 This is a direct contradiction to what you are finding in the schoolroom. That isn't unusual, of course, with youngsters. They let off steam one place or another. He is quite aggressive. (III)17 He takes his place in the home and he demands, maybe more attention - I would say more attention (V)12 - than the other children, and maybe more attention than he should normally have. (V)12 We find that the report in his church activities, ever since he has been going to primary and Sunday School is that he is very quiet, -

very, very quiet, - and very, very well behaved, which of course isn't particularly good. (III)14 I would rather have him more active than to just get the report that he is well behaved.

Teacher: I found that at the first of the year, Mrs. B---, he was very, very quiet and withdrawn. (III)14 He withdrew, and so that was the one thing I began working on right at the first of the year. I think I told you and Mr. B--- once when we met away from school, that one thing I was working on was to try to get him to take more part in things. Then I found that he became a little more aggressive, (III)17 in fact he is quite aggressive at the school now. (III)17 During the first two months of school, he didn't have much to say, - now he is having more to say. He is having more to do, too. (V)15

Mother: May he not go to an extreme in that for a while until he gets a balance?

Teacher: I think so. I think it is altogether possible that Br--- will go to an extreme, and fall over the other way. Anytime they have a change from one characteristic to another, they are pretty likely to go to the extreme that way. I have seen grownups do that. I am hoping that Br--- will find a balance, and I think he is finding it. (III)4

Mother: He seems happier. (III)9 Something that had considerable to do with this business of sort of withdrawing within himself, is, as I have told you, he has been with adults almost all of his life. (V)7 He has never learned to intermingle with children very much, when he has changed schools so frequently. (III)20 He has been in a different school each year, until the last two years. (V)4

Teacher: That is hard on children, there is no doubt about it.

It is hard on children.

Mother: Some children will adjust, but some take it by withdrawing within themselves, as he seems to have done. (III)14

Teacher: Of course the adjustment that he makes, when he changes, might revert back then to the fact that he has been with adults more. (V)7
If he had been with children more, maybe he would have made his adjustment better. We have children coming in all of the time, and some of them adjust very quickly, but some of them are like Br---, and some of them a little worse in that respect, in that they just can't seem to get hold of themselves and adjust. (V)6 I think he is doing well this year. (V)15

I wanted to mention something to you about last year. He had a friend in school last year with whom he was very, very close, and the two of them were, so to speak, lone wolves. You know to whom I refer - and they drew away from the group. (V)16 They had their interests in common, but they didn't have the interest of the group in common. (V)1 And so, I found this fall when he started, and the other boy had left school, Br--- was consequently alone much of the time, (III)13 - almost like coming into a new school. In fact, it might have been worse than coming into a new school, because he didn't have the friendship, he didn't have the shoulder of the other boy to fall back on. (IV)20
Now we don't know what the other boy has done, - maybe it has been tough on him too. At least Br--- had to come back then and make his way with the boys to whom he had paid no attention last year. (III)15
It was a little bit difficult for him. I think he is overcoming it, however. (V)15

I might mention to you, the music thing that you talked

about this morning. Our music teacher - I don't teach all of the music because I can't very well get up on their scale - but our music teacher has had a little trouble with Br---, ^{(V)7} and it might be that we can talk with her on that. She rather resents the fact that he doesn't attempt to sing at all. ^{(III)4} I think it was only yesterday, - or Monday it was, - that I came up through the library just as he was coming out of the room due to the fact that he hadn't sung. I didn't chasten Br--- at all in any way, but I merely sat down and talked with him, and said that I thought he could learn to enjoy it, and appreciate music more if he would try to sing a little bit. ^{(IV)20} I did notice after that, we went back in and Br--- did attempt to sing for the rest of the period, ^{(III)4} and today I noticed again that Br--- was attempting to sing. ^{(IV)20} Did you say he had a little bit of difficulty when his father came home from the army? ^{(V)14}

Mother: Well, it was actually the thing that did it to him. I know that the people I have discussed it with seem to agree, too, that the thing that did it to him was over-developing ^{(V)12} his singing when he was tiny, encouraging him to sing on every occasion, - singing, singing, singing constantly, ^{(V)12} - until he just developed a psychological block ^{(IV)18} that is just as real as anything that can ever develop in a person. Adults get it. There are grown people who will not sing in groups, and whether he will change I don't know. Now, about trying to force him, - he has been offered every enticement to sing. ^{(IV)20} He was offered a chance to sing on television with a music group. He was to sing a cowboy solo, and he wanted desperately to be on that program and have that particular part, yet it involved singing, so he gave it up. ^{(IV)18}

Teacher: Well, it is a matter of over-urging him there and he is just probably tired of it. ^{(II)15} He just got tired of it to the point he isn't going to sing. ^{(III)4}

Mother: Now he gets the outlet by playing the piano, of course.

Teacher: Well, I haven't attempted to force him to sing here. The thing I have attempted to do, was to talk him into singing, ^{(IV)20} trying to show him an appreciation of music can be gained by actually trying to sing. I don't think any of us should look forward to being great musicians. The only reason I believe we should have music in the school, as far as the public music is concerned, is to give an appreciation of the finer arts in life and to give them something to look forward to. Incidentally, I don't particularly care for grand opera, - I don't care for it at all, - but I still force myself to go to the opera that comes here, the civic music, and the lyceums. I go to those, and I try to listen to them with an ear of understanding, but I have never had much musical training and consequently there is a lot of it I don't care for.

