

plans for the future. Likewise *interest and adjustment inventories*, and *rating scales*, although such instruments have readily recognizable limitations, can, when cautiously used, elicit information regarding pupils' school and vocational interests and personal-social adjustment which is of value to teacher and pupil. *Sociometric techniques* either of the type in which individuals choose others with whom they would or would not like to be associated or the reputation or "guess who" test, assist teachers in discovering the underlying psychological structure of their classroom and to become more conscious of the need for friendship and for personal and social adjustment on the part of pupils.

*Samples of pupils' work*, such as themes and reports, records of books read, summaries of leisure-time activities, samples of poems, drawings, and construction work, all

afford additional evidence of a pupil's growth in relation to basic educational objectives.

### *Services of Evaluation*

As an integral, dynamic process in modern education, evaluation assists schools: (1) in making a periodic check on the effectiveness of the educational institution, and thus indicating the points at which improvements in the program are necessary; (2) in validating the hypotheses upon which the educational institution operates; (3) in providing information basic to effective guidance of individual students; (4) in providing a certain psychological security to the school staff, to the students, and to the parents; and (5) in developing a sound basis for public relations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Eugene R., Tyler, Ralph W., and Evaluation Staff, *Appraising and Recording Student Progress*, New York, Harper and Brothers, pp. 4-11.

## Reporting Pupil Progress

WILLIAM L. WRINKLE

UNDERLYING THE VARIOUS USES to which school marks are put is an assumption that marks are effective conveyors of meaning—that one can look at a mark assigned to Johnny and tell what is meant by it. But that is difficult to do, and certainly not easy for Johnny's mother and father. Unless the teacher explains what has been put together in arriving at the mark, the best the parents or anyone else can do is guess at what the mark means—and the chances of actually guessing what is really meant are very poor.

The continued use of marks as a means of reporting to students and their parents is based on a number of misconceptions. Among these are the beliefs that: (1) people succeed in out-of-school life about the same as they do in school; (2) the mark is a pay check; (3) the mark is a defensible introduction to competitive adult life; (4) anyone can achieve any mark he wishes if he is willing to make the effort; and (5) the mark can be used as a means without it eventually becoming thought of as an end in itself. A critical examination of these beliefs leads to only one conclusion—all of them are unsound.

Much of the early experimentation for the improvement of marking and reporting was concerned with superficial rather than fundamental issues. The symbols used in reporting an evaluation are not basic. But what is evaluated is basic. The improvement of reporting then is not a simple matter of manipulating symbols, changing from per cent to letter marks or five letters to two letters, but rather a difficult task involving the formulation of the objectives of the school program, the determination of the abilities and achievements of the student, the evaluation of his growth with reference to the objectives, and

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*The search for a satisfactory method of marking and reporting student growth and achievements has concerned teachers, administrators, students, and parents for years. The experimentation carried on in the Secondary School at Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colo., and the criteria used there in developing the report merit careful study. William L. Wrinkle is director of the Secondary School. A more detailed description of the experiments carried on by Dr. Wrinkle and his staff can be found in Wrinkle and Gilchrist, Secondary Education for American Democracy, Farrar and Rinehart, 1942, and Guidance in Public Secondary Schools, A. E. Traxler, editor, Educational Records Bureau, October 1939.*

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the reporting of the evaluation in a way which will convey intended meanings.

### *Criteria for Developing Reports*

Most important of the criteria for use in developing reporting forms and practices are: *Have the objectives of the program been identified? Are they clearly stated? Do they have specific meaning?* If objectives are to be of any real value, they must be something more than a list of things on a sheet of paper on the teacher's desk or in the principal's office—they must be used as guides in teaching, learning, and evaluating.

The application of the criteria, "Is the objective clearly stated?" and "Does it have specific meaning?" may be illustrated by using the general objective, "He directs his individual activities effectively." Although the objective as stated uses ordinary everyday words, there is no certainty that it means to one person what it means to another. To some teachers it means in part that the student did what he was told to do without asking questions. The only way a group of teachers can evaluate such an objective intelligently is to break it into the specific behaviors which together make up the quality of self-directiveness. Then it must be used to mean just those things and nothing more. This break-down of the general objective would, of course, have to be included on the report form or on an information sheet to accompany the report to parents if they are to understand what the teacher means by self-direction.

