

BEAUMARIS PRIMARY SCHOOL
Teacher Feedback from Semester One DET On - Line Reporting Format
& Procedures
August 2006

Beaumaris Primary School undertook the DET On line Reporting Format at the end of Semester One 2006. Several external pressures both complicated the process and challenged staff, including:

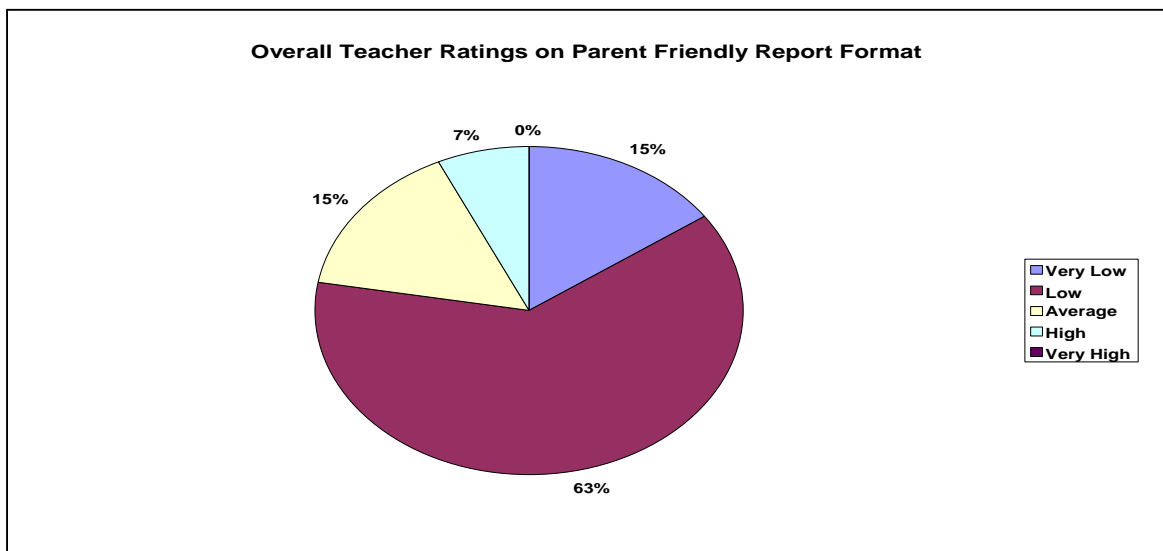
- numerous changes to the program
- initial instability and slowness on line
- uncertainty
- union bans
- access to professional development
- change management requirements

Regardless, staff continued and to their credit completed all requirements on schedule. As way of proposing changes to improve the process staff fed back information through an on line survey via the school intranet. Key aspects of the survey focused upon the report format in terms of:

- parent friendliness
- teacher user friendliness
- time taken
- printing
- proofing
- areas for improvement

Beaumaris staff are highly professional in their approach to all school and system procedures and their feedback warrants due attention.

1. How would you rate the overall format in terms of parent friendliness?



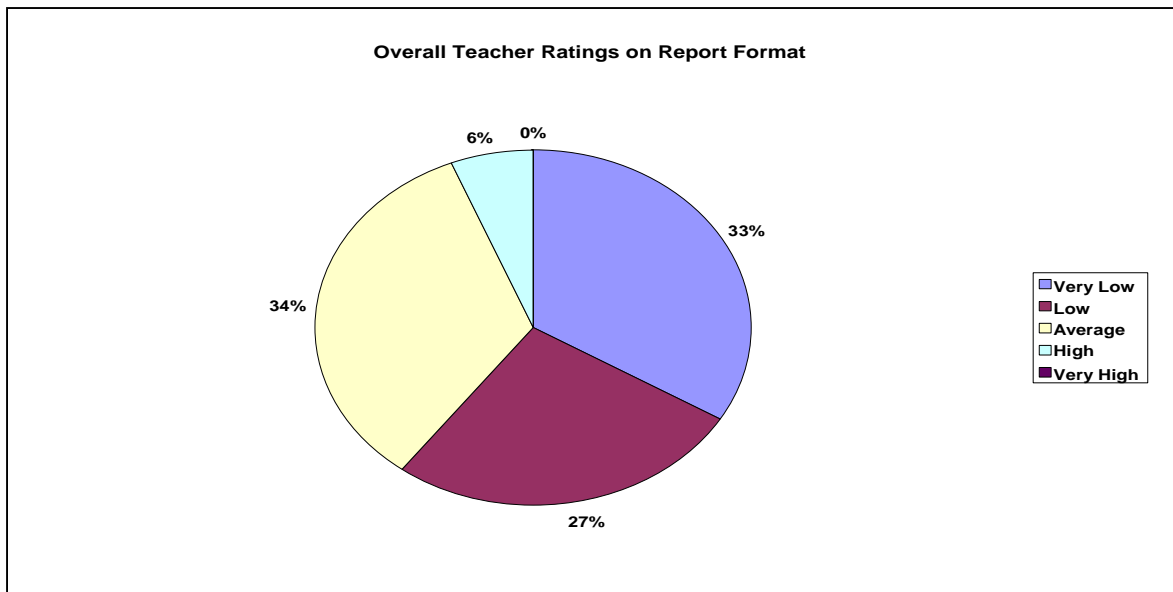
Of the respondents, 78% rated the new formats either 'Very Low' or 'Low' in terms of parent friendliness. Only 22% saw them as being either 'Average' or 'High.' Further discussions with staff identified several areas which they felt were either in contrast to school curriculum philosophy or inadequate and ambiguous in terms of catering for all students. Some of these included:

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- grading achievements in ABCD as opposed to outcomes levels
- ambiguous descriptors
- inability to acknowledge progress for all students – eg Individual Education Plans
- year level structures in reporting compared with multi age classes in sub schools aligned to the Curriculum Framework

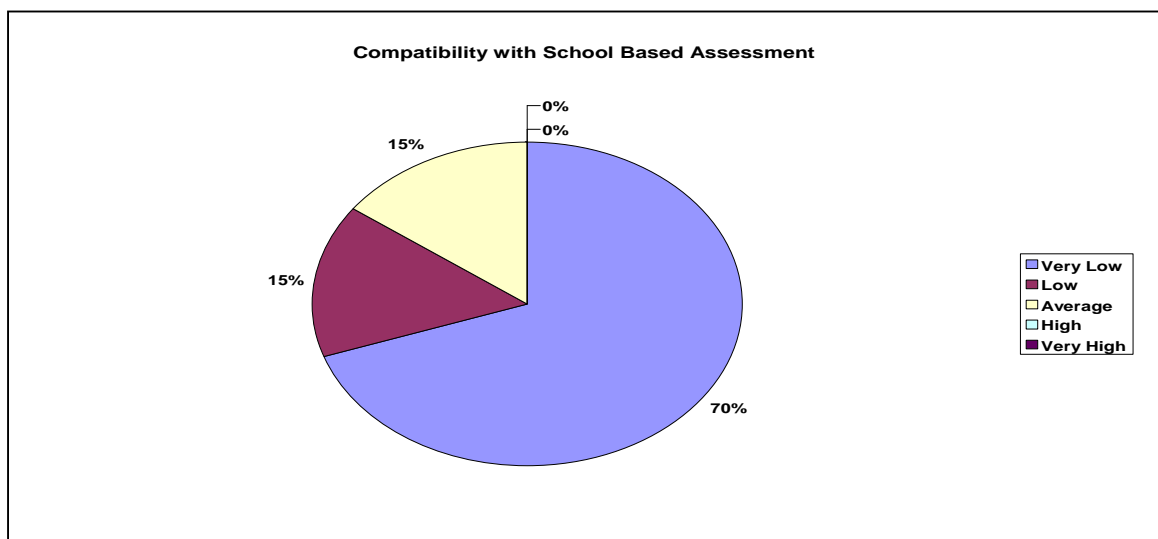
These concerns were signalled early in the piece, resulting in several workshops run for families prior to reports being issued. This action did assist to an extent for those parents who attended. However the concerns are still there.

2. How would you rate the overall format in terms of teacher user friendliness?



A third of respondents rated the process 'Very Low' in terms of being user friendly. Over half (60%) found the task difficult. Just under half (40%) found it more manageable. Individual technology skills may have had an impact to an extent. Other reasons can be seen in teacher comments about the overall format (p3).

3. How would you rate the overall format in terms of compatibility with school based assessment?



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Of all responses, school compatibility was rated lowest with 85% of respondents indicated the format was either 'Very Low' or 'Low.' It needs to be understood that Beaumaris is well developed in terms of Outcomes Based Education philosophy, implementation, assessment and structural and procedural pedagogy. Staff generally suggested the traditional prerequisites imposed by the format, was counter to pedagogical practices within the school. Again, this dichotomy of interpretations necessitated parent workshops to assist with greater understanding as well as substantiating classroom practices.

These perceptions are supported by teacher comments when asked to expand on their overall ratings.

4. Additional Teacher Comments on the Overall Reporting Format:

- We did more but often gave parents less information, for example with struggling students. They often appeared to be making no progress when actually they may have or are just progressing a little slower than others.
- Grades of A-D are incompatible with level assessment and even more so with our structure
- Year levels are incompatible to our structure, where Year 6 students are given a different grade to Year 7 students in the Reports, yet our pedagogy recognises both as one cohort in one phase and hence undertake common tasks and common assessment.
- Too many 'Bs' in the report.
- Some year levels - it's easier to get an A.
- Doesn't show a true picture of the students progress (unless looking at comments)
- The grade 'C' does not mean satisfactory as students have not reached the achievement target for that year level. Parents therefore are receiving a misleading message about their child's achievement.
- The reporting format of grades (A,B,C,D) does not mesh with "outcomes based education".
- I do not like the way that weaker children are not able to celebrate their successes.
- There is not enough delineation within one level, such as distinguishing a bottom B to a top B student.

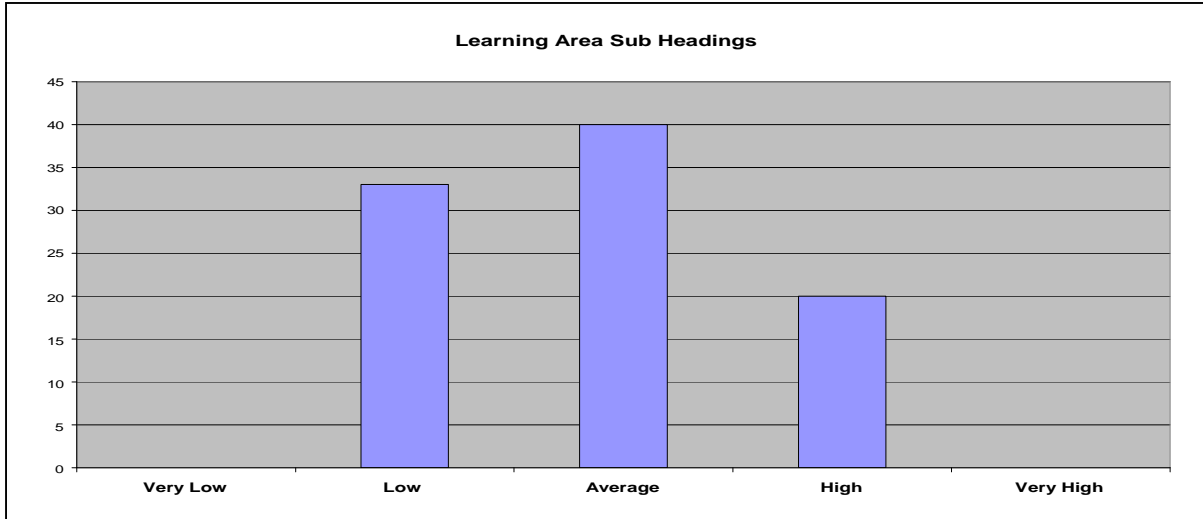
5. Other mechanical aspects relating to the new format were also considered:

- learning area sub headings
- attitude & behaviour
- comments bank
- data/details input
- grading ABCD
- capacity to report on all students
- on line speed
- printing speed
- saving
- moving from one report to another
- year structures
- time frame
- inability to cater for multi age classes
- other

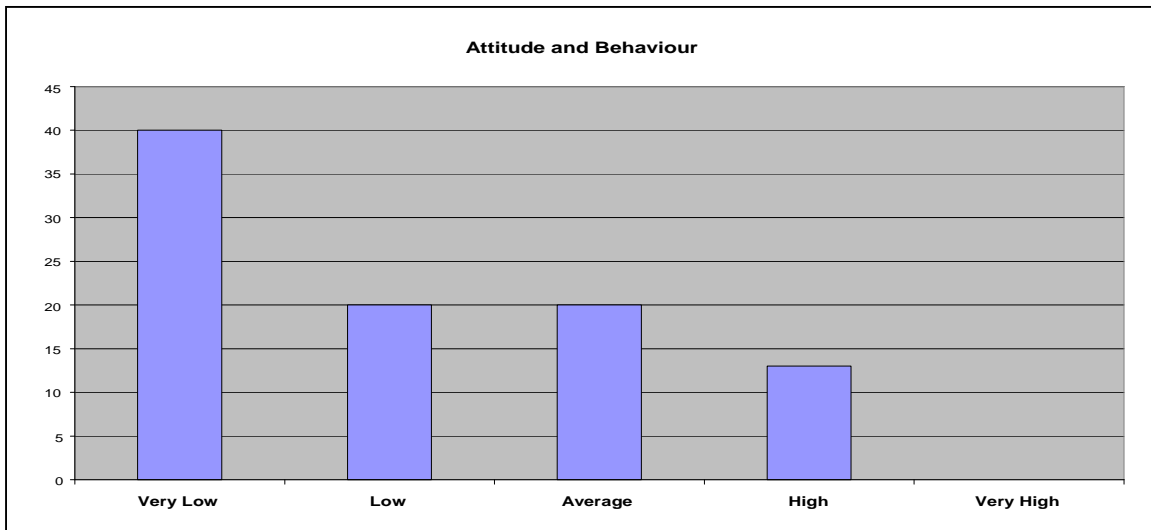
Teachers were asked to rate the reporting format and requirements in terms of their user friendliness. Generally the ratings substantiate previous perceptions and emphasise a need for review to improve the format and process.

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5.1. Learning area sub headings