Mother: He has a very keen ear for music. ^{(II)13} He was playing rhythms and carrying a tune before he could talk ^{(II)13} - before he could form words - and he will pick out symphonies and different music on television, then he will go to Mrs. C--- and ask her to get them for him. ^{(II)13} She gives him a simplified version of them, and he will sit and practice them by the hour, so he gets his musical satisfaction through the piano. ^{(II)13}

Teacher: That's fine that he can do that. It is certainly wonderful that he can do that.

Mother: She says he is gifted where that is concerned. ^{(II)13}

Teacher: Well, I would like to talk to you then about his other academic work. His arithmetic as you have noticed here on the scale, is quite well up. ^{(II)14} He did take a tumble when it came to story problems, and there we have already found the thing that seems to bother him. In our classroom, we are going to attempt to help him and boost him along on that a bit. We did bring him up on his last test over his previous test. ^{(V)15} However, one test never makes a difference. I am not concerned with one test. A child might come to school with a headache; or maybe a mother and father had a spat at home and the child heard it and came to school thinking about that, and it throws him down; or he maybe had a spat with some friend on the school ground, or on the way to school; or he may be unhappy about some certain thing that throws him down. I have a little girl who came to school Monday with quite a swollen jaw, and I allowed her to go ahead and take a spelling test. She is quite high in spelling, ^{(V)6} but on this particular test the bottom dropped out of everything for her, and so you can't tell just what the reason is for one test dropping, but the thing that we are concerned with is if a child drops down and stays down, then we are concerned about why it happens. One reason might be that he was absent and didn't get that particular information, and so I don't want you to feel concerned about this particular test. He is coming back. He did take a tumble there. This is very normal. He is cutting the line of the class average here, ^{(II)14} and here, and here, and here, but without the master sheet, of course, you can't see just what it means.

Mother: Does he complete his work? ^{(II)3}

Teacher: He has a tendency to tire on certain things, ^{(I)16}

but he does complete his work.^{(II)3} We have to urge him once in a while to get him to complete work,^{(IV)20} but he has never refused to complete it, or washed out on us.^{(II)3} He does pretty well on that.

Mother: Does he waste a lot of time?

Teacher: He wastes quite a little time.^{(II)17} Yes, he does waste quite a little time. He dreams.^{(II)17} Does he do that at home, too?

Mother: Yes, he does.^{(II)17}

Teacher: I have had him sit for five minutes at a time, when I have wondered just when is it going to register on him that we are now studying social studies, or we are now in arithmetic class, or we are now in something else?^{(II)17} And finally, he will come along, or if I will mention it to him, he will immediately snap out of it.^{(IV)7} Now what is the reason for his dreaming?^{(II)17} Some dreaming is good for anyone, but we have to accomplish about so much, so we don't want to allow too much time for dreaming.^{(II)17} He does that. He is slow to get started on some things,^{(II)15} and I have wondered if maybe he was that way at home, - if he was slow in getting started.^{(II)15}

Mother: He gets very keenly interested in something, as you are well aware. It is either stamps,^{(V)1} or something else. Now it is the aquarium and fish.^{(V)1} He is just living in the world of aquarium and fish.^{(V)2} He can tell us more about fish! And if it means being late for a meal, or skipping something we think is important, he has his interest in his fish.^{(V)2} Always something is holding his interest keenly.^{(V)1} Always it seems that he has to have a driving force,^{(IV)20} - a keen interest in something,^{(V)1} - one thing or another, that overshadows anything else he does, and he has been that way all of his life.

Teacher: How do you and Mr. B--- share his problems with him at home? ^{(V)4} Do you go through them with him, or do you ignore them, or do you enter into them in a "pal" way and discuss them with him at times, ^{(V)4} such as his aquarium, ^{(V)2} which right now is paramount with him?

Mother: Well we try to give him time, ^{(V)7} and try not to discourage him. That is the thing, because if he becomes discouraged in it and has to let it drop, then he feels a very definite frustration. ^{(IV)18} He seems to have a terrific urge for the things he wants, when he wants them. ^{(V)1}

Teacher: Well, I know you are busy, and I know that no parent can follow every little change that a child has, but I feel that Br--- does need a little confidence on some of those things, ^{(IV)20} and let's - I believe we can make that a paramount thing with him, - talk it up with him in a "pal" way to see if maybe he couldn't make a better association with other people through that. ^{(III)13} We are always happy here to allow a child to share things with other children, ^{(III)19} if they will bring them to us, - but if we don't keep after them they won't bring us things. In other words, they may be quite definitely interested in it themselves, but they feel down deep within themselves that no one else is interested. ^{(III)13}

Mother: That is another interesting thing about him. He likes to have these particular interests, but he isn't eager to share them, ^{(III)19} even with the members of the family. They are very definitely his. ^{(III)19} Of course that is a very natural thing, being an older child, he has built up the feeling that what is mine, is mine, and you have to keep it away from the younger ones. ^{(III)19} Do you get

the idea, what that reaction is? But he has carried it to an extreme, because he hasn't any friends to share it with. (III)19

Teacher: Do you invite and encourage his friends to come in with him on those things?

