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TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR ATTITUDES TOWARD
THE USE OF GRADES AS COMPARED WITH SELECTED
ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PUPIL PROGRESS
REPORTING.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1978

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A STUDY OF MICHIGAN PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

AND ADMINISTRATOR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF

GRADES AS COMPARED WITH SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

FORMS OF PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTING

By

Robert L. Crane

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF MICHIGAN PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER
AND ADMINISTRATOR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF
GRADES AS COMPARED WITH SELECTED ALTERNATIVE
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The focus of the research was the attitude of middle school teachers and administrators toward A B C D F reporting as compared with seven alternative reporting methods including blanket grades, check list reporting, credit-no credit, narrative reports, parent conferences, pass-fail, and self-evaluation. The research was a replication of a study conducted in 1977 by William G. Scharffe, who investigated the attitudes of elementary educators toward the same reporting methods.

A selected sample of 484 teachers and 39 administrators was drawn by randomly selecting 160 public middle schools which include grades six, seven, and eight throughout the State of Michigan. This group of 160 schools was further narrowed to 30 buildings after determining their levels of implementation of middle school characteristics by utilizing a middle school identification questionnaire and seeking commitment from building administrators and their staffs to participate further in the study. Fifteen buildings were identified

as "high" middle schools and 15 were "low" middle schools. A response rate of 53 percent was obtained from the total number of available teachers and 61 percent of the available administrators participated in the study.

Analysis of variance for repeated measure, chi square test of homogeneity, chi square independency, and means and variances of rank ordering were used to analyze the data.

In ranking the eight reporting methods, middle school teachers selected A B C D F as their first preference, followed by parent conferences. Middle school administrators reversed these two methods by selecting parent conferences as first choice followed by A B C D F. It is concluded that both groups favor a combination of A B C D F and parent conferences. Narratives and check lists were ranked third and fourth by teachers and administrators alike, and it is concluded that these two methods are 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 it is concluded that their use would be met with considerable resistance.

The over-all rankings of the eight methods by the two groups did not vary significantly. Further, the rankings of the eight methods considered did not vary significantly from the elementary educators' rankings in the Scharffe study. Therefore, it is concluded that attitudes of middle school educators toward A B C D F when compared to selected reporting alternatives are compatible with attitudes of elementary educators.

Teachers listed teacher-oriented responses for favoring A B C D F while administrators listed parent-oriented reasons. The variables of sex, years of experience, degrees held, undergraduate teacher training, or middle school status had no significant effect on the attitudes of middle school teachers or administrators.

The conclusion was reached by the researcher that teachers and administrators favor parent conferences with A B C D F as the written records, and both groups showed some interest in narratives and check lists as possible alternatives to letter grades.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preparing the acknowledgments for this dissertation is a task that should have begun several years ago when I first began working toward this degree, for every professor along the way has had a hand in its completion. There are so many people who have, unknowingly, provided inspiration and guidance that I know should be included in these pages, but the list is so long that a separate chapter would be required to merely mention them.

It goes without saying that the individual at the top of the list is Dr. Louis Romano, advisor and committee chairman. From planning my entire course of study through advising me on this dissertation, Dr. Romano has been a "brick," and words cannot adequately express my appreciation for his patience and understanding. Dr. Robert Muth was so gracious in agreeing to join my committee after one of the original committee members left the university, and I will always be grateful to him for taking on this unexpected assignment. Dr. Arden Moon, longtime friend and committee member, found himself being called upon perhaps more than planned since he resides in Saginaw near my home, and it was too convenient to call him several times during the preparation of this work for advice and guidance. The patience, understanding, and character of this gentleman will always be an inspiration to me. And, Dr. Philip Marcus, cognate committee member, has been so helpful in the preparation of this

ii

work, with his technical advice and suggestions on appropriate statistical testing devices.

Much could be said about Dr. William G. Scharffe, who originally advised me to conduct this research as a follow-up to his study on the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators toward the same grading and reporting systems. Bill has been more helpful than he will ever know by providing me with his data and allowing me to modify some of his instruments for this study. After calling on him literally dozens of times for advice, he was always very helpful and understanding. Thanks, Bill. I am forever indebted.

After so many years of course work at the university, I have grown to depend upon the help of a very gracious and beautiful lady in the graduate office of Erickson Hall, Mrs. Virginia Wiseman. Like so many others before me, there have been times of frustration and exasperation over the details of administrative paper work connected with graduate studies, and each time, I have been helped and placed at ease by the smile and reassuring "wink" from this wonderful lady. Every university should have a Virginia Wiseman.

After completing the final page of the draft of the dissertation, the job of typing it in final form according to acceptable university form is a formidable task requiring the skill and expertise of an accomplished typist. I found such a person in Mrs. Susan Cooley. It was a great relief to hand this dissertation to her, knowing it would be completed perfectly, and I wish to thank her for her assistance on the completion of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

One of the most perplexing, and often unpleasant, tasks facing educators today is the process of evaluating students' achievement, and relating that achievement with some degree of accuracy to the student and the parents. To say the least, it often is difficult to know what has really been absorbed or learned by the student. Be that as it may, student evaluation remains a necessity--a requirement demanded of educators at all levels. The demands are made by parents, students themselves, and institutions of learning as well as institutions of employment.

Studies by the National Education Association have shown that the most commonly used method of "defining" student achievement is the letter grade, or A B C D F, system. While letter grades are the most widely used method of reporting student achievement, there is widespread debate over whether such marks provide a valid form of assessment.

A study by William G. Scharffe[1] investigated the attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators in grades kindergarten through six toward the use of letter grades as compared with seven

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[1]The Scharffe study, along with any others cited in this chapter, will be specifically cited in Chapter II.

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other forms of reporting including blanket grading, check list, credit-no credit, narratives, parent conferences, pass-fail, and self-evaluation. The Scharffe study indicated that grades, A B C D F, were second only to parent conferences in over-all favor by both administrators and teachers. Scharffe also found that, even though parent conferences were viewed as most desirable, they are seldom used exclusively and are usually accompanied by some form of written evaluation.

The debate about the validity of letter grades is not new, however; neither is the organizational structure of the traditional elementary school which generally houses grades kindergarten through six in self-contained classrooms. A school organizational structure which is rather new is the middle school concept designed to meet the unique needs of the transescent child between the ages of 11 and 14. The middle school movement has grown since the early 1960s when pioneer middle schools emerged in Centerville, Ohio; Barrington, Illinois; Eagle Grove, Iowa; Mt. Kisco, New York; and Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania. The middle school is uniquely designed to meet the needs of youngsters in transition from childhood to adolescence. Hopefully, the teachers and administrators assigned to middle school programs share an awareness of the purposes for which the middle was designed.

It would seem logical, then, that a follow-up of the Scharffe study be completed with the examination of the attitudes of middle school teachers and administrators toward the use of letter grades as compared with blanket grading, check list, credit-no credit,

narratives, parent conferences, pass-fail, and self-evaluation, for
if the middle school concept is indeed working a difference in atti-
tudes would be present.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the attitude of
middle school teachers and administrators in Michigan toward the use
of letter grades (A B C D F) as compared with several other methods
of student evaluation and reporting, and to compare those attitudes
to the attitudes expressed by elementary teachers and administrators
in the Scharffe study.

Significance of the Problem

The purpose of evaluating the work, achievement, or growth
of any individual, whether they be a student or employee, must be to
provide a valid, fair assessment of their performance. It should be
an educational experience to give the individual direction in which
to strive for continued improvement. The assessment must be clear
and precise in delineating specific strong points as well as areas
needing added attention. And, assessment must involve the participa-
tion of both the evaluator and the evaluatee with goals and objectives
previously agreed upon by both parties. Given that goals and objec-
tives have been clearly outlined for the courses offered at the
middle school level, the criteria for various levels of satisfactory
achievement should be clearly stated and understood in advance by the
student. Which, then, of the several different methods of evaluating

and reporting student achievement is most fair and valid, and most preferred by middle school educators?

This question has yet to be asked of middle school teachers and administrators. It seems appropriate, then, to replicate the Scharffe study, which was directed toward kindergarten through sixth grade teachers and administrators, with the population being teachers and administrators in middle school programs including grades six, seven, and eight. It is the researcher's intention to determine if the atmosphere or climate in a middle school, which professes to practice the 18 characteristics of a middle school as outlined by such writers as Eichorn, Romano, Alexander, and others, will in fact result in similar attitudes toward the eight different student evaluation and reporting methods as was demonstrated by elementary teachers and administrators in the Scharffe study.

One of the accepted characteristics of the middle school is that there be full provision for student evaluation which will be personal and positive in nature. Since the middle school program stresses individualized instruction, it follows that evaluation should also be individualized, including student self-assessment, with frequent student-teacher-parent conferences. It is significant, then, to determine the attitudes of teachers and administrators who are currently functioning in middle schools toward the various systems of student evaluation and reporting to be included in this study. Are they in accord with the principles of the middle schools in which they are functioning? And, are they significantly different than the attitudes of K-6 educators?

Definition of Terms

Public Schools: Public schools refers to schools supported by public tax monies to meet the needs of local residents, and excludes all private schools supported by tuition, fees, or affiliated with private organizations which may require membership of the constituents.

Middle School: Middle school refers to public, tax-supported schools including grades six, seven, and eight exclusively.

Middle School Teachers: Middle school teachers refers to those teachers certified and regularly contracted to teach in grades six, seven, and eight and who are actively teaching in a middle school as defined above.

Middle School Administrators: Middle school administrators refers to any person responsible for the over-all daily operation of a middle school and who has the authority to recommend the hiring, suspension, discharge, lay-off, recall, promotion, transfer, assignment, reward, or discipline of employees, and is not a member of the teacher bargaining unit.

Grade: Grade refers to the specific grade level or year the student has been in school, such as sixth grade, seventh grade, or eighth grade.

Letter Grade: Letter grade refers to a rating of the student's achievement on an examination or in a course by the use of letters of the alphabet with A being the highest achievement and F indicating failure.

Pass-Fail Reporting: Pass-fail reporting refers to the use
of only two alternatives in evaluating the student's achievement in
a course or subject matter with the awarding of either a passing
mark or a failing mark with no intermediate marks, pluses, or minuses.

Credit-No Credit Reporting: Credit-no credit reporting
refers to the use of only two alternatives in evaluating the student's
achievement in a course or subject with the awarding of either a
credit mark or a no credit mark with no intermediate symbols, pluses,
or minuses.

Blanket Grade Reporting: Blanket grade reporting refers to
the system of awarding every student in a course or subject the same
passing evaluation mark, regardless of difference in student achieve-
ment, with no indication of pluses or minuses.

Narrative Reporting: Narrative reporting refers to descrip-
tive passages which describe, in complete sentences, the student's
achievement or progress toward meeting the predetermined objectives.

Parent Conference Reporting: Parent conference reporting
refers to face-to-face, personal meetings, either at the school or
in the home, between the teacher and the parents of each student to
explain and discuss the child's achievement and progress toward
meeting the predetermined course objectives.

Check List Reporting: Check list reporting refers to the
practice of compiling a comprehensive list of affective and cogni-
tive behaviors, characteristics, and evaluative comments, both posi-
tive and negative, whereby the teacher checks the comments which best
describe the progress and behaviors of the individual student.

Self-Evaluation Reporting: Self-evaluation reporting refers to the practice of each student evaluating his or her own achievement and progress toward meeting predetermined course objectives utilizing one or more of the reporting instruments described above.

Attitude: Attitude refers to the teacher or administrator's thinking, acting, or feeling, either positive, negative, or indifferent, toward each of the above methods of student evaluation and reporting.

High Middle School: High middle school refers to a school which ranked in the upper 25 percent of all schools surveyed in the middle school identification survey, which is part of the current research, to determine the level of middle school implementation of each individual school.

Low Middle School: Low middle school refers to a school which ranked in the lower 25 percent of all schools surveyed in the middle school identification survey cited above.

School Status: School status refers to the level of true middle school implementation, high or low, being practiced by each of the individual participating schools.

Possible Delimitations of the Study

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

1. Only middle schools including grades six, seven, and eight will be surveyed.

2. Only middle schools in Michigan will be included in the study.

3. Michigan teacher certification permits both elementary and secondary teachers to teach grades seven and eight. Some of the teachers and administrators surveyed may have been trained to teach at the elementary or senior high school levels rather than the middle school level, which could influence their attitudes toward student evaluation and reporting.

4. The assumption must be made that the respondents will respond with their true attitudes toward reporting practices.

5. The data from middle school administrators are based upon a rather small sample of 39 respondents.

<u>Review of Related Literature</u>

The review of the literature will include:

1. A definition and history of the middle school concepts, particularly those concepts which speak to student evaluation and reporting.

2. A historical review of various methods of student evaluation and the "evolution" of these methods.

3. A review of the literature in support of the use of letter grades (A B C D F).

4. A review of the literature in opposition to the use of letter grades.

5. A review of the literature in support of, or in opposition to, each of the alternative forms of student evaluation and reporting being considered in this study.

6. A review of the literature concerning the attitudes of teachers toward student personality which may affect the grades given to students.

Objectives

Research Question 1: Do middle school teachers in Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward self-evaluation is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

Research Question 2:   Do middle school administrators in

Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of

selected alternative forms of reporting?

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward
A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward
A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude
toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward
A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward
A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward
A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
self-evaluation reporting is the same as their attitude
toward A B C D F.

Research Question 3:   If middle school teachers 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 4:   If middle 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 the teacher's preference for a particular form of

reporting and the teacher's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level teacher was trained to teach, (5) school status?

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship exist between the administrator's preference for a particular form of reporting and the administrator's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level administrator was trained to teach, (5) 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 progress reporting?

Analysis of Data

Selection of Sample

Sample size.--Based on information provided by the 1977-1978 Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide, there are 235 middle schools which include grades six, seven, and eight in Michigan. It is the researcher's estimation that the combined total of principals and assistant principals should provide a projected total of 400 administrators in the population. While not all schools list the number of faculty members in the directory, the majority that do include these figures indicate a total of approximately 6,000 teachers. The researcher has estimated a total of approximately 6,400 middle school faculty members in the total population. According to Krejcie and Morgan, the minimum sample size of schools from a total of 235 should be 148 in order to collect sufficient data to

make generalizations to the total population.[2] The researcher will take the liberty of randomly selecting 160 schools; however, since the study is ultimately to include each individual teacher and administrator in the sample schools, it is felt that 160 buildings will involve a much larger sample of teachers and administrators than necessary. Therefore, only those schools that most exemplify the characteristics of the "true" middle school will be included in the study, as well as those schools that least exemplify the true middle school, in order to draw comparisons between the attitudes of the teachers and administrators between the two groups of schools. A modified Riegle questionnaire will be sent to the principals of all 160 schools selected to determine the level of implementation of the accepted middle school characteristics.

Middle school teachers.--Teachers included in the sample will be all teachers employed in the "high" middle schools as well as from the "low" middle schools.

Middle school administrators.--Administrators included in the sample will be all principals and assistant principals in the high middle schools as well as in the low middle schools.

Distribution of the Survey

A sample of 160 schools was randomly selected from the 235 middle schools in Michigan. A letter explaining the purpose of the study, along with a modified Riegle questionnaire to identify middle

[2]Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan, "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities," Educational and Psychological Measurement 30 (1970): 607-10.

school practices was sent to the principals of each of the 160 middle schools. The principals were asked to complete the questionnaire, identifying the level of implementation of middle school practices in their own building, and return it to the researcher. Also, each principal was asked to determine if his or her building would be willing to participate in the next phase of the study. After scoring all the returned questionnaires, the responding schools were ranked according to level of middle school practices implementation from "high" to "low." A school with a score of 65 would be considered very high and indicates an exemplary middle school, whereas a score as low as 20 would indicate that the school is a middle school in name only and actually practices few, if any, of the accepted middle school characteristics.

After ranking the schools according to their numerical scores on the Riegle questionnaire, the ranked schools were divided into four groups, or quartiles. Those schools with scores in the top quartile whose principal indicated a willingness to participate in the final phase of the study and those schools in the bottom quartile whose principal indicated a willingness to participate in the final stage of the study, were selected to receive the final questionnaire. The schools that fell in the second and third quartile, or the middle half, were all eliminated. This system allowed the researcher to compare the attitudes of middle school teachers and administrators in "true" middle schools with their counterparts in buildings which are middle schools in name only and practice middle school concepts sparingly.

Finally, each building in the first and fourth quartiles was sent a packet of questionnaires to allow each member of the administrative and teaching staff to indicate his/her feelings and attitudes toward letter grade reporting as compared with the several alternatives included in this study.

Length of Study

The final survey instrument to be used was a revised form of the same instrument used in the Scharffe study in order to insure replication. Dr. Scharffe has kindly cooperated in granting permission to use the questionnaire developed by him in his study of the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators toward the use of A B C D F as compared with other selected methods of student evaluation and reporting. The instrument was designed to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. A modified Likert scale was used, with choices for responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." A four-point scale was used in order to force respondents to either agree or disagree with the statement given, thus avoiding the chance for a repeated cluster on the mean point of the scale. Respondents were then asked open-ended questions requesting them to offer rationale for their responses on certain items. Rationale offered by respondents on the open-ended questions were then coded in order to report the data.

Treatment of the Data

Analysis of variance for repeated measure data will be used for Research Questions 1 and 2, using subject as unit of analysis.

These two questions will have seven hypotheses each and will be treated as seven planned contrasts. Research Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 will be analyzed by cross-table frequency using chi square test of homogeneity and chi square independency. Research Question 7 will be answered by descriptive information about the means and variance by rank ordering. Two computer packages are used to analyze the data. They are the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)[3] and MULTIVARIANCE.

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[3]Norman H. Nie et al., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A History of Reporting Methods

The question of "Where are we now, and how did we get here?"
certainly lends itself to an historical review of student grading
and reporting in American schools. However, a thorough analysis of
this type could take us back as far as pre-revolution days of the
eighteenth century, and such a review could encompass an entire dis-
sertation on its own merit. For purposes of the current study, we
will review the practices of the twentieth century, particularly from
1910 to the present, for as Smith and Dobbin tell us:

> . . . The concern for systematic reporting of learning progress
> may be described generally in two phases: (a) the period
> extending roughly from 1910 to 1940, when research interest was
> focused mainly on the mechanical and semantic problems of mark-
> ing; and (b) the period from 1940 to the present, during which
> a greater interest has centered on improvement of marks in com-
> prehensiveness and communication.[1]

For the past several generations, being "graded" has been a
basic part of the experience of growing up in America. As Hiner
states,

> From the time the American child receives his first gold star
> for brushing his teeth until he grasps his final sheepskin,
> he is graded--he is evaluated and compared, sorted and classi-
> fied, passed and failed, promoted and held back; he is given

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[1]Ann Z. Smith and J. E. Dobbins, "Marks and Marking Systems,"
Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 3rd ed. (New York, 1960),
p. 783.

percentages, A's, B's, C's and S's and U's. During his 11 to 16 years of formal schooling, he is graded hundreds, even thousands of times.[2]

One writer, Kirschenbaum, provides considerable historical information on the subject of grading. As he points out, most training or education at one time took place primarily within the family unit. Fathers trained their sons to follow in their footsteps, and the process resulted in generations of the family continuing in the same line of work. Likewise, mothers trained the daughters in the matters of homemaking and child rearing. "Performance was all that counted. To be an A farmer you harvested the most wheat. To be an A hunter you killed the most game. The product was readily visible, and success or failure was easy to measure."[3]

In early America, most schools were the one-room variety and all students were grouped together, regardless of age or achievement level, and one teacher was responsible for the entire group. Oftentimes the older students were responsible for tutoring the younger children in such situations. In most cases, the curriculum consisted of basic skills such as reading, writing, penmanship, history, and possibly geography.

Generally, the students showed their competencies by their actual performances in reading, writing and reciting. Progress reports were mostly descriptive. The teacher would write down the skills the student could or couldn't do. This

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[2]Ray N. Hiner, "An American Ritual--GRADING as a Cultural Function," The Clearing House Magazine 47 (February 1973): 356.

[3]Howard Kirschenbaum, Sidney B. Simon, and Rodney W. Napier, Wad-Ja-Get? (New York: Hart Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), p. 47.

was done mostly for the student's benefit since he would not move to his next subject area until he had mastered the previous one.[4]

Such techniques sound very similar to the mastery learning theories of today. And, the system of having older students assist the younger students is a prime example of the pendulum which always seems to return to models of earlier eras as this, too, is a technique often advocated by contemporary writers.

As school enrollments increased, particularly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the number of students continuing on into secondary schools increased considerably. Enrollments in secondary schools between 1870 and 1910 increased from 500 to 10,000, while enrollments in elementary schools increased from 6,871,000 to almost 18 million.[5] At the same time, the secondary schools began expanding their curricular offerings. It was during this period that secondary schools began reporting pupil progress by percentages in order to differentiate the various students by ability. "In a sense, this was the beginning of grading as we know it today."[6]

As more and more students continued on into high school, and from there pursued college training, the need, or demand, for more and more differentiation was placed upon high school records. These college demands were very instrumental in the implementation of grades at the secondary level. By the turn of the century, percentage grades became increasingly popular at the secondary level, even though the elementary schools generally continued without any grades except

[4]Ibid., p. 51.   [5]Ibid.   [6]Ibid.

for a few symbols such as S for satisfactory and U for unsatisfactory. So, by early in the twentieth century, "Success was no longer measured in competitive debate, or in the sports arena or on the battlefield, or on the job. It was determined by the whim of the teacher in the classroom."[7]

The controversy over the validity of grades began as early as 1912 and is still continuing today. Two noted researchers, Starch and Elliot, conducted a study to test the reliability of grades as a measure of student accomplishment which is still cited by many students of the topic today. Their study involved two English language examination papers written by two pupils at the end of their first year in a large midwest high school. The papers were duplicated and sent to 200 high schools where the principal English teachers were to mark the papers according to the practices and standards of their own school. The differences in scores were dramatic. One of the papers varied from 64 to 98 points, with an average of 88.2. The other paper had a range from 50 to 97, with an average score of 80.2.[8]

If a score of 75 was considered minimal for a passing grade, both of these papers would receive grades ranging from an A to an F. Similarly, Starch and Elliot repeated the study using a geometry test paper, which one might expect to be more objective than an English examination; yet the range was even wider, as the score on one paper had a range of 67 points.[9]

[7]Ibid., p. 53.   [8]Ibid., p. 55.   [9]Ibid., p. 56.

As a result of the Starch and Elliot studies, educators began moving away from the percentage grading and moved toward a system of fewer marks. One popular scale was a three-point system which utilized Excellent, Average, or Poor. Another system was the familiar five-point scale utilizing Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, and Failing, which has since been converted to the system most often used today: A, B, C, D, F.

To illustrate the extent of change that school systems experienced since the pioneer studies of Starch and Elliot, the Philadelphia public schools have undergone eight changes in reporting systems since 1913, and their secondary schools are now utilizing the familiar five-point system, or letter grades A, B, C, D, F.[10]

So, where are we now? To underline the pendulum effect mentioned earlier regarding the evolution of evaluation and reporting, Cagle states,

> A bird's eye view of the history of marking systems shows us moving from a percentage to a five-point letter classification (usually A, B, C, D and F), to a pass or fail, to checklists, to letter writer, to parent conferences, and, in the majority of cases, back to the five-letter classification. In most instances, schools have abandoned the use of percentages as a tool for showing pupil progress.[11]

Are we really back to "square one"? According to the findings of Scharffe, elementary school teachers and administrators favor the use of letter grades over any other form of written report, even

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[10]Ibid., p. 67.

[11]Dan F. Cagle, "How May We Make the Evaluation and Reporting of Student Achievement More Meaningful?" NASSP Bulletin 59 (April 1955): 25.

though they hold the parent-teacher conference in the highest esteem as a reporting technique. Scharffe's study reports on elementary teacher and administrator attitudes toward eight different reporting techniques, including letter grades, parent conferences, narratives, check lists, pass-fail, credit-no credit, blanket grading, and student self-evaluation.[12] Further reference will be made to the Scharffe study throughout this paper.

This researcher believes there may be some differences in attitudes of middle school educators, particularly since the middle school is a relatively recent innovation which has shown widespread growth throughout the United States in the past 20 years. In Michigan alone, there are now 235 public middle schools housing grades six through eight, as well as many other schools with slightly varying levels, such as grades five through eight, or grades seven and eight.[13] Hopefully, the many teachers and administrators in these schools are familiar with the characteristics of "true" middle schools and will understand that the evaluation and reporting system should be "personal and positive in nature," and that it should be individualized so the student can take part in assessing his own progress and help plan his own future progress. The middle school evaluation and

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[12]William G. Scharffe, "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" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1977), p. 128.

[13]Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide (Lansing: 1977-1978), pp. 116-222.

reporting system also calls for periodic parent-teacher-student conferences.[14]

This study will compare the attitudes of practicing public middle school educators in Michigan with the attitudes of practicing public elementary educators in the Scharffe study, to determine if middle school educators actually "practice what they preach."

Proponents of the Letter Grade System

The arguments presented against grades are formidable, to say the least. However, there are still many writers who take the opposing view and feel they are justifiable if not necessary. While the percentage of secondary schools using grades in reporting student progress is not necessarily a valid testimony for either the pro or con of the argument, there is still evidence to point out that the majority of our nation's school systems still use either letter grades or numerical grades. In a 1967 study by the NEA which covered a sample of 600 school systems, it was found that a system of numerical or letter grades was used in about 80 percent of the systems, except at the first grade level, where the percentage was about 73, and in the kindergarten, where it was 17 percent.[15]

In 1967 at least, the argument appeared to be somewhat like the weather: everyone talks about it but no one does anything about

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[14]Nicholas P. Georgiady and Louis G. Romano, "Do You Have a Middle School?" Educational Leadership 31 (December 1973): 240.

