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A STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOL ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' AND ELEMENTARY ADMINISTRATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF GRADES AS COMPARED WITH SELECTED ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTING

By

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOL ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' AND ELEMENTARY ADMINISTRATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF GRADES AS COMPARED WITH SELECTED ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTING

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This study was undertaken to determine the attitudes of Middle Cities Education Association (MCEA) elementary teachers and administrators toward the use of A B C D F grading and seven alternative forms of reporting: blanket grading, check list, credit/no credit, narratives, parent conferences, pass-fail, and self-evaluation. The researcher also examined whether certain demographic variables (gender, degree(s) held, grade level taught/administrative post held, and years of paid experience in education) affected reporting attitudes.

This study replicated the Scharffe (1977) study, which drew a sample from Michigan, Georgia, Tennessee, and West Virginia. This study, however, focused on three large and three small school districts in the MCEA. The statistical procedures included repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance, frequency counting, chi-square analyses of correlations, and standard deviation augmented by application of Cramer's V.

This study supported Scharffe's findings: (1) Parent conferences were most preferred by teachers and administrators; (2) A B C D F grading was the second most favored method for the combined group of teachers and administrators; (3) Interests of students was the most important consideration of teachers and administrators when selecting their preferred reporting method; (4) Blanket grading, credit/no credit, pass-fail, and self-evaluation were rejected in favor of parent conferences, A B C D F, narratives, and check list.

The differences between the findings of this study and Scharffe's were: (1) The gender of teachers or administrators was not a significant factor in their attitudes toward all eight reporting methods, but it was in Scharffe's study; (2) Check list was teachers' second choice, whereas narratives was administrators' second choice, but in Scharffe's study, A B C D F was the second choice of teachers a group, whereas for administrators as a group it was the most desirable reporting method.

The implication of this study is that, because teachers and administrators in both studies rated students as the most important consideration and parent conferences as the most preferred method of grade reporting, they need consistent input from students and their parents to choose the best reporting method to meet the objectives of instruction.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

"WAD-JA-GET?" is the question raised by students, regardless of grade level, when they receive their grades on daily assignments or at the end of the semester (Kirschenbaum, Simon, & Napier, 1971). This deep anxiety about traditional grades concerns not only students, but their parents as well. Both groups often are not sure of the extent of accuracy of the grade. "Grades must go," stated Simon and Hart (1973), clearly defining their position and taking on the questions of those who hesitate.

Traditional grades--A B C D F--are usually the method used to report student achievement. A number of studies on the topic of giving students traditional grades have been discussed by writers not only in the past, but also in recent years. Melby, Simon, Priestly, and others are some of the strongest critics of letter grades. Some of the earliest critics of grades stated that "grades are unscientific, subjective and seldom relative to educational objectives" (Kirschenbaum et al., 1971, p. 62). These writers further stated, "Grades tend to divide students into unrecognizable groups, reflecting inferior and superior qualities, thus often becoming the basis for social relationships" (p. 62).

Melby (1966) made a strong case against traditional grades when he stated:

> Our marking system is no longer relevant to the needs and educational programs of our society. It says nothing meaningful about a pupil. It glosses over exceptional effort on the part of some pupils and lack of effort on the part of others. It says nothing about the most important outcomes of education. (p. 266)

The Scharffe (1977) study, which this writer replicated, reported that the use of letter grades was the second choice of elementary teachers and administrators, whereas parent conferences were their first choice. The check list and narrative reporting were teachers' third and fourth choices in the assessment of pupil progress, whereas the elementary administrators chose the narrative reporting and check list third and fourth, respectively. This study was undertaken in an attempt to follow up on the Scharffe study, to determine whether the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators have changed inthe past two decades.

Purpose of the Study

Traditional grading has been an integral part of educational practice in reporting pupil progress for students and parents. However, evidence is emerging against the use of letter grades (A B C D F). The researcher's purpose in this study was to determine whether elementary teachers and administrators are beginning to raise questions about the use of grades as compared to a number of other forms of reporting pupil progress. Another purpose was to follow

up on the Scharffe study to determine whether the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators have changed in the past two decades.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The following research questions were posed to guide the collection of data for this study. The corresponding hypotheses were formulated to test the data gathered for the research.

Research Question 1: Do elementary teachers in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

Hypothesis 1a: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward blanket grading are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1b: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward check list reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1c: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward credit/ no credit reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1d: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward narrative reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1e: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward parent conferences are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1f: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward pass-fail reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1g: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward self-evaluation are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Research Question 2: Do elementary school administrators in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

Hypothesis 2a: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward blanket grading are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2b: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward check list reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2c: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward credit/no credit reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2d: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward narrative reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2e: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward parent conferences are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2f: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward pass-fail reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2g: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward self-evaluation are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Research Question 3: If elementary school teachers do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected grading alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

Research Question 4: If elementary school administrators do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

Research Question 5: To what extent does a relationship exist between a teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting and the teacher's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level teacher was trained to teach, and (e) school status?

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship exist between an administrator's preference for a particular form of reporting and the administrator's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level administrator was trained to teach, and (e) school status?

Research Question 7: To what extent do the teachers and administrators differ, or have similarities, in their attitudes toward a particular form of pupil progress reporting?

Significance of the Problem

The use of letter grades has been an integral part of education, not only at the elementary level, but also at the middle school and high school levels. In the vast majority of cases, parents, too, have gone through the educational system and have experienced traditional grades--A B C D F--the only method of reporting pupil progress. Usually, parents who receive good grades have only positive words about the grading system, whereas those who receive poor grades have much to say about the use of grades. Parents know that they spent their time and energy in school doing those things that will result in the best grades.

Wise and Newman (1965) pointed out that "evidence is mounting against these traditional grading practices, and educators are beginning to be increasingly concerned with the grading problem" (p. 253). Because of this concern about traditional grading, educators are attempting other types of reporting of pupil progress. Unfortunately, the grade changes emerge very slowly. Far too often, changes in pupil progress reporting are made with little thought of parent involvement, which results in abandonment of the newer reporting system. In a study of teachers and parents of 2,150 students, Otto et al. (1957) found that both parents and teachers wanted realistic, factual descriptions of student development. Furthermore, they wanted descriptive reports about strengths and weaknesses, as well as how they could be of assistance in pupil growth.

Ebel (cited in Otto et al., 1957) and Mehrens and Lehmann (1973), professors at Michigan State University, wrote in support of the traditional A B C D F reporting, whereas Wise and Newman (1965), Melby (1966), Wrinkle (1947), and others have taken a position to eliminate traditional grading in favor of other more descriptive methods. This study was undertaken in an attempt to determine the state of affairs as related to pupil progress reporting and to ascertain whether there is a difference in reporting pupil progress as reported by Scharffe in 1977 and in the present study.

Methodology

Selection of Sample

The total number of school districts in the Middle Cities Education Association was 27, ranging from a large school district such as Lansing to a small school district such as Mt. Clemens. To ensure that the sample included large and small school districts, the names of all of the school districts were placed in a container. A graduate student not connected in any way with this study was asked to draw seven slips from the container. On the first attempt, a fair sample was picked, including both small and large school districts. Ten school districts were included in the sample. The elementary teachers and principals from each of these schools were included in the sample.

Distribution of the Survey

The principals of the randomly selected elementary schools were contacted by telephone, asking for their cooperation in participating in this study. In the large school district, a central office person was contacted as a liaison, who then contacted the elementary administrators for permission to be included in the study. In all cases, the questionnaires were distributed to the administrators to be sure that returned questionnaires did not include anyone's name. In other words, confidentiality was adhered to.

Length of the Survey Instrument

Three graduate students who were practicing teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire. It took these students from 22 to 28 minutes to complete the questionnaire, for an average time of 25 minutes. A modified Likert-type scale response system was used; the choices for responses ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." A forced-choice method was used to make the respondents either agree or disagree with the statements presented. Questions were included that asked for reasons why a particular response was made. These responses were codified to enable the researcher to report the data.

Treatment of the Data

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to analyze the data. Various statistical procedures were used, including F-tests, chi-square analyses, and frequency distribution. From these procedures, statistical data were drawn that were used to draw conclusions. Descriptive statistics were obtained, which enabled the researcher to answer the various research questions posed in this study.

Delimitations of the Study

The validity of the study may be affected by the following factors.

1. This study was limited to elementary schools and included kindergarten through grade five.

2. Only elementary schools in the Middle Cities Education Association were included in the study.

3. The researcher assumed that all of the administrators and teachers who completed the questionnaire were certified as educators by the State of Michigan Department of Education.

4. The researcher assumed that both the teachers and administrators would respond to the best of their ability regarding the various practices of reporting pupil progress.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature as related to this study includes the following sections:

1. Review of the findings from the Scharffe study.
2. Writings in support of grades.
3. Opponents of letter grades.
4. Alternative reporting methods.

Analysis of Data

Selection of the Sample

A table of random numbers was used to determine the needed sample within the school districts of the Middle Cities Education Association. In those schools chosen for the sample, the administrator and all of the teachers participated in the study.

Distribution of the Survey Instrument

A letter was sent to the principal of each school selected for the sample. The purpose of the letter was to inform the principals of the procedures for distributing, completing, and returning the questionnaires.

Length of the Survey Instrument

Approximately 20 minutes were needed to complete the questionnaire. A modified Likert-scale response system was used. Choices for responses ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Respondents were forced to either agree or disagree with the questionnaire statements. Besides following through with this procedure, the respondents had an opportunity to present their reasons for certain responses. Written rationales for responses were later codified for reporting purposes.

Treatment of the Data

The data were programmed through the use of the SPSS statistical computer package available on the CDC 6000 computer at Michigan State University. F-tests, chi-square correlations, and frequency distributions were used to obtain the statistical information. Conclusions were then drawn from these data.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this study.

Attitude. A teacher's or administrator's feeling, manner, and behavior toward a situation or cause. This attitude could be positive or negative.

Blanket-grade reporting. For a particular task or course, every student receives the same passing evaluation mark, regardless of any difference in student performance.

Check list reporting. Students are evaluated on the basis of their outcomes on a carefully defined list of desired social, emotional, physical, and intellectual behaviors. The teacher checks the behavior that best describes the student's progress.

Credit/no credit reporting. A student is given a "credit" or "no credit" for a particular task or course. No letter grades are given.

Elementary school. A public, tax-supported school that includes kindergarten through grade five.

Elementary school administrators. Certified personnel who have the responsibility of overseeing the daily operation of the elementary school program and have the responsibility of recommending hiring, laying off, discharging, promoting, transferring, assigning, rewarding, and disciplining of employees.

Elementary school teacher. A certified teacher who teaches in kindergarten through grade five.

Grade. The grade level or year the student has been in school--namely, kindergarten through grade five.

Letter grade. The student's performance on a test or at the end of the semester in various instructional areas--namely, reading, mathematics, social studies, science, language arts, art, music, and physical education. The grades assigned are A, B, C, D, and F, with "A" being the highest grade and "F" the lowest grade.

Narrative reporting. The classroom teacher describes the student's performance for a particular assignment or course, without the use of traditional A, B, C, D, or F grades.

Parent conference reporting. Plans call for the parent to come to school to meet with the teacher to discuss the child's progress in meeting the various instructional objectives or goals.

Pass-fail reporting. A teacher assigns a "pass" or a "fail" to a particular assignment. No letter grades are given.

Public school. An educational institution that serves the boys and girls within a particular community, and is supported by tax monies paid by the local residents. This excludes all educational institutions supported by tuition or affiliated with private organizations, which may require membership of the constituents.

Self-evaluation reporting. The student has the opportunity to evaluate his or her own achievement in meeting the objectives of the course.

Overview

This chapter contained an introduction to the study and a statement of the problem. The purpose of the study, as well as the research questions and hypotheses, was set forth. The significance of the problem and methodology used in conducting the study were discussed next, followed by the delimitations of the study and definitions of key terms.

Chapter II contains a review of literature pertinent to the study. The Scharffe study, which was replicated in the present research, is discussed. Then literature in support of letter grades is reviewed, followed by a review of writings by opponents of letter grades. Other methods of reporting pupil progress--namely, self-evaluation, pass-fail grading, credit/no credit grading, blanket grading, check list reporting, narrative reports, and parent conferences--also are discussed.

