A Review of Student Progress Reports in BC: Aligning the ‘Report Card’ with the BC Education Plan

by

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BSc, University of Victoria, 2005

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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A review of British Columbia’s legislation and annual reports from the Ministries responsible for K-12 education in BC has found 6 different purposes of the report card over time. They include: teacher accountability; assisting the child to evaluate growth; encouragement of parents to co-operate with the teacher; improvement of home and school relationship; easy comparison of students to each other and to standards; and transferability of student achievement information. Four teachers interviewed identified the purpose of the report card as communicating to parents what their child is doing in the classroom and they are using e-portfolios to do so. They found that e-portfolios can allow for more personalized reporting for teachers and students and can address many of the legislated purposes of the report card but do not easily address comparison of students to each other and to standards or transferability of student achievement information.
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Dedication

To all the students that I have taught at Shearwater Elementary, this work is dedicated to you. You have all in some way shown me what a good education should look like and I continually strive to meet a standard of education that you deserve. To me, your abilities have always outshone the challenges you face in the education system and it is my hope that one day the student reporting method will better reflect your abilities and celebrate all the growth I have seen throughout the years.

I would also like to dedicate my thesis to the tireless and dedicated work of the teachers I interviewed. Their drive to always examine their own practices and continually put their students’ needs first inspired and motivated me to ensure their stories were told.
Chapter 1 Introduction

Statement of Problem

With the new curriculum in B.C. set to roll out in the next few years, education in B.C. is evolving to better fit the needs of the students. The focus in the curriculum is shifting from a knowledge-based education to a process-based education. The report card, a relic of an older education system, needs to be updated to better fit the direction of the B.C. Education Plan. A review of the purpose and function of the report card is needed to reflect the proposed changes to education in BC as a reflected in the BC Education Plan. The ‘report card’ brings up good and bad memories for all people whether they are 97 or 7 as this method of reporting on student progress has been around since the late 1800s (Guskey, 1994). Many schools continue to use the report card in the traditional manner by distributing documents with teachers' comments and a scale using letters or numbers at designated times during the academic year. The subjectivity of the report cards, the need for report cards to better reflect students’ learning and to a larger extent the purpose of report cards has become an areas of concern in BC. Traditionally, report cards have focused solely on grades; however, grades themselves can be very subjective, reflecting a teacher’s philosophy on grading rather than a student’s academic achievement. Many grading policies, including British Columbia’s, explicitly outline that a teacher’s grading practice only reflect academic achievement, although this is not always the case.

guides for each subject or course and grade” (p.7). Despite this clear policy, teachers’ grading practices vary depending on many factors. A study done by McMillan et al. (2004) found evidence showing that there is a myriad of factors that influence grading. These factors include effort, participation, extra credit work, grade distribution of other teachers and, to lesser extent, disruptive student behavior. Guskey (1994) outlines three major components that influence grading practice: product criteria – what the student can do in relation to a standard; process criteria – what effort or work habits the student has; and progress criteria – how much a student gains from their learning experience. For criteria based grading the standards are determined by first identifying expected learning goals and their performance indicators then determining a graduated level of quality for assessing those standards (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). Guskey (1994) asserts that teachers draw on product, process or progress depending on their own personal preference, thus lessening the meaningfulness (as far as relating to a standard) of the final grade.

The BC Education Plan has been created to provide a current model of education in our ever-changing world and to ensure that young people have the skills to enter the work force (Ministry of Education, 2015). It includes competencies such as self-reliance, critical thinking, inquiry, creativity, problem solving, innovation, teamwork and collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, and technological literacy (Ministry of Education, 2011). There is also a significant focus in the plan to provide a more personalized education for each student, and to include the student in the development of their program. There are, however, a few questions left hanging in the balance; for example, ‘How do we report on these areas when there is such a focus on personalized learning?’ Furthermore, Elevate Consulting (2012), commissioned by the
Ministry of Education, asked the question, “In order to meet the future needs of learners and schools (e.g. to support personalized learning) what additions should be considered as part of a new student information system?” These researchers’ findings indicated that there was confusion as to what personalized learning was, how it differs from Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and how a student information system can support it. Presently the only students permitted to be on an IEP are those identified with special needs by an educational psychological assessment (Province of British Columbia, 2009). This is a clear indication that more research and support for teachers and administrators needs to be put in place to transition to the progressive education promoted by the BC Education Plan and devise appropriate reporting methods as well as to more clearly define ‘personalized learning’.

Communication to parents, incentive to learn, providing information so students can self-evaluate or even information to group students for particular educational paths or programs have all been identified as purposes of report cards (Guskey, 1994). The idea that one reporting method could meet all these needs is challenging and problematic. Before any major reporting reform can occur, the legislated and practical purpose of report cards needs to be identified as well as the effectiveness of report cards to fulfill these purposes.

The primary goal of grading and reporting is effectively communicating high quality information in a way that is useful to interested persons (Guskey & Bailey, 2001)

Communication to parents using a report card is often muddled or confused according to a study done at the University of Iowa (Waltment & Frisbie 1994). These authors found that parents and teachers had very different ideas about the meaning of grades and that for grades to serve as an effective means of communication, both parents and teachers must have a clear
understanding of what the grades represent (Waltment & Frisbie 1994). This clear understanding will be hard to achieve because even when comparing the perceived purpose of report card grades between parents of high achieving students and parents of students with learning disabilities, there was a conflict in the understanding of the purpose (Munk & Bursuck, 2001). Parents of high achieving student thought the purpose of report cards was to inform post-secondary institutes and employers of a student’s achievement, whereas parents of students with learning disabilities believed that the purpose of report cards was to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses (Munk & Bursuck, 2001). Differences between administrative mandates, teacher practices and parents’ and students beliefs about the purpose of the report cards makes report card meaning difficult for everyone to understand.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to research reporting practices, identify concerns and create recommendations about the development of appropriate reporting to reflect the new BC Education Plan. This study is very timely as the new BC curriculum has outlined the need for assessment practices and reporting methods to be updated to align with the mandate of the BC Education Plan (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2013). In light of educational delivery shifting to a personalized learning model in BC, teacher reporting should align with the practices teachers are using in the classroom to meet their students’ needs. This study provides educators and administrators a broad view of the historical legislative context in BC of reporting students’ progress, a review of the research regarding traditional and alternative reporting methods, as well as reflections of teachers currently using alternative methods to report students’ progress.
By learning from historical and current experiences with reporting methods, teachers and administrators will have a starting place in redesigning reporting methods.

Before answers to larger questions like, “How can current reporting methods improve to better meet the needs of the teachers, parents and students in a personalized learning environment and align it with the mandate of the BC Education Plan?” can be addressed we need to look at what has been done historically in BC regarding reporting so we can understand how the report card has evolved into its current form. This will inform what changes could be beneficial to meet the newly mandated purpose of the report card. Also, research into what is being done currently in BC to meet the changing needs of the students brings a very practical approach to this study. In examining what is already being done, educators can move on to the next step of designing and identifying an appropriate means of reporting student progress to students and parents. This research has been developed in two parts; the questions that this study addresses are:

Part I: What have been the legislative purposes and practices of the report card in BC since its inception?

Part II: What do educators currently identify as the purpose of the report card? What alternatives to the standard report card are being used in some elementary schools in BC? In what ways do educators find their alternative reporting process effective?

Using the information from historical documents and the interviews about current practices suggestions are made regarding changes needed to the reporting methods used in elementary schools in BC to align the reporting methods and the purposes of the reporting to the BC Education Plan.
Significance of the Study

There has been a collection of studies completed on grading students, and a collection of studies done internationally on feedback to students (Stewart & Mary, 1978; Bishop, 1992; Afflerbach & Johnston, 1993; Lake & Kafka, 1996; Reynolds & Dwyer, 2003; Gregory, Cameron, & Davis, 2011); however there have been few studies that focus on methods of reporting, particularly in a Canadian context. An extensive look at research and practice was done in the literature review, but specific research was completed in British Columbia. The location of the study and the focus on alternative reporting makes this study unique and therefore significant for teachers in British Columbia. In this study, I make recommendations that are specific to British Columbia and the Ministry of Education’s commitment to the implementation of its Education Plan. Also, curriculum changes are occurring worldwide and report cards are used in schools locally, nationally and internationally, therefore the significance of this study has the potential to be far reaching.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Communicating student progress is required in a public education system to ensure parents and students have information about and understanding of students’ accomplishments and areas of concern in relation to their education. The process for communicating information to parents regarding a student’s progress and areas of concern in relation to the curriculum has been legislated in BC to consist of three formal written report cards and two informal reports in elementary school year. Each of these must report a student’s level of performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes prescribed by the province (Ministry of Education, 2009).

For grades K-3, formal reporting must include a performance scale indicating student progress along with written comments to describe what the student is able to do, areas that require further development, ways to support student learning, observations of student behaviour, and students’ social responsibility. The report must also reference the expected development for students in a similar age range (Ministry of Education, 2009).

For students in grade 4-7 letter grades are used to indicate their level of performance as it relates to the learning outcomes for each subject or grade as well as written comments with the same criteria as students in grades K-3. An individual school board can decide whether letter grades have to be included in the report card and progress can be reported in an alternative manner to parents with students in grades 4 and 5 (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The format explained above is the current practice for reporting student progress in elementary school in BC and it is unclear whether this method of reporting students’ progress is effective, or the effects on students of this approach because there has been no review of the process.
There are many factors that influence teachers grading practices and many ways that student progress reports are interpreted. There have been different methods of reporting used in the past including letter grades, percentages and written comments. Over the last ten years there has been an increased interest in the potential of e-learning tools and an emerging trend of using an e-portfolio (Joint Information Systems Committee (UK), 2008). Educational organizations have commissioned reports (Chant, Liersch, & Walrod, 1960; Sullivan, 1988; Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada, 1993; Elevate Consulting, 2012) and experts have written books about reporting practices (Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971; Marzano, 2000; Guskey & Bailey, 2001). There has been some overlap in these sources, but also some unique insights that are important to consider. The purpose of this review is to examine the literature that relates to reporting on student progress in detail and provide a clear understanding of the theories and the practices used today that could inform student progress report reform in BC.

Factors that influence teachers grading practices

In reviewing the assessment practices of 900 teachers, researchers McMillan, Myran and Workman (2002) found that there were many factors that affect a teacher’s grading practice. Some of these factors are considered enablers to academic performance. They include effort, ability, improvement, work habits, attention and participation, as well as completion of homework, comparisons with other students, academic performance and extra credit (McMillan, Myran, & Workman, 2002). This study also found a high variance of practices among teachers regardless of whether teachers taught in the same school or region. The researchers conclude that more professional development is needed to develop consistent grading practice
among teachers (McMillan, Myran, & Workman, 2002). These results are common among reviews of grading practices, and the inconsistencies become greater when we factor in the various audiences that receive the report card.

Reporting serves different purposes for individual teachers: for example, to inform parents, to attempt to change a student’s or parent’s behaviour, to motivate students, or to demonstrate accountability to administrators and parents (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1993). The fact that grading practices of teachers are highly variable is perplexing since many school districts have strict guidelines and even legislation stating that student achievement should be the only factor to be considered when assigning final grades (Randall & Engelhard, 2009). This points to an interesting phenomenon of related to the disconnect between the theoretical student-teacher relationship identified in policy and the real student-teacher relationship in the classroom. Case (1994) speaks about the trouble of educational reform in his paper entitled *Our Crude Handling or Educational Reform: The Case of Curricular Integration*. He explains a need to negotiate the two educational solitudes – the gap between the worlds of the theoretician and the practitioner (Case, 1994). If the understanding of the student-teacher relationship at a policy level is different than the understanding of a student-teacher relationship in the classroom than there will be limited success to either conceptualize and operationalize educational initiatives (Case, 1994). This gap of understanding points to the need for more dialogue between theoretician and practitioner.

The relationship between students and teachers is complicated even more as there is also a wide range of teachers’ roles in the classroom. These roles include counsellor, parent, friend, judge, administrator and advocate. When teachers do both encouraging and grading,
they become advocates as well as judges – roles that are not necessarily compatible (Bishop, 1992). The effect of the relationship between the student and the teacher has been a long standing issue. Nell Noddings, a curricular scholar, explains the struggle educators encounter when reporting on students’ progress (Nodding, 1984).

The great difficulty is in grading, which is an intrusion upon the relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for. Here is a demand which both know to be an intrusion. The teacher does not grade to inform the student. She has a far better, more personal ways to do this. She grades to inform others about the student’s progress. Others establish standards, explicitly or implicitly, and they charge her to report faithfully in observance of these standards. Now the teacher is torn between obligation to the employment community and faithfulness to the student...We are asked to look at the student as an object – a thing to which some measuring stick can be applied. (pp 193,194)

Due to the many factors that influence grading and reporting, the report card is often an indicator not of academic success, but acts more as a reward for the mastery of the hidden curriculum of complying with procedural expectations of the institution (Jackson, 2013). Students have been known to become test-wise: able to decipher how to do well on a test without understanding the academic content. According to Jackson (2013), this goes even further and a student can become school-wise. They learn how to respond with the minimum amount of pain and discomfort to the demands, both official and unofficial, of classroom life. The students who struggle with or resist becoming school wise withdraw to a point where,
“neither the demands nor’ one’s success of failure in coping with (school) is sharply felt” (Jackson, 2013, p. 126). All of this can lead to students seeing grades as a sought after goal, rather than merely symbolizing what had been learned (Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971). The extreme opposite can be dangerous as well, with teachers trying to only report on academic achievement against a performance standard. Elliot Eisner’s reflections on educational objectives, which are used to develop performance standards, suggest that we can overlook those modes of achievement incapable of measurement (Eisner, 2013). Those modes of achievement may be indicators of a student’s performance, but are left out of the reporting method due to the impossibility of measuring them. Not only does this emphasize the type of learning which can be easily graded, it can encourage teachers to develop assessments that are easy to grade such as multiple choices test and quizzes, rather than creating more meaningful assignments based on inquiry or projects-based, which would be more challenging to measure but might be more informative about student progress (Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971).

The Interpretation of Grades

Another variable is parents’ understanding of their children’s report cards. A study done by Waltman and Frisbie (1994) with grade four students found that school-to-home communication is muddled. There were three areas studied. The first was whether a grade compared a student’s achievement either to a relative standard or an absolute standard. Second, did a grade described growth over time or achievement at a particular time, and finally, did a grade focus only on academic achievement or reflect non-academic characteristics as effort, disposition, deportment or neatness (Waltman & Frisbie, 1994). The parents and teachers both filled out surveys indicating their thoughts on these three facets and there was a
significant amount of variability among parents and an intolerable level of inconsistency between teachers and parents in their interpretation of how grades are determined (Waltman & Frisbie, 1994).

One group of individuals who have been overlooked thus far are the students themselves. The students have their own interpretation of grades received on report cards, and it is one of capital gain according to a study done with students in grades five and six. Children had learned that high marks and grades could be exchanged for money, food and clothing, increased self-esteem, positive relationships with teachers and parents, membership in a peer group, and access to further education (Reynolds & Dwyer, 2003). The high degree to which students identify with the grade is apparent when one participant in a grade 5/6 split class in the study done by Reynolds and Dwyer (2003) said, “The report card tells you what kind of person you are, and it also tells yourself who you are. It tells you more about yourself every time you get one” (p.49).

Given the many factors influencing grading practices and the interpretation of grades, for example to inform parents, to attempt to change a student’s or parent’s behaviour, to motivate students, or to demonstrate accountability to administrators and parents (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1993), it is easy to conclude that insisting a simple letter or numerical grade implies a level of evaluation precision is likely impossible (Randall & Engelhard, 2009).

**Negative Effects of Grading**

Grading students can influence the development of a fixed mindset according to Dweck (2006), in her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. She differentiated between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. A fixed mindset is the belief that we are who we are, no
amount of effort will change that, and intelligence has been given to us, not earned. A growth mindset, on the other hand, leads people to believe that intelligence is malleable, and through experience, individuals can develop greater intelligence (Dweck, 2006). This belief in one self to be able to change allows students to engage in further developing their competencies and skills. The practice of grading is fostering a fixed mindset by leading children to attach their identities and their intelligence to their grades. If a student thinks they are a C- student, then they will never try for higher. If a student usually achieves ‘A’ grades, and they don’t think they will achieve an A in a particular situation, they often self-handicap, and blame other factors not their intelligence or ability for their grade (Dweck, 2006).

Grading students reduces students’ engagement with learning, and in fact grade orientation and learning orientation are inversely related (Kohn, 1999). Because the grade becomes the valuable thing to achieve, Kohn claims that there is no focus on the benefits of the learning itself, thus leading students to avoid challenging learning opportunities for fear that they might not succeed and be given a lower grade (Kohn, 1999). If students are led to focus on how well they are doing more than on what they are doing, they may do whatever they think is necessary to make it look as though they are succeeding (Kohn, 2007). The school culture plays a large role in the development of a student’s mindset. A school that emphasises grades and test scores with practices of posting honour rolls is likely to be perceived as a performance oriented school and students who attend such a school have a higher level of reported cheating than those who do not (Schaw, et al., 2011).
Other Methods of Reporting Progress

Percentage

In an effort to be more objective, some educators lean towards a mathematical approach to reporting on student progress, one with the use of percentages. However, relying on percentages does not remove the ambiguity of reporting and marking. Consider, for example, the possibility of errors when marking student work. A margin of error is a statistical term applied to a mathematical error that could occur, thus adding the uncertainty of a calculation. In marking there is also a chance for an error in consistency. This occurs when one student is rewarded a mark for the same information another student gave, but did not receive the mark. If an assignment is out of twenty that means that each mark on the assignment is worth 5%. If a grading error of 2 marks is made, the grade for the student could range 20%, and in some cases, that could translate to 2 letter grades (Guskey, 2013). A highly contended issue is the effect of zero. If a teacher in an effort to be fair, reported student achievement based on weekly test scores, and a student missed or achieved poorly on an assessment, the effect of zero in a percentage system can make it impossible for the student to recover their grade. Also, 100 gradient of percentages implies that student’s work can be equally divided into 100 achievement indicators for the student to achieve the full expectation of the teacher.

Written Comments

In examining another traditional method of reporting, written comments, the literature indicates that the results are mixed as to their effectiveness. In an early study Page (1958) took
three groups of students and gave them different type of feedback. The first group received just a grade, the second, a grade and comments and the third just written comments. He then reassessed the students and found that the written comments on their own had shown to be the most effective method of increasing the students’ achievement (Page, 1958). The group with just the comments improved on their next assignment more than any other group. These findings were profound as they challenged the status quo of letter grading so other researchers attempted to replicate the study. However, the high positive correlation between student achievement and written comments was never found in the replications. One replication found that there was a higher correlation between positive written comments and student achievement, but only in college level students (Stewart & Mary, 1978). In another study done to test the effectiveness of written comments, the researchers found that the group of students who were just given written comments did far poorer than the other group (Smith & Gorard, 2005). In that study, however, the researcher noted that the students were frustrated with comments which did not in fact inform them about the quality of their work, and the students did not understand the purpose of the comments. This indicates that the quality of the written comments as well as the students’ understanding of the comments might be more important than the presence of the comments.

**E-Portfolios**

An alternative reporting method that is currently getting a lot attention is the e-portfolio. The data on the effectiveness of this type of reporting on students’ achievement is mixed for many reasons including the methodology of the studies. Perhaps this is a case of not everything that can be counted counts. One interesting finding in an empirical study is an
increase in the students’ self-efficacy. Perhaps the academic progress, that would be empirically measureable, would be included with the self-efficacy aspect and takes longer to develop than the timeline of the study. The social cognitive perspective suggests that individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings and actions and this is a chief component to academic motivation and the definition of self-efficacy (Nicolaidou, 2012). In another study (Chang, 2008), the findings indicate that student achievement didn’t differ depending on whether an e-portfolio was used or not, but the students who used an e-portfolio had a significant increase in self-perceived learning performance. This is another factor that affects student academic motivation. These findings support the use of e-portfolios in place of traditional report cards due to the fact that report cards have been linked with disengaging students in their learning and e-portfolios do just the opposite by motivating students to stay engaged (Nicolaidou, 2012).

