Developing Effective Partnerships In Reporting Student Achievement:

Making Links Between Educative Theory and Schools' Reporting Practices

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or any other institution for a degree or any other qualification.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how three participant schools reported the achievement of students to parents and the extent to which reporting practices reflected current educative theories and effective partnership. The understanding of parents and teachers of the process of the reporting practices, and how practice promoted or hindered educative partnerships between teachers and parents were examined. Over the past ten years schools, in New Zealand, have spent much time realigning their reporting practices to New Zealand national requirements, and the expectations of their school communities. This research examined what led schools to make their decisions about their reporting practices, comments on the effectiveness of current practices and draws conclusions based on the findings of the research.

Evaluative case study was selected as the methodology for this study. The study is located within three school contexts and involves in-depth examination and analysis of teachers' and parents' perceptions about educative theory, partnership and reporting student achievement. The methodology used provided an opportunity to evaluate current practice, provide feedback to each participant school and allowed the cooperative development of recommendations for improving reporting processes. Issues and themes were identified as data were gathered. Exploration of emerging themes occurred throughout the data gathering phase. Data gathering strategies included parent and teacher questionnaires, individual interviews with senior leaders, teachers and parents and document analysis.

That data revealed a number of themes in relation to educative theory, reporting and partnership. Initial themes included: important educational outcomes identified by parents and teachers, the purpose of reporting identified by parents and teachers, the type of information parents found helpful, the role of teacher-parent interviews, the desire of parents to be actively involved in their children's' learning, and the frequency and timing of personal contact between parents and teachers.

This thesis concludes that each school had not directly linked their practices to educative theory or conditions for effective partnerships with parents. A key purpose identified by both parents and teachers was the support of parents in helping their children achieve, yet this key purpose was omitted from any documentation identifying purposes and, in many cases, from the implementation of reporting processes by teachers. A further conclusion is that the link between educative theories, the relationship of those theories to the reporting process and how effective links could be made to develop effective partnerships between teachers, parents and students is a significant area for future research.

Acknowledgements

As with all research, this thesis is the culmination of the contributions of many people. Without the support of the three school's Board of Trustees, staff and parents this thesis could not have been completed. The openness with which each school community contributed to the research is testament to their own desire to ensure students are at the heart of decision making within each school.

I acknowledge the invaluable support of Jan Hill, IPDER, Massey University who kept me on task and focused. Jan challenged me to extend my thinking and ensured the process of research was rigorous. I also thank Dr Jenny Poskitt for her critique and timely advice in relation to the completion of this study. Andrea Morley provided secretarial and practical support. Coordinating community questionnaires and making contact with appropriate translators was an enormous job and I am grateful to Andrea for managing that aspect of the study so well.

And finally, to my family, who came to 'lovingly' know me as 'the back' because that was all they saw of me for the latter part of 2002 and all of 2003. I could not have completed this study without their tolerance and understanding.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

'Reporting is an integral part of the learning process, much like assessment. It certifies the attainment of learning goals and identifies where additional work is needed.' (Guskey, 1996: 3)

Introduction

The desire to complete this thesis has grown from a deep interest by the researcher in assessment practices and issues schools face in changing their reporting practice to better reflect current research about quality learning and effective partnerships.

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The focus for this thesis is on the practice of the participant primary schools in reporting student achievement. The understanding of parents and teachers of the process and outcomes of the reporting practices, and how practice promotes or hinders educative partnerships between teachers and parents are examined.

Wylie (1997, 1999) argues that schools, over the past ten years, have spent much time realigning their reporting practices to national requirements and the expectations of their school communities. Schools have, in general, undertaken this exercise largely in reaction to legislation and increased community pressure to report accurate achievement information. This research evaluates the current practice of three participant schools. The research examines what has led schools to make their decisions about their reporting practices, comments on the effectiveness of current practices and draws conclusions based on the findings of the research.

The Context For Reporting

As already stated, schools have been engaged in a state of rapid change over the past ten years, particularly in the area of assessment and reporting student achievement. In New Zealand, the Education Act 1989 heralded a new era in education under the banner "Tomorrow's Schools'. Parents were elected to Boards of Trustees and the requirement that school charters be written cooperatively by teachers and parents using a process of community consultation was established (Ramsay, Hawk, Harold, Marriott & Poskitt, 1993: 3).

How has this new era in partnerships translated into reporting student achievement? Examining the Education Act as it related to the reporting of student achievement gives us a starting point in answering this question. The Education Act 1989 specified obligations for schools in reporting to parents:

Section 77(b)(i) states that

> *The Principal of a state school shall take all steps to ensure that a student's parents are told of matters that, in the Principal's opinion, are preventing or slowing the student's progress at school.*

Legislation did not however specify the nature or amount of reporting. The question as to what constitutes "all reasonable steps" is open to debate. Most schools would agree, however, that procedures such as written reporting and parent/teacher interviews would form the basis of reporting practice in their schools (Education Review Office[1], 1996: 12).

With the introduction of National Administration Guidelines in the early 1990s and the revision of those guidelines in December 1999, schools have

[1] Government agency responsible for externally reviewing schools performance. From now on in text referred to as ERO.

endeavoured to interpret the requirements in relation to student assessment and reporting. The national curriculum documents developed during the 1990s required schools and teachers to report in relation to how students were achieving and progressing against the objectives as stated in the curriculum documents.

Over time the Ministry of Education[2] has attempted to provide some guidance to schools in reporting student achievement. In 1994 the MoE published a document *Assessment: Policy to Practice* (MoE, 1994). This publication provided some guidance to schools in developing assessment policies and practices. Schools were advised to design reporting procedures as an integral part of the development of policies. Schools were also advised to review their reporting procedures to ensure they met the needs of their audiences and were consistent with the emphases of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and National Education Guidelines (MoE, 1994). In March 1995, through the Education Gazette, the MoE then advised schools to use their professional judgement when deciding on which objectives from the curriculum to assess and report.

In their publication, *Reporting Student Achievement* (1996), ERO set out to examine why student achievement is reported and to whom, the current legal and policy framework for reporting students' educational progress and current issues for schools and policy makers in reporting student achievement. They concluded that the nature of the audience would determine the information a report contains and the way this is presented. They also concluded that in order to fulfil their partnership role effectively parents need "regular, timely and accurate information about their child's intellectual and personal development" (ERO, 1996:12).

In 1998, the MoE released its policy decisions on assessment in primary schools (MoE, 1998). At the same time they released a pamphlet to parents to explain how parents could find out more about how their children were

[2]The Ministry of Education is a government agency which determines national education policy. From now on in text, Ministry of Education will be referred to as MoE.

achieving at school. This pamphlet stated that there would be changes to the assessment tools made available to schools. In particular new tools would be developed in reading, writing and mathematics (in English and Maori); examples of student work in each of the learning areas would be developed to show achievement at each level of the national curriculum (MoE, 1998: 2).

The study for this thesis took place in 2003 just as these assessment tools were being made available to schools. Each of the schools in the study was still coming to grips with how they could firstly use the new assessment tools to inform their teaching and learning programmes and then, secondly, how they might use these tools to provide information to parents.

At the same time that these developments were happening in New Zealand, international research was providing clear evidence about the effects of assessment and reporting on learning. The setting of challenging, meaningful goals, student participation in assessment, the place of feedback and feed forward, and the motivational consequences of testing were all identified as key factors in student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998, Hattie, 1999, Assessment Reform Group 2002).

The Research Problem

Added to the research on student learning is the research that highlights the need for effective home school partnerships in promoting student learning. With this research has come a new challenge for practitioners about how to communicate student achievement in order to reflect the learning theories that positively affect student learning.

The primary objective of this thesis is to highlight the practice of participant schools in reporting student achievement to parents. It analyses the practices of the schools in relation to current research on how children learn and effective partnerships. The thesis also contributes to the current educational

debate about what constitutes effective partnerships in reporting student achievement to parents.

Objectives

In undertaking this research, five focus questions are identified:

1. In what ways have the national requirements or guidelines for reporting student achievement information to parents influenced school practice?
2. In what ways has current research into effective partnerships, educative theory and reporting processes informed each school's policies and practices?
3. How do schools articulate purposes (written and /or verbal) for reporting student achievement to parents and how are those purposes translated into procedures?
4. How does the intended message, given when reporting student achievement, match the actual message received by parents?
5. How do school's policies and practices in reporting student achievement to parents promote the concept of education as a partnership?

In answering the focus questions, specific areas of interest are identified within the questions.

1. In what ways have the National requirements or guidelines for reporting student achievement information to parents influenced school practice?

    i. What is the level of understanding of the national requirements by:
        - Principal
        - Teachers
        - Parents

ii. How has each school implemented new assessment tools within their reporting processes?

2. In what ways has current research into effective partnerships, educative theory and reporting processes informed each school's policies and practices?

   i. To what extent have schools reviewed current literature related to educative partnerships, educative theory and reporting practices?
   ii. How have schools provided opportunities for professional development in educative theory, educative partnerships and reporting processes?
   iii. In what ways have teachers and parents explored current issues together?
   iv. How are current theories reflected in school policies and practices?

3. How do schools articulate purposes (written and /or verbal) for reporting student achievement to parents and how are those purposes translated into procedures?

   i. What is the understanding of the purposes of reporting student achievement information by:
      - Principal
      - Teachers
      - Parents
   ii. How are the school's purposes and procedures for reporting student achievement to parents documented?
   iii. Are there any differences between the articulated purposes in each of the participating schools?
   iv. In what ways do teachers interpret school procedures?
   v. Do the procedures link to the stated purposes?

4. How does the intended message, given when reporting student achievement, match the actual message received by parents?

    i. What are the expectations of the outcomes of reporting student achievement information to parents as expressed by:
        - Principal
        - Teachers
        - Parents

    ii. As a result of participating in reporting student achievement to parents what is the resultant understanding of parents in relation to effort, progress and achievement of their children?

    iii. What impact does reporting student achievement have on improving learning opportunities for students?

    iv. What meaning do parents make from the written report?

    v. How do parent-teacher interviews contribute to parent understanding of their child's achievement and progress?

5. How do school's policies and practices in reporting student achievement to parents promote the concept of education as a partnership?

    i. What are the conditions for educational partnership present in each participant school?

    ii. How do participant schools interpret current research in relation to effective partnerships?

    iii. In what ways do school's reporting policies and procedures promote/hinder partnership?

The research questions require an approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection. By combining both approaches within an evaluative case study methodology, emergent issues can be identified and examined within the context of each school and across the participant schools.

The Process: Evaluative Case Study and The Researcher's Role

Evaluative case study was chosen as the key methodology as it provided an opportunity to evaluate current practice, provide feedback to each participant school and allowed the cooperative development of recommendations for improving reporting processes. The chosen methodology would provide data about the implementation of the reporting processes in each participant school. The methodology would provide findings and support the learning and decision making within each school.

The participant schools had all indicated a desire to not only learn from the findings of the research but also the research process itself, as each school believed in the need to become more systematically reflective in their practices.

The primary purpose of the research was to provide specific and detailed feedback to each participant school to allow them to make informed decisions about how they might improve their reporting practices and enhance partnerships with parents. The researcher has used the findings from each school to contribute to the current body of research about how what constitutes educative theory and effective partnerships in reporting student achievement to parents might be linked to ensure the theory can be applied in practice.

The Organisation of This Thesis

Chapter Two outlines the background to this study. It describes the New Zealand assessment landscape, portraying the political picture, as well as how current research has informed directions in education. In particular it identifies how formative assessment processes have been highlighted, the subsequent implications for reporting student achievement and developing effective partnerships.

Chapter Three reviews the literature. It discusses the place of educative theory, making explicit links between educative theories about what affects student learning and the implications for both educative partnership and reporting achievement.

Chapter Four provides a theoretical frame for the methodology of this research. It describes case study in all its forms and describes approaches which are consistent with evaluative case study.

Chapter Five applies the theory of case study, with particular emphasis on evaluative case study principles, within the context of this research study.

Finally Chapters Six and Seven identify the emergent themes and issues that have been derived from the case study. The findings are discussed in light of the original research questions and current literature about best practice in effective partnership, educative theory, reporting theories and the links that might be drawn amongst these theories.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

Parents, teachers, and students themselves want reporting strategies that are more specific, more individualised and, at the same time, more encompassing. (Watts, 1996: 11)

Introduction

This chapter explores the development of assessment and reporting practices in New Zealand over the past decade. It examines how New Zealand's Ministry of Education has interpreted international research on assessment and reporting and more critically how schools have made sense of guidelines and requirements.

Key issues, which have affected the implementation of assessment and reporting in New Zealand schools are examined. The issues are discussed under the following headings:

1. The evaluation of school's reporting policies and processes
2. Matching intended messages with messages received
3. New Zealand national assessment strategy
4. Assessment tools that assist reporting
5. Legislating for change
6. Current guidelines for reporting

The Evaluation Of School's Reporting Policies And Practices

In their study of eleven Auckland schools, Timperley, Robinson and Bullard (1999) described in detail the practice of the participant schools in reporting student achievement to parents. All schools in the study used a combination

of parent interviews and written reporting. Most schools supplemented written reporting with portfolio examples of children's work, either used during the interview itself or sent home regularly throughout the year (Timperley et al., 1999). Timperley et al. contended that the descriptive information on reports and portfolio examples of work required parents to have relatively sophisticated knowledge of both the curriculum and the expected standards for a child at a particular age if they were to understand the reports.

Schools involved in Timperley et al.'s (1999) study also identified the need to build parent self esteem. Their concern centred on the parents being upset if they received negative information about their child.

> *It's our job to make them feel a million dollars. It's the human face that's important. No one feels threatened – that's what we do well. It's what's not done at secondary school.* (Deputy Principal, cited in Timperley, et al., 1999: 85)

The difficulty with this explanation of current practice is the dilemma between reporting accurately and being positive and helpful. For many, the integration of accuracy and positiveness meant only accurate statements that were positive were reported. Timperley and Robinson (2002) comment on this situation further. In their research of the reporting practices of eleven schools they found that many of the schools noted that reports to parents should be accurate in relation to student achievement. Ironically one of the schools did not report student achievement at all. Across the ten schools that reported student achievement there appeared no association between the teacher's evaluative ratings and their nomination of students as low, medium or high achieving students. For example, a low achieving student in one school received twenty-three ticks for 'Achieving a high standard'. The parents interviewed at this school believed that the standard used by the school was a national standard. Therefore, if the report indicated that their child was "achieving at a high standard" then they accepted that meant their child was achieving as well as children of the same age (Timperley & Robinson, 2002: 69).

As part of the evaluation of the Assessment for Better Learning (AbeL) Contract[3] Peddie (2000) commented on the policies and practices of participating schools in reporting student achievement to parents. Peddie argued that school policies should reflect new conceptual understandings of assessment issues at school level. Further school reports should reflect these new understandings in a very practical way.

> *Nevertheless, while school policies might comment on the importance of valid and reliable reporting to parents about the achievement of students, if the reports sent out do not put these policies into practice, there are some serious questions to be asked.* (Peddie, 2000: 79)

Peddie (2000) reported on the data provided by 119 schools in relation to their school policies. The data indicated that the policies were a mix of "this is what we do" to " this is what we ought to do" to some schools noting, "we don't need a policy".

Of the 119 schools that provided copies of their assessment policies 78% stated that teachers should use "varied" or " a wide range of" methods to assess student achievement. No detail was given as to what methods might be included. In relation to reporting achievement to students and parents 62% of schools merely mentioned the need to report to parents, again no detail was provided, and 78% of the schools mentioned reporting to students with no detail as to what this might include (Peddie, 2000: 83).

Peddie (2000) concluded that it is easy to be critical of school policies, particularly when there is a strong indication that policies are sometimes written more as a way of compliance for external expectations than for their active use by the staff and school community.

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[3] Assessment for Better Learning – A Ministry of Education funded professional development programme offered to schools to support the development of effective assessment and reporting practices.

They also raise questions about variability of teacher professional judgement in relation to national standards and the confusion experienced by parents in interpreting the achievement of their children.

Matching the intended Message With the Message Received

There has been limited research undertaken on the impact of reporting student achievement to parents and the effectiveness of school practice in this area. Peddie (2000), in evaluating the effectiveness of the Ministry of Education contracts Assessment for Better Learning professional development programmes, noted many positive changes in school practice relating to assessment procedures and school self review. However, in relation to reporting to parents, he made the following statement:

> *The evaluation team have concerns about reporting to parents... What matters in both areas (reporting to parents and school policy) is the actual practice of schools and teachers. As already made clear, the policies may or may not reflect what happens in a school...Evidence suggests that for many schools, important changes remain to be made* (Peddie, 2000: 102).

Peddie's concerns echo the comments made by Timperley et al. (1999). This group of researchers was contracted by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara initiative. As already indicated, Timperley et al. (1999) focussed their research on the written reporting of eleven schools and they carried out a case study of one school's parent interview process. They concluded that the majority of parents felt they should take an active role in their child's education. However, only two schools were reporting student achievement information in a way that was "not ambiguous and relatively easy for parents to interpret in relation to a standard" (Timperley, 1999: 92).

> *The problems associated with ambiguous reports that are not easily interpreted are that the authority is vested with the teacher and the school. Without knowledge of the basis for judgements made about their children, parents may not realise that they are interpreting data inappropriately.* (Timperley, et al., 1999: 86)

It was against a backdrop of local concern about what information was being reported and more critically on what basis teachers were making judgements about student learning that the New Zealand government launched a discussion about the future direction of assessment and reporting in New Zealand. It released a discussion paper and invited interested parties to submit their views on the proposed changes.

New Zealand National Assessment Strategy: A Need for Change

As a result of international research findings (Crooks, 1988: Broadfoot, 1996; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996; Black and Wiliam, 1998) the Ministry of Education heralded significant changes to the way in which information about students might be collected and reported.

> *The assessment of student achievement should be ongoing and geared towards providing teachers, schools, students, and parents with information that helps to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes for students.* (MoE, 1998: 17)

The MoE had identified information gaps in the current practice of schools in collecting and reporting student achievement:

- Diagnosis of specific learning needs or disabilities.
- The standard a student should meet that indicates mastery of an achievement objective.

- How the achievement of students compares with that of similar groups of students at national level.
- Achievement of small groups of students nationwide at a particular year level. For example Pacific Island students.
  (MoE, 1998: 18)

As a result of these identified gaps the MoE recommended the introduction of an 'assessment package'. It was proposed that schools would be provided with additional diagnostic tools, national exemplar material, new externally referenced tests and more comprehensive national summary information (MoE, 1998). Various interest party groups were invited to comment and make submissions about the proposals contained in the discussion document.

The most controversial proposal was the call for externally referenced tests and comprehensive national summary information. The MoE (1998) stated that information gained from the New Zealand tests would be to provide reports for various interest groups. That is, government, individual schools and parents. The concern of interest groups was that this move heralded the introduction of national testing in New Zealand. Responses included reviewing national testing in the UK where national testing for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 had been implemented. Concerns about the validity and reliability of Key Stage testing used in the UK had fuelled ongoing debate about testing and the predominant use of summative assessment practices (Broadfoot, 1996). Research by the Assessment Reform Group (2002: 2) found that a review of 19 studies indicated strong evidence of the negative impact testing has on student motivation. They also found that low achieving students are doubly disadvantaged by tests. Being labelled as a failure impacted on the way they perceived their ability to learn, as well as further lowering their self esteem (Assessment Reform Group, 2002: 5).

A final MoE policy document was released in September 1999. This report set out policy direction in relation to assessment in primary schools. The assessment policy would help parents, including Maori parents, to get better

information on their child's strengths and weaknesses and to help them better place how their child is achieving against national standards. They would also get an indicator of the quality of education at their school (MoE, 1999: 2).

The policy document identified how new policies would help teachers, schools and government. In particular, teachers would be able to identify each student's learning needs, monitor literacy and numeracy development, identify whether their judgements of student achievement were consistent with national standards, and evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes (MoE, 1999: 2).

The concern with the direction as documented in 1999 was how the changes would be manifested in reality and the potential conflict between demonstrating individual student achievement and school effectiveness.

Assessment Tools to Assist Reporting

The new assessment package identified by the MoE included development of more diagnostic tools. This was to include a comprehensive study of the range of tools available in literacy and numeracy. It was anticipated that new diagnostic tools would be available in both English and Maori (MoE, 1999).

The second aspect of the assessment package was the development of National Exemplars (MoE, 1999:14). The MoE began the development work by commissioning an international review and analysis of the international literature on the use of exemplar material illustrating levels-based expectations and standards of achievement described in outcomes based curricula (Peddie, Hattie & Vaughan, 1999: 3).

Exemplars were described as assessed or graded pieces of student work, accompanied by annotations or a form of scoring rubric, used to promote

better learning by indicating the levels at which students are working (Peddie et al, 1999: 3).

The stated purposes of New Zealand national exemplars provide further insight into the form and role of exemplars (Poskitt et al., 2002: 3). According to the MoE (2002: 1) exemplars will

- Signal important features of student work to watch for, collect information about, and act on to support growth in learning
- Provide students, teachers and parents with a basis for discussing important qualities, aspects of indicators of learning
- Provide reference points that will support teachers' professional judgements about the quality of their students' work.

These purposes demonstrate the intended multi-functional role for exemplars. The key reference frame for national exemplars is that they were to be criterion referenced. A matrix (map of key progressions) was developed for each curriculum. These matrices provide criteria for assessing student work.

The ability to carry out ipsative[4] assessment was also to be a feature of exemplars as teachers and students would be able to use both the exemplar and associated matrix to identify areas for development.

The use of exemplars was exhorted to focus teacher attention on key aspects of student learning through observation and action (implying the role of formative assessment rather than summative assessment of standardised testing). This formative aspect is extended by the involvement of students, parents and teachers in discussing learning (another contrast from formal testing) (Poskitt et al., 2002: 3).

[4] Assessing the performance of an individual against other aspects of him/herself.

Of significance, was that feedback gained through the national trials indicated that using national curriculum exemplars encouraged teachers to engage in more focused discussion with students about their work, provide more specific feedback to students, clarify their expectations and success criteria with students (partly through the provision of models of other student work), pinpoint aspects on which students needed to improve and begin to identify ways of moving students forward (Poskitt et al, 2002: 10). These concepts are of significance in the literature relating to educative theories that impact positively on student learning, as outlined by Stipek (1998), Hattie (1999), Schunk (2001), Black et al (2002), Clarke, (2002), and Clarke et al (2003).

National curriculum exemplars have now been distributed to all schools in New Zealand in Mathematics and English (writing). Currently research is underway to determine what impact the national curriculum exemplars will have on the assessment practice of schools and teachers, and more importantly the impact on student learning.

The third aspect of the new MoE policy was the independent review of the Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs) (Gilmore & Hattie, 2000). ARBs are collections of assessment tasks, accessed from the worldwide web and are available in English, mathematics and science. The findings of the review indicated that where teachers considered assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning programme (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Assessment Reform Group, 1999: 7) the use of the Assessment Resource Bank was high. The message was that usage was more a function of the excellence of information derived from using the assessment tools, rather than any function of marvellous attributes such as Internet access, ease of use or quality design (Gilmore & Hattie, 2000: vii).

The final area of change in the MoE's policy statement was the introduction of externally referenced tests. These tests would be made available to schools but would not be compulsory to use (MoE, 1999: 22).

Auckland University developed the Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (asTTle). The tools were developed to assess literacy and numeracy in years 5, 6, and 7 for level 2 to 4 of the New Zealand national curriculum, in English and te reo Maori (Maori language). The tools are designed to enable teachers to track the progress and achievement of both individual students and groups of students against national standards.

The asTTle assessments are pencil and paper based tests and students have 40 minutes to complete the assessment. A feature of the asTTle tools are that they are norm referenced, that is, they can be used for comparing the performance of individual students and groups of students against similar groups of student. The tool is also criterion referenced. A set of indicators has been developed in each test area so that teachers can assess student performance against those indicators.

The issue for schools relates to understanding the links between the various tools being developed, current educative theory and developing effective home school partnerships. For parents the issue is whether they understand the tools being used to assess their children and the differences between the tools.

Legislating for Change

Against the backdrop of changes to the provision of new assessment tools for schools, the government introduced new legislation to further cement the accountability of schools and teachers to provide better quality information about student learning. The Education Standards Act (2001) introduced a new level of accountability in relation to the government's strategies to raise the achievement of students. Schools are now expected to set annual targets of achievement and, as part of their annual reporting processes, identify any variance to meeting their targets of achievement. Hill (2003) believes that this requirement may jeopardise progress being made by schools and teachers to balance formative and summative assessment practices. Teachers need to

be able to use assessment tools and other rich assessment tasks formatively, as well as measuring achievement for reporting (Hill, 2003: 11). Hill (2003) goes on to argue that schools may view the new legislation as a lifting of the assessment stakes, requiring more credence be given to accountability strategies over formative strategies.

This view is strengthened when one considers how the latest assessment tools were released into schools. The New Zealand Minister of Education announced the release of the asTTle tool on the 18th February and described them as a world leading development in boosting education (Minister of Education, 2003: 1). The Minister further stated:

> *Parents and caregivers can also get a much more accurate picture of how their child is doing early on, rather than waiting for gaps in their learning to be picked up well into secondary school years when it's too late to put them on the right track* (Minister of Education, Hon. Trevor Mallard, 2003: 1).

No such announcement was made when the national exemplars were distributed to schools. Rather, the exemplars were simply mailed out to schools with no public acknowledgement by the Minister.

While both the developers of asTTle and national exemplars would exhort the formative nature of their tools, the question must be asked as to why the Minister of Education would publicly announce the arrival of one, and exhort its usefulness and allow the other to quietly 'arrive' in schools with no public acknowledgement. The use of asTTle and other tests are discussed further by the MoE in its online publication 'How is your child really doing at school?' In relation to asTTle, the Ministry of Education indicated that the use of the tests would be reviewed after two years to decide their future (MoE, 2003: 2). With the initial concern by lobby groups about potential national testing, the question is left unanswered as to why this particular tool was would be reviewed after two years, in relation to its possible use and tools such as the national exemplars would not.

Current National Guidelines for Reporting Student Achievement to Parents

The MoE (2003) published a document *Using Information* which identified key features in relation to information required by parents. The document states that reports should include the actual level of attainment or measure the school itself uses to monitor progress and an illustrative comment about what this attainment means in terms of progress and what the next learning steps should be (MoE, 2003:¶). The document further describes what it believes to be key characteristics of written reports. The document states that reports should be:

- Presented in a professional, meaningful manner and in a format that is appropriate for the age and stage of the student
- Brief and constructive
- At intervals that parents feel appropriate
- Easily understood
- Responsive to cultural and language needs such as those for whom English is a second language
- Based on substantive gathered and documented evidence (MoE, 2003:¶)

In addition to the characteristics listed above the MoE (2003) also argues that the reports should cover all essential learning areas, comment on attitudes, values, skills and knowledge, recognise strengths and interests, be supportive of effective teaching and learning and clearly inform about actual student progress and achievement.

The MoE also advocates for partnership with parents through the sharing of valid assessment information. Partnership will allow dialogue to occur about how parents can support learning at home and what learning goals are most appropriate for their child (MoE, 2003: ¶).

There are key aspects of reporting highlighted by this MoE document. The first is that reports should be completed 'at intervals that parents feel appropriate'. Many schools have followed an entrenched timing of reporting which includes an end of year report and in some instances a mid year report. Of interest within this study will be whether participant schools have asked their parent communities about when they (parents) would like to receive information and reports. Another issue for schools is to define what 'substantive and documented evidence' will be. How do the participant school decide how they will grade student achievement? What data are collected which supports teacher judgements about student achievement?

Linked to the concept of achievement is the notion of progress. How have schools incorporated progress into their reporting process? Progress is linked to ipsative assessment in that it measures the extent to which a student has grown in knowledge, skills, values and attitude.

Summary

The issues raised throughout this chapter provide a history of the current context in New Zealand as it relates to assessment and reporting student achievement. It provides a backdrop to examine how current research might inform future direction developing links between educative theory, effective partnerships and reporting processes.

Chapter Three will provide a commentary in relation to current literature relating to educative theories and how effective sharing of knowledge of these theories may provide insight into establishing meaningful partnerships with parents. Concepts of educative theory and reporting processes are linked to processes for reporting that further enhance the concept of educative partnerships.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

> *'How do children and young people acquire the skills and the confidence to be leaders, organisers, key players, joiners, participants in their schools? Are these the same skills and attitudes, which help them cope effectively with the curriculum and to expect success? The answer is that there is very considerable overlap between the joiners and the leaders and the academically successful because both are underpinned by a confidence and sense of self, developed at home, in school and in the interface between the two'.* (MacBeath,2000: 143)

Introduction

This thesis involves the examination of a number of key issues relating to the development of processes used by schools in reporting student learning.

The first section of this chapter describes conditions for effective partnership with particular reference to partnership within the reporting process. It explores the role of school, teachers, students and parents in the partnership.

The research related to raising student achievement is then be explored. Current research on relationships, motivation and self efficacy, goal setting, challenging tasks, feedback, feed forward, and self and peer assessment provide insights into the role students, parents, teachers and schools might play in the reporting process.

The chapter then describes the development of effective practices in reporting student achievement. This section critically analyses the development of assessment strategies such as norm referenced, standards, and achievement based assessment. The tools used in schools to report learning are also discussed.

The key issues are explored under four headings:

1. Effective partnerships in reporting student achievement
2. Effective practice in supporting student learning
3. Theories of effective practice in reporting student learning.
4. Making links between effective partnership, educative theory and reporting

Effective Partnerships In Reporting Student Achievement

Partnership is a term widely used throughout the education sector and it covers a range of situations and circumstances (Bastiani, 1999). Bastiani (1993) argues that its use or overuse, is often uncritical, implying that it is highly desirable, unproblematic and easily attainable. In view of the common usage of the term, Bastiani (1999) goes on to argue that there have been surprisingly few attempts to pin the notion of partnership down in terms of education.

Partnership has been characterised by a "sense of shared purpose, mutual respect, and a willingness to negotiate" (Pugh, 1989, cited in Bastiani, 1993:104). Wolfendale (1989, cited in Bastiani, 1993:105) articulates partnerships as entailing involvement in decision-making, each partner being perceived as having equal strengths and equivalent expertise and a shared responsibility, so that parents and professionals are accountable to each other. Ramsay et al. (1993) further develop this concept in their definition of consultation. Ramsay et al. (1993) identify five levels of consultation.