The methodology used in conducting the study is described more fully in Chapter III. The population and sample are described, and the development and content of the survey instrument are discussed. Statistical methods used in the data analysis are explained.

The results of the data analyses are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, major findings, conclusions drawn from the study findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Review of the Scharffe Study

The issue of effective assessment of student achievement in school has been researched, studied, and written about dozens, if not hundreds, of times during the twentieth century in America alone. Scharffe completed a doctoral dissertation in 1977 at Michigan State University entitled "A Study of Selected Public School Elementary Teacher and Elementary Administrator Attitudes Toward the Use of Grades as Compared With Selected Alternative Forms of Pupil Progress Reporting." The alternatives selected for study included blanket grading, whereby everyone in the class received the same "grade"; check list reporting, using a list of academic or behavior outcomes to be checked by the teacher without indications of a letter grade; narrative (written) reports, consisting of individually prepared paragraph-form descriptions of student progress; individual parent conferences, consisting of personal face-to-face meetings between teachers and parents to discuss student progress; pass-fail evaluation, which consisted of only two levels of assessment; credit/no credit, again consisting of only two levels of assessment; and self-evaluation, whereby the student determines whether he or she satisfactorily met a set of preconceived goals and objectives.

The results of the Scharffe (1977) study indicated the first choice of elementary teachers and administrators for reporting student progress to be the parent-teacher conference, regardless of the type of written report that may be offered by the school as a permanent record. The second most favored method of reporting student progress by teachers and administrators was grades or marks, specifically A, B, C, D, F, regardless of any other reporting method that may be used in concert with them. The third and fourth most preferred methods of student assessment by classroom teachers were the check list and narrative reporting, respectively; these were the fourth and third most preferred assessment methods selected by elementary administrators. The student assessment methods of blanket grading, pass-fail, credit/no credit, and self-evaluation were all held in low esteem by teachers and administrators alike (Scharffe, 1977).

Scharffe's study was replicated in 1978 by Robert Crane at Michigan State University. However, Crane concentrated on middle school teachers and administrators throughout the state of Michigan. Although he fully accepted the validity of the results of the Scharffe study, Crane believed that the more progressive and humanized philosophy behind the emerging middle school movement throughout the United States might have had an empathetic effect on its teachers and administrators.

The results of the Crane (1978) study indicated teacher preference to be the A, B, C, D, F reporting as their first method of choice, followed by teacher-parent conferences. Administrators reversed their choice of reporting methods by selecting

teacher-parent conferences as their preferred method, followed by letter grades. Narratives and check lists were ranked third and fourth by teachers and administrators alike, and Crane concluded that these two methods were viewed as worthy of consideration. Self-evaluation, credit/no credit, pass-fail, and blanket grades were not favored in the rankings by either group, and Crane concluded that their use would be met with considerable resistance.

Writings in Support of Grades

The monthly national publication Education Week printed a story by Lynn Olson (1995) in which she described the typical controversy that often surfaces whenever there is a movement to change the manner in which schools assess student achievement. Teachers and administrators embarked on a program to communicate to parents what they believed to be a more accurate, humane, and equitable reporting system that essentially removed the use of traditional marks, or letter grades, in grades one through three. Instead, they recommended using the letter "C" to indicate Consistently Successful, the letter "M" for Making Progress, and the letter "I" for Improvement Needed. A similar system was introduced at the same time for use in grades four, five, and six on a districtwide basis.

Although teachers, administrators, and parents were represented on the school improvement committee, which spent a full year studying and designing the alternative pilot program for student assessment, there was strong backlash by many parents in the community against the new reporting system. Olson (1995) stated, "To trifle with grades, as Cranston educators learned, is to attack one of the

most basic notions about schooling and competition in America" (p. 24). One of the parents who campaigned against the new reporting system stated, "We were flabbergasted. We've seen 30 years of an A-B-C format. Maybe we're traditional. I consider us as a group to be moderate" (p. 24).

An open meeting was held in December 12, 1994, at which the five-member Cranston School Committee listened to more than two hours of heated debate, on both sides of the issue of grades versus the pilot project alternative report cards for elementary students. The results of this meeting caused the Cranston school board to unanimously agree to return letter grades to the pilot report cards for grades one through six for the January marking period (Olson, 1995).

It was also determined that a written survey would be sent to 5,000 parents in the community to get their input on the controversy. About 2,000 parents responded to the survey, and of these respondents, 1,501 did not want to continue with the pilot report card at all, and 1,638 indicated that if the pilot project continued, they wanted to add letter grades to the report card system (Olson, 1995).

To say that Grant Wiggins (1994) supported traditional grades as a positive assessment reporting method is certainly accurate; however, further explanation is required. He also took the opposing view, as reported later in this chapter. He stated, "I am not advocating the end of the use of letter grades on report cards. Letter grades per se are not the problem. Using a single grade with no clear and stable meaning to summarize all aspects of performance is a problem."

Wiggins (1994) believed that, before grades are effective, they must be interpreted within a meaningful context. There needs to be some sort of analogy or comparison. An "A" may be considered excellent, but compared to what? Wiggins thought that a single letter grade tells the parents very little, and that parents still do not know whether the grade represents relative or absolute achievement.

Wiggins (1994) advocated the use of grades, but he thought the system requires much more detail, rather than relying on a single letter grade for any given course. He proposed a six-step approach to student assessment reporting, including the following:

1. A clear distinction between standard-referenced and norm-referenced achievement.

2. Judgement about progress towards uniform K-12 exit standards, and judgements about growth expectations for each student.

3. A longitudinal reporting system that charts achievement against exit-level standards, so that a 3rd grader knows how he or she is doing against 5th grade and (sometimes) 12th grade standards.

4. Many more "sub-grades" of performance. The report card should report strengths and weaknesses.

5. Accurate distinctions between the quality of students' work and sophistication (or degree of difficulty) of their work.

6. An evaluation of the student's intellectual character (for example, persistence, attention to detail, and open-mindedness). (p. 29)

Wiggins (1994) believed that "grades are clear if clear standards and criteria are used, in a consistent way, by each teacher. Grades are unclear if they represent idiosyncratic values and vary from teacher to teacher" (p. 30). Wiggins's major position seemed to be that report cards should report growth and progress in as

much detail as possible. Yet the information should be summarized with a letter grade, primarily because parents feel the need for such a summary and the grade will provide a general frame of reference of their child's rank with other children in class.

Psychologists Ebel and Frisbie have taken both sides of the grading controversy, depending on which sources the reader reviews. Ebel (quoted in Hamachek, 1979) expressed his views in favor of letter grades with the following statement:

> The source of anxiety, dislike of schooling, and the decision to drop out of school is low achievement, which marks do not cause but simply report. In the essential process of adjusting education to individual pupils and individual pupils to education, marks are far more helpful than harmful. (p. 360)

Whereas Ebel, in particular, was generally in favor of the use of letter grades, he also readily pointed out a balanced view by describing pitfalls of the system. Ebel and Frisbie (1968) pointed out the shortcomings of the use of grades for assessing student achievement. The most obvious problem is that it is difficult to define just what a given letter grade means in the assessment process. If a child gets a "C" in arithmetic, for example, this should tell the parents that the youngster has not completely mastered all the mathematical concepts covered in the course. But the "C" does not explain the strengths or weaknesses the student may be experiencing in arithmetic. Further, there is always a level of inconsistency from one teacher to the next, from one school to the next, and even on the part of many individual teachers in assigning grades.

Ebel and Frisbie (1968) went on to point out that there are often biases and idiosyncrasies among teachers that will reduce the validity of grades used for student assessment. Some teachers may use low grades in the form of punishment for inappropriate student behavior, and at the same issue higher grades as rewards for students who display good classroom deportment.

Some proponents of letter grades have referred to the "ipsative method," whereby the student's work is compared with his own previous work, and have said that assessment on this basis makes the use of letter grades appropriate. As Cunningham (1986) pointed out:

> Grades provide feedback to the student. Most learning theorists from behaviorists to cognitivists-Gestaltists have emphasized this as a necessary component for learning. It is hard to improve unless you know how you are doing, but the feedback must also be honest. (p. 172)

Basically, most teachers want to give positive praise for student work. But, as Cunningham further stated, "When every child gets high praise, no one is getting useful feedback" (p. 172).

Opponents of Letter Grades

Because most adult practitioners today have personally experienced receiving letter grades, or marks, throughout their public and private school learning years, it seems as though the practice has gone on since the beginning of schools as institutions. However, that cannot be the case. But it is safe to say that the concept of A, B, C, D, and F marks for assessment of student achievement has been challenged almost since the turn of the twentieth century. Starch and Elliott (cited

in Ebel & Frisbie, 1968, p. 265) conducted research on this topic as early as 1912, in which English papers were given to 142 English teachers for assessment and grading. The scores on those papers ranged from 98% down to 50% on the identical student work, depending on which teacher provided the assessment. There was an obvious problem of interpretation, consistency, and reliability in using this grading method.

Wiggins (1994), like many other writers, generally appeared to support the use of letter grades, but in doing so he was careful to outline parameters that must be followed if grades are to be used. In a practical sense, a great number of teachers do not adhere to the standards demanded by Wiggins. So, was he in favor of the use of grades, or not? Wiggins wrote: "Using a single grade with no clear and stable meaning to summarize all aspects of performance is a problem" (p. 29). He further stated, "We need more, not fewer grades; and more different kinds of grades and comments if the parent is to be informed. Grades are clear if clear standards and criteria are used, in a consistent way, by each teacher" (p. 29).

Thomas Guskey (1994), a professor of education at the University of Kentucky, stated:

> What we find is that no matter what method of grading or reporting is selected, it serves some purposes well and not others. Letter grades . . . aren't inherently bad. It's just how we use them. The advantage to them is that they can communicate in a very brief form an overall summary of learning. The disadvantage is that a great deal of information is abstracted into a single symbol. (p. 14)

To state his opinions, or feelings, even more strongly, Guskey wrote, "Grading and reporting aren't essential to instruction. Teachers don't need grades or reporting

forms to teach well. Further, students don't need them to learn" (p. 14). He further stated, "Regardless of the method used, grading and reporting remain inherently subjective. In fact, the more detailed the reporting method and the more analytic the process, the more likely subjectivity will influence results" (p. 15).

Writer Alfie Kohn (cited in Olson, 1995), one of the strongest critics of letter grades, stated, "What grades offer is spurious precision, a subjective rating masquerading as an objective assessment" (p. 24). He argued that:

> Grades of any kind, even when they are not cured to create artificial scarcity--or deliberately publicized--tend to foster comparison and competition, an emphasis on relative standing. This is not only destructive to students' self-esteem and relationships but also counterproductive with respect to the quality of learning. (p. 24)

Glazer (1993) was concerned that many people think that, without "grades," the framework for success is missing, and that letter grades are the framework. She offered testimony on how grades were used when she was a youngster in school and were understood by parents and students. However, Glazer pointed out that today's curricula also teach facts, as well as strategies and processes that permit and encourage students to solve problems independently. She wrote, "[A] framework for grading this sort of learning doesn't seem to exist. Using the A,B,C system to show growth in problem-solving could be considered an oxymoron. That system contradicts the very nature of instructional activities" (p. 104). Glazer went on to say, "Today's teachers find the traditional evaluation systems inadequate for describing children's progress. Many, however, are still using grades for lack of a better procedure" (p. 104).

Hamachek (1979) believed that grading students on their learning or achieving classroom or individual goals is very tricky. He pointed to differing opinions on this topic by referring to learned individuals in the field of education. Ernest Melby, former teacher, public school superintendent, college professor, and university president had this to say:

> The marking system is irrelevant and mischievous. It is destructive. It destroys the self-concepts of millions of children every year. Note the plight of the deprived child. He often enters school at six with few of the pre-school experiences that the middle [class] children bring to school. We ask him to learn to read. He is not ready to read. We give him a low mark--we repeat the low mark for each marking period--often for as long as the child remains in school. At the end of perhaps the ninth grade, the child drops out of school. What has he learned? He has learned he cannot learn. We have told him so several dozen times. Why should he think otherwise? (cited in Hamachek, 1979, pp. 360-361)

In researching elementary education programs and practices, it was found that many writers have included pre-kindergarten through third grade in their research. Such was the case with Morrison (1984), who expressed his findings on the use of grades as follows:

> There has been a definite movement away from the traditional grading systems in which letters (**A,B,C,D,F**) are used to report pupil achievement. This spawned many alternative grading systems. The more popular alternatives were checklists, written narratives describing how and what the child achieved, and the use of letters, such as a **P** (pass), **S** (satisfactory), and **U** (unsatisfactory). The back-to-basics movement, however, advocates traditional grading, where **A** means superior work, **B** means above average, **C** means average work, and **F**, failure. Apparently, parents have always felt they knew what an **A** meant. (p. 458)

Although Morrison clearly supported the trends away from grading early childhood education programs with traditional letters (A,B,C,D,F), he found that many parents,

and certainly the more conservative individuals (particularly politicians) in society, continued to add their voices in support of maintaining traditional values.