There are many challenges for the implementation of e-portfolios in the classroom depending on how schools want to use them. If standardization of reporting is one of the goals for ease of comparison or measurement, then it is important to note that studies have shown that e-portfolio assessment is time consuming for teachers and difficult to standardize due to the range of varying evidence within even a single individual’s portfolio. There may not be an advantage to using them in diverse classrooms unless there are agreed upon guidelines or tasks within the system (Bures, Barclay, Abrami, & Meyer, 2013). When portfolios were analyzed across several classrooms often there was not the appropriate evidence in the portfolio to judge the intended competencies, and when the evidence was found it was time consuming to interpret (Gearhart & Herman, 1998). There also seems to be some ambiguity on the
participants’ end of e-portfolios. After e-portfolios were used with a group of high school students, the students indicated that the e-portfolio was easy to use, but they were unsure of the purpose (Blair & Godsall, 2006).

This seems to point to the fact that e-portfolios might have similar issues as traditional report cards with addressing the question, ‘What is the purpose?’ There is much research and literature regarding portfolios and many purposes for their content have been identified: exemplars of student learning, assessment tasks, qualification for employment and a showcase of best work (Barrett, 2007). Studies indicate a historical shift in the purpose of portfolios. Preliminary studies began with portfolios being used in the late 1980s at the college level in writing classes with the purpose of addressing accountability in assessment, then moving into high schools emphasising portfolios as a showcase of student’s graduating work and then more recent studies have shown that the portfolio has been used primarily for learning, advising or employment (Barrett, 2007).

There are, however, conflicting paradigms in the purposes of the e-portfolio. The two main paradigms in conflict are ones of a positivist nature and one of a constructivist nature. The positivist portfolio assesses learning outcomes and is a receptacle for examples of students work used to demonstrate what and how much learning has occurred. A constructivist portfolio creates a learning environment in which the learner constructs meaning where the portfolio presents a record of the processes associated with learning itself. This is not conducive to normative descriptions (Paulson & Paulson, 1994). A constructivist approach to e-portfolios is that the purpose of an artifact in a e-portfolios is more than an exemplar, but also needs to be
accompanied by the learner’s rationale for placing it there reflecting the learning and self-evaluation of the student (Barrett, 2007).

**Etymology of Terms**

There is a connection between two words used heavily in education, those words are *report* and *portfolio*. They both have the root word, *port*, whose Latin root is *to carry*. *Report* literally means *to carry back*, and in the original use of the word referred to an account brought by one person to another, commonly called a rumour (Harper, 2001-2015). It was not until the 1873 that the word was used in in education referring to official statement of a pupils work and behavior (Harper, 2001-2015). The term *portfolio* was used to describe a case for carrying loose paper in 1719, but by 1835 was known more as official documents of a state department (Harper, 2001-2015). In 1835 it referred to a collection of securities being held, and more recently in 1994 the term *portfolio* was applied to a collection of students work that demonstrated achievement or improvement (Stiggins, 1994). With these understanding of these words it is understandable why Stiggins (1994) clarified a portfolio as "a means of communicating about student growth and development" and "not a form of assessment" (p. 87).

Examining the roots and usage of words brings a deeper understanding to the field of education as many of the words in education are borrowed from different fields. For example, the term *assessment* was borrowed from legal proceedings regarding taxation of property. *Assessment* was a term used for estimating the value of property for the purpose of taxation as early as the 1600 (Harper, 2001-2015). In 1934 the word was also used in terms of judging the value of a person or ideas and in 1950 the term *assessment* was found in the field of education
and was often associated with accountability, measurement and judgment (Linn, 2000).


**Academic Manuals and Advice**

Advice in academic texts and manuals are important to consider when looking at reporting student progress (McLean, 1985; Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada, 1993; Lake & Kafka, 1996; Marzano, 2000; Guskey & Bailey, 2001). Their advice can act as a catalyst, initiating change to policy regarding reporting methods, but must also act as a reference to check after a new method of reporting is established in any situation where policy is put into practice.

The document, *The Principles of Fair Assessment Practices for Education in Canada*, created by a working group of the Joint Advisory Committee of the Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Alberta has made suggestions when it comes to reporting student progress. They suggest the report should be clear, accurate and of practical value to the audience for whom it is intended but they give little guidance as to what that would look like (Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada, 1993)¹. Cooperative participation of teachers, parents and students not only leads to more adequate and helpful reporting, but also increases the likelihood that the reports will be understood and used by those for whom they are intended (Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada, 1993). The members of the organisation,

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¹ This group was formed to create the document, and the document is still promoted by the centre for research in applied Measurement and Evaluation
Principles of Fair Assessment Practices for Education in Canada (1993) also emphasize that reports should contain information to allow participants to take relevant follow-up action (Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada, 1993). This advice points to collaboration with students and parents as well as using student progress reports to inform and direct further learning action placing the progress reports not at the end of a learning cycle, but more as a part of a learning cycle.

In *Knowing what Counts: Conferencing and Reporting*, Gregory, Cameron & Davis (2011) explain that effective communication of, and support for, student learning must have students take a lead role. Students must have work samples or demonstrations to show evidence of learning, and invite audiences to have active roles in giving feedback to learners. This suggests that by engaging others, to not only observe the report passively but also by some means provide feedback, the reports will become more meaningful.

Reporting student achievement provides feedback to parents and students about academic performance. Effective feedback, according to Reeves (2011), has four key characteristics: accuracy, fairness, specificity and timelines. All four of these characteristics are needed to ensure that feedback can be used effectively. Reeves draws attention to an area few academic texts and manuals have identified: timeliness. He explains that feedback needs to be given with sufficient promptness to influence performance and inform relevant follow up action in a timely manner.

Guskey emphasises in his writings that, when beginning to develop a reporting system for student achievement, the purpose has to be appropriately identified. He has identified three critical aspects in student reporting: 1) What information do we want to communicate?;
2) Who is the primary audience?; and 3) How would we like the information to be used? (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). There are many possible purposes of reporting student achievement, and these must be clearly identified to eliminate some confusion often found in reporting. He goes on to explain that attempting to accomplish too much with a single reporting device is one of the reasons that reporting reform efforts often fail. What is needed is a comprehensive, multifaceted reporting system that communicates multiple types of information to multiple audiences in multiple formats (Guskey & Bailey, 2001).

In 1983 a literature review and a survey of Canadian teachers was done by The Canadian Education Association to determine the issues of student evaluation in Canada and to try to determine current exemplary practices of student evaluation (McLean, 1985). The Association did not succeed in determining exemplary practices, citing complexity, decentralization of student evaluation and lack of consensus among teachers as the stumbling blocks. They did however find some trends in responses and came up with general recommendations. The first area of student assessment that Canadian teachers did agree upon was the need for student evaluation to be as fair and equal as possible but they did not determine how that could be done. They stressed the importance of regular communication to ensure there were no surprises on the report card that only usually comes out three times a year and recommended consistency among teachers and schools in practices so all students could expect the same system of evaluation. The second area of agreement was that evaluation needed to overlap with curriculum to ensure validity and fairness of the evaluation method. Although there was variance in teacher practices and options of reporting, it was the conclusion of the study that Canadian teachers believe clear communication is a central factor in evaluation.
Communication of the methods, communication of the expectations and communication of the meaning of evaluation all need to be considered when reporting student progress.

In 1996 The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in the United States came out with a yearbook regarding communication of student learning. The ASCD is a non-partisan, non-profit education association that is a diverse, international community of educators, trying to create a community that discusses how to ensure the success of all learners (Marzano, 2000). One chapter in the yearbook (Lake and Kafka, 1996) focused on reporting methods, and the authors made suggestions for reforming communication about student learning. They identified six areas of focus when it comes to reporting. Some are familiar foci -- parental involvement, narrative feedback, lifelong learning skills, identified standards, and self-assessment. One focus the authors identified that has not been studied heavily was the use of developmentally appropriate practices. Reporting practices should vary as a student ages and moves through the K-12 education system depending on the age or ability of the student.

Another book, *Transforming Classroom Grading*, published by the ASCD explored the areas that indicate academic achievement. Marzano (2000) states that reporting on effort, behaviour and attendance is important, but when it comes to academic achievement, the specific subject matter, thinking and reasoning skills, and general communication skills are central. These three factors together indicate academic achievement, and should be included in reports on student progress. This suggests that both types of information, academic achievement and behaviour habits, are important and need to be reported on separately and perhaps even equally valued.
Collectively the manuals and books (McLean, 1985; Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada, 1993; Lake & Kafka, 1996; Marzano, 2000; Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Gregory, Cameron, & Davis, 2011; Reeves, 2011) identified specific areas to consider in developing methods for reporting student progress. These include collaboration and clear communication with parents and students to inform further learning, timeliness and identification of the purpose of the report, developmentally appropriate reporting methods that refer to specific subject matter, thinking and reasoning skills and general communication skills.

**Canadian Assessment for Learning Network Conference**

I recently attended the 2015 conference of The Canadian Assessment for Learning Network (CAfLN). This newly formed organization focuses on establishing and sustaining assessment for learning in elementary, secondary and tertiary education across Canada. It is a flexible, member-led organization that fosters collaboration and sharing among educators, leaders and researchers with responsibility for assessment policy, practice, and research at local, provincial and post-secondary levels in Canada (Canadian assessment for learning network, n.d.). The voices heard at this conference can guide educators to improve their assessment practices and the focus was on communicating learning. The conference speeches are included in this literature review because they reflect the current assessment climate in BC with assessment specialists’ perspective, an Aboriginal’s perspective, and the Ministry’s perspective.
Keynote Speakers

The keynote speakers at the conference were its founding members, Lorna Earl, Damian Cooper and Ken O’Connor, and their introduction was titled, *What Does it Mean to Communicate for Learning?“*

Lorna Earl has been involved in consultation, research, evaluation and staff development with teachers’ organizations, ministries of education, school boards and charitable foundations in Canada (Canadian assessment for learning network, n.d.) Her experiences with assessment has led her to the conclusion that assessment is learning. In her introduction to the CAfLN conference on April 10, 2015 she spoke to the importance of knowing the purpose for assessment and brought to light the idea that schools are no longer sorting mechanisms. In my experience, it is not uncommon in schools for the information on the report cards to be used to sort students for; advanced placement classes, honour roll or academic probation. In her introduction to the CAfLN conference on April 10, 2015, Earl continued to say that the keystone of education is sustainable, continuous learning and emphasised that a metacognitive approach to learning helps students take control of their learning. These are key factors that must be incorporated when considering reporting student progress.

Damian Cooper has specialized in student assessment for more than twenty-five years. The focus in his keynote speech at the CAfLN conference on April 10, 2015 was very much on communicating learning. He was very passionate when he spoke about how a summative grade at the end of a grade is the end of learning, and that using levels to refer to students (“My C students” or “My level four students”) reinforces a fixed mind set. Not only does he want teachers to focus on formative assessment but he wants teachers to use formative language in
their assessment. For example, it is important to avoid words like ‘awesome’ because it does not give any descriptive feedback and does not give information about assessment. He listed three questions that need to be addressed when thinking about communicating learning: 1) to whom are we communicating; 2) what are we communicating; 3) and how are we going to do it? Another question he asked was, “Do all groups of audiences need to know the same thing?” He answered this with a resounding No. He commented that students need feedback, parents need progress information and ways to support their child and teachers, postsecondary institutions and employers are looking for achievement information. These are all very different types of information.

When Cooper looks to the future of communicating learning to parents he notes that the biggest challenge is getting people to understand that test scores are not precise and should be used carefully. The responsibility is ours as educators to educate parents and teach them what we know to be good assessment practices. A large problem he has with the report card is that it is only presented in one way - in writing. He explains that,

“Technology is becoming pervasive, and how can we use it to capture learning? Report cards belong in the Smithsonian! ...What can give us more information a C- ...or a 30 sec video clip? ....The digital age is among us!” (CAfLN keynote speech, April 10, 2015)

The third founding member of CAfLN, Ken O’ Connor, is an independent consultant on assessment, grading and reporting and he spoke about grading practice. He acknowledges that educators need to follow policy and do need scores, and that teachers still have to keep reporting on students. However, he explains in his keynote speech at the CAfLN conference on
April 10, 2015, that it needs to be about learning and needs to involve students in the process by making sure they understand their age appropriate learning targets. One of his guidelines for effecting grading is that the process of grading and how the information will be used, needs to be described to students at the beginning of instruction for the students to have the best opportunities to be successful (O’Connor, 1995). In his keynote speech he explains that, “School is about learning, and grades are the artifacts of learning and not the focus of what we are doing.” He identifies six considerations when determining grades: teachers must report learning goals; use performance standards not percentages; only report about achievement; evidence to determine grades needs to be summative; only include the most recent assignments; and look for consistent achievement. He chose his words carefully and purposefully using the word determine and not calculate grades. He understands that grading is subjective, but if teachers do it well the fact that it is subjective is not necessarily a downfall. He did receive a few raised eyebrows when he spoke about only using summative evidence in determining grades, but expanded on this with his analogy about when you practice for a sporting event, it is not how much you practice that determines your ranking but how well you perform.

**Aboriginal Perspective**

There were speakers from many backgrounds at the conference including Laura Tait, a Director of Instruction for the Nanaimo school district’s Aboriginal Education team, who brought an integral perspective of Aboriginal Education to the conference. Her comments pointed out that in any discussion of education in BC it would be remiss to discuss any type of reform without considering the aboriginal perspective. 11% of our public school system student
population self-identify as aboriginal and only 62% of those students graduate, where as 86% of non-aboriginal students graduate (Analysis and Reporting Unit, 2014). She brought the aboriginal students into the discussion of assessment practices and after listening to Earl, Cooper & O’Connor speak, she shared her insight with the audience, “As educators, if we practice wise pedagogy (referring to the keynote speakers’ comments) we are going to scoop up 80% of our aboriginal students and that is not happening right now.” She spoke of the collective ownership educators needed to have to improve the graduation rate of aboriginal learners and she stated that assessment practices play a role in that.

**Ministry of Education Perspective**

Among these educational leadership voices there was also Jan Unwin, the Superintendent of Graduation and Student Transitions at The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Advanced Education in BC. She is very hopeful about the future of communicating student learning. The title of her talk at the CAfLN Conference on April 11, 2015 was, *What is happening in BC? The Transformative Agenda: Implications for Communicating about Learning Through Assessment.* She wants teachers to align what they do with what they know and suggested that using assessment to make young learners successful is a huge part of a teacher’s role. When reflecting back on her experience as a principal she shared with the group, “As a principal it is horrible at report card time... learning stops. We have to say, ‘why do we do that?’.” She uses an analogy of two children learning to skate, one falls down 3 times the other 300 times, but they both learn to skate. She asked, “Does it matter, they are both skating?” When discussing grades as reward or punishment, she quips, “We don’t spank our second kids for not walking as fast as our first one.” Jan Unwin’s hope is that communicating student
learning can be done with providing evidence of authentic learning, competency, showing who the student is, and what the student is good at. She left the teachers in the room with a positive outlook when she finished her talk with, “My hope is that we do not work around things but really design our systems and structures to give you guys the freedom to do what they know is right as a teacher.”

The CAfLN conference brought assessment practitioners from across Canada together to hear and share the most recent information and practices regarding assessment and the communication of assessment. This event is very timely as BC is looking to implement new curriculum in the next year and it is my hope that the insights of the individuals at this conference can positively impact how this transformation of education in BC is going to occur.

BC Education Plan

Examining the report card is very timely in British Columbia because the Province of BC is currently overhauling all of its curriculum and the Ministry of Education has stated that the method of reporting will have to change (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2013). This process of review began in 2010 and the goal is that new curriculum plans will be implemented in 2016. Through consultations and focus groups with parents and teachers the Ministry of Education has noted that the purpose and nature of report cards is shifting in BC. In a report titled *Transforming Curriculum and Assessment*, The Ministry of Education has identified the following recommendations for reporting (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2013):

- Shift the language from ‘reporting’ to ‘communicating students’ learnings
- Support meaningful communication between teachers, parents and learners
- Report on core competencies and key areas of learning
- Focus on learning standards (curricular competencies and content/concepts) in an area of learning (subjects)
- Enable on-going communication (with provincial guidelines and supports)
- Maintain formal, written summative reports at key times of the year
- Use clear performance standard-based language
- Move towards meaningful descriptions/collections/demonstrations of students learning

Another survey was completed on behalf of the Ministry of Education called BCeSIS Stakeholder Engagement Survey Summary Report of Findings in 2012 by Elevate Consulting. BCeSIS is an online student information managing system and also generates report card formats in many school districts in BC. Student information systems focus on the management of student data and not necessarily the assessment process. It was the findings of the researchers (Elevate Consulting, 2012) that the participants believed that BCeSIS does not meet all of the current needs for a student information system solution and is not well positioned to meet the future needs of education in BC. There is also widespread support reported in the survey for a common, province-wide, web-based student information system and the replacement of BCeSIS (Elevate Consulting, 2012). One of the stated purposes of the survey was to engage stakeholders in the development of a solution for the provincial student information system to support the future direction of education in BC, including personalised learning. One of the findings of the survey was that:
In support of personalised learning and the future of BC education, the new system must be able to adapt and improve to meet future needs as they continue to evolve. In addition, the system must be flexible enough to support and assess student progress using a variety of approaches. It must ensure student and parent online access to relevant information and allow them to communicate effectively with teachers. An emphasis on personalised learning requires, on the whole, a system that enhances collaboration and provides multiple platforms to design and track individualized learning plans. (Elevate Consulting, 2012, p. 15)

Another finding that pertains directly to reporting and communicating learning is in response to the question, “In order to support personalized learning needs, what enhancements would you like to see in a student information system?” 66% of parents and students said that student portfolios are necessary enhancements to the student information system.

In January 2015 the BC Ministry of Education released another report titled, Toward Better Communication. This document is designed to be a starting point for school districts to improve communication with parents including communication regarding student progress. The report identifies the issue that traditional report cards are a snapshot into the past and that too often parents find report cards difficult to understand. During consultation some ideas parents put forward to address this issue were e-portfolios which they felt would provide more insight into their child’s learning, a better understanding of what their child is working on in real time and more flexible face to face options for parents to meet with teachers. Another suggestion that emerged in the report from parents was that they would like information about their child’s
learning through a variety of reporting tools, and channels of communication that involve parents, teachers and students would be ideal.

There have yet to be many directives from the Ministry of Education in British Columbia giving specific criteria for reporting in accordance with the BC Education Plan, and currently school districts are bound by the restrictions of the existing School Act when it comes to reporting. If the purpose of the proposed new report card is to improve communication with parents, it is also necessary to clarify what teachers are trying to communicate (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). The province has committed to a very extensive and lengthy review to promote curriculum and reporting reform, and it is the responsibility of BC educators to ensure that this process results in revised practice in the classroom. There is potential for the ‘everything that has happened has happened before’ phenomena when it comes to report card reform, where practices end up almost in the same place they started, but just with different representation meaning the same thing. However, educators have to remain optimistic because perhaps this inquiry can inform real change in the province due to the fact that right now we are in a process of transformation.

**Summary**

There are many reasons why reforming student reporting has been difficult for many education systems. The formula below from the highly referenced book, *Wad-ja-get?: the Grading Game in American Education* (Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971) sums up the issues surrounding the report card. This book tries to compile the most comprehensive survey of the history, research, alternatives and pro and con argument about grading data in the form
of a novel. This non-traditional model of academic writing has allowed for a deeper understanding of many of the issues touched on by studies done on the subject or reporting.

History + Research + Experience = Arguments Against Traditional Grades, while Teacher Ease + Administrative Convenience + College admissions Procedures = Forces Which Maintain Traditional Grades (Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971).

The equation above was created forty five years ago by the authors of *Wad-ja-get?: the Grading Game in American Education* to explain why reform is so difficult even in the face of evidence regarding the multiple ways teachers arrive at their grades or how these grades are interpreted by students or parents alike. Research has shown that the use of traditional grading used in reporting students’ progress has actually been linked to detrimental effects like student disengagement and cheating. Evidence suggests that teacher evaluation has become the focus of the learning experience rather than the students’ preparation for life in the real world (Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971).

Alternatives have been explored, but with mixed reviews. Percentages, written comments and e-portfolios all have their pros and cons. However it seems to be the way they are used that determines their effectiveness, not just using them. Before a reporting method in BC can be developed, there must be agreement about the purpose of the report, who the audience is as well as for what the information in the report is going to be used (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). The answers to these questions will strengthen the use of any reporting method and promote clear communicate to the audience so there will be less confusion as to what
progress reports are actually saying. Whatever purpose and practice of progress reporting is decided on in BC, having students, teachers and parents help inform the decision will increase the likelihood that the progress reports will align with the mandated purpose and practice. The e-portfolio addresses many concerns regarding reporting. The investment of time and money could be worthwhile because this method also has been empirically linked to increasing students’ self-efficacy and self-perceived learning performance.