- Level One –to be informed
- Level Two – take part in activities
- Level Three – to be involved through dialogue
- Level Four – to help make decisions
- Level Five – to have responsibility to act

(Ramsay et al., 1993: 17)

In 1993, Bastiani argued that it was now possible to catalogue with conviction, and support with evidence, the advantage and benefit that improving relationships between families and schools can have for students. Large scale research in the UK, Australia, and the USA, demonstrated that schools in which students do well (as defined by a series of measures of both achievement and positive behaviour) are all characterised by 'good' home-school relations (Brighouse & Tomlinson, 1991 cited in Bastiani, 1993: 103). These schools go well beyond the basic legal requirement of two-way communication; they are accessible in a variety of ways and at all reasonable times. They work hard to find ways in which parents can support and encourage their children and provide parents with practical help. Above all else they build a common purpose and shared identity – the beginnings of a genuine partnership (Bastiani, 1993: 103).

Bastiani (1993) defines partnership in relation to overlapping and distinctive emphases. An effective partnership will involve a sharing of power, responsibility and ownership. A degree of mutuality is necessary. Mutuality is characterised by a process of listening to each other and incorporates responsive dialogue. Responsive dialogue implies that action occurs as a result of dialogue. Shared goals and a commitment to joint action in which parents, students and professionals work together provide a sound foundation for effective partnership (Bastiani, 1993).

> *However, perhaps it is more helpful to see partnership as a process, a stage in a process or something to work towards rather than something that is a fixed state or readily achievable.* (Bastiani, 1993: 113)

While the promotion of educational partnership was encompassed in the New Zealand administrative reforms of 1989, policy documents at the time did not clarify how this might be achieved. Schools and communities had little real guidance as to how they could effectively work towards partnership. This was particularly true of partnerships within reporting student achievement. Ramsay et al. (1993) contended that many schools had not gone beyond

fairly cursory forms of consulting parents. One of the prime reasons Ramsay et al. give for this is that little research had been conducted on *how* partnerships could be best forged, what problems and pitfalls there were in collaborative decision making, and what strategies were successful in establishing collaboration (Ramsay et al., 1993: 2).

Research by Ramsay et al. (1993) provides some insight into how partnerships might be forged. They argue that before collaboration can take place careful planning, adequate resources and adequate opportunities for 'quality reflection' must be seen as part of the very important groundwork. They further argue that it is necessary to adapt rather than adopt new ideas and strategies to the needs of the school and its community (Ramsay et al., 1993: 244).

Timperley, Robinson and Bullard (1999) and Timperley and Robinson (2002) provide further insight into the conditions necessary for what they describe as a "Mutually educative partnership" within the reporting process. Timperley (et al., 1999, 2002) argue that in order for educative partnerships within the reporting context to be in place, four conditions apply.

The first condition is that the report must be an accurate description of the child's current achievement and it must be written in a way that is easily interpreted by parents. A simple statement, but the reality is much more complex. The complexities of this reality will be explained in more detail later in the chapter.

The second condition relates to having a shared understanding of what is desirable so that each partner can detect gaps between the current reality of the child's achievement and his or her expectations for future achievement. This condition implies identification of standards against which the child's performance can be measured. Timperley et al. (1999, 2002) do not advocate any particular standard but rather that whatever standard a school identifies should be understood and valued by both partners (parents/school) and that it provides a genuine educative interaction about what each partner

believes to be important. What Timperley et al. imply here is that the standard is set by the schools and agreed to and understood by both parents and school. The question must be asked, to what extent should parents also have input into what standards are desirable? What are the academic goals held by parents for their children? This question will be asked as part of this study.

The third condition relates to shared responsibility for the child's learning. Each partner (parents and school) understands their role in supporting the child to achieve the next step in their learning. Without this condition Timperley (et al, 1999, 2002) argue that it becomes inevitable that one partner will blame the other partner for any shortfall in the child reaching desired standards. This study will explore some of the issues surrounding the role of parent, teacher and student within the reporting process. The understanding of parents and teachers will be ascertained and the impact of that understanding on the concept of partnership.

The fourth and final condition for an educative partnership lies in reviewing the student's progress towards desired standards and to hold each other accountable for agreed actions and contributions to that progress (Timperley et al., 1999).

Bastiani (1993:113) states that "partnership is easy to talk about but much harder to achieve". Too often the partnership between home and school is seen as teachers 'liasing' with parents. This denotes a one-way communication system. Parents are rarely encouraged to liaise with teachers. With this approach and imbalance in the teacher-parent relationship there is little scope for developing a shared systemic exploration of the factors that may affect a child's learning (Dawson & McHugh, 2000:122).

F. Biddulph, J. Biddulph and C. Biddulph (2003) argue that there are various forms of educational partnerships operating in schools, not all of which are effective. Those partnerships which are poorly designed, based on deficit

views, and not responsive to the needs of families can be ineffective and even counterproductive. Programmes which are effective respect parents and children, are socially responsible, and are responsive to families and the social conditions that shape their lives (Biddulph et al., 2003:172).

Waller and Waller (1998: 4) refer to the ideal parent-teacher relationship as being a sharing of expertise. That is, a full sharing of knowledge, skills and experience between teacher and parent. Dawson and McHugh (2000: 122) develop this concept further by arguing that a genuine curiosity about how a child learns and develops both socially and emotionally, if explored by teachers and parents together, would enrich the educational experience for everyone. However, this can only be achieved if a number of considerations are acknowledged. Firstly, teachers must have access to information in which they can have confidence and which identifies meaningful criteria about what is important to learning and achievement. Secondly, a prevailing attitude that a student's learning will be enhanced by the participation of parents in the assessment process and that parents have an undeniable right to access information that results from that assessment process. There must also be a preparedness to be honest and to achieve this teachers may need support and training in advanced communication skills in order to deliver what may be perceived as difficult messages (Hill, 1999: 122). Difficult messages may include having to tell parents their child is not achieving very well or that their child is not participating fully in classwork and is disruptive. The degree to which teachers in this study have accessed professional development to develop or strengthen their skills in collecting, analysing and reporting student achievement is an important question to answer.

Biddulph et al. (2003) argue that such constructive partnerships empower those involved by fostering autonomy and self reliance within families, schools and communities, building on the strong aspirations and motivation that most parents have for their children's development and by adding to (not undermining) the values, experiences and competencies of parents and children. The evidence is that teachers can do much to initiate such constructive partnerships (Biddulph et al. 2003: 172).

So far the literature has focused on the partnerships between parents and teachers. Of critical omission is the student from the preceding literature. How might students be involved in the reporting process and how might partnership be extended to include students?

A review of the literature relating to assisting student learning may provide an excellent platform for students, parents and teachers to work together to effect quality partnerships.

Effective Practice In Supporting Student Learning

Relationships: Motivation and self efficacy

In recent times much research has been carried out in relation to what makes a real difference to student achievement. Often educators, researchers, and policy makers attribute lack of student achievement to the environment outside the school (Stevens, 1996:78). Stevens (1996) argues that to solely attribute low achievement to society's ills is to dismiss the very important influences of schools and teachers on student learning.

Studies suggest that students who have a positive, secure relationship with their teachers are engaged more highly in their academic work (Stipek, 1998). Relatedness is one of three basic human needs, along with feelings of competence and self-determination (Connell & Wellborn, 1991 cited Stipek, 1998: 155). Research by Connell and Wellborn (cited in Stipek, 1998: 156) showed that student's feelings of relatedness to their teachers and classmates are strong predictors of their cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement in classroom activities.

For low achieving students, Hill and Hawk (2000) argue that the relationship between teacher and student is a prerequisite for learning. Low achieving students will not be motivated and will not succeed unless they have a

positive relationship with their teacher. This has implications for the relationship between parent and teacher. If parent and teacher do not have a positive relationship what impact might that have on the student teacher relationship?

Gipps (2002) argues that in an open communicative relationship, communication is oriented towards understanding and respecting the perspectives of others. A positive relationship includes teachers demonstrating an understanding of the worlds of the students, that is, the worlds of home, church, school friends and work. Positive relationships also include respect, fairness, optimism, participation and reciprocity (Hill & Hawk, 2000). This concept is reiterated by McCaslin and Hickey (2001). In a sociocultural analysis, attribution and efficacy theories inform the emergent interaction of motivational dynamics, which are the "stuff" of identity (McCaslin & Hickey, 2001: 245).

Self-efficacy is also a key indicator of success (Bandura, 1986; Stipek, 1998; Hill &Hawk, 2000; Schunk, 2001). The concept of self-efficacy is defined as a belief that you can learn and that you are capable of improvement (Hill and Hawk, 1996; Bandura, cited in Stipek, 1998: 41; Schunk, 2001: 143). Self-efficacy affects student's behaviour, thoughts and emotional reactions (Stipek, 1998).

Students seek out activities and situations which they judge themselves capable. Students who have high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to set higher goals (Locke & Latham, 1990, 1994; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992 cited in Stipek, 1998:43) choose more difficult tasks (Sexton & Tuckerman, 1991 cited in Stipek, 1998: 43), and persist longer with tasks (Schunk, 2001:127). Students with lower self-efficacy become anxious and preoccupied with feelings of incompetence and are concerned with the notion of failure (Stipek, 1998:43).

Stipek (1998) and Schunk (2001) argue that it is the interaction between self-efficacy and the environment that is of critical importance in changing a

student's self-beliefs and therefore increasing the level of self-efficacy. As students work on tasks and are made aware of their progress towards their learning goals self efficacy levels are changed. Progress indicators "convey to students that they are capable of performing well", which enhances self-efficacy for continued learning (Schunk, 2001: 127).

Linked to self-efficacy is the notion of locus of control. Rotter (cited in Stipek, 1998:58) states that internal locus of control refers to the belief that events or outcomes are contingent on one's own behaviour or on a personal characteristic, such as ability. External locus of control is identified as factors beyond an individual's control, such as the quality of the teacher. Paris, Byrnes and Paris (2001) believe that children construct beliefs about the control they can exercise in their environments. Outcomes are both desirable and achievable or unobtainable based on their beliefs, and this contributes directly to their theories of ability and effort (Paris, Byrnes & Paris, 2001). Independent goal setting and motivation are unlikely if students do not possess beliefs that they can control their actions to achieve their own goals (Johnston & Johnston, 1985 cited in Paris et al, 2001).

Students are motivated by success and intrinsic motivation is a key factor in becoming a life long learner. Learners who see their success or failure as a result of factors within their own control are more likely to be successful than those who attribute success or failure to external factors (over which they have no control) (Hill & Hawk, 2000).

If students are to see themselves as in control of their learning, they must be encouraged to participate in the educative partnership. They must have some control over and participate in decision-making about their learning and what and how information about their learning is shared with parents. Parents and teacher must have an understanding of the importance of the student's role in the partnership. This study will seek to identify the extent to which students in participant schools engage in the reporting process and the extent to which parents and teachers understand the student role in the reporting process.

The extent to which students see themselves as in control of their own learning is a powerful determinant in the motivation of students to learn. However, it is also critically important for students to know how to succeed in their learning (Hill and Hawk, 1996).

Goal setting, challenging tasks, feedback and self assessment

The setting of challenging and attainable goals has a direct impact on motivation and self esteem of students (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Assessment Reform Group, 1999: 7). Achievement is enhanced to the degree that students and teachers set and communicate appropriate, specific and challenging goals (Hattie, 1999: 2). As indicated earlier in this chapter, schools that develop effective partnerships with parents find ways in which parents can support and encourage their children and provide parents with practical help (Bastiani, 1993). It follows, therefore, that if setting and communicating appropriate, specific and challenging goals enhances learning, involvement of parents in knowing and supporting the goals set must further enhance the educative partnership between teacher, student and parent.

Stipek (1998) argues that goals which are distal (long-term goals) are important for students to keep in mind but they may be difficult to monitor in terms of progress towards meeting them. Proximal goals (short term goals) may provide the opportunity to make a task seem more manageable, which, in turn, can serve to raise self-efficacy.

Schunk (1996 cited in Schunk, 2001: 141) conducted two studies to identify the extent to which goal setting and self-evaluation affected self regulated learning and achievement. Students worked under the condition of having a goal, which was either a goal of learning how to solve a problem, or a goal of merely solving the problem. Schunk (2001: 142) found that frequent opportunities for self-evaluation of capabilities or progress raised

achievement outcomes regardless of whether students had identified learning or performance goals.

Appropriate, challenging, and specific goals inform students about the type of level of performance to be attained. This enables the student to direct and evaluate their actions accordingly (Hattie, 1999: 11). Clarke (2001: 25) argues for making goals (or targets) visible to students. Clarke (2001) interviewed 72 students and asked if their teachers had shared or discussed targets with them. Most children indicated that this was not the case even though teachers in these classrooms did share targets or goals verbally. Teachers were then asked to write the targets or goals up for student to see. The difference in student perception of targets and goals was significant. Children indicated that they looked at the success criteria and that reminded them about what they were supposed to be doing (Clarke, 2001; Clarke, Timperley & Hattie, 2003). In other words the visual cues supported student's understanding of the task and provided the scaffolding to succeed within the learning experience or task.

Tasks given in class must be sufficiently challenging to students (Stipek, 1998; Hattie, 1999; 2002; Paris et al, 2001) and support the achievement of goals that have been set. Tasks must be justified in terms of the learning aims they serve, and they are only useful if opportunities for students to communicate their evolving understanding are built into the planning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black, Harrison, Lee, Bethan & Wiliam, 2002). Task dimensions, which include variety, diversity, challenge, control and meaningfulness, provide strong motivation for task completion and mastery (Blumenfeld, 1992; Meeces, 1991 cited in Paris et al, 2001: 271). Open-ended tasks characterise this approach. Paris and Turner (1994, cited in Paris et al, 2001: 271) identify open ended tasks as tasks that:

- Provide challenge
- Allow the student to construct personal meaning;
- Provide choice in relation to how the task might be solved;
- Allow the student control over strategies for success

- Provide opportunity for collaboration

This is in contrast to task dimensions which emphasise competition, rote learning, and management. Students engage in a superficial way with these tasks. Such "closed" tasks are characterised by worksheets, rote recall and involve little creativity. Easy tasks do not produce feelings of competence because no improvement in skill level or understanding is required to achieve success (Stipek, 1998: 95).

Task dimensions, which include variety, diversity, challenge, control and meaningfulness, create an additional challenge for teachers and students when they must decide how best to report achievement of those tasks and the associated learning goals. How does the teacher and/or student capture the learning to share with parents? As part of this thesis study, how each school reports achievement of learning goals and complex tasks is explored.

Critical to successful achievement of learning goals and tasks is the notion of feedback. Achievement is enhanced as a function of feedback (Hattie, 1999: 2). Hattie (1999) argues that the simplest prescription for improving education must be "dollops of feedback". That is, providing information that assists students understand their learning and to identify what directions the student might take to improve learning. Feedback allows students to set reasonable goals and to track performance in relation to those goals which, in turn, allows them to make adjustments to their actions, effort and directions.

Hattie (1999: 11) argues that effective feedback:

- Directs attention to relevant tasks or outcomes.
- Energises task performance.
- Motivates individuals to persist in their activities through time.
- Conveys normative information by suggesting or specifying what level of performance the student could be expected to attain.
- Has dramatic effect on the development of self-efficacy, which in turn affects choice of goals.

A combination of goal setting and feedback is most effective (Hattie, 1999; Schunk, 2001). The development of parents' understanding of these important factors affecting student learning would provide a platform for partnership. Parents need a clear understanding of how different types of feedback can either positively or negatively affect learning.

Tunstall and Gipps (1996) identify two types of feedback. The first is described as evaluative feedback. This type of feedback does not describe the work itself but serves more as a motivation or demotivation. Evaluative feedback may include a reward (or punishment) such as stickers, comments such as "good girl" or "well done". Descriptive feedback, on the other hand, provides students with information about their work. It is linked to criteria and has improvement as a focus (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). Effective feedback is clear, specific and informative (Stipek, 1998: 99; Ministry of Education, 2001: 2). Specific feedback about learning, as it is occurring, is one of the most powerful influences on student achievement (Ministry of Education, 2001).

The question must be asked 'how might the involvement of parents in knowing the learning goal, supporting the learning goal, understanding the concept of descriptive feedback support and/or increase the student's achievement?' These concepts may promote effective partnerships between teacher, parents and student.

Feedback should include comments about the particular qualities of the student's work, with advice on what the student can do to improve (Black & Wiliam, 1998; 2002). Opportunities for students to follow up comments should be planned as part of the overall learning process (Black & Wiliam, 2002: 9).

> *If we, as teachers, are to have impact on learning, then we must come to know what our students are thinking so that we can provide more feedback, task information, encourage trial and error,*

> *and develop deep understanding and transformations.* (Hattie, 1999: 10)

Feedback is powerful but the self-strategies that students develop can alter the interpretation and consequences of feedback. Providing feedback to students is not enough because the way students interpret information is a key to developing positive and valuable concepts of self (Hattie, 1999). While it may be the teacher who provides the feedback, it is the student who must take the next step in their learning. Thus it follows that actions which will raise the level of achievement of students will involve the student in decision making rather than being "passive recipients of feedback from the teacher" (Black & Wiliam, 1999: 9).

Inclusion of the students in decision-making demands a rethink of the traditional relationship between teacher and student, which traditionally, has been hierarchical. It has been a relationship where the teacher sets the tasks and determines how performance should be evaluated. However, an alternative approach is to negotiate tasks and how those tasks will be assessed.

Negotiated assessment and self-assessment involves the student in discussing and negotiating the terms and outcomes of the assessment (Gipps, 2002: 77). Self assessment is the process of reviewing a past experience, seeking to remember and understand what took place and attempting to gain a clear idea of what has to be learned and achieved (Towler & Broadfoot, 1992: 137, cited in Hill, 1999: 34).

Students should be encouraged and taught to evaluate their own work and to monitor their own progress (Stipek, 1998). Evaluating their own work allows students to develop a sense of their own competency and also develop strategies to guide their efforts for improvement (Stipek, 1998).

The effectiveness of self-assessment and self-management of learning has been shown to improve with age, experience, intelligence, academic

achievement and the quality of instruction (Paris & Cunningham, 1996; Swanson, 1990; van Krayenoord & Paris, 1997, cited in McAlpine, 2000:2).

Developmental improvements in self-assessment allow students to rely less on adult evaluations of their work. Student assessment is fundamental to the development of intrinsic motivation and autonomous learning. Self-assessment supports students 'learning how to learn' (van Krayenoord & Paris, 1997, cited in McAlpine, 2000: 2).

Through self-assessment teachers and students become more like partners in the learning process. Collaboration is the key to successful self-assessment techniques in the classroom (Bourke & Poskitt, 1997).

How might self-assessment partnerships between teacher and student be extended to include parents? Self-assessment results could be recorded qualitatively through descriptions for example, in portfolios, records and journals, or quantitatively through rating scales, inventories and questionnaires (McAlpine, 2000).

Making the connections

The connections between factors that influence student learning in the classroom and how parents might use some of these strategies to encourage their children in their learning may provide some insight into effective partnerships in student learning.

The teacher-student-parent relationship can be best described as the "power of three" (Coleman, 1998, cited in MacBeath, 2000: 143). MacBeath (2000) describes this power of three in relation to a triangle with student, parent and teacher at each apex. Each of the sides of the triangle is represented by a plus or minus which denotes the positive or negative nature of the relationship. If more than one of the sides is denoted with a minus sign the

power of the educational relationship diminishes almost entirely (MacBeath, 2000:143).

> *The key issue is how parents, other adults and siblings mediate learning. They can help structure meaning for children and give quality support to their children which will guide them through childhood, secure in the knowledge there is a supporting hand behind them.* (MacBeath, 2000:144).

Successful students are independent learners. They know how to motivate themselves, how to plan, how to organise and how to use techniques of accelerated learning (MacBeath, 2000). Students are also interdependent learners. There is a need to share and collaborate with others. Learning is intensely social by nature. It is in the relationships between people that knowledge is created and tested. It is not a matter simply of a "congenial social context", but a deeper form of learning that takes place when people explore ideas together (MacBeath, 2000: 149).

This thesis study asks questions such as 'how might students, teachers and parents share ideas about how to support student learning? What policies and practices might schools and parents engage to share information about the achievement and progress of children?'

Theories Of Effective Practice In Reporting Student Learning

A framework for reporting

As indicated earlier in this chapter the notion of education partnership is underpinned by the notion of accurate reporting. How might a school report accurately the achievement of students?

To report accurately is to be clear about what reference is being used in the reporting process. Croft (1995) argues that there are three frames of reference, which enable any form of measurement to be interpreted as assessment:

- Norm Referencing – the performance of an individual compared with the performance of an appropriate reference group.
- Criterion Referencing – the performance of an individual is compared with a defined area of content (objectives), or a set of performance standards.
- Ipsative referencing – the performance of an individual is referenced against other aspects of him/herself.

Clarke, Hattie and Timperley (2003) also identify these three frames of reference and argue that ipsative assessment must be in place. This is closely linked to concepts of formative and self-assessment.

Guskey (1996) identifies three categories for reporting student achievement which are similar in nature to the three frames of reference already identified. Product criteria relate to what students know or are able to do at a given point in time. Reports using product criteria are based on tests, overall assessments or other demonstrations of learning. Process criteria, in contrast, reflect not only the final results of learning but also *how* the student got there. Teachers consider effort or work habits when reporting student achievement. Progress criteria relate to how much students have gained from their learning experience. As a result scoring criteria may be highly individualised among students (Guskey, 1996:19).

To report against just one frame may not provide a comprehensive analysis of the student's achievement. For example, if achievement is solely reported based on a criterion referenced frame or product criteria a student may show a relatively low level of achievement. However, when linked to the student's previous achievement there may have been significant gains. This would not be reflected unless ipsative or progress criteria were also used to report

achievement. The use of these frames of reference will be further explored later in this chapter when written reports are discussed.

As learners pursue goals, it is necessary that they believe they are making progress toward goal attainment. Feedback indicating progress can substantiate self-efficacy, motivation (effort) and achievement outcomes (Schunk, 2001).

How might feedback be given to the student and to the parent and how might the feedback contribute to the partnership described earlier in this chapter?

Providing feedback about student learning: Shared understanding of what is desirable

Communicating student learning implies motion. Perceptions about student learning move from someone or someplace to someone else (Watts, 1996: 7). He suggests that it is important that there are choices available about how and what information is communicated.

> *"We have many different ways we can show you what your son or daughter is learning in school. What do you want to know? What do you need to know? If you can tell me what you really care about, we can figure out which road to take to that destination".* (Watts, 1996:7)

The reality is that schools do not often offer any choice to parents about how achievement might be reported. Schools have traditionally used a combination of approaches to report student achievement. This has included the use of both written and verbal feedback.

Alternative ways for communicating student learning are linked to alternative forms of assessment and can be divided into four categories:

1. Opportunities for two-way communication in conferences. What becomes known is not what one person says to the other. Rather it is an understanding that is constructed between all parties in the conversation
2. Visible evidence of student growth, and achievement through methods such as portfolios, exhibitions, displays of work, presentations, and videos sent home.
3. Evidence of learning through student self assessment or peer assessment.
4. A ranking or student achievement against clearly stated, predetermined standards, such as those found in sampling, rubrics, and report card checklists (Watts, 1999:9).

Communication: Shared responsibility and accountability

Traditional parent teacher conferences are common ways of reporting student progress and achievement. The benefits of a face-to-face meeting include an opportunity to establish a rapport and begin a relationship with parents (Fraser, 1995; Bailey & McTighe, 1996). The conference is also beneficial because it provides an opportunity to convey information which may be difficult to capture through other reporting methods. Swap (1993) argues that although conferences are the best way to communicate student progress and achievement they can be fraught with problems. The problems are that not all parents attend conferences, not all levels of education offer the same access to conferences and perhaps most fundamentally even confident, experienced teachers and parents approach conferences "with a mixture of hope and dread" (Swap, 1993: 79). This is elaborated on by Walker (1998, cited in Biddulph et al., 2003) who found, in a study of four schools in England, that:

- The purpose of the meetings was unclear to the participants

- The teachers and parents often had different views about the nature of assessment and consequently mismatching expectations which led to mutual incomprehension
- All parties felt defensive at times
- The parents felt relatively powerless and impotent in the exchange so that the experience was a frustrating experience and for many, deeply distressing (Walker, 1998, cited in Biddulph et al., 2003: 152).

Walker (1998, cited in Biddulph et al., 2003: 153) concluded that such meetings fail as communication events and that they are occasions fraught with personal and institutional danger. Biddulph et al. (2003) argue that the anecdotal evidence suggests that parent-teacher interviews in New Zealand may result in similar problems identified by Walker (1998).

> *The negative effect associated with such involvement for some teachers and parents may make it more difficult for them to achieve genuine understanding and collaboration in support of children's development and learning, and may add to the feelings of frustration and alienation experienced by some parents (especially Maori).* (Biddulph et al., 2003: 153).

Swap (1993) argues that with planning and preparation, conferences can become an effective vehicle for home school collaboration. She argues that schools should make clear the importance of conferences to all parties. Parents should have information that explains the purpose of conferences, and what might be expected. Parents should be encouraged to view conferences as two-way communication and as an opportunity to ask questions, identify concerns and share information that may be useful. Teachers, for their part should be open to new information. They should also review student work and assemble a judicious selection for parent viewing. Teachers should note the key issues for discussion (Swap, 1993). Having an agenda drawn up which sets priorities for discussion and assumes that both teacher and parent need to contribute to that agenda will ensure that identified priorities are addressed.

When a person who is the subject of the meeting also attends that meeting, information is less likely to be distorted or lost in translation. Although some schools have found three-way conferences to be useful, Woodward (1994, cited in Johnson & Rose, 1997: 259) argues that the position of power still resides with the teacher, and the student is still on the sidelines. Student led conferences change all this. The learner becomes the focus because the learner will be involved in forming plans to improve learning (Johnson & Rose, 2000).

The introduction of student led conferences needs to be planned. It is important that parents and students are informed about the rationale for having the student take leadership of the conference. This can be done through newsletters and parent evening. It is important to take this first step, otherwise parents may see the change to student led conferences as simply the teachers' way of 'shrinking' their responsibilities for reporting student progress (Johnson & Rose, 1997: 260).

Involvement of students in conferencing must include developing the skills and confidence of students to take a leadership role. Students should be encouraged to collect samples of their work and other artefacts. Students should reflect on their strengths and areas needing improvement. Time must be made available in class for this to happen. Students should also be provided with the opportunity to rehearse for the conference. Students can rehearse with their teachers, peers, students from other classes, or adults willing to serve as substitute parents (Johnson & Rose, 1997).

Student led conferences are a relatively new concept and as with all innovations have limitations. One obvious limitation is the time required to carry out such conferences. Another limitation is the need expressed by parents and teachers for private time to discuss confidential concerns without the student being present. It may be appropriate to offer parents alternative times should it be necessary (Bailey & McTighe, 1996).

Parent-teacher interviews and the role of the student is a key area within this study. The practice of each participant school will be explored and key issues relating to parent-teacher interviews discussed.

The role of documents and written information is sometimes underestimated. Certainly, on their own they can be a limited form of communication and are generally one-way. However, they do have advantages. Written information is permanent and can be referred to repeatedly in order to deepen understanding or clarify ambiguities (Hegarty, 1993). Written documents would include such things as portfolios, samples of student work and written reports. Written documents also provide information for parents who, otherwise, could not access information because they are unable to attend parent-teacher interviews.

Portfolios: Visible evidence to promote partnership

Within this study, two of the participant schools use portfolios as a way of reporting to parents. Portfolios are a useful tool for providing evidence of learning to both students and parents. They can provide a focus for two-way communication. Parent conferences for sharing portfolio data can be held by teachers, presented by teachers and students, or student led.

Watts (1996: 9) describes portfolios of student work as an example of a more holistic approach to reporting student achievement. It is important to define what the term portfolio means. Johnson and Rose (1997: 6) found that when they asked teachers what a portfolio was responses led them to believe that "this latest buzzword seemed very unclear in its meaning". At its simplest a portfolio is a container of examples of student accomplishments and skills. Arter (1990, cited in Johnson & Rose, 1997: 6) describes a portfolio as "being a collection of student work gathered for a particular purpose that exhibits to the student and others the student's efforts, progress and achievement in one or more areas". Portfolios are a purposeful, systematic anthology of student work over time that includes

- student participation in selection of content
- evidence of student self reflection
- criteria for selection
- criteria for judging merit (Johnson & Rose, 1997: 6)

Cole, Ryan, Kick and Mathies (2000) describe two types of portfolio. The first type is a process portfolio. This portfolio is used as a growth instrument. It demonstrates the student's performance at the beginning of a learning task, during the task and at the end. Unfinished work maybe included in this portfolio to demonstrate problem areas (Cole et al, 2000).

The second type of portfolio defined by Cole et al. (2000) is a product portfolio. The product portfolio demonstrates the student's proficiency of learning tasks. The process portfolio may provide a basis for selecting pieces of work to be included in the product portfolio.

A third type of portfolio that could be considered would be a combination of process and product portfolio. That is, a combination of demonstrating growth as well as the final accomplishment of the learning goal or task.

Conferences where students are not in attendance can be given a focus through the use of portfolios. Portfolios can provide a focus for discussing a student's effort, progress and achievement. Portfolio conferences differ from traditional conferences in that teachers can:

- refer to the portfolio as they talk about the student's progress and show related forms that they have used to record strengths, needs, and goals for the student.
- share and discuss the student's self evaluations and goals with the parents
- provide an opportunity to collaboratively summarise the student's learning needs and record this for future reference

Student led conferences with portfolios involve the student taking responsibility for evaluating their learning, displaying their work and reporting their learning. This type of conference provides students with responsibility for their own learning and for informing their parents of their progress (Anthony et al., 1991; Austin, 1994; Woodward, 1994 cited in Johnson & Rose, 1997: 260).