Jarolimek and Foster (1985) pointed out what may be a self-fulfilling prophesy in the level of achievement in elementary school children. They believed there is a likelihood of children "seeing themselves" as a C student, an A student, or worse yet, an F student or a failure. Parents, peers, or even teachers may view students in the same way.

As the reader can conclude, opposition to assigning letter grades as an indication of student achievement in academic endeavors is hardly a new phenomenon. Yet another scholar, Lindeman, wrote in 1967:

> There seems to be no common point of reference which makes it possible to compare grades received from one school from one teacher with those received from another teacher in another school. Thus the best information that can be obtained from grades or marks is that a particular student, in a given course at a given time with a given teacher, was either below average, average, or above average, in terms of academic achievement. Why, then, does the practice of assigning grades persist? (p. 139)

Lindeman further stated, "Grades will remain for some time. At least try to make them reliable and valid" (p. 174).

Although the current study is a replication of Scharffe's research completed in 1977, the controversy over the use of A,B,C,D,F marks to report student achievement as compared to methods that convey a more complete "story" or description of student achievement, including much more detail, has not diminished in the past 18 years. If anything, there are probably more educators in 1996 who look on letter grades, or marks, with disfavor than in the mid-1970s. As

Kirschenbaum et al. suggested in 1971, there are still parents and students alike who will persistently want to know, "Wad-ja-get?"

Alternative Reporting Methods

There are other methods of assessment of student achievement that could be considered to replace the letter grades, or marks, that have been considered by educators, and probably used with effectiveness in certain situations. Those alternative assessment reporting techniques were explored as part of this study. They include the following:

Self-evaluation. The student evaluates his or her own progress in writing or in a conference. The student determines his or her own grade. To use this method, the student should be involved in developing his or her educational goals and the means to achieve them, in collaboration with the teacher.

Pass-fail grading. The teacher states the criteria for a passing grade. The teacher and students can decide the grade together, and the students have the right to redo failing work to get a passing grade.

Credit/no credit grading. This method is similar to pass-fail, but credit/no credit can be modified and limited.

Blanket grading. This technique involves teamwork on the part of the entire class or portions thereof. The teacher, with involvement of the students, determines the level of achievement required of the entire group that will work together as a team. The level of achievement will be considered as a joint venture; therefore,

every student on the team or in the class receives exactly the same grade, or equal assessment.

Check list reporting. This technique requires a complete list of skills to be taught (learned) within each course of study, based on established goals and objectives. As students progress through their study assignments, the teacher "checks off" the skills mastered by the student on his or her own personal skill sheet for the course. It is assumed that all students in the class will have similar, if not identical, skill sheets.

Narrative reports. Narrative reports are written by the teacher, in paragraph form, to the parents of each student in the class, describing achievement or lack thereof. This system was once a common reporting technique, especially at the elementary school level.

Parent conferences. The parent conference involves a prearranged meeting between the teacher, the parent(s), and often the child. Such conferences can take place as often as is desirable, but they usually occur at the end of each assessment or marking period, depending on the policies of the school district.

The seven student assessment techniques described above are the same techniques researched by Scharffe (1977) when he compared the levels of esteem held for them by elementary school teachers and administrators as compared to their preferences for the use of A,B,C,D,F grades, or marks, to report student achievement. The present researcher replicated the Scharffe study to determine whether there had been any significant changes in the attitudes of Michigan

elementary school educators toward these assessment reporting methods since 1977.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This chapter contains a description of the target population and sampling procedures. The design of the survey instrument is explained, and the statistical methods used in analyzing the data are discussed.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study included teachers and administrators from elementary schools in the Middle Cities Education Association. This professional organization is limited to Michigan and includes 27 school districts ranging from small districts to large districts the size of Grand Rapids. The large school districts were numbered consecutively, and the smaller districts were also numbered consecutively. A table of random numbers was used to determine the required sample to be surveyed within the large and the small school districts. This procedure gave a cross-section of schools within the Association.

A letter was sent to the principals of those elementary schools included in the survey, to obtain permission to send copies of the survey instrument to all of the full-time teachers within their schools. As soon as a reply was received giving an affirmative answer to participate in the study, questionnaires were sent

to the administrators to distribute to the staff. Only one school district decided not to participate because of internal problems. The large sample is an indication of the close cooperation of schools within the Middle Cities Education Association.

Development and Description of the Survey Instrument

The survey instrument developed in the Scharffe (1977) study to determine teachers' and principals' responses to the various reporting practices was used in this study. Nicholas P. Georgiady from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, was asked to examine the questionnaire for possible improvements. The reply received by the researcher pointed out that the questionnaire was appropriate and did not need any changes. Furthermore, Georgiady stated that the questionnaire was designed to make sure the replies could be scored with ease.

A four-section format was implemented to permit a double-density, op-scan scoring layout. The format of the instrument is described in the following paragraphs.

Section I: General directions followed by clear and complete definitions of the eight reporting practices.

Section II: Definitions for the various response categories, ranging from SA (strongly agree) to A (agree) to D (disagree) to SD (strongly disagree). Forty statements were included in this section, and responses were made by checking the square or filling in the square with a pencil.

Section III: Respondents were to indicate their agreement or disagreement with particular statements. Furthermore, the eight methods of reporting pupil progress were included, and respondents were asked to rank them, from their favorite method to the method they least favored.

Section IV: Includes questions pertaining to personal characteristics of the respondents, including gender of the respondent, number of years of paid experience in education, the highest college degree earned, and the grade level the respondent was teaching. Administrators were to check "administrator" even though they might have been teaching. This section also included op-scan scorability. A boxed coding frame was used by the researcher so that, upon return of the questionnaires, the pages were sent through the scanner individually, allowing the data to be linked by the code.

The schools that were committed to participating in this study received copies of the questionnaires. A prepaid return envelope was included so that the principal could return the completed questionnaires. After three weeks, a phone call was made to the principal as a reminder to collect the completed questionnaires and return them within two weeks. The number of questionnaires returned by each school district, including the number of teachers and administrators responding, is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Number of teachers and administrators responding to the survey instrument, by school district.

School District	Teachers Responding	Administrators Responding
Flint	124	9
Grand Rapids	102	7
Niles	49	3
Port Huron	46	2
Mt. Clemens	73	3
Waterford	38	2
TOTAL	432	26

Validation of the Survey Instrument

The instrument was validated in the original study by Scharffe (1977). The following discussion provides the reader with an overview of the validation process. There was no effort to make any changes after Georgiady evaluated and approved the Scharffe questionnaire for use in this study.

A discussion of the Scharffe instrument follows. The five-page instrument has four sections containing 54 items. Section one, page one, provides general instructions to the reader on steps to be taken to complete all sections of the questionnaire. The reader is asked to use a soft lead pencil in sections two and four and to refrain from using pens, magic markers, or other such instruments. Also, the first page includes definitions of the eight grading and reporting practices under study. For example:

BLANKET GRADING — Giving a common mark to all students. Usually, students are informed in advance of the work as to what the common mark will be for all.

Section two, on pages two and three of the questionnaire, includes 40 attitudinal statements related to reporting and grading practices. In this section, an attempt is made to obtain a general evaluation of a particular reporting method. Opposing items are included. For example:

1. Self-evaluation reporting is better than giving a "grade." SA A D SD

The respondent is asked to mark one of the four choices.

In this section, an attempt is made to obtain a general evaluation of a particular reporting method. Opposing items are included, such as Item 12 in section two, "Check list reporting is really of little use to anyone," whereas Item 17 reads, "Check list reporting is good for kids and means more to them than other methods." Table 3.2 provides a summary of the opposing items for the reporting methods.

Another aspect of the reporting tool is student welfare and its connection with the various reporting practices. Using narrative reports as an example, Item 7 states, "Narrative reports are inadequate and inaccurate." The opposing "student concern" item, Item 39, states, "Narrative reports come closer to accuracy than most any other form of reporting." Table 3.3 shows the opposing "student concern" items for all reporting methods, including A B C D F.

Table 3.2: Opposing items of a general evaluation nature for the eight reporting practices selected.

Reporting Method	Item	Opposing Item
Blanket grading	2	33
Check list reporting	12	36
Credit/no credit	13	28
A B C D F (grades)[a]		
Narrative reporting	7	39
Parent conferences	14	40
Pass-fail	11	3
Self-evaluation	9	26

[a]The purpose of this study was to compare A B C D F with selected alternatives; a different treatment was needed for the A B C D F method. Items 8, 16, and 38 all gave A B C D F a positive treatment. Legitimate responses to these items would be expected to be uniform, i.e., agreement/disagreement with one, agreement/disagreement with all. The opposing items were numbers 1, 6, 10, 15, 24, 30, and 32. These items directly compared the seven alternatives with the A B C D F method. If, then, a respondent disliked A B C D F, this person would respond in disagreement to items 8, 16, and 38 while agreeing with one or more of the opposing items.

Table 3.3: Opposing items of student concern for the eight reporting practices selected.

Reporting Method	Item	Opposing Item
Blanket grading	21	25
Check list reporting	4	17
Credit/no credit	19	37
A B C D F (grades)	22	31
Narrative reporting	18	27
Parent conferences	23	5
Pass-fail	29	35
Self-evaluation	20	34

The Scharffe study and the present study focused on a comparison of A B C D F grading with various alternatives.

Section three of the research instrument includes eight open-response items for the purpose of obtaining information from the teachers and principals as to why they agree or disagree with given items covering all eight reporting methods. This activity was intended to provide the researcher with more in-depth attitudes of the respondents, rather than just the responses on the Likert-type scale. Item 49 asks for a ranking of the eight recording practices. A "1" on this scale shows the respondent's approval or the favorite method of reporting the particular practice, and "8" is the method that the respondent does not approve of or the least favorite method of reporting.

Section four seeks data about the respondent, such as (a) gender, (b) number of years of paid experience in education, (c) highest college degree held, and (d) teacher's grade-level assignment or, in the case of an administrator, a place to check "administrator."

Dr. Nicholas P. Georgiady, Department of Curriculum, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, reviewed the questionnaire. Phone conversations were held between Dr. Georgiady and Dr. Louis Romano, Michigan State University, to ensure that there were no problems concerning the questionnaire. No revisions were made. To ensure that readers of the questionnaire clearly understood the language used in the survey instrument, 14 graduate students enrolled in a class were given copies of the research instrument. A week after the distribution, the

students had an opportunity to discuss any difficulties they had experienced with the language used in the instrument. Only one of the students experienced any problems with the instrument. This student was from another country, and a few of the terms used in the instrument were not familiar to him. Scharffe checked for internal consistency of the various items, so this process was not repeated in the present study.

Statistical Methods Used in the Data Analysis

Statistical methods and descriptive procedures were employed in this study to test the hypotheses set forth in this study. Research Questions 1 and 2 were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance of repeated measurements. The first two research questions and corresponding hypotheses were as follows:

Research Question 1: Do elementary teachers in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

> Hypothesis 1a: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward blanket grading are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.
>
> Hypothesis 1b: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward check list reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.
>
> Hypothesis 1c: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward credit/ no credit reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1d: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward narrative reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1e: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward parent conferences are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1f: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1g: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward self-evaluation are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Research Question 2: Do elementary school administrators in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

Hypothesis 2a: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward blanket grading are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2b: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward check list reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2c: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward credit/no credit reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2d: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward narrative reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2e: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward parent conferences are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2f: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2g: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward self-evaluation are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Research Questions 3 and 4 were as follows:

Research Question 3: If elementary school teachers do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected grading alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

Research Question 4: If elementary school administrators do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

In Research Questions 3 and 4, if certain teachers and administrators ranked a reporting method as either "1" or "2," or "7" or "8" on the ranking item (Item 49), they were then compared across their codified responses to the open-ended questions (Items 41 through 48) in Section III. Open-ended responses were codified into four response modes as follows: (1) student-oriented responses, such as "When judging children's projects or reports, check lists are measurable ways of evaluating all parts of the whole," or "On a card, you can quickly say a great deal with a well-written check list"; (2) teacher-oriented responses, such as "Narratives take time, are subjective based on many factors like teacher fatigue, and are difficult to write"; (3) parent-oriented responses, such as "Most parents are only interested in grades because this is the only grading system that they have experienced"; and (4) other responses, such as "Only experience I had."