It is important to note that in BC no real transformation of reporting methods can be done until the legislation of the School Act is changed. If the theorists’ and academics’ recommendations regarding changing the reporting method are undertaken without changing the language regarding reporting in the current legislation a dual system of reporting will be created. If a dual system exists, one method would be more valued by students and parents if it was the one that had historically been relied on for comparison, special honours or admission to universities and the other method would soon be ignored.
Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Research Methodology

This study was conducted with an ethnographic theoretical perspective. An ethnographic approach is a qualitative approach best for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and language (Creswell, 2012). In this study there is one overlying culture-sharing group made up of people who are involved in education in BC, and it was done in two phases. The first phase is a historical document analysis and includes the behaviours, beliefs and language of policy makers, politicians, and Ministry of Education employees in BC over the last 120 years. By reviewing the School Act, Manuals of School Law, Rules and Regulations and Royal Commissions done in education in BC, it was determined how past practices have evolved and if there have been any shifts in purpose and practice regarding student reporting.

When choosing the historical documents to analyze I wanted to get a very clear picture of trends over time. This is why I focused on the annual publications of the Manual of School Law and Annual Reports from the Ministry responsible of public education at the time. The Royal Commissions, which occurred in 1925, 1960, and 1988, as well as the BC Education Plan in 2013-2016 allowed for an in depth look at education. By analyzing these documents I gained an understanding of the various approaches to reporting student progress in BC as well as parents’ attitudes towards reporting student progress. The other documents I cited, Administrative Handbooks and the periodical, Elementary Schools, were only published for
short periods of time in BC and provided examples of language from the Ministry of Education directed to teachers and administrators.

In the second phase, there is a focus on a smaller group of educators that all have experiences with alternative reporting in BC. This approach served to expose multiple perspectives and realities reflected in the participants’ views and allowed me to identify emerging trends in what the current use and beliefs are regarding reporting elementary school student progress to parents.

The ethnographic researcher was once regarded as an objective reporter who makes omniscient pronouncements about individuals being studied (Creswell, 2012). A more modern understanding of the ethnographic approach is one that provides a platform for the voice of the researcher to be heard among the many represented within research (Creswell, 2012). This more modern approach is the one used in this study. The specific type of approach I took is a case study. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system where bounded system refers to a separation of time, place or some physical boundary (Creswell, 2012). The bounded system explored in this study is the public education system in British Columbia. A case study also allows for focusing on a program, event or activity involving individuals more than the individuals themselves (Stake, 1995). This study focuses specifically on legislation and the use of reporting methods for reporting on student progress. All of the research in this study was done with a focus on education in BC, the first phase focused on historical documents and the second phase is a collective case study of four teachers currently teaching in public schools in BC who have experience with alternative reporting of students’ progress.
An ethnographic approach allows for the study of a culture sharing group to provide understanding of a larger issue (Creswell, 2012). This study focused on teachers’ perspectives on the effectiveness of reporting methods they are using. Teachers are often defined as the ‘front line’ of the education system; they are also the ones who know how a child behaves and performs in an educational setting. For a reporting method to be effective teachers need to understand and support it because it does not matter how good a reporting tool is if it is not being used appropriately. Teacher support is extremely important when implementing a new reporting method. For this reason this study focused on the public educators’ perspectives.

**Research Design**

The research occurred in two phases. The first phase was a qualitative policy analysis of BC historical document analysis dated from 1865 to present including, but not limited to: Public School Acts, Manual of School Law and Regulations, Ministry publications, and Royal Commissions on Education. These documents were chosen because a thorough public record of them has been maintained at the Legislative Library of British Columbia. Through analysis of these document the legislated purposes of the report cards in BC was determined. This was followed by a qualitative data collection of in-person interviews with educators who have experience with alternative reporting in BC. Using opportunistic sampling a third party emailed potential participant with my contact information and asked them if they would contact me for further discussion. Once they had emailed me, I responded to them with information regarding my study and asked them if they would be interested in participating. I also used snowball sampling and ask participants to pass my contact information on to potential new participants they thought would be relevant to my study. The interviews were audio recorded for accuracy.
of reporting. Data was coded for themes that emerged during the analysis. Also, direct quotes and inferences were used to identify and explain the participants’ point of view. To ensure that the qualitative findings were accurate, a summary of the findings was given back to the participants in the qualitative study and they will be asked if they believe the findings to be an accurate reflection of their opinions. This method, used to confirm validity of the data collected is called, member-checking and is a frequently used approach in qualitative studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

**Ethical Considerations**

The potential for ethical issues were examined in all phases of the study. Permission for this study was granted from the Institutional Ethics Review Board before commencing. To ensure teacher anonymity the researcher handled all the data collection. In the final paper the school names were not used and geographical location were masked. No unique feature of a school was mentioned in the paper so there is no risk of the school being identified.

**Role of the Researcher as an Instrument of the Study**

It is common practice in qualitative studies to discuss the role of the researcher and reflect on their biases, values and assumptions. This processes is called being reflective (Creswell, 2012). Defining the role of the researcher will only strengthen the understanding of the methods and approach of the study.

I teach on Denny Island, population of 90, located within Heiltsuk territory and beside the Bella Bella reserve. My multi-age class size has varied between 11 and 22 in the last eight years, and the student population is from both the Denny Island community and the Bella Bella
community. This is my first teaching job after leaving my teacher training and when I arrived at the school in May 2007 there were no other teachers on site, and there had not been a teacher consistently in the school for three months. My administrator was a 30 minute float plane ride away and community members had been coming in to support the students along with an educational assistant. I walked in with no understanding of how things had been done and had to create my own way of how things were going to move forward. As I continued in this position through the years I looked to policy and manuals to determine how to run the school and my classroom, as there was no one there to show me the ropes. The school was audited the first year I was there, and I was tasked with preparing the information needed and organizing the files to the provincial standard. For the first few years I taught, I believed it was my job to follow all the rules and guidelines I could find from the School Act, Rules and Regulations, Ministerial Orders and Government documents. I kept on teaching this way until I saw the detrimental effect it was having on my students.

All of my carefulness to foster my students’ motivation, belief in their ability and academic achievement was quickly undone with the three formal report cards I was required to issue in a prescribed format. The student’s growth was undone with an A, B, C+, C or C-. I utilize the comments as much as I could, but only comparing a student to their ‘grade standards’ and not to their own scale of personal growth taught my students that they not were good enough. There were also negative effects on my high achievers: education is all about the A, not the learning they have accomplished.

After developing a high reverence for the provincial legislation and supporting document that I used to help develop my practice, I found that the Student Progress Report
Order (M191/94) limited my ability to develop my students believe in their own ability, as well as hindered it. I needed to understand why teachers are required to report in this fashion in British Columbia. This led me to ask questions about the purpose of the report card and if it was in fact meant to encourage students to engage in their own learning as I thought it should be or if there were other historical purpose I was unaware of. Then I also wondered if there was a better method of reporting that could meet these purposes. All of these experiences and questions have driven me to complete this research.
Chapter 4 Historical Document Analysis

History of Reporting in BC

In an effort to understand how the report card came about, and the evolution of the legislative purpose of the report card in BC I conducted a historical document analysis of the legislation and government recommendations relating to reporting student progress to parents. Most of this research was done at the Legislative Library, and involved a rigorous review of *Manuals of School Law* in BC and the *Annual Reports* put out by the different Ministries responsible for BC public education during the last 150 years.

I consulted the statutes, in particular the *Public School Act* (1872 and revisions), later known as the *Public Schools Act* and now known as the *School Act*. I found much of the legislated language regarding reporting students’ progress in the *Rules and Regulations for the government (or Conduct) of Public Schools* (hereinafter cited as *Rules and Regulations*) and the *Manuals of School Law*. The *Rules and Regulations* were first published in 1874, and elaborated on the *Public School Act, Public Schools Act* and finally the *School Act*. The *Manual of School Law* was first published in 1893 and codified public school policies and practices for ease of accessibility.

The *Annual Reports* were submitted to the legislature by the Superintendent of Education who was responsible for the actual management of the school system and later became known as the Deputy Minister of Education. The *Annual Reports* described in detail a yearly review of the school system and was accessible to the public.

The *School Act* provided some information, but most of the information came from the *Rules and Regulations* of the Province up until the 1980s when the government started to use
Ministerial Orders to legislate the process of reporting student progress. There has been different legislation at different times about reporting student progress and the use of report cards, with an overall trend of increased regulation and legislation of the method of reporting. Much of this increase has occurred in the last 20 years. It is my hope that this review can shed light on some of the significant legislative changes regarding education in the history of legislation in BC and as we look forward to a new change, we will have a clear understanding of where the legislation came from. This understanding of historical legislation is pivotal because the educational trends that have developed in response to the prevailing educational philosophies over the 120 years that report cards have been legislated in BC influence the method of reporting student progress. This method has a large impact on the way teachers deliver educational programs because all teachers would have created evidence to reflect the assessment used to inform their reports.

The Formative Years 1849-1872

The first school in what is now called British Columbia began in 1849 when Vancouver Island was declared a Crown Colony and Victoria was chosen as its capital. At this time most of the population of Victoria was made up of employees of the Hudson Bay Company. The responsibility of public education in the colony was solely James Douglas’, the Chief Factor of the Hudson Bay Company and, after 1951, also the Governor of Vancouver Island (Johnson, 1964). He appointed Rev. Robert Stains to be school master who was later replaced by Rev. Edward Cridge who arrived from England in 1855. He was to, “hold quarterly examinations and to report on the progress and conduct of the pupils, on the system of management and on all other matters connect with the District schools which may appear deserving of attention”
Education remained in the hands of Rev. Cridge until the colonist population increased and with the influence of Amor De Cosmos the Free School Act was enacted in 1865 (Johnson, 1964).

Amor De Cosmos was a colourful character, the editor of the British Colonist newspaper and a huge advocate for secular public schools. In this new Free School Act the authority was strongly centralized in the Governor and his general board (Johnson, 1964). The public education of the colony of Vancouver Island developed alongside the Mainland Colony under the influence of John Roberston, the editor of the British Columbian newspaper. He was educated in Upper Canada under the leadership of Egerton Ryerson and promoted the use of a similar education system on the West Coast (Johnson, 1964).

Egerton Ryerson was a Methodist minister with strong ties to the loyalist movement in Eastern Canada. He was a strong believer in free universal education and believed that the duty of education was to develop “all the intellectual powers of man, teach him self-reliance as well as dependence on God, excite him in industry and enterprise, and instruct him in his rights as well as the duties of man” (Gidney, 1982, para 33). This interest in the Egerton Ryerson approach “foreshadows the very great influence which educational movements in Ontario were to have upon British Columbia” (Johnson, 1964 p. 33).

The Free School Act was short lived and was replaced by the Common School Act of 1865. The newly appointed governor, Seymour, did not agree with the concept of Free Schools, believing that “Every man who respected himself would not desire to have his children instructed without some penury sacrifice” (Journals of Legislative Council of British Columbia 1867 as cited in Johnson, 1964, p.33).
In 1869 the *Common School Ordinance* replaced the *Common School Act of 1865* and was the first legislation regarding education that was applied to the new colony of British Columbia. Control of the whole school system was placed in the hands of the Governor-in-Council. The Governor-in-Council was to “create school districts; to apportion school grants; to appoint, certificate, inspect and dismiss teachers, and make rules and regulations for the management of the schools” (Johnson, 1964, p.37).

**The Early Years 1871-1923**

In 1971 British Columbia joined Confederations as Canada’s sixth province. A new Act, The *Public School Act of 1872* was the first School Act enacted by the new provincial legislature. It repealed all previous school legislation and established a free non-sectarian public school open to all children between the ages of six and sixteen (Johnson, 1964). This Act made the Superintendent, John Jessop, the central official of a highly centralized system. He had graduated from Egerson Ryerson’s Toronto Normal School where he had been exposed to Ryerson’s ideas on Public Education (Johnson, 1964).

In The *Public School Act of 1872* there was no language regarding report cards or reporting student progress to parents however in the *Rules and Regulations* published in the 4th *Annual Report on the Public Schools* that Jessop devised, teachers were, “required to classify the pupils according to their respective abilities” (The Superintendent of Education, 1875, p. 57). Jessop advocated for a graded system of education in BC where children working from a *lower book* would be placed under one teacher and children working under a *higher book* would have another teacher. It is important to note that it was common practice at this time for students to be given work to then recite to the teacher upon memorizing (Johnson, 1964).
In the *Schools Act* of 1879 there was much power given to the superintendent of education due to the administrative reorganization that resulted in the disappearance of the Board of Education. This led to the first legislation of the report card in British Columbia by C.C Mckenzie, the Superintendent of Education in 1879. This legislation states that every teacher, “Must send to each pupil’s parents or guardian a monthly report stating the number of times he was absent, the number of times he was late, his deportment, his progress in each branch of his study, and his rank in the class” (*The Superintendent of Education, 1880*, p207). In *The Eighth Annual Report in the Public School of the Province of British Columbia 1878-79* written by the superintendent, McKenzie explained that the purpose for this report was to ensure that parents, trustees and superintendents are, “in constant communication with the teacher,... and it is hoped that the evils of defective inspections are by these means somewhat guarded against” (*The Superintendent of Education, 1880*, p.162). This indicated that the first purpose of the report card in B.C. is to account for teachers’ activities not only to the superintendent but also to the parents.

There was one downfall of the centralized control of education and that was that local interest in schools declined. In 1884 the Government increased the number of trustees in each of the large cities and invited the wives of voters to the school meetings in an effort to negate the declining interest (Johnson, 1964). The Superintendent, J.D. Pope, who held office from 1884 to 1898, noted that these changes “inspired greater confidence in their [school’s] proper management” (Johnson, 1964, p.90).

There was no change to *The Rules and Regulations* until 1888, where an example of the report card can be found in Appendix A. Along with the monthly reports, a teacher’s duties
now included making daily records of the work of each pupil in all his classes (Superintendent of Education, 1888). This change affected reporting to parents soon after, in 1889 when it was legislated in the *Rules and Regulations* that the monthly reports must be based on this daily record (Superintendent of Education, 1889). It wasn’t until 1893 that a note was added to the *Rules and Regulations* in the *First Manual of School Law* that indicated that the purpose of these daily records was to keep an authentic register of the work of each pupil, and that this would allow for teachers to send monthly reports to parents that were ‘intelligent and proper’ (The Government of the Province of British Columbia, 1893, p. 30).

The practice of monthly reports was not undertaken by all teachers equally. In The 23th Annual Report of 1893-1894 the Superintendent at the time, S.D Pope, reported that there were considerably fewer monthly reports being sent out than there were pupils in the classrooms. He suggested that teachers needed to be more familiar with the *Rules and Regulations* (Superintendent of Education, 1894).

There was a major shift in the administrative structure of the provincial authority beginning in 1891. The central authority over education was now the Council of Public Instruction, consisting of members of the government and the superintendent of education acted as the secretary (Johnson, 1964). The Council of Public Instruction’s responsibilities were many, and included defining the duties of teachers and drafting the *Rules and Regulations* (Duane (ed), 2011).

*The Rules and Regulations* changed slightly in 1900, when it was legislated In the *Manual of School Law and School Regulations of British Columbia* that the monthly reports needed to be on a form supplied by the Education Department, which had been the practice
regardless of whether it had been legislated or not. Some language was removed from The *Rules and Regulations* at that time and the rank of the student in the class was no longer required by law (The Government of the Province of British Columbia, 1900).

Up until 1905 all the language of reporting to parents was in the *Rules and Regulations*, but now the reporting language was for the first time included in the *Public School Act*. Prior to 1905, the *Rules and Regulations* needed to be followed by law, but the actual reporting language was not in the *Public School Act*. Perhaps having the reporting language in the Act itself allowed for the information to be more accessible. Also the *Manual of School law and School Regulations of British Columbia* changed in 1906 and now the monthly reports teachers were required to send home could be on a form either supplied by or approved by the Education Department (The Government of the Province of British Columbia, 1906). The choice between a form supplied (as it was before) or a form approved, gave schools more freedom over the format of the form sent home.

In 1906 there was also a larger shift to local authority over education with the formation of the Rural Municipal School Districts. The effect of the legislation was a larger governing body in the smaller school districts (Johnson, 1964). However by 1919 signs of these school districts were beginning to disappear when the Council of Public Instruction was, “empowered to appoint, where it deemed it advisable, an official trustee and invest him with all the authority of a rural school district” (Johnson, 1964, p. 97).

There were no changes to the method of reporting in the elementary schools for a long time, but in 1921 the *Manual of School Law and School Regulations of British Columbia* indicated that High School, Commercial Schools and Technical Schools changed to requiring
reporting only four times a year (The Government of The Province of British Columbia, 1921). Once Junior High was created in 1926 and 1927 they also issued reports in the same fashion.

**Post Putman Weir Report and Progressivism. 1925-1958**

Dr. J. Harold Putman and Dr. George M. Weir were appointed to carry out a survey of the provincial public school system. In the 54th *Annual Report, 1924-25*, Superintendent of Education, S. J. Willis, describes the survey “as the most thorough examination of a school system ever made in Canada” (The Superintendent of Education, 1925, p. M 10). The Putman and Weir's *Survey of the School System*, published in 1925 found that education in BC was being delivered in line with a Formalist philosophic theory. Advocates of this theory believed that mind as memory and reasoning needed to be trained and through studying algebra and formal grammar students could learn to apply memory and reasoning to life (Sutherland, 1986). The *Survey of the School System* strongly endorsed Progressivism and more revisions were made to the curriculum in the mid-1930s, when Weir became Minister of Education (Dunae, 2011).

The Progressive movement embraced social education; the progressivists insisted that education be a continuous reconstruction of living experience, with the child the centre of concern (Columbia University Press, 1991). One of the recommendations of the survey was to abolish the entrance exam into high school, grade eight at the time. Also, as explained in *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*:

The commissioners envisioned a system of promoting by subjects, which each course carrying certain “credits” towards a required minimum total. Promotion from one year to the next, they believed, could best be decided by the high school principal and his staff. As the standard of teaching and teachers improved, they looked forward to the
time when some students could enter university from high school solely on the recommendation of the school (Johnson, 1964. p. 106).

Reporting for elementary school changed along with curriculum revisions in 1936. This delay was due to the Depression and the more urgent problems of financing public education. These changes were, as quoted from the Vancouver Daily Province, October 4, 1935, p. 27, to “...make the school system meet the needs of a rapidly changing world and to make future British Columbians more socially minded, more cooperative in their attitudes to society as a whole” and “better equipped for using their leisure” (Johnson, 1964, p. 113). The Manual of School Law and Regulations of the Province of British Columbia (1936) required teachers to continue reporting monthly on the deportment, attendance and punctuality of pupils; they needed to report only bi-monthly on student progress (The Province of British Columbia, 1936). This separated reporting about behaviour from reporting on academic achievement.

New standardized report cards came out in the 1938-39 school year that very much aligned with the Progressive movement in education at the time. Along with the report home, there would also be an explanatory letter, published in the Annual Report of the Public School, 1938/39 on p. H32, emphasizing that each student has his own rate of growth and progress could only be reported in relation to his own abilities (Dunae (ed.), 2011). The letter went on to explain that stress should be laid upon growth of healthy habits and the ability to work and play with others, the ability to think for oneself and stay with a task, and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong (Dunae (ed), 2011). The letter also asked parents to praise a good report and confer with the teacher if the report was unsatisfactory (Dunae (ed), 2011). At this
time there was also a change in the legislation regarding reporting. No longer were reports to be sent out monthly, but they should be sent out at such time during the year as instructed within the report card itself.

In 1944 British Columbia had 1046 schools and 650 school districts. These small school districts were found to be unorganized in rural areas, small cities and municipalities (Johnson, 1964). Many of these small school districts had such a small tax base that they could not provide education to the provincial standard. This led to the Cameron Report in 1994 that made recommendations regarding finances and the present responsibilities of school districts. Cameron recommended that larger school districts be established to provide reasonable, adequate schooling from grades one to twelve (Johnson, 1964). It was Cameron’s hope that these larger units would ensure capable bodies of school trustees with wide interests. The provincial inspectors would have legal right to attend the board meetings, but without a right to vote. Much of the authority over education now lay in the hands of the School Boards. Cameron’s recommendations became part of the government’s re-election platform and after they were voted back in, Cameron’s recommendations were swiftly put in place in April, 1946 (Johnson, 1965).

