

# Interviews

## *Takari Primary School*

As part of Takari Primary School's commitment to effective communication with its parent population, in 1996 a proposal was accepted by the School Development and Management Group (SDMG) for a mid-year interview (K-7) to accompany the distribution of the written report.

It was decided to set aside the period from 12.15pm to 8.30pm on a school day for this purpose.

It was most important that the parents understood the purpose of the interview. The proposal was a whole-school initiative and essential to the cooperative approach between home and school to assist students.

The interview was to be specifically directed toward explaining and supporting the written report. Given that the school had produced a new report format, it was necessary to ensure that parents understood:

- ◆ the terminology;
- ◆ the outcomes-based criteria;
- ◆ the type of judgement made on attitude and skill level; and
- ◆ the comments teachers had written.

Teachers made suggestions regarding parent involvement; showed parents examples of the students' work to reinforce the teachers' judgements and suggestions; indicated specific help available (e.g. ESL), and discussed movement along the learning continuum appropriate to the children's ability.

Organisational considerations were:

- ◆ timetabling of interviews;
- ◆ providing a creche;
- ◆ using a parent information/return sheet;
- ◆ organising staff release – clearly, class teachers were central to the process. Others, however, were involved either at the class teacher interviews or in separate interview situations.

Class teachers compiled a master sheet from parent returns. Other parent requests were noted and passed on to those concerned. A meeting was required to coordinate times for those parents who required more than one interview; and

- ◆ organising an interpreter for ESL/NESB students.

Parents responded positively: the maximum possible number of interviews for mid-year 1996 K-7 was 248, and the total number conducted was 238. Sixty-five males attended. Of the ten parents who were unable to attend, all were contacted and alternative arrangements were made.

A parent questionnaire was issued on the day following the interviews. In the two days left before the holidays, 90 families out of 168 replied to the questionnaire. Ninety-six per cent of the returns indicated a positive support for the oral reporting day.

From the parent questionnaire, parents' comments, the support of the P&C and the involvement of the SDMG, an expectation was evident among parents that this type of reporting would become part of the calendar.

Typical comments of parents were:

- ◆ 'It was great being able to speak to a number of teachers on the same day about my children.'
- ◆ 'We appreciated the extra time given by teachers to fit in with family/work commitments.'
- ◆ 'Helped to clarify the report.'

- ◆ 'It was great that we had a choice of times and it was met.'
- ◆ 'You can pick a time that suits you.'
- ◆ 'It was a good opportunity for working parents (dads) to meet the teacher and discuss personally our child's progress.'

Some parents asked for more frequent oral reporting.

All teachers saw the exercise as educationally sound and felt their own commitment was well vindicated by the positive parent response. The nature and promotion of the interviews enabled them to see parents that they had previously not had the opportunity to meet. Follow-up arrangements were made with many parents to clarify the part they could play at home.

The interview accompanying the written report has become a mid-year fixture.

The school policy now defines the yearly cycle of oral reporting as:

- ◆ introductory whole-class meetings;
- ◆ first semester ongoing individual interviews/ follow-up (formal/informal);
- ◆ mid-year interview; and
- ◆ second semester ongoing individual interviews/ follow up (formal/informal)

An end-of-year oral report for certain students is being considered.

**PARENT SURVEY**

REPORTING DAY

It would be greatly appreciated if you would complete the following survey and return it to school by this Friday, 5th July.

• Did you find the interview situation valuable? YES /

Comments The interview was open, informative, practical & was held in a relaxing, friendly manner.

• Was the time allocated suitable? YES /

Comments Yes, although I would have prefer to have more time allocated. however I do understand that that would not be possible

• Would you like to see the mid-year reporting day format (pupil free; afternoon/evening; coinciding with the issuing of reports) continue for 1997? YES /

Comments It gives working parents the chance to meet teachers & discuss report while the children are minded.

• Do you have any comment on the new report form?

Comments It is very comprehensive & it gives a complete picture of the child's performance.

Thank you for your help

Alan Kennedy  
Principal

Figure 55: Takari Primary School parent survey

In 1999, the interview has taken on an even greater significance.

In addition to clarifying the written report, these interview times are used as an opportunity for students K-7, using a learning journey approach, to 'walk' their parents through various aspects of their school work. The main purpose is to explain the work contained in their portfolios.

Students are encouraged to develop goals and, where applicable, to write their own reports on what they intend to

focus on in the next semester. This thinking focuses on content, work habits, values and attitudes. Parents are asked to comment on these agreed directions. The intention then is to revisit these agreements during the next reporting session.

As a further benefit, parents are made aware, formally and incidentally, of important information in relation to the *Curriculum Framework*, Student Outcome Statements and forms of assessment.