Using the codifying procedure allowed for scoring any comments that seemed to include more than one of the code areas. For example, "In addition to grades, narrative reporting and parent conferences can be most productive for the students."

The frequency counting technique included the following steps with the data cards:

1. Teachers and administrators sorted the master card deck.

2. In the following step, each deck was then sorted on a response to Item 49 of either a "1" or "2" or a "7" or "8."

3. In open-ended questions, a frequency counting was done on the basis of the codified answers: student, teacher, parent, or other. Also, this procedure included any combination of student, teacher, and parent responses.

The statistical procedure of chi-square analysis of correlations was implemented for ranking Item 49. This procedure enabled the researcher to answer Research Questions 5 and 6:

Research Question 5: To what extent does a relationship exist between a teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting and the teacher's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level teacher was trained to teach, and (e) school status.

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship exist between an administrator's preference for a particular form of reporting and the

administrator's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level administrator was trained to teach, and (e) school status.

Correlations were then determined for all eight reporting methods and each demographic variable. To determine the magnitude of association on each variable, the chi-square statistic was used.

Each reporting practice, as designated by teachers and administrators (Item 7), was analyzed by using average rankings on Item 49. Then the average rankings were charted descriptively and standard deviations of rankings were determined.

Research Question 7: To what extent do the teachers and administrators differ, or have similarities, in their attitudes toward a particular form of pupil progress reporting?

In this study, 432 teachers and 26 administrators were sampled. This made it difficult to arrive at a statistical application seeking a significant (.05) level of difference. Unfortunately, there would be a great error, so it was decided to use descriptive techniques as the form of analysis for Research Question 7. Furthermore, item analysis was used for the 40 items from Section II.

Summary

Included in this chapter were a description of the population, procedure for sampling, and the statistical methods used in data analysis. Also, it should be pointed out that the Scharffe instrument was used in this study. The sampling involved the schools in the Middle Cities Education Association, which included

432 elementary teachers and 26 administrators. The Scharffe questionnaire included four sections, which were op-scan scorable. Eight open-ended questions were included to obtain explanations for the responses given on certain items.

The following statistical methodology was used for the seven research questions. Multivariate analysis of variance of repeated measurements was used for Research Questions 1 and 2, frequency counting for Research Questions 3 and 4, chi-square analysis of correlations for Research Questions 5 and 6, and descriptively charted average rankings and standard deviations of average rankings of Item 49 for Research Question 7. Item analyses also were performed on selected items from Section II so as to obtain average responses from both teachers and administrators.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators in the Middle Cities Education Association toward several selected student evaluation and reporting methods. Specifically, the researcher attempted to determine the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators toward letter grades (A B C D F), and whether or not they favored this method or one of the alternative methods presented in this study. The data were gathered from the responses of a sample of elementary teachers and administrators during the 1995-96 school year.

In this chapter the researcher presents the results of the data analyses conducted for this study. A description of the statistical techniques employed in this study is followed by the findings from each data analysis and a related interpretation. The statistical findings are organized in order of the research questions.

Statistical Methods

Multivariate repeated measures analysis of variance was used to analyze Research Questions 1 and 2. Seven hypotheses were tested, in which the A B C D F method was directly compared with the seven selected alternatives. The

repeated measures analysis of variance was then employed. The 458 subjects were treated as one group of observations, and each subject was taken as a unit of analysis.

The cross-tabulation technique was used to answer Research Questions 3 and 4. The chi-square statistic was used to determine whether the two variables of a cross-tabulation were independent of each other, to answer Research Questions 5 and 6, where four demographic variables (gender, years of experience, academic degrees, and grade level taught or administrative position) were considered to have any associations with the eight possible rankings of reporting methods in Item 49.

The frequency counting technique was used for Research Question 7, to examine any possible relationships between teachers' and administrators' reporting preferences and their responses to the open-ended questions. Frequency correlations then were calculated to determine possible correlations significant at the .05 level or below. Frequency distribution was used in describing the range of respondents over the demographic variables.

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance

Research Question 1: Do elementary teachers in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

Research Question 2: Do elementary school administrators in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

To answer the above questions, seven hypotheses were developed and tested:

Hypothesis 1: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward blanket grading are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward check list reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 3: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward credit/no credit reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 4: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward narrative reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 5: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward parent conferences are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 6: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward pass-fail reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 7: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward self-evaluation are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Repeated measures analysis of variance was employed to test these seven hypotheses. The design treated the 458 subjects as a group of observations and each individual subject as a unit of analysis. The group's attitude toward the eight reporting methods was the repeated factor, which had eight levels. Table 4.1 shows the design matrix for the analysis.

The results of the repeated measures analysis are presented in Table 4.2. The observed significance level was less than .0005, and the degrees of freedom for each error term was 396.

Table 4.1: Design matrix for repeated measures analysis of variance.

Subject	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
1								
2								
3								
. . .								
458								

Subject: The ith subject (i = 1, 2, 3, . . . 458).

M1 = Blanket grading
M2 = Check list
M3 = Credit/no credit
M4 = A B C D F
M5 = Narratives
M6 = Parent conferences
M7 = Pass-fail
M8 = Self-evaluation

Table 4.2: Results of the repeated measures analysis.

Source of Variation	df	Hypothesis Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
U_{m1}-U_{m4}	1	5022.03	573.45	.000*
U_{m2}-U_{m4}	1	.73	.08	.779
U_{m3}-U_{m4}	1	2159.89	268.79	.000*
U_{m5}-U_{m4}	1	.73	.07	.795
U_{m6}-U_{m4}	1	298.08	36.86	.000*
U_{m7}-U_{m4}	1	2419.14	320.73	.000*
U_{m8}-U_{m4}	1	739.96	57.07	.000*

*Significant at alpha = .0005.

As shown in Table 4.2, a significant difference was found in the attitudes toward five reporting methods and A B C D F grades separately. In addition, the attitudes toward narratives and check list reporting did not differ significantly from those toward A B C D F grades. If these tests were to be accepted, all but Hypotheses 2 and 4 would be rejected. A further test was needed to estimate the magnitude of differences to examine the values of each contrast. The magnitude of differences in Table 4.2 is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Magnitude of differences found in repeated measures analysis.

Contrast	Mean Difference	SE Mean
U_{m1}-U_{m4}	3.59	0.08
U_{m2}-U_{m4}	0.04	0.09
U_{m3}-U_{m4}	2.35	0.08
U_{m5}-U_{m4}	0.07	0.09
U_{m6}-U_{m4}	-0.83	0.08
U_{m7}-U_{m4}	2.48	0.09
U_{m8}-U_{m4}	1.37	0.10

As shown in Table 4.3, all of the differences that appeared in Table 4.2 truly were as pronounced as they may originally have looked except for one difference (U_{m6}-U_{m4}).

Findings

Hypothesis 1: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward blanket grading are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was rejected. Teachers and administrators clearly chose A B C D F grades over blanket grading. Their attitudes toward blanket grading differed significantly from their attitudes toward A B C D F grading.

Hypothesis 2: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward check list reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was retained. Teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward check list reporting did not vary significantly from their attitudes toward A B C D F grading. Their attitudes toward these two reporting methods were very similar.

Hypothesis 3: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward credit/no credit reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward credit/no credit reporting and their attitudes toward A B C D F grading.

Hypothesis 4: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward narrative reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was retained. No significant difference was found between teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward narrative reporting and their attitudes toward A B C D F grading. Teachers and administrators had the same attitudes toward these two methods.

Hypothesis 5: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward parent conferences are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was not rejected. Very little difference existed in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward parent conferences and their attitudes toward A B C D F grading.

Hypothesis 6: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward pass-fail reporting are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was rejected. A B C D F grading stood out as the choice of teachers and administrators. They did not have the same attitudes toward pass-fail reporting.

Hypothesis 7: The attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward self-evaluation are not different from their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

The hypothesis was rejected. A significant difference was found in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward these two methods. The respondents' attitudes toward A B C D F grading were not the same as their attitudes toward self-evaluation.

Cross-Tabulation Technique

Research Question 3: If elementary school teachers do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected grading alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

Research Question 4: If elementary school administrators do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

To arrive at an answer, the preceding questions were combined with Questions 1, 2, 5, and 6. As described in Chapter III, open-ended responses in Section III were coded as being student oriented, teacher oriented, parent oriented, others oriented, and STP (student, teacher, parent) oriented. For the purpose of cross-tabulation, the responses to Items 49a to 49h were separated into two groups: the high group (those who ranked a grading method as either 1 or 2 on Item 49) and the low group (those who ranked a grading method as either 7 or 8). The high and low groups were then cross-tabulated with their responses to the related open-ended questions in Section III. Because drawing information from the open-ended questions was very time consuming, the writer resampled 54% of the original data. Therefore, 250 cases actually were used for this part of the analysis. The results of the cross-tabulation are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Cross-tabulation showing rationale for responses to Items 41 through 48 of the survey instrument, based on high or low rankings of reporting methods on Item 49 of the instrument.

Open-Ended Question			Student	Teacher	Parent	Others	STP	Total
41: Pass-Fail	High	No.	8	0	0	3	0	11
		%	7.8	0.9	0.0	2.9	0.0	10.7
	Low	No.	54	2	0	31	5	49
		%	52.4	1.9	0.0	30.1	4.9	89.3
42: Parent Conferences	High	No.	25	3	42	17	38	125
		%	18.8	2.3	31.6	12.8	28.6	94.0
	Low	No.	3	0	3	1	1	8
		%	2.3	0.0	2.3	0.8	0.8	6.0

Table 4.4: Continued.

Open-Ended Question			Student	Teacher	Parent	Others	STP	Total
43: Check list	High	No.	224	7	9	41	3	84
		%	23.3	6.8	8.7	39.8	2.9	81.6
	Low	No.	5	5	2	7	0	19
		%	4.9	4.9	1.9	6.8	0.0	18.4
44: Narratives	High	No.	27	6	12	41	8	94
		%	23.9	5.3	10.6	36.3	7.1	83.2
	Low	No.	5	2	3	9	0	19
		%	4.4	1.8	2.7	8.0	0.0	16.8
45: ABCDF	High	No.	21	1	12	49	7	90
		%	18.1	0.9	10.3	42.2	6.0	77.6
	Low	No.	7	0	4	13	2	26
		%	6.0	0.0	3.4	11.2	1.7	22.4
46: Credit/ No credit	High	No.	5	0	0	3	0	8
		%	6.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0	9.5
	Low	No.	54	1	0	21	0	76
		%	64.3	1.2	0.0	25.0	0.0	90.5
47: Blanket Grading	High	No.	4	0	0	4	0	8
		%	2.7	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	5.4
	Low	No.	71	3	0	65	1	140
		%	48.0	2.0	0.0	43.9	0.7	94.6
48: Self-Evaluation	High	No.	36	0	0	0	1	37
		%	38.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	39.4
	Low	No.	47	0	0	10	0	57
		%	50.0	0.0	0.0	10.6	0.0	60.6

High = Favorable toward a grading method on Item 49
Low = Unfavorable toward a grading method on Item 49
Student = Student-oriented responses
Teacher = Teacher-oriented responses
Parent = Parent-oriented responses
Others = Other-oriented responses
STP = The combination of student, teacher, and/or parent-oriented responses

Findings

1. Eleven respondents ranking pass-fail as 1 or 2 on Item 49 indicated that student interests were the predominant reason for their choice. Forty-nine respondents (89%) who ranked pass-fail as either 7 or 8 also indicated that their choices were primarily for student interests.