The periodical, British Columbia Schools, Elementary Edition, was put out in 1946 by the Department of Education. The purpose of this publication was explained in the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia Seventy-Seventh Annual Report 1947-1948, and it was to keep teachers engaged in their professional development and to let teachers know the changes in the Programmes of Studies and the new regulations of the Department of Education (The Superintendent of Education, 1949). There is reference to a new type of report card and an
explanation of how it should be used. The excerpt below shows a clear layout of the purpose of the report card at the time:

....the new type of report-card places emphasis upon growth in desirable habits, attitude, appreciation, and skill, rather than upon failure. It points to where a child needs to be strengthened, and it indicates also the nature of his progress in the various subjects. It discourages undesirable competition among children and also discourages parents from making comparison between marks made by their children and those of their neighbours. The major purpose of the report card is to inform parents as to the growth of the child in the school, to assist the child in evaluating his own growth, to encourage parents in co-operation with the school, to further the growth of the child and to bring about more cordial relations between the home and the school (Department of Education, 1946, p. 49).

This purpose was reiterated in editions of British Columbia Schools published in the years 1949 and 1952. Legislation around reporting did not change for some time. But it was suggested in the Annual Report of the 1947-1948 Year that students’ IQs were to be included on report cards and there were some experimental forms of reportcards being used in the schools for grades 7-13 (The Superintendent of Education, 1949).

In an interview from April 3, 1950, Mr. H. L. Campbell, the Deputy Superintendent of Education and Director of Curriculum in the Department of Education, published in British Columbia Schools: Elementary edition, Sept 1950, Vol 6, No 1, spent much time explaining the
follies of comparative marking and reporting systems. He agreed with the interviewer that competition existed in the real world, however he went on to explain that the breadth of the student population would not be competing for the same position in the real world (Department of Education, 1950). Competitions between the 15th and 14th ranked student might be fair, but a competition between the 2nd and 30th ranked student would not. Furthermore, according to Mr. Campbell, this ranking is demoralizing to the students that did not have strong academic ability. The interviewer then suggested that many parents seem to think that percentages in each subject on reports would be more exact and more informative to parents. Mr. Campbell’s response is that percentages were what many parents would have been subjected to in school and were therefore familiar, but most people had a blind and unreasoning faith in their validity and reliability (Department of Education, 1950). Mr. Campbell also included in The 82nd Annual Report of The Year 1952-1953 his observations that students vary markedly in aptitudes and abilities. He said, “All cannot learn or preform at the same rate or to the same extent. Hence one standard, or rate of performance, for all is not possible” (The Superintendent of Education, 1954, p. P 28). This indicates that Campbell would be in favour of a reporting method that would allow for personalized standards.

There was a shift in education apparent in the 85th Annual Report of The Year 1955-1956. Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, J.F.K. English on behalf of the Division of Curriculum, reported that report cards for grades 1-12 had been under careful and detailed study for some time and that revisions of these cards had now been completed for the use in schools in 1956-1957. The revisions had been designed primarily to give a clear picture of the progress the pupil was making in school in terms of his ability and in terms of standards
expected (The Superintendent of Education, 1957). Throughout the process of revision frequent consultations were held with various organizations and groups. A large number of recommendations were received from parents, teachers and others. The Department of Education gave careful consideration to these views as well as to modern educational thought in revising the report cards (The Superintendent of Education, 1957). English also explained that the primary purpose of schools is, “...developing the character of young people, training them to be good citizens and teaching them the fundamental skills of learning necessary for further education and adult life” (The Superintendent of Education, 1957 p. EE 28)

New School Act and the Royal Commission 1958-1965

In 1958 the Public Schools Act was completely overhauled. In reference to the changes Superintendent of Education J. F. K. English noted in the 88th Annual Report, 1957/58:

Many attempts have been made over the years to define what education really is, but most authorities agree that education does not lend itself to any precise definition. This is because educational theory and practice are constantly changing and being adapted to meet new demands and new circumstances....The schools reflect these changes through revised curricula and by a periodic restatement of aims.... The purpose of the school is training for citizenship and all our educational resources are directed to this end” (p. Z 32).

There was not much change to the language regarding reporting student progress In the Rules and Regulations. The language now looked like this:
A teacher shall provide each pupil taught by him, on a form prescribed by the department of Education, a report four times during the school-year for the information of the parent or guardian setting out the pupil’s progress, attendance, and punctuality. The first report for the school year shall be made during the month of November, and the final report within one week of the closing of school in June. (Province of British Columbia, 1961. p. 9)

The most notable change is that the times the report card had to be issued were now included in the legislation, not on the report card. Also ‘deportment’ was removed from the reporting requirement. A few years later there was a slight change to the legislation and the report card form was prescribed or approved by the Department of Education (Province of British Columbia, 1962).

In 1960 a Report of the Royal Commission on Education [hereinafter cited as The Royal Commission] was released. The Royal Commission, along with many other educational reviews in the western world, was in response to the 1957 Sputnik launching that caused the western world, including BC, to turn toward schools and universities in an effort to determine why we were allegedly losing what was then called, the Race for Space (Sullivan, 1988).

Superintendent English also shifted his views on the aims of the public education system. Where he spoke before of training for citizenship, in the 89th Annual Report he stated, “the school is an agency for intellectual training. Schools exist to tech pupils something – the subjects in the curriculum” (Superintendent of Education, 1961, p. X 33). It was the task of The Royal Commission to identify any weaknesses in order to bring forward recommendations that
would lead to improvements in Education in BC (Chant, Liersch, & Walrod, 1960). The Royal Commission concluded that the general aim of education should be to promote intellectual development (Johnson, 1965). Also in the Royal Commission there was a section dedicated to reporting to parents (Appendix B). The recommendations made were that percentages, even though flawed were the best way to report on students’ achievement because they were the simplest to understand. Exceptions to this might be made for primary grades. The Royal Commission recommended that there be ample space on the report card for written comments, and that the written reports be complemented with parent-teacher conferences.

The criticism of reporting methods was wide, one person complained that:

...there is far too much direction from the Department of Education as to letter grading in our schools. Secondly, so much stress is being placed upon I.Q. rating, that in many schools, the students before they leave junior high school, know that they will never be able to reach a higher grade than C, C-, D or even E. All teachers are required to grade the class on the normative curve. In a large school, this means that certain students are never permitted to get higher grades, although they may make great effort... However the important fact is that no scientific direction or letter grading should be permitted to discourage a student of allow him to lose faith in himself. (Chant, Liersch, & Walrod, 1960. P. 434)

The Vancouver Parent-Teacher Council also aired their concerns and made some recommendations:
....the report card is intended to inform the parents just what progress his child is making in school. We desire a report that will show: (a) to what extent the child has learned what he has been taught, which the present report cards do not show; (b) how well the child is doing in relation to his ability; (c) how well the child is doing in relation to other pupils in the class; (d) the child’s attitude towards school work, and his work habits; (e) the child’s citizenship at school; (f) more attention should be given to comments. (Chant, Liersch, & Walrod, 1960. P. 434).

With such a wide array of feedback, it was the observation of the authors of The Royal Commission that there is no system of reporting student progress that will satisfy all conflicting views expressed at the parental hearing (Chant, Liersch, & Walrod, 1960).

The Royal Commission suggested that the standard of education across the Province varied and to correct this The Royal Commission made suggestions:

More frequent external examinations, more uniform standards of grading, among subjects of the secondary schools, the elimination of incompetent teachers from the staff, the more careful selection of principals, and the placing of more stress on the basic subjects in the secondary curriculum. (Johnson, 1964, p. 262)

The report was met with enthusiasm from the public and as reported in the Vancouver Province, December 30, 1960, it was seen as a return to “hard education” (Johnson, 1964 p 266.) Many of the organizational changes made as a result of The Royal Commission were maintained for a long time and can still be detected in the current system in BC, such as a K-7
elementary school, a Junior Secondary School where grade 8 provided pupils with opportunities
to explore their potential, grade 9 and 10 provided pupils with more electives, and at the end of
grade 10 students were streamed to either a technical, vocational or academic stream
(Johnson, 1964).

**Power Shifts to the School Boards 1965-1979**

In the *Annual Reports* from the mid to late 1960’s the superintendent’s reports state
that many of the school districts are developing their own report cards, and that elementary
education is taking a continual progress approach (The Superintendent of Education, 1968; The
Superintendent of Education, 1969). The Instructional Services Report, within the *Annual
Report for the 1969-1970 school year*, states that:

> Changes were made in the Rules of the Council of Public Instruction which enables
> schools to develop their own form of reporting to parents on the progress of their
> children. The changes require that such forms be authorized by the board of school
> trustees. Locally developed report cards for various grades and programmes have been
> authorised and are in use in 51 school districts. (p. G-50)

Within the same *Annual Report* the Inspector of Schools and School Services found that
the change in the Rules of the Council of Public Instruction had led to the use of locally
developed report cards and a much greater awareness of ways and means of reporting to
parents (The Superintendent of Education, 1971)

In 1979 a draft of *The Administrative Handbook for Elementary and Secondary Schools*
contained guidelines for reporting (Appendix C). It can be concluded that the language was
relatively unchanged from the draft to the final edition because the language was also found in the 1981 and 1982 edition of the handbook.

*The Administrative Handbook* has some insight into the Ministry of Education’s direction in 1979. There is reference to a common report card:

Consequently, in order that parents, students and teachers, irrespective of where they live, work or move to in the province, will have a common basis for understanding and participating in such communication, a common report card has been developed and prescribed for use in all schools.

However, because reporting to parents along with instruction, evaluation and promotion policies and procedures are critical to the successful operation of any school, and because all schools should reflect the needs and aspirations of students, parents and the local community, it is appropriate that individual schools and or districts develop and use local variations of the provincial report cards. (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 1979. P. 507)

The common report card referred to is one that has been provincially authorized and available for use in all public schools. The province allows that if a board approves and files with the Ministry, then a locally developed report card could be used to supplement or complement the provincially authorized report card (Ministry of Education, 1981).

This next passage shows an effort to balance local autonomy and provincial standards.

*The Administrative Handbook* from 1981 goes on to say:
It is likely that as a student progresses through the years, he or she might be working at different levels in one or more area of the curriculum; hence, the entries on the permanent record card would not necessarily be vertically aligned in successive grade columns. Instead, they would often resemble a broken front because the student completes, at different times, sequential levels in each areas of the curriculum. The report card and the permanent record card should carefully reflect instruction practice by indicating the level and achievement of the student in each area of the curriculum.

(Ministry of Education, 1981. p. 517)

Even though this passage is not in legislation, The Administrative Handbook was published by the Ministry of Education, and it indicates that the student should not be evaluated in terms of age range, but in comparison to the continuum of curricular level they are working on, and that reporting will be in reference to the level of work the student is working on and not to the grade or age level assigned curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1981).

The purpose of the report card is very clear in these Administrative Handbooks and it is to inform students, parents and educational personnel about the progress of the student. According to The Administrative Handbook parents should know, “how well the student is achieving relative to the teacher’s expectation for each area, level, and learning program” (p. 519). The Administrative Handbook also states that there may be more elaborate alternative systems, but letter grades are logistically convenient and practical for busy teachers (Ministry of Education, 1981).
According to *The Administrative Handbook* from 1982 any use of symbols, checklists, point scale or letter grades is not permitted in reporting on student progress from K-3 unless the local board authorises their use (Ministry of Education, 1982). And if such a method is approved, it is not allowed to compare children to each other, but must assist in understanding an individual child’s progress (Ministry of Education, 1982).

**The Beginning of Ministerial Orders and Regulations 1981-2006**

In 1981 there was an amendment in the *School Act* stating that the reporting of pupil progress would be subject to regulations which the minister may make establishing the method and the symbols to be used in reporting achievement 3 times a year. The language in the regulation was as follows (B.C. Reg. 380/81):

A report form of the progress of a pupil, except for a pupil enrolled in a Special Education Program by the ministry for special education grant,

(a) Used in kindergarten and grades 1, 2 and 3 shall contain comments, observations and notes of parent teacher consultation and may contain non-competitive symbols, check list or point scales

(b) Used in grade 4, 5, and 6 shall, if a school board decides to use symbols, use those set out in the schedule, and

(c) Used in grades 7-12 shall use the symbols set out in the schedule

(The Province of British Columbia, 1981, p. 711)
The non-competitive symbols referred to for use in grades K-3 were not legislated, but the use and meaning of letter grades for grades 4-12 were legislated (Appendix D).

A historical overview would be incomplete without mentioning The Year 2000. This educational programme was the result of *A Legacy for Learners: The Report of the Royal Commission on Education* [herewith in cited as *A Legacy for Learners*] carried out in 1987 by Barry Sullivan. His hope was that *A Legacy for Learners* would suggest what was good about the kind of educational world we have, as well as point the way to the kind of educational world we wish to create in the years ahead (Sullivan, 1988). He stated that education needed greater differentiation, greater choice, greater diversity and greater freedom. He recommended that there should also be greater articulation and cooperation among the components of the system, a basic system of monitoring and accountability, funding levels that be indexed and predictable, assignments of roles and responsibilities be better clarified and defined, zones of authority and jurisdiction be more specifically delineated, and more appropriate structures be in place for communication, control and action (Sullivan, 1988). In regards to reporting student progress, Sullivan (1988) found that most reporting in elementary schools was done anecdotally and by teachers who wished to emphasize each individual student’s progress in relation to past performance rather than some external standard. Sullivan (1988) concluded that this method was not useful in comparing students, cases, schools or districts. Letter grades and percentage scores were more the rule in secondary schools, shifting towards a more uniformly applied standard. This method was believed to be more objective than anecdotal comments. But Sullivan (1988) went on to explain that the objectivity is more apparent than real because there is a certain amount of error and inaccuracy associated with the measurement process. He went
further in saying that this type of measurement error in education can have serious consequences for a child’s future, in school and beyond. His recommendations did not specifically mention reforming reporting student progress to parents, but does state, “Those who are responsible for educational services should be accountable to those who support them” (Sullivan, p. 48). He found there to be limited reporting of available information because the main target for such information is parents and principals through the report card and he would like to see a wider audience for this information. However Sullivan’s recommendations were never put into practice.

In 1989 there were two Ministry Orders in the *Manual of School Law, Policy, Planning and Legislative Services Branch: Third ed.* that repealed The Reporting on Pupil Progress Regulations implemented in the early 1980s (Ministry of Education, 1989). One was the Student Progress Report Order (M145/89) and the other the Provincial Symbol Order (M48/89); Appendix E). The major difference was that there would be five reports to parents, three formal written reports and two informal ones, and that reporting for the first four years of the primary program would be anecdotal in nature and the use of symbols (grades) was optional until grade ten (Ministry of Education, 1989).

In the *Annual Report* from 1989-1990 there were comments that reinforced the practice at the time of reporting on students’ progress using anecdotal methods. There had been a poll done that showed parents’ overwhelmingly preferred anecdotal comments to letter grades (Ministry of Education, 1990).

The Annual Report from the school year 1990-1991 indicated that schools reported their results mainly to parents and mainly in terms of individual student progress. New methods of
reporting being developed at the time were aimed at giving parents a more descriptive picture of their child’s development in all areas of learning. This type of reporting focused less on students’ performance in comparison with other students and more on their success in achieving more individualized learning (Ministry of Education, 1991). Following this, the Annual Report from 1992-1993 notes that three districts studied the issue of reporting to parents. Their recommendations included:

- Ensuring that teachers’ methods of reporting are consistent within schools
- Providing teachers’ comments and marking criteria on interim reports
- Informing parents of upcoming interim reports in school newsletters
- Holding kitchen table workshops in parents’ homes to encourage parents to speak freely about their concerns
- Establishing an early warning system for students’ academic and behavioural problems


From 1990 onward any changes in legislation related to reporting were in The Orders of The Minister of Education. The School Act and the Rules and Regulations were maintained throughout this time, but the details about the legislated requirements of reporting were within the Orders.

The Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) became very specific about the requirements of the report card in 1994. Report cards for students in grade K-3 must be in writing and must be related to the expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994). The report must describe what the student is able to do, identify the areas in which the student requires further attention or development, and recommend
ways of supporting the student in his or her learning (Ministry of Education, 1994). Parents must be provided with oral or written comments about the student’s school progress with reference to the expected development for students in a similar age range (Ministry of Education, 1994). In Grades 4-7 reports must contain letter grades in relation to expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum, contain letter grades, unless the board provides the letter grades to parents in a different manner, and written comments with the same requirements as for students from K-3. Also within the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) there were requirements for all written student progress reports (Appendix F). The language was very similar to the language in The Administrative Handbooks from the early eighties; the only difference was that it was now legislated. Over the next few years there was a focus on graduation procedures, but no change to how report cards in Elementary Schools should be presented. The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) was developed and legislated in 1994 to better meet the educational requirements for students with special needs, and allowed teachers to personalize reporting on student progress with those students.

**Increased Legislations 2006-2011**

The legislation relating to reporting student progress in elementary schools was unchanged until 2006 when the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) was amended (M152/05) and became more specific about what should be reported on. Legally the report cards must contain reports on reading, writing, speaking and listening, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Personal Planning, Physical Education and Fine Arts i.e. Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts (Ministry of Education, 2006). These subjects listed above had to be reported on using a legislated performance scale of: not yet meeting, approaching, meeting, and exceeding
expectations (Ministry of Education, 2006). The only exception was that students in Kindergarten were not allowed to receive a ‘not yet meeting’ report (Ministry of Education, 2006). In addition, report cards must report on social responsibility and have a place for a parent to sign acknowledging receipt of the student progress reports (Ministry of Education, 2006).

There was no letter grades legislated until grades 4-5 when students must have letter grades on their report card unless the board provided letter grades to parents in a different document. Students in grade 6 -12 must have letter grades on their reports (M152/05). After this major change to the legislation regarding grading, the only further change to reporting elementary student progress was in 2008 when the subject Personal Planning was removed as a reporting area and Health and Career Education was added; also teachers needed to report on Daily Physical Activity (M269/08) (M265/08).

**The BC Education Plan 2011-2016**

Examining the report card is very timely in British Columbia because right now the province of BC is overhauling its entire curriculum and The Ministry of Education has identified that the method of reporting will have to change. This review process began in 2010 and the goal is that the new curriculum plans will be implemented in 2016. Through consultation and focus groups the Ministry of Education has identified that the purpose of the report card is shifting in BC, and has made the following recommendations:

- Shift language from ‘reporting’ to ‘communicating students’ learnings’
- Support meaningful communication between teachers, parents and learners
- Report on core competencies and key areas of learning
• Focus on learning standards (curricular competencies and content/concepts) in an area of learning (subject)
• Enable on-going communication (with provincial guidelines and support)
• Maintain formal, written summative reports at key times of the year
• Use clear performance standard-based language
• Move towards meaningful description/collection/demonstrations of student learning

(Ministry of Education, 2013.)

These changes have yet to be put in place, and by law any changes to the method of reporting must either also change the legislation or adhere to it. At this time in the history of BC, legislation related to reporting or communicating student progress is of high interest, and educators are still waiting to see how the change will be implemented.

Summary

The history of reporting student progress to parents is long and has gone through many legislative changes in B.C. The purpose of the report card began as a method of teacher accountability in 1879. Then it morphed into having the purpose of supporting student learning and building a cooperative relationship between parents and teachers in the wake of the Progressive movement in 1940. The purpose again changed in the late 1950’s to allow for clear communication of a student’s performance against a standard of achievement. As more control was given to individual school boards between 1960 and 1980 there was more local control
over the report card and its format with an overall understanding that the report card would be a tool for communicating student progress.