School reports: Grading student achievement against clearly stated standards

With a move to more authentic reporting processes the traditional report form must be scrutinised. Wiggins (1996: 141) argues that to reform the report card three issues need to be addressed:

- Clients typically require a frame of reference to make sense of individual results.
- Judgements require data to make them meaningful to readers.
- The client for the information is almost always more astute about what should be reported than is the purveyor of the information.

It therefore follows, that redesigning report cards is not simply a graphics exercise. Wiggins (1996:141) asserts that we must begin the reform process by asking: "Who is the audience and what is the purpose of the writing?" While this may seem a simple concept, it is obvious that schools reinvent reporting systems based more on their own interests than those of their various clients. This view is supported by Hill (1999) who found in her study of reporting practices of four schools that teachers acted as gatekeepers of assessment information.

> *Sometimes the gatekeeping was motivated by lack of confidence, in either pedagogical knowledge or knowledge of assessment theory and practice. At other times it was motivated by a desire to protect parents from the truth.* (Hill, 1999: 121)

Report redesign should follow a careful study of client needs for information (Wiggins, 1996: 142). Hill (1999) identified the outcomes of one school's survey of parents that called for more honesty in the reports parents were given about their children's achievement. Honesty is identified by Timperley et al. (1999, 2002) as a first condition for educative partnership.

A report card is designed to summarise students' performance in school. Grades and numbers, like all symbols, offer efficient ways of summarising. Wiggins (1996) asserts that what critics of grades must understand is that it is not the symbol that is the problem, but rather the lack of stable and clear reference points that is the problem. Grades are clear if we use specific and stable standards and criteria when giving them. Grades are unclear if they represent murky and inconsistent intellectual values across teachers (Wiggins, 1996; Marzano, 2000).

Marzano (2000: 23) further argues that the most important purpose for grades is to provide information or feedback to students and parents and that the best referencing system for grades is content specific learning goals: a criterion referenced approach. Marzano challenges the work of researchers who argue that grades are not useful and are a detrimental way of reporting student achievement. In particular, Marzano challenges Kohn (1999) and argues that he misinterprets the research on grading. Kohn (1999, cited in Marzano, 2000: 24) believes that grading should not be used at all. Grades are seen as either rewarding or punishing and he argues that rewards do not positively influence behaviour. However, Marzano (2000) argues that Kohn (1999) has confused rewards with feedback. He further argues that, although it is true that tangible rewards have little effect on achievement, feedback has a strong and straightforward relationship to achievement (Marzano, 2000: 25). Feedback on achievement, progress and effort, which is accurate, can increase student knowledge and understanding by 37 percentile points (Hattie, 1992, cited in Marzano, 2000: 25).

If providing feedback is central to the notion of effective grading of students then we must explore how teachers might apportion grades with respect to achievement and effort. To do this we must explore what academic achievement and effort are in the context of reporting and how teachers often try to use one grade to capture these concepts.

Academic achievement is cited as the most common factor that should be included in grades. At its simplest form, those who learn more should receive higher grades. When teachers use academic grades they assign grades proportional to the amount of content that students learn (Marzano, 2000: 27).

Using effort as grading criteria, students who try harder might receive a grade higher than those who achieve at the same level but who do not try as hard (Stiggins, cited in Marzano, 2000: 28). As evidence of effort teachers use the extent to which students complete classroom tasks in a timely and appropriate manner.

In an ideal grading system, effort and achievement would not be included in an overall grade. Marzano (2000) argues that academic achievement should be the only factor to include in grades. Feedback on effort, progress and behaviour should be kept separate from that provided on academic achievement.

Subject specific knowledge involves information and skills that are unique to that discipline. The difficulty with this concept is that teachers exercise so much decision making power over the actual curriculum taught that no one can be absolutely sure what student are exposed to (Marzano, 2000). To mitigate against this problem, standards can be identified at state and national level. These standards can help teachers identify subject specific knowledge that should be addressed.

> *The difficulty with reporting against standards is that members of the public (parents/caregivers) have a hard time*

> *understanding standards based assessments unless they understand the standards.* (Carr & Douglas, 2001: 114).

This concept links to the conditions for partnership cited earlier in this chapter. It is therefore critical that if standards are to be used on report cards that parents understand the standards being graded. To ensure honest reporting it is important not to confuse local standards with national standards. Local standards might be uniformly low and it would be dishonest to say that a student is developing "as expected" when that student is, for example, in the 29th percentile nationally (Wiggins, 1996: 152).

The questions the report should address are: How did my child perform given the fixed and authentic standards? And how did my child do, given 'reasonable expectations' for performance gains during the time period? Wiggins (1996) argues that report cards should separate out achievement and progress and that both should be divided into subscores. This would provide clarity to parents and would improve incentives for students, as it would provide feedback about specific weaknesses and strengths.

Including narrative on report cards can be an effective form of communication because using a narrative style enables the teacher to connect effort and performance to elements of quality and standards of performance (Bailey & McTighe, 1996: 126). They also allow for more individual feedback than other forms of communication within the report. The limitation of narrative report writing is that it is time consuming. Technology can offer some promise in this regard. Computer generated reports can provide large data bases of teacher comments to enable teachers to efficiently generate personalised reports which detail student achievement and progress (Bailey & McTighe, 1996). Technology is explored later in this chapter.

Another limitation is that an isolated narrative can never tell whether laudatory or critical language in the report represents absolute, relative or idiosyncratic achievement. Comparisons provide one frame of reference for the parents. Comparisons best serve students and parents if what is

compared is the *performance* against a *standard* (criterion referenced). That standard must be "credible and must relate to real world performance benchmarks" (Wiggins, 1996: 142).

For each of the participant schools the written report has been redesigned over the past two years. All three schools have introduced computerised reports. This move has created a new set of issues to be explored.

Technology – the way of the future?

Brewer and Kallick (1996) predict a future that includes parents being able to dial schools from their TVs anywhere in the country and review their children's work. Upon request, the school's computer will collect relevant information and send it to parents for viewing at their leisure (Brewer & Kallick, 1996). They further argue that before that time students will be leading student-parent-teacher conferences. Students will be able to explain their work using multimedia portfolios featuring models, exhibitions, and performances along with papers and projects (Brewer & Kallick, 1996).

Brewer and Kallick (1996) provide the following reasons for the promotion of technology in reporting student achievement:

- Technology can make information available anytime, anywhere
- Because computers can collect and store vast amounts of information, as well as process and retrieve information quickly, users can select information they want to review
- Technology can make achievement more visible through the use of multimedia
- Technology allows for reporting to happen in a timely way. That is, rather than waiting until year-end to report achievement, information can be shared more regularly (Brewer & Kallick, 1999: 182).

In order to move towards a technological approach to reporting, schools need to consider the type of technological equipment required, both hardware and software. The use of digital cameras and digital portfolios open a world of recording student achievement that emphasises developing students' capacity to be "self directed, reflective, and self evaluative" (Brewer & Kallick, 1999: 182).

The limitations with respect to the use of technology revolve around two key issues. Schools need to plan for the acquisition of the necessary equipment to make digital reporting a reality. The second issue revolves around the ability of students, teachers and parents to access the capabilities of technology. Brewer and Kallick (1996) also believe that until parents, student and teachers have experience in having substantive conversations about student achievement, technology will provide little support to effective reporting systems.

Making The Links: A Summary

The underlying message within the literature suggests that in order to promote educative partnership in reporting student achievement certain conditions must be met. The first must be to design and implement a reporting process that takes cognisance of parents rather than "continue practices steeped in long tradition" and that primarily serve teacher needs (Hill, 1999: 122).

The provision of accurate and honest reporting is critical to the notion of partnership.

A shared understanding of what is desirable would indicate the need for schools and parents to work together to identify standards of achievement and then expectations of achievement, which might be realistic.

A shared accountability implies that partners should understand the role they play in supporting student learning. This may mean a shared exploration of the factors that affect student learning. The place of relationships, self-efficacy, locus of control, the setting of challenging and specific goals, feedback and feed forward. To share knowledge about these factors will provide a sound foundation for partnership between teacher, student and parents.

The final condition for an educative partnership lies in reviewing the student's progress towards desired standards and to hold each other accountable for agreed actions and contributions to that progress. This implies that schools have effective systems for reporting student achievement. The focus of reporting being to provide all parties with honest and accurate feedback to ensure decisions can be made about appropriate actions. Reporting must include a variety of methods and must combine written with verbal feedback and must be timely to ensure maximum benefit for students. Teachers, parents and students must contribute to the reporting process.

Each of the participant schools have indicated a desire to improve their partnerships with parents and believe engaging parents in discussion about their children's learning could provide the basis to developing that partnership. This literature review has provided some key themes that are explored throughout the evaluation of the three participant schools.

The methodology used to evaluate the participant school's practices is explored in Chapter Four which provides a theoretical framework that underpins the choice of tools used to gather and analyse data from each school. Data is interpreted in relation the research questions which link to educative theory, effective reporting and partnership with parents.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE METHODOLOGY IN THEORY

How can knowledge of the ways children learn and the means by which schools achieve their goals be verified, built upon and extended? This is a central question for educational research. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 181)

Introduction

This chapter discusses case study as a research design with particular reference to evaluative case study. Evaluative case study has been selected as the methodology that best suits the research questions of this thesis study.

The philosophical and theoretical issues that have shaped the use of case study as a research design and data gathering methods that are associated with evaluative case study are explored within this chapter. This chapter provides a frame for the methodology used in this study as described in chapter 5.

Important issues to be explored when developing an understanding of case study as a research methodology are described in this chapter under the following headings:

1. Case study as a research design
2. Case study approaches
3. Evaluating school programmes
4. Limitations of evaluative case study
5. Evaluative case study tools

Case Study As A Research Design

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that there are three approaches to educational research. The first approach is that of the scientific paradigm which creates theoretical frameworks that can be tested by experimentation, replication and refinement. The second approach is one which seeks to understand and interpret the world in relation to the participants and is consequently described as interpretive and subjective. The third approach which is emerging takes into account the political and ideological contexts of much educational research and is known as critical educational research (Cohen et al., 2000).

The paradigm most associated with case study is the interpretive paradigm. Case study always involves "the study of an instance in action" (Adelman et al., 1980, cited in Bassey, 1999: 30). The single instance is of a bounded system, for example, it could be a child, a class, a school, or a community. It provides unique examples of people in real situations. This enables the reader to understand ideas more clearly than ideas being presented as abstract theories or principles (Adelman, 1980, cited in Cohen at al. 2000). Case studies establish cause and effect. Their strength is in the fact that they observe effects in real context, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect (Cohen et al., 2000).

Case study, and in particular evaluative case study, is the approach used in this thesis study. Case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994). This thesis study is located within three school contexts and involves in-depth examination and analysis of teachers' and parents' perceptions about educative theory, reporting student achievement and partnership.

Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis (cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994; Cohen et al. 2000; Bassey, 1999) identify key advantages of case study as an approach

to research. Adelman et al (1980) argue that case study data is strong in reality but difficult to organise. This contrasts with other research which is often weak in reality but easy to organise. The strength, in reality, relates to case studies being 'down to earth' and attention holding. They are often in harmony with the reader's own experience and therefore provide a natural basis for generalisation. Case studies have a strength that lies in their attention to subtlety and complexity of the case within its own right. Case studies recognise the complexities of social truths by attending to social situations. This allows the case study to represent the discrepancies or conflict between viewpoints held by participants (Adelman et al, 1980).

Adelman et al (1980) go on to state that because of the descriptive nature of case studies, they can provide a data source for researchers to draw upon. The descriptive nature of case studies makes them more accessible to a variety of audiences because the language tends to be less esoteric and less dependent on specialist interpretation than conventional reports from research. Of critical importance is that case studies are " a step in action" (Adelman et al, 1980, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994:123). They begin in the world of action and they contribute to that world of action. The insights gained can be directly interpreted and put to use within the organisation for formative evaluation and for policy making (Adelman et al., 1980).

Cohen and Manion (1994) describe the case study researcher as one who observes the characteristics of an individual unit. The purpose of this observation being to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute that life cycle. The view is to establish generalisations about the wider population to which the unit belongs (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

Bassey (1999) argues that an educational case study is an empirical study which is

- conducted within a localised boundary of space and time;
- into interesting aspects of an educational activity, or programme;

- mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons;
- in order to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy makers; or
- theoreticians who are working to the ends.
  (Bassey, 1999: 58)

Bassey (1999) further argues that case studies collect sufficient data for the researcher to be able to explore significant features of the case and to create plausible interpretations of what has been found. The researcher can test the trustworthiness of these interpretations and to construct a worthwhile argument or story. The researcher can relate the argument to any relevant research in the literature and can convey convincingly to an audience the argument or story. Such case studies provide a trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct an alternative argument (Bassey, 1999).

Theorists such as Yin (1984), Stenhouse (1985), Stake (2000), Cohen et al. (2000) argue that there are several types of case study.

Case Study Approaches

Yin (1984, cited in Cohen et al., 2000) identifies three types of case study, that is, exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Stenhouse (1985, cited in Cohen et al., 2000) identifies four styles of case study. They are ethnographic case study, action research case study, evaluative case study and educational case study. Bassey (1999) argues that case study in educational settings needs to be redefined. He argues that the clarity of purpose that existed in the 1980s has been lost as more and more researchers have come to perceive their small scale studies as case study. Bassey (1999) further argues that the political world has come to see the

potential of educational research but has, at the same time, found the plethora of offerings "confusing and incoherent" (Bassey, 1999: 57).

Bassey (1999) reconstructs the various case study approaches as three key approaches. The first approach is that of theory seeking and theory testing case study. These incorporate studies of general issues aiming to lead to "fuzzy propositions" (more tentative) or "fuzzy generalisations" (less tentative) (Bassey, 1999: 58). Bassey aligns this approach with Yin's exploratory approach and Stake's (2000) instrumental approach.

The second approach identified by Bassey (1999) is that of story telling and picture drawing case studies. Narrative stories and descriptive accounts of educational events, projects, programmes, institutions are told after careful analysis of data. This approach is discussed by Stake (2000) and he argues that the telling of stories is strongly interpretive and seeks out meanings held by the people within the case (Stake, 2000: 441). Stake (2000) refers to this approach as intrinsic case study and Yin (1993 cited in Bassey, 1999) as descriptive case study.

The third and final approach identified by Bassey (1999) is evaluative case study. He identifies this approach as enquiries into educational programmes, systems, projects or events to determine whether they are worthwhile. This is judged by the researcher and conveyed to the audience. Bassey (1999) states that evaluative case study examines the extent to which the programme's stated objectives have been achieved, the study may be illuminative and it may be formative or summative. Evaluative case study draws on theoretical notions but does not necessarily contribute to the development of theory, and therefore is different to Bassey's theory seeking, theory testing approach to case study. The concept of evaluative case study is not new. Stenhouse (1995, cited in Bassey, 1999: 28) identifies educative case study as a single case or a collection of cases that are studied in depth with a purpose of providing educational decision makers with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of their policies and programmes.

Bassey (1999) argues that Parlett and Hamilton's (1977) paper titled "Evaluation as Illumination" while not using the descriptor case study described a form of evaluative case study. To better understand the evaluative nature of this form of case study, it is important to explore formative evaluation and its role in evaluative case study.

Evaluating School Programmes

Calder (1994) discusses the notion of evaluation of school programmes by identifying eight key stages of effective evaluation. Calder (1994) suggests that rather than a tidy set of stages to be followed; the reality may be far more untidy and idiosyncratic. Some stages may be omitted, and the sequencing may not always operate as shown. The stages of evaluation may include identifying an area of concern, deciding whether to proceed, investigating identified issues, analysing the findings, interpreting the findings, disseminating the findings and recommendations and reviewing findings, agreeing to and implementing actions. These final two stages must be included in the cycle if there is to be increased likelihood of organisational use of evaluation findings (Calder, 1994: 17). Common to each of these approaches is the involvement of participants and their formative nature.

An approach consistent with formative evaluation is responsive evaluation. Parlett and Hamilton (1972) argue that responsive evaluation is concerned with description and interpretation rather than measurement or prediction. This form of evaluation studies the innovation, how it operates; how it is influenced by the various school situations in which it is applied; what those directly concerned regard as its disadvantages and advantages; and how students' intellectual tasks and academic experiences are most affected' (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972: 10).

Another approach is known as participatory evaluation. This is a continuous improvement model. The evaluator works closely with the organisation, often on programmes that are innovatory or unique (Patton, 1996). It is an

approach, which requires ongoing commitment of the evaluator. This approach sees the role of an evaluator aligned to the role of an organisational development consultant. Patton (1996) argues that this is indeed the way of the future in which the evaluation profession take on the role of offering timely advice based on evaluation expertise, broadly rather than narrowly defined. This represents a new orthodoxy.

A final approach consistent with formative evaluation is empowerment evaluation. This approach involves participants being guided to develop and evaluate their own programmes. This is seen as giving people control over their own lives and destiny (Owen & Rogers, 1999). This approach has attracted much controversy. Fetterman (1994) has disseminated the principles of empowerment. The empowerment approach is seen as a mechanism for creating and driving learning cultures. It is not mutually exclusive to more traditional impact evaluation undertaken by external evaluators.

> *Rather evaluators can take on the role of training others in the organisation to acquire evaluation skills, act as facilitators or coaches to help others undertake evaluation, undertake illuminative evaluation in conjunction with practitioners and act as advocates for disadvantaged groups.* (Fetterman, 1994, cited in Owen & Rogers, 1999: 229)

The evaluation models identified should not be seen as a package of standard methodological approaches but rather a research strategy that is adaptable and eclectic. The choice of research tactics follows not from doctrine, but from decisions in each case as to the best available techniques; the problem defines the technique, not vice versa (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972).

For this research study, evaluative case study principles guided the research process. The principles of evaluative case study and how they are interpreted within the context of formative evaluation of a school programme are now explored. Table 1 demonstrates a summary of the evaluative case study

approach and compares the evaluative case study approach with formative evaluation.

Table 1[5]: Relationship between Formative Evaluation and Evaluative Case Study

DIMENSION	FORMATIVE EVALUATION PROPERTIES	EVALUATIVE CASE STUDY PROPERTIES
Purpose	To diagnose strengths and weaknesses. To contribute to action and intervention.	
Foci	Performance, achievement potential: • Individuals • Group • Roles • Organisations • Community	Bounded phenomena and systems: • Individual • Group • Roles • Organisations • Community
	Focus is on delivery. Findings will influence changes in programme plan and therefore affect outcomes.	
Key terms	Formative Diagnostic	In depth analysis Descriptive Analytical Interpretive
Characteristics	In depth data from a variety of sources In depth analysis and diagnosis	In depth detailed data from wide data source Holistic treatment of phenomena What can be learned from a particular case?
Assembly of data	Intensive on site work, may include: Observation Interviews Questionnaires Document analysis	

A review of Table 1 provides an overview of the key concepts of formative evaluation and their relationship to evaluative case study. Within a bounded

[5] Adapted from Cohen et al (2000: 79))

system an in-depth analysis is descriptive, analytical and interpretive. Data is used to provide formative feedback to participants that identifies strengths and weaknesses of the system and identifies what may be learned from the study.

Limitations Of Evaluative Case Study

A number of limitations are identified within the case study approach. Results generated may not be generalisable except where other readers or researchers see their application. Case studies are not easily able to be crosschecked and therefore may be seen as selective, biased, personal or subjective (Nisbett & Watts, 1984, cited in Cohen et al., 1999).

Case study, as with any other research approach must be reliable and valid. This can be difficult to achieve when the uniqueness of a situation, by definition, may be inconsistent with other cases and therefore cannot subscribe to this positivist view of reliability and validity (Cohen et al., 1999). Bassey (1999) describes the concept of trustworthiness in case study research. He argues that analysis reliability is the extent to which a research fact or finding can be repeated, given the same circumstances, and validity as being the extent to which a fact or finding is what it claims to be. In case study these concepts are problematic. A case study is a study of the singular and is chosen because of its interest to the researcher or sponsor. It is not chosen as a typical example necessarily and so issues of external validity are not relevant.

As a different way of viewing validity and reliability Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Bassey, 1999) have put forward the concept of trustworthiness. The concept of trustworthiness is based on prolonged engagement with data, persistent observation of emerging themes, sufficient triangulation, ensuring the account of the research is sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence in the findings and in having an adequate audit trail.

There are important questions to be answered when undertaking case studies. Adelman et al. (1980), Nisbet and Watt (1984) and Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) (cited in Cohen et al., 2000) provide examples of the type of questions that must be answered. Questions include the identification of the case and what kind of case study will be carried out (what is the purpose?), what is reliable and objective evidence, what kind of sampling is most appropriate, to what extent is triangulation required, how will the balance be struck between uniqueness and generalisation and what is the most appropriate form of writing up and reporting the case?

The concept of trustworthiness must be imbedded in the tools used to carry out the evaluative case study.

Evaluative Case Study Tools

Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that the wide use of case study is characterised by diverse techniques for collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

For every question there must be a data collection and analysis strategy. It is critical to ensure that techniques chosen best answer the questions posed.

> *A research question is the engine which drives the train of enquiry. It should be formulated in such a way that it sets the immediate agenda for research, enables data to be collected and permits analysis to get started.* (Bassey, 1999: 67).

Assembling the data involves the interlinking of identifying sources of data, gaining access to data and collecting the data.

Observations

To observe is to simply watch what happens. However, researchers do not just have a look. They are looking for *something*. The researcher is guided by a clearly stated question and data is systematically recorded (Bouma, 1996: 60). There are two types of observation. That is, participant observation and non-participant observation. In participant observation the evaluator engages in the very activities they set out to observe. Non-participant observers on the other hand, stand aloof from the group activities they are observing (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Cohen et al., 2000).

Bouma (1996) argues that to carry out observations requires a great deal of discipline. Participant observations can be criticised for being subjective, biased, idiosyncratic and lacking in the precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of surveys and experimentation. These criticisms raise questions about two types of validity, in observation based research. Comments about subjectivity are to do with external validity. How do we know that the results of this piece of research are applicable in other situations? Fears that the observers' judgement will be affected by their close involvement with a group relate to the internal validity of the method. How do we know the results of this piece of research relate to the real thing? (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Cohen et al., 2000)

Interviews

Discovering the views of participants is crucial to assessing the impact of an innovation. Structured interviews are useful for obtaining biographical, historical or factual information whereas more open ended and discursive forms are suitable for less straightforward topics. Though desirable it is not generally possible to interview all participants. Therefore, interviewees must usually be selected randomly or by 'theoretical' sampling. This latter mode requires seeking out people with "particular insight" or whose position makes their viewpoints noteworthy (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972: 16).

Interviews are usually guided by an interview schedule that lists key questions to be asked, or topics to be covered, in the interview. Interviews may be tape-recorded or the interviewer may take notes and write the interview up later. The transcription of a taped interview may be time consuming but it does provide a readily analysable record of the interview. If notes are taken it is critical to write up the notes soon after the actual interview. Any unnecessary delay can undermine the record's accuracy and reliability (Bouma, 1996).

Questionnaires

An ideal questionnaire possesses the same properties as a good law. That is, it is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. Its design must minimise potential errors from respondents and coders. And since people's participation in surveys is voluntary, a questionnaire has to help in engaging their interest, encouraging their cooperation, and eliciting answers as close as possible to the truth (Davidson, 1970, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994: 93).

Parlett and Hamilton (1972) state that free and fixed responses formats can obtain both quantitative summary data and also open ended, and perhaps new and unexpected comment. There is, however, a tension between the ease of analysis which precoded answers offer and the greater opportunity for participants to offer more detailed and specific comment offered by open ended questions where a considerable analysis commitment must be made if answers are to be content analysed (Calder, 1994: 98).

Documents

Documentation can provide background information and insight into an educational programme. The gathering and analysis of documents may provide an historical perspective of how the innovation was regarded by different people and may also provide areas for inquiry. It may also expose

aspects of the programme that would otherwise have been missed (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972: 17).

Triangulation

No method should be used in isolation as different techniques can be combined to throw light on a problem. Besides viewing the problem from a number of angles, this 'triangulation' approach also facilitates the cross checking of otherwise tentative findings (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972: 198).

Denzin (1978, cited in Janesick, 2000) identifies four types of triangulation. That is, data triangulation which incorporates the use of a variety of data sources in a study, investigator triangulation which involves the use of different researchers, theory triangulation which is the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data and methodological triangulation which involves the use of multiple methods to study a single problem. For this study two forms of triangulation will be used. That is data triangulation and methodological triangulation.

Richardson (2000) argues that triangulation has developed as a concept and is more aptly described as crystallisation. Crystallisation recognises that many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life. Richardson (ibid) expands this notion by stating that

> *what we see when we view a crystal, for example, depends on how we view it, how we hold it up to the light or not. Crystallisation, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of validity. We know there is no single truth. Crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically we know more and doubt what we know and there is always more to know.* (Richardson, 2000: 934).

Summary

This chapter has described the development and application of case study as an approach. In particular it has described evaluative case study as a key approach which has been used in this research study. Case study is useful in evaluation research. It can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. Evaluative case studies can identify causal links, describe interventions, illustrate topics, explore situations and can form a case study of an evaluation study (Poskitt, 2003). The principles of evaluative case study, as described in this chapter, will be applied in practice in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY IN PRACTICE

An evaluative case study studies a case or collection of cases in depth with a purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions. (Stenhouse, 1985:50, cited in Bassey, 1999: 28)

Introduction

This study engages the principles of evaluative case study. Principles outlined in chapter four are applied in practice throughout this chapter. The study was undertaken during the latter part of 2002 and the first half of 2003. It involved three participant schools that were in the process of, or wanted to, review their reporting to parents' processes.

The methodology used in the evaluation of the practices of all three schools and a description of the processes used to gain support of various stakeholders, that is, Boards of Trustees, Principals, staff and parents is included. The chapter also includes a description of how data were collected and how that data were analysed. Ethical issues are identified and how these ethical issues were addressed. Limitations of the research are identified and findings should be interpreted with those limitations in mind.

Methodology in practice will be presented under the following headings:

1. Selection of participants
2. Personal contact with schools
3. Evaluative Case study approach
4. Evaluative case study tools used
5. Analysis of data
6. Ethical issues
7. Limitations of the approach

Selection of Participants

As indicated in the introduction to this study the motivation of the researcher to complete this study grew from a deep interest in the changes that have occurred in our education system and the issues schools face in changing their reporting practice to better reflect current research about effective learning and effective partnerships.

Schools selected for this thesis were from a large metropolitan city in New Zealand. Criteria for selection included schools that were:

- Primary schools i.e. Year 1 – 8.
- A range of deciles - one low decile[6] school (Decile 1 – 3), one mid decile school (Decile 4-6) and one high decile school (Decile 7-9).
- Not considered to be at risk and ascertained through review of the most recent ERO report. Schools who have either undergone or will undergo a discretionary review this year will not be invited to participate.
- Reporting to parents on the basis of developed policies and procedures.
- New to the researcher in terms of professional work in assessment or reporting.

Initially a list of possible schools was drawn up. Five schools in each of the decile rankings were identified. The researcher then approached each of these schools, in turn, to find schools willing to participate. The approach was by way of an information sheet forwarded to each school. If the school declined another school was approached. Schools responded by sending an expression of interest back to the researcher. On receipt of the expression of interest the researcher made personal contact with the school. The number

[6] Decile ranking – In New Zealand a school's decile ranking indicates the school's socio-economic status. Schools with a decile ranking of one are identified as having low socio-economic status and schools with a decile ranking of ten have a high socio-economic ranking.

of schools approached was three low decile, one mid decile and three high decile schools.

Table 2 provides the statistics[7] about each participant school in relation to the criteria set and provides a breakdown of ethnic composition for each school. The table indicates that each school met the criteria for selection.

Table 2: Statistical Information About Each School

DESCRIPTION	SCHOOL		
	A	B	C
Classification	State	State	State
Type	Primary	Primary	Full Primary
Year levels	Year 1 - 6	Year 1 - 6	Years 1 - 8
Decile	3	4	8
Roll No.	355	426	346
No. Of Teachers	19	20	18
Ethnic composition	Pakeha 23%, Mäori 14%, Tongan 17%, Samoan 10%, Indian 10%, Niuean 7%, Chinese 4%, Cook Island 4%, Fijian 3%, Other 8%	Päkehä 47%, Mäori 25%, Samoan 14%, Indian 4%, Chinese 3%, Tongan 3%, Niuean 2%, Other 2%	Pakeha 84%, Mäori 12%, Other 4%

Personal Contact With Schools

Once schools had indicated interest in evaluating their reporting processes, a meeting was held between the researcher and the principals of each school. In two of the schools the researcher also met with the school Board of

[7] Statistical information has been sourced from each school's ERO report.

Trustees. The purpose of these meetings was to provide information about the study and answer any questions about the research.

In developing the methodological strategy of evaluative case study, each school had input into what questions they specifically wanted answers to, how data should be collected and how information would be disseminated for discussion.

Once the Boards of Trustees had signed an informed consent to participate in the study, the researcher then met with the staff of each of the school. The intention of these meetings was to explain the purpose of the study and to answer any questions that teachers might have. Teachers were also invited to provide feedback about the data collection. As a result of their input the number of teacher interviews was increased to ensure a teacher from every syndicate was interviewed.

Two schools also asked that information sheets and questionnaires be made available to parents in Samoan and Tongan and that information sheets also be made available in Maori.

In following formative processes it was agreed that feedback to each school would occur during the study. Feedback to each community would also occur through a school newsletter. This newsletter would highlight findings and each school's recommendations for action.

Evaluation Approach

As already indicated evaluative case study principles were applied in this study. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, cited in Cohen et al., 2000) argue that case study has several hallmarks, that is, it blends descriptions with the analysis, it focuses on individuals and their perception of events and the richness of the case is captured in the writing of the report.

Each school's focus was to improve the way in which they report student achievement to parents and to further develop the concept of educative partnerships within the process. While each school had made some changes to their reporting processes in recent times none of the schools felt confident to say that what they were doing was effective and so to have an independent evaluation done at this time would provide each school with information which would inform their future practice. By comparing and contrasting each school with each other some generalisations were able to be drawn.

Evaluative Case Study Tools Used

The research questions identified in this study determined how data should be collated within an evaluative case study model. Within this study these questions were used to determine the most effective and efficient way of collecting data.