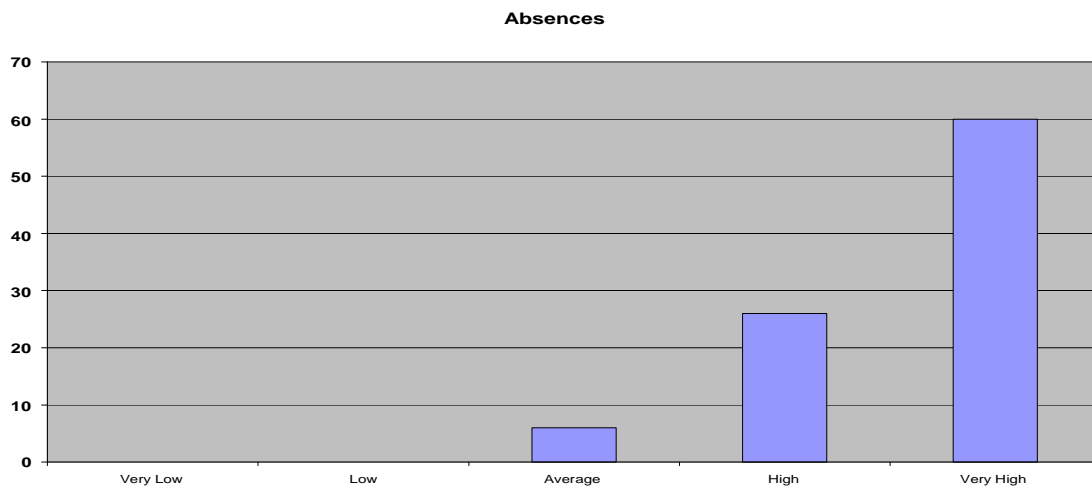


5.2. Attitude Behaviour & Effort

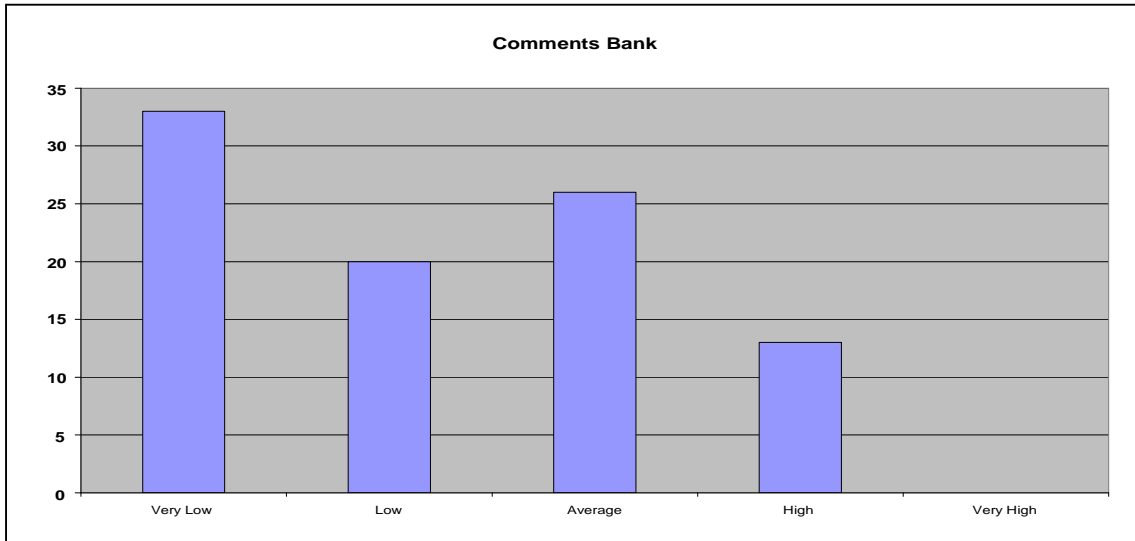


The main issue concerned terminology, particularly inconsistencies such as 'usually' and 'sometimes' in the same descriptor. It was felt the school's existing report was a better framework in this area.

5.3. Absences



5.4. Comments banks

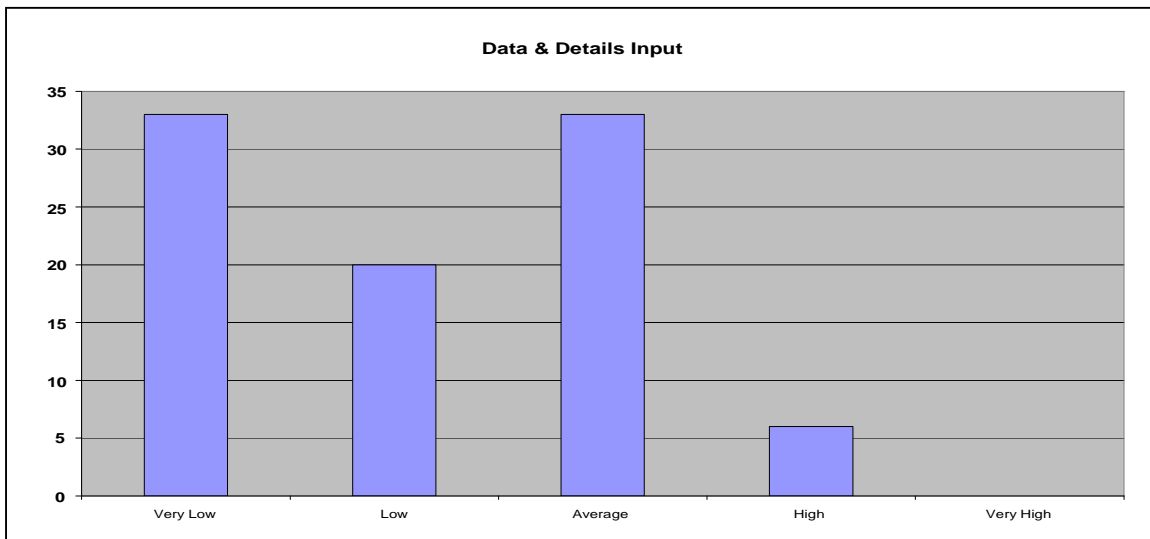


Initial manipulation of the 'Comments Bank' posed difficulties, inputting and importing data. However, these were generally overcome with further support in the use of EXCEL and sub schools combining in preparation of common banks. Individuals who worked in isolation found the process a little more difficult and lengthy.

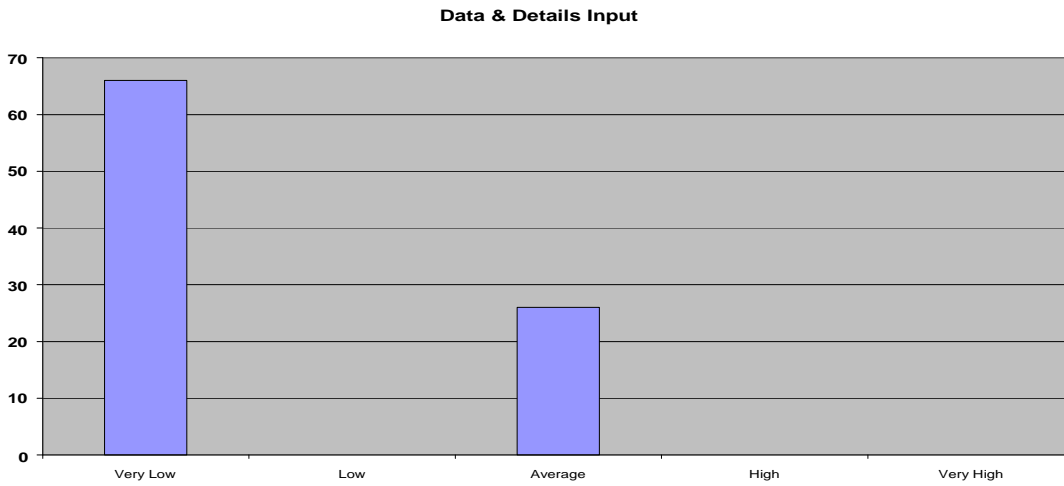
Another issue is the inability of the program to allow teachers to input one whole multi age class set, as the program requires switching year levels – this proved time consuming.