There was a sharp change from local control as the 1980’s continued, and the creation of legislated Ministerial Orders regarding student progress reports began. The purpose, as stated in the Annual Reports of the time, was to focus less on students’ performance in comparison with other students and more on their success in achieving more individualized learning. This era came with increased legislation in B.C. regarding student progress reports and there was an even more prescriptive method of reporting that followed in the early 2000s as the language of the performance scale, the identification of who should receive letter grades, and the list of the subject areas that must be reported on using performance scale language was now legislated. This is the current legislation that teachers must legally operate under; however, there is a potential change coming in how education is delivered in BC with the new B.C. curriculum that emerged from the B.C. Education Plan. This historical overview illustrates how legislation related to reporting student progress has changed over time. There have been many shifts and even dramatic changes in education regarding reporting to parents in the past, thus there is no reason that reporting or communicating to parents should be ‘as it has always been’ because there is no such thing.
Chapter 5 Current Assessment Developments: e-portfolios

There are many teachers who have experimented with alternative reporting using e-portfolios and by including observations and experiences of four teachers in this thesis, I can illustrate how e-portfolios are being used in BC, as well as identify strengths and challenges of this method of reporting. I examined e-portfolios because they are a common method of alternative reporting in BC. Four teachers with varying backgrounds and experience in implementing and using e-portfolios were interviewed. They have all had over ten years’ experience teaching and have varying experience with e-portfolios. Mary (pseudonym) has been working in an inner city school on central Vancouver Island and is currently teaching grades 3-4. She has worked with e-portfolios for two years. Jane and Kim team teach kindergarten in a Victoria school district and they have just shared their first e-portfolio with parents. Brad teaches kindergarten in Victoria and used e-portfolios for two years, but no longer does. Each teacher’s voice assists in understanding the strengths and the challenges of implementing one alternative reporting method in the public school system in BC.

The four interviewees identified that their motivation for using e-portfolios stemmed from a discontent with the current reporting system. Brad shared his discontent, “We get this little courageous, curious strong individuals (in kindergarten) and something happens... by grade 10, they are not (courageous, curious, strong individuals) anymore, we are fighting to get them to even have an original thought.” More specifically, they wanted to report in a way that reflected their current classroom practices and communicate these practices more concisely to parents and students than the current system would allow. When Mary spoke about her job as a teacher she said, “I love it, I just want to do and serve these kids and not deal with the
politics.” Of the teachers interviewed, dedication to their teaching practice was obvious as they honestly explored and shared the challenges they had to overcome and they still struggle with e-portfolios, as well as the challenges they could see for a wider adoption of e-portfolios. Throughout our discussion each of the interviewees thought the struggles they experienced were justified because of the ample strengths, both anticipated and unanticipated, they found in using e-portfolios as a reporting method. The benefits of using e-portfolios were experienced by the students, parents and teachers, but with Brad, Jane and Kim it seemed more difficult for administrators to be supportive. Perhaps this is because this type of reporting is extremely individualistic, and makes comparison of students, classes and schools very difficult. In Brad’s opinion their use requires a high level of trust in teachers and their practices.

**Philosophical Approach and Teaching Situation of the Participants**

Mary’s educational philosophy has shifted due to her professional development at the postsecondary level. She focuses her teaching practice on developmentally appropriate practices using a Vygotskian approach and play based learning, and sees herself as a facilitator in her classroom. Her guiding mantra is “Assess what you value and value what you assess.” Mary is part of a supported group in her school district and the group has guiding parameters that have stayed the same throughout the evolution of their e-portfolios. According to the guiding parameters, a teacher must: report on reading, writing and math, use competency language every term, give descriptive feedback, use student voice, have authentic evidence of student work and have the next step for students embedded in the report. The e-portfolio can have any shape, as long as it meets the guiding parameters. Mary’s team’s philosophy also follows an appreciative model. An appreciative model values what is best about a student by
deliberately noticing and heightening their positive potential rather than focusing on what a student cannot do. For example, instead of language about expectations, Mary uses language about support - direct, guided, or independent. An appreciative model leads students to recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution and experience a sense of progress (Barrett, 1995).

Brad focuses his teaching around metacognition and student reflection. He also firmly believes that all the systems in the school need to support the triangle of communication between parents, students and teachers. He believes that if you need a form completed, or your reports done, that it should be further down the priority list than, “Look I am having a conversation with a parent about a kid.” His priority is communicating and providing feedback to student and parents, not paperwork. He makes all the decisions in his classroom, but because of his philosophy he explains “Then us teachers (sic) we better know what we are doing, we better turn out a product that looks like we really know what we are doing. And if your track record as a teacher shows that you can do that, then get out of the way [administrators] and let teachers do it.” His educational philosophy does not include measurement at the elementary level, “Let’s measure them in grade ten,” he says when that information might be needed for post-secondary education or employment: “Kids don’t have to fail so much, we lose our middle school kids because we start measuring and hammering that measurement on them, they are not emotionally ready for that hammering. We are forcing kids to hit these marks [standards], what is it that we are trying to do?” He believes that e-portfolios can address this as long as the e-portfolio focuses on the process of learning and is self-driven by the student.
The team teachers Jane and Kim have a very collaborative approach to education which was apparent from the way they worked together. They have been teaching in adjoining classrooms, trying new approaches together and discussing their practices for 5 years. They are very new to e-portfolios and are still trying out ways of using them to help align with their educational approach of sharing their students’ learning with parents. They believe that “continual feedback to parents is valuable, and that it [reporting] doesn’t have to be this final thing.” Also they value student participation in the reporting of student achievement by providing a reporting method that is picture-based; the students can ‘see’ their learning. Their guiding philosophy to using e-portfolios is that if education and the process of learning were more visible to parents, than it would be more valued.

Discontent with the Current System

While each teacher interviewed had different reasons for using alternative reporting, there was a common thread of real discontent with the current legislated practice of reporting. They all spoke about the difficulty of labelling students as ‘not meeting’ or ‘approaching expectations’. This was a struggle for Mary, because this type of labeling didn’t seem to honour the efforts of the students, rather it was discouraging them. Jane and Kim had more of an issue with the age of the child, believing it was a flawed system that labels kids as young as four as ‘approaching expectations’ causing the student and parent to believe that the student is already failing. Brad’s quote captures the general feeling of all the teachers interviewed regarding the legislated labels used, “We have to put these arbitrary markers in education, especially in grade one. I don’t think human development works like that. What is normal? I
don’t think we have a good handle on that.” He goes on to explain that, “For children to meet these markers it is about compliance, not critical thinking.”

Mary and Brad both spoke to the subjectivity of report cards. Mary explains, “Your 2 is different that my 2, inner city vs upper-class... So subjective.” She highlights other annoyances with traditional report cards, like only reporting on a Prescribed Learning Outcome (PLO) once a year, or getting a ‘not yet meeting expectations’ in the fall report on learning outcomes that the student is not required to meet until June. Brad also spoke about his frustration with the subjectivity of the PLOs themselves. He said, “These PLO things that are either so jargon [filled] because they have to be so encompassing about a process that it is meaningless or so specific that they don’t matter. It has to be so literal or so general that no one really can understand what the PLOs really mean.”

Reason for Using E-portfolios

Even though all these teachers are discontented with the legislative reporting guidelines as laid out in the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94), they all have different approaches to reporting on students’ progress and they all looked to e-portfolios to address their concerns. Mary firmly believes that BC needs to shift from a rate-based report card that is focused on when students should learn material to a growth [progress] based reporting method, which would honour the student’s journeys and celebrate their successes. She sees the use of e-portfolios as a way to address this much-needed shift. Brad’s reasoning for using e-portfolios aligns closely with Mary’s, but he highlights the importance of “a visual representation of the process of learning” and his focus is on metacognition. He says that, “It [metacognition] has to
be embedded in the process of reporting to parents, it is a way of thinking.” The e-portfolio can do this because it can be done in the student’s voice and shares their way of thinking.

Jane and Kim’s approach is somewhat similar to Brad’s because it focuses on making learning visible, especially to the parents. Motivated by the way teachers were portrayed in the media during past strike action, Jane and Kim are committed to showing parents that the work that happens in a kindergarten classroom is important and purposeful.

**Challenges**

None of the teachers believed that shifting reporting styles would be easy. They all had experienced and found challenges of their own, they all looked forward to the challenges in the future. Jane and Kim, and Brad were both expected to produce the traditional report card as well as the e-portfolio which added to their workload. Mary was significantly more supported by her administration and was able to work around many of the rules around requirements for reporting student progress that are legislated in BC. Jane and Kim noted that support from administration would make the process of creating and working with e-portfolios better. They applied for a grant themselves to acquire more IPads for their class to make documentation for the e-portfolios easier. Brad agrees that support from administration is critical, but goes one step further and identifies a real need for leadership, especially for using technology. He identifies that “the difficulty that middle management is having in adopting to new ways is a real stumbling block [and] that when you are doing something like this [e-portfolios], you are a bit on the edge, and you need an administrator who is backing you up.”

The technology itself comes with limitations. Mary explains that when it comes to e-portfolio format and platform, “There is nothing yet that is perfect.” And Brad does admit that
you need a fair bit of knowledge of technology to use an e-portfolio. “Sometimes file conversion is needed and we are getting closer to creating the files and it [student work] going directly into the portfolio in one step, which is better.” Jane and Kim spend much of their own time working with, and learning about the technology. Their first week of spring break was dedicated to creating their students’ e-portfolios. Even Brad, with a lot of technological exposure, comments that when you start to use them they are a lot of work because you have to get to know how to use new technology. After a teacher gets over the beginning hump though, Brad believes that the e-portfolio and the traditional report card take the same amount of work, but the time to maintain the e-portfolio is spread out over the school year.

When discussing a wider adoption of e-portfolios in education in BC there are more potential challenges because using e-portfolios doesn’t mean good reporting is being done. Jane and Kim put in a lot of effort to keep the reporting authentic and not fluffy. Mary clarifies that, “e portfolios aren’t about selfies, it is purposeful.” For Jane and Kim an e-portfolio is more than cute pictures of cute kids, it is about honouring the students’ work and educating parents about what is really happening in the classroom. And Brad warns that, “If people use an e-portfolio to showcase polished work, then it can be used incorrectly.” He views the correct way to use an e-portfolio is to focus on the process of learning and thinking and not on the final product. These teachers suggest that there needs to be a clearly understood purpose and process for the use of e-portfolios.

There will also have to be a shift in teaching practice for some teachers. Mary stated that for “teachers who aren’t teaching one on one, this will be very challenging and in team teaching, both teachers need to need to have the same approach to reporting.” Brad explains
that, “You have to be a process oriented teacher; [e-portfolios] force you to become a more constructive teacher. [e-portfolios] push teachers to get at – ‘what are you thinking when you are doing this?’ [It] changes the way you teach, away from a didactic way (sic) to teach.” By using a different method of reporting student progress that focuses on the process of student learning, teachers will have to adjust how they teach so that they can share that process with an e-portfolio.

Another issue that came up for Kim and Jane is how to communicate to parents when a student is not meeting learning expectations. They don’t want to put a negative comment on a picture or imply the student has not mastered a concept. They ask, “Is there a place to say, this is a concern? How can the e-portfolios address that?” Mary addresses this issue by separating PLOs from the e-portfolio. She believes that the e-portfolio tells a story of a child’s learning journey and is separate from whether or not a student is meeting learning outcomes. This gives the e-portfolio a very different purpose than the traditional report card which is all about comparing a child to a standard. This shift in teaching ideology will be a challenge for some teachers, especially because reporting your students’ progress in relation to a provincial standard set by the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) is currently legislated in BC.

Identifying the information that parents, and perhaps other audiences, want is an important part of developing an e-portfolio. Both Mary and the team teachers identify a need for balance, “Is there such thing as too much information?” One parent explains to Jane and Kim that they would not like an e-portfolio app on their phone indicating when the e-portfolio was updated by saying, “I don’t want a ‘bing’ every day with a little highlight of learning.”
Both the team teachers and Mary identify a need for educating parents about not only how to understand e-portfolios, but also how to participate in their use. Jane and Kim explain that this type of reporting is a huge mind shift for parents. This mind shift would also be needed for many teachers. Jane and Kim would like the e-portfolio platform to even go so far as notifying them when a parent is accessing the portfolio to confirm that the information is getting to the parent.

Looking towards the implementation of the new BC curriculum and a new student information system in his district, Brad is a little concerned with how the province is going to address e-portfolios. Many different operating systems can be used to develop e-portfolios and Brad is concerned that if the province supports one, it might be for the administrative reasons. He sees districts focusing on learning management systems with little thought to the e-portfolio’s purpose. “The problem with where our district is, [is the] adoption of a learning management system -whether it is Fresh Grade or MyedBC - is that people are going to focus on the learning management. [Focusing on] assigning things, marking things, collecting and reporting them, they are going to forget what an e-portfolio is. The problem with focusing on a learning management system is that it focuses on the summative, it is not formative process-based learning. Learning management systems are really saleable, the e-portfolio [is] harder to [sell].” There is little direction on how to use an e-portfolio or which one to use, but there are clear steps to using a learning management system, it is more of an information management system than a learning tool and can be prescriptive. School districts want to change the way reporting student progress is done to better align with the BC Education Plan, and Brad is
concerned that they are looking to buy an easy management solution rather than e-portfolios that can benefit students’ learning.

Mary did bring up the issue of information security and parents sometimes feel uncomfortable with student information being stored in the USA, but Brad explains that he only posts information that puts the child is a positive light and is password protected. Given those factors, he feels that there is reasonable security.

**The Power of the E-portfolio**

Even with all the challenges in using e-portfolios, there are many strengths that the teachers using them identified. All of the teachers interviewed appreciated that the e-portfolio could give a clear picture of what the student is working on and what they are working towards. Mary says that portfolios, “Can move a student forward, not focus on where they start, or where they finish, but focus on how far they came.” This was a real benefit for Mary, who focuses on an appreciative model of acknowledging learning successes rather than a deficit model of ‘not yet meeting’. Brad acknowledges that e-portfolios can be in the voice of the student, and better reflect the student’s way of being, a major strength when compared to the traditional report card that is in the teacher’s voice. For Mary and Brad it was really important that the e-portfolio represents the process of learning over the content of learning. The use of audio and visual technology makes the process more accessible for younger students. This visibility then leads to the next strength of the e-portfolio, and that is the opportunity for reflection about learning for both the students and the teachers. Brad has found that audio and visual technology provides the clearest and most powerful information. “There is room for what did you do well, and what would you do better next time, and the teacher can confirm [the
As Kim and Jane review the photos they have taken to document the students learning to put in an e-portfolio, they notice more about what the students are achieving that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

One of the most rewarding aspects of using the e-portfolio was that parents and students became more engaged in school and in the students’ learning. The e-portfolio has places where the parents and the child can comment, and parents also shared their access with grandparents, thus widening the audience for the student’s achievements in their learning. This feature is very useful for parents who live in different cities or travel for work. There were comments to Jane and Kim from working parents, who don’t do pick up and drop off at the school, who are happy they can see what is happening in the classroom. Also some parents in Mary’s school are uncomfortable coming into school due to prior experience with public education or residential schools, and e-portfolios allowed them to participate in and see their child’s learning. Not only are parents becoming more engaged, so are the students. Kim and Jane notice that their students loved to look at themselves in the pictures and notice “What they were doing and what they were learning about.” And this engagement crossed over to the home as well. A parent in Brad’s class noticed that her child really knew what she was doing and why she was doing it by watching videos of her learning. All the teachers interviewed spoke of the joy the kids had sharing their learning though the portfolio at home and Brad and Mary mentioned how pleased they were with how the portfolio was very effective as a jumping off point for discussion between parent and child.

Having e-portfolios as a tool for reflection and engagement of parents and students in learning celebrates the process of learning and is a major strength of the e-portfolio. This is
what motivated these teachers to use them. However, there were a few unexpected strengths that came to light with the practice of e-portfolios. Kim, Jane, and Brad all identified that e-portfolios were able to demonstrate criteria better than a written description. One parent of a child in Brad’s class noticed that his child could make many mistakes and still be doing all right in reading. Jane and Kim explain that if a descriptor says that a student is beginning to make out beginning and middle sounds, as a parent you can see what that looks like through work samples. This provides a much clearer picture than without the work sample. Criteria can be a tricky thing to understand, as applied to Kindergarten, Brad explains,

“...Especially for kindergarten, the developmental range is so wide. I have kids that are reading... some that find the alphabet a tricky thing. It is still both within OK, but I felt that with the portfolio... it was easier to represent and talk about it.”

A simple yet powerful observation by all of the teachers was that they got to know their students better. Mary took it one step further and says it is more than getting to know the students better, but also showing how well she knows her students through e-portfolios. Brad, who is no longer using portfolios because he felt unsupported by administration, says that he felt like he knew the children better when he used portfolios and for that reason he might go back to using them.

The versatility of e-portfolios allows for students of different abilities to be reported on equally and have reporting be a positive part of their education. Mary has found parents of struggling learners are saying that this is the first time the student has gotten a positive report card, even if the student needs guided support, the portfolio is about seeing the child as an individual and happy at school. The same benefit is felt on the other side of the spectrum. Mary
was talking with a teacher that is using e-portfolios with students in older grades when disengagement often sets in. This other teacher noticed that students who would work for an A would only do enough to get the A. However with the way she used e-portfolios, there were no limits, there was no, ‘this is what an A looks like’. This lead to engaging students in their learning process and also leads them to perform at a higher level in her class. Also Brad discovered that the e-portfolio can demonstrate a difference in abilities, for example, a highly complex oral story captured by video, accompanied by a poorly drawn picture or struggling writing shows intelligence and areas that need improvement while, at the same time, helping parents to understand their child’s abilities.

The teachers all touched on something that was a bit abstract as far as a strength of e-portfolios. The e-portfolio allowed for the teachers to teach within their teaching philosophy and share that with parents. E-portfolios will be useful for teachers who feel as if they are teaching one way, (either to support students of all abilities, like Mary, or to make learning visible like Kim and Jane, or to promote metacognition like Brad) and are forced to report in another way - three formal report cards a year with legislated language. Mary found the flexibility of reporting times, and the students’ next step embedded in the e-portfolios was a great strength of the e-portfolios. The use of pictures in reporting student achievement was extremely helpful to Kim and Jane. Having student’s reflections on their work using video clips strongly supported Brad’s metacognitive approach to teaching. All teachers might not identify these individual strengths of e-portfolios, because they don’t align with their teaching methods, but the flexibility of e-portfolios allow teachers to teach and assess within their own philosophical educational approach.
When the teachers were asked about the BC Ed Plan they all seemed to like the document and were hopeful about its implementation. Mary said, “I already am doing it in my classroom.” And Brad reflected that, “When I think about the new competencies, which are critical thinking and ... communication..., I think it is fantastic and portfolios are bang on for the whole process.” Kim and Jane noted that, “Portfolios are going to work better if we are going to talk about critical thinking and collaboration and more project-based learning. I don’t know how you can really report that on paper report card format.” Even though Brad is concerned about learning management systems being implemented under the guise of being an e-portfolio, he does remain hopeful about the implementation of the BC Ed Plan.

This next year will be a very interesting one in BC as teachers, administrators and policy makers navigate the BC education system to implement a large change in curriculum and the teaching philosophy in the BC Ed plan. All teachers interviewed saw e-portfolios as central in this implementation.

Summary

The four teachers interviewed had different reasons for looking to e-portfolios for communicating student achievement. Even though their reasons for using e-portfolios were different, there was alignment in their discussion of the strengths and the challenges of the e-portfolio. The most meaningful information in these interviews is the identification of the challenges because if the challenges outweigh the strengths, teachers will not engage in this type of communication. The work in the implementation of e-portfolios is addressing these challenges. Brad did identify that he would go back to portfolios because he liked to know his
students well and to share that knowing with their parents, but currently the challenge of unsupportive administration was stopping him. The amount of work that Kim and Jane put into the development of e-portfolios: their own time to apply for funding, technology that was not easy to use, learning how to create an e-portfolio. This type of time investment is not sustainable for teachers. Yes, it would become easier with experience, but without the support of administration and perhaps release time, I can see major challenges with the implementation of e-portfolios. Kim and Jane were asked to present their work at a staff meeting, and they were concerned that once they explained how much work they had done, others might not want to engage in a similar process. Mary’s experience is inspiring and encouraging. With the support of administration and the go ahead to break some rules to improve communication of students’ learning, her time and energy could be focused on other challenges. With this support Mary could focus on her teaching, assessing, communicating, and perhaps solving the few technology blips that came up.