Mother: We haven't done a great deal of it. I realize that that is one of the things that has made it difficult for him. (V)14 He hasn't felt too free to bring his friends home. (V)14

Teacher: That sometimes throws a block up between a child and his community friends. I know it is hard on a house, if you don't have a rumpus room, or something like that.

Mother: It hasn't been that so much, as it has been that we have been so crowded where we are now. (V)4 He hasn't had the space to have the things that he has wanted, and to share with other youngsters either.

Teacher: Well, I think this about Br---, that he is coming along nicely. (V)15 I am quite happy with his progress in his social adjustment. (III)4 I watch him out playing now. (III)1 He throws the basketball once in a while with the boys. (III)1 He gets out there. They don't all stick with it. (V)6 Very few of the boys will start playing basketball and stay with it, day in and day out for a period of a month or six weeks. They will play basketball today, but maybe tomorrow they will want to go over and play jump rope with the girls. Now that is a normal thing with boys of this age. They may want to snowball one day, and the next day they don't want anyone throwing a snowball at them.

Mother: But he is interested in sports isn't he? (III)1

Teacher: I think he is getting quite interested in sports. He

may never be a leader in sports,^{(II)9} but I don't think you want to look at him in that light, but if he participates and understands sports; if he can get the understanding where he can go to a game and enjoy it; or play a little basketball when he gets a little older in the scouts,^{(II)9} what else could you ask for?

Mother: He needs the feeling of competition,^{(IV)20} or sharing with fellows in sports, more than he needs anything else, I think.^{(III)18}

Teacher: I think he does, too. I think we are getting at that, but I think it is a situation that has grown on him since he was little. Was he born while his father was in the army?^{(V)4}

Mother: No, he was six months old when his father went.

Teacher: But he never knew his father until he came back?

Mother: No. He was $3\frac{1}{2}$ years old.

Teacher: It makes a situation where he didn't have a father there.^{(IV)20}

Mother: Mother and I took care of him.^{(V)7}

Teacher: Which is generally a bad situation.^{(V)11}

Mother: We lived out where he couldn't be with other youngsters at all,^{(V)11} and since then we have just moved from one situation to another, and he has had absolutely no feeling of security.^{(IV)18}

Teacher: I think you have pretty much the idea of what is Br---'s trouble. I don't think it is serious and I think he is doing quite well for the opportunities he has had.^{(IV)6}

Mother: He seems much happier this year.^{(V)15}

Teacher: He is certainly happier^{(IV)15} than he was when he came in the first of the year.^{(III)9}

Mother: Than he has ever been, I think.^{(IV)15}

Teacher: He doesn't attempt to stay out of school for anything? He enjoys coming to school? (III)9

Mother: Yes, he enjoys school. Does he seem to enjoy being with the youngsters in school? How does he seem to enter the school activity in the room, - committees or anything like that, - or is he pretty withdrawn?

Teacher: No, I think he is doing pretty well there now. (III)2
He is entering in. (III)1 Encouragement, I have always felt was necessary. I don't know, but I have always felt that Br--- feels pretty good toward me. (III)16 I can talk to Br--- and it seems like he will participate, (IV)20 but when I have thirty-four to talk to, - and I try not to show any partiality, and I try not to exploit any child, - I get around to talk to him once in a while. It may be thirty-four times before I get back to him. (III)4 It could be. But Br--- has always responded well when I have talked to him. Now, when I say this, "how do you feel about this," then he goes along with me. (IV)20 On this music thing, I was talking to you about. When I talked to Br---, just like you and I are talking here, I said, "well maybe the thing to do is to go back in there and attempt to sing," and he did. (III)4 I think he is going to conquer a lot of these social maladjustments. (III)20

Mother: I think he will too. Moving into a new neighborhood, one is outside of activity, and that is a thing that is hard. We moved into a new neighborhood down here, and there is a clique of boys. As soon as an outsider moves in, it is inevitable that they get the brunt of things, and especially if they are withdrawn at all. (III)14 It is awfully hard to break into a clique, whether it is boys, or girls, or

whatever it is, and being that way, that is one of the reasons that he found the other little boy who felt ill at ease, ^{(III)16} and they just formed a bond there.

Teacher: The same thing happened to us when we first moved down here, when we first moved to Logan. Our children were persecuted. Everytime our children stuck their heads out of the door, someone was ready to take a poke at them, - most of the children were just a year of $1\frac{1}{2}$ years older, - and we moved out of the area, because of that. We actually moved out of the area, and right now our children have absolutely no friendly feeling for the neighborhood. Right now, every time we go by there and look down in the neighborhood where we used to live, they have something to say about "I am sure glad we don't live there!" No, it is quite a problem.

Well, Mrs. B---, how do you feel about the things that we are trying to stress here at the Training School?