[15]Robert L. Thorndike and Elizabeth Hagen, Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1969), p. 571.

it. Marks and marking are now deeply imbedded in the educational culture. They become the basis, in whole or in part, for a wide range of activities including the curriculum that may be available to the student, whether or not the student is eligible for scholarships, whether the student is in fact admitted to schools of higher learning, and even whether certain vocational opportunities will be available to him after his formal education is completed. However, with all their limitations, whether they be technical or humanitarian, in Thorndike and Hagen's view, "marks remain one of the best predictors of later marks, and so are important in conveying information about likelihood of success in college generally, or in specific institutions or programs."[16]

The case in favor of grades is often stated in such a way as to imply a need for the general improvement of the system at which marks are assigned to insure greater validity and clarity in their use, but draws the line at total abandonment or total change to another system of reporting. One notable writer who takes this position is Robert L. Ebel, who believes that no single system of marking is likely to be found that will make the process of marking easy and painless or satisfactory to all users. Or, to put it another way, "you can't please everybody." As Ebel says, ". . . no new marking system, however cleverly devised and conscientiously followed, is likely to solve the basic problems of marking. The

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[16]Ibid., p. 573.

real need is not for some new system. Good systems already exist."[17]

From an administrator's point of view, letter grades or some comparable numerical system of marking are probably the simplest system of recording student achievement. While marks are usually given periodically during the semester on some form of report card, which reflect the average of all work completed in class during the marking period, these marking period grades are then averaged to show a final mark for the entire course. In most cases, this is the only mark that will appear in the permanent records of the student. It is easy to establish a grade-point-average; it is easy to rank students according to GPA, and higher educational institutions and employers generally believe they can gain some insights into the student's potential for further study or vocational placement according to these marks or grade-point-averages. Writers such as Ebel believe this is a fair and workable system. As he states,

> Marks are necessary. If they are inaccurate, invalid, or meaningless, the remedy lies less in de-emphasizing marks than in assigning them more carefully so that they more truly report the extent of important achievements. Instead of seeking to minimize their importance or seeking to find some less painful substitute, perhaps instructors should devote more attention to improving the validity and precision of marks they assign and to minimizing misinterpretations of marks by students, faculty and others who use them.[18]

Another writer who takes a rather strong stand in support of the necessity of grades is Spray, who believes the abolition of grades

[17]Robert L. Ebel, Measuring Educational Achievement (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 398.

[18]Ibid., p. 401.

would be unrealistic considering the needs and demands of both business and higher education. He speaks of society in terms of the individual's relationship with his fellow man, and the sorting and ordering, or ranking, of individual students according to achievement in order to satisfy the demands of higher institutions of learning or employment as necessary to the over-all societal plan. In this regard, Spray states, "School marks serve precedented and socially evolved purposes which, in the foreseeable future, cannot otherwise be served. Educators may rest assured that the practice of marking and reporting student achievement in school is here to stay."[19]

While Spray sees grades as essential and advocates their continued use, he does believe they are often used in such a way as to limit their value in communicating progress to parents. As other writers have said in opposition to the letter grades, no one can be certain just what a "C" actually means. Unless there is some supplemental report to accompany the grade, a checklist, a letter, or possibly a conference, the parent has no way to determine if the "C" indicates average work for a student of low ability, high ability, class average, national standards, or what. Spray believes grades should be used but at the same time, they should be based upon the student's ability to perform in the course, and this determination could be made by the use of past performance, test scores, and teacher judgment. "As accurately as possible, a determination should be made

[19]Cecil O. Spray, "Meaningful Grade Reporting," The Clearing House 43 (February 1969): 338.

of the student's ability in the particular subject."[20] Spray advocates as many as five different ability levels for the various courses being offered, and these levels might be referred to as "phases." From an administrative point of view, such levels might create a multitude of scheduling problems. Also, there may be some problems with disagreement between the school and the home as to which phase the youngster will be assigned to, as the system leads to the same philosophical arguments that are made against tracking.

Notwithstanding these arguments, Spray is not alone in his opinion regarding the system of assigning grades according to the varying levels of ability of students. Kvaraceus adopts a supportive view by stating the following:

> The only way evaluators in school can solve this personality-splitting dilemma is to provide two marks: one indicating the level of the pupil's performance measured against his potential; the other reporting his achievements against the performance of other pupils of his own age or grade.[21]

One of the strongest positions taken in favor of not only grades, but more generally, competition, is that of Grenis. He believes nongraded schools with so-called individualized programs are a myth. While schools may profess to have such a program, parents will often make such demands as, "I know you have a nongraded program, but what grade is Johnny in this year?" Grenis

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[20]Ibid., p. 340.

[21]William C. Kvaraceus, "DANGER Handle With Care!" NEA Journal 48 (December 1959): 27.

continues, "If the parent is insistent enough, he is usually told."[22]

Grenis makes his point against nongraded programs in that he dis-

agrees with the concept of a child being allowed to move at his own

pace. He feels that "to conduct an individualized program logically

leads to evaluation of the student in a vacuum."[23]

Further speaking on competition, Grenis states,

Excellence for this student will continue to be measured in
terms of other students having similar aptitudes, motiva-
tions, and goals. There is nothing basically wrong with
creating a competitive group climate. Why the reluctance to
see it for what it is and admit it openly?[24]

He continues:

We are helping children to live as members of a competitive
society. Let us accept the idea that excellence will be
rewarded. Ideally, every child is a winner--who doesn't win
every time.[25]

Opponents of the Grading System

In reviewing the literature on grading and student reporting

practices, this researcher has found that the preponderance of the

writers are against grades (A B C D F) for three main reasons. First,

the use of grades tends to cause some students to strive for the high

grade for the prestige it will bring to them in the eyes of their

parents, their peers, and institutions of higher learning and possibly

employment, rather than to promote learning for the sake of self-

improvement or to satisfy their natural inquisitive nature. Second,

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[22]Michael Grenis, "Individualization, Grouping, Competi-
tion, and Excellence," Phi Delta Kappan 57 (November 1975): 199.

[23]Ibid., p. 200.   [24]Ibid., p. 199.   [25]Ibid., p. 200.

the use of grades will induce an early sense of failure and discourage
the student who may need a bit more time to master the subject matter.
Third, the use of grades tells us little about the skills that stu-
dents have acquired in a given subject, in that a "C" fails to indi-
cate whether the student achieved an average amount of learning
compared to his classmates, national norms, or according to his indi-
vidual ability.

One of the writers who has covered the issue of grading and
student reporting rather thoroughly is Wrinkle, who says of the above
issues,

> Except in a very limited sense, A B C D F marks cannot convey
> significant information regarding the achievement, progress,
> failure or success of the student. A mark, unless its mean-
> ing is restricted to one defined value, cannot be interpreted
> since it is usually a composite index representing the average
> of a variety of different values. Does an A mean superior
> achievement on an absolute scale of values, high achievement
> in comparison with the achievement in relation to the student's
> individual ability? You don't know, and so you can't tell what
> the A means.[26]

Further, in the realm of interpretation, Wrinkle states,
"[Marks] do not represent fixed values in terms of which they can be
interpreted."[27] As motivators, Wrinkle views grades in a negative
manner as he writes, "The need for marks as persuasive devices, as
pressure instruments, to induce an increased application of student
effort is based on an assumption that students do not want to do what
the school wants them to do."[28]

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[26] William L. Wrinkle, Improving Marking and Reporting Prac-
tices (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1947), p. 34.

[27] Ibid., p. 35.   [28] Ibid., p. 34.

As many writers point out, the confusion exists where an attempt is made to summarize pupil progress in terms of a single letter grade and have its meaning be clear and precise to the student and parent. The question remains whether the assigned mark represents level of achievement, gain in achievement, or some combination of the two? Should effort be included, or should high achievers be given good marks regardless of effort? Should pupils be marked in terms of their own potential learning ability or in relation to the achievement of their classmates? As Gronlund points out, such confusion must be eliminated if the marks are to be effective.

> The reports should (1) clarify the goals of the school,
> (2) indicate the pupil's strengths and weaknesses in learn-
> ing, (3) provide greater understanding of the pupil's personal-
> social development, and (4) contribute to the pupil's motiva-
> tion.[29]

From the administrative point of view, a single letter grade tends to be preferred, largely because such marks are compact and can be easily recorded and averaged. With the increased use of machines for routine clerical work, this advantage will probably assume even greater importance in the future. Most larger school districts now have the services of computers for routine duties of the past, such as scheduling classes, marking report cards, and figuring grade-point-averages. In most cases, there is very little space left on the report card for detailed descriptions or interpretations of the grades.

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[29]Norman E. Gronlund, Measurements and Evaluation in Teaching (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1965), p. 373.

PUPIL PROGRESS REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF SAGINAW

| SCHOOL NAME > VEBBER JR. HIGH | TELEPHONE > 754-1489 | PRINCIPAL > R. Crane |

| STUDENT NAME | | | | 1700230009 | ? | 03/14/63 | 116 | 8 | 1 | 78-79 |

NUM	COURSE	TEACHER	1	2	3	HALF YEAR				FINAL GRADE
01	Office	Crane R.	A-1K	A-1J	A-1J	A-A				
02	Indus Arts	Isotalo B.	B+1K	A-1J	A-1J	A-				
03	Health	Busch J.	A 3J	A 2J	A 1J	B-A				
05	Soc. Stud 8	Vegner M.	B 1 K	A-1MK	A 1K	A				
06	English 8	Snyder J.	A 1KL	A 1KL	A 1JL	A				
07	Algebra	McCarthy M.	B 20	A 1K	A 1K	A-				

THIS MARKING PERIOD GRADE POINT AVE	CUMULATIVE TOTALS			
	CREDITS ATTEMPTED	CREDITS PASSED	POINTS	GRADE POINT AVERAGE
3.900				

CITIZENSHIP 1 EXCELLENT 2 GOOD 3 FAIR 4 POOR 5 CONFERENCE REQUESTED #
NOTE ANY PARENT SEEING A 5 IN CITIZENSHIP IS REQUESTED TO CALL THE SCHOOL
OFFICE AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A MEETING WITH THE APPROPRIATE TEACHER

MARKING PERIOD	ABSENCE SUMMARY						
FIRST							
SECOND							
THIRD							
FOURTH							
FIFTH							
SIXTH							

SCHOLARSHIP MARK

REMARKS

PARENTS COPY

Illustration 2.1.--Example of a typical report card currently being used, where letter grades for achievement, numerical marks for citizenship, and comments on character are all used.

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Another area of concern for Gronlund is the fact that most single marks on a report card actually represent the average of all the work completed by the student within a given marking period or semester. The student may have shown mastery to the highest degree on certain mathematical operations, performed adequately on others, and experienced considerable difficulty on others. His final mark may average out to a C. The single mark does not tell the student or his parents where his strengths and weaknesses lie. In this regard, Gronlund points out,

> As typically used, letter grades have resulted in an undesirable emphasis on marks as ends in themselves. Many pupils and parents view them as goals to be achieved, rather than as means for understanding and improving pupil development. While this is not entirely the fault of the marking system, the lack of information provided by a single letter grade probably contributes to this misuse.[30]

Another well-known writer, John Holt, recognizes this same problem of lack of clarity in the grades and offers the following suggestion:

> If we have to submit a grade or report card once a term, or quarter, or semester, that should be the only mark we give the child in that period. How then do we get the grade? When I taught ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade English, I graded my students on what I felt to be a cross section of their best work.[31]

He goes on to point out the example of averaging a serious writer's best work against his worst, which would be totally unacceptable in

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[30]Ibid., p. 375.

[31]John Holt, "I Oppose Testing, Marking, and Grading," Today's Education 60 (March 1971): 29.

the field of literature. The same is true of an artist. Only the best work is ever sold.

Holt further states that if grades must be given, they should be given

> . . . as leniently as possible, particularly at the low end.
> Put a safety net under everybody. To my ninth, tenth and
> eleventh graders I made it clear that nobody in class would
> get lower than a C-, whatever they might or might not do.
> This at least freed them from the burden of failure. Free of
> it, they went on to do good work, very often better work than
> they had done before.[32]

The area of interpretation of marks, determining their mean-ing, is of major concern to nearly every writer who speaks in opposition to the use of grades. In support of the concerns of Holt, Davis comments,

> Schools and colleges often define letter marks of A, B, C,
> D, or E in terms of percentages. One college, for example,
> states in its catalog that A = 90-100 percent; B = 80-89 per-
> cent; C = 70-79 percent; D = 60-69 percent; E = 0-59 percent.
> Taken literally, this statement means that a student who gets a
> score of 65 percent on any examination should be given a mark
> of D; one who gets a score of 89 percent should be given a
> mark of B, etc. Fortunately, no one takes the statement lit-
> erally because it is self-evident that to get 65 percent on a
> difficult examination might be the equivalent of getting 89
> percent on an easy examination.[33]

Davis points out that marks given by different teachers or even by the same teacher in different classes are not comparable. For example, an A from one teacher may represent the same level of

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[32]Ibid., p. 29.

[33]Frederick B. Davis, Educational Measurements and Their Interpretation (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), p. 299.

performance as a C from another teacher. This theory is supported by the earlier research by Starch and Elliot in 1913.

One of the fears often expressed to this writer by teachers is their concern over "accountability." Schools are now developing minimum performance objectives, several states administer statewide assessment tests, and some school systems are refusing to graduate seniors who fail to pass examinations of minimal exit skills. At the extreme level, lawsuits have been filed against boards of education after graduating students who cannot read.[34] But to this point, Holt says, "Make no mistake about it, if you have to send children on to their next class with labels around their necks, the better labels you can give them, the better off they will be."[35]

Following the same line of thought concerning attitudes and labels, Priestley writes,

Under traditional grading systems, a child is labeled a suc-cess or failure long before he completes his schooling. No child entering the first grade thinks of himself as a failure. Yet by the time a child finishes his public schooling 12 years later, he will, more likely than not, have been taught that he is a failure. And he will believe it.[36]

Priestley describes his own experiences as a classroom teacher and the problems he has encountered with the traditional grading sys-tem. He has found that the students who received A's and B's on their written assignments tended to continue to excel and receive

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[34]Peter Doe vs. San Francisco Unified School District, 1972; California Supreme Court refused to hear the case in 1976.

[35]Holt, "I Oppose Testing," p. 30.

[36]Ernest Priestley, "The Only Good Grades Are Good Grades," Changing Education 4 (Spring 1970): 17.

high grades. On the contrary, those who received C's and D's tended to continue receiving low marks, and in fact, their grades declined. He found that the only grades that served as motivators to the students were the "good" grades, while the poor grades proved to be discouraging factors. Of the students whose achievement might not warrant high grades in the traditional sense, Priestley states, "[School] should be a place where we learn how to handle life successfully. There is no place in school for labels and categories of failure."[37]

The concept of labeling students with their school grades seems to be the predominant factor in the works of many writers on the matter of reporting. Brantley follows this line of thought when he states, "It is a fact that some pupils are 'made' through marks while others are 'wrecked.'"[38] Brantley describes what he considers to be the ideal situation as follows:

An ideal school situation would be one in which the teacher is free to teach boys and girls who are interested in learning-- both teacher and pupil being unconcerned about the recording of a judgment, the mark. This ideal situation would eliminate the plan of young people being subjected to judgments based, too often, on too little objective evidence. Because of our ideal situation being in the future, teachers must continue assuming the responsibility for passing judgments on young people. These judgments bring joy and happiness to some; to others a feeling of bitterness and resentment; and to others, a spirit crushed to such an extent that further school attendance becomes objectionable to them.[39]

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[37]Ibid., p. 17.

[38]G. D. Brantley, "An Analysis of Current Practices in the Use of the Report Card," NASSP Bulletin 26 (January 1942): 67.

[39]Ibid., p. 67.

One outspoken writer, Brian Patrick McGuire, speaks out against grades from the perspective of a highly successful student. After graduating from a university with honors and a very high grade-point average, he looks back on his experiences with grades as a dehumanizing experience which limited his capacity for inquiry and self-motivation. McGuire states, "I have become convinced that the traditional letter-grading system should be eliminated in precollege education, for it discourages learning more than it encourages it."[40] Further, "My major objection to grading as I experienced it is that grades instead of merely symbolizing what had been learned usually became the sought-after goal."[41]

McGuire saw each teacher as a separate challenge as he catered to his tastes and preferences. The more observant and astute pupils would know the instructor's personality and expectations sufficiently within a few weeks of the course and knew how much preparation was necessary for the first examination. If successful, such a system would yield the best possible grades for the least possible work. This same point, in essence, is argued by many writers in that students will tend to cater to the whims of instructors and produce only that which is necessary to satisfy his standards for a high mark and will seldom go beyond into an area of genuine inquiry. As McGuire further states,

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[40]Brian P. McGuire, "The Grading Game," Today's Education 58 (March 1969): 32.

[41]Ibid.

The demands of academic efficiency deadened intellectual curi-
osity. If a certain chapter was not required for an examina-
tion, we would ignore it. The narrow pursuit of grades becomes
a poor substitute for discoveries of the world. The grading
system provides a breeding ground for mediocrity and cynicism.
Learning gets lost in a maze of points, minuses, and pluses.[42]

The idea of the A, B, C on the report card giving a false

sense of values to the less apt student as well as doing damage to

the superior student is supported by Brimm. He states,

Thosands of superior students in our high schools today can
meet the requirements for an A without "cracking a book."
It is difficult to convince a student that he is not working
when he receives the highest possible marks on his report
card. The antiquated device we are using lulls the inferior
students into a false sense of security and at the same time
encourages mediocrity in the superior students.[43]

While most would agree that marks should not be used in a

punitive way, we have all heard of instructors who allow the atti-

tudes and social behavior of the student to enter into their evalua-

tions. As Brimm further observes,

Most teachers temper the test results with such generalizations
as "attitude" and "effort." The degree to which these traits
enter into the mark is seldom defined and, as a result, no one
knows exactly what a C means. It may mean a below-average stu-
dent who works hard or a very good student who has a poor atti-
tude.[44]

McGuire expressed his concerns over the elitist cliques that

may result from maintaining honor rolls based upon academic grades.

It should be pointed out that the National Honor Society, which is

organized in many senior high schools in America, was established by

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[42]Ibid., p. 34.

[43]R. P. Brimm, "Report Cards--Yesterday and Today," Clearing
House 33 (September 1958): 17.

[44]Ibid.

the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in 1921. By 1925, the organization felt the need to establish honor societies for younger students in the secondary schools in order to stimulate them toward greater academic growth. As the NASSP puts it,

> The need to stimulate scholarship in high schools closely emulated the college design. Similar reasoning supported the concept of the National Junior Honor Society as a means to encourage academic performance during early adolescence.[45]

Although NASSP adopted the concept of a National Junior Honor Society in 1925, it was not until February 24, 1929, in St. Louis, Missouri, that the National Junior Honor Society was authorized by the Executive Committee of the NASSP.[46]

It might be well to examine the requirements for membership in the Junior National Honor Society. From the standpoint of scholarship, the rules state, "The minimum grade point average required for membership is 85 percent, a "B" average, or its equivalent. Schools may stipulate an average higher than 85 percent, but they cannot lower it."[47] The rules further stipulate, "Schools with non-graded, pass-fail, or other alternative systems should develop appropriate standards for meeting the scholarship requirement."[48]

While we generally think of honor society members as being high academic achievers, it should be remembered that there are four other criteria for membership, which include citizenship, service, leadership, and character. The definitions of each of these qualities

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[45]National Junior Honor Society Handbook (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1947), p. 4.

[46]Ibid., p. 6.   [47]Ibid., p. 12.   [48]Ibid., p. 34.

will not be discussed at this time, but suffice it to say that only those students who are considered to be very "special" are invited to become members. The final decision as to whether or not an individual meets the criteria rests with a committee of faculty and administrators in each individual school. It is this entire concept of students receiving special consideration or attention because of their school grades, and the idea of satisfying the expectations of a group of teachers, that McGuire finds so objectionable.

To illustrate the importance and prestige placed on Honor Society membership by its members, former President Gerald Ford used his membership in his 1976 campaign for reelection to the presidency. One of the films used by the mass media (television) included pictures of Mr. Ford being inducted as a student in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was again reinducted at the 1976 national convention of the NASSP in Washington, D.C., where he was a keynote speaker. If this writer may be indulged for a bit of editorializing, the nation's voters apparently did not see his high school scholastic achievements as significant enough to reelect him for a full term.

Among the foremost writers in the area of testing, grading, and reporting are Robert Thorndike and Elizabeth Hagen, who believe that the letter grade system is a satisfactory administrative device for recording purposes, but they also feel that it is insufficient in providing immediate feedback to the student and the parent as to the academic progress being realized. They believe the student needs constant information about himself to guide his learning activities

and to help him make plans for his future. He needs to know where his strengths and weaknesses lie, and the daily exercises, recitations, and quizzes provide this type of feedback. It is most important that such work be corrected by the teacher and returned to the student immediately in order to keep him up to date on his progress. Thorndike and Hagen believe that periodic grades or marks on report cards are too remote from the actual learning experiences to provide specific direction.[49]

Most students have experienced situations where teachers have assigned written work to be completed and turned in by a certain deadline, only to have it sit in a pile on the teacher's desk for days or weeks at a time before being corrected and returned. Thorndike and Hagen discuss a study of the attitudes of elementary school children on which subjects were most important for them to learn. It was found that the children tended to agree that spelling and arithmetic were most important because these were the papers their teachers graded and returned. Here again, it is testing and immediate feedback that are central, rather than a mark on a report card once in six or eight weeks.[50]

A study by White and Boehm produced similar results in testing the attitudes of elementary children toward various subjects in the curriculum. The children ranked their subjects in order of importance as follows: reading, arithmetic, spelling and writing,

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[49]Thorndike and Hagen, Measurement and Evaluation, p. 572.

[50]Ibid., p. 573.

and social studies and science. It was found that children believed spelling and arithmetic to be most important because these were the papers assigned most often, on a regular basis, and these papers were graded and returned to them most promptly. It was pointed out that the results may also imply that pupils respond to the world of learning in terms of repeated work demands and its evaluation, rather than to basic concepts or principles laid down in the curriculum.[51]

The point being made by White and Boehm is simply that children at the elementary school level are already looking at learning and importance of subject matter in terms of grades and teacher requirements, rather than a natural curiosity. Would it not be possible, with a different emphasis, to raise the level of importance in the minds of children toward social studies and science?

The Scharffe study revealed that elementary teachers and administrators also view letter grades as important indicators of academic success and worth, as they ranked this reporting system as being second only to parent conferences. Even so, they did not view parent conferences as sufficient in reporting by themselves. Some sort of written report was viewed as being necessary to accompany the parent conferences, and the written report form most favored was the letter grade.[52]

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[51]Mary Alice White and Ann Boehm, "Child's World of Learning: Written Workloads of Pupils," Psychology in the Schools 8 (1967): 73.

[52]Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 128.

Parent Conferences

One form of student reporting which receives wide support from many segments of the community of educators as well as parents is the periodic parent-teacher-(student) conference. Whether scheduled on a regular basis or on an informal basis according to need, the parent conference offers the teacher and parent the opportunity to discuss in considerable more detail the progress and achievements of the youngster. There are opportunities for questions from both parties to clarify the instructional materials and to gain better insights into the child's study habits or opportunities for privacy at home.

One writer, John A. Walecka, believes the opportunity to report on the growth of pupils in the schools through parent conferences offers the most effective means to coordinate the schools with the many agencies involved in the education of children. He further believes that in order that the child may have security in his environment, which is one of the 18 characteristics of the middle school, the relations between the parents and the teachers should be very close.[53] It would follow that such a close relationship would cause both parent and teacher to feel much more comfortable in developing a mutual goal of helping the child achieve to the full extent of his abilities. Along these same lines of thought, Baker says, "Anything

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[53]John A. Walecka, "Improving Pupil-Teacher and Parent-Teacher Relationships," Elementary School Journal (September 1942); cited in A. Purl, "REPORTS TO PARENTS: An Annotated Bibliography," Texas Outlook 29 (November 1945): 38.

which increases the understanding and strengthens the bonds between home and school works to ultimate advantage of the children."[54]

Also supporting the idea of close cooperation between home and school is Lasker, who states, "Not only are parents informed, but they have contributed toward [our] goals and philosophy through their suggestions and participation."[55] Alexander, further supporting the merits of parent-conferences, adds, "My belief--which has been strengthened by many comments from parents and others--is that the single most effective reporting medium is the teacher-parent conference."[56]

Most writers agree that in addition to the added time required in scheduling parent-teacher-student conferences, there is still a need to maintain some sort of record of the student's progress or achievement. In some cases, it is advocated that the same type of traditional recording method can be used, whether it be letter grades, numerical grades, check lists, narratives, or other, and that the conference serves to expand upon the recording technique to add a clearer understanding for all concerned as to the correct interpretation of the written reports. As Copland explains,

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[54]Harold V. Baker, "Reporting Pupil Progress to Parents," Report of the Sixth Annual Conference on Elementary Education, Boulder, Colorado, July 6-17, 1942; cited in A. Purl, "REPORTS TO PARENTS: An Annotated Bibliography," Texas Outlook 29 (November 1945): 39.

[55]Dorothy Lasker, "The Parent-Teacher Conference," NEA Journal (December 1959): 22.

[56]William M. Alexander, "Reporting to Parents--WHY? WHAT? HOW?" NEA Journal 48 (December 1959): 17.

Efficiently arranged, such a meeting can be one of the best
ways of enabling the report to fulfill its basic aims. It
acknowledges that, in any complex field, communication, to
be effective, must be two-way.[57]

This open line of communication between the home and school,

the close relationship that can be established between parent and

teacher recurs over and over in the themes of writers in favor of

the parent-teacher conference. The opportunity to clarify; to remove

the mystery of exactly how well the youngster is actually doing in

school and to develop a cooperative, working relationship between

all concerned is emphasized frequently. Adams describes the impor-

tance of the parent-teacher conference in the following manner:

Through a conference, a variety of data and their interrela-
tionships can be interpreted. The possibilities of misunder-
standing are diminished. The parent has the opportunity to
present his questions and problems. The teacher obtains
information of value concerning the student; and, perhaps most
important, a good conference leads to cooperative planning by
teachers and parents.[58]

Another writer, Thomas, expresses similar rationale by stating,

In a conference the teacher can be specific about the actions
of the child in school, the particular strengths and weaknesses
of his work. In addition, the parent can ask questions, can
understand better the school program, and can, with the teacher,
plan for the child's future growth in a more realistic manner.[59]

Gronlund takes exactly the same position in stating, "The

parent-teacher conference has the [additional] advantage of providing

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[57]R. E. Copland, "School Reports," Educational Research 8
(June 1966): 199.

