

BEAUMARIS PRIMARY SCHOOL

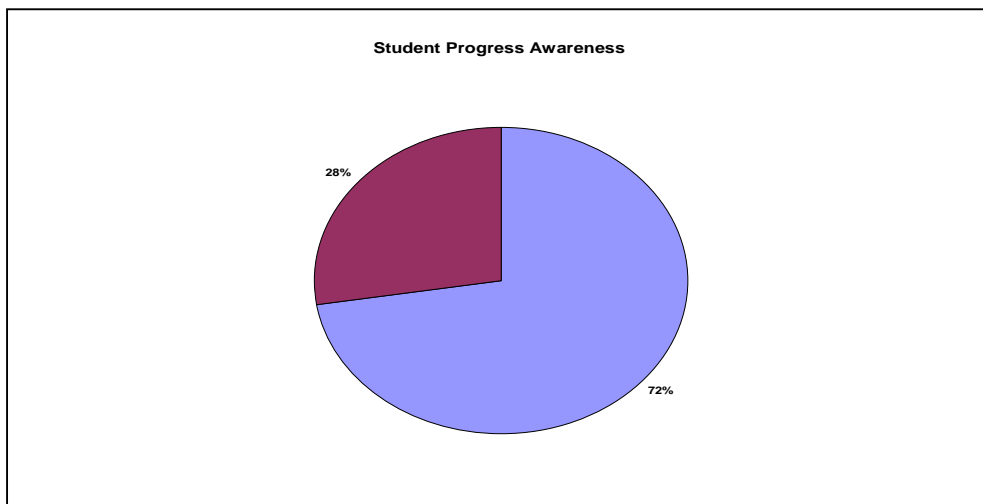
Parent Feedback from Semester 1 DET On - Line Reporting Format & Procedures

September 2006

Beaumaris Primary School undertook the DET On line Reporting Format at the end of Semester One 2006. Uncertainty and numerous changes to the program necessitated further explanation for parents, facilitated through in school and after school workshops. In conjunction with surveying staff, parents were also asked for feedback regarding the format, information and understandings.

The Beaumaris school community is very interactive and works closely, in partnership with the school, to promote further development, effective planning and improved outcomes. As such their feedback warrants due attention.

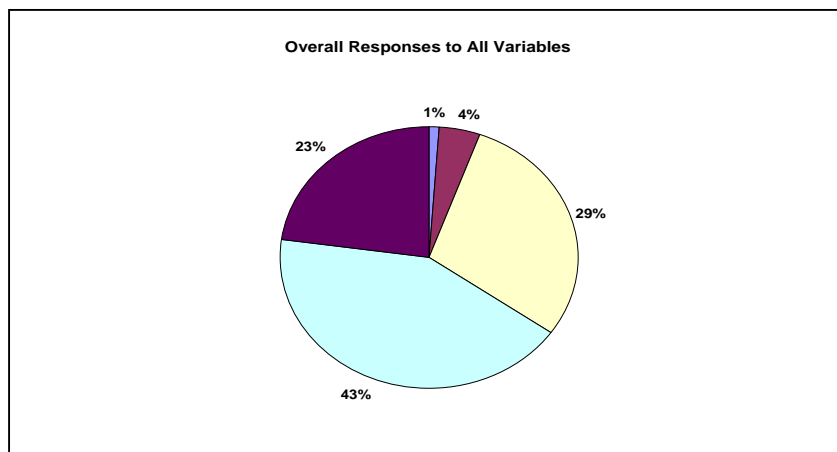
1. After reading the reports how well do you think you know about your child's progress?



Of the respondents 72% indicated adequate knowledge of student progress, with 28% indicating they were very well informed. No inadequate or very low responses were received, suggesting the format is sufficiently informative in terms of translating student progress to families.

2. Rate each of the following in terms of how they helped or influenced your understanding about your child's progress?

Overall responses were positive, with 95% of respondents indicating 'average' to 'very high' assistance in understanding the reports. Of these 48% were 'very high' & 28% 'high' in ratings.