Mother: Well, I am very grateful for the interest you are taking. I am especially grateful that you are aware of the social problem. A graph in arithmetic doesn't mean half as much to me, as whether or not he can cooperate and be happy. I think this business of charting his work, their activity in school, is a very, very worthwhile thing. Like you say, it not only shows what they are doing in their lessons, but there may be some reason for a drop, and it charts the personality as well as it charts the academic progress of the child. To me it does, anyway.

Teacher: Well, I think that is right. I will go along with you on that. Any one subject isn't the total picture of a child. The social picture is just as important, - maybe more so, - maybe more

important than the academic. This I want to continue. I give it to the parents so that they can see where their child is in comparison with the entire group.

Mother: And so often the social is the thing that has the most to do with it.

Teacher: Very definitely so. Very definitely so. I feel that we are getting along well with Br---. I think he is doing probably as well as we could do with him, ^{(V)15} - as well as he could do for himself, - until time works itself out, until time has worked him around to a little better social adjustment. He may never be an active leader. He may never be that. I don't think you can figure on that, but if he can learn to get along with people, ^{(II)14} - and we must learn to get along with people in this world, - if he can learn to get along with people, and understand that their desires are as important as his own; if he can learn that he must give as well as take, or take as well as give; if he can learn that other people's gripes are quite important, their feelings are just as painful as his, then I think we have gone a long way, and I believe that Br--- is learning that. I think he shows that he is adjusting pretty well socially. ^{(III)7}

Mother: There is also one other thing. Youngsters that are retiring, like he is, get a lot more and think a lot more deeply than you ever know. We are finding that out. ^{(II)1} Things that might seem trivial here at school, he may glean a great deal from. ^{(II)1} Little unimportant things still have a great weight on what happens.

Teacher: They are not unimportant, but they are things that we overlook easily. That is very true. Children who sit and don't seem to participate, seem to often absorb more than children who partici-

pate. (II)9

Mother: We have found with him that encouragement and appreciation help more than anything else. (IV)20

Teacher: I think it does with any child.

Mother: I think so, especially with these withdrawn children. (IV)20
I think if they feel that they have a place, and that they are not failing, it is highly important to them. (IV)20 It will be interesting to see what this business of aggression turns out to be - see what happens. I hope that he will sort of build that up until he feels that he has a place in his group.

Teacher: I think he is, and I think he has reached a point now where he will level off on a plateau and will get along much better. (V)15
I believe we will find it in the next year or so, that he is going to be pretty well adjusted. (IV)2 As I said, he is never going to be a strong leader, but I think you will find that he is going to be at least a good follower, (IV)6 and maybe it is better to be a good follower than a strong leader.

Well, Mrs. B---, I am glad you came. I think we have pretty well covered the things that have been bothering me, as to whether or not you knew them.

Mother: Well, I would like to express my appreciation for the work you are doing with him, that you are so very well aware of what his trouble is, and that you are doing so much about it. It makes me very happy, and I appreciate being here.

Teacher: Well, we attempt to do that with all of the children we have here at the Whittier. We do attempt to do that because we feel if we can't do a good job here, we cannot turn out teachers that will

do a good job other places, so we really want to work with Br--- as we do with all children.

Thanks for coming today, and feel free to call on us at any time.

(note: Tabulations were not summarized on this one interview, inasmuch as they are included in Tables I-V elsewhere)

EXPLANATION FOR READING TABLES

Although the following tables are to a large extent self explanatory, a brief interpretative explanation will help to make them more meaningful to the reader.

It was previously stated that four categories -- physical, emotional, social, and mental, were used. A fifth category -- topics unclassified, was added to accommodate those topics for which there seemed to be no definite classification.

As is indicated, Table I, Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to physical development, grades K-6, pertains only to those statements or questions which refer to the individual's physical condition.

Listed vertically at the left of the table are twenty variations of physical development. These variations were set up as a result of use in previous parent-teacher conferences, or which came into the classification as the study progressed.

Under "Grade" at the upper center of the table, are listed, horizontally, seven grades: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Below this "Grade" indication is listed the number of times any one phase of development was referred to in the conferences, namely, under Kindergarten, weight was referred to only once, while under 5 (fifth grade) weight was referred to seventeen times.

At the extreme right of the table are the totals which indicate the total number of times in all seven grades that any one phase of discussion was referred to. For example: Weight was discussed, or

mentioned twenty-three times in the total thirty-five parent-teacher conferences.

Lastly, at the bottom of the table is listed a total of the subjects pertaining to physical development which were discussed in each of the seven grades. Below the total line is shown a cumulative total for primary and intermediate grades.

TABLE I

Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to physical development,
grades K-6

Discussion pertaining to:	Grade							
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	T
1 Height			2		1	6	9	18
2 Weight	1	3	1		1	17		23
3 Coloring								
4 Effect of injury			4	9		2	2	17
5 Effect of disease	4	11		1			1	17
6 Eyes and sight	3		7					10
7 Hearing								
8 Teeth								
9 Speech	11			15			3	29
10 Muscular coordination	30	3	4	5	2	6	3	53
11 Diet	1	9	8					18
12 Rest	12	14	6			8		40
13 Exercise	6	5	3	2				16
14 Rough play			3	5	10			18
15 Proper play					1	1	8	10
16 Indication of fatigue	4	10	2			2	1	19
17 Nervousness	1	5	5	13	3		1	28
18 Neatness and cleanliness		4	2		1			7
19 Illness	11	27	13	2	1	4		58
20 Physical maturation	11	15	9	9	3	12	11	70
TOTALS	95	106	69	61	23	58	39	451

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Of the five categories, the school is probably least able to alter or improve physical development. The elementary child is in a stage of muscular development. His size, body proportions and rate of growth are largely due to inheritance. If it were possible to make any noticeable changes in these inherent characteristics, the teacher may not be sufficiently trained to make the improvements. Hence, any discussion along the lines of physical development would depend entirely on the teacher's and parent's ability to diagnose irregularities.