Similar feedback describes issues with data and details input. Individual skills and coordinated collaboration appear to be two variables that influenced ratings (Fig: 5.5).

5.5. Data/details input

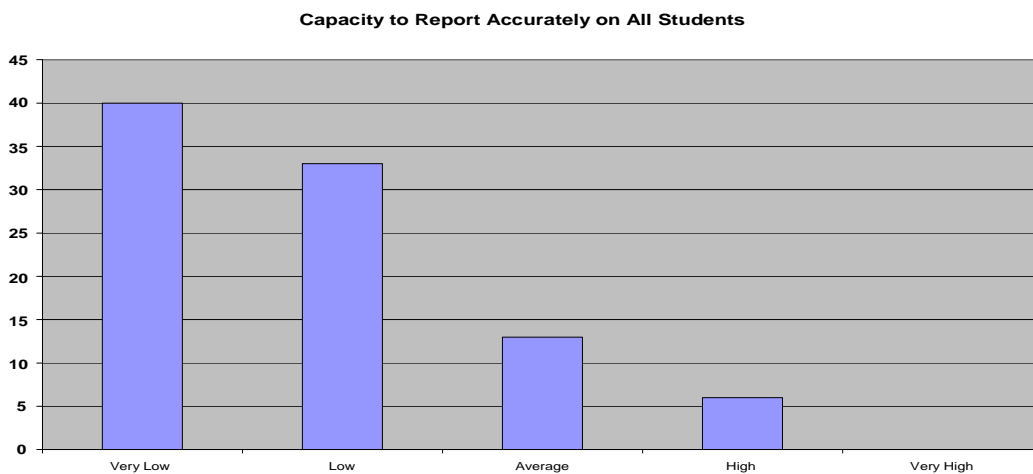


5.6. Grading ABCD

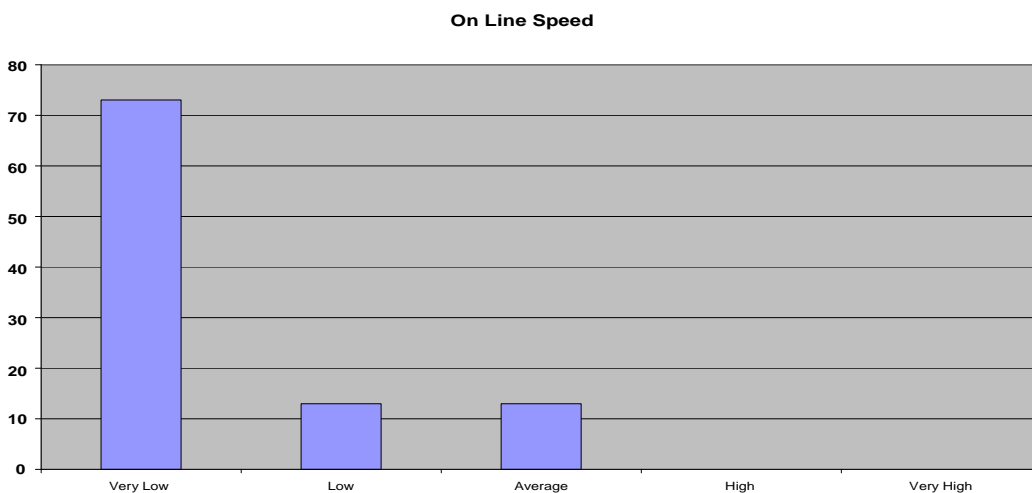


Ratings correlate and confirm teacher perceptions from Sections 3 and 4 about inconsistencies between practising pedagogy and report format, as does the report's capacity to cater for all students (Fig: 5.7)

5.7. Capacity to report on all students



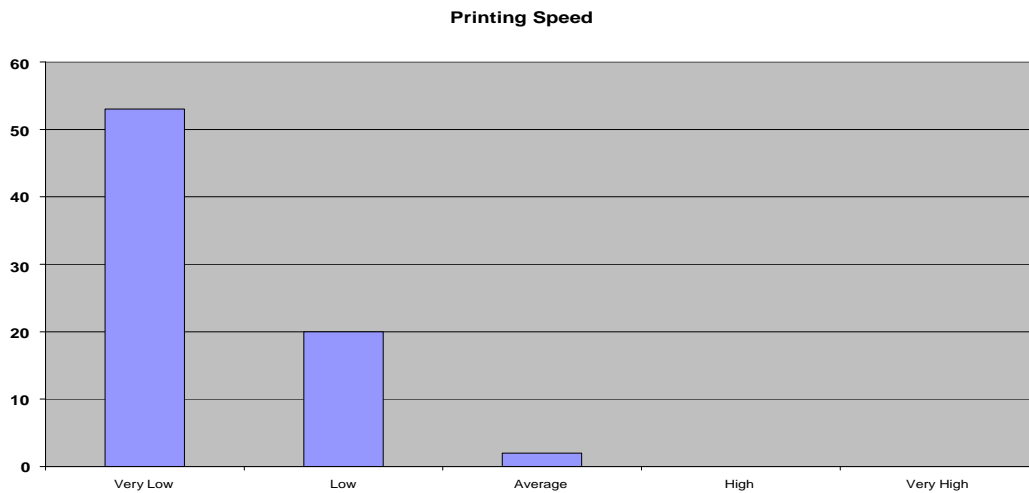
5.8. On line speed



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The majority of reports were undertaken prior to a 'line speed' improvement in the final weeks of Term 3. As such, most teachers found the process inordinately slow and cumbersome: saving (Fig: 5.10); moving between report (5.11); downloading; separate year lists (5.12); etc.