It is clear to me through these interviews that these teachers feel passionate about their teaching philosophies, and this passion led them to use e-portfolios to help them communicate learning in a way that reflected their teaching practice. It wasn’t the e-portfolio that inspired them to use this alternative method of reporting, rather aligning their practices with their educational philosophies and values was the inspiration, and e-portfolios was the tool.
Chapter 6 Analysis

Review of Major Findings

An examination of the history of report cards in BC revealed that over time the purpose of these reports have not been consistent. In the early years of the report card in BC, it was clear that the purpose of report cards was to hold teachers accountable for their teaching practices. C. C. Mckenzie, the Superintendent of Education at the time, states in the 8th Annual Report on Public School that the report card will allow for, “evils of defective inspections are by these means somewhat guarded against” (The Superintendent of Education, 1880, p.162). He was referring to inspections of classrooms done in the province to inform the government in Victoria about the delivery of education and ensure that tax dollars were being well spent. This was the nature of the report card for forty years until the Progressivist movement in the early twentieth century influenced the Putman and Wier Survey of the School System in 1925. This report was followed by a Progressive period in education when Weir was the Minister of Education (Dunae (ed), 2011). The purpose of the report card shifted slightly so that while there was still an expectation of teacher accountability, there was also a strong focus to compare a child only to his own rate of growth, in relation to his own ability (Dunae (ed), 2011). This new method of reporting was supported for some time and the purpose of the report card was clearly stated in a magazine put out by the Department of Education for teachers called, the British Columbia Schools, Elementary Edition (1946):

The major purpose of the report card is to inform parents as to the growth of the child at school, to assist the child in evaluating his own growth, to encourage parents in co-
operation with the school to further the growth of the child and to bring about more
cordial relations between home and school (p.49).

The purpose of the report card now had three functions; to demonstrate teacher
accountability, to compare a child’s growth only to her/himself, and to build a positive
relationship between home and school.

There seemed to be a push back by parents to this Progressivist method of reporting in
the 1950s. They preferred easily comparable information like percentages over a non-
competitive reporting. Even though the educational philosophy supported non-competitive
methods of reporting, parents wanted to know how their child compared to others. In 1950
during an interview with Mr. H.L. Campbell, the Assistant Superintendent of Education at the
time, the interviewer suggested that parents wanted percentages in each subject on reports
because they would be more exact and informative for parents (Department of Education,
1950). Education in the late 1950’s was very much influenced by Race to Space that spurred a
Back-to-Basics educational approach. The use of percentages was supported by the Royal
Commission of 1960 which concluded that the best way to report on students’ achievement
was percentages because it was the simplest for parents to understand (Chant, Liersch , &
Walrod, 1960).

This desire for an easily comparable and competitive method of reporting was
reinforced by the western world’s reaction to the Sputnik launch in 1957. The perception that
the western world was losing the Space Race resulted in an examination of education systems
(Sullivan, 1988). The global comparison of education systems reinforced the requirement to
report student academic achievement in an easily comparative way as well as in terms of standards of expected progress. Although the legislations did not require a comparison of students’ progress, the use of percentages and measurement against standards in report cards encouraged comparison of student achievement.

As time went by, there was more freedom in the method of reporting student progress as the format of the report card fell to individual boards of education within BC. However the Ministry of Education identified a need for transferability of information in report cards between districts. In the draft of *The Administrative Handbook* in 1979 it was reinforced that there is a need for a common basis for understanding the report card irrespective of where parents live, work or move in the province (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 1979).

It is important to note that up until the 1980s there had been 6 different and often conflicting purposes of the report card layered on top of each other: teacher accountability; assisting the child to evaluate growth; encouragement of parents to co-operate with the teacher; improvement of home and school relationships; easy comparison of students to each other and to standards; and the transferability of student achievement information.

The format of student progress information had not been overly legislated before the 1980s and in fact there was a suggestion that as a student progresses though the years, he or she might be working at different levels in one or more areas of the curriculum and the report card needed to reflect instructional practices for each student by indicating the level and achievement of the student in each area of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1981). In other words, the report card format had to be flexible enough to report individual student
achievement as he or she worked through the many levels of curriculum thus allowing for individual progress of students to be recognized as well as a need for comparison to a standard level of achievement.

In the early 1980’s the comparison of student achievement was discouraged by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 1982), but the demand for it still came from the parents as first noted in The Royal Commission in 1960. However some parents were changing their attitude over time, and in a poll reported in the Annual Report: July 1. 1989 to June 30,1990, parents showed an overwhelming preference for anecdotal comments to letter grades, information less easily comparable (Ministry of Education, 1990).

There has been no clear re-purposing of report cards from 1979 until the present. There was an increase in legislation in 1994 as reported in the Manual of School Law: Release 22, to identify what information needed to be reported and the method of reporting. Report cards for students in grades K-3, the legislation stated, must be in writing and must be related to the expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994). The report must describe what the student is able to do, identify the areas in which the student requires further attention or development, and recommend ways of supporting the student in his or her learning. The report must also provide parents with oral or written comments about the student’s school progress with reference to the expected development for students in a similar age range (Ministry of Education, 1994). In Grades 4-7 reports must contain letter grades in relation to the expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum, unless the board provides the letter grades to parents in a different manner, and the report must include written comments with the same requirements as for students from K-3 (M191/94). The requirement
that the report must show student progress in reference to expected development for students within a similar age range emphasised that comparison of student achievement was an important aspect of the report cards (M191/94). In 2005 legislation described the specific language for reporting (M152/05). The language of, “not yet meeting, approaching, meeting and exceeding expectations” made it very difficult for teachers to report on student progress with reference to their own growth and limited teachers to only report student progress in terms of a standard of achievement legislated by the province in relation to the expected outcomes described in the yearly curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Looking back over the history of reporting we see changes in the importance of the comparison of students. During the Progressivist era the advice from The Ministry to only compare students to their own growth has woven its way through the history of reporting, popping up in the early 1950s, then again in 1990. The current legislation does not support comparing students to their own growth. A tension between educational theory and the practical needs of a competitive world was an ongoing struggle that has not been resolved.

The various purposes of report cards over time are reflected in the inconsistency of current classroom and reporting practices. Differences in teachers’ philosophies of education and a broad spectrum of student needs due to variations in geographical location, family background, student ability, and parental expectation, have lead teachers to look for an alternative to the traditional report card format to better meet the student’s needs. The four teachers I interviewed all used the e-portfolio as an alternative format to report student progress for many different reasons and in very different ways. Mary used it to show continual growth regardless of the curricular level the student was achieving, Brad used it to reinforce
metacognitive learning and Kim and Jane used it to share the importance of the work they do to support children’s learning with parents. But a deeper examination of the way each of these teachers used e-portfolios showed one unifying purpose: to inform parents of what is happening in the classroom and what their child is actually doing and achieving. Each of the teachers was teaching in accordance with their own teaching philosophy. Mary focused on celebrating learning at student’s academic level, Brad focused on promoting metacognition and Kim and Jane focused on sharing students’ work with parents. Their classrooms looked different and the information being reported on also looked different. Brad used mostly video clips, Mary used work samples with limited comments, and Kim and Jan used written paragraphs for almost all the students’ work samples. The purpose of sharing the learning that was happening in the class with the parents was a unifying factor.

Implications

When I cross referenced the purpose of the report card as stated in the historical government documents with how the teachers used the e-portfolio there was common ground: the e-portfolio assisted children to evaluate their own growth, encouraged parents to co-operate with the teacher, improved home and school relationships, and demonstrated accountability by showing parents what learning was taking place in the classroom.

Each of the teachers in my study has been discontented with the current system of reporting on student progress, not because they disagreed with informing parents of student progress and other legislated purposes, but because they do not like the way the current legislated system forces teachers to label students for comparison and they each had a sense of the unacknowledged subjectivity and lack of depth of the report card. The four teachers
interviewed noticed a higher level of engagement on the part of parents and students through the use of e-portfolios; as well, the teachers had a better understanding and knowledge of their students. They felt strongly that the current reporting system supports a reward or punitive method of feedback by using alphabetical or numerical grading, whereas the e-portfolio allows a student learning to be shared in a non-competitive or comparative way. This highlights a conflict between the legislation introduced in 1994 and 2006 and some of historical purposes of the report card.

**Multiple Purposes**

Two purposes found in the history of reporting on student progress legislation, transferability and comparability, are not being fully met by the use of e-portfolios by the four teachers interviewed. This brings up an interesting conundrum. How many purposes can one document have? There are three critical aspects in creating a reporting system. What information do we want to communicate, who is the audience and how would we like the information to be used? (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). One reason that reporting reform efforts often fail is that systems try to accomplish too much with a single reporting device (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). When there are many purposes for one method of reporting it is often because there are many audiences. Then the question is, do all the audiences need the same information? In personal correspondence with Damian Cooper, who has specialized in assessment for more than 25 years in Canada, he says, no. At the CAfLN conference on April 10, 2015 Cooper explained that students need feedback, parents need information about progress and ways to support their child. He focused on the information that teachers, post-secondary institutions, and employers need; however he overlooked administrators. Living in a small
transient community, I recognize that there is a need for transferability of student achievement information to facilitate an easier transition for students moving around the province. When a student transfers school all that goes with them is their permanent record with their past report cards. Ensuring students can transfer though different schools in the province is a reasonable goal for an administrator. This is often when the discussion turns to Student information Systems (SIS) because of the cross over between reporting on student progress and managing the information regarding student progress. BC acquired and implemented BCeSIS more than ten years ago and this province wide web-based system provides common access for educators and administrator to each student record (Gartner, 2011). The primary uses of BCeSIS are administrative - student registration and transfers, course scheduling and timetables, and ministry reporting (Gartner, 2011).

The Ministry of Education has looked at how to improve the SIS and after consulting with stakeholders they found that to provide personalized learning a SIS

...must be flexible enough to support and assess student progress using a variety of approaches. It must ensure student and parent online access to relevant information and allow them to communicate effectively with teachers. An emphasis on personalised learning requires, on the whole, a system that enhances collaboration and provides multiple platforms to design and track individualized learning plans. (Elevate Consulting, 2012. p. 15)

The Ministry of Education has been using BCeSIS to manage student information related to accountability, transferability and comparison and also to provide a template to create
report cards. The purpose of the desired SIS, as outlined above, overlaps heavily with some of the purposes of the traditional report card. A separation between the system of student information management and the system of reporting on student progress would allow for more flexibility in meeting the purposes of assisting children to evaluate their personal growth, encourage parents to co-operate with the teacher and improve home and school relationships.

Brad, one of the teachers interviewed, is nervous about school districts focusing on what he calls learning management systems such as SIS, and not e-portfolios. Learning management systems are focused on the management of student data and not on the formative assessment process that can be demonstrated by using e-portfolios. Brad worries that, “People are going to focus on the learning management. [Focusing on] assigning things, marking things, collecting and reporting them.... The problem with focusing on a learning management system is that it focuses on the summative, it is not formative process-based learning.” If educators try to use one learning management system to meet the need for transferability and comparison and of reporting on individual student progress then Brad’s fears may be realised. Two separate systems are needed, one SIS and another for reporting student progress. This will allow both systems to better meet their purposes because, as has been stated before, when a single reporting system tries to accomplish too much the reporting reform efforts often fail (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). If the report card’s purpose is to assist the child to evaluate growth, encourage parents to co-operate with the teacher, and improve home and school relationships the stakeholders who would benefit from a system like e-portfolio are parents, students and teachers. The SIS development fulfills the needs of the administrators in the school districts to manage their information, and allow the student information to be
transferable. It can be looked at this way: teachers may need to provide two types of information, one for parents and students to meet the purposes stated above of reporting on student progress, and one for administration to manage, transfer and compare student information.

If there is a separation of the administrative needs for transferability and comparison from reporting on student progress to parents and students, then the implementation of e-portfolios is a good option for reporting on student progress to parents. It is important to acknowledge that the e-portfolio is not a methodology, it is a tool. Individual schools and districts need to determine a unified purpose and systems for using an e-portfolio to provide consistence. Mary, a teacher I interviewed, refers to guiding parameters as a way to ensure that the e-portfolio is used as a tool to teach individual students within a unified method. The guiding parameters in her school district are that teachers must report on reading, writing and math, use competency language every term, give descriptive feedback, have student voice, provide authentic evidence of student work, and they must embed the next step for students in the report. There is no more regulation than that, and the group that she works with is not required to follow the legislated guidelines. Similarly in Campbell River, the school district has come up with guidelines for reporting. Teachers must send home a learning sample (either via e-portfolio or paper copies) twice a month based on two monthly goals decided on by the district before the school year starts. The elementary students only get one formal report card that goes home at the end of the year that does not contain numbers or letter grades and is a series of rubrics representing each of the learning areas (personal communication, May 14, 2015).
These two school districts looked at how they wanted to improve communicating with parents, and found that using e-portfolios were the best tool. Mary’s school district and the Campbell River School District were able to put in place student-centred reporting methods with the support of the administrative staff. Unfortunately the other teachers interviewed used e-portfolios on their own, without administrative support or overarching guidelines provide by the school or district. Sustained use of e-portfolios to support better communication between school and home needs to be supported by a change in schools and school districts away from the current reporting model.

**Organizational Change**

Within any organization, change can be a difficult thing. One of the key attributes of an organization that can change its practice is trust, says Steven Covey Jr (2006). Organizations with low trust will have redundancy, bureaucracy, politics, disengagement, turnover, and fraud (Covey, 2006). On the other hand an organization with high trust will have increased value, accelerated growth, enhanced innovation improved collaboration, stronger partnering, better execution and heightened loyalty (Covey, 2006). Developing a trusting environment is paramount to supporting change, but it takes more than that, it also takes collective ability to conceptualize and operationalize change initiatives (Case, 1994). Case (1994) explains,

We need to enhance significantly our capacity to competently effect any systemic intervention. In popularizing reform we typically corrupt the initiatives by oversimplifying the issue, over generalizing the reform’s application, and translating intricate approaches into recipe-like process (p. 80).
Teachers and administrators need to have a common understanding of what the desired purpose and practice is for communicating student progress to parents. When describing what is needed for educational reform Case (1994) explains, “Many individual teachers possess a rich understanding of the current reform initiative, but many is not enough: successful systematic reform depends on widespread success in schools and classroom.” He is talking about curricular integration, but his observations about educational reform can be extended to student progress reporting reform. This purpose for reporting student progress is distinct from the purpose for reporting student achievement data for administrative purposes and universal understanding of this dichotomy is essential in student progress reporting reform.

In any educational reform, there are two levels of change required; change in practice and change in policy. For change in practice to occur a trusting culture within an organization is needed and every individual needs to have a deep understanding of the change. For policy, such as the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) to change we need to look to the Ministry of Education. The most current BC Education plan has highlighted all the work that the Ministry of Education has been doing over the last 3 years. According to the BC Education Plan...

research reinforces our knowledge that no two students learn the same way or at the same pace and that effective learning is far more than just memorizing information – it is really about getting students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. The best outcomes are achieved through learner-centred approaches that are sensitive to individual and group differences, that promote inclusive and collaborative learning, that harness students’ passions and interests, and that deliver tailored feedback and coaching (Ministry of Education, 2015. p. 3).
If teachers are expected to teach in a way that reflects this new direction from The Ministry, it is important that reporting student progress also reflect this direction. There is some language regarding reporting and assessment in the BC Education Plan,

Learning is assessed and reported in meaningful ways that help students improve....As learning becomes more personalized, educators will need more flexibility to decide how and when each student is assessed. New tools and approaches are needed to provide better access, richer information, and greater consistency across the province on student progress. Reporting should move from periodic events to an ongoing conversation with parents about their child’s progress and learning objectives (Ministry of Education, 2015. p. 9).

The Ministry of Education (2015) also promises that, “Parents will have access to richer and more real-time information about their child’s progress through the new MyEducationBC student information system starting in the 2015/16 school year” (p.8).

Despite my concerns about a SIS having too many purposes to maximize all the benefits of an e-portfolio, I am reminded that e-portfolios and SIS are tools not methodologies. If the tools are used in accordance with a sound methodological approach then they can be very useful. If it is assumed that because you are using a certain tool, a sound methodological approach is being used, then there is faulty logic and there is room for inappropriate use of the tools.
The statement of responsibility in the 2015 BC Education Plan clearly states who is going to be accountable for this change in educational delivery and reporting, “There is no top-down instruction manual on how to move personalized learning from concept to everyday practice. Educators on the ground will need to innovate and identify successful approaches” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 17). Clearly teachers will be held accountable for implementing the BC Education plan.

Teachers in the classroom are going to have to continue to challenge the status quo to have real change occur in the classroom. Looking at Mary’s district and Campbell River district, they are forgoing following the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) and focusing their efforts on their practice in the hope that their practice can inform policy. This is good practice for their particular situations, but if educators all across BC are going to follow in their footsteps there is need for a significant change in policy at the government level because the language around reporting student progress in the Student Progress Report Order (M191/94) is too restrictive to allow and encourage teachers to truly innovate their reporting practice.

This is a great opportunity for teachers to evoke real change in education in BC, but there are also many challenges. Teachers, like some of the ones I interviewed, might not have the resources or the support from their administrators to allow them the freedom to be innovative.

Conclusion

After examining the history of the purpose of the report card I identified that there have been six different purposes over the history of reporting on student progress in BC. Along with these historical purposes there has been constant debate between a need for a common
standard report card and the need for local control over the report card to be formatted to be personalized for each student’s progress. As this debate raged on, the Government of BC has, particularly since 1994, increased the prescriptive nature of the report card to such a degree that teachers and school have lost a lot of ability to report student progress in a way that aligns with most of the purposes of report cards found in the historical document analysis. Such as, assisting a child to evaluate their growth, encouraging parents to co-operate with the teacher to support a child and improving the home and school relationship. This disconnect between the strict regulations and the purposes for in the historical documents is even further complicated with the drive the teachers today have to share with parents what is actually happening in the classroom and how the child is progressing in relation to their own progress as well as their progress against a standard. With the strict detailed and legislated format of the report card, teachers are finding that they cannot use the report card to support the type of communication needed to support a child academic progress. The four teachers interviewed turned to e-portfolio in search of a better tool for communicating student progress in a way to promote learning. Unfortunately, three of the four teachers interviewed were required to complete a traditional report card as well as an e-portfolio if they chose to use the e-portfolio format. The e-portfolio addressed many of the historical purposes of the report card but missed the mark on two purposes, transferability and comparability. I have determined that these two purposes are administrative in nature and perhaps systems of information sharing need to be split depending on the purpose of the information. There are three types of student achievement information: information that supports student learning and informs parents of the student progress; information that is needed to track students and show their progress and
transferability; and information to measure the success of an educational program. It is important that these three types of information are treated differently since they serve three different purposes. When just focusing on the information that supports student learning and informs parents of the student progress then an appropriate system to communicate the information to parents and students can be determined. Splitting up the information will allow for a reporting method to better meet its purpose, and reforming the method of reporting student progress can finally occur as long as there is trust within the educational system and understanding of the rationale behind the reform.

The indication that such a reform is needed is apparent in the BC Education Plan document, and the method the Ministry had set forth for starting this reform is to look to teachers for innovations. It is important to note that there is much work needed at the Ministry level as well. One challenging hurdle is the prescriptive nature of the current legislation regarding reporting student progress; this language will have to be removed or changed for real reform to occur.

After reading all the Annual Reports of the Ministries responsible for K-12 education, the Manuals of School Law, Royal Commissions and other ministry documents, I have learned that there have been ebbs and flows of educational reform that reflect the different educational philosophy at the time. As these philosophies have shifted from Formalism, Progressivism and Back to Basics, the most notable sustained change over time is that there has been an increase in legislation. This has been done in an effort to unify reporting methods in the province, but what has actually occurred is BC now has a legislated reporting method that is detrimental to student engagement and the process relies heavily on reward and punishment. After
Interviewing teachers who are using the alternative reporting method of e-portfolios, I have learned that teachers have recognized the detrimental effects of BC legislated method of reporting on students’ progress and are pioneering their way through developing, not only a personalized reporting method for students, but also a method that is very personalized to a teacher’s teaching philosophy. They are seeing great success in their students’ progress. This success is due to the clarity in the communication of student progress an e-portfolio provides. The teachers I interviewed all had different focuses; honouring the student’s journeys and celebrating their successes; or metacognition; or making learning visible to the parents.

When we look at any reform to BC education the effect on the aboriginal population must be considered. With the e-portfolio, I see the benefits to areas that are a real struggle in our aboriginal student populations, areas such as student engagement and parental involvement. If we as teachers provide an assessment model that honours our aboriginal students’ voices and is built on an appreciative model I see great potential for increasing our aboriginal students’ engagement in school and this has the potential to increase their parents’ engagement. As an educator who works with aboriginal students I agree with Laura Tait who at the Canadian Assessment for Learning Network Conference in March, 2015 said, “As educators, if we practice wise pedagogy we are going to scoop up 80% of our aboriginal students and that is not happening right now.” Currently in BC, 11% of our public school system student population self-identify as aboriginal and only 62% of those students graduate, where as 86% of non-aboriginal students graduate (Analysis and Reporting Unit, 2014).

