



The art of interviewing

David Carroll on how his interviewing technique has evolved

I have found the involvement of parents in school related issues has changed since I commenced my teaching career. My opinion on the matter is one of absolute support. I believe that parent engagement is vital to a child's education. The triad of success allows for the best holistic outcomes.

As a result of the parental revolution, I have been forced to evolve in how I involve parents in the management of student related issues. My role as a Dean of Students has allowed me to engage parents when issues have arisen that have caused difficulty for all involved. I have found that the opportunity to shape or form the student is greater at such times and both parents and teachers can have a significant impact on students in their care.

Over the years, I have spent a considerable amount of time developing some basic techniques to assist with the development of this outcome. More and more, I have found that success is enhanced if the outcome of the issue is planned with the involvement of parents.

The technique is not complicated but it does require some getting used to – perhaps

even a change in attitude as to why parents should be involved in the interview process. If a team approach is adopted, then the formation experience can be enhanced because the style of conversation at home and at school is connected.

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The concept of one-off interviews or contact with parents over issues also needs to be reconsidered. I have found that, although planning for the interview is very important, the follow-up with both the student and parents has the greatest impact on the ability to form students.

One of my concerns is still around the development of teacher attitudes to the benefit of involving parents in this way. Particularly, for our beginning teachers, there still exists a nervousness to involve parents. I thought

originally that this was connected to the “teacher knows best attitude”. More and more, I now feel it is connected to a lack of understanding of how to use parents to assist in achieving goals.

Imagine using Parent/Teacher conferences in a way that builds connectivity and establishes meaningful relationships with parents. All situations would supply significant benefits for the student and his or her holistic outcomes.

Working my way through the various levels in pastoral care in schools, I have found that interviewing skills have not been discussed. I have never attended an in-service day or conference where a presenter talked about the ability to use these styles of settings to enhance the triad of success and the formation outcomes.

Every time I deal with an incident now, is an opportunity for formation. In fact I believe that when an issue arises, it is the best time, if managed well, for formation to be achieved.

I have worked with my team of middle managers at Terrace and we have been able to develop techniques to involve parents in a safe way. Openness of communication has ensured that parents are more supportive of our stance.

This stance has been formed as a result of a partnership with parents.

It is important that teacher-training institutions think about how they prepare beginning teachers for the changing role of parents in education. The stress felt by new members to our profession is significant. One of the major factors associated with this is the difficult task of dealing with parents while a young and inexperienced teacher.

It also is important to assist middle leaders to better manage the interview process. What support is this group being given to deal with this very important aspect of their role? Do schools develop a technique, as we have at Terrace, or do they work together to develop protocols? Either way the outcome is very important because this connection is the basis on which quality formation can be achieved.

For those interested in further information on this important skill, I have developed a presentation I have called *The Art of Interviewing* that covers the techniques I have learned and expanded on at Terrace.

The presentation covers:

- Purpose of Interview
- Formation opportunities
- Specific stages of an interview
- Facilitation techniques
- Use of courtesies and humour



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- Establishment of tone
- Planning requirements
- Follow-up approaches
- Successful and difficult interviews.

You are welcome to contact me by email if you would like to receive the school's interview preparation sheet and a PowerPoint of *The Art of Interviewing*. **ET**



David Carroll is Dean of Students
St Joseph's College
Gregory Terrace, Brisbane
email DavidCarroll@terrace.qld.edu.au

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