Questionnaires

The research questions and literature review provided the basis for developing questionnaires. Questionnaires[8] were developed for all teachers and parents, enabling the researcher to analyse information from a large group of respondents. Questions were developed that were both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Before distributing the questionnaire, it was trialled with a pilot group. This enabled the researcher to check for any ambiguities or confusions to be identified so that refinements and adjustments could be made.

[8] See appendix B

The questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the evaluation so that emerging themes could be further explored through the interview process and document analysis. Once the questionnaires had been sent out, a reminder was sent home after one week to encourage parents to return their questionnaire to the school. The sending of a reminder newsletter increased the return rate in all schools.

To ensure a greater return of questionnaires several techniques were employed. The first technique was to provide the initial information sheet[9] for parents in four languages. That is, English, Maori, Samoan, and Tongan. The second technique was to provide the questionnaires[10] in three languages English, Samoan and Tongan. This was to ensure parents had the opportunity to read and write their responses in their first language.

Each school was issued with enough questionnaires for all families within the school. Where appropriate, the English questionnaire was accompanied with the relevant translation. Each school was also given a full set of instructions about how and when to distribute the questionnaires. Parents were asked to return completed questionnaires to the researcher in a stamped addressed envelope. As already indicated, an information sheet accompanied all questionnaires.

At the same time as parent questionnaires were distributed, teacher questionnaires were also issued to all teachers. Teachers returned their completed questionnaire in a stamped addressed envelope to the researcher.

The questionnaire provided an excellent opportunity to gain a large number of responses in each community and school. The return rate provided a representative sample for each community as demonstrated in Table 3.

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[9] See appendix A
[10] See appendix C

Table 3: ***Percentages of Parents and Teachers Who Returned Questionnaires***

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	AVERAGE RETURN
Parents	62%	42%	40%	48%
Teachers	100%	70%	72%	80%

Interviews

An expression of interest[11] form was attached to the questionnaire for teachers and parents to be involved in an interview with the researcher.

Teachers and parents were asked to consider being interviewed by the researcher. The sample required was four parents from each participant school, a teacher from each syndicate in each school and the senior management team. The purpose of these interviews would be to probe emerging themes from the questionnaire and to explore issues raised within the literature review.

Table 4: ***Participation In Interviews By Teachers And Parents***

PARTICIPANT	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	TOTAL
Senior Managers	2	2	3	**7**
Teachers	3	3	3	**9**
Parents	4	4	4	**12**

The interviews were semi structured and were approximately 45 minutes long. Participants were given the choice of being audio taped or not.

[11] See appendix D

Criteria for teachers to be interviewed:

1. Teachers who had taught at the school for at least two years.
2. Representation of junior and senior school teachers.

For each school a sufficient number of teachers indicated a willingness to be interviewed. No additional selection process was necessary. Teachers were given the choice of having their interviews audio taped or not.

The number of parents willing to participate in the interviews exceeded the number required. A selection process was applied.

Criteria for selecting parents and caregivers were:

1. More than one child at the school (on the expression of interest form, parents had been asked to indicate how many children they had attending the school).
2. A representative sample of children who were, in their parents view achieving well, not so well (This was gleaned from the responses on questionnaires). An equal number of each was selected.

Identifying parents with more than one child at the school provided an opportunity to compare the experiences of each parent in relation to each child attending the school.

Once all expressions of interest had been sorted according to the set criteria, random selection took place within the selected group.

The researcher contacted teachers, parents who were selected so that any questions could be answered by the researcher before informed consent could be given to proceed with the interviews. To protect the confidentiality of parents interviews were held in the family homes. Parents were able to choose whether they wanted to have their interview audio taped or not.

Because more parents indicated a willingness to be interviewed than were required a newsletter was sent home to all families expressing gratitude for their willingness to participate and indicating that if they had been randomly selected they would hear from the researcher by a given date.

As well as teachers, the researcher also interviewed senior managers in the school. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the understandings of the management team in relation to current research about educative partnerships and reporting achievement. The interviews also allowed the managers to articulate what had informed previous decision making in relation to reporting student achievement.

Document analysis

The analysis of school documentation relating to each school's reporting processes allowed the researcher to gain a greater insight into the documented purposes and procedures for reporting student achievement. By analysing school documents the researcher was able to provide feedback related to documented intent and the intent in action. Documents analysed are indicated in Table 5. A dot indicates that the school had that document; no dot indicates the school did not have the document.

Table 5: Documents Analysed

DOCUMENT	CODE	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Curriculum policy	CP	•	•	•
Assessment policy	AP		•	•
Reporting to parents policy	RP		•	
Assessment procedures	APr	•	•	•
Reporting to parents procedures	RPP		•	•
Student Report forms	SR	•	•	•
Student portfolio samples	SPS	•		
School newsletters	SN			•

Where schools did not provide certain documents the schools did not have that document. For example, School A and C did not have a specific policy for Reporting to Parents.

There was an analysis of public documentation relating to reporting student achievement. This related, in the main, to MoE documents which provided a context in which each of the schools were operating. The findings of that analysis are referred to in detail in Chapter Two.

Summary of tools used

Table 6 indicates the tools used within the evaluative case study methodology of this study and how information was recorded. The use of these tools ensured that data could be triangulated.

Table 6: Tools Used In Study

Principles Of Evaluative Case Study	Tools Used	How Information Was Recorded
Bounded phenomena and systems: • Individual • Group • Roles • Organisations • Community In depth detailed data from wide data source Holistic treatment of phenomena What can be learned from a particular case?	Questionnaires • All families • All teachers • Senior Management Team	Individual response questionnaire
	Interviews (semi structured) • Principal and senior managers • One teacher from each syndicate • Four parents	Taped and transcribed; field notes.
	Document analysis • Strategic plans/ charters • Assessment policies • Reporting to parents policies and procedures • Twelve student report forms - representative of all levels in the school.	Notes

Analysis Of Data

Data analysis occurred throughout the evaluation. The teacher and parent questionnaires were analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative questions, which were quantitative, were analysed using SPSS[12].

Qualitative questions were analysed using a content analysis to identify themes. Each school was coded and each questionnaire was given a unique

[12] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

number. The researcher then read through the qualitative question responses and recorded one or two words to get a sense of the potential themes that would emerge. These themes became the categories to which responses were collated. Every response was coded for data source, school, questionnaire number, appropriate teacher, parent or caregiver and question number. For example, data source Q, school A, questionnaire number 112, parent response P and question number 3 would be coded Q.A.112.P.3.

The researcher recorded key phrases to describe each of the key ideas of responses in reviewed transcripts and interview notes. These became the themes or categories for deeper analysis of the interviews. Each paragraph in transcripts and field notes was numbered. Interviews were coded for data source, school, questionnaire reference, appropriate teacher, parent or caregiver and paragraph number (eg. data source I, questionnaire reference 112, parent response P, paragraph number 5 would be coded I.112.P.5).

The same approach was taken for document analysis. That is, each set of documents was read and reread by the researcher. The researcher recorded phrases to describe each of the key ideas. These became the themes or categories for deeper analysis of the documents. Each paragraph or section was numbered. Documents were coded for data source, school, document reference, document number and paragraph number. That is, data source D, school A, B, or C, document reference AP (Assessment Policy), APr (Assessment Procedure), RP (Reporting policy), RPr (Reporting procedures), R (Report form), St (Strategic plan), and paragraph/section number. For example, D.A.APr.5 would indicate data source document, school A, assessment procedures, paragraph or section 5.

Feedback was given to each school from the questionnaire. This was done in two ways. The feedback pertinent to each school was shared and then information collated for the three schools was also shared. This allowed each school to view their data as a stand alone set of data as well as viewing their data in relation to the data collected from the other participant schools. Each school was aware of the types of schools involved in the case study.

All sources of data were then cut up and sorted under the key theme headings. Coding for all responses was kept intact during the sorting process to ensure all responses could be verified against the original data source.

The frequency of data or the significance of a response determined whether the themes were included in the final analysis or discounted. For example there were a high number of responses relating to timing of parent teacher interviews so these were included. Alternatively a small number of responses related to a significant issue of the language of reports, this theme was also included because it was an important issue. These themes were then explored against the literature.

Ethical Issues

The New Zealand Association for Research in Education (1998) has identified key principles when researching in education. The rights and welfare of students, research participants and the general public should take precedence over the self interest of members of the Association or the interests of employers, colleagues or other special interest groups. In reporting research there should be concern for the rights and interests of all of the individuals, groups and institutions involved in and affected by it.

All research should be done and reported objectively and frankly without prejudice. Due note should be taken of the limitations in techniques and the influence of particular theories and ideologies in research. Opinions expressed by the researcher which are unsupported by evidence should be clearly distinguished from research findings.

There should be, in all aspects of research, a spirit of open inquiry and open discussion. Research findings should be expressed in a way, which is readily understood by those with an interest in them.

In relation to this study the following ethical considerations were identified.

Informed consent

Informed consent was gained from The Board of Trustees, Principals, teachers, parents and caregivers. In order to gain informed consent a clear description of what the research involved, how it was to be reported and the extent of public availability was written as information sheets for each of the identified groups.

Gaining informed consent involved a tiered approach. The researcher, in the first instance, approached the principals in each of the schools to explain the purpose of the research, research techniques and how results will be reported. If the principal agreed in principle, to participate the researcher then attended a Board of Trustees meeting to present the research thesis to the Board of Trustees to seek approval. In all cases, schools confirmed informed consent in writing.

Once informed consent had been gained from the Board of Trustees, the researcher then attended a full staff meeting at each school to inform the teachers about the process and to invite questions. All teachers were asked to fill in a questionnaire. To not give consent would simply have involved the teacher concerned not filling in the questionnaire.

Teachers were also informed about the opportunity to participate in the interviews. The purpose and criteria for selection were made clear to teachers. All teachers involved in the interviews were asked to sign an informed consent form.

The researcher sent out to all families at each school an information sheet and questionnaire. As indicated earlier in this chapter the information sheet was available in four languages. Parents were told that filling in the

questionnaire was purely voluntary. Having read the initial information sheet, parents and caregivers were asked to indicate if they would be prepared to consider being interviewed as part of the study.

The researcher contacted those parents who indicated a willingness to consider being interviewed individually to explain the research and to ask for consent to interview the parent. Parents who agreed to be interviewed signed an informed consent form.

As part of the process for seeking informed consent it is important to clarify issues around the withdrawal of informed consent. At anytime a participant could withdraw their consent to participate. However, it was made clear that information gathered before consent was withdrawn would be included in the research.

Confidentiality

All data collected from individuals or groups are stored in boxes with a school identification number allocated and will then be kept in a locked storage file at the researcher's home.

With regard to confidentiality and anonymity, no information gathered from participants shall be given to any person, without the express written permission of the participant, unless it was agreed as part of the research process. All information will be used for the express purposes of this research thesis. Confidentiality was gained through giving each participant a code and by carrying out parent interviews in family homes.

In small town New Zealand anonymity can be difficult. The schools were given codes. However, once a school is described in terms of decile rating, size, and some indication of location it becomes a relatively academic exercise to identify the participant schools. This is exemplified in Tolich

(2001) when he gives the example of a researcher studying conflict in one of 2700 schools in New Zealand.

> *The school is a secondary school (delete 2400 primary schools); it is a boy's high school (delete girls high and co-ed schools); it is a private school (delete all public boys' schools); it is not located in a main centre (delete all Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Dunedin private boys' schools); its population is predominately Maori. The number of possible schools is few.* (Tolich, 2001:9)

It was important to protect the participant schools from identification as much as possible but also to indicate to the schools that a small risk of anonymity not necessarily being achieved was inevitable.

Legal Issues

In completing this thesis the researcher has an understanding of the following legislation and it's implications:

Privacy Act 1993

As the researcher accessed school records and individual student records it was critical to gain written permission of the appropriate authorities. For the purpose of this study the appropriate authority was each schools' Board of Trustees.

Copyright Act 1994

As the researcher accessed documents and literature it was critical to ensure all parties were acknowledged and that there is no breach of copyright.

Employment Relations Act 2000

As the researcher interviewed employees, protocols that protect participants' confidentiality were established. Employers accessed no individual information given to the researcher.

Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992

As the researcher worked on school sites it was essential that the researcher made herself familiar with all health and safety matters relating to employee safety. The key issue was in relation to emergency procedures. In two schools the researcher wore a tag that identified her as a visitor to the school.

Minimising Harm

The risks involved in this research thesis centred on the schools and the parents who participated.

It was important to ensure that the research activity did not impinge on teaching and learning as a result of principals, teachers, parents and caregivers being involved in this research. Interviews were carried out using a combination of school time and out of school time for each school. The timing of parent and caregiver interviews was negotiated with each parent and included times when young children were at kindergarten, evenings when both parents could be available, early mornings when children had left for school and mid afternoon just prior to picking children up from school.

The potential identification of each school has already been identified as a potential risk. Once again, this was made clear to participating schools and every attempt made to ensure anonymity.

Reporting

Confidential information, which might lead to identification, has not been published without the consent of participants. All forms of assistance in completing this thesis are acknowledged. All participant schools have been given a copy of the research findings.

Limitations of the Methodology

Whilst the need to carry out this case study was expressed by each of the schools, they did not initiate the evaluation. In an evaluative case study model the need for information would, most likely, have been initiated by the schools themselves. Each school saw the approach made by the researcher as an opportunity to evaluate their reporting processes. While the reciprocity of this evaluative case study was clear, the audience was not restricted to each school and this had implications for each school's involvement in designing the approaches and questions to be answered. The researcher mitigated this by ensuring each school was able to identify specific areas of information they were most interested in having and by accommodating changes to data gathering methodology. For example, providing information sheets in four languages and interviewing a wider range of teachers in each school.

The questionnaire was an excellent tool for gaining a large number of responses from each community. It was an efficient way of gathering initial data. The limitation of the questionnaire was that data could not be analysed according to ethnicity. This may have been helpful when identifying the specific reporting needs of families, particularly Maori families, and other ethnicities who may have had particular needs. It could be argued that those responses returned using the Samoan or Tongan version could have been analysed separately. However, this was not appropriate because it could not

be ascertained that all Samoan and Tongan families used the Samoan or Tongan version to record their responses.

The interviews provided an opportunity to probe emerging issues from both the questionnaire and literature. The limitation of this approach was, that due to the scope of the study, the researcher was not able to interview all parents who indicated a willingness to be interviewed. This may have provided more breadth and depth of information. In addition to interviews, an approach that could have been utilised would have been focus group discussions. This could have been done in a number of ways. It could have included significant ethnic groups within each school or parents or caregivers of children of particular ages. The reason this approach was not used in this study was that the researcher was most interested in asking parents about their understanding of their child's report. This could not have been achieved in a focus group situation.

Another limitation of the interviews was the number of participants who felt uneasy to be audio taped. While the researcher took full and comprehensive notes during interviews and wrote up these interviews on the same day they took place, notes cannot provide the same richness of a full transcript of responses by participants.

The final limitation related to the methodology is the exclusion of students from the participant list. The ethical and practical issues of involving students were beyond the scope of this study. However, in thinking about true educative partnerships, it is critically important that future research does include input from the focus of the partnership, that is, the student.

Summary

Within the evaluative case study model some variation had to occur as a result of the context of each school and the limitations of this study. However,

the approach used has provided a comprehensive set of data from which each school can make informed decisions about their future direction in reporting student achievement in a way that encourages and enhances the concept of educative partnerships.

Emerging themes were fully explored through questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Participant views were sought from senior managers, teachers, parents and caregivers. All of these people's views were valued as part of the evaluative process. As indicated to take all participant views into consideration the inclusion of the student voice is missing from this study. It should be included in any future research on educative partnership.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS AND EMERGENT THEMES

As all parents, I would like my child to be confident, caring and have the knowledge to be whatever she wants to be. Already I am very proud of my child's progress. She may not be Prime Minister but I hope that if she wants to she gives it a great go. Whatever happens in her life we want to look back and tell her that this school gave her the start and helped her achieve what she wants in her life, and as her parents, so did we. (Parent: PQ.A.165.1)

Introduction

The research questions and subsequent literature review provided a frame to develop an initial questionnaire for teachers and families. From these questionnaires a number of themes began to emerge in relation to educative theory, reporting and partnership in learning. Initial themes were: important educational outcomes identified by parents and teachers, purposes of reporting identified by parents and teachers, the type of information parents found helpful, the role of teacher-parent interviews, the desire of parents to be actively involved in their children's' learning, and the frequency and timing of personal contact between parents and teachers. These themes were further explored through parent and teacher interviews.

Interviews and document analysis assisted the researcher identify and explore the dominant themes that developed throughout the evaluation process.

This chapter identifies the issues and themes for all of the participant schools, as well as themes that were particular to individual schools. The chapter is organised under key headings:

1. Key understandings and interpretation of national guidelines and requirements
2. Articulating purposes for reporting student achievement to parents
3. Articulating and implementing reporting procedures
4. Matching intended message with message received by parents
5. Promoting the concept of education as a partnership

Chapter 5, Table 2 provides a detailed description of each participant school. However, for the purposes of this chapter, readers are reminded that School A is a low decile school, School B a mid decile school and School C a high decile school.

Key Understandings And Interpretation Of National Guidelines And Requirements

Key understanding and interpretation of guidelines was an important theme to explore within this study. As indicated in chapter 2, in New Zealand national assessment strategies had been implemented during 2002 and 2003. Two key assessment tools had been distributed to New Zealand schools early in 2003, that is, National Curriculum Exemplars and asTTle[13]. Each school's understanding of the national strategies, and in particular, the associated assessment tools, would have direct bearing on how and if such tools would be included into their reporting programmes.

As part of the initial teacher, parent and caregiver questionnaire, participants were asked to rate their understanding of key national guidelines and legislation. A Likert scale was used to determine how familiar participants were with each guideline or legislation, where 1 represented extremely familiar and 5 represented unfamiliar. Table 7 represents the participant's responses in terms of a mean ranking score. It compares teacher mean rankings with parent mean rankings. The closer the mean ranking is to 1 the higher the level of familiarity with the guideline or legislation. The closer the

[13] Described in chapter 2.

mean ranking is to 5 the lower the level of familiarity with the guideline or legislation.

Table 7: Familiarity With National Guidelines And Legislation

	SCHOOL A PARENTS (P =113) TEACHERS (T=19)		SCHOOL B PARENTS (P=65) TEACHERS (T=14)		SCHOOL C PARENTS (P=64) TEACHERS (T=13)		COMBINED PARENTS (P= 242) TEACHERS (T=46)	
Guideline	MRS (1-5)							
	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T
National Administration Guideline 1	3.75	3.35	3.60	2.22	4.41	3.23	**3.92**	**3.05**
Education Standards Act (2001)	3.80	3.76	3.64	2.89	4.50	3.46	**3.98**	**3.37**
National Assessment Strategy	3.86	3.82	3.81	2.78	4.50	3.31	**4.05**	**3.30**
ERO booklet: School Reports – A Guide to Parents	3.96	4.29	3.87	4.00	4.63	4.00	**4.15**	**4.09**
ERO booklet: Reporting Student Achievement	4.12	4.24	3.96	4.11	4.66	4.08	**4.24**	**4.14**

P = Parents T = Teachers

Neither teachers nor parents had a high mean ranking for any of the national guidelines or legislation. While teachers' mean rankings were lower than parents and caregivers, their mean rankings were still lower than average for all guidelines and legislation. The exception to this was School B where the teachers ranked above average for their familiarity with National Administration Guideline 1.

For the teacher group, this lack of understanding was further explored in the interviews. All teachers, when asked to clarify their familiarity with national guidelines and legislation, said that while they had some familiarity with the guidelines they certainly could not quote them. When asked to further clarify

what their understanding was one teacher said that she thought there was a higher emphasis on reading, writing and number (Teacher: TI.C.4.3). The most common response was that the responsibility for knowing about guidelines was vested in the leadership team[14] of each school.

> *It is important but I guess the responsibility is removed from us because here we do whole school planning. The management team make sure we comply with any regulations – so that's okay.* (Teacher: TI.C.5.2)

It was the leadership teams that demonstrated a clearer understanding of the guidelines and implications for practice. In their teams they had discussed implications for planning. This included developing a stronger emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The leadership teams were also aware of the need to base reporting to parents on valid data.

> *As a management team have a good understanding. We talk a lot about best practice - you know making sure we assess the kids using valid data and that teachers share the learning with the kids. That is especially important in literacy and numeracy.* (Leadership team member: TI.C.3.2)

In School C, the leadership team had looked at the national exemplars and had begun to explore how the exemplars could provide a basis for assessing student learning. As part of staff meetings, the leadership team had explored ways to assess student's work. In particular this had occurred in relation to student writing. The staff had discussed providing feedback to students and the need to share next steps in learning with students. The school also developed indicators of achievement in literacy and numeracy.

A number of parents interviewed did not recall any school information relating to national requirements coming home or being shared at parent evenings.

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[14] Referred to by teachers commonly as the management team

Parents assumed that the schools were implementing procedures to ensure they complied with what they 'had to do' (Parents: PI.A.217.21, PI.A.2.19, PI.B.64.20, PI.C.47.24).

The lack of understanding in relation to new assessment strategies has implications for professional development needs of teachers. Teachers were asked in the questionnaire to identify what professional development they had been involved in over the past three years. Table 8 indicates the type of professional development and percentage of teachers who have been involved.

Table 8: Percentage of Teachers Involved In Professional Development

TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	SCHOOL A N = 19	SCHOOL B N = 14	SCHOOL C N = 13	COMBINED PERCENTAGE N = 46
Completing computerised student reports	83%	89%	61%	**78%**
Carrying out valid and reliable assessment	80%	55%	61%	**65%**
Analysis of assessment	66%	44%	46%	**52%**
Writing student reports	69%	33%	46%	**49%**
Effective communication skills	38%	33%	30%	**34%**
Conducting parent/teacher interviews	28%	10%	38%	**25%**

For all participant schools the focus of professional development has been primarily on generating computerised reports. Carrying out valid and reliable assessment has also been a focus.

The focus on carrying out valid and reliable assessment reflects the new Zealand national strategy, in that tools such as National Curriculum Exemplars and asTTle were developed to provide more reliability and validity in relation to teacher judgements about student achievement. Of surprise is that only one school indicated that they had discussed National Curriculum Exemplars and possible implications for implementation.

Through teacher interviews, professional development was further explored. Teachers were asked what they saw as their professional development needs in relation to reporting student achievement. Of the nine teachers interviewed five teachers felt they did not need any professional development (Teachers: TI.A.1.7, TI.A.2.7, TI.B.2.1, TI.B.3.1, TI.B.4.1). Four teachers indicated that perhaps professional development might be most useful to inexperienced teachers (Teachers: TI.A.1.2, TI.C.4.5, TI.C.1.3, TI.C.3.12).

Senior leaders in the school had different views on the professional development needs of their staff. The Principal in School A identified the need for some teachers to develop their skills and understanding in a number of areas related to reporting student achievement. That is, communication skills, analysing and using student achievement information and conducting parent/teacher interviews that created positive parent/teacher relationships. The Principal of School B indicated that although there had been much 'talk' by teachers about developing learning conversation with students and parents, it had been a negative experience with few teachers implementing any change to their current practice. The Principal of School C was more positive about the outcomes of professional development within the school indicating that there had been discussion about the National assessment strategy. In particular, National Curriculum Exemplars in writing had been explored and teachers were now beginning to use strategies such as sharing learning intentions and success criteria with students. The National Curriculum Exemplars had been useful in implementing this change to practice because teachers were able to use the progress indicators with students in the classroom.

The lack of impact of professional development, particularly in School A and B, has implications not only in relation to developing teacher's understanding of current assessment and reporting strategies using nationally available assessment tools, but also for any future professional development that will need to focus on what affects children's learning, how to reflect those factors in any reporting process and how to develop effective partnerships with parents.

Articulating Purposes Of Reporting Student Achievement To Parents

Teachers and parents were asked to identify how important they felt a range of purposes was in reporting student achievement. Participants were asked to rank each purpose from extremely important to not at all important using a Likert scale where 1 indicated extremely important and 5 indicated not at all important. The closer the mean ranking is to 1 the more important the purpose. The closer it is to 5 the less important. Table 9 indicates the mean ranking for each purpose. It compares the mean ranking of parents and teachers.

Table 9: Purposes of Reporting Student Achievement

PURPOSES	SCHOOL A Low decile P = 113 T = 19		SCHOOL B Mid decile P = 65 T = 14		SCHOOL C High decile P = 64 T = 13		AVERAGE Par = 242 Tchr = 46	
To find out:	**Scale (1 – 5)**							
	P	**T**	**P**	**T**	**P**	**T**	**P**	**T**
How parents can help their children with their learning	1.39	1.41	1.25	1.00	1.35	1.46	**1.33**	**1.36**
How the teacher and parent can work together to help the child	1.51	1.29	1.35	1.11	1.38	1.31	**1.41**	**1.23**
If the child is making good progress	1.33	1.53	1.32	1.33	1.65	2.00	**1.43**	**1.64**
If the child is working hard	1.77	2.12	1.64	1.22	2.35	2.33	**1.92**	**1.97**
The child's achievement compared to children of same age	1.96	2.88	1.86	2.44	2.35	2.67	**2.05**	**2.71**
The child's achievement compared to children in same class	2.24	3.71	2.37	3.56	2.89	3.62	**2.86**	**3.64**

P = Parents T = Teachers

For parents all purposes were seen as important, as all mean rankings were higher than 2.5. The exception to this was comparing the child's achievement against the achievement of students in the same class.

For teachers, mean rankings indicated that they identified most purposes as very important. The purpose of finding out the child's achievement compared to children the same age and comparing achievement to other children in the same class scored a mean ranking greater than 2.5 (2.71 and 3.64 respectively).

For parents the most important purpose was to find out how parents could help their children with their learning. This was closely aligned with the notion of the teacher and parent working together to help the child.

For teachers, the most important purpose was how parents and teachers could work together to support student learning. This was closely aligned with helping parents to help their children with their learning.

Identifying the achievement of students with students of the same age scored lower than 2.5 for teachers. When this is compared with the parents' response to this there is not an alignment. Comparing their children's achievement to children the same age was important to parents. This was further validated through the qualitative analysis of the parent questionnaires and through the interviews. The need for parents to know how their children compare to children of the same age has direct implications for the reporting process. The extent to which each participant school reported this information is discussed later in this chapter.

The information gained from the questionnaire provided a frame by which to analyse each school's policies, and how written purposes matched articulated purposes identified in the questionnaire. Analysis of policies also allowed the researcher to determine the extent to which schools articulated, through policies, a partnership with students and parents. How the stated purposes are implemented through reporting practice is discussed later in this chapter.

Table 10 identifies policies that were analysed in relation to their stated purpose. The blank cells indicate that that school did not have that particular policy.

Table 10: Policies Analysed In This Study

DOCUMENT	SCHOOL A LOW DECILE	SCHOOL B MID DECILE	SCHOOL C HIGH DECILE
Curriculum policy	•	•	•
Assessment policy		•	•
Reporting to parents policy		•	

Policies on curriculum

The analysis of the curriculum delivery policies allowed the researcher to determine the extent to which schools articulated, through policy, a partnership with parents and students in the teaching and learning programmes. The actual practice of teaching and learning was not part of this study and so comment is restricted to the documentation and the stated intent of each school.

All curriculum delivery policies stated their purpose as being to foster student achievement (D.A.CP.4, D.B.CP.4, D.C.CP.4). All schools also identified two key purposes in curriculum delivery as being to foster respect and understanding in a multi-cultural setting and to recognise the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi, recognising and valuing the position of Maori in New Zealand society (D.A.CP.7, D.B.CP.2, D.C.CP.8). School A also identified a key purpose to encourage students to become independent life long learners (D.A.CP.6).

Within the guidelines of the curriculum policy School B stated that they 'recognised parents as participants in the educative process' (D.B.CP.11) and School C stated that 'the school recognises the value of parents as educators' (D.C.CP.8). School A stated in its conclusion that 'learning happens best when there is active partnership of children, teachers and community' (D.A.CP.26). These are important inclusions, which, in intent, recognise the need for an approach to learning which is inclusive of diversity and, in the case of School A, moves towards supporting self-regulated learning. This theme will be explored further in the discussion chapter of this study.

Policies on assessment

The analysis of assessment policies was limited to Schools B and C. School A did not have a separate assessment policy, rather, assessment was included within the curriculum policy.

School A identified, within their curriculum policy, that the school's assessment plan will ensure that Essential Learning Areas and the Essential Skills are adequately assessed. Ongoing assessment and evaluation, using a variety of methods, will be an integral part of all programmes and will provide data for school wide information (D.A.CP.17). The curriculum policy made no reference to providing information to learners or parents and caregivers. No reference was made to educative theories such as goal setting, feedback, feed forward, self or peer assessment.

School B identified five key purposes for assessment. They included obtaining useful, ongoing information to assist teachers to review progress, to enable teachers to plan and review progress, to provide a basis for reporting to parents/caregivers about the children's learning and development, to provide information for school review and to provide data, profiling student achievement and learning barriers (D. B. AP.3). School B did not state within its purposes anything related to educative theories such as the provision of feedback or feed forward to students or goal setting, as a key purpose of assessment. Within the school's guidelines, the school did refer to the student as being the focus of the assessment, and as far as practical, involving the student in their own evaluation.

School C identified four key purposes for assessment. They included improving teaching and learning programmes, giving recognition and feedback to learners, providing direction and vision for the school and community and informing parents of the progress and achievement of their children (D.C.AP. 2).

Key purposes for assessment for all schools centre on gathering and disseminating achievement information. None of the policies articulate a purpose geared towards two-way communication between parents and teacher, and certainly not to three-way communication between student, parent and teacher. When the state purpose within the assessment policies are analysed they fall short of articulating the key purposes identifies through the questionnaire responses of teachers and parents.

Policies on reporting to parents

School A's curriculum policy made no reference at all to reporting to parents within their curriculum policy.

As already indicated School B is the only school in the study, which has a specific policy on Reporting to Parents. The purpose of reporting to parents is stated as ensuring parents have access to their child's progress at school in each curriculum area, assisting with developing links between home and school and fulfilling statutory obligations (D.B.RP.2).