2. Of the 125 respondents who ranked parent conferences as either 1 or 2, the interests of parents were their primary reason for that choice, closely followed by the combination of STP interests. Student interests was ranked third. Very few respondents ranked it for teacher interests only. That 125 respondents (94%) were in the high group indicates that teachers and administrators strongly recommended the parent conferences method. Only eight respondents were in the low group, and their first interests were for both students and parents equally.

3. Eighty-four respondents ranked check list as 1 or 2 for other interests first and student interest second. This implies that when teachers and administrators favored the check list method, they had concerns not only for students, teachers, and parents, but also for various others, such as subject-related, personalized interests. Quite a few people expressed that check list was a good method for the subjects like gym, arts, and music. Only 19 respondents ranked check list as low as 7 or 8 with the other interests first and the STP interests second.

4. Ninety-four respondents favored the method of narratives, and their choices were primarily related to other interests instead of student, teacher, or parent interests. However, student interests was the second that dominated their

choice of the narratives method. Nineteen respondents did not favor the narratives method, with the primary concerns for other interests and student interests.

5. Ninety respondents ranked A B C D F as their favorable method with the most concern being other interests. Twenty-six people were not in favor of the A B C D F method, and their dominant reasons for this were also other interests. Both elementary teachers and administrators accepted student interests as their second concern for the A B C D F reporting system.

6. Student interests was the rationale for eight people to choose credit/ no credit as a favorable method and also for 76 participants to consider it an unfavorable method.

7. Only eight respondents favored the blanket grading method, with various other reasons. One hundred forty respondents (94.6%) who rejected this method had student interests first.

8. Self-evaluation was judged high by 37 (39.4%) respondents, but it was judged low by 57 (60.6%) respondents. However, all of them indicated that their choices were made for student interest.

Summary: The results indicated that student interest was listed by elementary teachers and administrators as the most important concern in their choices of reporting methods. Other interests was listed as the second most important concern, which might be due to the fact that the choice leaves much room for teachers and administrators to answer eight open-ended questions precisely. Teacher interests and the combined STP interests were much less of a concern.

Chi-Square Analysis

Research Question 5: What correlation exists, significant at the .05 level of confidence, between a teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting and the teacher's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level teacher was trained to teach, and (e) school status?

Research Question 6: What correlation exists, significant at the .05 level of confidence, between an administrator's preference for a particular form of reporting and the administrator's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level administrator was trained to teach, and (e) school status?

Findings

The chi-square correlation table, Table 4.5, shows the degree of relationship between the four demographic variables and the eight reporting methods used in the study. In addition to the use of chi-square, Cramer's V was used as an indicator of magnitude of association.

1. The significant chi-square tests showed that gender was not a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward all eight grading methods. This might be due to the unbalanced data, i.e., 86% of the sampled teachers and administrators were female, and only 14% were male.

2. Years of experience was a significant factor in respondents' expressed attitudes only toward the parent-conference grading method, but not toward the other seven alternative methods.

3. Degrees was significantly related to the teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward the blanket, credit/no credit, and pass-fail grading methods.

Table 4.5: Effect of demographic variables on attitudes toward reporting methods: teachers and administrators combined. (N = 458)

Demographic Variable		Reporting Method							
		Blanket Grades	Checklist	Credit/ No Credit	ABCDF Grades	Narrative	Parent Conference	Pass-Fail	Self-Evaluation
Gender	X^2	11.4930	6.8259	9.8395	7.1801	4.2356	7.9678	5.1483	3.9048
	V	.16908	1.12912	.15529	.13201	.10139	.13890	.11261	.09735
Years of Experience	X^2	21.0897	46.1601	34.4277	37.2814	52.2043	72.3084	56.5636	40.3560
	V	.09305	.13632	.11801	.12221	.14462	.17000*	.15176	.12715
Degree	X^2	91.3221	33.2715	65.2939	31.2567	36.6387	33.8798	85.7716	37.5792
	V	.19362*	.11573	.16252*	.11190	.12116	.11637	.18673*	.12270
Grade/Admin. Post	X^2	73.1607	59.2877	54.3423	83.3945	83.9803	54.8127	79.3987	54.4072
	V	.16084	.14338	.13760	.16967*	.17023*	.13736	.16674	.14075

Gender — Chi-square with 7 degrees of freedom
Years of Experience — Chi-square with 42 degrees of freedom
Degree — Chi-square with 42 degrees of freedom
Grade/Admin. Post — Chi-square with 63 degrees of freedom

*Significant at the .05 level.

4. Grade taught/administrative post held was a significant factor in the teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward the methods of A B C D F grading and narratives.

Summary: The values of Cramer's V, used to indicate the magnitude of the associations illustrated by significant chi-square, revealed that the association between degrees and the attitude toward blanket grading was of the greatest magnitude. The second greatest magnitude was the relationship between the grade taught/administrative post held and the attitude toward the method of pass-fail grading. The third greatest magnitude was the relationship between the grade taught/administrative post held and the narratives method. Other statistically significant associations, by magnitude, are ordered as: years of experience and parent-conference reporting, grade level taught/administrative post held and A B C D F grades, and degrees and the credit/no credit method.

The most significant variables related to the teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward reporting practices were found to be, in order: degrees, grade taught/administrative post held, and years of experience. Gender was not a significant factor in teachers' or administrators' attitudes toward the eight different grading methods.

Frequency Counts

Research Question 7: To what extent do the teachers and administrators differ, or have similarities, in their attitudes toward a particular form of pupil progress reporting?

Findings

Table 4.6 contains the results of frequency counting on Item 49, giving the mean, standard deviation, and ranking for each selected reporting method by teachers and administrators. Mean rankings are interpreted on the basis of the lowest mean being the most favorable reporting method because the ranking item asked for a 1 to 8 ranking, with 1 being the most preferable to the respondent and 8 being the least preferable.

A review of Table 4.6 shows that both teachers and administrators ranked parent conference as the most preferable reporting method and A B C D F grades as the third preferable method. The second preferable method for teachers was check list, whereas narratives was the second preferable method for administrators. Both teachers and administrators ranked self-evaluation, credit/no credit, pass-fail, and blanket grading as the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth preferable methods, respectively.

The standard deviation in the ranking by teachers of A B C D F as the third most preferable reporting practice showed a wide range of variation within the group. The standard deviation in the ranking by administrators of self-evaluation as the fifth preferable reporting practice also displayed a great deal of disagreement within the group.

The smallest standard deviations were found on the credit/no credit method for both teachers and administrators. This implies less difference within these two groups with regard to their attitudes toward the credit/no credit method. Ranking

Table 4.6: Teachers' and administrators' rankings of eight reporting methods: Means and standard deviations of rankings. (N = 432 teachers, 26 administrators)

Group		Reporting Method							
		Blanket Grades	Checklist	Credit/ No Credit	ABCDF Grades	Narrative	Parent Conference	Pass-Fail	Self-Evaluation
Teachers	$\bar{M}$	6.96	3.37	5.72	3.39	3.47	2.56	5.84	4.74
	SD	1.57	1.91	1.57	2.23	1.92	1.60	1.73	2.09
Ranking		8	2	6	3	4	1	7	5
Administrators	$\bar{M}$	7.04	4.13	5.79	3.13	2.92	2.21	6.04	4.71
	SD	1.46	1.65	1.38	2.21	1.91	1.53	1.43	2.37
Ranking		8	4	6	3	2	1	7	5
Teachers & Administrators	$\bar{M}$	6.96	3.41	5.72	3.37	3.44	2.54	5.85	4.74
	SD	1.56	1.90	1.56	2.23	1.92	1.59	1.71	2.11
Ranking		8	3	6	2	4	1	7	5

self-evaluation as the fifth preferable reporting practice, both teachers and administrators showed disagreement within their groups--a significant range of preferences.

Because of the large difference in sample sizes between administrators and teachers, an attempt to draw a significance level and apply a .05 level of confidence would be fraught with error. The mean rankings did, however, serve as a valid indicator of overall preferences expressed by both groups. As can be seen in Table 4.7, the groups agreed on the rankings for six of the eight reporting methods and differed on the rankings for the remaining two reporting methods.

Table 4.7: Differences in teachers' and administrators' rankings of eight reporting methods. (N = 432 teachers, 26 administrators)

Reporting Method	Teacher Ranking	Administrator Ranking
Blanket grading	8	8
Check list	2	4
Credit/no credit	6	6
A B C D F grades	3	3
Narratives	4	2
Parent conference	1	1
Pass-fail	7	7
Self-evaluation	5	5

As a further analysis of Research Question 7, a summary table, Table 4.8, was prepared, showing the raw score and percentage of rankings by the combined

Table 4.8: Combined raw totals, percentages, means, and rankings of eight reporting methods by teachers and administrators. (N = 432 teachers, 26 administrators)

Reporting Method		Rank								Mean	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Blanket Grades	Row Total	5	9	5	12	30	54	66	229	6.961	8
	%	1.2	2.2	1.2	2.9	7.3	13.2	16.1	55.9		
Checklist	Row Total	77	84	69	75	50	26	27	10	3.414	3
	%	18.4	20.1	16.5	17.9	12.0	6.2	6.5	2.4		
Credit/ No Credit	Row Total	3	16	19	39	95	95	104	45	5.724	6
	%	.7	3.8	4.6	9.4	22.8	22.8	25.0	10.8		
ABCDF Grades	Row Total	132	53	45	62	48	28	28	24	3.374	2
	%	31.4	12.6	10.7	14.8	11.4	6.7	6.7	5.7		
Narrative	Row Total	58	103	92	59	40	30	17	21	3.436	4
	%	13.8	24.5	21.9	14.0	9.5	7.1	4.0	5.0		
Parent Conference	Row Total	132	109	88	50	13	14	7	7	2.543	1
	%	31.4	26.0	21.0	11.9	3.1	3.3	1.7	1.7		
Pass-Fail	Row Total	7	16	24	38	47	121	89	72	5.853	7
	%	1.7	3.9	5.8	9.2	11.4	29.2	21.5	17.4		
Self-Evaluation	Row Total	29	40	57	69	84	30	52	59	4.743	5
	%	6.9	9.5	13.6	16.4	20.0	7.1	12.4	14.0		

administrator and teacher groups. When the two groups were combined, the almost 10 to 1 dominance by the teacher respondents swayed the overall total means toward the teacher rankings. The overall results indicated that the second preferable method was A B C D F grading, the third was check list, and the fourth was narratives. All of the other rankings remained the same as those for the teacher and administrator groups separately.

Frequency Distribution of Respondents

Findings

As expected, females in this study outnumbered males by 6 to 1. Teachers' responses outshadowed administrators' responses by almost a 17 to 1 margin.

The second-grade teachers comprised 16.1% of the total sample population responding, followed closely by first, third, sixth, fifth, kindergarten, and administrators, in that order. Respondents with 21 to 30 years of experience were the mode. Teachers with one year of experience ranked third from the bottom in frequency of response, and those with more than 40 years of experience ranked last.

Surprisingly, more than 54.3% of the respondents had master's degrees, whereas 39% had bachelor's degrees, ranked second. Holders of educational specialist degrees were 5.2% (23 people), and three respondents (.7%) had Ed.D. degrees. There were no Ph.D. holders, and only two people (.2%) had less than a bachelor's degree (associate or no degree).

Frequency Distribution of Selected Items

The general purpose of this study was to directly compare A B C D F grading with seven selected alternative forms of pupil progress reporting. Items 1, 6, 10, 15, 24, 30, and 32 of Section II of the questionnaire were designed to set the alternatives directly against A B C D F grading. The responses to all 40 items of Section II are displayed in Appendix C. Specific review of the preceding items resulted in the following findings.

Findings

About 58% (57.8%) of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that self-evaluation is better than A B C D F grades. Further, 83.6% agreed that credit/no credit was better than A B C D F grades. In addition, 93.5% disagreed that blanket grading was preferable to A B C D F grades. About 57% (56.9%) of the respondents agreed that narratives are a much better, more informative method than A B C D F grades. Eighty-one percent thought that pass-fail was not preferable to A B C D F grades. Further, 56.1% disagreed that check list is better than A B C D F grades. Fifty-six percent agreed that parent conferences are far and away better than A B C D F grades. Finally, 64.4% of the respondents to Item 16 ("A B C D F is a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered") disagreed with the item.

In the overall analysis, parent conferences, which emerged as the first choice of teachers and administrators, drew the following responses on Items 5, 14, 32, and 40:

Item 5: Parent conferences are not necessarily of any value to students except, perhaps, in the early grades.

