

Reflection on parent teacher night

Last night was the first parent teacher night for Year 7 at Morpeth High School. As this is the first time the school has had a chance to meet some of the students' families, the Yr 7 Form Patron, Ms Finegan has asked for some brief comments from the teachers who participated in the meeting. Every one agreed that most parents were pleased with their child's transition from the local primary schools. There were many positive comments on the quality of teaching and the level of support their children have received such as the mentoring program and the observation days the school had organised when the students were still in Yr 6. Like at every other parent teacher meetings there were of course some issues and Ms Finegan was concerned to hear about these as well as reporting back about two matters parents had raised with her.

Mrs Jones (Bobby's mother)

Bobby is a physically active boy who spends most of his time playing cricket, rugby league and practising martial arts. He plays in a very successful representative rugby league team, which is coached by his father, an ex-first grade footballer. Mrs Jones is concerned that the English novel, 'Goodnight Mr Tom', the Year is reading is inappropriate for boys. She feels that the last assignment asking the students to imagine they are the male character in the novel and to write about their feelings and reactions discriminates against boys. "Boys should not be asked to write about feelings" was one of her memorable comments.

Dr Armstrong and Mr Campbell (Sarah's parents)

Sarah is a very capable girl with an excellent record from her local primary school. Sarah parents are concerned about the amount of group work Sarah is being asked to do. Last week Sarah received the marks and comments on a history assignment. Dr Armstrong and Ms Campbell are concerned that Sarah received the same mark as 4 of her peers even though she made a greater contribution to the group assignment. They are anxious that Sarah's progress is not inhibited, as they know she would like to study Medicine and therefore needs a high UAI mark in the HSC.

Mr & Mrs Stevens (Christopher James parents)

Christopher is often in trouble at school for not completing his homework, talking and being late for class. Christopher enjoys some of the more practical subjects like Design and Technology and PDHPE. The tests at the beginning of the year indicated that Christopher had a reading age below his peers. Many of the teachers laughed when Christopher's English teacher reported that his parents were concerned that Christopher did not have enough homework.

Ms Cook (Science teacher and Roll Call teacher for 7Red)

Ms Cook asked if anyone had seen Elizabeth's parents. Elizabeth is a very quiet girl and has few friends in the year. Of late Ms Cook has noticed that Elizabeth is often away or arrives late for school. On the days she is there Elizabeth often looks tired and fell asleep in afternoon classes two days last week. Notes always arrive explaining Elizabeth's absence, but Ms Cook is concerned about what else the school can do to assist Elizabeth.

Mrs Finegan (Form Patron Yr 7)

After hearing from the staff Mrs Finegan reported that two parents (*Mrs Harper, Beth's mother*) and (*Ms Chan, Maryanne's mother*) asked that their daughters were moved from their class 7 Gold to either 7 Blue or 7 Red because the girls were getting behind the other classes. When they were again told that all the classes covered the same work, they both said that the students in 7 Blue and 7 Red had more notes in their books and that 7 Gold was too noisy for their daughters to do any work. Mrs Finegan asked for comments back from the staff who indicated that there were indeed three disruptive boys in 7 Gold but all classes were covering the same work and in fact one child in Year 7 Gold had come top in the year in English and Mathematics common tests.

The second issue raised by parents was the upcoming school camp. Mr and Mrs Elbatoory did not want their daughter Nagla to attend a school camp organised for the whole of Yr 7 later in the term. They were concerned about their daughter's welfare as she would be staying overnight away from home. They were especially worried about stories of midnight feasts and meetings between the girls

and boys after dark, which they had heard occurred on last years school camp. The school organises this camp as both an excellent social exercise for the students as well as providing them with effective learning activities in Geography, Science, Art and Mathematics. Mrs Finegan is interested in hearing the staff reaction to organising an alternative excursion for girls like Nagla.

You reflect on the issues raised by the parents and teachers. How would you respond to these issues in light of the policy frameworks in NSW schools and your knowledge of schools as social as well as teaching and learning institutions?

Group Presentation – 10 minutes

Identify one or more of the issues raised in this case study. Discuss your group's reactions to these issues. You may wish to consider

- Educational theories
- Relevant policy documents
- How these policy documents relate to this issue
- The schools implementation of the syllabus
- The organisation of classes
- Behaviour of teachers and students
- Relationships between members of the school community