Since teachers and parents are not usually trained in medicine, and have only limited training in health, they may feel that an occasional suggestion concerning obvious disorders is all they should make, leaving the subject almost wholly to the family doctor.

This belief is somewhat substantiated through further analysis of the general category Physical Development. This shows the three most discussed topics in order of their frequency to be Physical Maturation, Illness and Muscular Coordination. These features can be more easily recognized by both the teacher and the parents than many of the others listed under Physical Development. In some cases, there is a definite over-lapping of meaning; as for example, Physical Maturation in many instances includes such topics as Height and Weight. Thus, it was difficult to segregate these features of inherent nature from Physical Maturation.

In recent years, the medical profession has specialized in de-

fects pertaining to sight, hearing, teeth, speech, diet, and nervousness to such an extent that teachers may feel inadequately prepared to make definite statements concerning them. They feel it more wise to generalize on apparent deficiencies, needs, and weaknesses concerning these phases of Physical Development.

It was somewhat surprising that three topics under Physical Development, which would appear to have some bearing on child reaction and development, were not mentioned in any of the thirty-five conferences. These topics were: Coloring, Hearing and Teeth. Although they are often referred to in group discussion, they were not discussed, or even mentioned in any of the thirty-five conferences. This lack of consideration might be due to the fact that medical science has greatly decreased the need for teacher's concern regarding these physical factors. Although they are no less important, it is possible that trouble in these three phases of child development has become so rare that teachers may find only slight occasion to discuss them.

TABLE II

Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to mental development,
grades K-6

Discussion pertaining to:	Grade							
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	T
1 Ability to think in- dependently	10	10	9	4	4	4	10	51
2 Ability to make wise decisions	17	10	5		7	6	13	58
3 Ability to organize and work independently	12	4	1	5	6	7	3	38
4 Ability to finish plans Child's intellectual	15	10	11	13	4	1	4	58
5 curiosity	25	7	3	10	3	9	18	75
6 Child's confidence and self expression	5	8	2	5	1	4	9	34
7 Worthwhile contribution	15	14	2		1	2	11	45
8 Comprehension in reading Ability to understand			5	15	9	11	12	52
9 experiences	20	12	4	13	6	9	15	79
10 Use of skills in solving problems	4		1	5	5	1	12	28
11 Use of good grammar	9		1		3	1	1	15
12 Fluency in speech	3	3		1	2		9	18
13 Appreciation of art, music and rhythms	22	30	8	1	31	27	9	128
14 Mental ability	29	18	7	21	26	23	19	143
15 Child's hesitancy	3	2	5	1	1	5	5	22
16 Academic weakness		7	20	27	3	22	12	91
17 Day dreaming		1	3	3	1	15		23
18 Imagination	13			2	8	1		24
19 Child's attitude toward ability limits	5	1	2	8	9	7	17	49
20 Interest span	4	4	15	12	22	19	2	78
TOTALS	211	141	104	146	152	174	181	1109

MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

It is only a relatively recent educational aim for trained teachers to attempt to alter or improve social and emotional development. Many of the topics listed in Table II are dealing with subjects to which the parents have given little or no thought, and hence they may not understand just what the teacher is attempting to discuss. On the other hand, the teacher, too, may not be adequately trained to recognize the phases of social and emotional development. In either case, it is only natural for the discussion to lead away from the unknown. In addition, emotional and social developments are very difficult to measure. There are clinical devices to appraise these phases of development. These require special training to use, while in the field of mental development, measures, tests, and methods have had a more practical application. Tests and measures of mental development are more widely used by teachers, and have some meaning for parents.

Within the category Mental Development, mental ability is the most discussed topic, with a total of 143 mentions in thirty-five conferences. According to these figures, parents and teachers are apparently more vitally interested in children's mental abilities than they are in any other one phase of their development.

Further analysis of the general category Mental Development shows that the sub-topic Appreciation for Art, Music and Rhythms, was mentioned 128 times during the thirty-five conferences, and Academic

Weakness was discussed ninety-one times. In these three sub-topics there was a slight increase in the number of times referred to by the upper elementary grades over the primary grades. This slight increase was also apparent in over-all totals for the entire category Mental Development. This trend was very slight and was not consistent throughout the twenty sub-topics in the category. For example: the sub-topic Ability to Finish Plans shows a definite decrease in the upper elementary over the primary grades.

