

# Reporting Pupil Progress: Alternatives to Grading

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*What are the criteria of excellence in assessing pupil achievement? Some of these are indicated here.*

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**T**HERE ARE numerous ways to report pupil achievement to parents, each plan having its strengths and weaknesses. No doubt, one of the best approaches in reporting pupil progress to parents may be the use of parent-teacher conferences. In some schools, the student is directly involved in these conferences. Involvement by the participating student in parent-teacher conferences has much to recommend itself in terms of democratic tenets in grading and evaluation.

In a face-to-face situation, relevant questions concerning the pupil's performance may be asked by both the teacher and the parent or parents and pupils' products, such as written reports and art work, may be viewed. The success of the parent-teacher conference will depend upon criteria such as the following:

1. Both the teacher and the parents or guardian should feel relaxed so that problems may be identified and solutions sought.

2. The teacher and the parents should all want to help the learner toward optimum achievement.

3. There is recognition of different perceptions among participants as to how to help the learner.

Thus, parent-teacher conferences could provide a meaningful approach in reporting pupil progress to parents.

As is true with many innovations in education, this method also has its pitfalls. A major weakness is that some parents may not be able to attend these conferences. Others may not feel comfortable visiting with the teacher to discuss their child's achievement and progress.

## Use of the Telephone in Reporting Pupil Progress

A telephone call can be an effective way of reporting pupil progress. Face-to-face conferences need not be necessary when communicating ideas to parents or guardians by phone. Further advantages in using this means to report pupil progress to parents can be the following:

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1. Progress can be reported at any time rather than waiting for specific intervals such as after report cards have been issued. Parents or guardians may respond to comments as the need arises, thus initiating two-way communication.

2. At times, the school secretary may convey selected positive information given by the teacher pertaining to a student's progress, such as reading the contents of a creative poem or story written by the child to the parent or guardian. This has implications for utilizing the teacher's time effectively.

3. More frequent reporting of pupil progress is made possible by using the telephone.

4. Parents or guardians who cannot attend parent-teacher conferences for various reasons may be reached by telephone.

5. When reporting positive items pertaining to a child's progress through the use of the telephone, parents and guardians may soon feel that conferences are rewarding and valuable. This may open doors to parent-

teacher conferences held in a face-to-face situation.

### **Student-Teacher Conferences To Assess Performance**

An adequate number of conferences to assess student achievement need to be conducted by the teacher involving individual students. Periodically, the progress of students could be evaluated within committees or small groups. With teacher guidance students could evaluate items such as the following in a conference setting:

1. Relevancy of learnings developed
2. Learning activities most beneficial to learners
3. Reasonableness in terms of quantity and quality of learnings achieved
4. Opportunities to work on objectives and learning experiences involving concerns of students
5. Quality of the learning environment for optimal learner achievement

6. Variety of learning activities pursued in the class setting

In addition, the student should diagnose his or her own needs to determine additional learning experiences to remedy identified deficiencies.

Data obtained from these conferences should be evaluated by the teacher and used ultimately in improving the curriculum. Information obtained from these conferences must judiciously be used by the involved teacher or teachers to improve the quality of teaching-learning situations.

### Teacher Observation of Pupil Performance

Teacher observation is valuable in evaluating achievement of individual pupils. Observations made must always be evaluated in terms of standards or criteria. Thus, the teacher must study trends in his or her own area of specialty in teaching. The teacher may observe pupil behavior pertaining to the following categories:

1. Revealing interest in learning
2. Perceiving purpose in ongoing learning activities
3. Understanding what is being learned
4. Desiring to extend learnings by volunteering to do additional work



A telephone call can be a quick, effective way of reporting pupil progress.

5. Helping other learners achieve their optimum

6. Working well with others.

If pupils do not exhibit behavior that is in harmony with the above criteria, the teacher may evaluate his or her own teaching in terms of the following standards:

1. How can I interest each pupil in ongoing learning activities?

2. What can I do to have pupils perceive the purpose or reason for participating in ongoing learning activities?

3. What can be done to have each pupil understand what is being taught?

4. How can pupils be stimulated so that a genuine desire to learn is in evidence?

5. What can I do to aid learners in developing well socially?

In conclusion, it is important to utilize standards of high quality in evaluating and reporting pupil progress. An atmosphere of respect must be in evidence when conducting parent-teacher conferences. Students should be active participants in these conferences since their interests are definitely involved. The teacher may obtain valuable data to improve the curriculum from the use of conferences conducted with students individually, as well as in small groups. Teacher observation is a valuable technique to use in assessing pupil achievement; recommended criteria must be used in evaluating these observations. Self-evaluation by teachers is of utmost importance in working toward an improved curriculum for all learners!

### References

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