No matter how desirable an objective may be or how clearly it is stated, unless its achievement can be and is evaluated it is of doubtful significance. And so a fourth criterion for use in developing reporting forms and practices would be: *Can the teacher evaluate the achievement and growth of the student with reference to the objectives which have been set up?*

The mistake made in ABCDF reporting, throwing together into a single evaluation a variety of separate evaluations, must be avoided. Evaluations of self-directiveness, language usage, and social adjustment combined into a single evaluation would become as meaningless as B or D or any other mark. This gives us a fifth criterion: *Are different objectives evaluated and reported separately?*

Another error in conventional practice is

the assumption that a single form is adequate for all purposes. On the contrary, there should be different forms for different purposes. Reports to parents should not include certain information which might well be on reports to guidance counselors, and the reports to either would be too elaborate for transcript record purposes. A sixth criterion would be: *Are different forms provided to serve different purposes?*

The specific objectives of a course should be referred to regularly in the classroom. Student self-evaluation and teacher evaluation of the student should occur frequently and should be discussed, but the important information in a report to parents is: Has the student made the growth and achievement which reasonably might have been expected of him in terms of his ability and background? The evaluation of specific objectives is a classroom instructional activity involving the teacher and the student. Whether the student's achievement has been (1) better than, (2) consistent with, or (3) poorer than his ability and background with reference to specific objectives is information which parents should have.

It is also reasonable that parents should be informed if the student's achievement of specific course objectives is such that he can be recommended for admission to college courses or training programs to which the course is prerequisite or if credit can be approved for administrative records for graduation or transfer.

Whether the student's achievement of specific course objectives is in the top 10 per cent or the middle 40 per cent on competitive standards is something the college would want to know if the student applies for college entrance, and such information, of course, should be used in guidance and kept for administrative records.

*Are the bases for evaluation appropriate to objectives?* This is a seventh criterion for use in developing reporting forms and practices. The quality of self-direction which should be expected of a seventh-grade youngster would be what reasonably might be expected of a typical youngster of his age and grade placement. The evaluation of his achievement of specific course objectives for reporting to parents should be in terms of his ability and background. The evaluation of his achievement of specific course objectives

in technical courses taken for entrance to specialized college programs and to be reported to guidance counselors and to colleges should be cold-bloodedly competitive and based on national test standards if appropriate standardized tests are available.

Already it must seem that a report form which would satisfy the seven criteria which have been discussed would be long and complicated—too long and too complicated to be used by the typical teacher who has the typical heavy load of classes and students. But a report form, no matter how good it may be in theory, is no good if it cannot be used. This gives us the eighth criterion: *Can the reports be prepared with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort?*

There are other criteria which might well be included: (9) *Does the form make provision for special information of value in guidance?* (10) *Is provision made for the reporting of evidence and comments relative to the evaluations?* (11) *Are the forms so constructed as to facilitate recording?* (12) *Can the evaluations be easily translated into various systems used in different systems of marking?*

#### *Experimentation in Reporting*

It is one thing to set up a statement of criteria to be used in developing reporting forms; it is another thing to set up a form which meets all the criteria. And criteria, like

objectives, are no good unless they are used—unless they produce the desired results.

Beginning in 1932 the Secondary School of Colorado State College of Education at Greeley made its first serious departure from conventional marking and reporting practice. In the thirteen years which have elapsed, new forms and new practices have been developed, tried, scrapped, and replaced by newer forms and practices. Detailed analytical reports, scale-type evaluations, the conference plan, anecdotal reports, and check-list type reports were developed and discarded because they did not do a good job of conveying information or demanded too much time.

Repeatedly it was discovered that adequacy meant detail and detail meant forms which were impractical for use in public school situations. One criterion which resulted in the scrapping of many forms and practices including those which were successful in their use in the laboratory school was: *Whatever is developed must be usable in the public schools by public school teachers.*

*Editor's note:* A request addressed to Dr. Wrinkle will bring to any interested school or teacher a copy of the report form developed by the Secondary School at Colorado State College of Education. This 8½ by 11 inch printed form is the result of thirteen years of effort and meets all of the criteria which have been discussed here.

## Appraising New Report Forms

MANY SCHOOLS have been loath to experiment with new report forms even though they recognize the fallacies supporting the use of school marks and the dichotomy existing between the school's philosophy and its practice.

Fear usually is the cause of this hesitancy—fear that the teachers would rebel against the additional work which the new report would demand; fear that unless marks were given as reward or punishment for achievement or lack of it that standards in the school would decline; fear that parents would be suspicious



*Courtesy Madison (Wis.) Public Schools*

Youngsters can evaluate, too

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