5.9. Printing speed

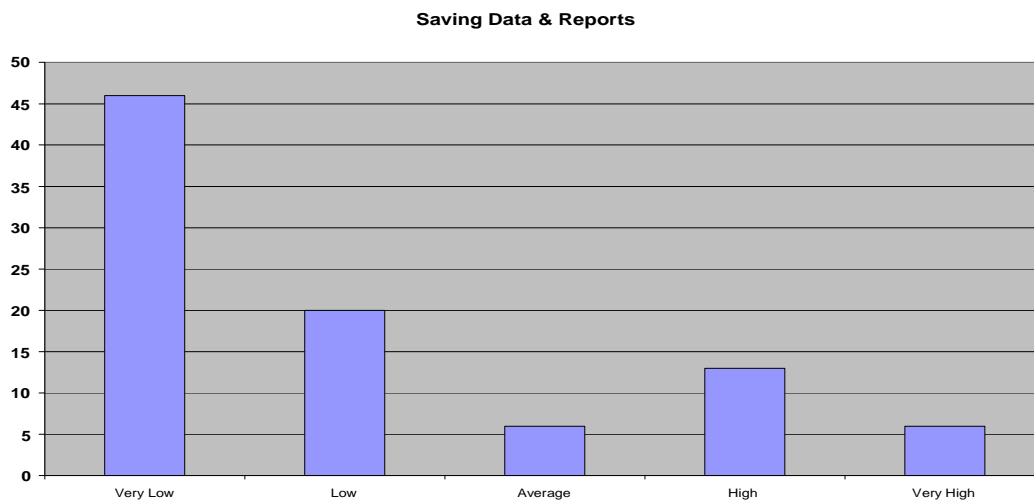


The majority of report printing was undertaken by the Curriculum Coordinator, not teaching staff, as initial printing was requiring almost 3 hours for a class run. The problems here were inconsistency in DET's timetable of procedures where targets were continually deferred and amended, whereas the school needed to maintain its schedules in catering for large student numbers.

- inability to run off one set of multi age class reports as the format only supports one year level at a time

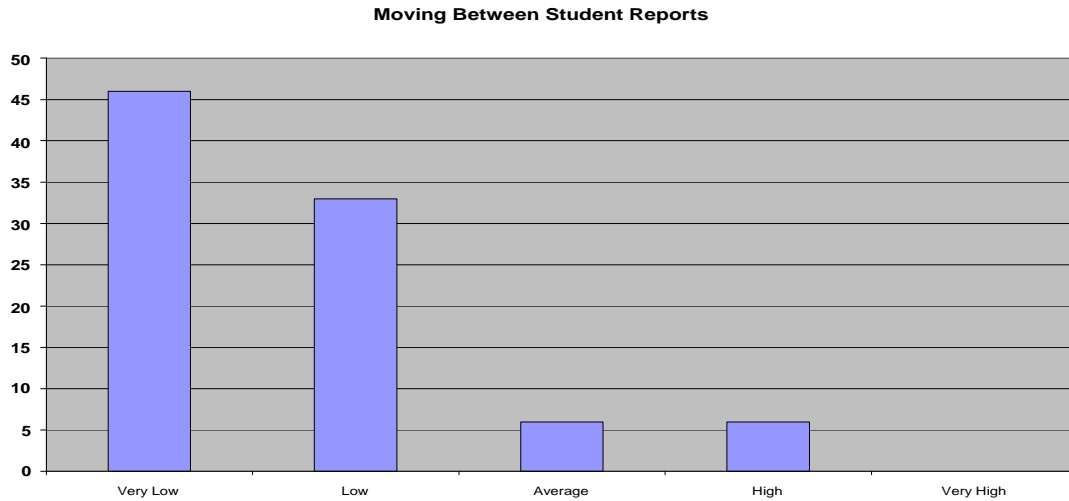
Hence the majority of reports were published prior to the line speed and program improvement. This improvement was significant, making the operation less demanding.

5.10. Saving

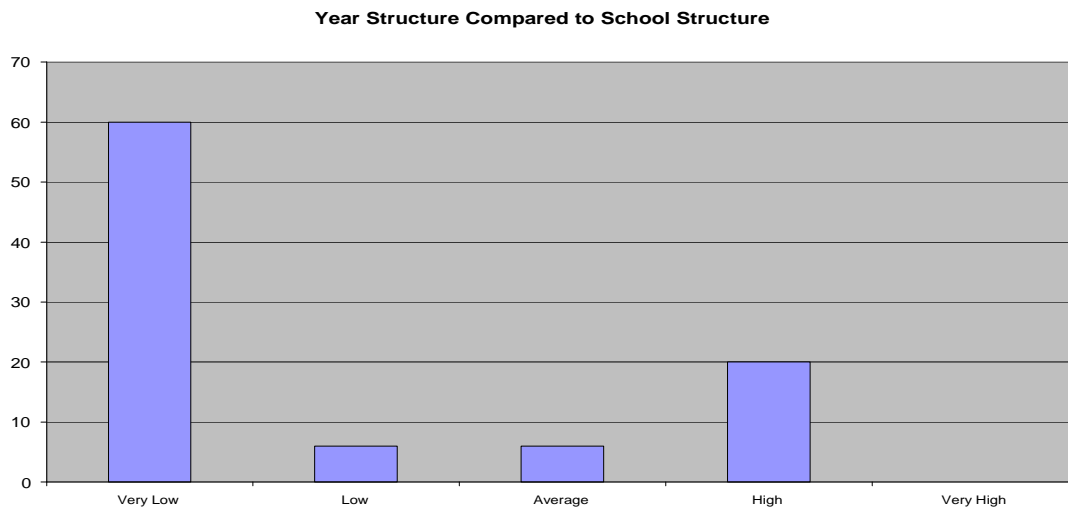


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5.11. Moving to a new report