[58]Georgia Sachs Adams, Measurement in Education, Psychology,
and Guidance (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 516.

[59]Murray R. Thomas, Judging Student Progress (New York:
Longmans, Green and Company, 1954), p. 294.

parents with an opportunity to ask questions, describe the pupil's
home life, and discuss plans for the pupil's further development."[60]

Parent conferences have often been criticized from the admin-
istrative point of view in that they are difficult to record, and
they are impossible to organize since secondary teachers have many
more students than elementary teachers. Brimm points out that such
conferences are administratively possible at the secondary level and
they would be one of the better ways of reporting pupil progress.
Regarding the value of the conferences, Brimm states,

> A single obscure mark on a report card can take on real mean-
> ing when a parent and pupil can discuss it with a profes-
> sionally trained person. In addition, such an arrangement
> offers an excellent opportunity for the parent to study the
> results of standardized tests as well as other evidence of
> educational growth.[61]

On the matter of organizing the conferences in such a manner that
will not require each teacher to conduct over 100 different confer-
ences, Brimm offers the following suggestion:

> In this sort of organization all information concerning a
> pupil must be funneled to the one teacher who is to hold
> the conference. Report cards, test results, anecdotal
> records, and other information must go to this teacher-
> counselor. Then he can do the best job in interpreting
> the pupil's work and his progress in school.[62]

In the case of middle schools, this coordinating responsibility and
conference may well rest with the home-room teacher, which would
reduce the number of conferences to a workable number. Any individual

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[60]Gronlund, Measurements, p. 376.

[61]Brimm, "Report Cards," p. 19.

[62]Ibid.

parent-teacher conference between other teachers and the parent could be arranged on an individual basis as the need arises.

The Scharffe study revealed that parent-teacher conferences were the most preferred method of reporting over all other methods considered. However, the difference was slight between this method and the letter grade (A B C D F) system. The difference was less than .05 degrees of confidence, or as stated in his study, "No significant difference exists in the attitudes of teachers and administrators between parent-conferences and A B C D F. They are about equal in choice."[63]

With all the advantages of parent-teacher conferences discussed by writers, this researcher has found no writer who advocates the use of conferences as the only method of reporting. Rather, the conferences are recommended as a supplement to some other form of written report: to clarify, expand, and discuss ways the home and school might work together for the benefit of the child. As Scharffe states, "This method of parent-teacher-student contact is deemed to be valuable by the selected respondents and give support for Parent Conference usage regardless of the type of written report which might be offered by the school."[64]

In most cases, writers who discuss the disadvantages of the parent-teacher conferences do not imply that the process is not worthy, but rather they cite the administrative disadvantages along

[63]Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 101.

[64]Ibid., p. 128.

with the problems of varying skills of teachers who are charged with conducting the conferences. On the one hand, it is difficult to record the results of the conference in a brief, concise manner for permanent records, and the time required for conducting such conferences is greater than that required for administering a simple letter grade. Wrinkle describes his sentiments on conferences by stating, ". . . such conferences are generally good, especially in getting acquainted and clearing up confusing points about written reports."[65] However, he goes on to say,

> Although the conference plan is effective for reporting purposes, and is highly desirable entirely apart from the reporting function, it does not result in a record. And the school has to maintain a record. Therefore, it cannot be thought of as a substitute for conventional reporting practices. Reports for school record purposes would still have to be made by the teacher.[66]

Regarding the burden of teacher time, Wrinkle says, "The most serious objection to the conference plan is that it demands a heavy time investment. Even though the time spent is well spent, reporting is regarded as a regular part of the teacher's day in addition to his regular teaching load."[67]

While favoring the concept of parent-teacher conferences, Lasker points out the need for thoroughly preparing teachers to conduct such conferences skillfully and tactfully. She points out, "Although the parent-teacher conference is excellent in its purpose

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[65]Wrinkle, Improving Marking, p. 53.

[66]Ibid.   [67]Ibid., p. 54.

and potential, it can do more harm than good unless it is handled
skillfully by the classroom teacher."[68]

Narrative Reports

The narrative letter to parents to report pupil progress is
certainly not a new form of reporting as it has been used in many
elementary schools for quite some time and is still widely used at
that level. This researcher found few secondary schools using this
technique at the present time, probably for the reason that it is
admittedly more time consuming and most secondary teachers are
involved in programs of varying degrees of departmentalization result-
ing in more students than most self-contained elementary teachers
would normally have. However, there are writers who advocate the
use of the narrative letter at the secondary level. Next to the
parent-teacher conferences, it is felt that this technique allows
the teacher a better opportunity to explain in more detail the
progress and achievement of the student. It requires more thought
and planning on the part of the teacher, and it will tax their
ability to compose a clear, precise, and yet brief written descrip-
tion of the youngster's achievement. As Thomas puts it,

A capable teacher who writes lucidly can create an interest-
ing and very useful letter for parents. However, some teach-
ers either do not express themselves well in writing or do
not keep adequate evaluation data to form a specific report
of the pupils' progress.[69]

[68]Lasker, "Parent-Teacher Conference," p. 21.

[69]Thomas, Judging Student Progress, p. 296.

No writer has indicated the narrative letter system is easier or faster, but rather, they indicate it is clearer if properly prepared. It is generally felt that professional teachers have the ability to prepare effective narratives; however, some attention must be given to in-service training to better prepare them for the task. Thomas continues,

> To increase the meaningfulness of letters home, some school systems which prefer this type of report have organized inservice workshops during which letter-writing is discussed and analyzed. Others have developed extensive lists of commonly used (but meaningful) statements around which to build letters that describe accurately how well individual children are meeting the behavioral goals of the school.[70]

As mentioned, one of the frequent criticisms of the narrative letter at the secondary level is that it is too burdensome to the teacher, particularly when the teacher is involved with over 100 students each day. In some cases, the same comments are used over and over and the letters begin to all sound alike and the repetition is all too evident. The type of evidence needed for the letter must be gathered more effectively, and this can be done by a professional, well-trained teacher.[71]

Even though it may be somewhat more time consuming to prepare, the narrative letter is said to be more advantageous and meaningful than the single letter or numerical grade. As Adams points out,

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[70]Ibid.

[71]Fred E. Harris, "What About Current Practices in Grading, Promoting, and Reporting to Parents?" Understanding the Child 73 (April 1954): 38.

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The informal letter has many advantages as a medium for reporting to parents. The letter can be individualized to highlight the special strengths and needs of an individual student. It can be highly analytical in those areas of the student's development in which specific problems are being met. A carbon copy of the letter constitutes a permanent record that should be filed for use by later teachers.[72]

To relieve the burden of writing out a complete narrative letter and to avoid some of the problems of teacher limitations in writing skills, some systems have developed programs whereby a rather complete set of various comments is prepared for the teacher simply to check off. These comments are prepared in advance to speak to many traits and could be selected by the teacher to describe the appropriate progress made by the student. This minimizes the time involved and prevents teachers from making statements which may be misinterpreted. Smith says of this system, "This method is an excellent one, since good descriptions by a number of teachers combine to give a reasonably complete picture of development in relation to the objectives discussed."[73]

From the administrative point of view, one of the most frequent criticisms of narratives is the problem of satisfying grade-point-average requirements for college registrars and potential employers. Along with this, narrative letters will also require more filing space in the school archives. Proponents of narratives take the view, "so be it." Cummins proposes that letter grades be

[72]Adams, Measurement in Education, p. 516.

[73]Eugene Randolf Smith, Appraising and Reporting Student Progress (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 489.

abolished and replaced with personalized and detailed evaluations
from each teacher. Thus a student, instead of receiving a "vague
and crushing C" might receive the following evaluation:

> Jane Roberts, English 10:
> Jane, your work has been extremely uneven this semester.
> You began with two fairly well conceived essays (on Thoreau
> and Hawthorne) but your essays on Emerson, Whitman, and
> Billy Budd were vague and under-nourished. You simply
> didn't take them anywhere. Also, your writing style is
> still too choppy and disorganized. There are not clear
> transitions from sentence to sentence and paragraph to para-
> graph. You also seem to have difficulty narrowing your thesis
> to a manageable scope. Your participation in class is lively
> and enthusiastic, although you do not listen to your class-
> mates' ideas as attentively as you might. . . .[74]

Cummins concedes that such reports are more difficult to
write and will take more preparation and thought, but he believes the
reader will understand much more about the progress and achievement
of the student than a simple "C."

What of the requirements of colleges and future employers?
As Cummins says further,

> And for those admissions officers who argue that they need
> grades to reach their decisions, I can only reply: you have
> (1) College Board scores, (2) Counselor's reports, (3) Teachers'
> recommendations, (4) Interviews, (5) Essays written by the
> applicant--is this not enough?[75]

Of the several writers reviewed on the matter of narrative
letters, Marshall provides a very supportive summaritive view. He
believes the alternative to grades is description, a minimal amount
of tacit recognition of "floating" qualities and characteristics. He

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[74]Paul Cummins, "De-escalate Grades," _Journal of Secondary
Education_ 45 (April 1970): 190.

[75]Ibid.

believes that not only will dedicated teachers bless this opportu-
nity, but students and parents will too, while they are benefiting
by better teaching. And administrators, employers, and others will
heave a sigh of relief and say "at long last"--except those to whom
rites, rules, and rituals are more important than the things with
which the three R's deal. He quotes the dean who objected vigorously
to a move unanimously approved: "But there is no place on the card
for it." Marshall further believes,

> Teaching is a privilege, as well as an obligation, of those
> who are hired to teach. Grading is a restriction on teaching.
> The floating description, concise and really descriptive, is
> as far as a teacher need go in any record. Even that is
> usually too much, because so little of it is ever needed.[76]

Marshall believes grades are too often fruitlessly debated.
To set them against passed/failed, passed/not passed, the use of
relative words, or redefinitions of the symbols is only uselessly
to compare members of the same species. He believes further that to
accomplish any progress grades have to be set against something
which is usable and totally different in concept. Grading, ranking,
and relativity can be contrasted with pertinent description and an
elimination of the personal concern over values as such. He believes
"the characteristic, not its value, is significant." It becomes a
value only when appropriately used. He further states, "Slowness
is not a sin; it characterizes. Brilliance is a virtue only when it
is applied in the right place; it can mark a fault."[77]

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[76]Max S. Marshall, _Teaching Without Grades_ (Corvallis: Oregon
State University Press, 1968), p. 131.

[77]Ibid., p. 136.

Narrative reports proved to be the third choice of elementary teachers and administrators, according to the Scharffe study, of the eight different methods of student evaluation and reporting techniques considered. However, the difference between narratives and the second-choice letter grade system was found to be insignificant. "There is not a significant difference between teacher and administrator feeling toward narratives and A B C D F. The two methods are about equal in teacher and administrator attitude toward them."[78] Scharffe further states, "The conclusion is reached that these methods [narratives], like Parent Conferences and Grades, are held in some esteem and can be considered as useful means of reporting in the elementary schools surveyed."[79]

The arguments against the use of narrative letters in reporting student progress are very similar to the arguments against the use of parent-teacher conferences in that they are very time consuming and require a skill of written communication that is not equal among the teachers who must prepare the letters. Most writers would probably concede that letters would be useful in explaining some of the individual traits the child may have which contributed to the level of achievement, but the concept of using the letter as the only means of reporting and the justification for the amount of teacher time required to prepare the letters, particularly at the secondary

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[78]Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 101.

[79]Ibid., p. 129.

level, is often questioned. Wrinkle's criticism of the narrative

letter is summed up as follows:

> The informal-letter plan of reporting is impractical for teach-
> ers who work with large numbers of students because it involves
> too much time. As with the conference plan, it is most work-
> able in elementary schools which do not have departmentalized
> programs and possibly in core programs at the high-school level,
> where one teacher may work with one group of students three or
> four times daily.[80]

Wrinkle goes on to say,

> One difficulty in the use of the informal-letter plan of
> reporting is that many teachers cannot or at least do not do
> an effective job of making themselves understood in writing.
> The possibilities of misinterpretation involved in the use
> of the informal letter are present to a greater degree than
> in the use of the formal printed form. A blank sheet of paper
> imposes no restrictions on what the teacher may say or how he
> may say it.[81]

Rather than writing a letter in the purest form, some systems

provide an outline form which provides space for the teacher to des-

cribe certain characteristics of the student's work. There may be a

space for the teacher to discuss "strengths," "weaknesses," and

"recommendations for improvement." The form may even offer a more

detailed breakdown which could include various subject matter such

as reading, writing, discussion skills, or class participation.[82]

Kirshcenbaum points out that any written evaluation, including the

outline form described above, offers certain disadvantages. Teachers

are allowed to be even more subjective than usual in evaluating

students. They may unconsciously minimize the strengths and focus

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[80]Wrinkle, Improving Marking, p. 54.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Kirschenbaum, Simon, and Napier, Wad-Ja-Get?, p. 294.

on the weaknesses of students they dislike. He points out that test scores averaged out into a letter grade tend to prevent this kind of subjectivity.[83]

In addition to agreeing with criticisms offered by other writers in the area of narratives being too time consuming and creating additional work for the school records office, Kirschenbaum also agrees that not all teachers are skilled in writing meaningful, helpful individualized evaluations. He points out that some teachers will rely too heavily upon certain vague cliches such as "excellent," "fair," "poor," "needs improvement," "good worker," or "capable of better work."[84]

Self-Evaluation

The concept of self-evaluation would probably not imply that students would prepare their own evaluations or grades, and these self-evaluations would be the only records retained. More than likely, self-evaluations would be used in conjunction with other types of reports, or possibly averaged into the teacher evaluations. And, to be successful or useful, a great deal of preparation must go into the plan if the student is to be accurate and honest in his own evaluation. The student must have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the course or assignment and the criteria for which attainment is to be measured. The student might write out a narrative describing his attainment of course objectives, or simpler yet, an instrument in the form of a checklist could be

[83]Ibid., p. 295.   [84]Ibid.

developed on which the student could check off the skills he had acquired in the course. If a formula is developed in advance by the teacher and student which describes the number of objectives needed to warrant an A, B, C, or pass/fail, or even other types of reporting symbols, the student could also determine his grade after checking the skills or objectives he had attained. Such a system is most likely to be effective and successful if the student has a hand in determining the goals and objectives of the course as well as developing the reporting instrument.

The advantages of the self-evaluation system are several. First, it is an important learning experience for students to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses. Second, self-evaluation might encourage students to take more responsibility for setting their educational goals. Third, while it may or may not be an advantage, students are often found to be harder on themselves than the teacher might have been.[85]

Teel and Teel feel strongly that student self-evaluation teaches children responsibility toward their own classroom performance and promotes an awareness of the purposes of academic training. They sum up their attitudes toward this technique as follows:

> Children can be given a better idea of their progress
> toward self-realization if the classroom procedure makes them
> aware of what is happening to them. Teachers who utilize
> such procedures as teacher-pupil planning are teaching pupils
> to know the goals of the classwork, to analyze possible
> approaches to achieve the goals, and to appraise their own

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[85]Ibid., p. 296.

progress. Regular evaluation sessions help children realize their own contributions.[86]

There are a number of disadvantages to self-evaluation. First, students will usually take self-evaluation very seriously, but as the novelty wears off they tend to put less thought into the process and as time wears on, their self-evaluations become less accurate. Often, they tire of the process and are content to return to the system of the teacher performing this duty. Second, when students like and respect their teachers they will try to evaluate and grade themselves fairly; however, if they lack respect or dislike their teachers, they are apt to take advantage of the situation and evaluate and grade themselves as highly as possible.[87]

The findings of the Scharffe study indicate that self-evaluation was "found to be held in low esteem by teachers and administrators alike." And, "The conclusion that can be reached is that possible efforts to institute these reporting practices in the schools surveyed would be met with some degree of resistance from teachers and administrators alike."[88]

Blanket Grades

Blanket grading represents still another step toward the equalitarian end of the continuum. In this case, every student receives the same grade for the course or assignment, without regard

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[86]Dwight Teel and Eugenia Teel, "Pupils Report in Their Own Way," NEA Journal 48 (December 1959): 19.

[87]Kirschenbaum, Simon, and Napier, Wad-Ja-Get?, p. 297.

[88]Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 129.

to any differences in quality of work. No one fails. It is taken for granted that all students will meet minimum standards and no real effort is made to distinguish among students with respect to effort, achievement, or ability. The concept is somewhat similar to that of strict mastery learning in that all students are expected to learn the material, even if it may take some longer than others. This system of grading is somewhat rare and is usually not used in the purest form, as Hiner points out: "Even those who want to eliminate grades altogether will often recommend they be replaced by written evaluations which, when examined, prove to be very similar in content if not in form to grades in a criterion-referenced or an effort system."[89]

As a system of evaluation and reporting, this researcher has found no evidence that blanket grading has ever been used by an entire school system, or even by an entire school. It is usually not the type of system that would receive endorsement by the administrative hierarchy. In most situations it is used as a form of protest by the teacher to demonstrate to the administration, parents, and students that grades are unimportant and that the focus will be on learning. The individual teacher will usually announce at the beginning of the course that the students who complete the minimum required work satisfactorily will all receive the same blanket grade, usually a B, and whose who do not complete the work are given extra

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[89]Hiner, "American Ritual," p. 360.

time and attention until they master the material. Blanket grading is a form of contract grading as well as a mastery approach, and it is important to remember that it is used in individual classrooms only; it is never used by the whole school.

The advantages of blanket grading are similar to those of pass/fail grading in that students are more relaxed, less anxious, and less competitive. There may be a better learning atmosphere with students more willing to take risks, disagree with the teacher, and explore the subject on their own. There is no reason to cheat or "brown-nose," and some students may do more work than usual after being freed from the usual pressures of grading.[90]

On the other hand, there are some definite disadvantages to the blanket grading system. As with pass/fail, students are given a limited amount of feedback. There is no distinguishing between the accomplishments of different students; therefore, colleges and employers may be reluctant to accept such grades. Also, some student may do even less work if freed from the pressures of grades. And, as pointed out earlier, many teachers use this system as a protest which may place the teacher in jeopardy with administrative officials in the school.[91]

From the teacher and administrator preference standpoint, the Scharffe study indicated that both groups of educators at the elementary level clearly chose the traditional letter grades

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[90]Kirschenbaum, Simon, and Napier, Wad-Ja-Get?, p. 305.

[91]Ibid., p. 307.

(A B C D F) over blanket grading and that "possible efforts to institute these reporting methods in the schools surveyed would be met with some degree of resistance from teachers and administrators alike."[92]

Check Lists

Another alternative to the traditional letter grade is the check list. This system utilizes a rather exhaustive list of skills or traits relative to the course, and the teacher simply checks off those items on the list that describe the student's progress. In some cases, the check list may be used in conjunction with some other form of reporting, i.e., to clarify the rationale for a letter grade. The check list can be used to describe progress in several areas such as academic growth, work and study habits, social behavior, and possibly general appearance.

As with other reporting forms, check lists have both advantages and disadvantages. A disadvantage, as Harris points out, is that "check lists proved to have the same major weakness as other forms of reporting previously developed. They often failed to communicate sufficient meaning to serve as a basis for effective home-school relations."[93] Other difficulties with the check list, as Gronlund points out, are in "keeping the list of behavior statements

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[92]Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 130.

[93]Harris, "Current Practices in Grading," p. 38.

down to a workable number and in stating them in such simple and concise terms that they are readily understood by all users of the reports."[94] One example of a vague remark often used on check lists is "capable of better work." The thought that usually enters the researcher's mind when seeing this comment is "Who isn't?"

Another weakness mentioned by Gronlund is the age-old administrative problem of recording the check list for permanent records. High schools still tend to insist upon a single mark for permanent records and tend to use the check list only for the benefit of clarification to parents. However, notwithstanding the disadvantages, he does acknowledge certain advantages in that check lists provide the student with a somewhat detailed analysis of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses, so that constructive action can be taken to help him improve his learning. They also provide the pupils, parents, and others with a frequent reminder of the goals of the school.[95]

One difficulty with check lists that comes to the mind of this researcher is that the question might be raised as to why certain traits or positive behaviors on the list were not checked. One method of avoiding this type of problem is to utilize modern data processing in printing report cards so that only those traits or characteristics which are checked will actually be printed on the card.

Cagle discusses a survey taken of parents to determine the type of report most preferred to tell them what they want to know about the progress of their children:

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[94]Gronlund, Measurements, p. 376.

[95]Ibid.

The parents were unanimously agreed that they wanted something more specific and suggested a check list arrangement of some kind. After a few more meetings the various items were grouped in three general classifications: (1) study habits, (2) attitude-interest, (3) adjustment. Twenty check list items were included in the three groups. Following each item, five rows of blanks were placed with the headings as follows: outstanding, above average, average, needs to improve, unsatisfactory.[96]

Ironically, the five categories are comparable to the five levels usually used in the traditional letter grade system.

In studying the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators toward check list reporting, Scharffe found that there was very little difference between their preference toward this method as compared to the letter grade system, even though the educators surveyed did favor letter grades slightly.

Check List Reporting and Narrative Reporting, while not preferred over Parent Conferences or Grades, emerged as the third and fourth choices of teachers and the fourth and third choices, respectively, of administrators. The conclusion is reached that these methods, like Parent Conferences and Grades, are held in some esteem and can be considered as useful means of reporting in the elementary schools surveyed.[97]

Pass-Fail Reporting

In stating a case against a two-letter system such as pass-fail, S-U, or even credit-no credit, writers have taken two rather predominant positions on the matter. First, the matter of reliability is disputed. By reliability, various writers take the position that individuals using the information will have little basis to determine the skills actually mastered by the student, and will have

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[96]Cagle, "Evaluation and Reporting," p. 25.

[97]Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 129.

no way to determine rank order of students according to achievement. The two-letter system, when used alone without any accompanying information or clarification, implies that all students who passed have achieved at the same level. Speaking to the problem of reliability, Ebel states,

> The use of fewer marking categories is not required by unreliability of the basis for marking. On the contrary, the use of the very few categories aggravates the problem of unreliability. If maximum reliability of information is the goal, a five-letter system is better than a two-letter system, and the use of ten categories in marking is better than five.[98]

A number of studies have been conducted to test the level of achievement that actually takes place by comparing the grades students earned under the five-letter system with the grades they would have earned if their actual achievement under the two-letter system would have been converted to the five-letter system. Do students actually learn more for the sake of learning to satisfy a natural curiosity if the competition aspect of grading is removed? Studies cited by Weber would indicate that this is not the case. "Studies of letter grade achievement under pass/fail grading show consistent results: grades go down. A full letter grade drop, from an A to a B, is not the exception but the rule."[99] In citing specific studies, Weber adds, "Princeton discovered that both students and teachers like pass/fail grading, even though 72 percent of the students stated that they worked closer to their capacity in graded

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[98]Ebel, Measuring Educational Achievement, p. 423.

[99]Catherine A. Weber, "Pass/Fail: Does It Work?" NASSP Bulletin 58 (April 1974): 104.

courses than in pass/fail courses."[100] The Princeton report further concluded that students earned significantly better grades in the competitively graded courses than in the pass/fail subjects.

Also cited by Weber, "Following the study conducted at Brandeis, it was found that all but the college seniors achieved significantly lower grades under the pass/fail option."[101] Similarly, Weber points out,

> A study at the State University of New York at Cortland reports that not only did grades go down under a pass/fail option, but even after returning to conventional grading the former pass/fail students continued to receive significantly lower grades than the "controls" who had not been allowed pass/fail courses during the study.[102]

Another author, Kirschenbaum, cites more of the specific disadvantages of pass/fail reporting as follows:

a. Freed from the pressures of traditional grading, some students do less work than usual.
b. The student in danger of failing still labors under all the pressures normally associated with traditional grading. P/F is no help to our poorer students.[103]

Kirschenbaum further points out that while the objective of pass/fail is to implement an "either-or" situation in evaluating and reporting with no middle ground, some systems have introduced a third level which weakens the concept and leans back in the direction of more options. One variation mentioned is the modified pass/fail which adds one category to denote outstanding work. This modification is called Honors/Pass/Fail (H/P/F, as well as Limited/Pass/Fail). As Kirschenbaum points out, the addition of these options brings

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[100]Ibid., p. 104.   [101]Ibid.   [102]Ibid.

[103]Kirschenbaum, Simon, and Napier, Wad-Ja-Get?, p. 304.

the total grades possible under the system to four ([1] Honors,
[2] Pass, [3] Limited, [4] Fail), which is only one grade less than
the A B C D F system of reporting.[104]

The concept of pass/fail is not totally without support.
Bramlette offered five possible benefits to be derived from the use
of such a system: (1) increases emphasis on learning, (2) decreases
emphasis on marking, (3) encourages the poorer student, (4) forces
students to evaluate themselves, and (5) encourages better attitudes
in parents who want a superior child but have instead an average
child.[105]

Generally speaking, the effect of pass/fail on student
achievement is suspect. It would appear that any school system
choosing to adopt the two-grade system would find considerable
pressure placed upon it by outside concerns to expand to the modifi-
cations mentioned by Kirshcenbaum. Such imminent pressures might
also be considered a disadvantage to the pass/fail method of reporting.

Referring back to the Scharffe study, elementary teachers and
administrators did not favor the pass/fail system when compared with
the letter grade system.

> The methods of Blanket Grading, Pass-Fail, Credit-No Credit,
> and Self-Evaluation are found to be held in low esteem by
> teachers and administrators alike. It can be concluded that
> these methods would find little support in the schools

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[104]Ibid., p. 306.

