



Dargaville High School

Plunket Street
Dargaville Phone 09 439 7229

Issue No 7. Supplement

FROM THE BOARD

DHS Student Questionnaire 2008 - Executive Summary

This year the Board decided to survey the whole school student body, to assess some important aspects of the school values. Unfortunately on the day chosen quite a number of students were absent; we did however get a good sample of all year groups. We were made aware of some difficulties with the wording of some of the questions making interpretation less robust.

What follows is a listing of the main findings from that survey. A more complete analysis is found on the school intranet, along with all the raw data. It will inform decision making and planning.

There was a majority 'respect for [unspecified] authority', more so recognised by senior students [60%], and at all ages, by girls. This question has been criticised for not being specific enough. Overall 60% of students considered that teachers **often** 'treated each other with respect'. The most common experience of students is that teachers **sometimes** speak well of each other in class. Two-thirds of students felt that they themselves were respected by teachers and a similar number by office staff. Conversely about two thirds of Students **did not recognise respect** from Management, and even more did not from the Board. There was also less certainty about who these authority groups are.

As for student perception of respect from authorities within the school, teachers and office staff received similar ratings (67%), from students in both senior and junior school. Females scored slightly higher, and 44% of Year 10 students, especially boys considered this to be so. Management and BOT rated poorly 35% and 29% respectively, suggesting:

- Students have a lack of respect for school authorities
- Students may be unfamiliar with who the school authorities are.

Follow up in this area is needed.

Two thirds of students thought school was a **good place to be learning** [more females] and about half thought school a **good place for fun**. [more males]. Only the most senior students, and then just less than half, thought school a **good place to grow up**. Overall, three quarters of the students indicated that **our school is a safe place to be**. We are working hard to improve the environment for the other quarter.



This response raises a number of questions

- What would make this school a better place for learning
- Why do boys find school more fun than girls?
- In what ways can we help students to see that school is a good place for maturing and that there is purpose in staying at school longer.

The qualities students' rate as belonging to an excellent teacher are:

1. sense of humour
2. being fair
3. showing respect
4. knowing the subject well

This order of ranking is remarkably consistent with both genders and across the year levels, altering only at Year 13 when 97% consider subject knowledge as being the most important. High expectations were considered a quality of excellent teachers by only one third of students. Teachers who care about student's individual learning scored higher for females (63%) than males (50%), until Year 13, when 75% of male and female students considered this important. Students considered behaviour management most important at Year 13 and being interested in the student as an individual scored highest for males at Year 11 (70%) compared to 48% for Year 11 females, and highest for females at Year 13 (91%) compared to 50% for males.

The amount of teachers' students considered excellent at DHS was illuminating.

58% of all students considered at least 4 of their teachers were excellent

43% considered at least 5 of their teachers were excellent

27% considered at least 6

18% considered at least 7

Year nine students rated their teachers very highly for excellence. Female students scored consistently across the age levels. Male students in Year 10, 11 and 12 do not rate many of their teachers highly, with 50% of Year 11 students rating no more than two teachers as excellent. The year band results may tell us more about the stage of life that students are progressing through as it does about teaching excellence. A school is only as good as its teachers and DHS, and teachers in particular, can be proud of the student perception of excellence in teaching.

Option choice is often limited, particularly in the junior school, but three quarters of students choose their options because of their interest in the subject. One quarter of the year 13 boys chose their options because of the teacher, and two thirds because it was part of a training programme.

Although teacher expectation was not identified as a prominent quality required for excellence in teaching, 80% of students at DHS considered that teachers were expecting the best of them, with 50% of students believing they were capable of more if expectations were increased.

The degree in which students managed themselves was reflected in the question relating to studying when they would rather not. 60% of students recognised a time within the previous week when they had stuck to their studies when they would have preferred not to. Results were consistent for both genders, with a slight increase for Year 11 students, which may reflect NCEA Level 1 expectations. One quarter of students identified two occasions when they had persisted with their studies when they would have preferred not to and a second quarter recognised three or four occasions.

Our **core school values**, represented by our KAURI acrostic (K – keep trying, A – attitude, U – understanding, R – respect, I – integrity) are very poorly known by students, less than 50% being able to recognise even one of the 5. There is plenty of room for better communication here.

Recognition of the school values using the acrostic KAURI indicated that few students were able to indicate more than two values. 50% of girls picked 'respect' and 36% of boys. Given that a degree of the questionnaire was focused on this, it may well have been a lucky guess. This was a benchmark question which will be used to compare student groups in future years. For students to 'own' these values and 'live' these values as a part of what makes up Dargaville High School, they first need to be exposed to them by teachers, management and school leaders who 'own' them and 'live' them.

Parent interviews are highly rated by just 17% of students, more than half seeing little relevance, particularly in the senior school. We will compare with parent reception of these interviews shortly, and will be giving further thought to how parent-student feedback is conducted.

Having a **formal targeted drug testing policy** is perceived as being valuable for our students, particularly the juniors, and especially the boys where 51% thought it would have a positive benefit for their learning.

Feel free to ask any questions, and to follow up any of these points further. As you will know our aim is always to improve student achievement.

Student questionnaire 2008 - Comments from question 6

Students were asked to put forward suggestions for improvement in the school and provide general comment. This is all valuable information for the Board of Trustees.

The majority of comments (61) were about the curriculum and teaching in the school. 28 were regarding teacher consistency and fairness, followed by 16 relating to options, 9 for more PE/sports and the rest relating to start finish times, breaks, etc.

The next largest group of comments were general about the school – a total of 57. These again related to school activities and amenities such as skate board parks, playground, socials, etc. In a separate category there were 28 comments specifically relating to the need for activities at lunch time.



The 4th largest response was the physical environment of the school (26 comments), of which 18 related to shelter.

The canteen attracted 22 comments, of which 13 were about cheaper /free food available. Uniforms accounted for 21 comments of which 7 each were for more mufti days, change the uniform and no uniform.

There were only three comments relating to harassment, although there were 7 personal comments or views.

Details of Comments made (many students made more than one comment):

Area for comment	Number of Comments
Personal comments/view	7
Harassment	3
Curriculum, Teaching, etc	61
Lunchtime	28
General School	57
Potential issues	3
Mufti/uniform	21
Discipline	16
Physical environment	26
General suggestions	7
Canteen	22