TABLE III

Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to social development,
grades K-6

Discussion pertaining to whether or not the child:	Grade							
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	T
1 Plays well with others	20	8	4	6	5	12	8	63
2 Works well with others	13	9	2	4	3	5	4	40
3 Makes friends	16	16	10	9	9	21	4	85
4 Strives to, or refuses to cooperate	23	9	6	18	20	26	16	118
5 Believes in democracy	6	7			5		9	27
6 Displays leadership	7	5			2	4	6	24
7 Accepts responsibility	27	16	4	4	2	8	11	72
8 Displays individuality	4	17	2		1	5	3	32
9 Is happy in the group	28	19	5	8	9	18	20	107
10 Is domineering	4	7	14	7	9	2	3	46
11 Is overbearing	1		7	5	1		2	16
12 Shows jealousy	4	1	4		1			10
13 Is timid in the group	1	5	9	5	9	12	2	43
14 Withdraws from the group	8	3	26	8	14	12	2	73
15 Allows himself to be domineered	4	2	7	4	5	1		23
16 Shows loyalty	4	2	4	5	11	4	5	35
17 Is aggressive	10	11	4	2	8	6	1	42
18 Is generous	8	1	1	3	4	4	6	27
19 Is selfish	2	1	20		2	5	2	32
20 Shows immaturity						9	4	13
TOTALS	190	139	129	88	120	154	108	928

502

426

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In considering the general category Social Development, sub-topic no. 3, Strives to Cooperate, has been mentioned the greatest number of times, -- 118 in all. The trait of cooperation is, without a doubt, very important in getting along with people. This is very noticeable in the home as well as at school. The child may play well, work well, display leadership, or make friends when away from home, but due to existing home conditions, these desirable features of the child's social development may not be noticeable to the parents. They can, however, see the cooperative ability of the child with other members of the family. For this reason, the parents are better able to enter into the discussion of cooperativeness of the child. This sub-topic showed no appreciable change throughout the seven grades. However, the general trend in the over-all total of twenty sub-topics in this category indicated that there was a tendency toward decreased importance of Social Development in the upper elementary grades over the primary grades.

Further investigation of the sub-topics under the heading Social Development reveals that the four topics used the greatest number of times in discussing Social Development are: Strives to Cooperate, Is Happy in the Group, Makes Friends, and Withdraws from the Group.

It is possible that these four sub-topics might be so broad that they overshadow many of the other sub-topics under the heading of Social Development. For example: Working Well with Others, Playing

Well With Others, and Accepting Responsibility could be considered as different ways in which children might strive to cooperate. In the same manner, the sub-topics: Is Timid in the Group, and Allows Himself to be Domineered could be classified with the sub-topic Withdraws from the Group. Certainly these sub-topics are very closely related. Whatever their relationship, and whatever their classification, they were definitely considered of major importance in conference discussions at the Training School.

TABLE IV

Frequency of mention of topics pertaining to Emotional Development,
grades K-6

Discussion pertaining to whether or not the child:	Grade							T
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1 Appears to feel secure in group	14	4	4	7	6	9	22	66
2 Has self control and stability	10	4	1	1	2	17	6	41
3 Shows love and affection Is stimulated by the	9	11	3	2	4	3	2	34
4 group	10	9	21	11	3		4	58
5 Shows no over- stimulation	23	2	10			11		46
6 Desires success	19	8	22	18	14	14	21	117
7 Accepts criticism	7	4	6	2	2	2	2	25
8 Accepts assistance	7	7	15	7	5		10	51
9 Is passive	10	5	12	3	3	6	5	44
10 Is moody and despondent	4	3	7	4	3	1	3	25
11 Cries easily	1		4	1	3			9
12 Is subject to temper flares	1	1	18		4	1	1	26
13 Quarrels	5	2	4	3	4	1	1	20
14 Strikes others, or kicks	4	7	5	3	2			21
15 Adjusts to new situations	28	17	9	6	2	5	3	70
16 Is impatient	18	5	9	3	5	1	7	48
17 Gives up after failure	2	1	8	1	4	4	2	22
18 Shows frustration	4	4	22	7	7	8	1	53
19 Shows a need for companionship						6		6
20 Needs encouragement						28	28	56
TOTALS	186	94	180	79	73	117	118	838

499

347

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In analyzing the category Emotional Development it was found that the sub-topic Desires Success rated 117 mentions for the most discussed sub-topic of the category. The child's attitudes are often changed by the degree of success attained. His reaction at home usually reflects the satisfaction of success in school, or vice versa, success at home may be reflected in his work and play at school. It is reasonable to assume that among the topics discussed under the category Emotional Development, the sub-topic Desires Success would stand very high in importance.

Although there was no appreciable decrease in the trend of the sub-topic Desires Success from primary to upper elementary grades, there was a slight tendency towards decreasing importance as the children advanced in grades. The sub-topics - Is Stimulated by the Group, Shows No Over-stimulation, Is Subject to Temper Flares, Quarrels and Strikes others or Kicks, are all closely related characteristics. These sub-topics all showed decided decreases in importance as the children advanced from primary to upper elementary grades. While the general over-all trend showed decrease in importance as the children advanced from primary to upper elementary, the sub-topics Shows Need for Companionship, and Needs Encouragement were not mentioned in the primary grades, but received some notice in the upper elementary grades.