[105]Metle Bramlette, "Is the S and U Grading System Satis-
factory or Unsatisfactory?" Texas Outlook 26 (April 1941): 29-30;
cited in Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 42.

surveyed and cannot be considered as viable alternatives to Parent Conferences, Grades, Check Lists or Narratives.[106]

Credit-No Credit Reporting

The differences between credit-no credit reporting and pass-fail are few, in that both systems utilize only two levels with no middle ground. As mentioned earlier, some school systems have used modifications such as honors and limited pass, but under the purest sense, both systems utilize an "either-or" decision. The advantage of the credit-no credit system is that the concept of failure is removed which may encourage students to elect difficult courses, out of personal interest, that they might not elect otherwise if their limited background might result in a low or failing mark. Students who feel the need or pressure to bring home high marks and maintain a high grade-point-average may be reluctant to gamble on a foreign language or a chemistry course, even though they may personally wish to explore such subjects. Under the credit-no credit option, the "no credit" often does not appear in the student's permanent records at all if he fails to meet minimum standards for passing the course, thus eliminating all threats of failure. One writer supporting the credit-no credit plan states,

> To use a system that does not contain failure, students are encouraged to try hard courses. Education is then expanded. Even if the student does not pass, he can continue through the rest of the semester to assimilate a certain amount of

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[106]Scharffe, "Attitudes," pp. 129-30.

knowledge, perhaps enough to allow him to pass a second time if he tries the course again.[107]

Gerhard has written extensively on the importance of school success and failure as they relate to development of self-concept, which offers further support of a system that removes the possibility of failure.

There is not one sliver of doubt that self-concept is a prerequisite to learning; that it is a prerequisite to all of our actions. How we view ourselves and how others view us are communicated and determine our behaviors. If we view ourselves negatively or are viewed negatively, in many cases the results are self-defeating or destructive behaviors.[108]

She further states,

The school curriculum should be experience-based rather than primarily symbol-based. It should provide for direct, purposeful, concrete experiences, and insure a large measure of success for each pupil. Pupils who experience success will derive satisfaction from learning, which in turn will keep the cycle moving. The learning environment should be open and threat-free. Pupils should not be fearful of making mistakes, for most of us have learned far more from our mistakes than from our successes.[109]

Gerhard's comments not only support a system whereby failure is removed, such as a credit-no credit system, but she also, without making direct reference, appears to support the middle school characteristics.

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[107]Educational Research Service, Pass-Fail Plans (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators and National Education Association, November 1971), p. 2; cited in Scharffe, "Attitudes," p. 44.

[108]Muriel Gerhard, Effective Teaching Strategies With the Behavioral Outcomes Approach (West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), p. 55.

[109]Ibid., p. 56.

The disadvantages of the credit-no credit system are the same as the disadvantages of the pass/fail system mentioned earlier, but it is felt that the prime difference, that of not providing a category of failure, warrants this separate consideration. And, it must be mentioned that elementary teachers and administrators surveyed in the Scharrfe study looked upon the credit-no credit system of student evaluation and reporting with disfavor.

> The methods of Blanket Grading, Pass-Fail, Credit-No Credit, and Self Evaluation are found to be held in low esteem by teachers and administrators alike. It can be concluded that these methods would find little support in the schools surveyed and cannot be considered as viable alternatives to Parent Conferences, Grades, Check Lists or Narratives.[110]

Reporting Techniques and Middle School Concepts

In any study of middle school teacher and administrator attitudes toward various evaluation and reporting techniques, it is important to consider how various techniques fit the middle school concept. There are 18 characteristics of the true middle school that are generally accepted by practitioners. These include the following:[111]

1. Continuous progress

2. Multi-material approach

3. Flexible schedules

4. Provisions for appropriate social experiences

5. Appropriate physical experiences and intramural activities

6. Provisions for team teaching

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[110]Scharffe, "Attitudes," pp. 129-30.

[111]Georgiady and Romano, "Do You Have a Middle School?" p. 239.

7. Planned gradualism

8. Provisions for exploratory and enrichment activities

9. Appropriate guidance services

10. Provisions for independent study

11. Basic skill repair and extension

12. Activities for creative experiences

13. Full provision for evaluation

14. Community relations emphasis

15. Adequate student services

16. Auxiliary staffing

17. Security

18. Inter-disciplinary approach

For purposes of the discussion at this point, particular attention will be given to characteristic number 1, continuous progress; characteristic number 5, appropriate physical experiences and intramural activities; and characteristic number 13, full provision for evaluation.

Georgiady and Romano discuss continuous progress in the following manner:

> Regardless of chronological age, students should be allowed to progress at their own individual rates. This transescent state of growth is one in which individual differences are most pronounced. Forcing students into a rigid chronological grouping pattern ignores this important developmental characteristic and defeats the effectiveness of educational plans. Instead, the curriculum must be built on continuous progress, permitting each student to move through sequential learning activities at his own rate.[112]

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[112]Ibid., p. 238.

It would seem from this description of continous progress that the ideal middle school setting would avoid pitting one student against another in any sort of comparison of their achievement on a predetermined lesson or set of objectives, simply because not all students approach the middle school at the same stage of readiness. It implies independent study which requires independent evaluation. It also implies that students treated as individuals and being allowed to progress at their own individual rates is in direct contrast to any system of comparing one student with another or in any manner utilizing a "normal curve," in evaluation and reporting systems. Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus state this position as follows:

> If we are effective in our instruction, the distribution of achievement should be very different from the normal curve. In fact, we may even insist that our educational efforts have been <u>unsuccessful</u> to the extent that the distribution of achievement approximates the normal distribution.[113]

This concept supports the idea of the "pyramid" effect, or mastery learning. Each individual student must have the time and opportunities to build solid foundations of basic skills on which to build more advanced skills. While some students may grasp concepts quickly, it may take others a bit longer.

The middle school characteristic that speaks to appropriate physical experiences and intramural activities may at first seem inappropriate in the context of evaluation and reporting. However, a review of the full discussion on this matter is warranted:

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[113]Benjamin S. Bloom, J. Thomas Hastings, and George F. Madaus, <u>Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning</u> (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), p. 45.

> Highly competitive athletic programs are not appropriate
> for transescents, who are generally unprepared for the serious
> pressures these activities generate. Instead, physical educa-
> tion classes should center their activity on helping students
> understand and use their bodies. A strong intramural program
> which encourages widespread participation is greatly preferred
> to a competitive, selected program of athletics which benefits
> only a few. The stress should be on the development of body
> management skills.[114]

For purposes of our discussion at this point, we will not concern ourselves with athletic competition per se, but rather with the concept of competition. Competition is not an accepted concept of the middle school, whether it is competition on the playing field or in the classroom. It is felt by most middle school advocates that the transescent is not emotionally prepared for competition and the emotional pressures that accompany it. It is believed that the letter grade system of evaluating and reporting student progress is competitive in nature, particularly when a normal curve is used as the criterion for the distribution of the grades. Such systems place pressure on students whether the pressures be self-induced, whether they originate in the home, or whether they are a result of peer pressures to avoid being seen as failures in the eyes of their classmates. Harris sums up the inappropriateness of classroom competition in the following manner:

> Competition means little for the child who always loses or for
> the one who always wins. The effects of competition for either
> child may be damaging, however; neither gains an adequate con-
> cept of self. Most classroom living is a cooperative venture
> if it is successful. Unequal competitive advantages produce a
> poor atmosphere for cooperation.[115]

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[114]Georgiady and Romano, "Do You Have a Middle School?" p. 239.

[115]Harris, "Current Practices in Grading," p. 39.

One of the arguments frequently offered by advocates of
letter grades and "learning to fail" is that the concept is a way
of life. It is said that adults will suffer many failures through-
out their lives and students must learn to deal with failure if they
are to survive in the real world. But, considering this argument,
this writer can think of few, if any, real-life situations outside
the classroom where letter grades are used to indicate real-life
failure. Employees are evaluated, true, but the process usually
involves narratives, perhaps a check list, and almost always a per-
sonal discussion between the evaluator and the evaluatee. Generally
speaking, adults would never accept the type of evaluation and
reporting which is usually forced upon students. Harris describes
such a comparison as follows:

> A teacher went to a clinic for a thorough physical examina-
> tion. There she experienced the usual X-rays, blood counts,
> reflex checks, allergy analysis, and endless interrogation.
> When the examination was completed, she inquired, "What is
> the answer, Doctor?" And the doctor replied, "Miss Jones,
> your grade is B."[116]

Wax offers another comparison by stating, "Students are manipulated
to compete for rewards by teachers who protest violently, to the
point of striking, if asked to accept a merit pay proposal involving
competition."[117]

Wax further describes the effects of competition in the
classroom and the effects of failure:

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[116]Ibid., p. 39.

[117]Joseph Wax, "COMPETITION: Educational Incongruity," Phi
Delta Kappan 57 (November 1975): 179.

Classroom defeat is only the pebble that creates widening ripples of hostility. It is self-perpetuating. It is reinforced by peer censure, parental disapproval, and loss of self-concept. If the classroom is a model, and if that classroom models competition, assault in the hallways should surprise no one.[118]

Wax very aptly summarizes his contempt for competition in the classroom as follows: "Races should be run. Scores should be kept. It is neither the race nor the score that is inevitably competitive. It is competition's punitive effect upon the loser and the disproportionate reward for the winner that degrades and brutalizes."[119]

Most germane to the topic under study here is middle school characteristic number 13, which calls for full provision for evaluation. Georgiady and Romano describe this characteristic as follows:

The middle school program should provide a system of evaluation that is personal and positive in nature. If an individualized program is to be carried on, then the evaluation should be individualized. The student should be encouraged to assess his own progress and plan for future progress as well. The present common grading system using letter grades provides little information useful in understanding his progress and his areas of needed improvement. As part of an effective evaluation system, student-teacher conferences on a regularly scheduled basis are valuable. Additional conferences including parents can aid in reporting progres. The whole atmosphere in conducting evaluation should be constructive and positive rather than critical and punitive.[120]

While many writers and theorists might agree that the principles or characteristics of a true middle school would be equally sound and desirable in any school, particularly the traditional junior high school, it is also felt by middle school advocates that most of these characteristics are not present in traditional schools.

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[118]Ibid.   [119]Ibid., p. 198.

[120]Georgiady and Romano, "Do You Have a Middle School?" p. 240.

The students generally do not take an active role in planning their own programs, nor are parents given ample opportunity to provide input. The aspect of evaluation and reporting, however, is one characteristic that often stimulates more controversy and emotion than most of the other characteristics. Administrators often prefer a simple system requiring a minimum of recording space, colleges and universities sill generally demand a simple device such as a letter grade or a numerical score that can be averaged and compared with other students, many parents still relate to the simple letter grade and anything else is found to be confusing, teachers them- selves are divided and often prefer the simple letter grade that requires a minimum of time and effort on their part, and finally, the students themselves are often so indoctrinated in the letter grade system that they too become accustomed to receiving them. It becomes an issue with many individuals involved in the system of evaluating and reporting; however, proponents of the middle school concept feel it is essential that a more personal and positive pro- gram of reporting be utilized. In describing the importance of total student involvement in the evaluation system, Harris states,

> Good grading practices evolve into good evaluation techniques.
> Here the child is thoroughly involved. He considers his role,
> his goals, his contribution, and his growth. It is only as he
> gains an increasingly accurate perspective of himself that his
> role in the learning process becomes clear.[121]

The emphasis upon _positive_ and _nonpunitive_ forms of evaluation is the central theme of middle school advocates as opposed to the

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[121]Harris, "Current Practices in Grading," p. 39.

competitive nature of the "normal curve" and the feeling of failure

that is transmitted to students who receive low grades in the tradi-

tional A B C D F system of reporting. The following rather lengthy

statement sums up this attitude rather well.

> The effect of this system on the unsuccessful students--
> and the largest fraction of those who begin education are
> unsuccessful at some stage in the system--is not of central
> concern to teachers and administrators. The system of cate-
> gorizing students is generally designed to approximate a
> normal distribution of marks (such as A,B,C,D,F) at each
> grade or level. Since the system is highly consistent from
> one grade or level to the next, our research finds that some
> students are rewarded with an A or B at each grade, whereas
> others are reminded over and over again that they are D or F
> students. The result of this method of categorizing indi-
> viduals is to convince some that they are able, good, and
> desirable from the viewpoint of the system and others that they
> are deficient, bad, and undesirable. It is not likely that
> this continual labeling has beneficial consequences for the
> individual's educational development, and it is likely that it
> has an unfavorable influence on many a student's self-concept.
> To be physically (and legally) imprisoned in a school system
> for ten or twelve years and to receive negative classification
> repeatedly for this period of time must have a major detrimen-
> tal effect on personality and character development.[122]

Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus further state, "The schools must

strive to assure all students of successful learning experiences in

the realms of ideas and self-development."[123]

Another middle school advocate, Musholt, in support of Bloom,

states,

> A composite portrait of the successful student would show
> that he has a relatively high opinion of himself and is opti-
> mistic about his future performance. He has confidence in
> his general ability and in his ability as a student. He needs
> fewer favorable evaluations from others. He feels that he

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[122]Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus, Handbook, p. 7.

[123]Ibid., p. 44.

works hard, is liked by other students, and is generally polite and honest. This is in stark contrast to the self-image of the majority of unsuccessful students.[124]

Musholt believes it is a "personal tragedy and a social waste" for students to spend year after year receiving failing grades which continually reinforce the feelings of failure, insecurity, low self-worth, and certainly a profound dislike for school and learning.

> The majority of available studies indicate that unsuccessful students maintain self attitudes that are pervasively negative. They tend to see themselves as unable, inadequate, and less self-reliant than their more successful peers. Students with negative self-images of ability rarely perform well in school.[125]

It should be clear that the differences between the form of evaluation and reporting discussed by middle school advocates as compared with traditional reporting techniques include student input in the planning; the setting of realistic goals according to interest, readiness, and need; self-evaluation along with teacher evaluation in a positive, nonthreatening manner; and the utilization of frequent pupil-teacher-parent conferences, as opposed to systems involving only teacher or school system input and the labeling of students with unclear, simplistic marks which instill feelings of failure, and tend to compare individual students unfavorably with their peers.

Georgiady, Riegle, and Romano summarize the essence of evaluation in the middle school by stating,

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[124]Wayne Musholt, "Self-Concept and the Middle School," NASSP Bulletin 58 (April 1974): 67.

[125]Ibid.

The middle school program should provide an evaluation of a student's work that is personal, positive in nature, non-threatening, and strictly individualized. The student should be allowed to assess his own progress and plan for future progress. A student needs more information than a letter grade provides, and he needs more security than the traditional system offers. Traditional systems seem to be punitive. The middle school youngster needs a supportive atmosphere to generate confidence and a willingness to explore new areas of learning.[126]

Summary

At one point in early America, "students" were taught primarily by their parents in the home. They learned farming, hunting, homemaking, blacksmithing, or whatever other skills their parents had to pass down through generations of the family structure. The only criterion for success was the youngster's ability to perform the task proficiently. Little is written about the reporting systems used in early American schools for the few students who received a formal education until the period beginning roughly from 1910. As more and more students entered the public school systems at this time, it became necessary to develop reporting techniques. Early techniques utilized generally were percentage grades, followed by numerical grades, and the five-symbol letter grade system as we know it today (A B C D F). Such a system allowed comparisons and rankings of students to satisfy the demands of colleges and employers.

The validity of the five-point letter grade system came under close scrutiny by early researchers such as Starch and Elliott in

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[126]Nicholas P. Georgiady, Jack P. Riegle, and Louis G. Romano, "Characteristics of Middle Schools," NASSP Bulletin 58 (April 1974): 72.

studies conducted in 1912, and such questions of validity have continued today. As a result of such research showing letter grades to be unreliable, other systems of student evaluation and reporting have been introduced and tried. However, the predominant system of reporting is still shown to be the five-point system. Alternative reporting techniques to the A B C D F system considered included the following seven methods: blanket grading, narratives, parent-teacher conferences, pass-fail, credit-no credit, check lists, and self-evaluation. Various writers cited were found to support and oppose each of these systems when compared to the letter grade. The primary study cited in this chapter was the Scharffe study, which tested elementary teacher and administrator attitudes toward each of the seven reporting techniques when compared with the letter grade system. It was found that parent-teacher conferences were favored highest followed by letter grades, check lists, narrative letters, blanket grading, pass-fail, credit-no credit, and self-evaluation. Even though parent conferences were the first choice of both teachers and administrators, it was found that this system is only advocated as a supplement to some sort of written report.

A review of middle school concepts as related to student evaluation and reporting reveals that the process should be positive and nonpunitive, and it should be highly individualized rather than being based on the "normal curve." The student is to take an active role in planning his own program to meet his goals and needs by utilizing frequent teacher-pupil planning sessions, and the reporting

system should involve pupil-teacher-parent meetings on a regular basis. The writers reviewed advocated the use of narrative letters, conferences, self-evaluation, and some forms of check lists as primary reporting systems, and they found no justification for the five-point, or letter grade, system of reporting. The emphasis of these writers is to avoid comparing students with one another and creating a competitive atmosphere in the middle school, as the transescent is not emotionally mature enough to deal with this type of situation.

The review of the literature revealed that grades have remained the primary system of reporting since early in the twentieth century for several reasons: (1) From the administrative view, they are easy to record; (2) they can be averaged, which facilitates the comparing and ordering of students; (3) they are easy for the classroom teacher to record; (4) parents are accustomed to grades and believe they understand their meaning; (5) students have come to expect grades and they seem to believe they understand them; and (6) higher institutions of learning as well as potential employers have continued to demand grades from their potential constituents.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

This chapter will describe the target population, sampling procedures, the design and validation of the survey instruments, and the statistical methods utilized to analyze the data.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was the teachers and administrators in the public middle schools in Michigan that housed grades six, seven, and eight exclusively. During the 1977-1978 school year there were 235 schools identified in the "Blue Book"[1] that include the above grade levels. According to Krejcie and Morgan,[2] the minimum sample size from this population should be 148 schools in order to collect sufficient data to make generalizations to the total population.

All of the middle schools listed in the Blue Book were numbered by the researcher, consecutively, from 1 through 235. A table of random numbers was then used to identify the needed sample to be surveyed. However, the researcher took the liberty of

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[1]Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide (Lansing: 1977-1978).

[2]Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan, "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities," Educational and Psychological Measurement 30 (1970): 607-10.

identifying a total of 160 schools in the hope that the added number would provide a broader base for selecting the sample to be used in the final phase of the study.[3]

Since the current study was ultimately to include each individual teacher and administrator in the middle schools identified in the sample, it was felt that using all 160 schools would involve a much larger sample of teachers and administrators than necessary, along with the fact that the resulting number of individual questionnaires would, in turn, create massive problems of coding for the researcher. It was felt that only those schools that most exemplify the characteristics of the "true" middle school should be included in the study, as well as those schools that least exemplify the true middle school in order to draw comparisons between the attitudes of the teachers and administrators between the two groups of schools. Therefore, it was determined that a modified Riegle questionnaire would be sent to the principals of all 160 schools selected, to determine the level of implementation of the accepted middle school characteristics. The development, validation, and scoring procedures used for the questionnaire will be discussed later in this chapter.

All returned questionnaires were scored and ranked according to the level of implementation of middle school characteristics in each school.

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[3]Richard P. Runyan and Audrey Haber, Fundamentals of Behavioral Statistics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1968), p. 276.

Development and Validation of Survey Instruments

As stated earlier in this chapter, it was determined that middle schools should be selected for participation in the study according to their tendencies to practice established middle school characteristics, or conversely, their reluctance to practice these established procedures. In order to identify these schools it was necessary to either develop a completely new instrument for this purpose or utilize an existing instrument which already had been validated and used in other studies. This researcher elected the latter method and selected the questionnaire developed by Jack Riegle for use in his 1970 dissertation, which studied implementation of the same middle school characteristics in Michigan middle schools.[4] The instrument included a total of 62 items, all multiple choice, which allowed each responding administrator to select answers that best described the degree of "true" middle school characteristics implementation in his or her building. The Riegle questionnaire utilized anywhere from one to six items which spoke to each of the 18 middle school characteristics listed in Chapter II of this study. Further, Riegle assigned each possible response for these multiple choice items a numerical "score," depending upon the appropriateness of the response to middle school goals. The higher totals of these scores indicated that the responding schools were, in fact, practicing

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[4]Jack D. Riegle, "A Study of Middle School Programs to Determine the Current Level of Implementation of Eighteen Basic Middle School Principles" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1971).

middle school characteristics, while the lower total scores indicated the responding schools were middle schools in name only.

For the purposes of the current study, the researcher did not feel it was necessary to use the Riegle instrument in its entirety, and a system was utilized to pare it down to an abbreviated form. To do this, the instrument was reorganized so that all items pertaining to a particular middle school characteristic appeared on a separate page. For example, the Riegle instrument had two items which dealt with "continuous progress," and both of these items were placed on the first page. Riegle had six items pertaining to "multi-materials approach," and all six of these items were placed on the second page. This approach was followed throughout, resulting in an 18-page modified Riegle questionnaire with each page dealing with a specific middle school characteristic. The resulting questionnaire is shown in Appendix A.

It was then decided that only one item on each page dealing with each specific characteristic would be retained. The system utilized to determine which items would be retained was to select a panel of five judges, or middle school experts, throughout the United States to rate all of the items as to their effectiveness in describing middle school characteristics. The rationale for using this method is stated as follows: "Not only should the items contain the common thread of the attitude under study, but between them they should also cover the full range of the attitude, and cover it in a balanced way." Further, "The assessment of content validity is

essentially a matter of judgement; the judgement may be made by the surveyer or, better, by a team of judges engaged for the purpose."[5]

The five judges selected, as suggested by Dr. Louis Romano of Michigan State University, were as follows:

> Dr. Mary Compton
> University of Georgia
> Athens, Georgia
>
> Dr. John Swaim
> University of Northern Colorado
> Greeley, Colorado
>
> Dr. Conrad Toetfer
> State University of New York
>   at Buffalo
> Amherst, New York
>
> Dr. Nicholas Georgiady
> Miami University
> Oxford, Ohio
>
> Dr. Daniel Bird, Principal
> Eaton Rapids Jr. High School
> Eaton Rapids, Michigan

The reorganized Riegle questionnaire was sent to each of the five judges with the instructions that they were to rate or rank the effectiveness of the items on each page. For example, page one of the questionnaire had two items that dealt with continuous progress. The judges were asked to rate the best of these two items, as effective middle school indicators, with the numeral 1, and the second best item with a numeral 2. The responses were then weighted in reverse so that any item rated number one by a panel member would be given two points, and conversely, an item rated second would be given

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[5]C. A. Moser and G. Kalton, Survey Methods in Social Investigation, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972), p. 356.

only one point. The points for each item from all five judges were then totaled, and the item with the highest score was retained from the first page dealing with continuous progress.

Page two of the questionnaire had six items, all dealing with the multi-materials approach. The same procedure was followed whereby the judges were instructed to rate the best multi-materials indicator with the numeral 1, the second best with the numeral 2, third best with 3, and so on. Again, responses were weighted in reverse with the first choice from each judge being awarded six points, the second choice was awarded five points, third choice four points, and so on. The points for each item from all five judges were totaled and the item with the highest number of combined points was retained from the second page.

The resulting questionnaire from this paring down procedure was an 18-item instrument designed to measure the rate of implementation of middle school characteristics in the 160 schools selected at random in the State of Michigan, all of which include grades six, seven, and eight.

By utilizing the process of scoring each judge's rankings of the effectiveness of items in the various categories, as described above, it was a simple matter of determining which item scored highest after totaling the scores of all five judges. Only the items with the highest combined scores were retained and all others were dropped. However, it was felt that a test of the significant rate of agreement among the five judges was necessary, even though the items

selected to be included on the middle school practices questionnaire would remain intact.

Page one of the modified Riegle questionnaire contained only two multiple choice items related to continuous progress. In this case, the rankings of the five judges were unanimous, in that all five selected the first item as being best and the second item as being second best. No test was conducted to determine the level of agreement in this situation, since there is obviously no question in the case of a unanimous choice. Item one was retained and item two was eliminated. Likewise, page 14 included only two items dealing with the teacher's role in providing guidance services to students, and again, the choice of the five judges was unanimous in selecting the first item as the best indicator. Therefore it was retained and the second item was eliminated. There was no need to test the level of agreement here, since all judges made the same selection.

Page eight had only one item dealing with departmentalization and page 17 had only one item dealing with auxiliary services. Therefore the limitation of choices forced the judges to be unanimous in their choices. No test of significant agreement was necessary.

On all pages where there were three or more items to be ranked, the Kendall-W test, Coefficient of Concordance, was selected to be appropriate for determining level of agreement among the five judges. The statistic used to conduct this test is $W = \frac{S}{1/12\ K^2(N^3-N)}$. The Kendall-W test was applied to items on pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 18. Table 3.1 illustrates the manner

In which the responses of the five judges are compiled when ranking the order of preference of the six items on page two of the modified Riegle questionnaire.

Table 3.1.--Tabulation of judges' scores for utilization of Kendall-W statistical test.

Judges	Questions					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	5	4	6	3	1	2
B	1	6	5	2	4	3
C	6	5	4	3	2	1
D	1	6	5	2	3	4
E	4	3	1	2	5	6
Sum of Rankings	17	24	21	12	15	16

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{17 + 24 + 21 + 12 + 15 + 16}{6} = 17.5.$$

$$S = (17-17.5)^2 + (24-17.5)^2 + (21-17.5)^2 + (12-17.5)^2 + (15-17.5)^2 + (16-17.5)^2 = 93.5.$$

$$W = \frac{S}{1/12\ K^2(N^3-N)} = \frac{93.5}{1/12 \cdot 5^2(6^3-6)} = \frac{1122}{25 \cdot (216-6)} = \frac{1122}{5250} = 0.21$$

This technique actually provides two measures of the level of agreement among the five judges. First, the critical value of S, in this case 93.5, can be compared with figures in the Table of

Critical Values of S in the Kendall Coefficient of Concordance.[6]

For significant agreement, S must be equal to or greater than 182.4. In this case, 93.5 falls considerably short; therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant agreement among the five judges. Further, with a possible value of W being anywhere between zero and one, with a value of one indicating absolute agreement, the W = 0.21 found in this case would indicate a low level of agreement.