School C did not define the purpose of reporting but rather identified reporting as a purpose of assessment. The school's written statement relating to the purpose of reporting was to 'inform' parents of progress and achievement (D.C.AP. 2). This finding was supported by the responses of teachers, when they were asked to identify the key purpose of parent-teachers interviews[15]. Teachers interviewed indicated that they saw the main purpose of interviews as being to tell parents or inform parents about their child's achievement (Teachers: TI.C.5.36, TI.C.4.11, TI.C.2.23).

Policy statements did not encompass the concepts contained in current literature on educative theory, in particular ensuring reporting practices continue to build student self-efficacy and locus of control. Ideally reporting

[15] Parent- teacher interviews is a theme explored later in this chapter

reflects student's learning goals and that information is shared to support the student in achieving those goals.

Parents and teachers indicated that the most important purpose of reporting was to provide support to parents in helping their child achieve. It must surely follow that to be able to assist a child's learning, teacher, student and parent must understand the learning goal. It follows, that the teacher should be engaging the parents in dialogue about how best to support the learning at home. None of the documentation in any of the participant schools reflected this key purpose of reporting.

Policy statements: Links to educative theory, reporting and partnership

As already indicated, each school's policies were analysed in relation to whether the policies referenced any aspect of educative theory, reporting practice and effective partnerships. Table 11 demonstrates the relationship between each school's policies and the key themes from the literature review. It does not demonstrate the quality of each schools' reference to each aspect, but rather, that a statement exists within the policy which makes some reference to aspect of educative theory, reporting or partnership. Yes indicates inclusion of a statement referenced to the key aspect. A blank cell indicates that there is either no reference to the key aspect or that the policy does not exist in that school.

Table 11: The Relationship Between Participant School's Policies and The Themes Identified In The Literature

POLICY	LITERATURE	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Curriculum	Refers to aspects of educative theory	Yes		
	Reference to partnership		Yes	Yes
	Reference to reporting			Yes
Assessment	Refers to aspects of educative theory		Yes	Yes
	Reference to partnership			
	Reference to reporting		Yes	Yes
Reporting	Refers to aspects of educative theory			
	Reference to partnership		Yes	
	Reference to reporting		Yes	

School A has no reference in policy statements that relates to partnership or reporting. School B and C include some links to educative theory, partnership and reporting. However the links are not comprehensive.

None of the schools' policy documentation included key purposes, identified by parents and teachers in the questionnaire, which are directly linked to educative theories, educative reporting and effective partnerships within the literature review. That is:

- Providing ideas/support to parents so they can help in their child's learning
- Finding ways that parents, caregivers and teachers can work together to support their children's' learning
- Finding out if the child is working hard (effort) (See table 9).

When these purposes are linked with the concept of developing knowledge about and implementing effective educative theories, reporting practice and partnerships with parents, this would seem to be an important omission

within each school's written and spoken purposes. The inclusion of these additional purposes would also have implications for each school's procedures.

Articulating and Implementing Reporting Procedures

Parents were asked, through the questionnaire, whether they had been informed about how their school would report their child's achievement to them throughout the year. Table 12 indicates the percentage of parents who indicated that they had or had not been informed.

Table 12: Perception of Parents About Receiving Information On Reporting Procedures

	SCHOOL A LOW DECILE (N=113)	SCHOOL B MID DECILE (N=65)	SCHOOL C HIGH DECILE (N=64)	AVERAGE (N=242)
Informed	82%	85%	90%	**86%**
Not informed	18%	15%	10%	**14%**

Table 12 demonstrates that most parents perceived that they had been informed about how their school will report to them about their child's achievement.

Each school used a number of methods to inform their parents about how they would report student achievement. Through the questionnaire, parents were asked to indicate how they had been informed. This question was important because each school wanted to ascertain whether any methods were more frequently mentioned. Table 13 indicates the percentage of parents who indicated how they had been informed about reporting procedures used by each school. The percentages do not add to 100% as some parents indicated more than one method.

Table 13: Parents Perceptions About How They Receive Information About Reporting Processes

	SCHOOL A Low Decile N= 113	SCHOOL B Mid Decile N=65	SCHOOL C High Decile N=64	TOTAL AVERAGE N=242
Newsletters	36%	70%	63%	**56%**
By teacher	44%	30%	46%	**40%**
Parent evening	22%	36%	53%	**37%**
By Principal	14%	17%	8%	**13%**
Other ways	15%	13%	5%	**11%**

Analysis of the data presented in Table 13 indicates that no one method of communication reaches all parents and caregivers. The most frequently mentioned methods are the school newsletter and contact with the classroom teacher.

For School A, which is a low decile school, the most effective means of communication was the personal contact with the classroom teachers. Information through the school newsletter reached only 36% of those parents and caregivers who responded to this question. This is in contrast to Schools B and C where the majority of parents and caregivers identified the newsletter as the key source of information.

For School B, the school newsletter was the most frequently mentioned source of information. The number of parents mentioning personal contact with the teacher is lower than the other two schools.

More than half of the parents and caregivers in School C, the high decile school, identified parent meetings as a means of finding out about the school's procedures for reporting. This is in contrast to School B, the mid

decile school, where just over a third of parents and caregivers indicated parent meetings as a source of information and in stark contrast to School A, where less than a quarter of parents and caregivers indicated parent meetings as a source of information.

This data has implications for each of the participant schools in the way they communicate to parents. It may provide a basis for deciding the most effective means of communication.

Parent meetings

Given the variance in responses between the three schools in relation to parent meetings, parents were interviewed[16] as a follow up to the questionnaire.

All parents interviewed commented that they thought more parents attended to parent meetings which directly related to how they could help their children with their learning. This finding is aligned to the key purposes identified in the parent questionnaire.

All three schools had held a parent evening during the year in relation to mathematics. Parents commented in the following ways about those evenings. These quotes are indicative of parent comment.

> *They had a really neat maths night – they showed us things we could do at home – that was great.* (Parent: PI.A.1.12)

> *It would be good to have say parent evenings to learn about new way of doing things – like the maths.* (Parent: PI.B.64.21)

[16] Four parents from each school - A total of twelve interviews.

> *They had a nits and numeracy evening – that was great – they explained about the maths and gave us ideas to do at home – more things like that would be great.* (Parent: PI.C.47.16)

A number of parents interviewed indicated that they had gained some useful ideas about how to support their child at home and were now spending time not only supporting reading at home but now, also mathematics (Parents: PI.A.1.12, PI.A.47. 14, PI.B.64.21, PI.C.3.37, PI.C.59.17). The use of parent evenings as a way of providing ideas to parents about how to help their child at home may be worthy of further exploration.

Implementing the reporting process

Parents were asked to identify the ways in which the schools report their child's achievement to them. The following methods were identified:

- Student portfolios
- Written reports
- Parent/teacher interviews without the child present
- Parent/teacher interviews with the child present

School A and C used student portfolios as a method of reporting student achievement information.

Written reports and parent-teacher interviews are a method used by all three schools. There was variance amongst the schools in relation to the attendance of students at parent interviews. This theme is discussed later in this chapter.

As well as identifying methods of reporting, each school documented the timeline for reporting. All schools held a 'meet the teacher' evening at the beginning of the year, parent/teacher interviews towards the end of term two, and sent written reports home at the end of term four. School A and C also

sent portfolios home during the year. School A sent the portfolio home twice a year and School C once a year (D.A.APr.9, D.C.APr.8).

Parents and teachers were asked to identify how useful each method of communication was in relation to reporting student achievement. Table 14 indicates their responses. Participants were asked to rank each method from extremely useful to not useful at all using a Likert scale where 1 indicated extremely useful and 5 indicated not useful at all. The closer the mean ranking is to 1 the more useful the method. The closer to 5 the less useful the method of reporting.

Table 14: Usefulness Of Each School's Reporting Methods

Method	PARENTS				TEACHERS			
	School A N=113	School B N=65	School C N= 64	Average N=242	School A N=19	School B N=14	School C N=13	Average N=46
Written Reports	1.73	2.00	2.07	**1.93**	2.59	1.67	2.38	**2.21**
Student portfolios	1.81	N/A	2.25	**2.03**	3.24	N/A	2.92	**3.08**
Parent-teacher interviews without child	2.23	1.90	2.02	**2.05**	2.38	1.56	2.92	**2.28**
Parent teacher interviews with child	2.23	2.58	2.28	**2.36**	1.94	1.88	1.64	**1.82**

All methods of reporting were seen as useful by parents. However, there is variance in the respective rankings between teachers and parents, and there is also variance between schools.

Interviews with the child present ranked more highly with teachers than parents who rated it as the least useful of the reporting methods.

School A parents identified the written forms of reporting as more useful than interviews. This contrasts the teachers who ranked interviews as more useful than the written forms of reporting. School A parents ranked interviews with and interviews without the child as equally useful. Teachers ranked interviews with the child as more useful than interviews without the child.

School B parents ranked interviews without the child as more useful than the written form of reporting. School B teachers also ranked interviews without the child present as more useful than interviews with the child. This aligns with the parents' responses for School B.

School C parents ranked interviews without the child more useful than interviews with the child and the forms of reporting report. This contrasts teachers' responses. School C teachers ranked interviews with the child as most useful whereas parents ranked this method as least useful. The parent teacher interviews are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Of significance is the ranking of portfolios. School A and C use portfolios to report student achievement. Teachers in School A and C ranked portfolios as the least useful method of reporting with a mean ranking of 3.08. This contrasts parents of School A and C who ranked portfolios as a useful method of reporting with a mean ranking of 2.03.

Data from questionnaires, interviews and documents will now be explored in relation to each method of reporting. Emergent themes are identified in the next section of this chapter.

Parent teacher interviews

Several themes emerged through the parent, caregiver and teacher questionnaire in relation to parent-teacher interviews. These issues were explored further during interviews with parents, caregivers and teachers. The themes relate to attendance of children at interviews, role of students, role of

parents and teachers, timing and frequency of interviews. Twelve parents[17] were interviewed and all indicated that it was their preference for the child not to attend the interview.

> *For my son, he might be slow in progress but he remembers what is said. It would bite at his confidence. It is a mother's instinct not letting my child hear anything negative about him.* (Parent: PI.A.217.2)

> *You can be more candid when they are not there. You only get one chance all year to talk to the teacher.* (Parent: PI.B.64.10)

> *If your child is there, well, like if you know your child is not up there, you can't talk about her problems and her work.* (Parent: PI. C.47.4)

Teachers who were interviewed shared these views. Nine teachers[18] were interviewed and seven expressed concern about children attending parent-teacher interviews. While this result contrasts with the mean ranking of teachers in Table 14, interviewees provided insights into some of the barriers that may need to be overcome if children are to attend interviews.

The reasons given by both parents and teachers fell into three categories. The first being the need to protect the child from any negative comments or comments that may reflect that the child was having problems. For example, one teacher felt that she would have to temper the language she used if the child was there.

> *Thinking about the children in my class I would have to be careful about how I phrased what I said. Like if you had someone trying hard but not achieving the kid could misconstrue*

[17] Four parents from each school
[18] Three teachers from each school

the adult comments. It could put huge pressure on everyone. (Teacher: TI.B.5.37)

Parents and teachers were concerned for students who may not be faring well academically.

My concern is for children who attend parent / teacher interviews who are not doing well – will this affect their confidence. (Parent: PQ.C.25.9)

The second category was the need to provide the parent with an opportunity to share information that may be sensitive or that may not be appropriate for the child to hear.

I definitely would not want my son there. He has trouble socially. He is guarded but he picks up on points and asks 'What did you say?' (Parent: PI.B. 72.8)

Children don't attend. Mum and Dad sometimes don't want to share, like if they have to move house. They are protecting their children from that kind of stuff. (Teacher: TI.B.1.15)

What must also be explored is the place of traditional parent-teacher interviews. The data indicates that parents and teachers believe there needs to be opportunity for the adults to share information that may be sensitive. The introduction of practices such as three-way conferencing should not replace opportunities for parents and teachers to meet without the child. The purpose of parent-teacher interviews is different from that of three-way conferencing.

The third category related to age. This theme emerged only from School C. This school had decided to introduce three-way conferencing for year 4-8 students. Age was a factor identified by teachers interviewed. None of the parents interviewed identified age as a factor. The concern about age is

reflected in the school's procedures for interviews. The school newsletter indicates that children in years three through eight should attend the interviews (D.SN.3.6).

> *It's about age – I think there is an optimum age when children could attend interviews – we let our senior children attend.* (Teacher: TI.C.2.24)

The quote is indicative of responses from teachers in School C. As already stated, age was not a factor for parents. Parents indicated that they had reservations about the child attending at all. One parent articulated her concerns and recognised that her attitude was affected by her own experiences at school.

> *My husband and I had a really traumatic experience – you know stuff from our own childhood. It is hard as an adult; it takes you back to that whole school experience. We empathise with our children and being part of the school system.* (Parent: PI.C.47.6)

The challenge for School C in introducing three-way conferencing must be to find ways to ensure parents' previous experiences are acknowledged and overcome. Without this partnership, as described in chapter three, will continue to elude the teachers and parents.

As already indicated, School C had recently introduced three-way conferencing with senior students. Before introducing the process, teachers engaged in some discussion about three-way conferencing. The Principal provided some professional reading to the staff and then the procedure was introduced. After the first round of three-way conferencing the staff discussed what had gone well and what had been problematic.

The Principal of School C identified the lack of a consistent approach to three way conferences. Some teachers used the student portfolios as a focus for

discussion and others did not. Some teachers included discussion of student goals and others did not.

Staff also indicated that the role of the student was not a commonly understood concept. The school newsletter articulated the role for the students at the interview, that is, to have the opportunity to share their work and to share their goals with parents. However, this did not happen consistently (D.SN.3.6). Teachers were unclear about the role of the student. As a consequence of this, teachers felt that students were also generally unaware of their role in conferences.

> *And I guess when I think about the three way conferences we don't really tell the kids what they should do.* (Teacher: TI.C.2.13)

The role of students was also a theme that came through in the other two schools. All teachers interviewed expressed some confusion about the role of students. Responses to the question about what the role of the student was in interviews ranged from 'being there to listen to the adults' (Teacher: TI.A. 2.18) through to showing parents their work (Teacher: TI.C.1.18). Although all schools have some children who attend parent-teacher interviews none of the schools had purposely discussed the role of the student with students, parents or other teachers. This is a critical omission by schools. For partnership to be meaningful, all parties must understand their role in the reporting process. That means teacher, student and parent.

Responses from six parents out of the twelve interviewed indicated that teachers dominated the interviews.

> *Sharing information just doesn't happen really – you just get told what your child can and can't do.* (Parent: PI.B .64.16)

> *The teacher did all the talking really at the interview. At the interview I did ask about homework.* (Parent: PI. A.2.7)

This was also indicated in a number of responses on the parent questionnaire.

> *Last year the teacher just talked and talked at parent interviews. The comment that stuck in my head was 'she's no trouble at all'. I am more interested in how she learns than how she behaves.* (Parent: PQ.A.209.7)

Some teachers start by telling the parent what the student has achieved, others start by asking what the parents might want to know.

> *I always ask, " How do you think your child is going?" First, I discuss where they are going. Like in numeracy I talk about the knowledge and strategies the child is using (it's a chance to tell the parents about the project as well). I talk about what the child needs to work on next – like fractions. Then I ask if they have any questions.* (Teacher: TI.C.1.16)

> *They had stuff ready to show you. They didn't really refer to any level of achievement. It was more this is what she can do. She did give a sheet of ideas we could do at home - maths ideas. They are doing some maths differently – the teachers are learning about it too.* (Parent: PI.C.47.6)

The structure of interviews identified in the quotes is indicative of interview structures. They do not indicate any active student involvement in the interview; rather they indicate that some students simply attend the conference. The domination of adult conversation is apparent and in particular the dominance of 'teacher' talk is evident.

The hesitation of some parents and teachers towards having students attend conferences is a barrier to moving towards inclusion of students in the reporting process. Little student or parent education about the purpose of

three-way conferences has occurred in any of the schools (Senior leaders: TI.A.1.21, TI.B.2.18, TI.C.1.14).

As already indicated, teachers in School C have begun to discuss three way conferences but there still remain areas, such as structure of interviews and role of participants which are unclear. The role of teacher, parent, caregiver and student has not been articulated verbally or in written form. The benefits to student learning and role of each participant in three-way conferencing are not clearly understood by all participants in the process. Links are not made to educative theories in learning.

Factors such as self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, goal setting and self and peer assessment and their potential links to three-way conferencing will be explored in Chapter Seven.

A final theme that emerged related to timing, frequency and length of parent-teacher interviews. In all schools, parents indicated the desire for more personal contact. Some parents and caregivers thought that having at least two interviews per year would provide an opportunity for more interaction (currently each school has just one in the middle of the year).

Some parents also indicated that interviews were not long enough. Teachers in all schools indicated that interviews were fifteen minutes long. Given some of the schools' commitment to include students within the conference process, this may be an issue that needs to be addressed. As already indicated it may be appropriate to have both parent/teacher interviews and a separate opportunity for three-way conferences, as they serve different purposes. Some parents did concede that teachers 'have many interviews to get through' (Parents: PQ.B.114.5, PI.C.47.5). The inclusion of students and the desire by parents for more contact creates a tension between what is manageable and what is desirable.

A small number of parents indicated that they would like to meet with the teacher at the beginning of the year to discuss what their children needed to

work on and how they could help at home (Parents: PI.A.217.5, PQ.C.10.7, PI.C.47.8).

> *We could all set goals together, which included goals for the teacher, my child and myself. These could be written down and referred to throughout the year.* (Parent: PQ.C.10.7)

This has implications for timing of interviews and goes to the heart of the key purpose for reporting. Each school's current way of working is aligned to their current stated purpose within each school's policy. That is, to inform parents. However, if the schools embrace the additional purposes (providing support to parents so they can support their child's learning, ensuring the teacher and parent work together to support the child's learning) identified by parents and teachers, then there may well be good sense in having an opportunity for parents, student and teachers meeting at the beginning of the school year to identify specific goals and how each partner will support the achievement of those goals.

Portfolios

School A and School C use portfolios as part of their reporting procedures. School B had just begun the development of a work sample book. Teachers had begun to collect samples of work such as handwriting samples and basic facts assessment.

In School A assessment tasks are focussed on showing process. The learning process is highlighted, as demonstrated in an assessment task related to research (D.SPS. A.1). The assessment task asks students to identify key questions, sources of information and how they plan to present information. The final piece of work, along with the planning sheet, is then displayed in the portfolio. Students are expected to self assess their work. Essentially it is a process portfolio and product portfolio. That is, both learning process and product are displayed.

The assessment tasks analysed for School A included no criteria for assessment. It did include a task description. With no criteria or reference to any standards, parents indicated that they found interpreting the work difficult.

> *The parents are invited to write comments but I didn't know if the work was good or not. I just had to guess really.* (Parent: PI.A.1.14)

> *Portfolios don't really tell us about whether my child is achieving what they should be at that age.* (Parents: PQ.A.172.9, PQ.A.220.9, PQ.A.169.9. PQ.A.157.8)

With no specific criteria identified, the question must be asked as to how teachers, students and parents are able to engage in dialogue about the quality of the learning demonstrated in the portfolio.

An analysis of documentation for School C indicated that the school's purposes for using portfolios are:

- Show progress and achievement over time
- Show the current working level
- Show balance and coverage of achievement objectives
- Provide data for reporting to parents
- Provide data for school wide review to ensure all needs are met
- Involve students in their own assessment/learning
- Inform programme planning and evaluation
  (D.APr.3.2).

In School A and C the portfolio consists of a number of assessment tasks that cover all curriculum areas. There are more assessments required for English and mathematics than the other curriculum areas, reflecting each school's priorities in these curriculum areas.

In School C up to two pieces of work may be student selected 'and/or' teacher selected annotated samples of work. Teachers must state why the pieces of work have been chosen.

In School C assessment tasks were developed at the planning stage of units of work. Criteria were set for the assessment of student work. Teachers were expected to comment on the student's work using the criteria. Teachers were also expected to include the following information:

- Achievement objective/s
- Level (curriculum level)
- Task description
- Expectations/criteria on which the assessments have been made
- A statement about how well the student achieved.

The documented procedures also indicated that teachers 'may' include self-assessment, peer assessment and future goals. The documented procedures also indicated that annotations should be summative and need to reflect the child's achievement and effort (D.APr.C.11). The use of identifying future goals and annotating in a summative way are contradictory in purpose.

Essentially the portfolio is a product portfolio. Work included is summative in nature and reflects student achievement at a given point in time against set criteria. However, some parents indicated that they did not know the reference point for the criteria.

> *The portfolio doesn't give an idea of whether my child is where she should be for her age.* (Parent: PQ.C.59.9)

> *If we, as parents, knew what the expectations were academically – that would help.* (Parent: PQ.C.53.9)

The portfolios do not highlight progress over the year. These quotes are indicative of comments received through the questionnaires and interviews.

> *I would rather look at her books – portfolios don't show progress – it is always their best work but doesn't show me her progress.* (Parent: PI.C.47.7)

> *Some teachers treat portfolios as showcase and this does not always truly reflect the everyday practice of the child.* (Teacher: TQ.C.10. 8)

By using portfolios, School A and C have introduced a new method of reporting student achievement. The schools have attempted to introduce authentic student work as part of the communication process in a systematised way.

The difficulty with this approach, as with School C, is that the communication of the learning process may well be overlooked to accommodate the perceived need for consistency in appearance of portfolios.

> *Well we have different things we have to put in the portfolio so they all look the same but it stops you being able to really show what the child is working on. Like we had to do a writing sample on narrative writing because it was on the timeline for the portfolios but we weren't doing narratives so that was a waste of time.* (Teacher: TI.C.5.40)

The difficulty for School A was that the portfolio did show learning process and product, but parents did not know how, what they were seeing related to any kind of reference point.

Goal setting

Current educative theory identifies the setting of meaningful, challenging goals as central to student achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Hattie, 1999; Schunk, 2001).

In School A teachers interviewed indicated that they did set goals with the students. However, these goals were not shared with parents either through the portfolios or through parent-teacher interviews (Teacher: TI.A.2.21, TI.A.1.1.28). It simply had not occurred to them to do so. For example one teacher's response to the question ' Have you shared the student's goals with their parents?' was

> *No but I could put it in my newsletter. I like the idea of letting parents know about what we are doing. That is a great idea.* (Teacher: TI.A.1.30)

If, as Hattie (1999) argues, achievement is enhanced to the degree that students and teachers set and communicate appropriate, specific and challenging goals and there is a clear link between parents support and student achievement, it follows that if parents are aware of the learning goals of their children they will be in an even stronger position to provide support.

School B indicated that they simply do not set goals at all. The Principal indicated that children do not know what they are learning and why. She used as an example children who are sent to her to show her 'good' work. When she asked the children what made their piece of work good, children invariably could not describe any features of the work (Principal: TI.B.1.3). This was reinforced by teachers who indicated that they did not really set goals as it would be hard to keep track and they could not really see the point (Teachers: TI.B.2.14, TI.B.3.14, TI.B.4.14). This has enormous issues for the school's ability to develop educative practices that increase students' self-efficacy, locus of control and ultimately student motivation.

School C includes a goal setting sheet within the context of the portfolio. That is, goals are recorded in the portfolio. As one teacher indicated the goal tended to be one set for the whole class (Teacher: TI.C.4.15). Goals focus on the essential skills such as work habits. The school also has goals for the entire school based on values such as honesty and caring. These school goals are published in the school newsletter.

There is no consistency about the way in which goals are incorporated into the reporting process. Responses from teachers demonstrated this range of inclusion.

> *In passing at parent interviews I might mention the goals but no not really.* (Teacher: TI.C.5.42)

> *We did set goals and they came from the interview. They were mainly about social things like work habits. (Teacher: TI. C.54.14)*

> *We have a review sheet at the end of each term and that goes home to the parents. (Teacher: TI.C.1.20)*

Parent knowledge about what particular learning goal their children were focussing on at school was explored through parent interviews. Without exception, all parents indicated that they did not know their children's learning goals.

> *I have no knowledge about what her goals are. Though I guess it would be good to know. You could back it up at home.* (Parent: PI.A.1.10)

The schools need to consider, if portfolios are to continue as a method of reporting, what changes may need to occur to include educative theories such as: locus of control, self assessment, peer assessment, goal setting, identifying specific criteria and how students are achieving against those

criteria and identifying next steps in learning. How this information could be shared with parents and caregivers to support student learning needs to be explored.

Reports

A content analysis of each school's report form was carried out as part of this study. Features of the reports were analysed against the themes identified in the literature review in chapter three and the themes that emerged from the parent and teacher questionnaires.

A number of themes have been identified through the analysis of data from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. They are:

- Standards
- Grading
- Achievement, progress and effort
- Technology
- Frequency and timing of reporting

Table 15 identifies the features of each school's reports. Yes indicates that the aspect is included on the report form and no indicates no inclusion. There are also limited descriptions where appropriate. For example, frequency of reports is described as once per year.

Table 15: Features of Reports

THEME		SCHOOL A		SCHOOL B		SCHOOL C	
		Junior School	Senior School	Junior School	Senior School	Junior School	Senior School
Achievement	**Standard**	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Grading	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Point of reference	No	Compared to Children of the same age - nationally			No	No
Progress		No	No	No	No	No	No
Effort		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fully narrative		Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Inclusion of some narrative			Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Use of technology		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Teacher choice to use technology	
Frequency of reporting		Once a year					
Timing		End of year					

Each of these themes is now explored in more detail in relation to each school's reporting practice.

Standards

A significant number of parents wanted to know whether their child was achieving against national expectations. This was a theme that emerged through content analysis of the parent questionnaires, as well as through interviews. Parents described this in a number of ways. They described wanting to know whether their child was achieving at the right age and

stage, that the schools were using objective national measures, and that the schools were using national standards.

In School A only senior school children's results were reported against a standard and the point of reference was explained on the back of the report for literacy and numeracy. School B stated and explained the standard being applied within the report. School C used a grading system based on standards but did not explain either the standard or the point of reference (school indicators of achievement) to parents on the report. Parents indicated that they were not aware of what standards were being applied.

> *They gave me a sheet that said my son was at stage 4 and he is a year 4 – is that okay? I don't know if that is okay – I don't think it is.* (Parent: PI.C.23.7)

> *We don't get enough information on national standards.* (Parent: PQ.C.29.7)

Schools A and C used wholly narrative reporting for children in the junior school and no reference point or standard was provided. Parents were told what their child could do. Some reports identified features such as a specific reading level, but as already indicated no reference point was provided. Parents were left to decide whether this was an appropriate level of reading or not.

> *The report is a bit vague – I am not sure of the value of grades.* (Parent: PQ.A.63.9)

This gap in information to parents was recognised by senior managers in School A and C.

> *I do think we need to tell the parents more. In the juniors we don't really tell parents whether their child is meeting the*

expectations or standards. We need a cleaner above / within below (Teacher: TI.C.3.17).

Grading

In all schools, an attempt to provide information based on standards has included the use of a grading system. Grading was incorporated in senior school reports only at School A. That is, grading was used on the reports of students in years three to six. In school B grading was included for all students Years one through six. In School C grading was included on reports for years five through eight students.

In School A the grading system was based on a letter grade. A indicated above average, B average and C below average. The explanation on the back of the report indicated that this grade in numeracy and literacy was based on where children should be compared to children of the same age nationally. Although this was stated on the report some confusion still existed for teachers and parents. The school also used the same grading system to grade effort. No explanation of what criteria were used to decide the grade was given on the report.

They have A for above average, B for average and C for below average. I wonder what they base that on? It seems totally emotive. What do they base it on? My daughter was above average last year, and then this year the teacher says she is below average. How can she slip back so much in a year? (Parent; PI.A.1.2)

In School B the grading system was based on a description 'met', 'above', 'causing concern' and 'not yet met' based on the 'expected achievement'. The report described expected achievement as the child achieving at a level appropriate for their age. The school defined the ideal report as being one that indicated met or above for both achievement and effort. Some parents,

caregivers and teachers identified the comment on the reports 'causing concern, as negative and unhelpful.

> *That the child's achievement be supported is paramount. However small that achievement is, and that problem areas are addressed in a way with suggestions and ideas for helping – not with comments such as causing concern.* (Parent: PQ.B.87. 7)

This parents' comment raises issues related to educative theories such as developing student self-efficacy, locus of control and motivation. It also raises these issues in relation to parental self-efficacy, locus of control and motivation. One parent noted:

> *The report is pathetic. I don't want to know my child hasn't met whatever. I want to know about my child and how I can help. It is hard to extract really useful information. Reporting my child's progress is lost.* (Parent: PQ. B. 70.5)

Parents in School B did respond positively to the continuum used on the junior reports. Student's reading levels were plotted on a continuum, which identified where most children should be reading and where their own child was reading. Two reasons were given for the positive response. The first was that the continuum identified a national standard and the second was that the graphic display was really clear in identifying where the child was achieving within the standard.

In School C the grading system was based on a letter grade, which denoted whether the student is working below, within or above expectations. However, parents did not know what the expectations were and whether they were based on national or local expectations. While the school has developed a set of indicators or criteria for grading student achievement, the criteria and what the criteria were referenced to had not been made clear to parents.

The grading system used at School C reversed the order of letters used. In an attempt to move away from the traditional A for excellent, B for average and C for below average system, the Principal introduced a system whereby A means working below expectation, B working within and C working above. The Principal was aware of the criticism levelled at this new system. The Principal indicated that although being aware that parents and some teachers hated it 'I wanted to break the stereotyping of A for excellent' (Principal: TI.C.2.18). The Principal was unable to link her decision to any research or current literature on grading. While this was acknowledged by some teachers and parents, they still wanted a return to what was 'known' by parents. Their reasoning was to try and avoid any confusion.

School C also used a grading system for defining effort. The grades used were VG for very good effort, G for good effort and P for Poor effort. It was interesting to note that none of the reports analysed allocated any P grades for effort. Students were graded as G or VG for effort.

For all schools, progress comments were not a significant feature of any of the reports. Some teachers included a comment about progress within the narrative part of the report. However, this was not a consistent approach used by all teachers. When considering the literature that refers to the need to include ipsative assessment and reporting, this represents an omission within each school's procedures.