TABLE V

Frequency of mention of fifteen topics not covered in Tables I-IV

Special points of interest which did not classify elsewhere	Grade							
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	T
1 Special interests	15	3	14	7	17	15	15	86
2 Hobbies	1		2		6	3		12
3 Special dislikes	1	3	8	2	11	1	8	34
4 Home conditions	21	16	9	12	5	22	3	88
5 Home responsibilities	12			2			12	26
6 Comparison with other people	51	49	17	16	26	22	14	195
7 Reaction to adults	27	10	18	8	7	5	6	81
8 Cheats or steals				1	1	1		3
9 Falsifies	2	11	1	2	3			19
10 Shows over-protection	3	4	15	5	11	2		40
11 Shows exploitation	2	1	4	1	3		1	12
12 Shows neglect at home	15	1	1	3	1	7	1	29
13 Shows parental conflict	7	8	11	6	7	10	8	57
14 Over-all growth			13	27	16	19	26	101
15 Regressing				2	2	1		5
TOTALS	157	106	113	94	116	108	94	788

423

365

TOPICS UNCLASSIFIED

There is little opportunity to compare Table V, Frequency of mention of fifteen topics not covered in Tables I-IV, with the previous mentioned four categories, because of the unrelated topics included in Table V. It is significant, however, that in this unclassified group is the topic Comparison With Other People, which was actually mentioned and discussed more than any other one topic under any of the previous four categories of discussion. This topic was mentioned 195 times during the thirty-five conferences.

Consider it from the standpoint of the parents who have had another child in the same grade. The parents are anxious to know if they have treated all of their children equally well. Have they given the same advantages to each of their children? Is each child endowed with the same mental, physical, social and emotional possibilities that each other child is? The teacher, too, may have taught other children, or another child, of the same parents. His relationship with that child may have been pleasant, unpleasant, disappointing, encouraging, etc. Thus, there is a common ground for discussion.

It cannot be concluded that since these topics have been mentioned more than any others in their category, they are more important than any, or many of the other topics charted. It is important to point out, however, that these were the most discussed topics and that they are considered very important by many writers and educators. It is probable that in the study of thirty-five different children, other

topics might possibly be considered of greater importance. With greatly extended study, many other subjects might be mentioned, and discussed to some extent. This study indicates, however, that the ninety-five topics discussed are very important and that any significant change brought about by using different parent-teacher conferences at the same grade and age level, would be highly improbable.

This study includes only kindergarten through sixth grade. There is reason to believe that parents and teachers of children in junior high and high school would be confronted with many problems and phases of development that parents and teachers of children in the elementary grades would not have occasion to consider.

SUMMARY

Introduction

This study is concerned with the topics discussed in parent-teacher conferences at the Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School (Whittier). The study is an analysis of thirty-five parent-teacher conferences held at the Whittier during the school year 1953-1954. Five conferences were used from each of seven teachers.

Five phases of development discussed were: Mental Development, Physical Development, Social Development, Emotional Development and Topics Unclassified.

Review of literature

From a review of literature, certain concepts were established relative to the subject of reporting to parents.

Procedures

Through the cooperation of the Staff at the Whittier, and parents of children at the School, five conferences from each of seven teachers, or a total of thirty-five parent-teacher conferences were recorded via tape recorder. The tape recordings of the interviews were then played back and typed. Five general classifications for rating child development were set up on charts with sub-topics to accommodate the analysis.

Parent-teacher conferences

It was established through the analysis of the conferences and study leading to the analysis, that the reasons for the conference were to allow time for both parents and teacher to share their knowledge about the child, for the purpose of aiding and stimulating the child to

achieve his maximum progress. Although curriculum, methods, materials, buildings, administrative organization, and finances, for example, are important, effectiveness depends upon the people who work to provide education for children.

A sample parent-teacher conference

A sample parent-teacher conference chosen from the thirty-five conferences used in this study was included. The purpose of including this conference was to expedite the analysis and clarify for the reader, some of the subjects discussed.

Explanation for reading tables

The basis on which the score sheets were organized was explained on pages 41 and 42. Tables are also included, and are not altered in any way from the originals.

Results or analysis of the findings

With the foregoing discussion, explanation, and clarification, results or analysis of the findings are recorded in the following statements:

Of ninety-five phases of development listed, only three were not mentioned or discussed in a single conference. These omitted phases were: - hearing, teeth and coloring. Thus ninety-one phases of child development were mentioned in one or more of the thirty-five conferences. This indicates that the teachers at the Utah State Agricultural College Elementary Training School attempted to evaluate the many aspects of the child, and his development, in the different areas.

There is an over-all tendency for discussion pertinent to Mental Development to increase in the upper elementary grades over the kindergarten, first and second grades. This increase was slight, and was

not uniform throughout the entire twenty phases of Mental Development discussed.

Analysis of the four score sheets concerning Physical Development, Social Development, Emotional Development and Topics Unclassified, indicate that there was an over-all tendency toward decreasing importance in the upper elementary grades over the primary grades. In all four general categories, these over-all decreases were definite and appreciable, however, in none of the four categories was the decrease uniform throughout all of the sub-topics discussed.