Closer scrutiny of individual variables support overall perceptions by both ratings and the low percentage of negative respondents.

Variable	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
DET information note	6%		56%	32%	6%
Beaumaris information note		6%	32%	48%	14%
Report explanatory notes	1%		43%	43%	13%
Overall ABCD grades		10%	28%	48%	14%
Specific ABCD grading in subject sub headings		6%	26%	55%	13%
Teacher comments in subject areas		3%	17%	47%	33%
Rankings in 'Attitude, Behaviour & Effort'			24%	41%	35%
Teachers' final overall comment		3%	14%	38%	45%
Other		1%	1%	1%	2%

Though low in comparison, the area of most common lack of understanding was Grading. This may be attributed to the fact Beaumaris structure, pedagogy and communications are embedded in Outcomes Based discussion about Levels and student cohorts, not grades and year levels. Comments from parents support this perception. This area was also of some concern to teachers, as indicated in their survey feedback. Generally the parent workshops helped understanding, for those who attended, but even they were not absolutely sure about the 'translation' and need. While this is not substantiated by the 'high' to 'very high' percentages, two other observations have been made following further informal dialogue:

- Many parents did not attend the workshops
- Parent views of just what ABCD meant didn't match what was intended.

For Beaumaris this will mean the need for additional work shops, particularly with further changes in this area, which will impact on report grades at the end of the year in some areas.

A small percentage of respondents added other variables which they felt either helped or hindered understanding, as well as providing additional feedback.

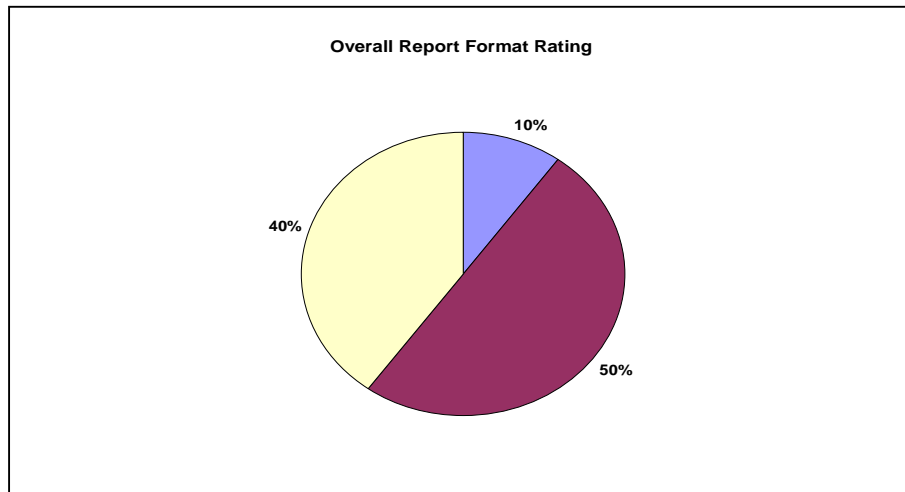
3. Other comments on understandings about the report

These comments generally reflect the positive parent feedback regarding aspects of reporting that assisted with understanding. Samples include:

- Attending parent workshop was informative and ensured I had realistic expectations and the report to follow
- I more or less realised how my daughter was doing, however, only after talking to the teacher afterwards did everything make sense
- Comments made - "poor listening skills" - what does this mean?
- I feel a little disconnected with my children's school work, as in 'what they are doing each day/week. I would love to see more examples of their school work (a portfolio of some kind)
- My daughter is in Year 1 and this is the first formal report I have seen, I was extremely impressed with the report I received.
- All teachers have contributed greatly to make this report informative, accurate and professional
- All teachers should be congratulated for the time and effort they have put into the report writing process

4. How would you rate the overall format?

Half of all respondents found the format adequate and a further 40%, very adequate. Only 10% of parents rated the format as inadequate.