In using this test on each of the pages mentioned earlier, it was found that there was not significant agreement at the .05 level of confidence on pages 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, or 18. There was agreement, however, on page four, dealing with the extent club activities were available in the schools, with a critical value of W equal to 168, which is greater than the value of 112.3 indicated as minimum in the Table of Critical Values of S in the Kendall Coefficient of Concordance. Also, page four produced a W = .672, which approaches the absolute agreement level of 1.0. There was also agreement on page nine, which dealt with identification of exploratory programs available in the schools. The critical S value was equal to 178.8, which is greater than the value of 112.3 indicated as minimum on the table cited above. Page nine produced a W = .4492.

Table 3.2 shows the levels of agreement among the five judges for each of the 18 pages of the reorganized Riegle questionnaire, as well as the middle school characteristics described by the items on each of the pages.

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[6]Sidney Siegel, Non-Parametric Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 286.

Table 3.2.--Rankings of levels of agreement among judges on each page of the reorganized Riegle questionnaire.

Page	Middle School Characteristic	Number of Items	W	Significant Agreement
1	Continuous Progress	2	1.0	Yes
14	Teacher Guidance Role	2	1.0	Yes
8	Departmentalization	1	1.0	Yes
17	Auxiliary Services	1	1.0	Yes
4	Clubs	5	.672	Yes
9	Exploratory Nature	5	.4492	Yes
10	Guidance Service	4	.36	No
18	Community Volunteers	2	.36	No
12	Skill Repair	4	.328	No
3	Flexible Scheduling	3	.28	No
5	Physical Activities	3	.28	No
15	Evaluation and Reporting	3	.28	No
6	Intra-Mural Programs	4	.23	No
2	Multi-Material Approach	6	.21	No
7	Team Teaching	4	.20	No
13	Dramatics	6	.16	No
11	Independent Study	3	.04	No
16	Community Relations	4	.04	No

It should be emphasized at this point that no effort is being made to show that any items on the Riegle questionnaire are ineffective. All of his items were validated by a team of middle school experts and his panel of judges agreed that all items were very good. This researcher also agrees that each item on the Riegle instrument is very effective and it is believed that the panel of judges engaged for the current study would also agree on this point. However, the

study was a complete and detailed dissertation on the issue of middle school implementation and the more complete questionnaire was desired for that purpose. The current study is ultimately interested in middle school teacher and administrator attitudes toward grading and reporting techniques, and the modified Riegle instrument is used for only the phase of identifying the level of middle school implementation in the schools represented by the individual respondents.

The current panel of experts was asked to perform the difficult task of identifying the "best" items out of a field of items that they would probably agree are all very good. It was not surprising to this researcher that there was little agreement on the part of the judges.

Selection of Sample for Final Survey

The abbreviated Riegle questionnaire, as shown in Appendix B, was then sent to the principals of each of the 160 middle schools selected at random from the 235 public schools in Michigan housing grades six, seven, and eight. Of the 160 questionnaires sent out, 120 were completed and returned for a return rate of 75 percent.

At the end of each of the questionnaires was a page requesting a commitment on the part of the administrators to involve themselves and their staffs in the final stage of the survey on attitudes toward the various methods of student evaluation and reporting. If the administrators agreed to ask their professional staff members to participate, a space was provided to indicate the number of teachers and administrators in the building who should receive the next

questionnaire. Table 3.3 shows the percentage of response and commit-ment of the available schools.

Table 3.3.--Response and commitment of selected schools.

Total	Number Returned	Percent	Number Committing	Percent of Committing Respondents
160	120	75	50	41.7

Each possible multiple choice response on the questionnaire was assigned a numerical "score" ranging from a high of four, down to the lowest possible score of zero. The high scores of four points indicated a high degree of implementation of the middle school char-acteristic described in the particular item in question, and scores of zero or one point indicated a low degree of implementation of the characteristic. The assignment of points was developed and validated by Dr. Riegle for his original study and the assignments of points for each item can be seen on the questionnaire shown in Appendix B. The total scores on the returned questionnaires ranged from a high of 75 points, which indicates a high degree of middle school imple-mentation, down to a low of 18 points, indicating a low degree of commitment to middle school practices. Table 3.4 shows the range of scores of the responding schools, divided into approximately four equal groups, the number of schools responding in each group, and the number of schools in each group that have indicated a willingness to participate in the final stage of the research.

Table 3.4.--Scores of responding schools and number of schools
committed to continue participation.

	Range of Scores	Number of Respondents	Number of Committing Schools
First Quartile	18-39	29	15
Second Quartile	40-47	31	8
Third Quartile	48-54	31	12
Fourth Quartile	55-75	29	15
Totals		120	50

Rather than include all schools responding to the survey on middle school practices, a total of 50 that agreed to participate in the third and final stage of the study, it was decided to limit the study to only those committed schools in the top scoring group with scores ranging between 55 and 75, and the schools included in the bottom group with scores ranging between 18 and 39. This would allow the researcher to compare the attitudes of teachers and administrators in the 15 middle schools that most exemplify the true middle school with the attitudes of their counterparts in the 15 schools that fall considerably short of middle school goals. In addition, both groups, separately and combined, can be compared with the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators surveyed in the Scharffe study.

Table 3.5 shows the number of schools, teachers, and administrators from the high implementation middle schools and the low implementation middle schools that committed themselves to participate in the third phase of the study.

Table 3.5.--High implementation and low implementation participants in the study.

	Schools	Teachers	Administrators
High Implementation	15	516	34
Low Implementation	15	394	30
Totals	30	910	64

The combined total of teachers and administrators provides a potential total of 974 respondents in the teacher-administrator attitude survey toward various student evaluation and reporting techniques.

Validation of the Final Survey Instrument

The Pupil Progress Reporting Questionnaire, which was the primary data-gathering instrument used in this study, is almost identical to the instrument developed and validated by William G. Scharffe in his study of the attitudes of elementary teachers and administrators toward various pupil evaluation and reporting techniques.[7] Since

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[7] William G. Scharffe, "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" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1977).

the current study is a replication of the Scharffe study at the
middle school level, a conscious effort was made to make as few
changes as possible in order to maintain the integrity of the origi-
nal questionnaire, and to avoid the necessity of revalidating the
instrument. The only changes necessary were to change the word
"elementary" to "middle school" on items 13, 20, 23, 28, and 34 on
section two of the instrument, and item 53 on section four was
changed to reflect professional training of the respondents that
would include secondary school levels as well as elementary and
higher education levels. Also, item 54 was eliminated since this
was used to code the four states used in the Scharffe study, while
only Michigan schools are included in the current study. In modify-
ing the Scharffe questionnaire, this researcher inadvertently
neglected to include a question to identify whether each individual
respondent was a teacher or an administrator. To remedy this situa-
tion, the letter that was sent to each administrator along with the
packet of questionnaires requested that the instruments completed
by each administrator be identified by writing the word "adminis-
trator" on the top of the front page. Fortunately, this request
was met by each of the responding schools. The modified Scharffe
instrument used in the current study can be seen in Appendix C.

The questionnaire, while developed and validated by Scharffe,
bears some explanation at this point. It is presented in four separate
sections requiring four pages. Section one, page one, includes gen-
eral instructions as well as definitions of each of the eight grading
and reporting systems being considered in the study.

Section two, page two, of the questionnaire includes 40 statements which are all either pro or con regarding each of the eight grading and reporting systems. After each statement the respondent is asked to either strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The respondent must select some degree of agreement or disagreement and has no option for a "middle of the road" response.

There are several areas of concern which were involved in arranging or ordering of the 40 items developed by Scharffe in section two of the questionnaire. First, a general evaluation of each particular reporting method was sought. To get this, opposing items were used to insure consistency of responses. An example would be item nine, which reads "Self-evaluation reporting is really unfair because the honest kids get hurt," while item 26 reads "Self-evaluation is a system which could help to eliminate cheating." Table 3.6 shows the opposing general items for the reporting methods.

The second area of concern deals with student welfare and the manner in which each item describes the respondent's feelings in this regard. Again, using self-evaluation as an example, item 20 reads "Self-evaluation reporting is of little or no use for the middle school grades," as compared to item 34 which reads "Self-evaluation reporting is a very valuable teaching tool for middle school grades, 6-7-8." Table 3.7 shows the opposing student concern items for all methods considered in the study.

Table 3.6.--Opposing items of a general evaluation nature.

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)	(see explanation below)	
Narrative Reporting	7	39
Parent Conferences	14	40
Pass-Fail	11	3
Self-Evaluation	9	26

NOTE: Items 8, 16, and 38 all give letter grades positive treatment. However, since the A B C D F system is being compared with each of the seven alternative methods, the items that favor each of the alternative systems can be considered as opposing to the letter grade system. Consequently, items 1, 6, 10, 15, 24, 30, and 32 favor alternatives over A B C D F. Respondents favoring these items would be expected to oppose items 8, 16, and 38 and vice versa.

Table 3.7.--Opposing items of student concern.

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 third concern of the questionnaire was to determine the respondent's attitude toward letter grades as compared to the selected alternatives considered in the study. Items 8, 16, and 38 treat letter grades in a positive manner. In contrast, while items 1, 6, 10, 15, 24, 30, and 32 do not speak directly in opposition to letter grades, they do speak of the alternatives as preferable over letter grades. Two other items speak to letter grades; item 22 states that letter grades are "unfair" to students, while by contrast, item 31 claims letter grades are "about as fair as you can get."

Section three of the questionnaire called for eight open-ended responses where the respondents are asked to offer rationale for some of the answers in section two. For example, item 41 asks, "Refer back to statement number three in section two about Pass-Fail reporting. Why did you respond the way you did?" The researcher attempted to categorize the open-ended responses into five areas: student-oriented responses, teacher-oriented responses, parent-oriented responses, combination responses, and "other." An example of a student-oriented response to the above question might be, "Pressure is removed from students to try to earn high grades." The other seven open-ended questions ask the respondent to refer back to statement five about parent conferences, statement 12 about check list reporting, statement 15 about narratives, statement 16 about A B C D F, statement 19 about credit-no credit, statement 33 about blanket grades, and statement 34 about self-evaluation. In each case the respondent is asked to explain why they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Item 49 of section three asks the respondent to rank each of the eight reporting methods from their "favorite" down to their least favorite. This item not only serves to produce a "face-to-face" ranking of the eight techniques, it also serves to validate the responses of the first two sections of the questionnaire.

Section IV of the instrument asks for personal demographic data such as sex, years of experience, degree(s) held, and undergraduate training.

While an attitudinal questionnaire is one of the most difficult instruments to validate, Scharffe went to considerable lengths to do just that. After first developing the instrument to test the attitudes of elementary teachers and principals toward the eight reporting techniques, he sought the input and suggestions of members of his own doctoral committee. After incorporating their suggestions, the instrument was piloted in two elementary schools in Shields, Michigan. A detailed description of the pilot study to validate the instrument is included in Chapter III of the Scharffe study.[8]

Statistical Methods Used in Data Analysis

Repeated measure will be used for Research Questions 1 and 2 using subject as unit of analysis. The seven hypotheses for each of the questions will be treated as seven planned contrasts.

Research Question 1: Do middle school teachers in Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

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[8]Scharffe, "Attitudes," Chapter III.

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward self-evaluation is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

Research Question 2: Do middle school administrators in

Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of

selected alternative forms of reporting?

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward self-evaluation reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 will be analyzed by cross table frequency using chi square test of homogeneity and chi square independency.

Research Question 3: If middle school teachers 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 4: If middle 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 the teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting and the teacher's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level teacher was trained to teach, (5) school status?

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship exist between the administrator's preference for a particular form of reporting and the administrator's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level administrator was trained to teach, (5) school status?

Research Question 7 will be tested by descriptive information about the means and variance by rank ordering.

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

Summary

The third chapter has described the target population and the procedure used to identify the sample. Also described were the methods of validating instruments utilized in selecting participating schools which were drawn from the sample. Three survey instruments were required for the study, including a questionnaire to be completed by recognized middle school "experts," a questionnaire to be completed by middle school principals to determine the level of implementation of established middle school concepts in each of the schools in the sample, and finally, a questionnaire for middle school teachers and administrators to determine their attitudes toward A B C D F reporting as compared with seven alternative reporting techniques. The development and validation of each of these instruments is discussed. The final questionnaire to be completed by middle school teachers and administrators is discussed in considerable detail, including the concerns being studied as well as the manner in which the individual items are cross-checked to insure consistency of responses by the individual respondents.

The seven research questions are stated along with seven hypotheses for both Research Questions 1 and 2. Repeated measure was

used for Research Questions 1 and 2 using subject as unit of analysis. The seven hypotheses for each of these questions were treated as seven planned contrasts. Research Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were analyzed by cross table frequency using chi square test of homogeneity and chi square independency. Research Question 7 was tested by descriptive information about the means and variance of rank ordering.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the attitudes of teachers and administrators in Michigan public middle schools toward several selected student evaluation and reporting methods. More specifically, the researcher sought to determine their attitudes toward letter grades (A B C D F), and whether or not they favored this method or one of the alternative methods discussed in the study. The data presented in this chapter were compiled from the responses of a sample of teachers and administrators in public Michigan middle schools during the 1977-1978 school year.

Statistical Methods

Analysis of variance for repeated measure data was used for Research Questions 1 and 2 using subject as unit of analysis. These two questions each have seven hypotheses and were treated as seven planned contrasts, and each subject was used as the unit of analysis. Research Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were analyzed by cross table frequency using chi square test of homogeneity and chi square independency. Research Question 7 was answered by descriptive information such as the means, variances, and rank ordering of the eight methods that are preferred by the teachers and the administrators.

Statistical Findings

The findings presented below are organized in the order of
the research questions being answered. Significance level of each
test was set at alpha = .001 level to control for the over-all
probability of type 1 error (alpha) of the entire study to be about
.01.

Analysis of Variance of
Repeated Measure Data

Research Question 1: Do middle school teachers in Michigan
prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alter-
native forms of reporting?

The above research question was answered by testing the fol-
lowing seven hypotheses:

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
   blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward
   A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
   check list reporting is the same as their attitude
   toward A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
   credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude
   toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
   narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward
   A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
   parent conference reporting is the same as their attitude
   toward A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
   pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward
   A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
        self-evaluation is the same as their attitude toward
        A B C D F.

To analyze the seven hypotheses above, a repeated measure analysis of variance was used. The design treated the 484 subjects as a combined group of observations while each individual was considered as one unit of analysis. The eight reporting methods were the repeated factors which had eight levels.

In interpreting Table 4.1, it should be pointed out that the source of variations reflect the seven hypotheses (or seven planned contrasts) in Research Question 1. E1 through E8 are the eight evaluation and reporting methods being considered in the study. E1 = blanket grading, E2 = check list, E3 = credit-no credit, E4 = grades (A B C D F), E5 = narratives, E6 = parent conferences, E7 = pass-fail, and E8 = self-evaluation. The magnitude of the contrast difference was found by subtracting the average ranking by the teachers of the letter grade method from the average ranking of each of the other seven methods. Table 4.17 reports the average ranking of each method by the teachers.

Findings.--

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward
        blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward
        A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. Furthermore, the magnitude of the contrast is 4.994, which is very high. Thus, the teachers have clearly chosen A B C D F over blanket grading. This result can be seen in more detail later in this chapter by

Table 4.1.—Result of analysis of variance for repeated measure data for Research Question 1, Hypotheses 1 through 7.

Source of Variation	Magnitude of the Contrast Difference	df	Hypothesis Mean Square	Mean Square of the Error Term	Univariate F	Sig. Level
1. E1-E4	4.994	1	6033.19	2.82	2139.4	.0001*
2. E2-E4	1.457	1	513.30	3.26	157.6	.0001*
3. E3-E4	2.998	1	2174.34	3.51	619.2	.0001*
4. E5-E4	1.333	1	429.55	4.05	106.1	.0001*
5. E6-E4	1.017	1	249.99	3.58	69.9	.0001*
6. E7-E4	3.227	1	2519.74	3.01	838.1	.0001*
7. E8-E4	3.595	1	3126.74	4.44	704.2	.0001*

NOTE: Degrees of freedom for error = 483.

*The test is significant at the .001 level.

studying Table 4.17 which shows that teachers ranked blanket grading as their eighth choice of the eight methods considered.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. The magnitude of the contrast is 1.457 as the teachers have chosen A B C D F over check list reporting. Further, as can be seen on Table 4.17, teachers have ranked check list reporting as their fourth choice of the eight methods considered.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. The magnitude of the contrast is 2.998. A significant difference in attitude exists as the teachers have chosen A B C D F over credit-no credit reporting. Table 4.17 shows that teachers have ranked credit-no credit as their fifth choice of the eight methods considered.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. The magnitude of the contrast is 1.333 as the teachers have shown a preference for A B C D F over narrative reporting. Later in this chapter, Table 4.17 shows that narrative reports were the third choice in ranking by the teachers.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward parent conference reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. A B C D F was preferred by the teachers over parent conference reporting even though the magnitude of the contrast was only 1.017. Table 4.17 shows that teachers have selected parent conferences as their second choice of the eight reporting methods being considered.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward pass-fail reporting and A B C D F stands out as the preferred method. The magnitude of the contrast is 3.227, which is quite large. Table 4.17 shows that teachers ranked pass-fail reporting as their sixth choice of the eight methods considered.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward self-evaluation reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected at .001 levels. The A B C D F method is the choice of the teachers over self-evaluation, and their attitudes toward the two methods are significantly different. The magnitude of the contrast is high at 3.595, and Table 4.17 shows that teachers have ranked self-evaluation as their seventh choice of the eight methods considered.

As can be seen by reviewing Table 4.1, significant differences exist between the attitude of middle school teachers toward A B C D F and each of the seven alternative methods of evaluation and reporting. By examining the magnitude of the contrast differences, it can be seen

that the differences in attitude are much more pronounced with some methods over others. There is less difference between E6, parent conferences, E5, narratives, and E2, check list, as compared with E4, letter grades, than between E1, blanket grading, and letter grades.

Research Question 2: Do middle school administrators in Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

The above research question was answered by testing the following seven hypotheses:

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward self-evaluation reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

To analyze the seven hypotheses above, a repeated analysis of variance was again used. The design treated subject as the unit

of analysis and the reporting method was the repeated factor, which had eight levels.

The ANOVA table, Table 4.2, illustrates the results of the analysis by repeated measurements.

Findings.--

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected. Furthermore, the magnitude of the contrast is 4.606, as the administrators have clearly chosen A B C D F over blanket grading. The result is shown in further detail later in this chapter by studying Table 4.17, which shows that administrators ranked blanket grading as their eighth choice of the eight methods considered.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis cannot be rejected. Administrator attitudes toward check list reporting do not vary significantly from their attitudes toward A B C D F. The magnitude of the contrast difference is .921; therefore the attitude or the preference for one over the other is very close. Table 4.17 indicates that check list reporting was ranked as the fourth choice by administrators of the eight methods considered.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected. Administrators have clearly chosen A B C D F over credit-no credit reporting. As can be seen in

Table 4.2.--Result of analysis of variance for repeated measure data for Research Question 2, Hypotheses 8 through 14.

Source of Variation	Magnitude of the Contrast Difference	df	Hypothesis Mean Square	Mean Square of the Error Term	Univariate F	Sig. Level
1. E1-E4	4.606	1	402.84	2.72	148.3	.0001*
2. E2-E4	.921	1	16.11	3.14	5.1	.0296
3. E3-E4	3.000	1	170.95	3.32	51.4	.0001*
4. E5-E4	.763	1	11.06	4.09	2.7	.1086
5. E6-E4	-.079	1	.12	3.31	.03	.8510
6. E7-E4	3.369	1	215.51	3.31	65.2	.0001*
7. E8-E4	2.658	1	134.18	4.36	30.8	.0001*

NOTE: Degrees of freedom for error = 37.

*The test is significant at the .001 level.

Table 4.17 later in this chapter, administrators ranked credit-no credit as their sixth choice of the eight methods considered. And, the magnitude of the contrast differences is 3.000, which is quite large.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis cannot be rejected. The attitude of administrators toward narrative reporting did not vary significantly from their attitude toward A B C D F. The magnitude of the contrast difference was only .763, and Table 4.17 shows that administrators selected narrative reporting as their third choice of the eight reporting methods considered.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis cannot be rejected. The attitude of administrators toward parent conferences did not vary significantly from their attitude toward A B C D F. However, Table 4.17 indicates that parent conferences were the first choice of the methods considered by a narrow margin. The magnitude of the contrast difference was a negative (-).079.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected. The attitude of administrators demonstrates a clear preference for A B C D F over pass-fail reporting with the magnitude of the contrast difference being a sizable 3.369.

Table 4.17 shows that administrators have ranked pass-fail as their seventh choice of the eight reporting methods considered.

> 7. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward self-evaluation reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

The hypothesis is rejected. The administrators have clearly chosen A B C D F over self-evaluation reporting. The magnitude of the contrast difference is 2.658, and Table 4.17 shows that administrators ranked self-evaluation as their fifth choice of the eight methods considered.

A review of Table 4.2 shows that significant differences exist between the attitude of middle school administrators toward A B C D F and blanket grading, credit-no credit, pass-fail, and self-evaluation. Administrators clearly preferred A B C D F over each of these evaluation and reporting methods. Table 4.2 also shows that no significant difference exists between the attitudes of the administrators toward A B C D F and check list, narratives, and parent conferences. Further, parent conferences were preferred over A B C D F.

Cross Tabulation Technique

Research Question 3: If middle school teachers 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?

Teachers were asked to respond to eight open-ended questions, items 41 through 48 on the questionnaire, each of which asked for specific rationale for responses given on eight previous statements. To answer Research Question 3, a cross tabulation technique was used

whereby the ranking teachers gave to the A B C D F method was compared with their rationale for either agreeing or disagreeing with statement 16 of section two of the questionnaire.[1] For example, question 45 asks: "Refer back to statement number 16 about A B C D F. Why did you agree/disagree there?" If the respondent answers the question with a statement such as "I agree because it's easy for teachers to record," the researcher coded the response as being _teacher_ oriented. If the respondent answered the question with a statement such as "I disagreed because grades are dehumanizing for students," the researcher coded the response as _student_ oriented. Answers to the open-ended questions were coded in several ways, including student oriented, teacher oriented, parent oriented, student-teacher combination, student-parent combination, teacher-parent combination, student-teacher-parent combination, and "other," which might be no response at all, or something indecisive such as "I don't know."

Findings.--Using the Chi Square test of association to test for a significant degree of association between preference for the A B C D F method and the reasons given for this preference, Table 4.3 shows the raw Chi Square test is 49.318 with 56 degrees of freedom, and the test is significant at .72. Therefore, the association is not significant at alpha = .05. It can be concluded that preference for the A B C D F reporting method and reasons for this preference are not related.

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[1]Statement number 16 reads: "A B C D F is a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered."

Table 4.3.--Cross tabulation of teacher rankings of the A B C D F method and the orientation of their rationale for assigning a particular rank.

Teacher Rankings of A B C D F		Student	Teacher	Parent	Student-Parent	Student-Teacher	Teacher-Parent	Student-Teacher-Parent	Other	Row Total
1	n	53	134	20	26	10	3	13	16	275
	%	11.1	28.0	4.2	5.4	2.1	.6	2.7	3.3	57.4
2	n	7	37	4	4	3	0	2	7	64
	%	1.5	7.7	.8	.8	.6	0	.4	1.5	13.4
3	n	10	24	1	2	4	1	2	4	48
	%	2.1	5.0	.2	.4	.8	.2	.4	.8	10.0
4	n	10	18	1	1	0	1	0	7	38
	%	2.1	3.8	.2	.2	0	.2	0	1.5	7.9
5	n	3	10	1	1	2	0	0	3	20
	%	.6	2.1	.2	.2	.4	0	0	.6	4.2
6	n	2	10	0	0	2	0	1	1	16
	%	.4	2.1	0	0	.4	0	.2	.2	3.3
7	n	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
	%	.6	.6	0	.2	0	0	0	0	1.5
8	n	5	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	11
	%	1.0	.8	0	0	.2	0	.2	0	2.3
Column Total	n	93	240	27	35	22	5	19	38	479
	%	19.4	50.1	5.6	7.3	4.6	1.0	4.0	7.9	100.0

Raw Chi Square = 49.318   56 Degrees of Freedom   Significance = .7240   Alpha = .05

114

that 57.4 percent, or 275, of the teachers gave A B C D F their highest rank. Of these, 134 gave teacher-oriented rationale for their choice. The number of teachers who favor A B C D F for student-oriented reasons drops rather sharply to 53.

Research Question 4: If middle 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?

Findings.--With such a small sample of administrators and eight categories that might be listed as rationale for selecting parent conferences as the most preferred reporting method, it is not practical to test for significance at any level of alpha that would be meaningful. Instead, Table 4.4 does illustrate trends of admin-istrator choices. Of the 13 administrators who ranked parent confer-ences as their first choice, orientation of their rationale is fairly evenly divided among the possible reasons. Most of the administra-tors considered needs of parents in some way for their reason for preferring parent conferences.

No one rated parent conferences lower than fifth choice, and only one administrator rated this method lower than fourth.

Chi Square Analysis

Research Question 5: To what extent does a relationship exist between the teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting and the teacher's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level teacher was trained to teach, (5) school status?

Table 4.4.—Administrator rankings of parent conference reporting and the orientation of their rationale for assigning a particular rank.