Technology for report writing

All three schools had technology available for teachers to write their reports. Schools A and B expected all teachers to use the school's computerised system for writing reports. School C made the use of computers optional. The reason given was the variance of teacher confidence to use the technology.

Several themes emerged about the use of technology. They were presentation, use of predetermined lists (drop down menus) and perceived loss of a personal touch, and technical issues.

All parents interviewed indicated that the reports that had been computer generated looked professional. One parent described the professional appearance of the reports as 'a big step up' (Parent: PI.B.64.1).

In an attempt to make computerised reporting time efficient for teachers and to ensure consistency of comments all three schools had developed drop down menus. However, they worked in two different ways. In School A the drop down menu was a list of learning outcomes that teachers could select to record in the appropriate curriculum area. They were not directly linked to the grading.

In Schools B and C the drop down menu related directly to the grade given. For example, in School B if a child received the grade 'met' for reading the associated comment would be the identified standard expressed in terms of what the student could do. Some parents commented about this through the questionnaire and interviews

> *Now that reports are computer generated there is no personal touch. It looked like the teacher had options to pick from and then chose and printed out the comment. I have two children and the comments were just the same.* (Parent: PQ. C.102.9)

The tension between trying to provide a consistent quality of comments linked to the standard and providing a personal comment for each student is clearly articulated in the quote above.

For School B a technical issue meant that not all reports were set up to provide an effort grade. The school's decision was to send the reports out with just the achievement grade. Again, this created anxiety for parents;

especially for those parents whose children were 'causing concern'. Teachers interviewed affirmed this view.

> *With effort we had a technical hitch in that we couldn't include an effort column so we just had to leave it out. They (children) have worked their hearts out and we don't have criteria or a box for that.* (Teacher: TI. B.3.11)

To provide a grade solely on achievement and to not comment on effort did not provide parents with a full view of their child. Once again, when considering educative theory related to motivation, the question must be asked 'What impact does receiving a report that labels a child as not achieving a standard, and that provides no information about effort or progress, have on a child's (and the parent's) motivation to learn? An achievement grade, effort grade and identification of progress would support the notion of developing motivation to improve.

Frequency and timing of reporting

A theme that came through from the questionnaires and the interviews with parents was the timing of reports and frequency of them. This is linked to the same theme within parent-teacher interviews.

> *If I only relied on the written report I would have no way of working with the teacher. The end of the year is just too late.* (Parent: PQ.B.93.9)

The key theme relates to regular contact or communication of information. Parents and caregivers at all three schools have one formal opportunity each year to meet with the teacher and the written report is sent home at the end of the year and is seen as a summative report. While two schools supplement this with portfolios, some parents and caregivers want more information.

As already indicated this has created a tension in the schools between providing information and keeping the process manageable. Chapter Seven will explore this theme further and offer some possible solutions.

Matching The Intended Message With The Message Received By Parents

Parents were asked to indicate their own level of understanding in relation to aspects of their child's learning. Participants were asked to rank each aspect in relation to their level of understanding using a Likert scale, where 1 indicated excellent understanding and 5 indicated no understanding. The closer to 1 the higher the level of understanding and the closer to 5 the lower the level of understanding. Table 16 depicts the mean ranking for aspect.

Table 16: Parents Perceived Level Of Understanding About Their Child's Learning

UNDERSTANDING ABOUT	*MEAN (1-5)*			
	School A Low Decile	*School B* Mid Decile	*School C* High Decile	*COMBINED AVERAGE*
How I could help my child at home	2.39	2.55	2.60	**2.51**
What the teacher did to help my child achieve	2.45	2.52	2.60	**2.52**
How the teacher and I could work together to help child's achievement	2.51	2.61	2.62	**2.58**
How well child was achieving compared to children of same age	2.55	2.52	3.00	**2.69**

The combined mean rankings for all aspects indicate only average understanding.

School A parents had the highest perceived level of understanding out of the three schools relating to how they could help their child, what the teacher had done to help their child and how they could work together with the teacher to help their child. School B parents' highest perceived level of understanding related to what the teacher had done to help their child. School C parents had the lowest perceived level of understanding out of the three schools in all aspects, in particular about how their children were achieving compared to children of the same age. While it could be argued that most parents have some understanding, given that these aspects have been identified as important by parents and teachers, these mean rankings indicate that there is work to be done in raising the level of understanding of parents in all areas of reporting. This theme will be further explored in the next section on how reporting practices promote the concept of partnership.

Promoting The Concept Of Education As A Partnership

One of the key conditions of partnership, as expressed in Chapter Three of this study, is the need for partners to have shared expectations of achievement for students. Each partner can contribute more to the partnership if there is shared understanding about the expectations.

As part of this study the parents and teachers were asked to express their expectations of educational outcomes for the children in their communities. This question was an open question where parents recorded their own responses. A content analysis was carried out to identify key categories. Table 17 indicates the key categories and the frequency of responses within those categories (expressed as a percentage of responses).

Table 17: Parents and Teachers Expectations Of Educational Outcomes

EXPECTATION OF EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES	School A Parents =113 Teachers = 19		School B Parents = 65 Teachers = 14		School C Parents = 64 Teachers = 13		Total Frequencies Parents = 242 Teachers = 46	
	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T
Literacy and Numeracy	51%	58%	51%	50%	59%	62%	53%	56%
Life Skills	43%	31%	43%	43%	61%	61%	48%	43%
Personal Attributes and Values	33%	26%	40%	14%	48%	46%	39%	28%
Overall academic achievement	27%	16%	32%	21%	23%	15%	28%	17%
Independent Learners	18%	37%	18%	36%	48%	61%	26%	43%
Preparation for next level of education	13%	10%	28%	0%	25%	15%	20%	9%
Sports achievement	6%	0%	5%	3%	4%	7%	5%	6%
Creative achievement	5%	0%	0%	0%	8%	15%	4%	1%

P = Parents T = Teachers

Parents and caregivers identified literacy and numeracy most frequently, followed by the development of life skills. Teachers also identified literacy and numeracy and the development of life skills. There was alignment between parents, caregivers and teachers responses. It can be argued that at school level there are shared expectations of achievement between parents, caregivers and teachers. However, for all three schools this study was the first time this information had been articulated to parents, and teachers.

At another level, to develop effective partnership must involve individual parents and teachers having an open relationship where all parties understand expectations or goals and responsibilities. None of the schools provided an opportunity for parents and caregivers to meet at the beginning

of the school year with child and teacher to identify specific learning goals for individual children.

As part of the interview process, parents and teachers were questioned about their experience in developing effective partnerships with each other. All parents and caregivers interviewed could provide an example of a poor relationship in action, from their own experiences and a positive relationship in action. All parents interviewed said that they felt confident to approach the teacher if that teacher was welcoming and followed through on agreed actions. This, in turn, gave some parents further confidence to become more proactive in the relationship (Parents: PI.A.217.23, PI.A.1.24, PI.B. 47.19, PI.C.64.18). A challenge for all of the schools is to ensure all teachers are welcoming and that teachers follow through on agreed actions.

Individual teachers in each of the schools promoted communication through the use of regular newsletters, reading logs and homework assignments (Teachers: TI.A.1.23, TI.B.2.14, TI.C.1.20, TI.C.2.22). This was not an expectation in the schools but individual teachers had decided that this would be a good way to develop two way communication. Once again, the challenge to all of the schools is to promote activity which facilitates effective communication and partnership.

Parents and teachers were able to share experiences of very open and positive relationships. Features of such relationships included:

- The teacher being welcoming of enquiry
- The teacher being open and non defensive
- Parents and teachers being non aggressive and non blaming
- Regular communication through newsletters, reading logs, including ideas about what parents can do at home to support learning
- Parents becoming proactive in the relationship

A parent from School A provided a clear example of a partnership in action.

> *Last year with his new teacher - we met at the beginning of the year – she had already tested my son and knew what he could and couldn't do. She told me what I could do. From there she sent home charts about how to help him – what to expect. She invited me to give her a call if I needed to and I did. We were in regular contact – then when I went to the interview she told me he had caught up to where he should be.* (Parent: Pl.A.217.9)

Parents and teachers were also asked to identify barriers to developing effective relationships with each other. The following barriers were identified:

- Teachers, parents not following through on agreed actions
- Aggressive and blaming behaviour by teachers or parents
- Parents and teachers not sharing information with each other
- Parents perceiving that teachers are too busy

A parent from School B provided a clear example of an ineffective partnership in action.

> *Term one was a write off. I don't want the teacher to think, "The mother is in my ear". The first year was hopeless the teacher was so defensive – we had no discussions about my child's progress.* (Parent: B.64.19)

If parents and teachers are to have an effective partnership, it follows that the conditions for partnership are made known to both teachers and parents. The extent to which parents were able to engage in partnership activities directly related to the welcoming nature of the teacher and the commitment of the teacher to engage in a positive relationship with parents. Given that all parents interviewed had been able to provide data that indicated not all contact with all teachers had been positive in nature, the challenge for school leaders must be in providing professional development that supports teachers developing strategies for increasing the level of engagement of parents.

Summary

The overriding theme, which permeates all of the sub themes, is the link between educative theories, the relationship of those theories to the reporting process and how effective links can be made to develop effective partnerships between teachers, parents and students is significant. Related key sub themes that will be explored in chapter seven are:

- The need for a clear understanding by all partners about the purpose of reporting.
- How educative theories relating to self and peer assessment, goal setting, feedback and feed forward may provide a basis for providing information to parents.
- Defining the role of students in the reporting process.
- The need to ensure standards or criteria for reporting are explicitly stated and understood by for all partners.
- The need to share information.
- Presenting information in a way that parents find helpful.
- Providing a climate where parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's' learning and;
- Ensuring the timing and frequency of personal contact between parents and teachers supports student learning.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAKING CONNECTIONS AND MOVING FORWARD

> *School-home partnerships are critically dependent upon the agency of educators, their ability to avoid deficit or stereotypical characterisations of parents and caregivers, and their ability to initiate links, respond to, and recognise strengths within the diverse families of their students. Partnerships that align school and home practices and enable parents to actively support their child's in-school learning have shown strongest impacts on student outcomes.* (Alton-Lee, 2003: 44)

Introduction

This chapter draws together the research findings and current literature to highlight what can be learned from the experience of the three participant schools. How might each school consider a way forward that enables them to make the important links between educative theories, educative reporting and the development of effective partnership?

The chapter explores the key themes identified at the conclusion of chapter six. It starts by re-examining the key purposes of the reporting process and discusses how schools might rethink their stated purposes to align them with the concept of partnership. The chapter then discusses educative partnerships and how current educative theories might inform reporting processes. The place of systems such as portfolios, parent-teacher interviews and written reporting are discussed.

A model for rethinking reporting is suggested as a way forward for schools that may want to commit themselves to developing true partnerships.

Finally, the chapter concludes by suggesting areas of future research into the links between educative theory, reporting and effective partnerships.

The chapter is organised into the following themes:

1. Purposes for reporting student achievement
2. Educative partnerships
3. Incorporating educative theories into reporting procedures
4. Model for reviewing a school's current reporting processes
5. Future research

Purposes of Reporting Student Achievement

Each of the participant schools described their key purpose for reporting as being 'to inform' parents and caregivers. The focus of the information provided to parents essentially focussed on achievement, effort and to a lesser extent, progress. In order for each of the participant schools to be able to review the effectiveness of their reporting processes, purposes must be clear. Parents and teachers, through the questionnaire, identified the key purposes of reporting. The parents and teachers were in agreement about the key purposes of the reporting processes. Key purposes with mean rankings higher than 2.5 were in order of importance:

- Finding out how to help the child with their learning
- Finding out how teacher and parents or caregiver could work together to support the child's learning
- To be informed about whether the child is making good progress
- To be informed about whether the child is working hard
- To be informed about whether the child's achievement is commensurate with children of a similar age

These purposes go straight to the heart of partnership. Each school's espoused purposes omitted the first two purposes listed above. Given that these two purposes are the most important (as identified by parents and teachers) and they have the potential to strengthen the partnership between parents and teachers, schools must consider ways that they can achieve these purposes within their policy statements (intent) and their procedures (actions). Linked to partnership are the educative theory concepts of developing student self-efficacy, locus of control and motivation. These concepts are aligned with actions such as goal setting, setting challenging tasks, feedback and feed forward. Developing reporting processes should incorporate these concepts and may start with the questions:

- How does what we report and how we report contribute to a student's knowledge about their own learning?
- How does what we report and how we report contribute to parents' and caregivers' knowledge about how to support their child's learning?
- How does what we report and how we report contribute to a teacher's knowledge about how to support the child's learning?

These key questions provide a context for examining potential practices that result in raised student achievement within the framework of effective partnerships.

Education As A Partnership

The first section of Chapter Three in this study refers to the conditions for educative partnership. The first condition relates to accurate reporting (Timperley et al., 1999; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). It is this researcher's contention that if the second, third and fourth conditions are met, that is, shared understanding, shared responsibility and review of progress, then accurate reporting will be the consequence.

Shared understanding of standards

The second condition identified in this study relates to partners having a shared understanding of what is desirable so that partners can detect gaps between current reality and the child's achievement. This condition implies identification of a set of standards against which the child's performance is measured (Timperley et al., 1999,2002).

This condition could be met at a number of levels in the participant schools. At a school level it is important to find out the expectations of the community in relation to the education of the children of that community. The participant schools did this and found that their communities wanted their children to be literate, numerate, to develop life skills and to develop personal attributes and values. Teachers also identified the desire for students to be life long learners. However, to carry out a community survey, record the results and claim consultation has taken place, is to negate the power of the information gained and to limit the usefulness of that information. Publishing the results of such community surveys is important, as is meeting with community members to discuss any areas of difference. Each of the schools published the results of the community questionnaire and one school has planned a public meeting to further explore the findings of the survey further.

In the participant schools, parents and caregivers described literacy and numeracy in a number of ways. They wanted their children to be able to read and write, spell and do basic mathematics. Many parents wanted literacy and numeracy levels for their children to be commensurate with national benchmarks or norms. Two of the participant schools had developed indicators of achievement in literacy and numeracy, that detailed the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes they expected most children to be able to achieve at each year level. Each school had referenced their indicators to national curriculum documents and, in the case of one school, resources such as the National Curriculum Exemplars in English and the numeracy

framework[19]. These indicators were used as a basis for reporting student achievement both in portfolios and on the end of year written report. However, neither of the schools had shared any of this information with parents, caregivers and students. As indicated in Chapter Six, parents were often confused about whether the standards, if stated in portfolios or on reports, were based on local school goals or national standards.

The development of such indicators could provide valuable information for teachers, parents, caregivers and students in mapping out a continuum of learning and providing an agreed set of benchmarks by which to determine what support children need in their learning. One of the participant schools has now decided that the indicators in writing, reading and mathematics will be shared with parents at the 'meet the teacher' evening held at the beginning of the year and a copy of the indicators given to parents as a reference. This action denotes the beginning of a sharing of expertise between teachers and families.

The other group that these indicators must be shared with are the students. Teachers could use the indicators to develop shared criteria or learning intentions with students in the classroom. The purpose of this would be to support students in developing a sense of self-efficacy and control over their own learning. Carr and Harris (2001) describe this process as 'mutual sharing' and argue that implementing standards and linking them to the reporting processes plays a key role in building a learning community.

New assessment tools such as National Curriculum Exemplars could provide a framework for both developing indicators and for assessing students' work against those indicators. The use of exemplars could focus teacher attention on key aspects of student learning through observation and action. This formative aspect is extended by the involvement of students, parents and teachers in discussing learning (Poskitt et al., 2002).

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[19] Numeracy framework – describes strategy and knowledge development in number. Programme currently being implemented in primary schools in New Zealand.

Although there may be agreement about what indicators or standards are appropriate, it is the individual child's progress against those indicators or standards and how they can support their child's learning, that interest parents, as evidenced in the parent questionnaire responses for each school. Carr and Harris (2001) argue that student and parental participation increases when they see how the process affects children.

None of the participant schools deliberately incorporated any comments on progress within their reports or portfolios. Some teachers did make reference to progress but this was not an expectation of the reporting process. To disregard the importance of reporting progress is to negate the concept of developing self-efficacy and locus of control which directly impact student motivation. As students are made aware of their progress towards their learning goals, self-efficacy levels are changed. Progress indicators convey to students that they are capable of performing well, which enhances self-efficacy for continued learning (Schunk, 2001: 127). It follows therefore that progress should be a feature of any reporting process. Clarke, Hattie and Timperley (2003) support this view and argue that ipsative assessment must be incorporated within the reporting process.

Shared responsibility

The third condition for educative partnership described in Chapter Three refers to the concept of shared responsibility. Each partner has an understanding of their role in supporting the student to achieve their next step in learning (Timperley et al., 1999, 2002).

None of the participant schools had clearly articulated the role of each participant in the reporting process. This was particularly evident when children were included in parent-teacher interviews. Some parents felt uncomfortable with the presence of their child. Teachers indicated that the child's involvement could cause difficulties related to what information teachers would share with parents, what information parents would share

with teachers and the effect of any negative comments on the child's self esteem. These factors are important and must be considered as part of the process of developing a shared responsibility in the educative partnership.

While it could be argued that parents and teachers are closely aligned in their expectations there is a point of difference. That is, the teacher's identification of developing life long learners as a key goal. Hattie (1999) argues that achievement is enhanced to the degree to which students and teachers set and communicate appropriate, specific and challenging goals. Black and Wiliam (1998) and the Assessment Reform Group (1999) go further and state that the setting of challenging and meaningful goals has a direct impact on motivation and the self-esteem of students. These are important aspects in developing students who are independent learners. While teachers had identified this expectation, little deliberate focus had been placed on this within the reporting process. Students were not actively involved in the reporting process at all. Although one school had begun three-way conferencing, practice described by parents, caregivers and teachers did not indicate any involvement of students at any meaningful level.

If schools are to embrace parents as partners in the education of their children, then it follows that parents, teachers and students should play a role in determining meaningful goals and supporting the achievement of that goal.

Reviewing progress towards achieving desired goals

The fourth and final condition for an educative partnership lies in reviewing the student's progress towards desired standards and to hold each other accountable for agreed actions and contributions to that progress (Timperley et al., 1999, 2002).

While each participant school provided information to parents about achievement, none of the schools had been clear about how what they reported supported involvement of parents and students in the process. To

be able to hold partners accountable each partner must be clear about their role in the partnership. This was not the case for any of the participant schools. The development of practices that promote partnership must include understanding of the respective role of participants and the development of procedures that support the ability of each partner to fulfil their role.

Incorporating Educative Theories Into Reporting Procedures

This study did not include research into the changes that each school has made to their reporting processes as a result of the feedback from this study. However, discussion about the potential changes may provide some insights into how each school has interpreted the findings and where future directions may lie in improving partnerships with parents. The following section provides comment about the possible implications for other schools outside this study.

Goal setting

As already indicated if partnership is to be based on mutual understanding of what is desirable, it would follow that to incorporate goal setting with students and parents at the beginning of each year would provide a platform for all to establish their role in supporting achievement of those goals. Given that parents and teachers identified literacy and numeracy as key outcomes, it would seem logical that goals be based on these areas of learning. Student, parents and teachers may negotiate other important goals. These may include life skills such as self-belief, self-confidence or life long learning goals such as problem solving or research skills[20]. The purpose of this would be to engage the student and parent from the outset in the achievement of learning goals. Learning goals should be based on each school's indicators for achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

[20] Goals identified by teachers and parents in questionnaire.

Teachers could negotiate with parents and students an appropriate goal, based on assessment information collected at the beginning of the year and by referring to the previous year's portfolio and report. The negotiation of learning goals could be achieved by holding three-way conferences halfway through term one.

This is an action that would need to be planned carefully, otherwise it runs the risk of being something that is 'done' but not necessarily understood by all parties. As already identified in the literature and this study, parents and caregivers had varying experiences of parent-teacher interviews. All parents and caregivers interviewed had experienced negative interviews and interviews that had been really positive. The teacher played an important role in the relationship. Parents who felt welcomed, listened to and supported, established positive relationships with their child's teacher.

Teachers interviewed generally felt positive about being approached by parents and some said they welcomed approaches by parents. However, some teachers did express hesitation and concern about dealing with parents who were aggressive or apportioning blame to the teacher. By openly sharing the roles and responsibilities within partnership, parents and teachers could be made the need to be non aggressive and blaming.

The role of the teacher must be to facilitate parental involvement (Biddulph et al., 2003). Research literature shows the critical role of schools and teachers in developing effective school-home relationships. Teacher leadership plays a major role in the extent to which parents become involved in their children's in school learning and sustain that involvement (Epstein, 2001: cited in Biddulph et al. 2003: 39). Epstein (2001) found teacher's deficit assumptions about families to be a barrier to effective partnerships.

In the researcher's view, the role of teacher is five fold. The first is to establish a clear understanding of learning theory and the links to educative partnership with students and parents. The second is to establish a positive relationship with each parent. The third is to gather reliable and valid

assessments of the child's achievement, effort and progress. The fourth is to focus the relationship on supporting the child's learning. The fifth is to make the process inclusive of the child and parent. Meeting with the, parent and child early in the year to discuss goals for learning has the potential to provide a sound basis for partnership.

Three Way Conferences

The purpose of the three-way conference needs to be made explicit to and understood by teachers, parents, caregivers and students. This approach marks a significant shift in thinking for the participant schools. It also requires an enormous shift in thinking by parents and students. Schools will have to be proactive in how they introduce this new way of working. Swap (1993) argues that parents should have the information that explains the purposes of conferences, as well as what might be expected. For two of the participant schools this will mean ensuring that information is made available in a number of languages, particularly Samoan and Tongan.

While the long term goal is to have the students taking a leadership role, it should be conceded that the first three-way conference, if held early in the year may require teachers to take a proactive role to ensure goals set reflect the learning needs of the students. However, if this method of communication is to be effective, fundamental principles of learning theory should be applied. That is, over time, in subsequent conferences, the student and parent should be supported to take a role in setting goals that are meaningful, attainable and challenging.

To ensure active participation of students in conferences, teachers need to work with students prior to the conference in order to develop the skills and confidence to take a leadership role. Time, in class, will need to be set aside for this important task. Johnson and Rose (1997) advocate that students should rehearse for the conference. This can be achieved by rehearsing with other students in the class, their teachers or other adults.

It is also important that teachers are provided with professional development to deepen their own knowledge about:

- The purpose of three-way conferences
- The standards and how to gather valid and reliable information based on the standards
- How to facilitate a three way conversation based on setting meaningful learning goals

The process of developing such skills with students and teachers supports the concept of developing self-efficacy, locus of control, and in turn motivation.

Bailey and McTighe (1996) believe that the time needed to undertake such conferences must be explored. This is the case for schools in this study. Traditionally, interviews have been fifteen minutes long. Perhaps schools might need to consider the option of holding three-way conferences during a school day and extending into the evening. Interviews might need to be twenty minutes long, to ensure a more appropriate allocation of time for each student. The limitation may be access for parents and caregivers who are in paid employment. This option would need to be monitored by the school to ensure this practice does not alienate any parents from the process.

It is important that as part of the first meeting of the year, each participant in the process identifies what role they will play in supporting the child's learning. Each participant should answer questions such as:

- What will I do to support the achievement of the learning goals?
- What information might I need to support the achievement of the learning goals?
- What difficulties can I see in providing support?
- What help might I need to overcome these difficulties?

Each participant school held parent-teacher interviews in the middle of the year. It is anticipated that this practice will continue. However, for schools intending to have three-way conferences at the beginning of the year to set goals, the middle of the year interview would take on a different purpose from traditional interviews. As argued by Timperley et al (1999, 2002) the fourth condition for partnership is in each partner reviewing progress towards the desired standards (goals) and being accountable for agreed actions and contributions towards that progress.

If schools use the middle of the year interview to review the goals set at the beginning of the year, this will have significant implications for the preparation, structure and content of the interviews. As already indicated earlier in this chapter the purpose and focus of the interviews will need to be made explicit to parents, caregivers and students.

Teachers and students could also actively seek to collect information and artefacts that demonstrate progress towards the goals set. This might form the focus of discussion between parents, student and teacher at mid year conferences.

Collecting information to share

The findings of this study indicated that two of the schools use student portfolios to collect achievement information to share with parents. School A used a combination of process and product portfolio. School C used a product portfolio.

Both schools had developed a programme of assessment that indicated what assessment samples would be collected and when. For School C the dilemma was that the portfolios had become 'showcase' portfolios and did not necessarily reflect the everyday practice of students. Another dilemma was that the school's assessment programme did not always match

classroom programmes. For example, teachers were asked to collect a sample of narrative writing when the class focus was actually report writing.

A way forward for all schools would be to ensure portfolios (or sample books for School B) reflected the learning goals agreed at the beginning of the year and progress towards meeting those goals. These learning goals would derive from the school's indicators of achievement referenced to national standards and shared with parents and caregivers. Samples of work in the portfolio would demonstrate progress towards meeting the goals identified. Students should be involved in the selection of work for the portfolio. Both student and teacher should be able to offer comment on the following aspects of the sample collected:

- The standard the student is working towards
- The degree to which the student is achieving against that standard (comment related to achievement, effort and progress)
- The next steps in the student's learning

The choice of tasks would involve each school in further developing their knowledge and understanding of current tools such as New Zealand national exemplars, asTTle, New Zealand numeracy project diagnostic assessments and Assessment Resource Bank tasks.

Portfolios could provide a focus for parents, caregivers, students and teachers to discuss progress towards meeting the goals set at the beginning of the year. Success could be celebrated, goals renegotiated, barriers discussed and a new plan agreed to and actioned.

The written report

All schools used a written report at the end of the year. This report was summative in nature and provided parents with information about how their children had achieved across all curriculum areas.

Themes that emerged from the study included confusion about what the reports were referenced to and what standards were being applied, the way in which the schools allocated the grading, the lack of information on the report about the progress of students and some issues with regard to computerised reporting.

With clearly defined and published indicators parents, caregivers, students and teachers should be in no doubt as what the standards are and to what they have been referenced.

This study revealed that parents wanted to find out how well their child had achieved, how hard their child had worked and what their child's achievement was compared to children of the same age. Reports should include an explanation of any grading system used and ensure that grading separates out achievement, effort and progress.

The choice of a grading system is important. In School C parents and caregivers were confused when the school introduced a new system for grading by reversing the A, B, C grade. A had become below average and C above average. The Principal had been keen to break the stereotyping of A being above. The consequence of her actions was that no real change with regards to grading had occurred but parents were now even more confused and some resentful because they recognised this and saw it as a change with no real purpose. The issue with grading is to be clear about reference points. Making clear to parents what 'above average' actually means in relation to the school's indicators or standards in any given learning area (and on what basis those standards have been derived) may create less confusion and resentment.

In school B parents who expressed concern did not like the grading labels. The school used terms such as met (the standard), not met, causing concern, exceeding the standard. Parents felt that for children labelled 'causing concern' and 'not meeting the standard', this was not a helpful way

to refer to their achievement and effort because it did not identify a way forward. It was also thought to demotivate parents and their children. An examination of the literature on self-efficacy may provide some insight here. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief you can learn and that you are capable of improvement (Bandura, 1986; Stipek, 1998;Hill & Hawk, 2000; Schunk, 2001). If children do not believe they can learn they can become demotivated. Being told that 'you do not meet the standard' or that 'you are causing concern' is at odds with the notion of developing a child's self efficacy. However, the tension as identified by Timperley et al. (1999, 2002) is the need for honesty. An analysis of reports in School B may provide an insight into reporting which is honest and which provides a way forward. In School B the junior school report did not use grading terms for reporting reading, rather they used a continuum, which identified the reading levels matched to the year level of the student. Parents, caregivers and teachers all commented positively on the approach of using a continuum for identifying achievement.

Table 18 is a replication of School B's continuum for reporting reading. The teacher places a tick in the appropriate box for the achievement of the student.

Table 18: School B Reading Report Continuum[21]

YOUR CHILD								
Reading level	Magenta	Red	Yellow	Dark blue	Green	Orange	Light Blue	Purple
Year level	Year One				Year Two			

The use of a continuum such as the one in Table 18 allows parents, caregivers and student to see exactly what reading level their child has

[21] Colours on table link to colour wheel used in New Zealand junior reading programmes and which identify level of difficulty of text.

achieved, what the next reading level will be (goal orientation) and how their reading level relates to their year group (comparison to age group). The interpretation of the continuum should be supported with either a grade or narrative comment related to effort and progress against the goals identified at the mid year interviews. This approach does not use the terms 'not met', 'causing concern' that are currently used in the senior reports. By removing these terms there is less likelihood of affecting parent and student motivation and lowering of self-efficacy.

By also including a formative aspect to written reports, a section for possible future goals could provide a basis for parent, caregiver, student and new teacher to develop goals at the beginning of the following year.

Sharing expertise with parents

Each participant school held a mathematics parent evening at their school. This was part of each school's commitment to a New Zealand national initiative to raise achievement levels in mathematics.

All parents interviewed found these evenings really helpful in providing a better understanding of how mathematics education was being taught in classrooms. Most importantly all parents interviewed commented on the practical nature of the evenings and that they had been given a sheet with ideas to promote mathematics learning at home.

All parents interviewed had used some of the ideas with their children and were now spending time not only supporting the child's learning in reading at home but now, also mathematics.

This type of activity is supported by research carried out by Biddulph (1993, cited in Biddulph et al, 2003: 40). Biddulph carried out a comparison of reading progress of students whose parents received a five hour programme to assist them help their children read, and students who did not get the

parent programme but received mainstream and special assistance at school. For the students in Biddulph's parents programme, after only three months there were significant (p>.001) gains in reading achievement compared with a matched control group of students, some of whom were receiving ongoing specialist in-school assistance.

In each participant school some teachers provided regular communication to parents via reading journals, class newsletters and homework assignments. There were no school wide expectations for teachers to do this but teachers engaged in these activities because 'they thought it was a good idea'.

> *I communicate a lot through the homework books because I mark it (the homework). I use a comment section. We have just started to do that. It hasn't even been spoken really - a couple of parents commented and so I told the kids as a whole group - I love your parent's comments. So now more parents comment and I will always reply to their comments. A parent might say their child didn't know their plurals. I will say thank you very much we will build that in to the programme. Yeah but I don't know whether I am allowed to. I just typed up the letter and I don't know if I am supposed to* (Teacher: TI.A.1.23).