While these perceptions are generally supportive, there is still room for improvement. As a system it would be in our interest to have well over 50% of respondents indicate a very good rating, if only to justify the change. A target of 75% plus would be more convincing, especially where school communities were more than happy with past practice.

The following comments and general feedback provided by this report may assist towards improving the format and procedures.

5. If you wish, please provide reason/s for your selection?

Parents were given opportunity to elaborate on their ratings. The following sample range reflects their selections and overall perceptions and may give a little insight into possible improvements, both at system and local levels:

- Clear, easy to read, lovely report to read
- Comments on every section desired
- Like to know class position (Reading; Spelling; Maths)
- There was a lot of detail in the teacher comments which is appreciated
- DET explanatory notes and the information for parents were contradictory (i.e. the information sheet called the shaded areas grade box 'Overall Achievement,' but the Explanatory notes called it 'Achievement Target.' So it was a little unclear of whether my child was achieving for the grade or had achieved it, especially since the target seemed to be Year 7, not Year 6. After teacher clarification it all made sense of course
- Clear and concise with some useful comments
- Differences between subjects not made obvious
- Grades must be so vast in content that a good level 'C' and low level 'C' are not distinguished
- I know my own child's strengths and weaknesses, but these are not apparent with the grades given
- The format itself is OK, but it is formal and I feel it doesn't allow me to share in my children's educational experiences - to sit with them and look at what they are doing, what they are proud of and where there are problems
- It was a very professional looking report

The issue of grades received most attention, indicating some uncertainty, as previously stated, even though the overall perceptions about understandings were quite positive (Page 2). Again, the limited post survey probing suggested these understandings may be polarised:

- Parents who have a grasp of OBE through closer interaction with teachers, attending workshops and readings
- Parents who view grades with a personal historical perspective, not necessarily related to OBE

With so many new international families it will be important for the school to firstly inquire deeper to substantiate if this is the case, then address the need.

6. Do you have any concerns with the reporting format?

Parents were given the opportunity to share any concerns. Those who responded generally addressed issues relating to rankings, and grades, once again. Examples include:

- Is 'Position in School & State' really necessary
- Hopefully position ranking will only be used for Yrs 3/5/7
- This report doesn't acknowledge that learning is developmental
- I think DET is making things as complicated as they can for all concerned, but if it's proved it works, then great
- I found the report quite negative, particularly for lower ability students
- The 'C/D' grades give a feeling of inadequacy at a very young age
- What sort of Maths/Science etc, are my children doing - the format gives an outline in a vague, non direct sort of way, but I still don't feel as if I really know what my kids are doing
- I am glad to hear that position in school will not be recorded - I feel it could cause self esteem issues for lower achieving children

These sort of comments justify the decision not to include 'rankings' for the end of year reports. There were few respondents to Question 6, but issues raised confirm other areas previously mentioned.

One other area of concern was raised by families whose students have either special or learning needs, where the report is unable to reflect progress they are making on their Individual Education Plans. Further discussions have raised issues of inequity and non-inclusivity which if pursued, could have ramifications system wide. Thankfully, these families rely largely on teacher input and discussion, through their IEP partnerships where progress and improvement is evident. However, some do feel their children are being labelled as ongoing 'failures.'

While these families are in the minority, their perceptions and needs are probably 'louder' than the majority and need to be taken into consideration.