Administrator Rankings of Parent Conferences		Student	Teacher	Parent	Student-Parent	Student-Teacher	Teacher-Parent	Student-Teacher-Parent	Other	Row Total
1	n	2	2	2	2	0	3	1	1	13
	%	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	0	7.8	2.6	2.6	33.4
2	n	1	0	2	2	0	2	0	2	9
	%	2.6	0	5.1	5.1	0	5.1	0	5.1	23.0
3	n	1	2	0	3	0	2	0	2	10
	%	2.6	5.1	0	7.7	0	5.1	0	5.1	25.6
4	n	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	6
	%	5.1	0	0	5.1	0	2.6	0	2.6	15.4
5	n	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	0	0	0	2.6	0	0	0	0	2.6
Column Total	n	6	4	4	10	0	8	1	6	39
	%	15.4	10.2	10.2	25.6	0	20.6	2.6	15.4	100.0

N = 39

Findings.--Table 4.5 shows the results of using the Chi Square test of association to test a significant relationship between sex and each of the eight reporting methods. Since none of the Chi Square tests for association between sex and each of the eight methods is significant at .001, it can be concluded that the teacher's sex does not have a significant relationship to expressed preference or attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.5.--Relationship between teacher sex and evaluation and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Sex and Blanket Grading	6.785	6	.3412
Sex and Check List	5.824	6	.4432
Sex and Credit-No Credit	3.694	6	.7180
Sex and Grades (A B C D F)	7.236	6	.2996
Sex and Narratives	17.380	6	.0080
Sex and Parent Conferences	4.668	6	.5870
Sex and Pass-Fail	6.163	6	.4052
Sex and Self-Evaluation	10.869	6	.0924

Alpha = .001   N = 480

Findings.--Years of experience is a significant factor in teacher attitude toward blanket grading, as can be seen in Table 4.6. However, experience was not a significant factor affecting the expressed attitude of teachers toward check list, credit-no credit,

grades (A B C D F), narratives, parent conferences, pass-fail, and self-evaluation.

Table 4.6.--Relationship between teacher experience and evaluation and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Experience and Blanket Grading	100.556	42	.0000*
Experience and Check List	47.076	42	.2726
Experience and Credit-No Credit	43.811	42	.3946
Experience and Grades	54.572	42	.0925
Experience and Narratives	55.723	42	.0763
Experience and Parent Conferences	42.933	42	.4311
Experience and Pass-Fail	36.231	42	.7214
Experience and Self-Evaluation	41.619	42	.4876

Alpha = .001   N = 480

*Significant.

In finding experience as a significant variable, Table 4.7 further illustrates that the younger teachers are less likely to look upon blanket grading with disfavor. Twenty-nine teachers in the category of 20 years or less rated blanket grading no lower than fourth choice. No one in the 31 year or over category rated blanket grading higher than seventh choice. However, the researcher recognizes that

Table 4.7.--Relationship between teacher preference for blanket grading and years of experience.

Years of Experience		First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	Fifth Choice	Sixth Choice	Seventh Choice	Eighth Choice	Row Total
1	n	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	6
	%	0	0	.2	0	0	0	.4	.6	1.2
1- 5	n	0	0	3	8	14	19	32	103	179
	%	0	0	.6	1.7	2.9	4.0	6.7	21.5	37.3
6-10	n	1	0	4	5	10	12	21	108	161
	%	.2	0	.8	1.0	2.1	2.5	4.4	22.5	33.5
11-20	n	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	4
	%	.2	.2	0	0	.2	0	0	.2	.8
21-30	n	3	2	0	3	8	8	18	77	119
	%	.6	.4	0	.6	1.7	1.7	3.7	16.0	24.8
31-40	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	0	0	0	0	0	0	.2	0	.2
41+	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	10
	%	0	0	0	0	0	0	.6	1.5	2.1
Column Total	n	5	3	8	16	33	39	77	299	480
	%	1.0	.6	1.7	3.3	6.9	8.1	16.0	62.3	100.0

Raw Chi Square = 100.555   42 Degrees of Freedom   Significance = .0000   Alpha = .001
N = 480

only 22 teachers are represented in the "over 30" group, and even a sizable majority of the younger teachers rated blanket grading very low.

Findings.--The results of the Chi Square test of association to test the significance between the teachers' highest degree and their reporting method preferences are shown in Table 4.8. None of the Chi Square tests is significant at .001. Therefore, it is concluded that the teachers' college degree has no relationship to their expressed preference or attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.8.--Relationship between teachers' highest degree and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Degree and Blanket Grading	18.306	28	.9182
Degree and Check List	24.889	28	.6339
Degree and Credit-No Credit	26.238	28	.5599
Degree and Grades	32.850	28	.2413
Degree and Narratives	29.006	28	.4122
Degree and Parent Conferences	35.675	28	.1511
Degree and Pass-Fail	21.938	28	.7841
Degree and Self-Evaluation	38.434	28	.0905

Alpha = .001
N = 451 (some teachers did not respond to the question, and a few others responded incorrectly)

Findings.--Table 4.9 shows the results of using the Chi Square test of association to test for a significant relationship between the teachers' undergraduate teacher training and their rankings of the eight reporting methods. None of the Chi Square tests is significant at .001. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teacher's undergraduate teacher training does not have a significant relationship to expressed preference or attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.9.--Relationship between teacher undergraduate training and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Training and Blanket Grading	153.086	147	.3518
Training and Check List	143.804	147	.5629
Training and Credit-No Credit	136.373	147	.7265
Training and Grades (A B C D F)	124.414	147	.9104
Training and Narratives	182.128	147	.0245
Training and Parent Conferences	163.712	147	.1641
Training and Pass-Fail	135.997	147	.7340
Training and Self-Evaluation	140.914	147	.6291

Alpha = .001   N = 478

Findings.--School status was not a significant factor affecting expressed teacher attitudes toward any of the eight reporting methods considered. To amplify this point, as was found in testing the first hypothesis of Research Question 1, teachers clearly

preferred letter grades over all of the seven alternative methods
considered, and this preference was indicated by teachers from high
middle schools as well as low middle schools. Table 4.10 illustrates
the lack of significance in the relationship between school status
and reporting preferences.

Table 4.10.--Relationship between school status and teacher evaluation
and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
School Status and Blanket Grading	6.351	6	.3851
School Status and Check List	8.797	6	.1853
School Status and Credit-No Credit	11.005	6	.0882
School Status and Grades	6.193	6	.4020
School Status and Narratives	8.070	6	.2330
School Status and Parent Conferences	1.942	6	.9250
School Status and Pass-Fail	5.631	6	.4657
School Status and Self-Evaluation	2.610	6	.8559

Alpha = .001   N = 480

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship
exist between the administrator's preference for a particular form
of reporting and the administrator's: (1) sex, (2) years of experi-
ence, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level administrator was trained
to teach, (5) school status?

Findings.--Table 4.11 shows the results of using the Chi

Square test of association to test a significant relationship between

sex and each of the eight reporting methods. Since none of the Chi

Square tests for association between sex and each of the eight methods

is significant at .001, it can be concluded that the administrator's

sex does not have a significant relationship to expressed preference

or attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.11.--Relationship between administrator sex and evaluation and
reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Sex and Blanket Grading	6.825	5	.2340
Sex and Check List	3.877	5	.5673
Sex and Credit-No Credit	12.667	6	.0486
Sex and Grades	4.234	6	.6450
Sex and Narratives	4.330	5	.5029
Sex and Parent Conferences	4.222	4	.3767
Sex and Pass-Fail	6.045	6	.4182
Sex and Self-Evaluation	4.868	6	.5608

Alpha = .001   N = 39

Findings: Years of experience is not a significant factor

affecting an administrator's preference for any of the eight report-

ing methods. When examining each of the cross tabulations that were

conducted to develop Table 4.12, it was found that experience and

reporting preference was correlated closest with letter grades, but

even so, it is not significant at .001. In that case, 14 of the administrators in the 21-30 year group selected grades as their first choice of the eight methods.

Table 4.12.--Relationship between administrator experience and evaluation and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Experience and Blanket Grading	16.021	20	.7153
Experience and Check List	19.379	20	.4973
Experience and Credit-No Credit	19.175	24	.7426
Experience and Grades	34.653	24	.0737
Experience and Narratives	9.330	20	.9788
Experience and Parent Conferences	9.388	16	.8966
Experience and Pass-Fail	18.777	24	.7637
Experience and Self-Evaluation	23.749	24	.4760

Alpha = .001   N = 39

Findings.--The results of the Chi Square test of association to test the significance between the administrators' highest degree and their reporting method preferences are shown in Table 4.13. None of the Chi Square tests is significant at .001. Therefore, it is concluded that the administrators' college degree has no relationship to their expressed preference or attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.13.--Relationship between the administrators' highest degree and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Degree and Blanket Grading	20.144	15	.1665
Degree and Check List	15.215	18	.6472
Degree and Credit-No Credit	23.401	15	.0760
Degree and Grades	42.084	21	.0041
Degree and Narratives	19.294	18	.3739
Degree and Parent Conferences	7.333	15	.9478
Degree and Pass-Fail	13.591	21	.8865
Degree and Self-Evaluation	25.918	21	.2096

Alpha = .001   N = 37

Findings.--Table 4.14 shows the results of using the Chi Square test of association to test for a significant relationship between the administrators' undergraduate teacher training and their rankings of the eight reporting methods. None of the Chi Square tests is significant at .001. Therefore, it can be concluded that the administrators' undergraduate teacher training does not have a significant relationship to expressed preference or attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.14.--Relationship between administrator undergraduate training and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
Training and Blanket Grading	35.937	50	.9328
Training and Check List	47.280	60	.8836
Training and Credit-No Credit	66.144	60	.2732
Training and Grades	101.205	70	.0074
Training and Narratives	48.418	60	.8582
Training and Parent Conferences	32.460	50	.9742
Training and Pass-Fail	48.902	70	.9713
Training and Self-Evaluation	68.060	70	.5488

Alpha = .001   N = 39

Findings.--School status was not a significant factor affect-
ing expressed administrator attitudes toward any of the eight report-
ing methods considered. The manner in which administrators as a
group expressed their attitudes toward letter grades in comparison
to the seven alternative methods considered in this study was not
affected by whether they are employed in a high middle school or a
low middle school. Table 4.15 illustrates the lack of significance
in the relationship between school status and reporting preference.

Table 4.15.--Relationship between school status and administrator
evaluation and reporting preferences.

Variables	Chi Square Test	df	Significant Levels of the Chi Square Test
School Status and Blanket Grading	6.087	5	.2978
School Status and Check List	3.792	5	.5797
School Status and Credit- No Credit	5.344	6	.5005
School Status and Grades	9.626	6	.1413
School Status and Narratives	4.744	5	.4479
School Status and Parent Conferences	2.068	4	.7232
School Status and Pass-Fail	2.428	6	.8764
School Status and Self- Evaluation	5.780	6	.4483

Alpha = .001   N = 39

Results of Rank Ordering

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

Findings.--Table 4.16 reports means, standard deviations,
and rank ordering, or order of preference, of each of the eight
reporting methods for teachers and administrators. All responses in
Table 4.16 are taken from item 49 of the questionnaire, which asks
respondents to rank each of the eight methods in order of preference
with a ranking of 1 being their first choice and a ranking of 8 being
their last choice. Ranking was based on means, and the mean rankings

Table 4.16.--Means and standard deviations of ranking of eight reporting methods by teachers and administrators.

		Reporting Method							
		Blanket Grades	Check List	Credit-No Credit	Grades	Narratives	Parent Conferences	Pass-Fail	Self Evaluation
Teachers	X̄	6.151	2.614	4.155	1.157	2.490	2.174	4.384	4.752
	S.D.	1.433	1.701	1.624	1.756	1.959	1.834	1.660	1.934
	Ranking	8	4	5	1	3	2	6	7
Administrators	X̄	6.184	2.500	4.579	1.579	2.342	1.500	4.947	4.237
	S.D.	1.353	1.538	1.621	1.840	1.713	1.751	1.659	1.822
	Ranking	8	4	6	2	3	1	7	5

N = 484 teachers, 38 administrators

Rank 1 = most preferred; Rank 8 = least preferred

128

can be interpreted as indicating that the lowest mean score is the highest-ranking method. Thus, the ranking can be interpreted as indicating that most of the teachers, and administrators, found blanket grading to be their last choice of the eight reporting methods considered in this study.

Standard deviation in Table 4.16 indicates degree of agreement in ranking the eight methods on the part of the teacher and administrator groups. The smaller the standard deviation, the better the agreement about the rank of each method of the particular group. For example, in selecting grades as the first choice of the eight reporting methods, the teacher group has a standard deviation of 1.756, and it indicates a reasonable degree of agreement among the teachers in selecting grades as their first choice. The highest standard deviation was 1.959 for narratives as the third choice of reporting methods, which would indicate that more teachers had disagreements on that selection than they did with the last choice of blanket grades. The standard deviation of 1.433 and mean score of 5.151 would indicate that blanket grading was easily the last choice by the majority of the 484 teachers.

In examining the administrator group, there was slightly more agreement within the group in their rankings than there was with the teacher group. The largest standard deviation was 1.840 in selecting A B C D F as their second choice. The standard deviations for the first three choices, 1.751, 1.840, and 1.713 for parent conferences, grades, and narratives respectively would indicate limited mixture on

the part of administrators in making their first three selections. As with teachers, the lowest standard deviation was 1.353 for blanket grades, which indicates a reasonably high majority of the administrators selected it as their last choice.

The standard deviation in the teacher group and the administrator group in ranking the eight methods ranges from 1.433 to 1.959 and from 1.353 to 1.840, respectively. These two ranges are not wide, and they are very close in their low magnitudes. Thus, the standard deviations of each of the eight methods indicate a reasonably united feeling among the teacher group and the administrator group as to their rankings.

While the standard deviations indicate general agreement in ranking methods by teacher and administrator groups, it is appropriate to test the significance of the differences in rankings by utilizing the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient test (Spearman Rho).

Table 4.17 shows a side-by-side comparison of the teacher and administrator rankings of the eight methods. The Spearman Rho test is conducted thus:

$$r_s = \frac{1 = 6\Sigma di^2}{N^3 - N} = 1 - \frac{6(8)}{512-8} = 1 - \frac{48}{504} = 1 - .0952 = .9048$$

This result is significant at .01 since .9048 exceeds the tabled value of .833 for this test.[2] It can be concluded that there

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[2]Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1956), p. 284.

is no significant difference in the attitudes of teachers and administrators as demonstrated by their rankings of the eight reporting methods.

Table 4.17.--Comparison of teacher and administrator ranking of eight reporting methods.

Reporting Method	Teacher Ranking	Administrator Ranking
E1 Blanket Grading	8	8
E2 Check List	4	4
E3 Credit-No Credit	5	6
E4 Grades (A B C D F)	1	2
E5 Narratives	3	3
E6 Parent Conferences	2	1
E7 Pass-Fail	6	7
E8 Self-Evaluation	7	5

N = 484 teachers, 38 administrators

Consistency of the Responses

While there is no way to be certain that respondents are expressing their true attitudes when responding to items on an attitudinal questionnaire, it is possible to determine if the responses are consistent. Items 1 through 40 on the instrument ask the respondent to either strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Table 4.18 lists the items which speak to each of the eight reporting methods in either a positive or negative statement. Item 25 is a positive statement about blanket grading: "Blanket grading is

challenging to kids because it puts them on their honor." Item 33 is also positive: "I like blanket grading because it takes pressure off kids." If the respondent expresses a favorable attitude toward either one of these statements, it is expected that he/she will also express a favorable response for the other item. Or, conversely, if they disagree with one of the statements it is expected that they would disagree with both of them.

Item two is a negative statement about blanket grading: "The blanket grading method is something I really don't care for," and this statement is compared with item 25, which was shown above to be positive. Therefore, if the respondent agrees with item two, it is expected that he/she would disagree with item 25. Table 4.18 lists all the questionnaire items that were matched against each other for expected agreement or disagreement to determine consistency of responses. Using the Chi Square Test with alpha = .001, it is found that respondents were significantly consistent on all comparative answers.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized by the following 17 statements:

1. A B C D F is the reporting method most preferred by middle school teachers, followed in order of preference by parent conferences, narratives, check list, self-evaluation, credit-no credit, pass-fail, and blanket grading.

Table 4.18.--Cross tabulation of positive and negative questionnaire items to test consistency of attitudinal responses toward grading and reporting methods.

	Cross Tabulation of Questionnaire Items		Chi Square Test	df	Significance of Chi Square Test
Blanket Grading	+25	+33	250.619	16	.000
	- 2	+25	94.228	16	.000
	-21	+33	137.055	16	.000
	-21	+25	135.763	16	.000
	- 2	-21	218.849	16	.000
	- 2	+33	180.994	16	.000
Check List	- 4	+36	114.021	16	.000
	- 4	+17	109.494	16	.000
	- 4	-12	167.099	16	.000
	-12	+36	93.045	16	.000
	-12	+17	102.891	16	.000
	+17	+36	351.106	16	.000
Credit-No Credit	-37	+28	183.139	16	.000
	-37	-13	274.961	16	.000
	-19	+28	90.474	16	.000
	-19	-13	147.660	16	.000
	-13	+28	285.284	16	.000
Grades	+ 8	+16	297.476	15	.000
	+16	+31	322.737	12	.000
	+ 8	+31	207.674	20	.000
	+38	+31	251.581	16	.000
	+ 8	+38	288.895	20	.000
	+16	+38	216.904	12	.000

Table 4.18.--Continued.

	Cross Tabulation of Questionnaire Items		Chi Square Test	df	Significance of Chi Square Test
Narratives	-27	+39	120.875	16	.000
	-27	+18	115.966	16	.000
	-27	- 7	136.771	16	.000
	- 7	+39	306.172	16	.000
	- 7	+18	153.037	16	.000
	+18	+39	205.850	16	.000
Parent Conferences	- 5	+40	216.164	12	.000
	- 5	+23	168.381	16	.000
	- 5	-14	240.844	16	.000
	-14	+40	244.950	12	.000
	-14	+23	169.116	16	.000
Pass-Fail	+ 3	+35	54.987	20	.000
	-29	+ 3	87.315	20	.000
	-29	+35	123.560	16	.000
	-11	-29	120.123	16	.000
	-11	+ 3	158.207	20	.000
	-11	+35	39.842	16	.000
Self-Evaluation	-20	+26	109.836	16	.000
	-20	+34	291.097	16	.000
	-20	- 9	146.494	16	.000
	- 9	+26	76.176	16	.000
	- 9	+34	79.665	16	.000
	+26	+34	213.552	16	.000

Alpha = .001   N = 519
+ indicates positive items; - indicates negative items

2.   Parent conference reporting is the method most preferred by middle school administrators, followed in order of preference by grades, narratives, check list, self-evaluation, credit-no credit, pass-fail, and blanket grading.

3.   While middle school administrators selected parent conferences as most preferred and middle school teachers selected grades as most preferred, there is no statistically significant difference in their rankings of the eight methods by the two groups.

4.   It was in the interests of teachers that A B C D F was selected as the most preferred method by middle school teachers. Of the 275 teachers who selected A B C D F as their first choice, 134 offered teacher-oriented rationale as the reason.

5.   Parent-oriented responses were most often offered by administrators in selecting parent conferences as their most preferred reporting method. However, the small sample of 39 administrators were fairly evenly divided among the possible responses to the question.

6.   The sex of a middle school teacher is not a significant factor in their expressed attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods considered.

7.   Years of experience is a significant factor affecting a teacher's attitude toward blanket grading. Younger teachers are less likely to look upon blanket grading with disfavor.

8.   Years of experience is not a significant factor affecting a middle school teacher's attitude toward check list, credit-no credit, grades, narratives, parent conference, pass-fail, or self-evaluation.

9. Degree held by middle school teachers is not a significant factor affecting their attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods considered.

10. Level of teacher training (elementary, middle school, junior high school, high school, higher education) of middle school teachers is not a significant factor affecting their attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods considered.

11. No significant difference can be detected between attitudes of teachers employed in high middle schools as compared with attitudes of teachers employed in low middle schools. School status is not a significant factor affecting the attitude of middle school teachers toward the eight reporting methods.

12. The sex of middle school administrators is not a significant variable affecting their attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

13. No significant difference can be detected in the attitudes of middle school administrators toward any of the eight reporting methods when compared with their years of experience as educators.

14. The highest degree held by the middle school administrators is not a significant factor affecting their attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

15. The undergraduate teacher training of the middle school administrators is not a significant factor affecting their attitude toward any of the eight reporting methods.

16. No significant difference can be detected between attitudes of administrators employed in high middle schools as compared

with attitudes of administrators employed in low middle schools. School status is not a significant factor affecting the attitude of middle school administrators toward any of the eight reporting methods.

17. There is no significant difference between the over-all rankings of the eight reporting methods in order of preference by the middle school teachers as compared to the over-all rankings by the middle school administrators. While teachers ranked grades as first choice and administrators ranked parent conferences as first choice, the over-all rankings between the two groups are very similar.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief restatement of the purpose of the study, research procedures, and conclusions derived from statistical analysis. The researcher will utilize the final section to make recommendations for further study.

Rationale for the Study

The arguments for and against letter grades in evaluating and reporting student achievement have gone on for many years, as can be seen in the review of literature where articles from the 1930s were cited. In reviewing the literature, the researcher found more writers against letter grades than in favor of them, yet the practice of using letter grades has persisted, particularly in secondary schools. Since there are other methods available, it seems appropriate to study the attitudes of educators toward A B C D F as compared to selected alternative reporting methods.

A study of attitudes of elementary school teachers and administrators toward selected reporting methods was conducted by Scharffe in 1977, but such a study had not previously been done at the secondary level. The target population of the current study is the teachers and administrators in Michigan public middle schools with

138

grades six, seven, and eight. It is particularly appropriate to study attitudes of educators at this level since the true middle school concept includes an evaluation and reporting philosophy which provides student evaluation which will be personal and positive in nature, including student self-assessment with frequent student-teacher-parent conferences. And, it is appropriate to compare the attitude of middle school educators with elementary school educators as described in the Scharffe study.

Summary of Methodology

The intent of the researcher was to replicate the Scharffe study and determine the attitudes of teachers and administrators at the middle school level. A survey was used to determine the middle school educators' attitudes toward A B C D F when compared with seven alternative reporting methods, which were blanket grading, check lists, credit-no credit, narratives, pass-fail, parent conferences, and self-evaluation. The following demographic variables were also considered: (1) sex, (2) degree(s) held, (3) years of experience, (4) grade level educator was trained to teach, and (5) school status.

Objectives

Knowing the results of the Scharffe study, it was the researcher's objective to determine whether middle school educators would share the attitudes of elementary educators toward A B C D F. The elementary educators ranked parent conferences as their first choice of the eight methods considered, and they ranked A B C D F as

their second choice. To determine the attitudes of middle school teachers and administrators, the following research questions were developed:

Research Question 1: Do middle school teachers in Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school teachers toward self-evaluation is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

Research Question 2: Do middle school administrators in Michigan prefer the use of A B C D F reporting over the use of selected alternative forms of reporting?

1. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward blanket grading is the same as their attitude toward A B C D F.

2. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
    check list reporting is the same as their attitude toward
    A B C D F.

3. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
    credit-no credit reporting is the same as their attitude
    toward A B C D F.

4. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
    narrative reporting is the same as their attitude toward
    A B C D F.

5. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
    parent conferences is the same as their attitude toward
    A B C D F.

6. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
    pass-fail reporting is the same as their attitude toward
    A B C D F.

7. Ho: The attitude of middle school administrators toward
    self-evaluation reporting is the same as their attitude
    toward A B C D F.

Research Question 3: If middle school teachers 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 4: If middle 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 the teacher's preference for a particular form of reporting

and the teacher's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s)

held, (4) grade level teacher was trained to teach, and (5) school

status?

Research Question 6: To what extent does a relationship exist

between the administrator's preference for a particular form of

reporting and the administrator's: (1) sex, (2) years of experience, (3) degree(s) held, (4) grade level administrator was trained to teach, and (5) 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 progress reporting?

Sample

A sample of 160 middle schools was randomly selected from the total population of 235 middle schools in Michigan during the 1977-1978 school year. A middle school identification questionnaire was sent to principals of the schools to determine the level of implementation of middle school practices in each building and to ask for a commitment from schools to participate in the final stage of the study. One hundred twenty-one schools responded and 50 offered to participate further in the study. This total group was divided into four levels of middle school implementation, and it was determined to include the top 25 percent and the bottom 25 percent in order to compare the results of the high middle schools with the low middle schools. The middle 50 percent was eliminated.

The 15 high middle schools and 15 low middle schools produced a sample of 910 teachers and 64 administrators. Of the 30 schools that agreed to participate, 25 returned the packets of questionnaires; however, not all teachers in the schools responded. Of the total of 910 potential teacher respondents, 484, or 53 percent, returned a

questionnaire to their building principal. Thirty-nine of the 64 administrators returned a questionnaire.

Data Collection

The final questionnaire was an instrument of 53 items, originally developed and validated by Scharffe to study elementary educators' attitudes toward reporting methods, and was revised where necessary to meet the needs of the middle school study.

Of the 53 items, 40 were statements about the eight reporting methods considered requiring respondents to select their level of agreement or disagreement from a four-point Likert scale. Eight items were open-ended questions to explore respondents' reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with some of the first 40 statements. One item required respondents to rank the eight reporting methods from 1 through 8, with 1 being most preferred and 8 being least preferred, and five items asked for demographic data such as sex, experience, degrees held, and undergraduate training of the respondent. It was estimated that the entire questionnaire could be completed in approximately 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data were programmed and analyzed through the use of the SPSS statistical computer package available for use in the Michigan State University CDC 6000 computer. Analysis of variance for repeated measure data was used for Research Questions 1 and 2 using subject as unit of analysis. Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were analyzed by cross tabulation using chi square test of homogeneity and chi square

independency. Question 7 was answered by descriptive information about the means and variance by rank ordering.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is the small sample size of administrators (39). Most schools in the survey had only one administrator and only one or two schools had more than two administrators. While the researcher takes comfort in the reliability of the findings based on responses of 484 teachers, hindsight suggests that perhaps the administrator portion of the study might better have been designed to cover many more individuals in additional schools.

Another limiation of the study is evidenced by the wide variety of responses to item 53 of the questionnaire dealing with the grade level the respondents are trained to teach. Michigan School Code[1] permits both elementary and secondary certificated personnel to teach seventh and eighth grade subjects. Consequently, only 30, or 6.5 percent, of the respondents were actually trained to teach in the middle school according to their responses to item 53.