119 disagreed
325 strongly disagreed
97.1% of the respondents disagreed

Item 14: Parent conferences are a farce.

139 disagreed
296 strongly disagreed
95.4% of the respondents disagreed

Item 23: Parent conferences are absolutely necessary at all levels, K-6.

319 agreed
105 strongly agreed
93.2% of the respondents agreed

Item 32: Parent conferences are far and away better than A B C D F grading.

78 strongly agreed
173 agreed
56% of the respondents agreed

176 disagreed
21 strongly disagreed
44% of the respondents disagreed

Item 40: Parent conferences are extremely valuable for parents, teachers, and students.

272 strongly agreed
168 agreed
97.1% of the respondents agreed.

Further analysis of the responses to Items 1 through 40 in Section II showed that 70% of the respondents disagreed that credit/no credit reporting is a valuable method for the lower elementary grades, and 65% of them disagreed that this method benefits only highly motivated students. More than 87% of the respondents rejected the statement, "Narrative is inadequate or inaccurate," and they did not agree that this method is helpful to students with mastery-level reporting. The

majority of the respondents agreed that self-evaluation is valuable as a teaching tool for any grade, K-6, and it would help eliminate cheating.

There was agreement that pass-fail is valuable at a certain grade level. Respondents disagreed that pass-fail reporting is cruel to children, but they thought it was not the "least cruel" method. Blanket grading found no favor whatsoever, as most of the respondents rejected the concept that it is challenging to students because it puts them "on their honor," and that they liked it because it "takes pressure off kids." Respondents strongly disagreed that check list has "little use to anyone" because they thought that check list could "stand on its own merits." But they had mixed feelings about whether it is better than A B C D F grading and means more to students than other methods.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study were compiled into the following 18 statements:

1. The gender of a teacher or administrator was not a significant factor in their expressed attitudes toward all the eight reporting methods.

2. Years of experience in education was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward parent-conference reporting.

3. Degrees held by teachers or administrators had a significant relationship with their attitudes toward blanket grading, credit/no credit, and pass-fail methods of reporting.

4. Grade level taught or administrative post held was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward A B C D F grades and the narrative method.

5. Based on the ranking of overall means, parent-conference reporting was the most preferred method of reporting pupil progress by teachers as a group, administrators as a group, and the two groups combined.

6. A B C D F grades was the second most favorable method for the combined group of teachers and administrators. Check list was the teachers' second choice, whereas narrative reporting was administrators' second most favorable method.

7. Teachers and administrators did not differ much in their views on the reporting methods, especially blanket grading, credit/no credit, parent conference, pass-fail, and self-evaluation.

8. Blanket grading was the least preferred method for both teachers and administrators. The teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward blanket grading were significantly different from their attitudes toward A B C D F.

9. Teachers and administrators expressed similar rationales for choosing four favorable methods (parent conferences, narratives, check list, and A B C D F) over the other four methods.

10. Teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward A B C D F grades were significantly different from their attitudes toward pass-fail, credit/no credit, and self-evaluation. A B C D F was clearly favored by both groups.

11. The interest of students was the most important consideration for teachers and administrators when choosing their favorite grading method.

12. The interest of others bore some concern from teachers and administrators when they chose a preferable grading method, and the interests of teachers and parents were ranked third.

13. Teachers and administrators strongly agreed that parent conferences are "absolutely necessary at all levels, K-6."

14. Elementary teachers and administrators did not agree that A B C D F is "a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered."

15. Teachers and administrators had mixed feelings about the credit/no credit reporting method. Their attitudes indicated that this method might work for some elementary grade levels.

16. Narrative reporting was considered to be adequate and accurate and especially useful with mastery-level reporting.

17. Self-evaluation was considered to be a valuable teaching tool by most of the teachers and administrators, but they did not see it as helpful in eliminating cheating.

18. Blanket grading, credit/no credit, pass-fail, and self-evaluation were rejected by the teachers and administrators. They were in favor of parent conferences, A B C D F grades, narratives, and check lists.

Discussion of Findings From the Scharffe Study and the Present Study

The present study was conducted to determine whether there were any differences in findings regarding the use of alternative methods in reporting pupil

progress between this study and the Scharffe study. It should be pointed out that the present study was limited to the state of Michigan, whereas the Scharffe study included the states of Georgia, West Virginia, and Tennessee, as well as Michigan. Therefore, the following findings should be viewed with some reservation.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
1. The gender of a teacher or administrator was not a significant factor in their expressed attitudes toward all of the reporting methods, namely, A B C D F grading, blanket grading, credit/no credit, narrative, self-evaluation, pass-fail, parent conferences, and check list.	1. The gender of a teacher or administrator was a significant factor in their expressed attitudes toward blanket grading, credit/no credit, narratives, pass-fail, and self-evaluation reporting methods.

Discussion: It is interesting that, in the present study, gender of both teachers and administrators was not a significant factor in their expressed attitudes toward the various reporting methods, whereas in the Scharffe study gender was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward the various reporting methods. Over a period of two decades, greater emphasis on obtaining further education, namely, graduate studies, may have brought about this significant change in attitude.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
2. Years of experience in education was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward parent-conference reporting.	2. Years of experience was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward blanket grading, pass-fail, and self-evaluation reporting methods.

Discussion. In both studies there was a lack of consistency. In the present study, apparently only parent conferences was affected by years of experience, whereas in the Scharffe study blanket grading, pass-fail, and self-evaluation reporting methods were affected by years of experience. Parent conferences is a more recent phenomenon in the elementary schools and would be accepted, whereas this practice was not as prevalent two decades ago.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
3. Degrees held by teachers or administrators had a significant relationship with their attitudes toward blanket grading, credit/no credit, and pass-fail methods of reporting.	3. Degrees held by teachers or administrators showed a significant relationship with their attitudes toward the check list method of reporting.

Discussion. There was no similarity in the findings from the present study and the Scharffe study as to the reporting method.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
4. Grade level taught or administrative post held was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward A B C D F grades and the narrative method.	4. Grade level taught or administrative post held was a significant factor in teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward check list, A B C D F, and pass-fail reporting methods.

Discussion. In both studies, there was agreement on only the A B C D F method of reporting.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
5. Based on the ranking of overall means, parent-conference reporting was the most preferred method of reporting pupil progress by teachers as a group, administrators as a group, and the two groups combined.	5. On the basis of the overall mean rankings, the parent-conference method of reporting was preferred by teachers as a group, administrators as a group, and by the two groups combined.

Discussion. It is most interesting that in both studies the teachers and administrators chose the parent conference as the most preferred method of reporting pupil progress. Apparently, both groups thought that meeting the parents in a conference enables the teacher to communicate in greater detail and understanding.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
6. A B C D F grades was the second most favorable method for the combined group of teachers and administrators. Check list was the teachers' second choice, whereas narrative reporting was the administrators' second most favorable method.	6. A B C D F was the second choice of teachers as a group, administrators as a group, and of the two groups combined, as the most desirable reporting method.

Discussion. In the two studies, both teachers and administrators chose A B C D F as the second favorable method of reporting, whereas in the present study check list was the teachers' second choice and narratives was the administrators' second choice. There was no apparent agreement as related to the other reporting systems.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
7. Teachers and administrators did not differ much in their views on the reporting methods, especially blanket grading, credit/no credit, parent conferences, pass-fail, and self-evaluation.	7. Teachers and administrators did not differ substantially in their views on the various reporting methods.

Discussion. Both teachers and administrators in the two studies did not differ substantially in their views on various reporting systems.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
8. Blanket grading was the least preferred method for both teachers and administrators. The teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward blanket grading were significantly different from their attitudes toward A B C D F.	8. The attitudes of teachers and administrators toward blanket grading were not the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F. A B C D F was favored.

Discussion. In both studies, teachers and administrators did not view blanket grading as an acceptable practice. Both groups seemed to prefer A B C D F over blanket grading.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
9. Teachers and administrators expressed similar rationales for choosing four favorable methods (parent conferences, narratives, check list, and A B C D F) over the other four methods.	9. Teachers and administrators expressed similar rationales for choosing parent conferences, A B C D F, check list, and narrative reporting methods over other methods of reporting pupil progress.

Discussion. In both studies, teachers and administrators preferred the same reporting methods: A B C D F, check list, narratives, and parent conferences.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
10. Teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward A B C D F grades were significantly different from their attitudes toward pass-fail, credit/no credit, and self-evaluation. A B C D F was clearly favored by both groups.	10. Elementary teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward credit/no credit, pass-fail, and self-evaluation reporting were not the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F. A B C D F was significantly favored.

Discussion. In both studies, A B C D F was clearly favored by the elementary teachers and administrators over pass-fail, credit/no credit, and self-evaluation.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
11. The interest of students was the most important consideration for teachers and administrators when choosing their favorite grading method.	11. The interest of students was the most important consideration of elementary teachers and administrators when making their choice of grading methods.

Discussion. In both studies, elementary teachers and administrators indicated interest of students was the most important consideration when making their choice of grading methods.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
12. The interest of others bore some concern from teachers and administrators when they chose a preferable grading method, and the interests of teachers and parents were ranked third.	12. The interest of teachers and administrators was the second most important factor considered when reporting practices were selected. Parent interests were the third most important factor.

Discussion. Both studies showed interest of students as the primary concern of teachers and administrators. In the Scharffe study, interest of teachers and administrators was the second concern, and interest of parents was respondents' third choice.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
13. Teachers and administrators strongly agreed that parent conferences are "absolutely necessary at all levels, K-12."	13. Respondents strongly agreed that parent conferences are absolutely necessary at all levels.

Discussion. Respondents in both studies strongly agreed that parent conferences are absolutely necessary at all levels. Apparently both groups thought that the face-to-face conference with parents is a superior method of reporting pupil progress to parents.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
14. Elementary teachers and administrators did not agree that A B C D F is "a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered."	14. Elementary teachers and administrators did not agree that A B C D F is "a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered."

Discussion. The elementary teachers and administrators in both studies agreed that A B C D F is not a good method of reporting pupil progress.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
15. Teachers and administrators had mixed feelings about the credit/no credit reporting method. Their attitudes indicated that this method might work for some elementary grade levels.	15. The attitude was expressed that some students can benefit from credit/no credit reporting in the elementary grades, but the feelings were mixed.

Discussion. In both studies, teachers and administrators agreed that the credit/no credit reporting method might be good for certain grade levels.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
16. Narrative reporting was considered to be adequate and accurate and especially useful with mastery-level reporting.	16. Narrative reporting was judged to be adequate and accurate and especially useful with mastery-level reporting.

Discussion. Respondents in both studies were in agreement with regard to narrative reporting. Both agreed that it is useful with mastery-level reporting.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
17. Self-evaluation was considered to be a valuable teaching tool by most of the teachers and administrators, but they did not see it as helpful in eliminating cheating.	17. Elementary teachers and administrators agreed that self-evaluation has little place in the elementary grades and that use of this method does not necessarily help to eliminate cheating.

Discussion. Respondents in the present study considered self-evaluation a valuable teaching tool, whereas those in the Scharffe study thought there was little place for this practice in the elementary school. Respondents in both studies agreed that the use of this reporting system does not help to eliminate cheating.

Present Study Findings	Scharffe Study Findings
18. Narrative reporting was strongly accepted and especially useful with mastery-level reporting.	18. Narrative reporting was judged to be adequate and especially useful with mastery-level reporting.

Discussion. Respondents in both studies agreed that narrative reporting is adequate and accurate and especially useful with mastery-level reporting.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This chapter contains a brief restatement of the purposes of this study, the methodology used, and the conclusions drawn from the research data. Furthermore, recommendations are presented for further study.

Summary

Much has been written concerning the pros and cons of various grading systems, and this concern continues to the present day. Grades have been condemned by early educators. For example, Simon and Hart (1973) stated, "Grades are unscientific, subjective and seldom relative to educational objectives." On the other hand, a number of writers have recommended the continuance of traditional grading practices. As Olson (1995) wrote, "To trifle with grades, as Cranston educators learned, is to attack one of the most basic notions about schooling and competition in America." Furthermore, a large number of articles and other publications have focused on bringing about a change in the traditional form of pupil evaluation, namely, A B C D F grading.

