

# Fostering Home-School Relations

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Teacher-parent and home-school relations are much improved through the conference method of reporting to parents, as shown in this article from Inglewood, California. Chester A. Taft, administrative assistant of the Inglewood schools, is the author.

SINCE 1934 the Inglewood city schools have been using the parent conference as a part of its program of reporting to parents. The basic philosophy behind the adoption of this type of reporting is the acceptance of the school as one of the chief agents of education in a democracy. Therefore, its actions must be based upon democratic principles as a goal and as a way of life. There must be shared interests and participation among school personnel and parents in order that each may contribute to the realization of the best interests of the child. The home, school, and child must all cooperate in this shared responsibility.

## Pre-Planning the Conference

The plan which was adopted includes a conference between the parent and teacher during a two-weeks' period beginning the sixth week of school. Classes are dismissed early in the afternoon, and one-half hour appointments are made with each parent. School is kept open some evenings for working parents and for fathers who desire to attend the conferences. Children participate in making these appointments by taking home blanks which include a proposed appointment time. If this time is satisfactory, the parent acknowledges it and returns the blank to the teacher by the



*Courtesy Waco (Tex.) Public Schools*

child. When several children in a family are attending the school, the principal coordinates the appointments so that the parent may meet with the teachers of her children on the same day.

In preparing for the conference the teacher is expected to consult the cumulative record folder, talk with the pupil, observe him in the classroom and on the playground, study his work, and confer with any auxiliary personnel and/or the principal if she feels they have information which will assist her to understand the child better. The teacher may invite to the conference a member of the auxiliary personnel or the principal when she feels either one can contribute information which will better help to evaluate the child and plan for the year's work.

#### **Conducting the Conference**

Tea is served in the entrance hall of the school by members of the PTA. Whenever possible, the teacher joins the parent and they have an informal chat. This sets a pleasant atmosphere for the conference and develops better rapport.

Teachers are asked to talk to the parents in understandable language. Special emphasis is placed on avoiding pedagogue. The teacher is expected to inform the parent of the status of the child. The child is judged in accordance with his own ability and aptitudes. The teacher does not use "marks," nor does she compare him with others. She is expected to obtain from the parent his point of view relative to the child's status as well as to obtain information regarding playmates, his place in the family, amount of responsibility in the home, and any other factors of impor-

tance to complete the picture of the child.

After sharing this information, the parent and teacher try to reach an agreement upon the emphasis they feel important for the child's best growth and development during the year. Many times children are invited to participate in part of the conference. This depends upon the parents, teacher, and the maturity of the child. It is exceedingly important for teachers to be really ready to accept the child as a participant. Children have participated effectively in conferences at all age levels from kindergarten through the eighth grade.

During the conference the teacher has available the cumulative record folder, a copy of the curriculum program, samples of the child's work, and materials with which the child is working. She is also expected to have the environment of the room attractive and representative of the kind of curriculum program going on in the room.

After the conference is over, the parent takes home the original written agreements reached between the teacher and parent. A copy is placed in the cumulative record folder of the child. At this time the parent and teacher agree upon the type of report to be made at the second reporting period. This may include a second conference or a form report.

If the second report is a conference, it is held during a two-weeks' period beginning the last week of February. The routine is the same except that in preparing for the conference the teacher studies the agreements reached between parent and teacher at the first conference and attempts to evaluate the child's progress in terms of these agreements.

### Group Conferences Are Effective

In 1948 an evaluation was made of the parent-reporting plan, and the following modifications were made. The first conference in the fall, instead of being an individual parent conference, is now a group conference. All of the parents of a class in the school are invited to attend one conference at which the goals of the school are explained and the objectives for this particular group are interpreted. In addition, the teacher attempts to make the parents aware of the growth and developmental characteristics of the children in relation to these objectives. This conference is held during a ten-day period beginning early in October. The second conference of the modified plan is the previously explained individual parent conference. The third report may include an individual parent conference or a form report.

This fall the first group conferences were held. Out of an enrollment of approximately 5,200 kindergarten through eighth grade pupils, almost 4,000 parents attended, including over 900 fa-

thers. Last year, one or both parents of ninety-eight percent of the pupils attended an individual parent conference.

The parents of one child commented: "We think the conference gave us a good picture of the year's plans. We can work better with Nancy when she needs help."

A teacher commented: "I sincerely believe that this procedure in reporting is most helpful to both parents and teachers."

### We Believe . . .

Reporting to parents by the conference method is valuable because it is a cooperative process, an integral part of teaching. It includes planning, recording, and evaluation of the "whole" child. It helps parents and teachers to understand the child, and builds better rapport. It explains that which written words never could. It helps the child plan, develop, and evaluate his sense of responsibility and, in many cases, brings both parents into the working relationship with the schools.

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