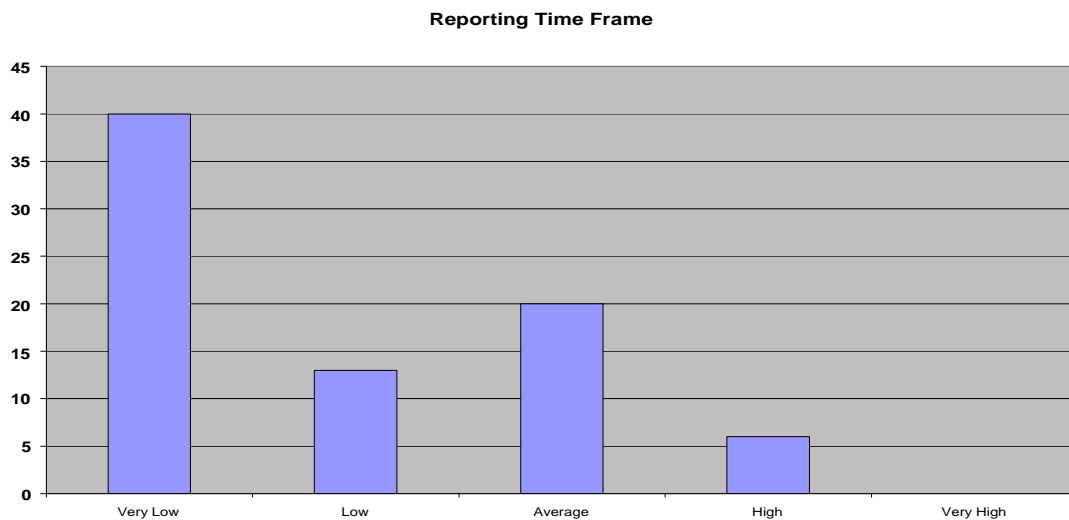


5.12. Year structures



With the new format being unable to cater for whole multi age classes teachers expressed they wasted unnecessary time switching between year groups, both when entering data and proofing. Hence, not only is the format year structure inconsistent with pedagogical philosophy but it is also not user friendly.

5.13. Time frame



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Continual changes to schedules, on line program and instructions to schools complicated both process and time lines for completion. Schools require more consistency in approach and a feasible time frame once a product has proven its reliability and credibility. Staff felt they were continuously adjusting to external 'on the run' decisions and changes giving the perception the school was complying to an unproven program and phlegmatic decision making, resulting in much unnecessary local stress and pressure.

Further comments reiterate teacher concerns about their experiences.

6. Additional Teacher Comments on the Overall Reporting Format User Friendliness:

- Descriptors for attitude, behaviour and effort are not compatible with the headings
- Very slow to change year levels and to initially open it up
- Absences done automatically is a great time saver
- Matching grade to outcome level requirements meant most students achieved at C or B. This did not adequately reflect the range of abilities within those levels
- 'Usually' does not mean 'Sometimes' as indicated in the Attitude Behaviour descriptor. Usually means more often than not
- The comment bank is not user-friendly as you have to open up each comment box to view the comment in its entirety - very time consuming
- The grading of ABCDE is not compatible with outcomes pedagogy for multi age classes. Grades misrepresent students working at the same developmental level because they are assessed according to their year level - even though completing the same common tasks and assessments
- The report does not consider students working on IEP's
- The report was very time consuming especially since the report had to be completed online and not at home. DOTT is limited for Primary Teachers!
- To proof a report in its entirety, you had to open each comment box separately as the spread sheet didn't allow a complete overview
- In split classes, the changing over from one year level to another was extremely time consuming as the program would reopen the previous year level, before allowing you to open the requested year level
- Organising a comment bank for each developmental level was extremely time consuming for teachers. Given that we are all working on Outcomes and Standards, one would have expected a comment bank to have been considered by the Curriculum Council
- Final report format arrived only weeks before report writing commenced. This gave teachers very little time to record data according to the new format
- Very slow in moving to a new report, wastes time and moving between year levels (even slower)
- Having to do the reports online at school slowed the whole process down as hours available to complete were restricted by school times and teaching

7. With regards to completing reports, estimate how long the overall process took?

| Hours | 0-6 | 6-12 | 12-18 | 18-24 | 24-30 | 30-36 | 36-42 | 42-48 | 48-54 | 54-60 | 60+ |
|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Taken | 0.0% | 18.8% | 37.5% | 18.8% | 12.5% | 6.3% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 6.3% | 0% |

The majority of teachers (37.5%) claimed to have taken 12-18 hours to complete the reporting process. Of the remainder 18.8% took 6-12 hours and another 18.8% took 18-24 hours. Over 26% took more than 24 hours.

Time taken showed correlation with individual skills, level of training, line speed, only school access point and manipulation of the format, as described in teacher comments (Fig: 6)

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8. With regards to completing reports, estimate how long the printing process took?

| Hours | N/A | 0-12 | 12-24 | 24-36 | 36-48 | 48-60 | 60-72 | 72-84 | 84-96 | 96+ |
|-------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Taken | 87% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

As publishing was undertaken by the Curriculum Coordinator, teachers were released from the process.