Scharffe completed a study in 1977 in which he examined the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators toward the use of grades as compared with

selected alternative forms of pupil progress reporting. This study is a replication of the Scharffe study, but the population was limited to educators in the Middle Cities Education Association, whereas Scharffe questioned elementary teachers and administrators in four states including Michigan.

Methodology

A survey instrument employed in the Scharffe study was used in this study to determine the perceptions of elementary teachers and administrators toward the use of A B C D F reporting practices compared with selected alternative forms of pupil progress reporting. The selected forms of pupil progress reporting that were compared with A B C D F were (a) blanket grading, (b) check list reporting, (c) credit/ no credit, (d) narrative reports, (e) parent conferences, (f) pass-fail reporting, and (g) self-evaluation. The following demographic variables were included: (a) gender, (b) degree(s) held, (c) years of paid experience, (d) grade level taught, and (e) post the administrator held.

Objectives

With a knowledge of the Scharffe study, this study was an attempt to determine how elementary teachers and administrators used grades (A B C D F) with seven alternative methods of reporting. The research questions and hypotheses were as follows:

Research Question 1: Do elementary teachers in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

Hypothesis 1a: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward blanket grading are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1b: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward check list reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1c: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward credit/ no credit reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1d: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward narrative reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1e: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward parent conferences are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1f: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward pass-fail reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 1g: The attitudes of elementary school teachers toward self-evaluation are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Research Question 2: Do elementary school administrators in the Middle Cities Education Association prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

Hypothesis 2a: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward blanket grading are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2b: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward check list reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2c: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward credit/no credit reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2d: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward narrative reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2e: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward parent conferences are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2f: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward pass-fail reporting are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Hypothesis 2g: The attitudes of elementary school administrators toward self-evaluation are the same as their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting.

Research Question 3: If elementary school teachers do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected grading alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

Research Question 4: If elementary school administrators do, or do not, prefer the use of one of the selected alternatives over the use of A B C D F, why does this preference exist?

Research Question 5: To what extent does a relationship exist between a teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting and the teacher's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level teacher was trained to teach, and (e) school status?

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship exist between an administrator's preference for a particular form of reporting and the administrator's (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) degrees held, (d) grade level administrator was trained to teach, and (e) school status?

Research Question 7: To what extent do the teachers and administrators differ, or have similarities, in their attitudes toward a particular form of pupil progress reporting?

Sample

Ten school districts from the Middle Cities Education Association were included in the sample. Only the elementary school personnel were used in this study--namely, the elementary teachers and principals of each staff. The ten school districts included in the sample represented both the small and large school districts in the Middle Cities Education Association.

Schools included in this study were sent letters asking for permission to participate in the study. Only one school district decided not to participate because of internal problems. A letter of introduction to the study was mailed, along with an ample supply of questionnaires for the teachers in the particular school and its administrator. All of the administrators and teachers in each school returned the questionnaires.

Of the 432 elementary teachers and 26 principals, all of them completed the research instrument, for a 100% return rate. All of the responses provided usable data.

Data Collection

The Scharffe instrument included four sections comprising 54 items on five printed pages. Eight of the 54 items required open-ended responses, and 40 items

required a response on a four-point, forced-choice Likert scale. An eight-point ranking scale was used to indicate a choice of reporting methods. It took respondents approximately 25 minutes to complete the instrument.

Data Analysis

Data were programmed and analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program, which was available for use on the Michigan State University CDC 6000 computer. The statistical methods and descriptive procedures were used in this study to test the hypotheses. Questions 1 and 2 were analyzed by repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance, whereas Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were analyzed by cross-tabulation using the chi-square test of homogeneity and the chi-square test of independence. Descriptive frequency distribution was the statistical technique used to arrive at conclusions for Items 1 through 40, which included a forced-choice Likert scale.

Limitations

Each elementary school had only one administrator, which was a limitation on administrators' responses to the research questionnaire. Thus, the question could be raised, Would more administrators' responses affect the conclusions?

Another limitation, as pointed out in the Scharffe study, was that the focus was solely on elementary schools. A survey of the literature showed that elementary school personnel provide a greater variety of reporting practices than are found in

middle and high schools. It would have been interesting to obtain data on perceptions of educators at those levels as to the various reporting methods.

Conclusions

The parent conference method of reporting emerged as the choice of both teachers and administrators. Apparently, both groups recognized the value of face-to-face discussions with parents related not only to academic achievement, but also to the emotional, social, and physical growth of the child. Together they can cooperatively plan to assist the child in any way during his or her early years of schooling.

The A B C D F method of reporting emerged as the third choice of the combined group of teachers and administrators. This method of reporting has been an integral part of the educational scene since the early days of schooling and is a reporting method employed in most of today's elementary schools. As separate groups, teachers chose check list and administrators chose narrative as their second preference, which is slightly different from Scharffe's study, in which A B C D F was the second choice.

The least preferable methods were ranked by both teachers and administrators in the following order: self-evaluation, credit/no credit, pass-fail, and blanket grading. Giving the same grade to all children seemed to be meaningless not only to children but to educators as well. It can be concluded that parent conferences, check list, narrative, and A B C D F are valued practices and can be

considered as useful means in an elementary school's reporting system, whereas the least desirable methods might meet some resistance in practice.

There were no significant differences in the attitudes of either elementary teachers or administrators toward A B C D F or toward parent conferences, check list, and narrative. But there were differences in attitudes toward A B C D F and toward pass-fail, credit/no credit, and self-evaluation. A B C D F was clearly favored over the other six methods, except for parent conference. The conclusion is that elementary teachers and administrators have a common understanding of their schools and the schools' reporting system.

"Interests of student" was the primary rationale for both teachers and administrators when choosing their favorable methods. It was followed by "interests of others," which might be the result of definition bias. "Interests of teacher" and "interests of parent" remained in third and fourth place when such choices were being made. The conclusion is that their school's reporting practices were more student oriented than teacher or parent oriented.

Gender was not a significant factor in the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward the eight grade-reporting methods. But years of experience, degree held, and grade taught/administrative post held were, suggesting that these demographic variables should be taken into account when implementing a school's reporting system.

It can generally be concluded from the study that the elementary teachers and administrators from the Middle Michigan City Area held high esteem for the practice of parent conferences and considered it as a necessary component in the school's

current reporting system. Check list, narrative, and A B C D F are useful grade-reporting tools when they are used along with parent conferences.

Recommendations for Further Study

Many questions have been raised concerning the use of grades by almost everyone, including educators, parents, students, and even employers. The problem especially concerns teachers and administrators who may be looking for a better way to communicate to students and parents on their progress in the instructional program. The following questions are raised for researchers to examine and on which they might possibly carry out a research study:

1. What are the attitudes of high school teachers and administrators regarding the use of A B C D F grading as compared with selected alternatives?

2. What new methods of reporting, such as the use of portfolios, fit into the program of A B C D F grading?

3. What attitudes do parents of elementary children have regarding the use of A B C D F grading as compared with selected alternatives?

4. If a school is using a reporting system other than A B C D F, how effective is the reporting plan as viewed by teachers, administrators, and parents?

5. In a longitudinal study, do the A B C D F grades at the elementary school level predict the performance of students at the middle school level and at the high school level?

6. Do grades achieved at the high school level predict success in the business world, or attendance in college?

The use of A B C D F grades has been a part of the educational scene since the early days of education, and was implemented by the educators. Studies have shown positive and negative effects of A B C D F grading for boys and girls. As was pointed out, educators have continued to use this grading method. It would be valuable to conduct the following studies:

1. Does A B C D F grading have an effect on students' self-perceptions?

2. Do parents believe that the use of A B C D F grading is the final word in evaluating pupil progress?

Another issue to explore is unique to the state of Michigan. Each year, students must take the Michigan State Educational Assessment Test. A study could be conducted to explore: Can grades serve as a predictor of student performance on the Michigan State Educational Assessment Test?

It seems that grades are an integral part of the current educational scene. The question will always be raised by some educators and even noneducators as to the reliability of using A B C D F grading. It therefore behooves us as educators to explore and study the many issues raised by the use of the traditional A B C D F grading system.

Reflections

I have a point of view on the matter of grading practices, and it is interesting to note that both teachers and administrators chose the parent conference method of reporting. Far too often the use of A B C D F grades does not give the parent and the student a complete picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the child's

performance. Parent conference reporting certainly provides the recipient of grades and his or her parents an opportunity to discuss what an "A" or any other grade means. At the parent conference the teacher can explain the strengths and weaknesses in the performance of the child. Furthermore, if the child is included in the conference, he or she will obtain further insights as to what needs to be done to improve his or her performance. As an educator I am very supportive of this type of reporting practice.

Other reporting practices I would support are check lists and narrative reporting. These practices would certainly augment the use of A B C D F. For example, in reading there are certain skills that a student should learn. A check list of these skills would be included in the reporting practice so that parents and the students would have a clear understanding of the skills they have mastered and what skills need to be mastered. While the check list reporting is specific, the narrative method of reporting would allow the teacher to explain in some detail what steps need to be taken to assist the child in mastering the skills, or the objectives of the unit of study covered.

The reporting practices of pass-fail, credit/no credit, and self-evaluation have no place in the elementary school. In some activities one might use pass-fail, but it is questionable to use it in the general reporting practice. Credit/no credit is a term used at the high school level, and has little meaning to children in the elementary grades. Self-evaluation does take place in certain activities. A child certainly knows

whether he or she has mastered a particular skill, but to use the child's evaluation for a reporting activity for parents would be questionable.

Another reflection concerns the promptness of the replies from the participants. All staff in each participating school participated in the study. One school did not participate because of some internal problems, but this could be understood.

It is interesting that both the administrators and teachers agreed on certain reporting methods because they thought that these reporting practices were in the interest of the students. What a commendable position! It speaks well of the educators in the participating schools.

I would hope that the participating schools would look on this study as an opportunity to examine critically their programs of reporting pupil progress. The question should be raised, "How valid is the use of the A B C D F method of reporting?" Maybe it is impossible to eliminate them, but can A B C D F grades be coupled with parent conferences and narratives? In parent conferences, both participants would discuss the progress the child is making to date, and the teacher would have the opportunity to assist the parents in their role in working with the child at home. Certainly parents can provide a quiet time so that the child can do his or her homework without interruption. This is an example of how the educator and parents can work together to help the child succeed in his or her school work.

In closing, I hope that this study is replicated 20 years from now. Would the results be the same? Will we have made headway in the elimination of A B C D F reporting as the only method of reporting?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO ALL PARTICIPANTS

Michigan State University
Department of Educational Administration

PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: This questionnaire will take about 18 minutes to complete. Questions deal with various ways of reporting pupil progress. Respond to all questions. Necessary definitions are given in Section One. Please read the definitions before proceeding to the statements in Section Two. A **soft lead pencil only** should be used in sections Two and Four--do not use pens, magic markers or other such instruments.

SECTION ONE

BLANKET GRADING:	Giving a common mark to all students. Usually, students are informed in advance of the work as to what the common mark will be for all.
CHECK LIST REPORTING:	Use of a prepared listing of comments from which certain ones are chosen for use by the teacher and "checked off" as being appropriate for the child.
CREDIT-NO CREDIT:	The student either receives credit for the class or he doesn't. There is no middle ground. A "no credit" mark, however, does **not** always mean "failure."
GRADES:	A B C D F, S I U, or some numbering system such as 1 2 3 4 5. Often, plus (+) or minus (-) symbols are used to help clarify the grade.
NARRATIVE REPORTS:	A "letter home" to the parents either written by hand or with the aid of a computer.
PARENT CONFERENCE REPORTING:	A face-to-face meeting with parents for the specific purpose of discussing the student's academic and social progress in school.
PASS-FAIL REPORTING:	The student either "passes" the class or he "fails" the class. There is no middle ground.
SELF-EVALUATION: REPORTING:	The student decides what his grade or mark will be. Usually, the teacher confers with the student along the way, but the decision remains the student's.

NOTE: After reading the definitions, please proceed to Section Two of the questionnaire. Refer back to the definitions if necessary.

PROCEED TO SECTION TWO ON THE NEXT PAGE.