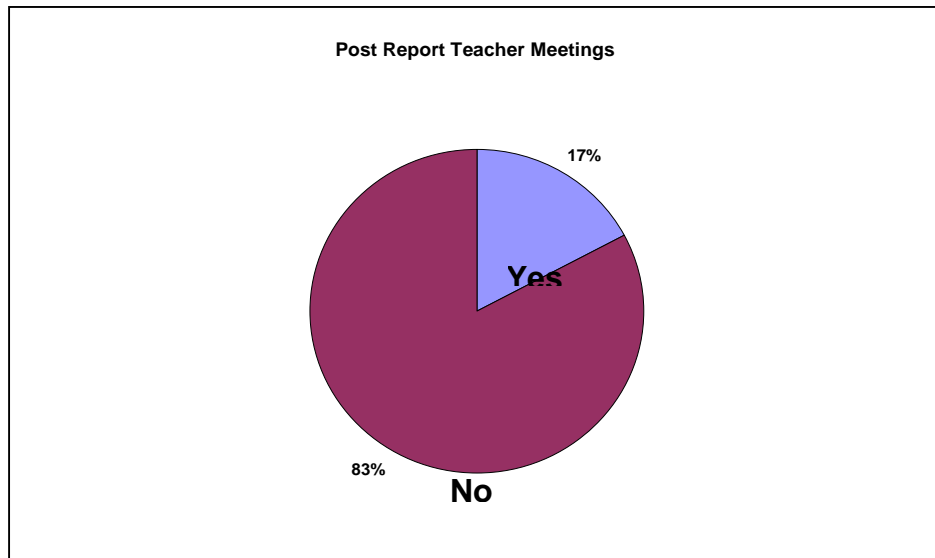
7. Do you have any suggestions regarding the reporting format?

Only a few respondents shared their views, but these reiterate previous perceptions.

- Could more info be provided in the English learning area
- Broaden grades to 'C', 'C+', 'C-' to give more accurate level
- The teachers are wonderful and I feel that they have done a great job, given the format. But could it be extended to include more specific items of my children's work - something real which will allow us as parents to connect with our child and their work
- I would like to see Attitude, Behaviour and Effort relate to individual subject areas as well

- The shading of the boxes to indicate 'target' rather than 'progress' is misleading and only made clear when reading the explanatory notes carefully - not everyone will read the explanation
- More space needed for comments - most parents pay more attention to the teacher' comments as it gives a better indicator of achievement

8. Did you arrange a meeting with your teacher, having read the report?



As part of semester one reporting, teachers were encouraged to initiate parent meetings, not only for students on IEP's and IBP's, but also where there might be any concerns about progress, classroom issues, responsibilities and whether any families might need additional support in understanding the new format. Of the respondent sample, 17% indicated they followed up with a meeting. This ratio of almost 1:5 closely matched the number of overall requests, by teachers.

The data substantiates teacher actions in conferencing with parents, reducing any element of 'surprise.'

9. In terms of helping you understand and appreciate classroom practice, student work and student practice, how effective are the following school practices?

The survey also provided an opportunity to gain feedback on other aspects of school – community relationships and practices to share what's happening and what students are doing and learning. Parents were asked to rank each practice.

Variable	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
February parent classroom information night		3%	46%	42%	9%
Teacher meetings & visits		3%	22%	45%	30%
Formal reports			38%	42%	10%
Phone calls	5%	5%	48%	24%	18%
Parent workshops & information sessions			42%	50%	8%
Letters			46%	42%	12%
Term 3 open night		4%	29%	54%	13%
Work samples/portfolios			21%	64%	15%
Assemblies		3%	29%	54%	14%
Newsletters		7%	39%	36%	18%
Special performances		7%	18%	56%	19%

General feedback suggests current practices are well received by the vast majority of parents, in terms of sharing what students are doing, what is expected and how they are going at school. Areas which rated highest among parents included: work samples; teacher meetings and visits; special performances; Open Night; and assemblies. It is interesting to note Formal Reports were ranked below these in terms of 'High – Very High' ratings.

While still positive, less favoured practices include: phone calls; Information Night; Newsletters; letters; workshops; and again - formal reports.

From parent feedback, the perception is that direct and active access to student activities and others involved in those activities (e.g. teachers and student peers) provides them with a preferred mode of understanding and appreciation of performance and outcomes. These are substantiated by the regular large numbers who turn out for such events and access such opportunities throughout the year. It is important these opportunities are maintained and further developed, more so than formal reporting.