While the directions on the questionnaire clearly instructed the respondents to complete all items, this was not always carried out. Therefore, the value of N is not the same for each set of data. These differences are not critical to the over-all findings, however, since some of the different sections of the questionnaire are independent of one another.

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[1] State of Michigan General School Laws, prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau for the State Board of Education, 1973, R 390.1101, p. 742.

Conclusions

The A B C D F reporting method was the first choice of the eight methods considered by teachers as a group. It is concluded that this method is still held in the highest esteem by the middle school teachers who participated in this study. As can be seen in one of the later conclusions in this chapter, most teachers gave teacher-oriented reasons for making this choice. While it would be impossible to list all the various open-ended responses given in section two of the questionnaire, there seemed to be an overwhelming number of individuals who agreed that "A B C D F is a darn good grading system which hasn't been bettered" for purely mechanical reasons. Many teachers indicated it was the only method that could be used with as many as 150 students; anything else would be too time consuming and would involve far too much work. Another point frequently made by teachers and administrators alike is the belief that the A B C D F method is understood by everyone concerned. They believe an A or a C on a report card will have a definite meaning to the student, teacher, parent, and employer, and any change from this tradition would involve additional work, and at the least, confuse those who make use of student evaluation reports. These are the rationale frequently offered by the respondents, but the researcher feels there may be another unstated reason for the lack of favor found in some of the alternatives to A B C D F, in that there may be some degree of fear of the unknown. Users believe they know about grades, understand grades, and any departure from this system would merely be change for the sake of change.

Parent conference reporting was the second choice of middle school teachers, which leads the researcher to the conclusion that even though the method was selected as second choice, teachers feel it is important to maintain a teacher-parent contact, regardless of what system of recorded written reporting might be utilized. This should be an encouraging finding for the middle school advocate, in that parent-teacher-student conferences are an integral part of the established middle school philosophy. However, parent conferences are also time-consuming, involve a great deal of planning, usually require teachers to work beyond the normal teaching day to accommodate working parents, and the result of the conferences is difficult to summarize in permanent record form. These factors are all in direct contrast to the reasons often stated for preferring the simplistic A B C D F method. Again, while it is impossible to list every open-ended response offered in support of parent conferences, such comments as "I have found them useful through tenth grade," "valuable at all levels," "they can give insight to a child's problems," and "parent conferences allow the teacher and parent a greater insight into the student's development" were commonly offered by the respondents.

While the researcher found it somewhat surprising that middle school teachers would favor two methods so highly that are quite opposite as far as middle school philosophy is concerned, second thought indicates the outcome might well be expected. Familiarity with the two methods might well have been highly influential. Since there is

no middle school certification requirement in Michigan, the middle school faculties are made up of combinations of secondary- and elementary-trained teachers. The researcher knows of no elementary school that does not now practice parent-teacher conferences, at least through the early grades, and it is quite possible that this training and experience has had a strong influence on the reporting preferences of this group of elementary-trained middle school teachers. Further, even the secondary-trained middle school teachers are somewhat familiar with the parent conference reporting method either as parents or students themselves, at least to the degree that there would not be a fear of the unknown.

Narrative reporting and check lists were ranked third and fourth by teachers; therefore it is concluded that these methods are seen as being somewhat worthy of consideration. Again, while the middle school advocate may be disappointed that these methods ranked only third and fourth, another review of Table 4.1 is somewhat encouraging. The magnitude of the contrast difference for narrative reporting was only 1.333 and the magnitude of the contrast difference for check list reporting was only 1.457. These figures compare favorably with the magnitude of 1.017 for parent conferences. Even though A B C D F was clearly favored over all these methods, parent conferences, narratives, and check lists were not that far behind. But again, teachers seem to perceive narratives as being a great deal of work. Common comments offered included "it is impossible with 33 students per class per hour," "they may be good but they're impractical

when dealing with over 300 students," "forget it; too many students--time counts." On the positive side, "narratives would allow a much more personalized evaluation," "narratives are very direct and to the point," "written reports can explain differences."

As for check list reporting, some of the negative rationale offered included "it has been grossly over-used and misused," "it does not explain if the student did well on the objective or just barely made it," "check lists are impersonal and make blanket statements." From the positive side, "if properly done could have value," "it is more helpful than a letter grade in letting a student and his/her parents know where they stand."

As can be seen on the last page of the Middle School Practices Questionnaire, Appendix B, the question was asked of administrators, "Reporting system most commonly used in your building?" Of all the responses received, not one administrator listed either written narratives of check list reporting. Either of these methods would be a significant departure from present middle school practices, even though it is possible to computerize narrative reports in such a way that combinations of appropriate comments can be selected to describe, in complete sentences, the progress of the student without sounding cold, unfeeling, or "canned." The researcher has seen such reports and found them to be thorough and quite personal in nature. And, as is an important consideration for all teachers concerned, such computerized reports involve a minimum of time for preparation on the part of the teacher. As for check lists, this system has been used

in the military for many years, and variations of the check list are frequently used in evaluating employee performance in the world of work. However, teachers see it as only moderately favorable in evaluating student performance. It would seem that more experimentation with this system might increase its popularity at the middle school level if teachers can be shown that it can report accurately without overly taxing their time.

Credit-no credit, pass-fail, self-evaluation, and blanket grades were ranked fifth, sixth, seventh, and eight respectively, and it is concluded that these methods are held in low esteem by the middle school teachers. Teachers left little doubt about their feelings toward these methods. As can be seen again by reviewing Table 4.1, the magnitudes of their contrast differences were 2.998, 3.227, 3.959, and 4.994 respectively. Teachers see these methods as simply too "far out," and from their comments, it is doubtful that any amount of persuasion will alter their views. Some typical comments were "Most of us like rewards. I can't see many students working for credit-no credit; it doesn't give any indication of the level of ability." "It [pass-fail] assumes a polarity in educational ability. I don't think that it exists. There's got to be some in the middle." "It [self-evaluation] is the whim of the student and how he feels that day." "Blanket grades are useless." There was minimal support for credit-no credit and pass-fail, usually for elective courses, but teachers in support of these two methods even for this purpose were few and far between. Again, teachers feel the need to communicate

some level of qualitative evaluation on student work as well as sort and rank their students.

While over-all rankings of the methods by administrators did not vary greatly from the teacher rankings, they did select parent conferences as most preferred, followed by grades as second choice. Administrators agreed with teachers in ranking narratives and check lists as third and fourth choices. Self-evaluation, credit-no credit, pass-fail, and blanket grades were ranked fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth choices. The researcher concludes that administrators favor the face-to-face conference, accompanied by grades, as the permanent written device. Perhaps the similarities in administrator preferences and teacher preferences was to be expected, in that most administrators are not that far removed from their previous teaching roles. However, the researcher's experience in both roles leads to some understanding of the reversal in A B C D F and parent conferences as favored by the two groups. So often, perhaps unfortunately, the administrator is contacted in cases of parent disagreement or disapproval of the grade assigned to their child. It is the administrator who must smooth ruffled feathers, arrange conferences, provide additional information, and in short, compensate for any inadequacies in the reporting method being utilized by calling upon public relations skills. It is not surprising that they would favor the parent-teacher conference as the initial and dominant reporting method. With skillful teachers conducting these conferences, confusion and misunderstanding could be reduced to minimal levels.

While a tally of the reasons offered on the open-ended questions for selecting A B C D F as the most preferred method revealed most teachers gave teacher-oriented responses, the Chi Square test of association found no significant relationship between rationale and the selection of A B C D F. And while most administrators offered parent-oriented reasons for selecting parent conferences as most pre- ferred, the Chi Square test of association did not find a significant correlation between the reasons offered and the administrators' selection.

At this point it is appropriate to compare the rankings of the eight methods by middle school teachers and administrators with the rankings of the same methods by elementary teachers and administrators. According to the Scharffe study, elementary teachers and administrators selected parent conferences as first choice, A B C D F as second choice, teachers selected check list as third choice and narratives as fourth choice while the administrators reversed these two methods, both groups ranked pass-fail as fifth, self-evaluation as sixth, credit-no credit as seventh, and blanket grades as eighth choice.

The rankings by elementary educators and the rankings by mid- dle school educators, as shown in Table 4.17, were tested to determine the rate of agreement among the four groups by utilizing the coeffi- cient of concordance (Kendall-W) test. The resulting correlation was $W = \frac{620.87}{672} = 0.92$. This can be considered very high, since perfect correlation would be 1.0. To further test the significance of $W = 0.92$, Chi Square was applied and it was found that $X^2 = 25.76$.

Referring this value to the table of critical values of Chi Square, it was found that the correlation has a probability of occurrence by chance of $p < .001$. It is concluded with considerable assurance that the agreement among the elementary educators and middle school administrators in ranking the eight methods is higher than it would be by chance.

It was found that no significant relationship exists between sex, degrees held, undergraduate teacher training, or school status which affected either teachers or administrators in expressing their attitude toward the eight reporting methods. There was a significant relationship between experience of teachers and blanket grading, in that older, more experienced teachers are more likely to look upon this method with disfavor. However, years of experience had no significant effect on their attitudes toward other methods, nor did the years of experience variable significantly affect the expressed attitudes of administrators. In considering these findings, several points need to be considered. First, a variable that was not considered in the study was one dealing with tradition. It is the researcher's belief that many educators still tend to teach the same way they themselves were taught. It is reasonably safe to assume that most teachers and administrators were "raised" on grades themselves as students. They are at least familiar with their use whereas they are not, as expressed by administrator responses to the final item on the Middle School Identification Questionnaire, now practicing any other form of reporting. It is conceivable, in the

researcher's view, that there might have been some differences in the findings if more educators in the sample had experienced using some of the alternative reporting methods.

Another variable which did not offer the diversity in background hoped for by the researcher was the undergraduate teacher training. Almost all respondents in the sample indicated training in either elementary or high school levels exclusively, or they checked combinations of elementary, middle school, junior high school, or high school. Not one respondent indicated training exclusively at the middle school level. Even though they are employed in middle schools, most of the educators at this level received their indoctrination and in-service in the middle school concepts while on the job. A middle school advocate would quite naturally assume, at least in the area of evaluation and reporting, that the indoctrination and in-service programs have not been successful.

The over-all findings lead to the conclusion that both teachers and administrators are comfortable with grades. However, both groups might be receptive to some innovative pilot programs involving more extensive use of parent conferences at the middle school level, narrative reports, and perhaps check lists. Blanket grades, pass-fail, credit-no credit, and self-evaluation methods would most likely be met with considerable resistance.

Implications

It is the researcher's candid opinion that the findings of the current study on middle school teacher and administrator attitudes

toward A B C D F as compared to seven selected alternative reporting methods will be surprising to no one. This was not the belief at the onset of the study, but as the researcher became more and more engrossed in collecting data and discussing the project with colleagues, it became quite apparent that feelings and attitudes are deeply entrenched, not only in the specific area of evaluation, but in matters of education in general.

The finding that was most surprising to the researcher, and most disappointing, was the resulting comparison of attitudes between high-status middle school staff members and low-status middle school staff members. Educators in high-implementation middle schools favored A B C D F as much as educators from low middle schools. This was not expected. It points out that the middle school philosophy is not held intact by the practitioners. While most of the 18 middle school concepts are readily accepted by most educators at all levels, grade reporting remains to be a very emotional issue. Unless these attitudes can be changed and more effective, nonthreatening, and open evaluation methods can be implemented, the middle school dialogue may be "much ado about nothing." This is a challenge to middle school advocates, and this researcher is confident that the challenge will eventually be met.

Change simply for the sake of change would be mere folly, but on the other hand, improvement of any kind requires change. It seems that educators, parents, students, employers, and higher education have been willing to accept change in areas of updated curricula,

modern school plants with open classrooms, many innovative classroom teaching techniques, and even, to a lesser degree, busing and integration, but they are still unwilling to accept change in certain areas such as evaluation and reporting. The implications of the findings are that educators will continue to label students in a qualitative manner, students will continue to pass from one level to the next with poor grades, and the future will continue to hold a society of ranked and ordered citizenry of inescapable inequality. The researcher does not believe such a condition needs to be inevitable in education or society, at least as far as equality of individual opportunity for mastery is concerned. It should not be acceptable for an educational system to produce C and D students who have learned a little or part of the skills offered over a period of years in school. With the present grading system there is no way to know which of the skills were mastered and which skills have been missed. Some of the alternative reporting methods would speak to these problems by offering more specific information about skills mastered. Narratives and check list reporting, for example, have the capability of outlining very clearly the level of mastery in a given subject. Even credit-no credit and pass-fail, while they do not outline specific skills, at least can be interpreted as indicating adequate mastery or a failure to absorb sufficient skills to be able to utilize the training in the world of work.

To give examples of the inadequacy of grades in the area of life-role competencies, no one would allow a "D" mechanic to replace

the brakes on their automobile, no one would allow a "C" or "D" dentist to repair their teeth. In these and many other life-role situations mastery has been required before the practitioner was allowed to practice his/her trade. These are considerations in evaluation and reporting that require more innovation in education in general and middle school levels in particular. The evaluation process must be open, honest, clear, nonthreatening, and provide specific direction for improvement. Specific direction for improvement, in particular, is not provided by A B C D F.

Recommendations for Further Study

Now that research has been conducted on the attitudes of elementary and middle school teachers and administrators toward grades as compared with selected alternative reporting methods, it would be appropriate to expand on these works for further understanding which might lead to development of more improved evaluation techniques. Researchers might consider the following questions:

How accurately does the letter grade assess actual achievement in a given course or unit of study?

Would a time study reflect a significant difference in teacher-administrator work time between using grades as compared with alternative methods?

What effect do A B C D F grades have on the self-perception of students?

What are the attitudes of parents toward A B C D F as compared with selected alternative forms of pupil progress reporting?

What are the attitudes of employers toward A B C D F as compared with selected alternative forms of pupil progress reporting?

What relationship exists between grades earned and Michigan State Educational Assessment Test results?

There are certainly many more areas of inquiry that might be considered in continuing the study of alternative reporting methods. It seems that grades, while they have only been used for less than 100 years, have become so well entrenched in our educational system that we seem to have forgotten that other methods were once used. And, certainly other education systems throughout the world are finding other methods satisfactory.

Further research may, indeed, show that grades are the most effective reporting method and "haven't been bettered," but it only seems logical that this view will remain foremost without hope for change without more widespread pilot trials of alternative methods.

Reflections

Throughout the process of conducting this study, the researcher found himself watching the returning questionnaires carefully and hoping the attitudes of middle school teachers would reflect certain feelings that would be in harmony with established middle school philosophy. It was hoped that parent conference reporting, narratives, check lists, and some self-evaluation would emerge as most preferred, and that A B C D F would be ranked much lower in over-all standings. While the researcher's choices result in a somewhat different ranking than those given by respondents in this study, there is some consolation in that most of his choices were ranked in the top four or five by most of the participants in this study.

It seems that more consideration must be given to "real-world" needs in determining evaluation and reporting methods. This researcher is not aware of a single business or place of employment that utilizes A B C D F in evaluating the work of its employees. Labor unions and professional associations would never agree to such a system. As principal of a secondary school, this researcher is faced with the frequent responsibility of evaluating teachers and providing a written record of these evaluations which become a part of the individual's personnel record. While the procedure is far from perfect, it involves pre-evaluation conferences, agreement on goals and objectives, classroom observations, utilization of a check list, a narrative report, a post-evaluation conference, and the signatures of both the teacher and administrator. This same procedure is followed in evaluating the work of secretaries, custodians, para-professionals, and literally all employees in the school. Suppose this procedure were arbitrarily changed to a simple letter grade to describe the employee's performance. The researcher predicts a wildcat strike would probably take place.

Why, then, are grades considered so important in evaluating student achievement? How can they perform a function for children and describe performance, and be used by school officials and future employers for many years, if they cannot accomplish the same thing for adults? This researcher believes part of the problem is that educators must realize the manner in which grades label students with a stamp of quality--not so much from the standpoint of quality in

relation to work achieved, but more from the standpoint of quality of the individual. An "A or B person" is seen as more desirable than a "C or D person." The grade takes on a very personal meaning to the recipient and to others who interpret those grades. Deep down, teachers realize this and would not subject themselves to the same system of labeling. No teachers would voluntarily accept a system that might label them as a C or D teacher, nor would any other employee group accept such a plan.

Another factor which affects the teacher and administrator preference for grades as the written record of achievement is the belief that the system requires the least amount of time on the part of the educator. This may or may not be true, and as stated earlier in this chapter, more pilot projects utilizing other recording methods may prove this view to be false.

The middle school concept speaks very well to the issues raised here and offers viable alternatives to grades as the primary reporting method. However, the very teachers and administrators employed in our middle schools are not in concert with these views. It seems appropriate, then, that teacher training institutions might take the lead in preparing future middle school teachers and administrators to better understand the advantages and disadvantages of the various reporting methods. So far, the "disciples" of the middle school concept that have been sent out from our colleges and universities are deeply entrenched with traditional thought on evaluation and reporting methods.

Second, it appears that middle school principals, as well as central office administrators, must assume a greater responsibility in providing leadership and in-service training for teaching staffs. If such training can be accompanied by implementation of school policies and practices consistent with middle school concepts, it may be possible to positively affect the attitudes of teachers toward middle school concepts, particularly in regard to evaluation and reporting methods.

Third, while administrators and teacher associations would not agree, the State Board of Education might well look further into the possibility of adding a middle school certification category which might be more effective than the present middle school endorsement program. The researcher has long believed that the present overlapping system of permitting both elementary and high school teachers the license to teach all seventh and eighth grade subjects was ill advised.

The thought that grades are demanded by students, parents, higher education, and employers has not been explored deeply enough. If this situation is actual, it is the job of middle school advocates to provide the education and in-service to the above groups to enlighten them to other methods more intuned to the real world.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MIDDLE SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

MIDDLE SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I. <u>Instructions</u>: Using the boxes below, please rate the items as to their effectiveness in identifying a middle school characteristic. The "best" or most effective item should be rated with the numeral (1), and the second best should be rated (2).

☐ Continuous progress programs are:

_____ not used at this time.

_____ used only with special groups.

_____ used only for the first two years.

_____ used only by some students for all their years at this school.

_____ used by all the students for their entire program.

☐ Continuous progress programs are planned for a student over a span of:

_____ one calendar year.

_____ two calendar years.

_____ three calendar years.

_____ more than three calendar years.

II. <u>Instructions</u>: Again, using the boxes below, please rate the items as to their effectiveness in identifying a middle school character- istic. The best or most effective item should be rated with the numeral (1), second best with (2), and so on, rating all six items.

☐ The multi-textbook approach to learning is currently:

___ used in all or nearly all courses.
___ used in most courses.
___ used in a few courses.
___ not used in any courses.

☐ The materials center has a paid staff of:

___ more than one certified librarian.
___ one certified librarian.
___ a part-time librarian.
___ no certified librarian.

☐ The instructional materials center in the building houses:

___ more than 5000 books.
___ between 4000 and 5000 books.
___ between 3000 and 4000 books.
___ between 2000 and 3000 books.
___ between 1000 and 2000 books.
___ less than 1000 books.

☐ For classroom instruction, audio-visual materials other than motion pictures are used:

___ very frequently by most of the staff.
___ very frequently by a few of the staff and occasionally by the others.
___ occasionally by all of the staff.
___ very rarely by most of the staff.
___ very rarely by any staff member.

☐ Which of the following types of materials are housed in your instructional materials center?

___ filmstrips.
___ collections (coins, insects, art, etc.).
___ motion pictures (include this if you are a member of a central service).
___ micro films.
___ overhead transparencies.
___ phonograph records.
___ ditto and/or mimeo machines.
___ photo or thermal copy machines.
___ maps, globes, and charts.
___ display cases or areas.

Note: Section II is continued on the following page.

☐ Which of the following types of materials are housed in your instructional materials center?

_____ general library books.
_____ current newspapers.
_____ below grade level reading materials.
_____ current magazines.
_____ files of past issues of newspapers.
_____ above grade level reading materials.
_____ card catalogue of materials housed.
_____ student publications.
_____ files of past issues of magazines.

III. <u>Instructions</u>: Again, rate the following items as to their effectiveness in identifying middle school characteristics using the same procedures followed on the first two sections (pages) of this questionnaire.

□ The basic time block used to build the schedule is:

_____ a ten to twenty minute module.
_____ a thirty minute module.
_____ a forty minute module.
_____ a sixty minute module.
_____ a combination of time so diversified that no basic module is defined.

□ Which of the below best describes your schedule at present?

_____ traditional.
_____ traditional, modified by "block-time," "revolving period," or other such regularly occurring modifications.
_____ flexible to the degree that all periods are scheduled but are not identical in length.
_____ flexible to the degree that changes occur within defined general time limits.
_____ flexible to the degree that students and teachers control the daily time usage and changes occur regularly.
_____ other _____

□ The master class time schedule can be changed by teachers when need arises by:

_____ planning with other teachers on a daily basis.
_____ planning with other teachers on a weekly basis.
_____ seeking administrative approval for a specific change.
_____ requesting a change for next semester.
_____ requesting a change for next year.
_____ other _____

IV. <u>Instructions</u>: Please follow the same procedure as with previous
sections.

☐ Sponsorship for club activities is handled by staff members who:

_____ are assigned sponsorships without additional pay.
_____ are paid to assume club sponsorships that are assigned.
_____ volunteer to assume club sponsorships without pay.
_____ are paid for sponsorships that they volunteer to assume.
_____ staff members do not work with club activities.

☐ At present, approximately what percent of your student body
regularly participates in at least one club activity?

_____ none as we have no club program.
_____ 25 percent or less.
_____ 25 to 50 percent.
_____ 50 to 75 percent.
_____ 75 to 100 percent.

☐ School social functions are held at this school:

	During the Afternoon	During the Evening
Grade six		
Grade seven		
Grade eight		

☐ School dances are held for:

_____ grade six.
_____ grade seven.
_____ grade eight.

☐ A club program for students is offered for:

_____ grade six.
_____ grade seven.
_____ grade eight.

V. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ The physical education program is:

____ highly individualized.
____ moderately individualized.
____ slightly individualized.
____ not individualized at all.

☐ The physical education program serves:

	All Students	Some Students	No Students
Grade six			
Grade seven			
Grade eight			

☐ What degree of emphasis does the physical education program give to the competitive and developmental aspects of the program for boys and girls? Please check the appropriate spaces.

	Boys	Girls
Competitive Aspects	___ High ___ Medium ___ Low	___ High ___ Medium ___ Low
Developmental Aspects	___ High ___ Medium ___ Low	___ High ___ Medium ___ Low

VI. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Inter-scholastic competition is currently:

_____ not offered at this school.
_____ offered in one sport only.
_____ offered in two sports.
_____ offered in several sports.

☐ Intramural activities often use the same facilities as inter-scholastic activities. When this causes a time conflict, how do you schedule or resolve the conflict?

_____ this does not happen because we have no intramurals.
_____ this does not happen because we have no inter-scholastic program.
_____ intramurals take first priority and others schedule around their needs.
_____ inter-scholastic activities take first priority and others must schedule around their needs.
_____ other _____

☐ Intramural activities are scheduled for:

	All Students	Boys Only	Girls Only	No Students
Grade six				
Grade seven				
Grade eight				

☐ The intramural program includes:

_____ team games.
_____ individual sports.
_____ various club activities.
_____ other _____

VII. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Team teaching programs operate for:

_____ all students.
_____ nearly all students.
_____ about half of the students.
_____ only a few of the students.
_____ none of the students.

☐ What percentage of your teaching staff is involved in team teaching programs?

_____ over 90 percent.
_____ between 60 and 90 percent.
_____ between 30 and 60 percent.
_____ less than 30 percent.
_____ none.

☐ A student in grades seven or eight averages about how many minutes per day in a team taught situation?

_____ 180 minutes or more.
_____ 130 to 180 minutes.
_____ 90 to 130 minutes.
_____ 40 to 90 minutes.
_____ less than 40 minutes.

☐ A student in grade six averages about how many minutes per day in a team taught situation?

_____ 180 minutes or more.
_____ between 130 and 180 minutes.
_____ between 90 and 130 minutes.
_____ between 40 and 90 minutes.
_____ less than 40 minutes.

VIII. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Which of the following best describes your school program as it evolves from enrollment to completion of the last grade (i.e., grades six through eight)?

_____ completely self-contained program for the entire grade span.

_____ completely departmentalized for the entire grade span.

_____ modified departmentalized program (block-time, core program, etc.).

_____ program moves from largely self-contained to departmentalized.

_____ program moves from largely self-contained to partially departmentalized.

_____ other _____

IX. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Instruction in music is required:

_____ for one year.
_____ for two years.
_____ for three years.
_____ not at all.

☐ Instruction in art is required for all students for:

_____ one year.
_____ two years.
_____ three years.
_____ not at all.

☐ The amount of student schedule time set aside for elective courses students may select:

_____ decreases with each successive grade.
_____ is the same for all grades.
_____ increases with each successive grade.
_____ varies by grade level but not in any systematic manner.
_____ does not exist at any grade level.

☐ Students are allowed to elect courses of interest from a range of elective offerings:

_____ in grade six.
_____ in grade seven.
_____ in grade eight.
_____ not at all.

☐ Electives currently offered in this building are (check those you offer from this list and add any not listed):

_____ art   _____ orchestra
_____ band   _____ wood shop
_____ vocal music   _____ speech
_____ drawing   _____ typing
_____ drama   _____ natural resources
_____ journalism   _____ creative writing
_____ foreign language   _____ other_____
_____ family living   _____ other_____
_____ unified arts   _____ other_____

X. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Guidance services are available upon request for:

_____ all students every day.
_____ all students nearly every day.
_____ most of the students on a regular basis.
_____ a limited number of students on a limited basis.
_____ other _____

☐ Guidance staff members:

_____ always work closely with the teachers concerning a student.
_____ often work closely with the teachers concerning a student.
_____ seldom involve the teachers in their work with the students.
_____ always work independently of the teachers.