With my new understanding of the purposes of reporting student progress I am going to look at my own practices and see how I can bring more clarity to my communication with
students and parents about student’s learning in hopes of engaging the students in their progress. As I am moving back into my classroom I understand the real life pressure on teachers to meet the needs of their students, and sometimes changing practice can seem like an overwhelming task. I have learned from the teachers I interviewed that change is not a quick switch; it is a process to be engaged with. My immediate change in practice is to always have student work samples on hand and share these samples with parents at any opportunity, be it at a Parents Advisory meeting, or at pick up time. I have also begun to photocopy work and fax it to parents. My work now is to frame this communication of learning in a more formalized method that allows for continual documentation. I have also learned that an important element of change is to be a part of a supportive community. I have connected with other teachers in my district who are interested in changing the way they report and we are scheduling regular meetings for discussion, sharing and reflection on practice.

Unfortunately, I too will run into difficulties with meeting my students’ needs at the same time I will have to fulfill the legislated requirements regarding reporting on student progress and will end up reporting using two different methods. After seeing the amazing results the teachers I have interviewed have seen, I am motivated to clearly share with students and their family their learning successes in relation to their ability and their way of thinking.

Looking to the future of reporting student progress in BC, I am excited to watch the changes that will occur as a result of the BC Education Plan and am hopeful that the legislation will change to allow for a reporting method that promotes student learning.
Recommendations

First and foremost the current legislated language in BC regarding reporting on student progress must be abolished to support a reporting system that supports student learning.

The ministry needs to identify three types of information: information that supports student learning and informs parents of student progress; information that is needed to track students and show their progress and transferability; and information to measure the success of an educational program. It is important that these three types of information are treated differently since they serve three different purposes.

The language used to define the purpose of reporting student progress must be clear, concise and free of jargon and slogans. Slogans are found everywhere in education, but unfortunately they inspire action with not much actual direction (Case, 1994).

The school districts must determine guidelines for reporting student progress to meet the needs of their population and allow for flexibility. This can be done similarly to Mary’s school district or Campbell River School District or in a way that meets the needs of individual school districts.

Teachers and Schools Districts need to identify a tool to share the student progress information. With the flexibility of the e-portfolio, it will most likely be the best fit. However, there may be teachers and parents that would prefer a different format of reporting, and there could be ways that the information identified could be shared and the method of how it is to be shared can be met in a paper format.

Once a reporting method is chosen, it is important that it be in a format that is flexible so that if ideas emerge on how to improve it, those changes can be incorporated quickly.
There are 60 school districts in BC and it would be redundant for all to undertake similar processes. The purpose of reporting and communicating with parents and students about student progress should come from the provincial level to provide a unifying purpose. Local consultations would ensure that each district express their individual needs, but there would need to be an opportunity for all districts to come together and share information and insight regarding reporting student progress. This is more than a stakeholder consultation, but a working group of individuals representing each district to determine how different districts can meet the purposes of communicating student progress to parents.

Areas of Future Studies

The use of student progress information to measure the success of educational programs in the schools needs to be further examined. Student data can be used to enhance programs that are working and redesign programs that are not. The question then is, what information could be used to assess successful educational programs? Test scores? Report cards? Student, parent or teacher feedback? Perhaps the need for comparability is more a reflection of failure to find achievement indicators that correctly reflect the successfulness of an educational program or even define success. The topic of program evaluation is beyond the scope of this thesis but it is related to the reporting student progress.

Identifying the information needed by administrators and the Ministry of Education to determine whether as a whole the education system in BC is meeting its commitment to the citizens of BC is an area that needs exploring. How can we allow teachers the freedom to develop personalized systems of reporting student progress, while assuring the public at large that there is a high standard of education in BC? We currently have two conflicting ideologies
where graduates of the BC education system need to be competitive in a global market, but also be educated in a manner that values their individual learning styles and timelines. These ideologies need to be examined and it needs to be determined how they can coexist.
Appendix A

- Increased attendance made necessary the opening of the upstairs rooms and Miss M. Hartney was appointed as second assistant. Though this reduced the number of grades in each classroom, it did not lessen the number of pupils, for many, previously deferred through lack of accommodation, enrolled, greatly taxing the organizing ability of the principal and his staff.

- The first Canadian Pacific passenger train, Montreal to Port Moody, arrived July 1, 1886. On May 23, 1887, the first through passenger train from the East reached Vancouver. Each succeeding train brought its full quota of prospective settlers. By June, school enrollment had reached 285.14 In the words of Major J. S. Matthews, City Archivist, "The building was too small before the paint was dry."

- The Vancouver Section of the Public Schools Report 1887, told of the necessity of erecting another school-house, one in the ancient
Appendix B

ROYAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

(c) Indication as to whether the pupil is using his full ability.
(d) Indication of the pupil's social tendencies.
(e) Indication where pupil improvement could be made:
   (i) Scholastically,
   (ii) Socially,
   (iii) Personally.

No. 147: As each community seems to present a particular problem with regard to reporting pupils' progress to parents, it is suggested that the form and content of reports to parents be put solely in the hands of the local educators. The District Superintendent of Schools, working with the principals and teachers of the district, should design the reports and reporting procedure to best suit the needs of the school and district. A very minimum requirement could be that the preview be a whole.

Any method of reporting a pupil's progress is based upon some marking system. The traditional marking system rates a pupil's achievement against a standard of perfection taken as 100 per cent, so that theoretically a pupil who received a mark of 50 per cent in a subject was assumed to have learned approximately one-half of the course. This type of marking is based upon a percentage of achievement that takes no account of any factors other than the amount the pupil has learned as measured by examinations. With the newer approach to education, previously described in this Report, a strong emphasis was placed upon the personal growth of the pupils, and the report card was looked upon as a means for making this known to all who were concerned with their education, especially their parents. The new systems of marking, therefore, endeavored to take individual differences into consideration in order to give some recognition to ability and effort, as well as to achievement.

A standard of achievement may be either absolute or relative. If the standard is absolute, the pupils are marked according to how nearly their work approaches a theoretically perfect performance. If the standard is relative, the pupils are marked according to how their work compares with the average performance of the class. Both of these methods have their shortcomings.

In most school work there is no absolute standard of perfection. Even in a subject such as spelling, where the pupils' work can be marked right or wrong, the words in a spelling test constitute only one sample taken from many others that could have been included. Hence the teacher's judgment in compiling the test is a determining factor. Too often the standard for a perfect performance exists only in the mind of the classroom teacher, and may fluctuate from one occasion to another or from year to year. Moreover, the standards of one classroom teacher may not be the same as those of other classroom teachers.

The use of relative standards whereby a pupil's performance may be compared with the average performance of the class also raises some questions. The teacher may make use of some such statistical device as the normal curve of distribution, and since it is unlikely that the abilities of the pupils in any one class will fit the normal curve, classroom teachers often prefer to compare the work of their pupils with that of much larger groups, such as the norms of standardized tests.

Under either plan described above, the slow learners or the pupils of low mental ability always get poor or failing grades. They may work to the full extent of their ability and fail, while brighter pupils may put forth little effort and get high grades. As emphasized by the newer approach to education, such procedures result in discouragement for the poor learners, which may have undesirable effects upon other features of their development, while at the same time the brighter pupils may develop poor work habits and get into mischief because they are bored. Such considerations led to grading systems based upon what the pupils could be expected to achieve. Objections have also been raised to this method of grading. As stated
in some briefs, no matter how persistently the school seeks to avoid placing the pupils in competition with anything but their own records, the out-of-school world demands a relative estimate of their work. Some briefs, therefore, claimed that marking systems that do not show the pupil’s relative standing are simply attempting to ignore an issue that cannot be ignored. It is claimed that a child must know sometime how he stands in comparison with others.

A modified percentage system is one that divides the pupils into several groups on the basis of their achievement. Letters such as A, B, C, D, F may be used to indicate this. These letter grades may be defined in terms of a percentage range, such as A meaning 86 to 100 per cent, or by descriptive terms such as A is excellent, B is good, C is average, and F a failure. There is very little difference, in fact, between such gradings and percentages. It is simply that the gradings provide for wider groupings than the actual percentage marks. These grading systems may be related to the normal curve so that only a certain percentage of the pupils in the class will receive any one grade.

Certainly the majority of parents cannot be expected to be conversant with methods that employ the normal curve of distribution. Indeed, it is doubtful if many teachers understand fully its statistical implications, and the extent to which it may be unfair to certain pupils who, coming near the margin of one gradation, are penalized by a strict adherence to its divisions. Even some school principals who were employing such a system were by no means clear as to why a pupil could obtain a mark of 80 per cent in one subject and be given a C grade, whereas with a mark of 65 per cent in another subject the same pupil might obtain a grade of A. Such anomalies are by no means uncommon when the principle of the normal curve of distribution is used as a fixed pattern.

A strange belief in the fairness of statistical procedures seems to prevail rather widely throughout the school system. Basically there is no reason to believe that because pupils are graded on a system that employs statistical techniques, they are being more fairly dealt with than they are by procedures that do not employ such techniques. Certainly the parents who were questioned on the matter at the hearings appeared to have a very vague understanding of what the application of the normal curve of distribution implied. Obviously such ratings do not tell the parents what they want to know.

Any report card should be easily understood by parents who represent all sorts of backgrounds, occupations, and interests. Any methods that are too complex, that are open to misinterpretation, or that imply some special statistical knowledge are poorly suited for the purpose.

The above discussion indicates something of the complexities that enter into any system of grading. One must conclude from the comments in the briefs that all methods have certain advantages and also certain disadvantages.

Another method that was referred to was a letter to parents regarding the school progress of their children. This has some advantages because the teacher can comment on the pupil’s strengths and weaknesses, and the parent can tell more readily what the pupil needs in the way of home direction. Such correspondence, however, takes a great deal of time. If teachers have large classes and no clerical help, they will tend to make such letters stereotyped and formal. Moreover, such letters need to be supplemented by some form of grading, because the letters themselves will not tell everything the parents wish to know.

A conference with parents can be one of the most satisfactory ways for reporting to parents. The teacher can learn about the pupil from the parent’s attitude, and can ask and answer questions so that any misunderstanding can be settled on
the spot. A number of the briefs referred to the advantages of such conferences between teachers and parents.

No. 213: . . . Recommend that regularly scheduled interviews between the teacher and one or both parents of each child (i.e., Teacher-Parent Conferences) be mandatory for every school. An opportunity to discuss the child’s progress is a valuable supplement to the Report Card. Teacher-Parent conferences are at present encouraged by the Department of Education and practised in some schools, but the Federation urges that these should be Departmental Policy for all schools and all grades.

No. 237: Teacher-Parent Conferences should be less frequent, and held more frequently. They can do much to deepen accord and improve understanding and mutual respect between teachers and parents.

A teacher should send a short emergency report in every case of difficulty, requesting the parent to make contact for discussion.

No. 265: That the whole matter of reporting on students be reviewed with consideration given to implementing parent-teacher conferences on pupils’ progress and further that it be recognized as part of the teaching day.

No. 306: That the present method of reporting be continued and that it be supplemented by more parent-teacher conferences.

No. 328: Parent teacher conferences are useful as a supplemental method of reporting.

Conferences, however, also have some weaknesses. They are very time-consuming, and teachers who are unaccustomed to interviewing may fail to establish a satisfactory relationship with the parent. Furthermore, conferences do not provide any satisfactory record for subsequent reference. Ninety-two per cent of the principals and vice-principals preferred report cards along with conferences as the best means for reporting to parents.

The importance of report cards should be seen in its proper perspective and not exaggerated. The report is not a final judgment regarding the pupil. It is only one part of a pupil’s record. On their visits to schools, the Commissioners examined the school records, which were cumulative and covered the pupils’ entire school careers. What is noted on the report card is but a part of the data which are maintained in order to evaluate a pupil’s development in school. Reports to parents do not require the same statistical refinement which might be desirable in school records. School records may be used for many survey purposes which require statistical formulations that have no bearing upon reports to parents.

The Commission’s survey of 897 experienced teachers showed a preference by most teachers of all grades for report cards together with parent conferences. When asked to rank various methods of indicating the pupils’ progress, the teachers were very divided in their opinions. The following table shows the order of preference according to grade level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 198.—Experienced Teachers’ Preferences Regarding Ways for Showing Pupils’ Progress on Report Cards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rank and marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Percentage marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rank only.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be noted that more teachers of all grade levels gave first choice to letter grades and least preference to rank only. Percentage marks received more approval from the high school teachers than from those in the elementary grades.
In no instance did as many as 50 per cent of the teachers agree on a first choice for any one of the methods.

All things considered, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT A PERCENTAGE SYSTEM BE USED AS THE SIMPLEST PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING TO PARENTS. An exception to this might be made in the primary grades. Percentages are familiar to a wider section of the population than any other system that might be employed. The percentages would provide an appraisal of achievement on the basis of the teacher's evaluation of the pupil's accomplishment. The card should allow ample space for the teacher's comments. These comments should avoid any terminology that implies a knowledge which parents generally may not be assumed to have. By the use of this combined system the teacher can point out that, even when a pupil's percentage marks may not be high, he is applying himself with diligence, and that his conduct in school is satisfactory. In order to deal with special cases the reports should be supplemented by teacher-parent conferences.

The above recommendation is made in the belief that it is the most readily understood form for parents, and that no system has been, or can be, devised that will satisfy all of the conflicting views that were expressed in the briefs and at the hearings. Furthermore, after a study of various systems of reporting that are in use elsewhere, the Commission had to conclude that there is no system that is not open to criticism on some grounds. The Commission considers that the reorganization of the public school system as recommended in this Report will overcome much of the objection to reporting percentage marks, because pupils of certain levels of ability will be classed with those of similar ability.

THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN THE COMMUNITY

The status which teachers have in a community is a matter of great importance to the successful achievement of the aims of the schools. Professional status is a two-way affair: it involves both the qualities of the individual to whom it applies, and the recognition which those in the community confer upon the individual.

The status of the teachers in any community will depend very greatly upon their own efforts. It is essentially a matter of the teachers' qualifications for the positions they occupy and the competence with which they carry out their duties. A large part of the recognition which people receive, whatever may be their occupations, depends upon how they meet their obligations and do their work. Persons who are indolent, careless, irresponsible, or casual about their work are rarely given much status in the community, although they may be liked for other personal qualities. This is especially true of those whose work is directly concerned with any public service and who are paid from public funds.

Hence the efficient operation of the schools is the first requisite for maintaining or enhancing the prestige of teachers. This is the solid ground upon which recognition is based. Furthermore, when a person does not receive the recognition which he considers is his due, the most effective means he has for enhancing his status in the community is through the improvement of his work. During their visits throughout the Province the Commissioners gained the impression that most teachers were deserving of fuller recognition by the communities they served than they received. However, 561 or 71 per cent of the experienced teachers in the Commission's survey expressed no concern over any lack of prestige.

It is possible that the teachers of some years ago did have more standing in the community than during more recent times. In the past the teachers' educational qualifications gave them a better status relative to the public at large. Not so long
Appendix C

B. REPORTING

The interests of the student are best served when the school and the home
are in harmony. In order to achieve this mutuality of interest and purpose it
is essential that parents are kept informed of progress achieved toward the expect-
atations held in common by the teacher, student, parents and community. This is
usually accomplished by a variety of communication vehicles such as notes, telephon
calls, visits, conferences and interviews in addition to official report cards.

Effective communication of student progress is made more difficult for parents,
students and teachers if there is extensive variation from teacher to teacher,
school to school, and community to community in the format, contents, symbolization
and frequency of the reporting forms used. Consequently, in order that parents,
students and teacher, irrespective of where they live, work or move to in the
Province, will have a common basis for understanding and participating in such
communication, a common report card has been developed and prescribed for use in
all schools.

However, because effective reporting to parents is critical to the successful
operation of any school, and because all schools should reflect the needs and
aspirations of students, parents and the local community, it is appropriate that
individual schools or districts develop and use local variations of the provincial
report cards. Such variations should supplement and complement the authorized
form and its contents, and must be consistent with provincial and district require-
ments as well as with the philosophy, objectives, policy and practices of the
school. Pursuant to the Public Schools Act and Regulations all such local adap-
tations must be approved by the local board and submitted to the Ministry before
they may be used.

1. Rationale

The Ministry believes that successful reporting of student progress is based on
clearly delineated and communicated expectations for student performance. More
particularly, the Ministry maintains that each teacher has clear expectations for
the performance of the students in his class. These expectations are derived from
a knowledge of the students and their individual readiness; the intended learning
outcomes of the curriculum being taught; the instructional materials and equipment
available; the knowledge and experience of the teacher; and the general expect-
atations of the district, school, and other teachers of the same curriculum. It is
precisely to enable students to achieve these expectations that the teacher pre-
pare lessons; selects instructional techniques, activities and materials; carries
out diagnostic, formative and summative evaluations; and provides the necessary
time, encouragement and remedial assistance.

To assist in the establishment of performance expectations that have curricular
validity and external credibility and that are neither too easy nor too difficult
for most students, it is recommended that the teacher consider information such
as the results of the provincial Learning Assessment Program, standardized tests
with provincial and local norms, and locally developed survey tests, as well as
the expectations of colleagues teaching the same curriculum in the same school or
neighbouring schools.
The Ministry believes that these expectations should be the basis for reporting student progress. Parents should not only know the areas and levels of the curriculum and the nature of any specially arranged learning program at which the student is working, but also how well the student is achieving relative to the teacher's expectations for each area, level, and learning program. Thus, the teacher would select the symbol which in the teacher's judgment best describes the performance of the student relative to the expectations for each area and level of the curriculum studied by the student. For example, if a student in a year six classroom is doing above average work in year five arithmetic, the report would show that the student was working at arithmetic five and the symbol selected (B) would indicate that the student's progress was above average relative to expectations for year five arithmetic. It is likely that as a student progressed through the year, he might be working at different levels in one or more areas of the curriculum. Hence, the entries on the permanent record card would not necessarily be vertically aligned in successive grade columns, but, instead, would often resemble a staggered line because the student completed sequential levels in each area of the curriculum at different times. Thus the report card and the permanent record card should carefully reflect instructional practice by indicating the level and achievement of the student in each area of the curriculum.

From these brief comments it is hoped that the reporting system will be seen as a very modest step towards a criterion referenced system in which the progress of each student is reported relative to the general performance criteria determined by the teacher for each level of each area of the curriculum. The teacher should select the symbol which in his judgment best describes the performance of the student relative to the expectations for the given level and area of study. No teacher is expected, on any one set of report cards, to use all of the symbols available - unless the performance of individual students so directs. If continuous progress is practised and if students are placed in the most optimum instructional setting, most students should achieve average or better performance and thereby minimize the need to use unsatisfactory or failing grades.

At the risk of oversimplification, symbols (letter grades) are essentially a code - a logically convenient shorthand for teachers - to summarize, report, and record data regarding a student's progress relative to expectations. Although other more elaborate alternative systems may be available, the suggested system conveys adequate information to students, parents and other audiences; reflects instructional practices; and is logically convenient and practical for busy teachers.

Because of the difficulties and dangers inherent in reporting and recording student performance relative to student potential, great care should be taken to avoid conveying any impression of poor expectations for any child, that the potential of any child is judged to be limited and measurable. If, in the judgment of the teacher, such an opinion should be conveyed for purposes of perspective, only very carefully worded comments should be used to indicate that the student does not seem to be working at a level consistent with his ability.

2. Guidelines

a) Formal written reports must be issued at least three times each school year. It is expected that schools operating on the semester system will issue formal written reports at least twice each semester.
b) Provincially authorized report cards are available for use in all public schools. Provincial symbols must be used on all provincially authorized report cards and must be included on all locally developed report cards used in grades four to twelve inclusive.

c) Subject to board approval and prior filing with the Ministry, locally developed report cards may be used in one or more schools in a district to replace a provincially authorized report card. In the early childhood years (K - 3) locally developed report cards need not include provincial symbols unless required by the board.