However, this would not be possible if not for the highly professional staff culture, where teachers 'do the extra yards and time' to make access possible, both in and outside school hours. This is acknowledged and appreciated by parents.

10. Do you have any other comments regarding the school that may help us in our future planning?

While only a minority of parents chose to add suggestions the following summarise responses for further consideration in planning for 2007 and beyond:

- Would like my child to bring home samples of spelling, maths, science etc (tests or worksheets) done through the school week for parent signature & return to school - would give clearer indication of what he's studying & where he needs extra assistance
- The only negative I have is the general lack of maintenance of the school grounds (From the Santiago entrance). Do you not have a maintenance man to clear up the rubbish, rubble, dead leaves, twigs, glass etc. The same stuff lies there for weeks on end, and it makes the school look neglected
- Personally I feel that consistency of terminology needs to be applied. As parents we are now confused - first levels - now grades ABCD. It will take time to get used to.
- I think an information sheet of how a child achieves an overall grade would be useful, explaining the expected level for the age group and how that relates to the grade - but I realise that may cause confusion for some parents.
- Inconsistency with age grades and school multi-age and OBE philosophy, based on levels.
- Have only joined the school this year. The children have settled and are doing well. I am pleased with the school's 'overall performance.'
- It is a clean, pleasant and positive working environment.
- We have found the teaching and office staff to be friendly and helpful.
- References to work levels/assignment work/ behaviour in some areas should have been dealt with earlier in the semester. I was aware of some behaviour issues in Term 1, but believed they had been sorted out as I had not heard any more. Although I am a firm believer in self-management I feel some problems are not helped if teachers do not take responsibility for insisting a good behaviour and help more 'disorganised students' by checking homework written down etc
- I am very pleased how this school operates and how they look after my children
- Would it be possible to share in post assembly time with our children - a chance to celebrate together all the hard work and joy of the moment. That would be great!
- As stated, more examples of children's work to share and connect in their educational experiences and connect us as parents with what our children are actually doing - strengths

and weaknesses - where they may need more help and support and what they are finding easy?

- I must say that I am very pleased with my children's teachers and the experiences that they are having at Beaumaris School.
- Very Caring teachers. Well done!
- The school and teachers should be proud of the reports that have been produced.
- The overall presentation is excellent
- The best feedback is from individual contact with the teacher and this supplements reports invaluablely
- We have been delighted with the support and encouragement our son has had during his short time at Beaumaris
- Would like teachers to expand more on their comments

Generally the comments reflect previous perceptions surrounding inconsistencies between grading and levels. The desire for more home – school sharing of student work and concerns is raised again, but this is more localised to a small minority which can be looked at in isolation. The overall perception is parents are both happy with the reporting format and school practices, with a few minor areas that can be 'tuned up' in the future.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, parents appeared supportive of the reporting format, procedures and teacher input. The very few negative responses are more individual perceptions than general and need to be treated as such. Issues concerning inconsistencies are evident, as they were with teacher feedback:

- Incompatibility of 'year level' assessment as to school based learning phase development by student cohorts
- Uncertainty between grades and levels
- The range difference within grades

This will only be further exacerbated by proposed changes to assessment ranges, such as in Year 5, which will result in significant differences between mid year and end of year reports. Further parent workshops will need to be undertaken to develop greater understanding here, as well as in the other issues raised above.

Feedback also suggests school practices in sharing student work and outcomes are successful and need to continue, with a view to further improvement in some areas. One is the sharing of work samples between home and the classroom.

In general the school is meeting parent expectations and for that staff are to be congratulated. I also wish to thank them for the many extra hours they commit to in school and out of school hours in working towards improved student outcomes and school – community relationships. Their professionalism and commitment is to be commended and emphasises why Beaumaris has been nationally recognised as a 'High Demand Government School.' Staff value and protect their professional culture through practices of lifelong learning, collaboration and support of each other. This culture needs to be preserved and further developed as an ongoing strategic goal.

Tony Misich
Principal
Beaumaris Primary School
September 2006