☐ Guidance counselors are:

_____ not expected to help teachers build their guidance skills.
_____ expected to help teachers build their guidance skills.
_____ expected to help teachers build their guidance skills and
       they are regularly encouraged to work in this areas.
_____ other _____

☐ How do your guidance counselors handle group guidance sessions:

	Regular Sessions Several Times Per Year	Special Sessions Only	None
Grade six			
Grade seven			
Grade eight			

XI. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Independent study opportunities are provided for:

	All Students	Some Students	No Students
Regular Class Time			
Time Scheduled for Independent Study			

☐ How much time would you estimate the average student spends in independent study for each grade listed below?

_____ minutes per day in grade six.
_____ minutes per day in grade seven.
_____ minutes per day in grade eight.
_____ none at all.

☐ Students working in independent study situations work on topics that are:

_____ we have no independent study programs.
_____ assigned to them by the teacher.
_____ of personal interest and approved by the teacher.
_____ of personal interest and unrelated to classroom work.
_____ other _____
_____

XII. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ The amount of time provided in the classroom for instruction in the basic learning skills:

_____ increases with each successive grade.
_____ remains constant with each successive grade.
_____ decreases with each successive grade.
_____ varies greatly due to the individualized program teachers operate.

☐ Clinics or special classes to treat the problems of students with poor basic learning skills are:

_____ not available at this time.
_____ available to all students needing such help.
_____ available only to the most critically handicapped learners.
_____ other _____

_____

☐ Daily instruction in a developmental reading program is provided for:

	All Students	Poor Readers Only	Not at All
Grade six			
Grade seven			
Grade eight			

☐ Students with poor basic skills can get special help in the following areas. (Check only those areas where special help on an individual basis is provided by special staff members trained to treat such situations)

_____ reading.
_____ spelling.
_____ physical education.
_____ mathematics.
_____ grammar.
_____ other _____
_____ other _____

XIII. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Concerning school dramatical activities, most students:

____ do not get experiences in creative dramatics while enrolled in this building.
____ get at least one or two opportunities to use their acting skills while enrolled in the building.

☐ Concerning a student newspaper, our school has:

____ no official student school paper.
____ an official student school paper that publishes no more than four issues per year.
____ an official school paper that publishes five or more issues per year.
____ other _____

☐ Dramatic productions at this school are produced from:

____ purchased scripts only.
____ materials written by students only.
____ materials written by students and purchased scripts.
____ other _____

☐ This school has oratorical activities such as debate, public address, etc.:

____ as part of its planned program of instruction.
____ as part of its enrichment program.
____ not included in school activities.
____ other _____

☐ Talent shows are:

____ not a part of our program.
____ produced by students at each grade level.
____ produced once a year on an all-school basis.
____ produced at each grade level with some of the acts entering an all-school show.
____ other _____

☐ Dramatic presentations by students are:

____ not a part of the school program.
____ a part of the activities program.
____ a part of certain class activities planned by teachers.
____ other _____

XIV. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ In the operational design of this school the role of the teacher as a guidance person is:

_____ given a very strong emphasis.
_____ encouraged.
_____ mentioned to the staff but not emphasized.
_____ left strictly to the individual teacher's personal motivation.
_____ not important in our guidance operational plan and therefore not encouraged at all.
_____ other _____

_____

☐ As a general policy, in the teacher-pupil relationship:

_____ no formal provisions are made for the teacher to provide specified guidance services.
_____ teachers are expected to provide guidance services for all of their pupils.
_____ teachers are expected to provide guidance services to only a limited number of pupils.
_____ other _____

_____

XV. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ A student's academic progress is formally reported to parents:

_____ two times per year.
_____ four times per year.
_____ six times per year.
_____ other _____

_____

☐ Parent-teacher or parent-teacher-student conferences are held on a school-wide basis:

_____ not at all.
_____ once per year.
_____ twice per year.
_____ three times per year.
_____ four times per year.
_____ five or more times per year.

☐ Formal evaluation of student work is reported by use of:

_____ a standard report card with letter grades.
_____ teacher comments written on a reporting form.
_____ parent-teacher conferences.
_____ standard report card with number grades.
_____ parent-teacher-student conferences.
_____ other _____

_____

XVI. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Community service projects by the students are:

_____ not a part of our program.
_____ carried out occasionally for a special purpose.
_____ an important part of the planned experiences for all
students while enrolled in this building.

☐ This school currently has:

_____ no parents' organization.
_____ a parents' organization that is relatively inactive.
_____ a parents' organization that is active.
_____ a parents' organization that is very active.

☐ In regard to community relations this school currently:

_____ does not send out a parents' newsletter.
_____ sends out a parents' newsletter when need arises.
_____ sends out a parents' newsletter on a scheduled basis.
_____ uses a district-wide newsletter to send out information
related to this school.
_____ uses the commercial newspaper.
_____ other _____

☐ The staff presents informational programs related to the
school's functions:

_____ when requested by the parents.
_____ once or twice a year at regular parents' meetings.
_____ at open house programs.
_____ at regularly scheduled "seminar type" meetings planned
for interested parents.
_____ other _____

XVII. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ From the specialized areas listed below, check each service which is available to students in your building. (Note that a service need not be housed within the school building to be available to your students.)

_____ guidance counselors.
_____ school nurse.
_____ school psychologist.
_____ visiting teacher.
_____ speech therapist.
_____ diagnostician.
_____ clinic services for the emotionally disturbed.
_____ special education programs for the mentally handicapped.
_____ special reading teacher.
_____ others _____

_____

XVIII. Please follow the same instructions.

☐ Teaching teams are organized to include:

    ____ fully certified teachers.
    ____ para-professionals.
    ____ clerical helpers.
    ____ student teachers.
    ____ others _____

_____

☐ From the following list check those types of auxiliary helpers available in your building:

    ____ paid para-professionals.
    ____ volunteer helpers from the community.
    ____ volunteer helpers from the student body.
    ____ student teachers and interns.
    ____ high school "future teachers" students.
    ____ others _____

_____

Thank you very much. Your assistance has been greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B

MIDDLE SCHOOL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

MIDDLE SCHOOL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

<u>Instructions</u>: On each of the items on the following few pages, please check the phrase that best describes the current practices in your building.

Which of the following best describes your schedule at present?

__0__ traditional.

__1__ traditional, modified by "block-time," revolving period," or other such regularly occuring modifications.

__2__ flexible to the degree that all periods are scheduled but are not identical in length.

__3__ flexible to the degree that changes occur within defined general time limits.

__4__ flexible to the degree that students and teachers control the daily time usage and changes occur regularly.

_____ other_____

For classroom instruction, audio-visual materials other than motion pictures are used:

__4__ very frequently by most of the staff.

__3__ very frequently by a few of the staff and occasionally by others.

__2__ occasionally by all of the staff.

__1__ very rarely by most of the staff.

__0__ very rarely by any staff member.

Continuous progress programs are:

__0__ not used at this time.

__1__ used only with special groups.

__2__ used only for the first two years.

__3__ used only by some students for all their years at this school.

__4__ used by all the students for their entire program.

Intramural activities often use the same facilities as inter-scholastic activities. When this causes a time conflict, how do you schedule or resolve the conflict?

_0_ This does not happen because we have no intramurals.

_4_ This does not happen because we have no inter-scholastic program.

_4_ Intramurals take first priority and others schedule around their needs.

_0_ Inter-scholastic activities take first priority and others must schedule around their needs.

_____other_____

_____

What percentage of your teaching staff is involved in team teaching programs?

_4_ Over 90 per cent.

_3_ Between 60 and 90 per cent.

_2_ Between 30 and 60 per cent.

_1_ Less than 30 per cent.

_0_ None.

Which of the following best describes your middle school program as it evolves from enrollment to completion of the last grade (i.e. grades six through eight)?

_0_ Completely self-contained program for the entire grade span.

_0_ Completely departmentalized for the entire grade span.

_1_ Modified departmentalized program (block-time, core, etc.).

_2_ Program moves from largely self-contained to departmentalized.

_3_ Program moves from largely self-contained to partially departmentalized.

_____Other_____

At present, approximately what per cent of your student body regularly participates in at least one club activity?

__0__ None as we have no club activity program.

__1__ 25 per cent or less.

__2__ 25 to 50 per cent.

__3__ 50 to 75 per cent.

__4__ 75 to 100 per cent.

What degree of emphasis does the physical education program give to the competitive and developmental aspects of the program for boys and girls? Please check the appropriate spaces.

	Boys	Girls
Competitive Aspects	__0__ High __2__ Medium __4__ Low	__0__ High __2__ Medium __4__ Low
Developmental Aspects	__4__ High __3__ Medium __0__ Low	__4__ High __3__ Medium __0__ Low

Students are allowed to elect courses of interest from a range of elective offerings:

__1__ in grade six.

__1__ in grade seven.

__1__ in grade eight.

__0__ not at all.

Guidance services are available upon request for:

___4___ all students every day.

___3___ all students nearly every day.

___2___ most of the students on a regular basis.

___1___ a limited number of students on a limited basis.

_____ other_____

_____

Students working in independent study situations work on topics that are:

___0___ we have no independent study programs.

___1___ assigned to them by the teacher.

___2___ of personal interest and approved by the teacher.

___2___ of personal interest and unrelated to classroom work.

_____ other_____

_____

The amount of time provided in the classroom for instruction in the basic learning skills:

___0___ increases with each successive grade.

___0___ remains constant with each successive grade.

___2___ decreases with each successive grade.

___4___ varies greatly due to the individualized program teachers operate.

Concerning school dramatic activities, most students:

___0___ do not get experiences in creative dramatics while enrolled in this building.

___4___ get at least one or two opportunities to use their acting skills while enrolled in this building.

In the operational design of this school the role of the teacher as a guidance person is"

__4__ given a very strong emphasis.

__3__ encouraged.

__2__ mentioned to the staff but not emphasized.

__0__ left strictly to the individual teacher's personal motivation.

_____ other_____

_____

Formal evaluation of student work is reported by use of:

__1__ a standard report card with letter grades.

__2__ teacher comments written on a reporting form.

__3__ parent-teacher conference.

__1__ standard report card with number grades.

__4__ parent-teacher-student conference.

_____ other_____

_____

This school currently has:

__0__ no parents' organization.

__1__ a parents' organization that is relatively active.

__2__ a parents' organization that is active.

__3__ a parents' organization that is very active.

From the specialized areas listed below, check each service which is available to students in your building (note that a service need not be housed within the school building to be available to your students).

__1__ guidance counselors.

__1__ school nurse.

__1__ school psychologist.

__1__ visiting teacher.

__1__ speech therapist.

__1__ diagnostician.

__:__ clinic services for the emotionally disturbed.

__:__ special education programs for the mentally handicapped.

__:__ special reading teacher.

_____ other_____

_____

Teaching teams are organized to include:

__:__ fully certified teachers.

__:__ para-professionals.

__:__ clerical helpers.

__0__ student teachers.

_____ others_____

_____

Please complete the following items.

_____Yes. The staff in our school will participate in the study
of attitudes towards different techniques of student evaluation
and reporting.

_____No. We will be unable to participate.

Contact Person_____

School_____School Phone( )_____

Address_____

_____

_____

ZIP_____

Number of teachers, Grades 6-7-8 inclusive_____

Number of administrators in your building_____

Reporting system most commonly used in your building:

(Example: S I U; A B C D F; Parent Conferences, etc.)

_____

_____

Your prompt return of this questionnaire is greatly appreciated.

_____Check here if you would like a summary of the results.

Again, thank you very much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX C

PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX C

PUPIL PROGRESS REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Michigan State University
Department of Educational Administration
and Higher Education

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 receives either 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.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Pupil Progress Reporting Questionnaire

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.

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.

KEY ⟵

#		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 in middle school 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
20.	Self Evaluation reporting is of little or no use for the middle school 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 middle school levels. 6-7-8	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 middle school grades, 6-7-8	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 grading	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 middle school grades. 6-7-8	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

SECTION THREE

41. Refer back to statement number three in Section Two about Pass-Fail reporting. Why did you respond the way you did?

_____

_____

42. Look at statement number five in Section Two about Parent Conferences. Why did you agree or disagree with the statement?

_____

_____

43. Refer to statement number twelve on Check List reporting. Why did you respond the way you did?

_____

_____

44. Review statement number fifteen on narratives. Why did you agree/disagree?

_____

_____

45. Refer back to statement number sixteen about A B C D F. Why did you agree/disagree there?

_____

_____

46. Look at statement number nineteen about Credit - No Credit. Why did you respond the way you did?

_____

_____

47. In responding to statement number thirty-three on blanket grading, why did you agree/disagree?

_____

_____

48. Looking at statement number thirty-four on Self Evaluation reporting, why did you agree/disagree?

_____

_____

194

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 one (1) through eight (8) with the number one (1) indicating your favorite method and so on through number eight 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 fill in the correct response to the items below.

50. SEX
   Male
   Female

51. 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
   1 - 5
   6 - 10
   11 - 20
   21 - 30
   30 - 40
   40 or more

52. What is the highest college degree you hold?
   No degree
   Associate's Degree
   Bachelor's Degree
   Masters Degree
   Educational Specialist
   Ed.D.
   Ph.D.

53. Your undergraduate teacher training was in (check one or more):
   Elementary
   Middle School
   Junior High School
   High School
   Higher Education

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO FIVE JUDGES WHO VALIDATED THE MIDDLE

SCHOOL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO FIVE JUDGES WHO VALIDATED THE MIDDLE
SCHOOL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
ERICKSON HALL

EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824

December 2, 1977

Dr. Mary Compton
University of Goergia
Athens, Georgia

Dear Dr. Compton:

Your name was suggested to me by the chairman of my doctoral committee, Dr. Louis Romano, at Michigan State University. I would like to ask you to help me validate a questionnaire which is designed to identify intermediate schools that most exemplify middle schools according to the eighteen characteristics listed on the enclosed sheet.

I will be studying the attitudes of middle school teachers and administrators in Michigan towards several different methods of student evaluation and reporting. But first, I must identify "true" middle schools. To do this, I will be using an instrument used by Dr. Jack Riegle in his dissertation which was completed in 1970. Dr. Riegle's study also involved identification of true middle schools, and Dr. Romano was also his chairman.

It is the suggestion of my committee that a panel of middle school experts be asked to rate the items on the instrument in an effort to pare it down to one or two items that will effectively identify each of the eighteen middle school characteristics. I have grouped the items in such a way that they can be rated numerically. Would you be so kind as to read the items on each page and rate the "best" or most effective descriptor with the numeral (1), the next most effective descriptor a (2), and so on, following the same procedure on each section? Your ratings will help me determine which descriptors can be eliminated in paring down the questionnaire.

You may be interested in knowing that the other middle school specialists being asked to help validate this instrument are as follows:

Dr. Conred Toetfer
State University of New York
  at Buffalo
Amherst, New York

Dr. Joe Raymer
White Pigeon Public Schools
White Pigeon, Michigan

Dr. John Swaim
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado

Dr. Nicholas Georgiady
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio

Your assistance on this project will be greatly appreciated. When the final study on evaluation and reporting (grading) attitudes is completed, I will plan on sending you a summary of the results.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Robert Crane

EIGHTEEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. Continuous Progress

2. Multi-Material Approach

3. Flexible Schedules

4. Provisions for Social Experiences

5. Appropriate Physical Experiences and Intramural Activities

6. Team Teaching

7. Planned Gradualism

8. Exploratory and Enrichment Studies

9. Adequate Guidance Services

10. Provision for Independent Study

11. Basic Skill Repair and Extension

12. Creative Experiences

13. Individualized Evaluation

14. Community Relations Emphasis

15. Student Services

16. Auxiliary Staffing

17. Security

18. Inter-Disciplinary Approach

Louis G. Romano and Nicholas P. Georgiady, "Do You Have a Middle School?" Educational Leadership, ASCD, December 1973.

APPENDIX E

INITIAL LETTER TO MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ASKING THEM

TO COMPLETE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

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INITIAL LETTER TO MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ASKING THEM
TO COMPLETE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

January 30, 1978

Under the auspices of the Department of Administration and
Higher Education, College of Education, Michigan State University,
a study is being conducted concerning current practices in middle
schools throughout Michigan. The survey enclosed will help us identify
some of the prevailing practices, and in the near future, a smaller
sample of middle school teachers and administrators will receive a
questionnaire requesting their attitudes toward various student evaluation
and reporting techniques.

The enclosed survey will take only three to five minutes to
complete, and the data from it will provide us with a sampling for
the second stage of the study. Be assured that the data will be
confidential as no one will see it except the research staff. No
individual or school will ever be identified by name in any report.

Only people such as yourself can provide the data we need about
middle school practices, therefore we are asking that you return
the completed survey in the enclosed stamped envelope at your earliest
convenience.

We know you will want to cooperate in this important study,
and we look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Louis Romano
Professor
Department of Administration

Robert Crane
Research Director
19 Iota Place
Saginaw, Michigan 48603

200

APPENDIX F

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO SCHOOLS THAT AGREED TO PARTICIPATE
FURTHER IN STUDY

201

APPENDIX F

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO SCHOOLS THAT AGREED TO PARTICIPATE
FURTHER IN STUDY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
ERICKSON HALL

EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824

February 20, 1978

We want to thank you for promptly completing and returning the Middle School Practices questionnaire that was recently sent to you, and we also want to express our appreciation for your willingness to participate in the next phase of our study on the attitudes of middle school teachers and administrators towards various methods of reporting student achievement.

In the near future you will receive a packet of questionnaires with instructions to distribute them to your professional staff. The questionnaire is designed to take only fifteen to twenty minutes to complete and yet the data we will gather from it will be essential to the success of the research project. Your school is one of about thirty middle schools in Michigan selected to participate in this research program.

You will receive your packet of materials in the near future, and again, your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Louis Romano
Professor
Department of Administration

Robert Crane
Research Director
19 Iota Place
Saginaw, Michigan 48603

APPENDIX G

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS ACCOMPANYING FINAL QUESTIONNAIRES

APPENDIX G

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS ACCOMPANYING FINAL QUESTIONNAIRES

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION   EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
ERICKSON HALL

March 10, 1978

     Enclosed is your packet of materials for the final phase of our study of middle school teacher and administrator attitudes towards various student evaluation and reporting techniques. There should be an ample supply of questionnaires for each member of your professional staff as well as a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of the materials.

     Please distribute the questionnaires to each of your teachers and administrators. While the instructions are on the questionnaire, I would appreciate your reminding your staff to be sure to use a soft lead pencil, and ask them to answer all questions. Also, it is necessary that the administrators fill out a questionnaire as well as the teachers. It would be helpful if you could collect the completed questionnaires and return them within one week from the time you receive them.

     Again, Please be assured that all responses will be held in confidence and no individuals or schools will ever be mentioned in the final report. As stated in earlier correspondence, your cooperation and the willingness of your staff to assist in this project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Louis Romano
Professor
Department of Administration

Robert Crane
Research Director
19 Iota Place
Saginaw, Michigan 48603

204

APPENDIX H

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO SCHOOLS LATE IN
RETURNING QUESTIONNAIRES

APPENDIX H

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO SCHOOLS LATE IN
RETURNING QUESTIONNAIRES

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION   EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
ERICKSON HALL

April 10, 1978

Most of the Pupil Progress Reporting Questionnaires have
been returned and the responses are ready to be tabulated to complete
our study. However, we have not as yet received the packet of
completed questionnaires from your building. We can appreciate
the fact that this is a busy time of year and there are other day
to day obligations that consume your time, but we have only a very
limited number of schools participating in this study and we
desperately need responses from your school.

If you have already completed the questionnaires and mailed
them back in the envelope that was provided, we thank you, and we
will be sending you a summary of the results in the near future.
If you have not returned the packet as yet, please do so right away.

Thanking you once again, we remain

Sincerely,

Dr. Louis Romano
Professor of Administration

Robert Crane
19 Iota Place
Saginaw, Michigan 48603

APPENDIX I

TABULATION OF RESPONSES ON PUPIL PROGRESS

REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

TABULATION OF RESPONSES ON PUPIL PROGRESS
REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Table II.--Frequency distribution for responses to questionnaire items
with the exception of open-ended items and item 49.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Relative Frequency (Percent)
1. Self-evaluation better than grade					
SA	20				3.6
A		122			21.7
D			292		52.0
SD				123	21.9
2. Blanket grading--don't care for					
SA	278				49.6
A		189			33.7
D			57		10.2
SD				34	6.1
3. Pass-fail valuable at any grade level					
SA	21				3.7
A		133			23.7
D			296		52.8
SD				109	19.4
4. Check list little meaning for kids					
SA	33				5.9
A		157			28.0
D			291		51.9
SD				76	13.5
5. Parent conferences no value to students except early grades					
SA	13				2.3
A		37			6.6
D			214		38.1
SD				296	52.8

Table II.--Continued.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Relative Frequency (Percent)
6. Credit-no credit better than A B C					
SA	3				3.2
A		51			18.7
D			308		54.9
SD				197	35.1
7. Narratives inadequate, and inaccurate					
SA	18				3.2
A		105			18.7
D			328		58.5
SD				105	18.7
8. A B C gives good idea how students are doing					
SA	76				13.5
A		359			64.0
D			98		17.5
SD				22	3.9
9. Self-evaluation unfair to honest kids					
SA	50				8.9
A		247			44.0
D			221		39.4
SD				40	7.1
10. Blanket grading better than A B C					
SA	3				.5
A		22			3.9
D			238		42.4
SD				294	52.4
11. Pass-fail no value for kids any age					
SA	55				9.8
A		129			23.0
D			330		58.8
SD				44	7.8
12. Check list little use to anyone					
SA	8				1.4
A		76			13.5
D			383		68.3
SD				92	16.4

Table II.--Continued.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Relative Frequency (Percent)
13. Credit-no credit no use for middle school					
SA	59				10.5
A		169			30.1
D			283		50.4
SD				46	8.2
14. Parent conferences a farce					
SA	11				2.0
A		40			7.1
D			231		41.2
SD				276	49.2
15. Narratives better than A B C D F					
SA	47				8.4
A		252			44.9
D			219		39.0
SD				41	7.3
16. A B C darn good; hasn't been bettered					
SA	45				8.0
A		231			41.2
D			255		45.5
SD				30	5.3
17. Check list good for kids and means more					
SA	4				.7
A		166			29.6
D			353		62.9
SD				29	5.2
18. Narratives helpful to kids, used with mastery					
SA	59				10.5
A		349			62.2
D			128		22.8
SD				14	2.5
19. Only highly motivated bene- fit from credit-no credit					
SA	41				7.3
A		200			35.7
D			278		49.6
SD				40	7.1

Table 11.--Continued.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Relative Frequency (Percent)
20. Self-evaluation little use for middle school					
SA	67				11.9
A		196			34.9
D	.		264		47.1
SD				27	4.8
21. Kids lose incentive when blanket grading used					
SA	126				22.5
A		331			59.0
D			86		15.3
SD				9	1.6
22. A B C unfair to students					
SA	13				2.3
A		67			11.9
D			350		62.4
SD				129	23.0
23. Parent conference necessary in middle school					
SA	186				33.2
A		242			43.1
D			118		21.0
SD				11	2.0
24. Prefer pass-fail over A B C					
SA	5				.9
A		48			8.6
D			315		56.1
SD				187	33.3
25. Blanket grading challenging to kids because it puts them on "honor"					
SA	3				.5
A		38			6.8
D			355		63.3
SD				155	27.6
26. Self-evaluation helps eliminate cheating					
SA	7				1.2
A		93			16.6
D			351		62.6
SD				105	18.7

Table II.--Continued.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Relative Frequency (Percent)
27. Narratives inhuman					
SA	11				2.0
A		66			11.8
D			377		67.2
SD				100	17.8
28. Credit-no credit valuable for middle school					
SA	12				2.1
A		140			25.0
D			316		56.3
SD				87	15.5
29. Pass-fail cruel to children					
SA	24				4.3
A		113			20.1
D			367		65.4
SD				48	8.6
30. Check list better than A B C D F					
SA	16				22.5
A		126			22.5
D			351		62.6
SD				61	10.9
31. A B C about as fair as can get					
SA	65				11.6
A		282			50.3
D			186		33.2
SD				19	3.4
32. Parent conferences better than A B C					
SA	43				7.7
A		142			25.3
D			320		57.0
SD				44	7.8
33. Like blanket grading, takes pressure off kids					
SA	5				.9
A		37			6.6
D			344		61.3
SD				170	30.3

Table II.--Continued.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Relative Frequency (Percent)
34. Self-evaluation valuable in middle school					
SA	14				2.5
A		225			40.1
D			250		44.6
SD				67	11.9
35. Pass-fail least cruel for kids					
SA	8				1.4
A		108			19.3
D			370		66.0
SD				65	11.6
36. Check list can stand on own merits					
SA	10				1.8
A		246			43.9
D			266		47.4
SD				31	5.5
37. No student benefits from credit-no credit					
SA	24				4.3
A		102			18.2
D			391		69.7
SD				40	7.1
38. A B C gives good idea of how students are doing					
SA	92				16.4
A		390			69.5
D			63		11.2
SD				8	1.4
39. Narratives closer to accuracy than other forms					
SA	44				7.8
A		249			44.4
D			240		42.8
SD				25	4.5
40. Parent conferences valuable for parents, teachers, students					
SA	235				41.9
A		262			46.7
D			55		9.8
SD				8	1.4

Table II.--Continued.

(Items 41-48 are open-ended responses)

(Item 49 is a ranking of reporting methods treated in Chapter IV)

50. Sex
    Male   286
    Female   233

51. Years of Experience
    1   6
    1- 5   181
    6-10   171
    11-20   15
    21-30   132
    31-40   4
    40+   10

52. Degree(s) held
    None   0
    Associate's   2
    Bachelor's 259
    Master's   213
    Ed.S.   12
    Ed.D.   1
    Ph.D.   1

53. Undergraduate training
    Elementary   119   Many of the teachers and adminis-
    Middle   32   trators listed combinations of
    Junior high   60   undergraduate teacher training.
    High school   125   Those combinations are not
    Higher education   3   included in these figures.

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219

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