This teacher's view is supported by research. Homework has the potential to enhance student learning. Walberg's (1999) summary of the research found positive impacts of homework on achievement to be almost tripled when teachers took time to mark the work, make corrections and specific comments on improvements to be made, and discussed problems and remedies either with individuals or the whole class (Walberg, 1999, cited in Biddulph et al, 2003: 43). Homework design is particularly important. Teacher's ability to construct, resource and scaffold appropriate homework tasks that support in-class learning increase the effectiveness of homework (Biddulph et al., 2003: 43)

While this study did not provide opportunity to gain feedback from all parents in classrooms where these activities were happening, some parents interviewed did have children in classes where reading journals, class newsletters and regular homework were a feature. These parents expressed how useful and valuable these forms of communication were.

This type of communication infers a two way process and allows for knowledge about how the child is achieving to be shared between parents and students. It requires an open relationship and commitment to share information.

Reviewing A School's Current Reporting Processes: A Way Forward

As this study unfolded key questions were derived in relation to the evaluation of each participant school's policies and processes. These questions have been collated to provide a possible frame for any school that may decide to review their policies and processes with a view to building a better partnership with families based on the key purposes for reporting as identified in this study. The framework of the questions is provided in table 18 where a model of continuous communication in reporting student achievement is proposed.

Understanding standards

1. Are the school's expectations of achievement and the term of reference (e.g. expectations for children of a similar age/class, normed, ipsative) clearly articulated to parents and students?
2. Do teachers communicate class focus on working towards standards? E.g. regular class newsletters outlining the programme and how it connects to the achievement of standards and how parents may support the learning at home.

Sharing expertise

1. Does the school provide opportunities for parents and teachers to explore the factors that affect student learning:
   a. Relationships
   b. Self efficacy and motivation
   c. Goals, tasks, feedback and feed forward, self-assessment; through parent evenings, newsletters, focus groups?
2. Do parents and teachers openly discuss factors that may directly affect an individual student's learning?
3. Does the school encourage parents to contribute to the sharing of information about a student?
4. Is the student encouraged to share their understanding about their own learning?

Interviews/conferences

1. Is the purpose of conferences and interviews clearly understood by teachers, parents and students?
2. Are the roles of teacher, parent and student clearly understood by all parties?
3. Does the school provide an opportunity at the beginning of each year to meet with parent and child to identify specific goals to be achieved?
4. Is an action plan written and agreed to by teacher, parent and student?
5. Are conferences to discuss progress towards achieving goals timely?
6. Is the student encouraged/ expected to take a lead role in conferences?
7. Are students provided with training to develop their skills in leading a conference?
8. Are opportunities made available to staff to develop their conferencing skills?

9. Are other opportunities made available to parents to meet with the teacher without the student, should that be necessary?

Portfolios

If portfolios are used to collect visible evidence are they:

1. Related to the expectations or standards of achievement?
2. Do students have input into what is collected in the portfolio?
3. Does the portfolio contribute to the communication of student learning for teacher, parent and student?
4. Do students use the portfolio at student led portfolios?
5. Do teachers use the portfolio at parent teacher interviews?
6. Do parents understand the information contained in the portfolio?

Report card

1. Is the purpose of the report card clearly understood by teachers, parents and students?
2. If grades are used are they clearly referenced to a standard or set of criteria, which are understood by parents and students?
3. Are achievement, effort and progress reported separately on the report card?
4. Is there an opportunity to identify the student's next steps in learning on the report form?
5. Are clear guidelines for completing the report card made available to staff?

Policies and procedures

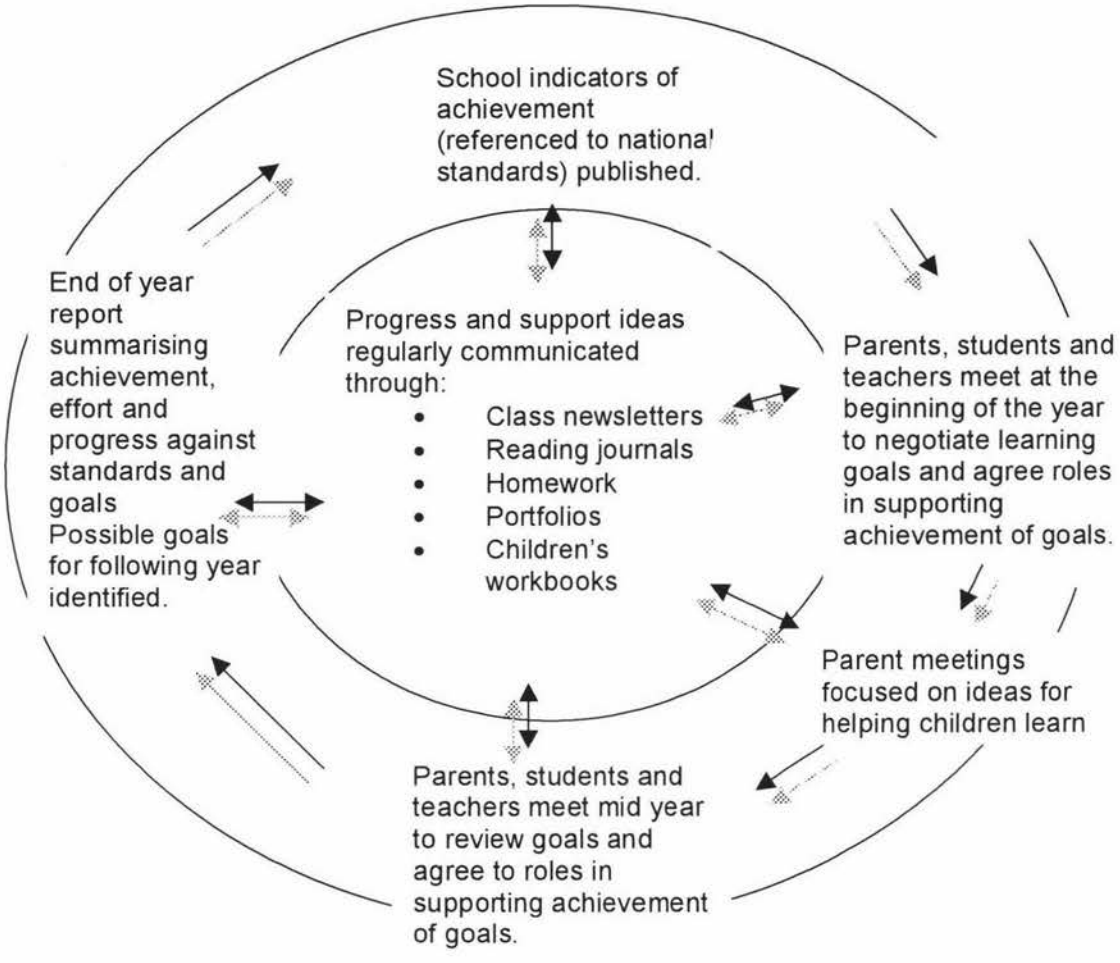
1. Have parents been consulted about how and what information should be included in the reporting process?
2. Do policies and procedure reflect the practices identified in the questions above?
3. Do parents and teachers understand policies?
4. Are procedures published regularly?

These questions are inclusive of the concepts contained in current educative theory, reporting and effective partnerships, as defined throughout this study. These questions should be answered in conjunction with the questions cited earlier in this chapter. That is:

- How does what we report and how we report contribute to a student's knowledge about their own learning?
- How does what we report and how we report contribute to parents' and caregivers' knowledge about how to support their child's learning?
- How does what we report and how we report contribute to a teacher's knowledge about how to support the child's learning?

This study has allowed the researcher to consider a possible model for effective communication of student achievement. Table 19 provides a possible model for effective communication between teacher, parents and student. The model does not include all of the detail contained within this chapter, but rather provides an overview by which to interpret the discussion contained in this chapter.

Table 19: Cycle of Communication In Reporting Student Achievement Which Demonstrates Educative Theory And High Level Partnership



Future Research

The cycle of communication identified in table 18 is derived from this thesis study and requires further research to discover the potential gains both in terms of developing educative partnerships and student achievement gains. A future research study could investigate the application of the model on fostering educative partnerships.

The professional development needs of teachers in relation to educative theories and the links to effective reporting and partnerships with parents

needs further exploratory research. The links between educative theories such as self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, goal setting, feedback and feed forward, while well placed in research in respect of classroom practice, are not well researched in respect of promoting educative partnerships between student, parents, caregivers and teachers. This is an area for future research.

A limitation of this study was the non-inclusion of student voice. This aspect was excluded because the scope of this research was primarily about educative partnerships between parents and teachers. The need to research actual impact on student learning, including students within the study, is very important. Any research in this area should also include research at the secondary school level. This would allow identification of the particular needs and issues related to young adolescent and adult learners and the role of partnership between home and school within those needs and issues.

The results of this evaluative case study must be treated with some caution as they represent findings from just three schools. Future research with a greater number of schools would provide further data and include a wider representation of schools, for example, geographic, rural/urban and school size.

In Summary

This study has drawn together current literature and the practices of three participant schools. It has provided a platform for discussion about how schools might review their reporting practices to ensure key purposes identified by their own communities drive the reporting process.

The research questions allowed the researcher to evaluate each participant's schools beliefs and practices in relation to the links made between educative theory, reporting and effective partnerships. This study has raised a number of important issues relating to the way in which the participant schools

understood the purpose of reporting, and the resultant practice of each school. The need for a clear understanding by all partners (parents, teachers and students) about the purpose of reporting has been an important finding.

How educative theories relate to self and peer assessment, goal setting, feedback and feed forward should be explored. These links could provide a basis for providing information to parents and students.

The place of standards and criteria for discerning achievement against those standards has also been a feature of this study. Participant schools struggled to determine how best to report against standards, how to communicate standards effectively to parents, and how to share information with parents.

Another important finding relates to the need to provide parents and students with information not only about actual achievement in relation to goals, but also effort (self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation) and progress (feedback, feed forward).

The need for accurate and honest reporting is well understood. This study has portrayed how schools might successfully implement reporting which is not only accurate and honest but which reflects a commitment to educative theory and partnership between student, parents and teachers.

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Appendix A

Information sheets for schools and parents

Massey University

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement

Information Sheet for Schools

My name is Kerry Taylor and I am currently a student in the Master of Educational Administration course at Massey University. As part of my study, I am undertaking a research thesis examining the practices of schools when reporting student achievement and the understanding of parents/caregivers of information given to them in relation to student achievement. I am being supervised in my research by Jan Hill, IPDER, Albany Campus, Massey University.

The research examines five key questions:

- In what ways have the national requirements or guidelines for reporting student achievement information to parents influenced school practice?
- In what ways has current research into effective partnerships, educative theory and reporting processes informed each school's policies and practices?
- How do schools articulate purposes (written and/or verbal) for reporting student achievement to parents and how are those purposes translated into procedures?
- How does the intended message, given when reporting student achievement, match the actual message received by parents?
- How do school's policies and practices in reporting student achievement to parents promote the concept of education as a partnership?

In order to answer these questions I would like to work with three participant schools, BOT, senior managers, all teachers and four parents in each school.

The research will involve the following:

- A questionnaire completed by all teachers in each school – approximate time required 15 minutes.

- A questionnaire completed by parents/caregivers in each school – approximate time required 15 minutes.

- Interview of Principal and senior managers in each school – approximate time required 45 minutes.

- Interview of two teachers in each school – approximate time required 45 minutes per interview.

- Interview with four parents/caregivers in each school – approximate time required 45 minutes per interview.

- Document analysis of each school's charter, strategic plan, policies and procedures relating to reporting student achievement and twelve anonymous student reports.

Participation in this research is purely voluntary and there is no compulsion to participate at all. If the school chooses to participate, it retains the right to:

- Decline to participate in this research.
- Refuse to answer any question put to you.
- Withdraw from the study at any time. However, information gathered prior to withdrawal will be included in the study.
- Ask questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that the name of the school will not be used unless you, the board of trustees, give permission to the researcher.
- Be given access to a summary of findings of the study when it is concluded.

By participating in this study it is expected that valuable information will be provided to each participant school, which will support each school's development of effective reporting practices. The findings of this study may also provide valuable information to other schools that are developing their own reporting practises in relation to student achievement.

Participants giving information through questionnaires and interviews will be assured that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Schools and individual participants will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Confidential information, which might lead to identification, will not be published without the consent of participants. Where interviews have been taped the researcher will employ a transcriber. The transcriber will sign a

confidentiality contract. Participants have the right, during interview, to ask for the tape to be turned off at any time.

No information gathered from participants shall be given to any person, unless it has been agreed as part of the research process, without the express written permission of the participant. All information will be used for the express purposes of this research thesis.

At the conclusion of the study all data gathered will be stored securely for a period of five years. At the conclusion of five years all data gathered will be destroyed.

All forms of assistance in completing this thesis will be acknowledged. All participant schools will be given a copy of the research findings.

If you have any questions about involvement in this study please contact:

Kerry Taylor
Researcher
[redacted]

Jan Hill
Research [redacted]
[redacted]

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Protocol 02/077. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry P Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 443 9700 x9078, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Massey University

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement

Consent form for schools

This consent form will be held for a period of five years.

The Board of Trustees and Principal have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to us. Our questions have been answered to our satisfaction, and we understand that we may ask further questions at any time.

The Board of Trustees agrees to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature_____ Date_____
On behalf of Board of Trustees

Full Name_____

School_____

Massey University

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement

Information Sheet for Teachers

My name is Kerry Taylor and I am currently a student in the Master of Educational Administration course at Massey University. As part of my study I am undertaking a research thesis examining the practices of schools when reporting student achievement, and the understanding of parents/caregivers of information given to them in relation to student achievement. I am being supervised in my research by Jan Hill, IPDER, Albany Campus, Massey University.

The research examines five key questions:

1. In what ways have the national requirements or guidelines for reporting student achievement information to parents influenced school practice?

2. In what ways has current research into effective partnerships, educative theory and reporting processes informed each school's policies and practices?

3. How do schools articulate purposes (written and/or verbal) for reporting student achievement to parents and how are those purposes translated into procedures?

4. How does the intended message, given when reporting student achievement, match the actual message received by parents?

5. How do school's policies and practices in reporting student achievement to parents promote the concept of education as a partnership?

I would like to work with teachers of each school. The participation of teachers would include:

- A questionnaire completed by all teachers in each school – approximate time required 15 minutes.

- Interview of Principal and senior managers in each school – approximate time required 45 minutes.

- Document analysis of each school's charter, strategic plan, policies and procedures relating to reporting student achievement and twelve anonymous student reports.

In addition the researcher would like to interview two experienced teachers in each school. By experienced, it is anticipated that teachers will have at least five years teaching experience and will have worked at this school for at least two years. The approximate time required is 45 minutes per interview. Teachers who are willing to be interviewed should indicate on the informed consent form.

Participation in this research is purely voluntary and there is no compulsion to participate at all. If you choose to participate, you retain the right to:

- Decline to participate in this research.
- Refuse to answer any question put to you.
- Withdraw from the study at any time. However, information gathered prior to withdrawal will be included in the study.
- Ask questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that the name of the school will not be used unless you, the board of trustees, give permission to the researcher.
- Be given access to a summary of findings of the study when it is concluded.

By participating in this study it is expected that valuable information will be provided to each participant school, which will support each school's development of effective reporting practices. The findings of this study may also provide valuable information to other schools that are developing their own reporting practises in relation to student achievement.

Participants giving information through questionnaires and interviews will be assured that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Schools and individual participants will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Confidential information, which might lead to identification, will not be published without the consent of participants. Where interviews have been taped the researcher will employ a transcriber. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality contract. Those participants who participate in the interview have the right, during interview, to ask for the tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

No information gathered from participants shall be given to any person, unless it has been agreed as part of the research process, without the express written permission of the participant. All information will be used for the express purposes of this research thesis.

At the conclusion of the study all data gathered will be stored securely for a period of five years. At the conclusion of five years all data gathered will be destroyed.

All forms of assistance in completing this thesis will be acknowledged. All participant schools will be given a copy of the research findings.

If you have any questions about involvement in this study please contact:

Kerry Taylor
Researcher
[redacted]

Jan Hill
Research Supervisor
[redacted]

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Protocol 02/077. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry P Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 443 9700 x9078, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Massey University

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement

Consent form for teachers

This consent form will be held for a period of five years.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree / do not agree to being interviewed.

I agree / do not agree to any interview being audio taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature_____ Date_____

Full Name_____

School_____

Massey University

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement

Information Sheet for Parents

My name is Kerry Taylor and I am currently a student in the Master of Educational Administration course at Massey University. As part of my study, I am undertaking a research thesis examining the practices of schools when reporting student achievement and the understanding of parents/caregivers of information given to them in relation to student achievement. I am being supervised in my research by Jan Hill, IPDER, Albany Campus, Massey University.

The research examines five key questions:

1. In what ways have the national requirements or guidelines for reporting student achievement information to parents influenced school practice?

2. In what ways has current research into effective partnerships, educative theory and reporting processes informed each school's policies and practices?

3. How do schools articulate purposes (written and/or verbal) for reporting student achievement to parents and how are those purposes translated into procedures?

4. How does the intended message, given when reporting student achievement, match the actual message received by parents?

5. How do school's policies and practices in reporting student achievement to parents promote the concept of education as a partnership?

***** School has agreed to participate in this project. As part of the research I would like to involve the parents. The participation of parents includes:

- A questionnaire completed by parents/caregivers in each school – approximate time required 15 minutes.

- Interview with four parents/caregivers in each school – approximate time required 45 minutes per interview.

By participating in this study it is expected that valuable information will be provided to each participant school, which will support each school's development of effective reporting practices. The findings of this study may also provide valuable information to other schools that are developing their own reporting practices in relation to student achievement.

Participation in this research is purely voluntary and there is no compulsion to participate at all. If you choose to participate, you retain the right to:

- Decline to participate in this research.
- Refuse to answer any question put to you.
- Withdraw from the study at any time. However, information gathered prior to withdrawal will be included in the study.
- Ask questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Be given access to a summary of findings of the study when it is concluded.

A questionnaire will be sent home with your child shortly. If you do not wish to complete the questionnaire simply return the uncompleted form in the enclosed envelope. Otherwise complete the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed envelope.

The researcher would also like to interview four parents from each school. The purpose of this interview will be to identify your understanding of the information given to you by the school in relation to your child's achievement. It will be important to bring along to the interview your child's latest school report. If you think you would like to participate in an interview, you are invited to complete the form at the bottom of the questionnaire. Four parents will be randomly selected and phoned by the researcher. At this time the researcher will give you all relevant information and will answer any questions you might have. At the end of this phone call you will be asked if you give consent to be interviewed and, if so, asked to sign an informed consent form before the interview can take place.

Confidential information, which might lead to identification, will not be published without the consent of participants.

No information gathered from participants shall be given to any person, unless it has been agreed as part of the research process, without the express written permission of the participant. All information will be used for the express purposes of this research thesis.

At the conclusion of the study all data gathered will be stored securely for a period of five years. At the conclusion of five years all data gathered will be destroyed.

All forms of assistance in completing this thesis will be acknowledged. All participant schools will be given a copy of the research findings.

If you have any questions about involvement in this study please contact:

Kerry Taylor
Researcher
[redacted]

Jan Hill
Research Supervisor
[redacted]

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Protocol 02/077. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry P Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 443 9700 x9078, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Massey University

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement

Consent form for parents

This consent form will be held for a period of five years.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to be interviewed as part of the study.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I understand I can ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature_____ Date_____

Full Name_____

School_____

Appendix B
Questionnaires for teachers and parents
(English version)

Massey University

Institute for Professional Development and
Educational Research
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore Mail Centre
Auckland
New Zealand
Ph. 64 9 443 9722
Fax 64 9 443 9700
E-mail: erdcalb@massey.ac.nz

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement – Parent Questionnaire

School code ☐ *Questionnaire Number* ☐

Dear Parent / Caregiver

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please complete all questions in the questionnaire. When you have completed the questionnaire please return it in the attached self addressed envelope to the researcher, Kerry Taylor by 7th April 2003. If you have any questions about the completion of the questionnaire or the research, please contact either Kerry Taylor (researcher) [redacted] or Jan Hill (supervisor) [redacted]

1. **Thinking about the education of your child, what are the most important outcomes you hope your child will achieve in their time at primary school?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **How familiar are you with the national guidelines and requirements that schools must take note of in relation to reporting student achievement?** *Please tick one box for each statement.*

National Administration Guideline 1

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Education Standards Act (2001) as it relates to reporting student achievement.

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The National Assessment Strategy

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Education Review Office booklet: Reporting Student Achievement, Number 3, Autumn 1996

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. **Has your school informed you about how your child's achievement will be reported to you each year?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have responded yes, please indicate how you were informed?
Please tick all the ways you were informed.

☐ By the Principal when I enrolled my child.

☐ By the classroom teacher.

☐ Through the school newsletter

☐ At a parent evening

☐ In another way. Please specify_____

4. **How does the school report your child's achievement to you?**
Please tick all the ways used by the school.

- ☐ Parent / teacher interviews without your child present.
- ☐ Parent / teacher interviews with your child present.
- ☐ Written reports
- ☐ Student portfolios
- ☐ Phone calls from the class teacher.
- ☐ Other ways. *Please specify*_____

5. **Thinking about the various ways that you have been informed about your child's achievement is there any way which <u>YOU</u> have found more useful?**

Parent / teacher interviews without your child present.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Parent / teacher interviews with your child present.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Written reports

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Student portfolios

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Phone calls from the class teacher.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Other ways. *Please specify*_____

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Please comment

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **What do you believe is the most important purposes for the school reporting your child's achievement to you?** *Please tick one box for each statement.*

To find out how well my child is achieving compared to children in the same class.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely Important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out how well my child is achieving compared to other children of the same age.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely Important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out if my child is working hard.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely Important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out if my child is making good progress.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely Important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out how I can help my child with their learning.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely Important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out how the teacher and I can work together to help my child.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely Important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

7. **Is there any information you would like to receive from the school about your child's achievement that you do not currently receive?**
Please comment.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **Thinking about your child's achievement <u>LAST YEAR</u> (2002) and the information given to you by the school, how well did you understand the following:**

How well my child was achieving at school compared with other children the same age.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding

What the classroom teacher did to help my child achieve.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding

How I could help my child at home.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding

How my child's teacher and I could work together to help my child achieve.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding

Please Comment

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **In what ways could the way your school reports the achievement of your child be improved?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your responses are very important.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Massey University

Institute for Professional Development and
Educational Research
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore Mail Centre
Auckland
New Zealand
Ph. 64 9 443 9722
Fax 64 9 443 9700
E-mail: erdcalb@massey.ac.nz

Educative Partnership in Reporting Student Achievement – Teacher Questionnaire

School Code ☐ *Questionnaire Number* ☐

Dear Teacher

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please complete all questions in the questionnaire. When you have completed the questionnaire please return it in the attached self addressed envelope to the researcher, Kerry Taylor by **7th April**. If you have any questions about the completion of the questionnaire or the research, please contact either Kerry Taylor (researcher) [redacted] or Jan Hill (supervisor) [redacted]

Position in school

- ☐ Senior Management
- ☐ Junior school teacher (Year 0 – 2)
- ☐ Middle School teacher (Year 3-4)
- ☐ Senior school teacher (Year 5 – 6)
- ☐ Intermediate teacher (Year 7 – 8)

1. **Thinking about the education of the children in your class what are the most important outcomes you hope your children will achieve during their time at primary school?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **Are you familiar with the national guidelines and requirements in relation to reporting student achievement?**
Please tick one box for each statement.

National Administration Guideline 1

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Education Standards Act (2001) as it relates to reporting student achievement.

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The National Assessment Strategy

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Education Review Office booklet: Reporting Student Achievement, Number 3, Autumn 1996

Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. **Over the past three years have you been involved in any professional development relating to the following aspects of reporting student achievement to parents?**

- ☐ Effective communication skills
- ☐ Conducting teacher/ parent conferences
- ☐ Carrying out valid and reliable assessment of student achievement
- ☐ Analysis of assessment data
- ☐ Completing computerised student reports
- ☐ Writing student reports

Please comment

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. **Does your school have a policy on reporting student achievement?**
Please tick one box only

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

If you have responded yes, please indicate how familiar you are with the policy?
Please tick one box only

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Not very familiar	Unfamiliar

5. **Does your school also have written procedures for reporting student achievement?**
Please tick one box only

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

6. **What are the procedures used for reporting student achievement at your school?** *Please tick all procedures used by your school*

☐ Parent / teacher interviews without the child present.

☐ Parent / teacher interviews with the child present.

☐ Written reports

☐ Student portfolios

☐ Phone calls from the class teacher.

☐ Other ways. *Please specify*_____

7. **How closely do <u>you</u>, as a teacher, follow the school's procedures for reporting student achievement?** *Please tick one box only*

I follow procedures:

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exactly	Very closely	Quite closely	Not very closely	Not at all

8. **Thinking about the various ways that you report student achievement is there any way of reporting student achievement that <u>YOU</u> believe to be more effective than other methods?**
Please tick one box only for each statement.

Parent / teacher interviews without the child present.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Parent / teacher interviews with the child present.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Written reports

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Student portfolios

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Phoning the parent/caregiver

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Other ways. *Please specify* _____

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely useful	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

9. **What do you believe is the primary purpose for reporting student achievement to parents?** *Please tick one box for each statement*

How well their child is achieving compared to children in the same class.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

How well their child is achieving compared to children of the same age, nationally.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out if their child is working hard.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To find out if their child is making good progress.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To discuss how they can help their child with their learning.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important

To discuss how the parent and I can work together to help their child.

Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please comment

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. **Thinking about your class LAST YEAR (2002) and the information you gave to parents / caregivers about their child's achievements, what do you believe was the level of understanding of parents/ caregivers after receiving the information?**
Please tick one box for each statement.

They knew how well their child was achieving at school compared to other children the same age.

Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

They understood how hard their child was working.

Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

They understood whether their child was making good progress.

Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

They understood how I was helping their child to achieve.

Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

They knew how to help their child at home.

Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The parents and I understood how we could work together to help their child to achieve.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellent Understanding	Very good understanding	Had some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding

*Please comment*_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Is there any aspect of the way you report student achievement that you feel should be changed or improved?
Please tick one box only

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

12. If you responded yes to question 12, please identify how it should be changed or improved and why you feel that change or improvement should be made.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your responses are very important.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix C
Parent Questionnaires
(Samoan and Tongan)

Massey University

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Ao'aoga Tu'u Fa'atasi. Lipoti tamiti A'oga, mo se lelei lumana'i.
Matua I Fa'amaumauga.

A'oga fa'ailoga ☐ **Fa'amaumauga Numera** ☐

Matua/ Ole olo'o I lalo ole Va'aiga. (tausia)

Fa'afetai ile faamae'aina o nei fa'amaumauga. Fa'amole mole fa'auma fesili I fa'amaumauga nei. A uma fesili poo fa'amaumauga nei fa'afo'i, ma tu'u iai lou tuatusi I totonu ole Teutusi ma tu'u ia Kerry Taylor ile aso Gafua 26 Me 2003. Afai e iai se fesili ile faamautuina o nei fa'amaumauga fa'amolemole fa'afeso'ota'i Kerry Taylor (tagata su'esu'e), po'o le telefoni ([redacted] po'o Jan Hill (o le fa'atonu) ([redacted]

1. **Mafaufau ile A'oga a lau Tama, o lea le mea sili ona taua e maua mai I lou fa'amoemoe I lau tama ose mea lelei, a'o iai o ia ma tuputupu a'e I A'oga maualalo. (Primary School)**

_____

_____

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_____

2. **E te silifia Puleaga fa'ale a'oa'oga, ae maise mea taua tau A'oa'oga, ia tusia I lalo, feso'otaiga o Lipoti o tamiti mo le faamoemoe I le lumana'i.**
(Fa'amolemole fa'asa'o le pusa e tasi mo nei fesili uma)

a. Pule'aga fa'ale a'oa'oga ma fa'ata'ita'iga auala lelei.

matua'l la'uiloa	malamalama laititi	e le malamalama	e ua iloa	e le malamalama lelei
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Maualuga ole ao'a'oga ua uma 2001 faalatau ile Lipoti tamititi mo le lumana'i.

matua'l la'uiloa	malamalama laititi	e le malamalama	e ua iloa	e le malamalama lelei
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Toe ilo ilo'ina le taua o fuafuaga.

matua'l la'uiloa	malamalama laititi	e le malamalama	e ua iloa	e le malamalama lelei
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Ole Ao'a'oga Tusi Ofisa toe fa'amanatu, Lipoti tamaiti Ao'ga mo le lumanai, I Ao'oga maualalo, faataitai'iga mo Matua. Numera 8, Spring 1997.

matua'l la'uiloa	malamalama laititi	e le malamalama	e ua iloa	e le malamalama lelei
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. Ao'a'oga ole tusi Ofisa toe faamanatu Lipoti o tamaiti mo le lumana'i. Numera 3 Autumn 1996.

matua'l la'uiloa	malamalama laititi	e le malamalama	e ua iloa	e le malamalama lelei
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. **Ua faailoa atu ele Ao'ga ia te Oe, faatatau ilau tama, I mea lelei ua maua, e ala lea ile Lipoti atu ia te Oe I tausaga ta'itasi.**

☐ Ioe ☐ Leai

Afai ua e tali mai loe, faamolemole fa'ailoa mai ile fa'asa'oina o pusa ia I autafa. *(Fa'amolemole fa'asa'o uma auala e pei ona fa'atonuina ai oe)*

☐ Pe na fai atu le Pule Ao'ga ina ua e sau e faatonu lou tama.

☐ Po'o le potu Ao'ga ile Faiaoga.

☐ Po'o le Pepa fo'I ale Ao'ga olo'o fa'asalalauatu.

☐ Po'o le po o Matua.

☐ Po'o seisi Auala. – Faamolemole fa'amalamalama mai.