In considering whether to develop local adaptations which complement and supplement the provincial report card, schools or districts may wish to examine the relative advantages and disadvantages for parents, students and the school’s or district’s philosophy and objectives; instruction, evaluation, promotion, and reporting policies and procedures; and the needs and expectations of the students and the community served.

If a board approves the use of a local adaptation of the provincial report card, it is essential that the content be clearly defined and understood by students, parents, teachers, and the community.

The Ministry encourages school districts to develop methods of reporting that will describe in detail progress in the basic skills; that will allow for individual differences in the rate of progress and the type of program and that will enable the pupil, in collaboration with parents and teachers, to plan effectively his future studies and career. However, while there is a need to encourage flexibility in each district, there is a corresponding need to provide some degree of standardization throughout the Province.

It is recommended that the normal curve only be applied in large scale procedures used to assist with the setting and verification of standards. Because the normal curve is most appropriate for describing chance and random activity, it serves inappropriate for use in education, which should be a purposeful activity enabling students to learn. Accordingly, schools are cautioned from using the normal curve as a device for arriving at letter grades for describing student achievement.

The determination of letter grades should be consistent with evaluation policy and procedures, which should emphasize reliance on continuous evaluation of day-to-day work. Thus, letter grades derived from a very small number of evaluations should be avoided. Results from final, comprehensive, survey, or other large-scale tests should not form a major proportion of any set of term or final grades.

All attendance and achievement symbols entered on permanent record cards or graduation certificates must first be entered on a formal written report to parents.

3. Required Information

All report cards should contain at least the following kinds of information:
a) Basic information
   i) the school’s name, address, and telephone number
   ii) the student’s name and class
   iii) the subjects and courses being studied
   iv) the definition of all symbols used

b) Information on the student's
   i) attendance - lates and absences
   ii) achievement
   iii) attitude, behaviour
   iv) effort, participation, preparation, and work habits

c) Constructive comments about
   i) strengths
   ii) weaknesses
   iii) how to improve performance

d) The names and signatures of
   i) the teacher
   ii) the principal
   iii) the parents/guardians (to acknowledge receipt)

e) Authorization
   Any local adaptation of the provincial form must stipulate that the report
card has been approved for use by the local board pursuant to the Public
Schools Act and Regulations.

4. Symbols

As already suggested, report cards represent a consistent and systematic attempt
to convey information to parents about various aspects of school progress achieved
to date by their children. Generally, comments and symbols (alphabetic and numeric)
are used to convey that information. It is essential that the symbols used on
the provincially prescribed components be consistent for all schools in the Province.
It is expected, therefore, that the symbols used for the various progress indicators
on reports to parents will be as follows:

a) Attendance - term and final reports
   Absences - number of hours/days absent out of number of hours/days
   class/school in session to date
   Lates - number of times tardy to date

b) Application indicators - term and final reports
   - attitude          Good
   - behaviour         Satisfactory
   - effort            Needs Improvement
   - participation
   - preparation
   - work habits

   as compared to the general standard of performance
   widely expected for that subject/course/grade level
### c) Achievement indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80 - 100</td>
<td>80 - 100</td>
<td>80 - 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>65 - 79</td>
<td>65 - 79</td>
<td>65 - 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>50 - 64</td>
<td>50 - 64</td>
<td>50 - 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0 - 49</td>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>40 - 49*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>0 - 39</td>
<td>0 - 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In grades ten to twelve a student who achieves a "D" letter grade may receive course credit but will not be eligible to advance to sequential courses in subjects other than those designated as constants: English 10 and 11, Social Studies 10, Physical Education 10, Math 10 and Science 10.

**SG** = standing granted

Although the student has not achieved a pass standing, a sufficient level of performance has been attained to warrant, consistent with the best interests of the student, standing being granted for the subject, course, grade or level. This symbol could be used in cases of serious illness, hospitalization, late entry, early leaving, best effort or performance, etc.

**TS** = transfer standing

Transfer standing may be granted by the principal on the basis of an examination of school records from other than a B.C. public school. The principal may also assign a letter grade(s) on the basis of an examination of such records.

**I** = incomplete

May only be used in special circumstances when a student has been granted additional time to complete required work before a permanent letter grade is determined. "I" must be accompanied by a written comment stating what the student must do by what date. On the indicated date, the "I" must be changed to a permanent letter grade. "Incomplete" must not be used as a euphemism for unsatisfactory progress.
Appendix D

SCHOOL ACT
[Section 148 (c)]

Pursuant to section 148 (c) of the School Act, I make the attached regulation.

BRIAN R. D. SMITH
Minister of Education

W. R. BENNETT
Presiding Member of the Executive Council

REPORTING OF PUPIL PROGRESS REGULATION

1. A report form of the progress of a pupil, except for a pupil enrolled in a special education program recognized by the Ministry for special education grants, (a) used in kindergarten and grades 1, 2 and 3 shall contain comments, observations and notes of parent and teacher consultations and may contain non-competitive symbols, check lists or point scales, 
(b) used in grades 4, 5 and 6 shall, if a school board decides to use symbols, use those set out in the schedule, and.
(c) used in grades 7 to 12 shall use the symbols set out in the schedule.

Schedule

Symbol for use on grades 4 to 12:

For term reports:

A = excellent achievement
B = very good achievement
C = above average achievement

For final reports:

A = excellent achievement
B = very good achievement
C = above average achievement

For term and final reports:

Achievement Indicators

G = Grade Marked
I = Incomplete
W = Withdrawn

Course Designations

C = Credit
S = Satisfactory
D = Unsatisfactory
A = Average
E = Endorsement
P = Pass
F = Fail

ME = Minimum Essentials
(English 11 and 12 only)

TS = Transfer Status
Appendix E

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT ORDER

Authority: Sections 97 (3) and 103 (2) (i) of School Act

M145/89 Effective September 1, 1989
Minister of Education Order No. 8/89

Application

1. This order applies to the 3 formal written student progress reports required in sections 3 (1) (i) and 4 (8) (a) of the School Regulation.

Primary progress reports

2. In the 4 years of the primary program, written student progress reports shall be anecdotal in nature.

Fifth to 11th year of educational program

3. (1) Each board shall determine whether written student progress reports for the fifth to the 11th years of the educational program will be anecdotal in nature, will use symbols or will use anecdotal comments and symbols.

   (2) Where a board decides to use symbols for written student progress reports, for the fifth to the 11th years of the educational program, the board shall use

      (a) the Provincial symbols set out in the Provincial Symbols Order (Ministerial Order No. 11/89), or

      (b) any additional symbols approved by the minister for use by the board

12th and 13th year of the educational program

4. Each board shall use the Provincial symbols to evaluate student progress in written student progress reports for the 12th and 13th years of the educational program.
Reports for designated programs

5. Notwithstanding sections 1 to 4, a board may provide written student progress reports for students enrolled in special education programs designated by the minister, that describe the achievement of the student in relation to the expectations for that student in his or her individual educational program.

Requirements for all student progress reports

6. A board shall ensure that written student progress reports contain

(a) the school’s name, address and telephone number,
(b) the student’s name,
(c) a description of the student’s educational program,
(d) a definition of all symbols used in the report,
(e) the number of days that the student was absent during the reporting period,
(f) the number of days that the student was late during the reporting period,
(g) a description of the student’s intellectual, social, human and career development,
(h) signatures of
   (i) the teachers involved in preparing the report, and
   (ii) the principal or other administrative officer,
(i) a place for the signature of the parent acknowledging receipt of the report,
(j) a statement that the report is on a form ordered by the minister or on a form approved by the board, and
(k) any other information that the teacher or administrative officer considers is relevant.
PROVINCIAL SYMBOLS ORDER

Authority: School Act, sections 97 (3) and 103 (2) (j)

Ministerial Order 148/89 (M148/89)…… Effective September 1, 1989
Order of the Minister of Education

Student progress report symbols

1. The symbols and their meaning in Table 1 are set out for use in student progress reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = excellent achievement</td>
<td>The student is considered fully capable of handling subsequent work with ease at the superior level of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = very good achievement</td>
<td>The student is considered fully capable of handling subsequent work with ease at a good level of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ = satisfactory achievement</td>
<td>The student has fully achieved the basic standard of performance widely expected for that educational activity and is considered capable of handling subsequent work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE 1 — *Continued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C = acceptable</td>
<td>The student has achieved an acceptable level of achievement based upon a demonstrated degree of mastery of the content covered by the program and is judged to be able to handle subsequent work at an acceptable level of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P = pass</td>
<td>The student has achieved the basic standard of performance widely expected for the educational activity but is judged unlikely to be able to handle subsequent work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = fail</td>
<td>The student has not achieved the basic standard of performance widely expected for that activity and it is in the best interests of the student to undertake further work to become ready for subsequent work in the educational activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS = transfer</td>
<td>Transfer standing may be granted by the administrative officer in charge of a school on the basis of an examination of school records from an institution other than a school as defined in the <em>School Act</em>. The administrative officer in charge of a school may also assign a letter grade on the basis of an examination of those records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG = standing granted</td>
<td>Although completion of normal requirements is not possible, a sufficient level of performance has been attained to warrant, consistent with the best interests of the student, the granting of standing for the educational activity. This symbol can be used in such cases as serious illness, hospitalization, late entry or early leaving, but may only be granted by an adjudication process authorized by the administrative officer in charge of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = incomplete</td>
<td>This symbol is used in special circumstances when a student has been granted additional time to complete required work before a letter grade is determined. “I” must be accompanied by a written comment stating what the student must do and by what date. On the indicated date, the “I” must be changed to a letter grade. “Incomplete” must not be used as a euphemism for unsatisfactory progress, nor may it be used as a final report symbol. A student in the 13th year of an educational program must be assigned a final letter grade by the last day of the school year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final student progress report symbols

2. The symbols and their meaning in Table 2 are set out for use solely in the final student progress report for the end of a school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEG = (Aegrotat Standing)</td>
<td>A pass standing based on certification that the student was unable to write the examination owing to illness or special circumstances. This grade is used only for Provincially examinable courses and may be granted only by the Provincial board of examiners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W = withdrawal</td>
<td>Within the period of time specified by school policy, and upon request of the parents, the administrative officer in charge of a school may grant permission to a student in his or her ninth to 13th year of an educational program to withdraw from an educational activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF = withdrawal and failure</td>
<td>A student in his or her ninth to 13th year of an educational program may, with the permission of parents and the administrative officer in charge of a school, withdraw from an educational activity during the period of time specified by school policy in which withdrawals are to be interpreted as failures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROVINCIAL SYMBOLS ORDER

Reporting requirements for courses with Provincial examinations

3. Final school marks in educational activities that have Provincial examinations are to be reported in the final written student progress report as percentages in Table 3.

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>86–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73–85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67–72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60–66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>50–59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>below 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT ORDER

Authority: School Act, sections 97 (3), 103 (2) (j) and 182 (2)
Ministerial Order 191/94 (M191/94). Effective September 1, 1994
Repeals M17/90
Amended by M397/94........................Effective November 28, 1994
Orders of the Minister of Education

Interpretation
1. (1) This order applies to the 3 formal written student progress reports required under sections 4 (2) (a) and 5 (9) (a) of B.C. Reg. 265/89, the School Regulation.
   (2) In this order "curriculum" means
      (a) the applicable educational program guide set out in Ministerial Order 165/93, the Educational Program Guide Order, or
      (b) a local program authorized under Ministerial Order 147/89, the Local Programs Order.

Kindergarten to grade 3 reports
2. (1) Student progress reports for students in kindergarten through grade 3 must be in writing and must, in relation to expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum, describe
   (a) what the student is able to do,
   (b) the areas in which the student requires further attention or development, and
   (c) ways of supporting the student in his or her learning.
   (2) In conjunction with the student progress reports required under subsection (1), parents of a student in kindergarten through grade 3 must be provided with oral or written comments on the student's school progress with reference to the expected development for students in a similar age range.

British Columbia Ministry of Education
Legislation and Independent Education

December 13, 1994
STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT ORDER

Grades 4 to 7 reports

3. Student progress reports for students in grades 4 through 7 must, in relation to expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum, contain
   (a) letter grades, unless the board provides the letter grades to parents in a different manner, and
   (b) written comments describing
      (i) what the student is able to do,
      (ii) the areas in which the student requires further attention or development, and
      (iii) ways of supporting the student in his or her learning.

Grades 8 to 12 reports

4. Student progress reports for students in grades 8 through 12 must, in relation to expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum, contain
   (a) letter grades, and
   (b) where appropriate, written comments describing
      (i) what the student is able to do,
      (ii) the areas in which the student requires further attention or development, or
      (iii) ways of supporting the student in his or her learning.

Letter grades

5. For the purposes of sections 3 and 4, the letter grades to be used and the requirements to be followed in assigning letter grades are those set out in Ministerial Order 192/94, the Provincial Letter Grades Order.

[en. M397/94]

British Columbia Ministry of Education
Legislation and Independent Education
E.71
December 13, 1994
STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT ORDER

(c) ways of supporting the student in his or her learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes set out in that student’s IEP.

(5) Student progress reports referred to in subsections (3) and (4) must contain
(a) a statement that the progress of the student is in relation to the expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for the course or subject and grade, and
(b) where appropriate, written comments describing
   (i) ways to enable the student to demonstrate his or her learning in relation to expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for the course or subject and grade, and
   (ii) the time period required to enable the student to demonstrate his or her learning under subparagraph (i).

(6) A letter grade may only be assigned for a student with special needs or for a student who is receiving English as a second language services where that student is able to demonstrate his or her learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for the course or subject and grade.

[am. M397/94]

Requirements for all written student progress reports

7. Written student progress reports for students in kindergarten through grade 12 must contain
(a) the school’s name, address and telephone number,
(b) the student’s name,
(c) a definition of all letter grades used in the report,
(d) the number of days that the student was absent during the reporting period,
(e) the number of days that the student was late during the reporting period,
(f) a description of the student’s progress as required by sections 2, 3, 4 and 6, as the case may be,
(g) a description of the student’s behaviour, including information on attitudes, work habits and effort,
(h) the name of the teacher involved in preparing the report, and the signature of the principal or other administrative officer,
(i) a place for the signature of the parent acknowledging receipt of the report,
(j) a statement that the report is on a form ordered by the minister or on a form approved by the board, and
(k) any other information that the teacher or administrative officer consider relevant.

[am. M397/94]
PROVINCIAL LETTER GRADES ORDER

(3) Where an "IP" letter grade is assigned on a final report, the "IP" letter grade must be
(a) accompanied by written comments for the parent of the student and for the subsequent
   teacher describing in relation to the expected learning outcomes set out in the curriculum
   for the subject or course
   (i) the areas in which the student requires further attention or development,
   (ii) the requirements that need to be fulfilled in relation to the expected learning outcomes, and
   (iii) a time period for completion of the requirements and a review and evaluation of the student's
   performance,
(b) converted to another letter grade before the next formal written student progress report
   is issued, whether issued in that school year, or the following school year, and
(c) converted to another letter grade before submission to the Ministry of Education for inclusion on
   that student's transcript of grades.

(4) The requirements set out in subsection (3) (a) (ii) and (iii) must be completed before the next formal written
   student progress report is issued, whether issued in that school year or the following school year.

(5) Subject to the requirements of subsection (3) (b), where a student who has received an "IP" letter grade
   transfers to another school, the "IP" letter grade must be converted to another letter grade before the student's
   progress report is forwarded to the other school, unless

There is agreement between the principals of the two schools to defer the conversion of the "IP" letter grade.

[en. M394/94]

Percentages for courses numbered 11 or 12

4. Where the letter grades in Table 1 are used to indicate student performance in courses numbered 11 or 12, percentages as set out opposite the letter grades in Table 1 must also be used in term and final student progress reports.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>86 - 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73 - 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67 - 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60 - 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>50 - 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 - 49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[am. M394/94]

Successful Completion of Courses Numbered 11 or 12

5. The successful completion of a course numbered 11 or 12 requires a minimum of a C-.

Transitional

6. (1) For the 1994-95 school year, a board shall direct whether or not schools in the school district use
"IP" letter grade may only be assigned in accordance with section 3.

\[ F = \text{(Failed)} \text{ The student has not demonstrated the} \]
\[ \text{minimally acceptable performance in} \]
\[ \text{relation to the expected learning} \]
\[ \text{outcomes for the course or subject and} \]
\[ \text{grade. F (Failed) may only be used as a} \]
\[ \text{final letter grade if an "IP" (In} \]
\[ \text{Progress) letter grade has been} \]
\[ \text{previously assigned or the "F" is} \]
\[ \text{assigned as a result of failing a} \]
\[ \text{provincially examinable course.} \]

\[ W = \text{(Withdrawal) According to the policy of the board, and upon request of the} \]
\[ \text{parent of the student or, when appropriate, the student, the} \]
\[ \text{administrative officer in charge of a} \]
\[ \text{school may grant permission to a} \]
\[ \text{student to withdraw from a course or} \]
\[ \text{subject.} \]

\[ SG = \text{(Standing Granted) Although completion} \]
\[ \text{of normal requirements is not} \]
\[ \text{possible, a sufficient level of} \]
\[ \text{performance has been attained to} \]
\[ \text{warrant, consistent with the best} \]
\[ \text{interests of the student, the granting of} \]
\[ \text{standing for the course or subject and} \]
\[ \text{grade. Standing granted may be used in} \]
\[ \text{cases of serious illness,} \]
\[ \text{hospitalization, late entry or early} \]
\[ \text{leaving, but may only be granted by an} \]

adjudication process authorized by the administrative officer in charge of the school.

\[ TS = \text{(Transfer Standing) May be granted by} \]
\[ \text{the administrative officer in charge of a} \]
\[ \text{school on the basis of an} \]
\[ \text{examination of records from an} \]
\[ \text{institution other than a school as} \]
\[ \text{defined in the School Act. Alternatively,} \]
\[ \text{the administrative officer in charge of a} \]
\[ \text{school may assign a letter grade on the} \]
\[ \text{basis of an examination of those} \]
\[ \text{records.} \]

Assignment of an "In Progress" letter grade

1. Where an "IP" letter grade is assigned on a term report, a written plan must be developed in accordance with subsection (2) and must describe
   (a) the areas in which the student requires further attention or development,
   (b) the requirements that need to be fulfilled in relation to the expected learning outcomes, and
   (c) a time period for completion of the requirements and a review and evaluation of the student's performance.

2. Where an "IP" letter grade is assigned on a term report, the student and the parent of the student must be consulted on the development of the written plan set out in subsection (1) within 30 days of the "IP" letter grade being assigned.
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C  = The student demonstrates satisfactory performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

C- = The student demonstrates minimally acceptable performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

IP = (In Progress) The student is making progress but it has been determined that additional time is required to meet the expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade. An "IP" letter grade may only be assigned in accordance with section 3.

F  = (Failing) The student has not demonstrated, or is not demonstrating, the minimally acceptable performance in relation to the expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade. The letter grade "F" may only be assigned if an "IP" (In Progress) letter grade has been previously assigned for that course or subject and grade.

W  = (Withdrawal) According to the policy of the board, and upon request of the parent of the student or, when appropriate, the student, the administrative officer in charge of a school may grant permission to a student to withdraw from a course or subject.

(b) final reports:

A  = The student demonstrates excellent or outstanding performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

B  = The student demonstrates very good performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

C+ = The student demonstrates good performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

C  = The student demonstrates satisfactory performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

C- = The student demonstrates minimally acceptable performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

IP = (In Progress) The student is making progress but it has been determined that additional time is required to meet the expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade. An
PROVINCIAL LETTER GRADES ORDER

Authority: School Act, sections 97 (3), and 103 (2) (j) and 182 (2)

Ministerial Order 192/94 (M192/94). Effective September 1, 1994
Repeals M18/90 and M148/89
Amended by M394/94..............Effective November 28, 1994
Orders of the Minister of Education

Interpretation
1. The letter grades and their meaning in this Order are set out for use in student progress reports for grades 4 through 12 in accordance with Ministerial Order 191/94, the Student Progress Report Order.

Letter grades
2. Letter grades are as follows for (a) term reports:

   A  = The student demonstrates excellent or outstanding performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

   B  = The student demonstrates very good performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.

   C+ = The student demonstrates good performance in relation to expected learning outcomes for the course or subject and grade.
References


The Superintendent of Education. (1894). *Twenty third annual report in the public school of the province of British Columbia 1893-1894*. Victoria, BC: Printer to The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.