SECTION TWO

Please do not omit any items on this page. If you have questions about the meaning of a certain type of reporting practice, please refer back to the definitions given on page 1. With a pencil, respond to the items using the KEY:

SA--Strong Agreement -- really in tune with your own personal feelings.
A --Agreement -- perhaps with some reservations. You agree more than you disagree.
D --Disagreement -- with some reservations. You disagree more than you agree.
SD--Strong Disagreement -- almost totally out of tune with your own personal feelings.

Item	SA	A	D	SD
1. Self-evaluation reporting is better than giving a "grade."	SA	A	D	SD
2. The blanket grading method is something I really don't care for.	SA	A	D	SD
3. Pass-fail reporting is valuable at any grade level.	SA	A	D	SD
4. Check list reporting is a method which has little meaning for kids.	SA	A	D	SD
5. Parent conferences are not necessarily of any value to students except, perhaps, in the early grades.	SA	A	D	SD
6. Credit-no credit reporting is much better than any form of A B C D F.	SA	A	D	SD
7. Narrative reports are inadequate and inaccurate.	SA	A	D	SD
8. A B C D F grading is a good system which gives a good idea of how students are doing.	SA	A	D	SD
9. Self-evaluation reporting is really unfair because the honest kids are hurt.	SA	A	D	SD
10. Blanket grading is a better way of reporting than using A B C D F.	SA	A	D	SD
11. I really don't believe that pass-fail reporting has value for kids at any age level.	SA	A	D	SD
12. Check list reporting is really of little use to anyone.	SA	A	D	SD
13. Credit-no credit reporting is of no use for lower elementary grades.	SA	A	D	SD
14. Parent conferences are a farce.	SA	A	D	SD
15. Narrative reports are a much better, more informative method than A B C D F.	SA	A	D	SD
16. A B C D F is a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered.	SA	A	D	SD
17. Check list reporting is good for kids and means more to them than other methods.	SA	A	D	SD
18. Narrative reporting is very helpful to kids, especially when it's used with mastery level reporting.	SA	A	D	SD
19. Only highly motivated students can benefit from credit-no credit reporting.	SA	A	D	SD

Item	SA	A	D	SD
20. Self-evaluation reporting is of little or no use for the lower elementary grades.	SA	A	D	SD
21. Kids lose their incentive to learn when blanket grading is used.	SA	A	D	SD
22. A B C D F grading is unfair to students.	SA	A	D	SD
23. Parent conferences are absolutely necessary at all levels, K-6.	SA	A	D	SD
24. I prefer the use of pass-fail reporting over the use of A B C D F.	SA	A	D	SD
25. Blanket grading is challenging to kids because it puts them "on their honor."	SA	A	D	SD
26. Self-evaluation is a system which would help to eliminate cheating.	SA	A	D	SD
27. Narrative reports are inhuman, because the system assumes that all kids fit the same mold.	SA	A	D	SD
28. Credit-no credit reporting is a valuable method for the lower elementary grades.	SA	A	D	SD
29. Pass-fail reporting is cruel to children.	SA	A	D	SD
30. Check list reporting is certainly better than A B C D F.	SA	A	D	SD
31. In terms of fairness to students, the A B C D F reporting method is about as fair as you can get.	SA	A	D	SD
32. Parent conferences are far and away better than A B C D F reporting.	SA	A	D	SD
33. I like blanket grading because it takes pressure off kids.	SA	A	D	SD
34. Self-evaluation reporting is a very valuable teaching tool for any grade, K-6.	SA	A	D	SD
35. For kids, the pass-fail method is probably the least cruel method we can use.	SA	A	D	SD
36. Check list reporting is a very effective method which can stand on its own merits.	SA	A	D	SD
37. No student really ever benefits from the credit-no credit marking system.	SA	A	D	SD
38. A B C D F gives a pretty good idea of how students are doing.	SA	A	D	SD
39. Narrative reports come closer to accuracy than most any other form of reporting.	SA	A	D	SD
40. Parent conferences are extremely valuable for the parents, the teacher and the student.	SA	A	D	SD

THIS CONCLUDES SECTION TWO. PLEASE PROCEED TO SECTION THREE ON THE NEXT PAGE.

SECTION THREE

When responding to these questions, please keep your statements as concise as possible while still making the point clear. Respond to each question. Do not leave blanks. Feel free to abbreviate.

41. **Refer back to Statement 3** in Section Two about pass-fail reporting. **Why did you respond the way you did?**

_____

_____

42. **Look at Statement 5** in Section Two about parent conferences. **Why did you agree or disagree with the statement?**

_____

_____

43. Refer to **Statement 12** on check list reporting. **Why did you respond the way you did?**

_____

_____

44. Review **Statement 15** on narratives. **Why did you agree/disagree?**

_____

_____

45. Refer back to **Statement 16** about A B C D F. **Why did you agree/disagree there?**

_____

_____

46. **Look at Statement 19** about credit-no credit. **Why did you respond the way you did?**

_____

_____

47. In responding to **Statement 33** on blanket grading, why did you agree/disagree?

_____

_____

48. Looking at **Statement 34** on self-evaluation reporting, why did you agree/disagree?

_____

_____

49. **We have considered eight different ways of reporting pupil progress in this questionnaire. The eight methods are listed below in alphabetical order. Please rank the methods in order of your preference for them as an educator. Use a scale of 1 through 8, with the number 1 indicating your favorite method and so on through number 8, indicating the method you least favor.**

METHOD	RANK
Blanket Grading	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Check Lists	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Credit-No Credit	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Grades (A B C D F)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Narratives	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Parent Conferences	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Pass-Fail	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Self-Evaluation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION FOUR.

SECTION FOUR

Please check the correct response to each of the items below.

50. What is your gender?

____ Male

____ Female

51. What is your number of years of paid experience in education? Include this year as year one if a first-year teacher, and as a full year if an experienced educator.

____ 1	____ 11-20	____ More than 40
____ 1-5	____ 21-30	
____ 6-10	____ 31-40	

52. What is the highest college degree you hold?

____ No degree	____ Master's degree	____ Ed.D.
____ Associate's degree	____ Educational specialist	____ Ph.D.
____ Bachelor's degree		

53. What grade level are you now teaching? (Fill in only one. In the case of a combination assignment, indicate the higher of the grade levels. Administrators are to indicate administrator even if teaching a part of the day.)

____ Preschool	____ Third	____ Sixth
____ Kindergarten	____ Fourth	____ Ungraded room
____ First	____ Fifth	____ Administrator
____ Second		

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

Dear Participant:

This doctoral thesis is under the auspices of Michigan State University and under the direction of Dr. Louis G. Romano and his doctoral student, Natalie Kreeger. This study is concerned with the attitude of elementary teachers and administrators toward the use of grades as compared with selected alternative forms of pupil progress reporting.

We appreciate your willingness to participate in this important study. Copies of the questionnaire to be completed will be sent to you for all of your teachers and a copy for you. Let me emphasize that individual responses will be confidential, and none of the completed questionnaires will be available to anyone but Mrs. Kreeger and myself. Furthermore, none of the data will be presented by schools. We are interested only in the total responses from all of the principals and teachers participating in this study.

Please feel free to call if there are any questions or you are in need of more questionnaires. My phone is 517-353-5461. Also, you will be reimbursed for any mailing costs.

Again, let me express our appreciation for your willingness to participate in this important study.

Sincerely,

Louis G. Romano
Professor
Educational Administration Department
Michigan State University

Natalie Kreeger
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS FOR RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Table C1: Frequency distribution for responses to Items 1 through 40.

Item	SA		A		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Self-evaluation better than grade	43	9.5	148	32.7	204	45.0	58	12.8
2. Blanket grading–don't care for	159	35.5	173	38.6	86	19.2	30	6.7
3. Pass-fail valuable any grade level	21	4.6	132	29.1	215	47.4	86	18.9
4. Check list little meaning for kids	22	4.9	117	26.1	224	50.0	85	19.0
5. Parent conferences no value to students except early grades	7	1.5	6	1.3	119	26.0	325	71.1
6. Credit/no credit better than ABCDF	9	2.0	66	14.5	262	57.2	119	26.0
7. Narratives inadequate, inaccurate	10	2.2	48	10.5	266	58.5	131	28.8
8. ABCDF gives good idea how students are doing	64	13.8	240	52.5	125	27.4	29	6.3
9. Self-evaluation unfair to honest kids	37	8.1	143	31.4	229	50.2	47	10.3
10. Blanket grading better than ABCDF	2	.4	27	6.0	253	56.2	168	37.3
11. Pass-fail no value for kids of any age	42	9.3	108	33.1	272	60.0	31	6.8
12. Check list little use to anyone	13	2.8	51	11.2	301	65.9	92	20.1
13. Credit/no credit no use for lower elementary	74	16.4	172	38.1	180	39.8	26	5.8
14. Parent conference a farce	5	1.1	16	3.5	139	30.5	296	64.9
15. Narratives better than ABCDF	70	15.3	190	41.6	168	36.8	29	6.3
16. ABC darn good–hasn't been bettered	32	7.0	130	28.6	228	50.1	65	14.3
17. Check list good for kids and means more	27	5.9	173	38.0	232	51.0	3	5.1

Table C1: Continued.

Item	SA		A		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18. Narratives helpful to kids used with mastery	71	15.7	295	65.4	80	17.7	5	1.1
19. Only highly motivated benefit from credit/no credit	23	5.1	136	30.1	265	58.6	28	6.2
20. Self-evaluation little use for lower elementary	53	11.6	131	28.8	226	49.7	45	9.9
21. Kids lose incentives when blanket grading used	70	15.6	269	60.0	102	22.8	7	1.6
22. ABCDF unfair to students	9	2.0	77	17.1	284	63.3	79	17.6
23. Parent conference necessary K-6	301	70.1	105	23.1	22	4.8	9	2.0
24. Prefer pass-fail over ABCDF	12	2.7	74	16.4	254	56.2	112	24.8
25. Blanket grading challenging to kids because puts them on "honor"	3	.7	58	13.0	284	63.8	100	22.5
26. Self-evaluation helps eliminate cheating	10	2.2	121	26.8	256	56.8	64	14.2
27. Narratives inhuman	9	2.0	52	11.6	281	62.6	107	23.8
28. Credit/no credit valuable for lower elementary	6	1.3	127	28.3	231	51.4	85	18.9
29. Pass-fail cruel to children	26	5.8	132	29.3	262	58.1	31	6.9
30. Check list better than ABCDF	35	7.9	160	36.0	216	48.5	34	7.6
31. ABCDF about as fair as can get	41	9.1	183	40.5	196	43.4	32	7.1
32. Parent conferences better than ABCDF	78	17.4	173	38.6	176	39.3	21	4.7
33. Like blanket grading, takes pressure off kids	2	.5	41	9.3	287	64.9	112	25.3
34. Self-evaluation valuable K-6	69	15.2	221	48.8	129	28.5	34	7.5

Table C1: Continued.

Item	SA		A		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
35. Pass-fail least cruel for kids	11	2.4	84	18.7	292	64.9	63	14.0
36. Check list can stand on own merits	40	8.9	225	50.1	167	37.2	17	3.8
37. No student benefits from credit/ no credit	21	4.7	114	25.3	301	66.9	14	3.1
38. ABCDF gives good idea of how students are doing	65	14.3	285	62.8	89	19.6	15	3.3
39. Narratives closer to accuracy than other forms	57	12.6	216	47.9	163	36.1	15	3.3
40. Parent conferences valuable for parents, teachers, students	272	60.0	168	37.1	10	2.2	3	.73

Note: Items 41-48 had open-ended responses.
Item 49 was a ranking item and was treated separately; see Chapter IV.

Table C2: Frequency distribution of responses to Items 50 through 53.

Item	Rel. Frequency	Percent
50. Gender		
Male	62	14.1
Female	378	85.9
51. Years		
1	24	5.4
1-5	59	13.3
6-10	48	10.8
11-20	99	22.3
21-30	179	40.3
31-40	31	7.0
40+	4	.9
52. Degree(s) Held		
None	1	.2
Associate's	1	.2
Bachelor's	174	39.2
Master's	54	54.3
Ed.Sp.	23	5.2
Ed.D.	3	.7
Ph.D.	0	.0
53. Grade Level		
Preschool	9	2.0
Kindergarten	41	9.3
First	64	14.5
Second	71	16.1
Third	63	14.3
Fourth	38	8.6
Fifth	46	10.4
Sixth	47	10.7
Ungraded	36	8.2
Administrator	26	5.9

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