_____

_____

4. **Fa'apefea ona lipoti atu e le Ao'ga lau tama ia te Oe, e fa'aaliai se mea lelei ua na fai.** *(Fa'amolemole fa'asa'o i totonu le pusa auala uma, na lipoti mai e le Ao'ga.)*

☐ Feiloaiga ma le Faiao'ga ise lua talanoaga ae le o iai lau tama.

☐ Feiloaiga male Faia'oga ise lua talanoaga ae o lo'o iai lau tama.

☐ O se lipoti tusitusia.

☐ Po'o se faila fa'a le a'oa'oga.

☐ O se telefoni mai ile Faiao'ga o le Vasega.

☐ Po'o seisi auala. *Fa'amatala mai.*

_____

_____

_____

5. **Mafaufau I auala eseese ua uma ona ta'u atu ia te Oe, e fa'atatau I lau tama I mea mo lona taumafai, e iai se auala UA E manatu e sili ona aoga.** *(Fa'amolemole fa'asa'o le pusa e tasi mo nei fa'amatalaga uma.)*

a. Matua feiloa'iga ma Faia'oga, ise talanoaga ae le o iai lau tama.

Ua talafeagai	Aoga feololo	Matua'I le Aoga	Matua'I Aoga	E le aoga
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Matua feiloa'iga ma le Faia'oga I se talanoaga a'o iai lau tama.

Ua talafeagai	Aoga feololo	Matua'I le Aoga	Matua'I Aoga	E le aoga
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Lipoti Tusitusia.

Ua talafeagai	Aoga feololo	Matua'I le Aoga	Matua'I Aoga	E le aoga
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Faila Tamaiti A'oga.

Ua talafeagai	Aoga feololo	Matua'I le Aoga	Matua'I Aoga	E le aoga
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. Telefoni mai ile Faia'oga ole Vasega

Ua talafeagai	Aoga feololo	Matua'I le Aoga	Matua'I Aoga	E le aoga
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

f. O isi auala. Fa'amolemole
Fa'amalamalama: _____

Ua talafeagai	Aoga feololo	Matua'I le Aoga	Matua'I Aoga	E le aoga
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Fa'amolemole au mai nisi fautuaga:

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **O lea sou lagona, o lea le mea pito taua ia te oe e lipoti o tamaiti mo latou taumafaiga.** *(Fa'amolemole fa'asa'o le pusa e tasi mo nei fesili uma.)*

a. **Pe fa'afefea ona ou iloa le lelei o lau tama ma lona malamalama ua iai fa'atusatusa I isi tamaiti o lana vasega.**

Matua fa'atauaina	E taua	E le taua	Taua tele	E le taua tele
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. **Pe fa'afefea ona ou iloa le lelei o lau tama, ma lona malamalama ua iai fa'atusatusa I isi tamaiti e tausaga fa'atasi.**

Matua fa'atauaina	E taua	E le taua	Taua tele	E le taua tele
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. **Ou te fia iloa po'o galue ma le fa'amaoni lau tama.**

Matua fa'atauaina	E taua	E le taua	Taua tele	E le taua tele
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. **Ou te fia iloa po'o ua maua se mea lelei, ma solo solo lelei le A'oga'oga.**

Matua fa'atauaina	E taua	E le taua	Taua tele	E le taua tele
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. **Ou te fia iloa pe fa'afefea ona ou fesoasoani e lau tama e lana taumafaiga e le a'oga.**

Matua fa'atauaina	E taua	E le taua	Taua tele	E le taua tele
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

f. **Ou te fia iloa pe fa'apefea ona ma galulue ma le faia'oga e fesoasoani e me a'oga a lau tama.**

Matua fa'atauaina	E taua	E le taua	Taua tele	E le taua tele
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. **E iai nisi fa'amatalaga e te fia maua mai ile A'oga mo lau tama ma lona taumafai e le'I maua atu I le A'oga.**

Fa'amolemole au mai se fautuaga:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **Mafaufau I se taumafaiga a lau tama I le TAUSAGA UA TUANA'I (2002) fa'atasi ma fa'amatalaga na avatu e le A'oga, e iai sou malamalama'aga i mea nei:**
(Fa'amolemole fa'asa'o le pusa e tasi mo nei fesili uma.)

a. O lea le esesega ole taumafaiga a lau tama, fa'atusatusa I tamaiti tausaga fa'atasi.

Matua malamalama	Ua iai se Malamalama	Leai se malamalama	lelei le malamalama	laititi malamalama
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. O lea le mea ale faia'oga ole vasega sa fai I la'u tama e fesoasoani ai lana taumafaiga.

Matua malamalama	Ua iai se Malamalama	Leai se malamalama	lelei le malamalama	laititi malamalama
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. E fa'afefea na ou fesoasoani I la'u tama I le fale.

Matua malamalama	Ua iai se Malamalama	Leai se malamalama	lelei le malamalama	laititi malamalama
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. E fa'afefea ona ma galulue fa'atasi ma le faia'oga a lau tama, e fesoasoani ai I lana taumafaiga.

Matua malamalama	Ua iai se Malamalama	Leai se malamalama	lelei le malamalama	laititi malamalama
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Fa'amolemole au mai sau fautuaga:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **O lea se auala a le A'oga e lipoti ai taumafaiga a lau tama, ma fa'aleleia ai.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

O sau fautuaga e taua tele.

Fa'afetai mo lou taimi fa'aavanoa, e fa'amae'a ai nei fa'amaumauga.

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Hoangaue `i he Ako ki hono Fakaha `o e Tu'unga Ako `oku A'usia `e he Tokotaha Ako – Pepa Fehu'i ki he Fa'e/Tamai

Faka'ilonga `o e Ako* ☐ *Fika `o e Pepa Fehu'i ☐

Si'i Tamai/Fa'e/Tauhi Fanau

Fakamalo atu ki hono fakafonu `o e pepa fehu'i. Kataki `o tali `a e fehu'i kotoa pe `i he pepa fehu'i. `I he `osi leva `a ho'o fakafonu `a e pepa fehu'i kataki `o fakafoki ia `i he sila kuo'osi fakatu'asila pea fakapipiki ki heni ki he tokotaha fakatotolo, Kerry Taylor, ke a'u ki ai he `aho Monite, 19 `o Me 2003. Kapau `oku `i ai ha'o ngaahi fehu'i fekau'aki mo hono fakafonu `o e pepa fehu'i pe ko e fakatotolo, kataki `o fetu'utaki kia Kerry Taylor (tokotaha fekumi) [redacted] pe Jan Hill (supavaisa) [redacted]

1. **Fakakaukau ange ki he ako ho'o tamasi'i/ta'ahine, ko e ha `a e ngaahi ola mahu'inga taha `oku ke `amanaki `e ma'u `e ho'o tamasi'i mei he taimi `oku nau lautohi si'i ai?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **`Oku fefe ha'o maheni mo e ngaahi fokotu'utu'u fakalele fakafonua pea mo e ngaahi fiema'u kuopau ke fakatokanga'i `e he ngaahi `apiako `o fekau'aki mo hono fakaha `o e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia `e ha tokotaha ako?** *(Kataki `o fakatonuhi `a e puha `e taha ki he setesi kotoa pe)*

a. Ko e Fokotu'utu'u Fakalele Fakafonua 1

Fu'u maheni `aupito	maheni `aupito	maheni lelei	ikai ke fu'u maheni	ikai ke maheni
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Lao ki he Ngaahi Tu'unga Ako (2001) `i he'ene fekau'aki mo e fakaha `o e tu'unga ako kuo a`usia `e ha tokotaha ako

Fu'u maheni `aupito	maheni `aupito	maheni lelei	ikai ke fu'u maheni	ikai ke maheni
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Palani Fakafonua ki he kaha'u `o e sivi'i `a e tu'unga ako

Fu'u maheni `aupito	maheni `aupito	maheni lelei	ikai ke fu'u maheni	ikai ke maheni
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Ko e ki'i tohi `a e `Ofisi ki hono Sivi'i `o e Ako: Ngaahi Lipooti ki he Ako Si'i – Ko e Fakahinohino ki he Matu'a, Fika 8, Faha'ita'u Failau 1997

Fu'u maheni `aupito	maheni `aupito	maheni lelei	ikai ke fu'u maheni	ikai ke maheni
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. Ko e ki'i tohi `a e `Ofisi ki hono Sivi'i `o e Ako: Ko e Lipooti `o e tu'unga Ako kuo a'usia `e he Tokotaha Ako, Fika 3, Faha'ita'u Fakatolau 1996

Fu'u maheni `aupito	maheni `aupito	maheni lelei	ikai ke fu'u maheni	ikai ke maheni
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. **Kuo hanga `e ho'o `apiako `o tala atu `a e founga `e fakaha atu ai kiate koe `i he ta'u kotoa pe `a e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia `e ho'o tamasi'i?**

`Io ☐ `Ikai ☐

Kaupau na'a ke tali `io, kataki `o fakaha pe na'e anga fefe hono tala atu kiate koe? *(Kataki `o fakatonuhi `a e ngaahi founga kotoa na'e tala atu ai eni kiate koe)*

- ☐ `E he Faiako Pule `i he'eku fakahu `eku tamasi'i ki he ako
- ☐ `E he faiako loki ako
- ☐ `I he ki'i tohi fanongonongo `a e `apiako
- ☐ `I ha fakataha mo e matu'a he taimi po'uli
- ☐ `I he founga kehe. *Kataki `o fakaikiiki:* _____

_____

4. **`Oku anga fefe hono fakaha atu kiate koe `e he `apiako `a e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia `e ho'o tamasi'i?** *(Kataki `o fakatonuhi `a e ngaahi founga na'e ngaue'aki `e he `apiako)*

- ☐ Faka'eke'eke `a e tamai/fa'e mo e faiako `oku `ikai ke `i ai `a ho'o tamasi'i
- ☐ Faka'eke'eke `a e tamai/fa'e mo e faiako `oku `i ai `a ho'o tamasi'i
- ☐ Ngaahi lipooti tohi
- ☐ Ngaahi tohi ngaue `a e tokotaha ako
- ☐ Ngaahi telefoni atu `a e faiako `a e kalasi
- ☐ Ngaahi founga kehe. *Kataki `o fakaikiiki:* _____

_____

_____

_____

5. **Fakakaukau ange ki he ngaahi founga kehekehe na'e fai atu `aki hono fakaha kiate koe `a e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia `e ho'o tamasi'i, `oku `i ai ha nai ha taha `i he ngaahi founga ni NA'A KE pehe `oku `aonga ange?** *(Kataki `o fakatonuhi `a e puha `e taha ki he setesi kotoa pe))*

a. Faka'eke'eke `a e tamai/fa'e mo e faiako `oku `ikai ke `i ai `a ho'o tamasi'i

Fu'u `aonga `aupito	`aonga `aupito	lahi pe hano `aonga	`ikai ke fu'u `aonga	`ikai ke `i ai hano `aonga `e taha
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Faka'eke'eke `a e tamai/fa'e mo e faiako `oku `i ai `a ho'o tamasi'i

Fu'u `aonga `aupito	`aonga `aupito	lahi pe hano `aonga	`ikai ke fu'u `aonga	`ikai ke `i ai hano `aonga `e taha
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Ngaahi lipooti tohi

Fu'u `aonga `aupito	`aonga `aupito	lahi pe hano `aonga	`ikai ke fu'u `aonga	`ikai ke `i ai hano `aonga `e taha
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Ngaahi tohi ngaue `a e tokotaha ako

Fu'u `aonga `aupito	`aonga `aupito	lahi pe hano `aonga	`ikai ke fu'u `aonga	`ikai ke `i ai hano `aonga `e taha
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. Ngaahi telefoni atu `a e faiako `a e kalasi

Fu'u `aonga `aupito	`aonga `aupito	lahi pe hano `aonga	`ikai ke fu'u `aonga	`ikai ke `i ai hano `aonga `e taha
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

f. Ngaahi founga kehe. *Kataki `o fakaikiiki:* _____

Fu'u `aonga `aupito	`aonga `aupito	lahi pe hano `aonga	`ikai ke fu'u `aonga	`ikai ke `i ai hano `aonga `e taha
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Kataki `o fai ha'o toe lau:

_____

_____

_____

6. Ko e ha ha'o fakaukau ko e taumu'a a mahu'inga taha ia ki hono fakaha atu `e he `apiako kiate koe `a e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia `e ha tokotaha ako?
(Kataki `o fakatonuhi `a e puha `e taha ki he setesi kotoa pe)

a. Ke `ilo ai pe `oku fefe `a e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia he'eku tamasi'i `o fakafehoanaki mo e tamaiki ako kehe `i he kalasi tatau

Fu'u mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga	`ikai ke fu'u mahu'inga	`ikai ke mahu'inga ia
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Ke `ilo'i pe `oku fefe `a e tu'unga ako `oku a'usia he'eku tamasi'i `o fakafehoanaki mo e tamaiki kehe `oku nau ta'u motu'a tatau

Fu'u mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga	`ikai ke fu'u mahu'inga	`ikai ke mahu'inga ia
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Ke `ilo'i pe `oku ngaue malohi `eku tamasi'i

Fu'u mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga	`ikai ke fu'u mahu'inga	`ikai ke mahu'inga ia
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Ke `ilo'i pe `oku fakalakalaka kimu'a `eku tamasi'i

Fu'u mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga	`ikai ke fu'u mahu'inga	`ikai ke mahu'inga ia
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. Ke `ilo'i pe `e anga fefe ha'aku tokoni'i `eku tamasi'i mo `enau ako

Fu'u mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga	`ikai ke fu'u mahu'inga	`ikai ke mahu'inga ia
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

f. Ke `ilo'i pe `e anga fefe ha'aku ngaue fakataha mo e faiako ke tokoni'i `eku tamasi'i

Fu'u mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga `aupito	mahu'inga	`ikai ke fu'u mahu'inga	`ikai ke mahu'inga ia
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. **`Oku `i ai ha fakamatala `oku ke fiema'u ke ma'u mai mei he `apiako fekau'aki mo e tu'unga ako kuo a'usia `e ho'o tamasi'i `oku `ikai ke ke lolotonga ma'u mai?**

Kataki `o fai ha'o lau ki heni:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **Fakakaukau ange ki he tu'unga ako na'e a'usia `e ho'o tamasi'i he TA'U KUO'OSI (2002) pea mo e fakamatala na'e `oatu kiate koe `e he `apiako, na'e anga fefe `a e mahino kiate koe `a e ngaahi me'a ni:**
(Kataki `o fakatonuhi `a e puha `e taha ki he setesi kotoa pe)

a. **Na'e anga fefe `a e tu'unga ako na'e a'usia he'eku tamasi'i he `apiako fakafehoanaki mo e fanau kehe `oku nau ta'u motu'a tatau**

Fu'u sai `aupito `a e mahino	sai `aupito e mahino	na'e mahino `a e ngaahi me'a	si'isi'i `a e mahino	`ikai ha mahino
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. **Ko e ha ha me'a na'e fai `e he faiako loki ako ke tokoni'i `a e tu'unga ako na'e a'usia he'eku tamasi'i**

Fu'u sai `aupito `a e mahino	sai `aupito e mahino	na'e mahino `a e ngaahi me'a	si'isi'i `a e mahino	`ikai ha mahino
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. **`E anga fefe ha'aku tokoni ki he'eku tamasi'i `e fai `i `api**

Fu'u sai `aupito `a e mahino	sai `aupito e mahino	na'e mahino `a e ngaahi me'a	si'isi'i `a e mahino	`ikai ha mahino
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. **`E anga fefe ha'aku ngaue fakataha mo e faiako `eku tamasi'i ke tokoni ki he tu'unga ako `e a'usia he'eku tamasi'i**

Fu'u sai `aupito `a e mahino	sai `aupito e mahino	na'e mahino `a e ngaahi me'a	si'isi'i `a e mahino	`ikai ha mahino
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Kataki `o fai mai ha'o lau ki heni:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Ko e ha ha ngaahi founga `e fakalakalaka ai `a e founga `oku fakaha ai `e ho'o `apiako `a e tu'unga ako `oku a'usia ho'o tamasi'i?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

`Oku mahu'inga `aupito `a ho'o ngaahi tali.

Fakamalo atu ki he tuku mai ho taimi ke fakafonu `a e tohi fehu'i.

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Hoangaue `i he Ako ki hono Fakaha `o e Tu'unga Ako `oku A'usia `e he Tokotaha Ako

`Oku ou / `ikai keu fie vakai pe teu kau ki he faka'eke'eke mo e tokotaha fakatolo

`Oku mahino kiate au:

- Mahalo `e fetu'utaki mai `a e tokotaha fakatotolo
- 'E hanga `e he tokotaha fakatolo `o `omai `a e ngaahi fakamatala kotoa pe `oku tonu ke `omai keu lava ai `o fai ha'aku lau fekau'aki mo ha'aku faka'amu keu hook atu ki he faka'eke'eke
- 'E hanga `e he tokotaha fakatotolo `o fokotu'utu'u ha taimi faka'eke'eke `okapau teu loto ke hook atu ki he faka'eke'eke
- 'Oku fakaangaanga `e haafe houa `a e loloa `o e faka'eke'eke
- 'E tala mai keu fakamo'oni hingoa ki he foomu `oku ha ai `oku ou loto lelei hili ha'aku ma'u ha fakamatala fe'unga kimu'a peau toki kau ki he fak'eke'eke mo e tokotaha fakatolo

Hingoa: _____

Telefoni: _____

Ngaahi ta'u motu'a `o e fanau `oku nau o ki he ako: _____

Appendix D
Expression of interest

Massey University

I am / am not willing to consider participating in an interview with the researcher.

I understand:

- ⇒ That the researcher may contact me.
- ⇒ The researcher will provide all necessary information to allow me to make a decision about whether I wish to proceed with the interview.
- ⇒ The researcher will arrange an interview time should I decide to proceed with an interview.
- ⇒ The interview will last approximately half an hour.
- ⇒ I will be asked to sign an informed consent form prior to participating in the interview.

Name_____

Phone_____

Ages of children attending XXXXXX School_____

Appendix E

Example of initial qualitative analysis of data from teacher interviews

School C Collation Of Teacher Interviews Into Initial Categories

(NB codes removed to protect confidentiality and anonymity)

Guidelines and requirements (6)	
Knowledge/ understanding (5)	***Reference***
I am quite familiar with the NAGs and the Education Standards Act because I am on the BOT and a member of the management team.	
I know of them – could I quote them – no.	
Teachers don't always have the terminology – it's the practice versus theory stuff. They do it in practice they don't necessarily know the theory.	
That depends whether you mean globally - like they are doing all of it – they just can't quote it. We as a management team have a good understanding.	
I don't think we need to know the detail – we just need to be aware of them.	
I think they (teachers) need to know about the curriculum parts of the requirements – the rest should be for managers to know.	
Interpreting guidelines (4)	
We have discussed it as a team and the implications for our curriculum planning. We have a much bigger focus now on literacy and numeracy. We have looked at exemplars and are starting to use them in our assessment	
We talk a lot about best practice - you know making sure we assess the kids using valid data and that share the learning with the kids. Yeah – like when we assess children's writing – we use the ARBs and then we talk to the kids about what they know and what they need to work on.	
The planning structures are there and they are based on the NAG requirements. I guess teachers just need to know that what we do does meet requirements – don't know that they need the detail.	
It is important but I guess the responsibility is removed from us because here we do whole school planning – the management team make sure we comply with any regulations – so that's okay.	
I know we are supposed to focus on reading, writing and number but apart from that I guess I don't know much else	

Reports (6)	
Grading (6)	
I am glad there are no grades – (junior reports)	
I don't like the ABC it is in reverse A = below. I would use beginning, developing and competent.	
The ABC is confusing A is low achievement and C is high achievement.	
Hmmm the grades – I know people think I am silly but I changed the ABC and reversed the order. What do you mean? Well now our reports have A for below, B for within and C for above. I know some parents and some of my teachers hate it but I wanted to break the stereotyping of A for excellent.	
I hate the way the senior reports mix up ABC it is silly. Parents need a common understanding and we just confuses them by changing the order of the letters – it all means the same in the end.	
I don't know how the decisions were made – I think the senior managers made the decisions – I don't know what they based it on except I know Heather hates A being for excellent.	
I like that we can personalise the junior reports – not using grading.	
Features of report (5)	
It would be good to be able to show the goals the kids are working on – we don't do that. Do you mean achievement goals or the essential skills goals like work habits? Well both would be good but I guess I just mean the essential skill goals.	
The junior reports are chatty – it says what they can do – the voice of the teacher is there – the report is just one part of the process so we talk to parents about the areas of difficulty more than we would write it on the report.	
With most children you can be specific but you have to be politically correct – no negative comments writing everything in a positive way. Like you want to say he is lazy instead you write something like he can be easily distracted	
I think they are well set out. It has achievement and effort.	
I like the social development.	
Plenty of room for comment.	
I'd like something about goals – how they have gone with their goals and giving them a goal for next year.	
I would write next steps on the report.	

Effort/Progress/ Achievement (3)	
Effort is the amount - hmmm – it's their attitude to work, handing work in on time, doing work to the best of their ability.	
Effort is about how hard a child tries to complete something – whether they stick at it – I guess.	
Effort is like when the child perseveres – they take stuff on board like whether they ask you for clarification	
Progress – that's achievement – it's meeting expectations for the year level.	
Progress – how far they have come – like they could read at level 3 at the beginning of the year and now they can read – say at level 12 – that's progress.	
Progress – that is the same as effort.	
Probably we don't show progress and maybe we should.	
Achievement – well that would be against a standard – what they can do.	
Achievement – you base it what children that age should be doing	
Basis for reporting (2)	
We based the reports on achievement information we collected for each strand of the curriculum. We used the numeracy assessments. We have indicators for each stage of a level so like if I am Year 7 and working at fluent level 4 I would be above expectation.	
To write something about science and social studies is a waste of time – you are trying to think of something to say – you haven't taught social studies for a while and so you really don't have anything to say.	
Technology (2)	
For those teachers who can write straight onto computer there is a drop down menu of standards so that is helpful to the teacher – makes it efficient for them.	
It's computerised – I don't like it – you can have four comments the same – Computerising might make it quicker – it doesn't make it better.	
Standards (1)	
I do think we need to tell the parents more – in the juniors we don't really tell parents whether their child is meeting the expectations or standards. We need a cleaner above / within below.	

Professional Development (6)	
It never has been a priority – we have done the computers – one session I think – but there were bits missing off the report – a technical glitch I think.	
I guess we could always improve what we do so I guess PD is important – don't know that we specifically need it in reporting.	
We also provided readings on three way conferences	
When we introduced three way conferencing we did a PMI after the interviews and then we modified the way we did them	
Yeah and last year we did some role-play – how to handle tricky parents –How do mean 'tricky'? You know the ones who are demanding who can be a bit aggressive.	
I think conducting interviews is an important thing to think about.	
As for parent teacher interviews – no – if you ask for help it's always there – sometimes they give you a list of good comments for the report forms	
I have 5 young teachers just out of college. We have done a little bit like in syndicate meetings ✓ What to expect ✓ How to conduct an interview ✓ Mock questions ✓ Setting goals ✓ How to use books and portfolios ✓ What to do when it gets nasty	
We don't do it as a whole staff though so I don't know what happens below Year 4.	
Probably using data as a basis of interviews - we need to moderate samples more (writing) We have developed indicators for writing and reading	
I guess for new teachers and as revision for old teachers – I like sharing things like comments on reports.	
I guess it would be good to have some PD on writing good comments – maybe setting that up in a more structured way. What do you mean? You know so we all write comments which are good and really say what you want to say but in a way that looks professional.	
For our younger teachers maybe some help with report comments like one of our teachers cut and pastes comments form one report to another but she forgets to change he to she.	

When I was at teachers college I got a list of possible comments for reports – that has been great – I use it all the time.	
We have had minimal PD – I think we had one staff meeting on organising for interviews – like when the bell will ring – what do you want for tea – safety issues – parents they might need help with.	
Goal setting (6)	
No not really – our goals tend to be more about behaviour – we write them on the whiteboard. We have a value each month we focus on like honesty, caring, - that sort of thing	
I do it verbally – we are learning to – but that tends to be with the whole class maybe groups – otherwise we do have the behavioural goals that are for each student. Hmmm monitoring – well I guess we ask the kids what are you doing? What should you be doing?	
Goal setting – well yes – it's an ideal – I suppose – some teachers do it some don't. Generally I think they are behavioural goals like – always completes work on time.	
All of my children have a literacy goal. It is selected from their work – so they each have different goals. They also have a goal that is about their work habits.	
We have a review sheet at the end of each term and that goes home to the parents.	
We did set goals and they came from the interview. They were mainly about social things like work habits.	
In passing at parent interviews I might mention the goals but no not really.	

Yes the children have an essential skills goal – some of it relates to working in groups. It is in their portfolios – it is a generic goal for the class.	
Hmmm – monitoring – that is really slack – pretty much I just remind the children. When the portfolio goes home the children write I can do this or I am having trouble. I suppose it is ongoing. The portfolios will go home later this year that is when we will review the goals – I guess.	
Partnerships (6)	
Working together (4)	
I am absolutely fine about parents approaching me. If I have an issue I will ring the parent and either set up an interview or have a phone discussion. Like when one of my students was struggling with her reading I met with the parents and we agreed they would work with her more at home – hearing her read.	
In the senior school we do a newsletter at the beginning of every term so that parents know the topics we will cover – we also make a plea for resources – we tell them to encourage their child to read current events. Some teacher also do weekly newsletter where they celebrate student successes and keep parents informed about what's happening.	
Oh yes – at risk kids – ideas for helping at home – we alert them (parents) when there is a problem. Sometimes we do it through the homework – at meet the teacher we tell them if you have a problem come and see us.	
The kids have a reading log – they can fill it in and make comments – in the juniors we have a sheet in their reading folder with suggestions for listening to their child read.	
We did have a maths evening and gave out a sheet with tips for helping at home. We bring them (parents) on board with the focus for the month – values.	
It depends on the teacher and how the parent approaches them. Most teachers are great and parents are quite okay about seeking help.	
Through the homework sheet I write a blurb about what we have done – ideas for what they can do at home. Like this year we are more focused on research so I tell the parents they should help their kids find information about whatever it is we are studying.	
Yeah this last interview we gave out sheets with ideas for maths activities – it's part of the numeracy project – it was quite good – counting to and back and some stuff on fractions.	
When I do the 6 year nets I tell the parents (if I see them) to come and look. With the New Entrants if there is something obvious I would share it with the parents What	

would be something obvious? Like if they weren't settling in or if they were naughty I might talk to the parents and get their help to sort it out.	
Barriers (4)	
We have developed indicators for writing and reading Have you shared them with your parents? No – but that's a good idea – I suppose we should really. We have a focus each year for essential skills like last year it was Management skills – we put that in our newsletters so parents would know.	
Teachers can get their confidence knocked if a parent is rude or aggressive – but that hardly ever happens. Most teachers are fine about helping parents.	
I am okay about being approached – I guess. Some of our parents just want to bail their kids out – like the kid I put on time out – the dad came in upset – mum rang – the management team were wonderful. They supported me through that.	
I really like it when parents come and see me. The only time I worry about that is when I think they might misuse the information – like give their child a hiding. Has that ever happened? No but you would hate it if it did happen.	
Interviews (6)	
Participation of students (6)	
We prefer talking to the parent without the child there.	
It's about age – I think there is an optimum age when children could attend interviews – we let our senior children attend (Year 4 – 8).	
Thinking about the children in my class I would have to be careful about how I phrased what I said. Like if you had someone trying hard but not achieving the kid could misconstrue the adult comments. It could put huge pressure on everyone.	
I think it depends on the child – if it is going to be a positive interview maybe, but if it is more negative maybe instead of helping the child – the child might think – why bother.	
But when the child isn't there they (parent) can share parts they want to share (with their child) at home.	
I know parents found it hard to talk about the child in front of them – they found it hard to talk to the teacher about their child.	

Mind you I think at Year 7 and 8 they should hear the truth. Why at Year 7 and 8? Well they are going to high school – they need to know.	
We also decided we wouldn't have three way conferencing with the little ones. They are just not ready for it – parents feel uncomfortable having their child there.	
It's new for us having the children there. I think for some children it is better if they are not at the interview.	
Sometimes parents can take over – mind you on the other hand having the child there maybe the issues can be resolved better – I am not sure	
And I guess when I think about the 3 way conferences we don't really tell the kids what they should do - one of the teachers did go through that with her kids though. Do you know what she said to the kids? *No – you would have to ask her.*	
Structure of interviews (6)	
Well the structure of the interview is usually the parents get 15 minutes before the interview to look at their child's books – then they meet with the teachers who tell them about how their child is going. Most teachers also ask if the parents have any concerns.	
I showed the parents the portfolio – but my first question is always do you have any concerns? I tell them what the child is doing well in like they are writing really good stories and then I might say like you could practice this at home – like their times-tables.	
We also thought the conferences needed more structure – teachers did it differently – so we will be talking about that before the next round of interviews.	
I always ask, " How do you think your child is going? First. I discuss where they are going like in numeracy I talk about the knowledge and strategies the child is using (it's a chance to tell the parents about the project as well) I talk about what the child needs to work on next – like fractions. Then I ask if they have any questions	
I ask them what they want to know. We had the maths testing to talk about – I had to help them understand that. I explained the stages and what stage their child was at and if that was okay or not. I have goals in their writing books and I show them to the parents.	
I think it is up to the teachers how they run the interviews – there isn't an agreed way to do it. Some use the portfolios – some don't. We need to talk about it as a staff.	

Purpose (3)	
To inform the parents about how their child is achieving at school.	
To tell parents about how their child is going. To see if they have any concerns – I guess.	
To tell the parents what their child is doing well in and what they need to work on.	
Portfolios (2)	
Like some teachers work off portfolios and others don't. Portfolios are great to work from they give you something to focus on – we should all do it.	
Not a lot we just made the portfolios part of the interview rather than leave them for parents to view with their child in the library	
I used to use the portfolios but they are too structured now. What do you mean? Well we have different things we have to put in the portfolio so they all look the same but it stops you being able to really show what the child is working on. Like we had to do a writing sample on narrative writing because it was on the timeline for the portfolios but we weren't doing narratives so that was a waste of time – so if I use the kids books I can show parents exactly what their child is working on.	