Of the five general categories used in charting subjects discussed in this study, parents and teachers at the Training School indicate (through use) their relative importance as follows: 1. Mental Development, 2. Social Development, 3. Emotional Development, 4. Topics Unclassified, and 5. Physical Development.

The most discussed phase of child development by teachers and parents in all but one grade at the Training School was Mental Development. This was closely followed by Social Development, and Emotional Development. Physical Development was referred to least of all.

Mental Development (having been mentioned 143 times) is of great concern to parents and teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the study it was found evident that parents and teachers in conferences at the Training School evaluate student progress on ninety-one phases of child development.

Although eighty of these phases (sub-topics) can be classified under four categories, - Mental Development, Social Development, Emotional Development, and Physical Development, there were fifteen sub-topics which could not be classified clearly. For this reason, a fifth category - Topics Unclassified, was included.

Analysis of the categories - Social Development, Emotional Development, Physical Development, and Topics Unclassified indicated that their over-all importance decreased slightly as the child progressed in school. This tendency was not uniform throughout the sub-topics of any one category.

The over-all tendency of the category Mental Development showed a slight increase in importance as the children progressed in school. This analysis did not show uniformity in trend throughout all of the sub-topics under Mental Development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should encourage parents to visit their child's classroom under normal operation.

Parents should be encouraged to participate in parent-teacher conferences in order to know the processes by which their children are being guided.

All teachers should familiarize themselves with the policies of the school regarding reporting to parents.

The teacher should arrange, if possible, for the conference to be conducted without interruptions.

The conference should be kept on an informal conversation basis as nearly as possible, in order that no tension be placed on either the teacher or the parents.

As many as possible of the aspects of the pupil's development - physical, intellectual, social and emotional, should be kept well in mind by the teacher.

If possible, no exact time limit should be placed on the conference.

Data, anecdotal reports, classroom and playground observations records of interviews, test results, and health records, for example, should be kept available for reference during the parent-teacher conference.

The teacher should not forget that the parent is unique in his own personality and problems.

Each parent-teacher conference should vary in accordance with the

background of the child and the home.

Success or failure of the parent-teacher conference rests primarily with the teacher. Success is relative, in each conference, to the circumstances and results.

The teacher should give the parents opportunity to express their thoughts concerning their child's progress.

Conferences should be closed with a pleasant reassurance of helpful cooperation, and an invitation for further consultation.

SUGGESTIONS

Discussion lists

Should readers care to use check-lists, these are included for their consideration. It is not inferred that check-lists should, or should not be used in parent-teacher conferences. It is further pointed out that the check-lists (suggested discussion lists) which are presented on the following pages, may be of maximum value under other conditions. It might be well for each teacher, if he wishes to use check-lists, to develop his own, or for each school or district to develop a list which would most nearly satisfy it's needs.

Keeping these possibilities in mind, the following check-lists are submitted for consideration in planning parent-teacher conferences.

These lists are prepared as a result of analysis of the charts presented on pages 43, 46, 49, 52, and 54.

Mental Development

Mental ability

Intellectual curiosity

Academic weakness

Interest span

Comprehension in reading and spelling

Use of skills in solving problems

Ability to think independently

Ability to make wise decisions

Ability to understand experiences

Appreciation for art, music, and rhythms

Ability to organize

Works independently

Finishes plans

Attitudes toward limits of ability

Confidence and self expression

Makes worthwhile contributions

Speaks fluently

Uses good grammar

Has imagination

Day dreams

Is hesitant

Social Development

Makes friends

Is happy in the group

Withdraws from the group

Plays well with others

Works well with others

Believes in democracy

Displays leadership

Shows loyalty

Displays individuality

Strives to, or refuses to cooperate

Accepts responsibility

Personal traits pertinent to social development

Is domineering

Is timid in the group

Is aggressive

Is selfish

Is generous

Allows himself to be domineered

Is over-bearing

Shows immaturity

Shows jealousy

Emotional Development

Reaction to the group

Appears to feel secure in the group

Is stimulated by the group

Shows no over-stimulation

Is passive

Is impatient

Shows frustration

Has self control and stability

Shows love and affection

Gives up after failure

Strikes others or kicks

Quarrels

Cries easily

Adjustments

Adjusts to new situations

Accepts assistance

Is subject to temper flares

Is moody and despondent

Accepts criticism

Needs

Encouragement and guidance
 Companionship and acceptance
 Satisfaction and feeling of success

Topics Unclassified

In the following list of topics, there seemed to be no apparent, clear-cut classification under which they belong. Therefore, they have been listed as Topics Unclassified, with the understanding that some readers might wish to place them in one category, while others might wish to place them in a different grouping.

Comparison to other people
 Over-all growth
 Home conditions
 Home responsibilities
 Shows over-protection
 Shows neglect at home
 Shows exploitation
 Shows parental conflict
 Special interests
 Hobbies
 Special dislikes
 Reaction to adults
 Regressing
 Falsifies
 Cheats or steals

Physical Development

Physical maturation
 Weight

Height

Muscular coordination

Eyes and sight

Teeth

Hearing

Speech

Rough play

Physical problems

Illness

Rest

Nervousness

Indication of fatigue

Diet

Exercise

Effects of disease

Effects of injury

Neatness and cleanliness

Coloring (paleness, etc.)

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