9. With regards to completing reports, estimate how long the proofing process took?

| Hours | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6+ |
|-------|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|
| Taken | 0% | 7% | 40% | 13% | 7% | 1% | 0% |

The program is not user friendly in terms of proofing and editing, where a scrolling and page view function could have saved time.

10. From the previous list, which two or three aspects would you change to improve the process for the end of the year?

Teacher subsequently asked which two or three aspects could be immediately changed to improve the overall process and outcome.

| Categories for Improvement | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Learning area sub headings | 0% |
| Attitude Behaviour & Effort | 14% |
| Absences | 0% |
| Comments banks | 14% |
| Data/details input | 0% |
| Grading ABCD | 20% |
| Capacity to report on all students | 11% |
| On line speed | 16% |
| Printing speed | 3% |
| Saving | 6% |
| Moving to a new report | 6% |
| Year structures | 6% |
| Time frame | 4% |
| Other? | 0% |

The most common areas for improvement were identified as:

- grading ABCD – linked to school pedagogy and capacity to cater for all students
- on line speed – also linked to saving, moving between reports, printing and year level structure
- comments bank - manipulation
- Attitude Behaviour & Effort – ambiguity in descriptors

10.1. Additional Teacher Comments on the Improving the Reporting Format:

- Need to be able to input data on the whole class (multi age grouping), not year 6 and year 7 on a separate downloaded list
- I would prefer to focus on what a child can do and what improvements they are making rather than A, B, C, D. This is not flexible and could be crushing to a child's self esteem, therefore it does not cater for all students

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- There should be an additional criteria of "SOMETIMES" along with seldom, usually and always in the attitude behaviour and effort section.

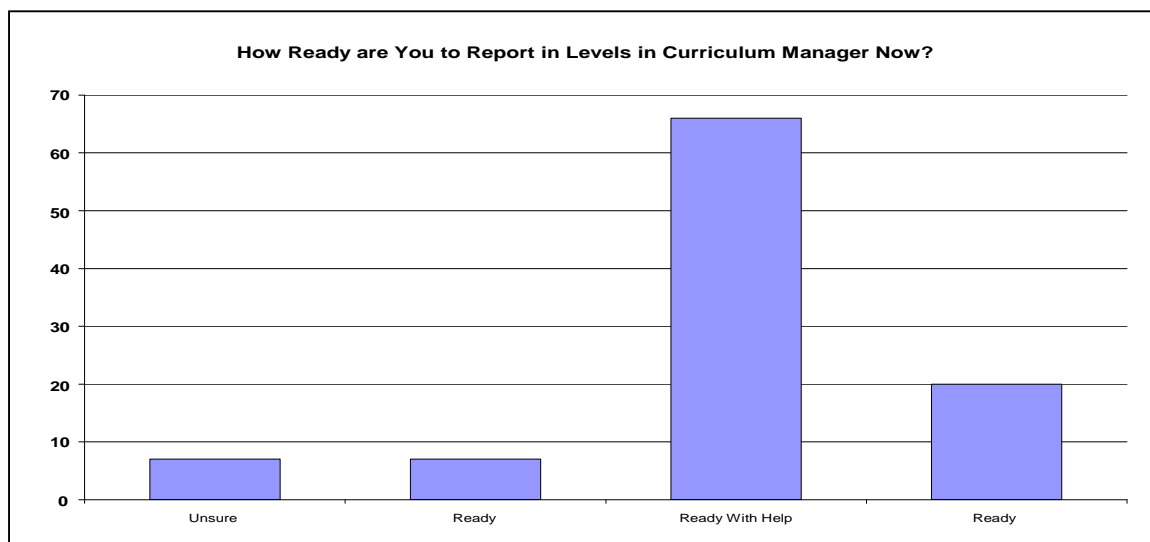
11. Did you require support during the process?

Eighty percent of respondents required ongoing support to complete the reporting process. Others required intermittent support. Main sources of assistance were from the Curriculum Coordinator, administration and colleagues (Fig: 11.1). Demands on the Coordinator were ongoing and onerous, yet essential in terms of outcomes.

11.1. If so, from whom did you get help?

| From Where? | N?A | Central Office | District Office | Admin | Colleague | Other |
|-------------|-----|----------------|-----------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Percentage | 20% | 0% | 0% | 40% | 60% | 0% |

12. Outside the reporting process, how ready are you to report in Levels in Curriculum Manager, now?



Teachers were also asked to reflect on their assessment and reporting practices, in terms of moving forwards with Curriculum Manager. The majority indicated they were either ready, but with help, or ready without help, reflecting professional growth across the school. This will need to be taken into consideration for future planning, as well as support for those not as ready or able.

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13. Conclusion and Recommendations

While the process generally elicited negative responses from staff, they were able to complete the task on schedule and used the experience to share their concerns and suggestions for future improvement. Classrooms were provided a day's PD support which proved invaluable in this initial round and no doubt assisted greatly in meeting timelines. However this time will be unavailable in Semester two, but teachers recognise their experience will help considerably second time around.

So too will suggestions they have made, as recommendations for change:

- grading ABCD
 - allowance needs to made to link school pedagogy
 - allowance for the capacity to cater for all students (eg IEP's)
- on line speed improvements
 - saving
 - moving between reports
 - printing
 - accommodating multi age year level structures
 - broadband access from home
- comments bank – manipulation ease
- proofing – whole of report scrolling view
- Attitude Behaviour & Effort – ambiguity in descriptors
- Setting realistic time frames that are fixed

Currently a similar survey is being undertaken with families to ascertain their perceptions and suggestions.

Beaumaris Primary School submits these findings to improve the on line reporting format and process.

Tony Misich
Principal
Beaumaris Primary School
August 2006