

Writer Discusses A, B, C and F Grading System for Children

By MARY MOSES

Most of the rural schools are getting ready to send out reports

to parents in the next few weeks. Some call them report cards. Other words are progress reports,

grade reports, grade cards. Basically the question is always the same: what do they really mean?

In old days, everyone got grades of A, B, C or F. But many teachers were unhappy with this way, because it only showed how well a child did if compared to other children.

If little Billy had been around the world three times and had been to school two extra years in private schools, of course he got the A's. School was just easier for him. He'd been in school more.

But if Johnny had been sick and missed a lot of school, and he really had no way to get any extra help or schooling, he usually got the F's. Maybe Johnny tried a lot harder than Billy.

Maybe he actually learned more than Billy, but Billy started out ahead of him. Johnny still got F. Billy still got A.

Also, if a child got used to seeing F's or D's or C's every time, he started to think of himself as an F, or a D, or a C person. He got the idea he just wasn't very good. Often, he stopped trying to be any better.

Because of all these problems in giving A, B, C, D and F grades, many schools have tried to find a better way. The idea is to find a way to tell parents how their children are doing in school, without hurting the child.

From this idea came the progress report. It takes many forms, but usually shares one important feature: there are no A, B, C, grades.

Sometimes "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" are used instead. Maybe "improving" and "needs improvement" are added. There is usually a place to show reading and math levels.

Another important improvement in reporting to parents is breaking down the things reported on, so the parent really knows what the child is doing. Instead of one "A, B, C" grade in math, for instance, a child might receive a rating in reading num-

bers, writing numbers, adding, subtracting, and each of all the things he is supposed to be doing.

Another good way of reporting progress to parents is the parent conference. In fact, it is perhaps the best way!

In parent conferences, parents are asked to visit the school and talk to the teacher. The teacher shows them what the child is doing. Sometimes the child is invited along also.

The teacher often tells how the parents might help the child do better in school. Sometimes the parents can tell the teachers things to help teach the child.

Whatever way is used in your community, the important thing is to try to find out what the report really means. If the teacher doesn't ask to see you, why not go see the teacher?