

Parent and Student Perceptions of Quality Program Outcomes

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This essay examines the perceptions of students with whom I have worked with over the years but more significantly, those of their parents to a range of special program outcomes offered at Glengarry, the Scots College's outdoor education campus in the Kangaroo Valley, NSW. The first section reports on a special program of 'parent hikes' designed to allow parents to experience 'first hand' some aspects of their child's experience and journal records kept over several years are used to analyse the experience and thus perceptions of parents about a range of program outcomes.

The second section examines data collected from debriefing sessions involving (on separate occasions) students and parents. This section also analyses survey data collected from parents which examines a broad range of program aspects and outcomes.

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Introduction

.....the relationship between schools and the community is the most important relationship in the provision of quality.....this is the key relationship to work on.

Aspin, Chapel & Wilkinson (1994, pg 92)

More and more, educators and schools are recognising the importance of parent engagement in improving quality learning outcomes, though these usually function to activate parents as 'third party' agents of their children's learning. Fewer perhaps have engaged parents actively in learning situations where child/parent roles and relationships become the focus of facilitating learning for the child, and the parent. Teachers in the USA, Australia and New Zealand and elsewhere, have looked to challenging not just students, but the whole family groups in which they are a part, using outdoor (and sometimes indoor) adventure settings. The objectives of such family programs are described by Gass (1993) as including:-

- *Increasing family skills in problem solving, communication, and cooperation.*
- *Increasing teamwork, trust, and flexibility within the family.*
- *Empowering families to identify salient issues and goals, and identify what the members can do to attain them.*
- *Enabling families to have fun together.*

What underpins these efforts is the belief that parent participation or involvement can not only be beneficial for students, but also their parents and the indeed, the family group as a whole, and that in doing so, measurable outcomes can be achieved in building positive perceptions of the work of the school and its staff.

My purpose here has been to analyse an area of interest to most schools though perhaps more so, independent schools who compete for student enrolments and therefore must present programs that are attractive to their students and their parents.

Part of this is a requirement that successful schools must foster a positive attitude and perception of their programs particularly where special programs have been adopted such as is the case at Glengarry where an outdoor education campus was established to focus on health, value affirmation and generally personal and social development. These kinds of program specialisations represent a break from the mainstream so choice becomes a more important factor in the schools planning and ultimate success. Accordingly the school has to somehow gauge the attitudes of parents and students to such programs in order to establish their acceptance, worth and viability.

J. Ainley (1995) in his paper on *Students Views of their schooling* analyses the importance of students' perceptions of their schools in determining their effects on educational outcomes. He indicates that although the link is broadly acknowledged, there is little objective information available about the topic. This interests me as the more I have looked at the area, the more relevant and important it appears in a range of significant educational concerns. Ainley concludes.. 'Students' perceptions of certain aspects of school life appear to be associated with adopting deep approaches to learning and to some extent to growth in achievement.'

His findings are based on results obtained from a number of studies that have used the ACER School Life questionnaires developed for primary and secondary years. By distinguishing positive and negative effects his research embodies five specific aspects of schooling: achievement, opportunity, status, identity and teachers. He also researches the changing attitude of students as they move through a school.

In his conclusions Ainley states that 'there is evidence of a link between favourable views of school life and the adoption of a deep approach to learning.'

Gray, Patterson and Linkey of the The University of Wollongong (1993) conducted a longitudinal study of the Glengarry campus' program in terms of its effectiveness in meeting a number of development needs. Using quantitative testing, two instruments were constructed - the Real Me Questionnaire and the School Life Questionnaire. The former examines attitudes, perceptions and behaviours; the latter analyses students' perceptions and attitudes pertaining to student/teacher relationships, school ethos, level of satisfaction and academic rigour.

Their results for the RMQ demonstrated a consistent positive direction in data movement overall as did the results from the SLQ analysis. The researchers conclude that both instruments confirm a 'very positive aspect of the outdoor education experience as being one of social growth.'

The perceptions of students and their parents of their school or special programs within it, are linked to the notion of the school's effectiveness and some measure of this has been researched by Tony Townsend (1992) in his analysis of community perceptions of school effectiveness. School effectiveness will manifest in positive perceptions being held by students and their parents alike as well as the school community as a whole.

Townsend's research indicates that no one element such as goal clarity or academic focus 'was dominant in determining school effectiveness. Rather, a wide ranging set of experiences that encompass academic, citizenship and personal development dimensions are perceived as features of effectiveness.' Other aspects including the nature of staff, planning matters and administration were seen to be of even greater importance.

In his paper *Show children's perceptions of their schooling experiences* Patrick Danahar (1995) in describing what is largely a positive view of a unique schooling program, suggests that at least some of the enthusiasm that students may hold for such a program might be attributable to the 'Halo effect' of being involved in an educational innovation. This is likely to apply in the case of the Glengarry program as well, and presents a little exposure at least, to my area of interest.

This essay examines the perceptions of students but more significantly, those of their parents to a range of special program outcomes offered at Glengarry, the Scots College's outdoor education campus in the Kangaroo Valley, NSW. The first section reports on a special program of 'parent hikes' designed to allow parents to experience 'first hand' some aspects of their child's experience and journal records kept over several years are used to analyse the experience and thus perceptions of parents about a range of program outcomes.

The second section examines data collected from debriefing sessions involving (on separate occasions) students and parents. This section also analyses survey data collected from parents which examines a broad range of program aspects and outcomes.

Section 1 Parent Hikes: An approach to parent inclusion

More than 8 years ago, my school embarked on a program to engage parents in key aspects of its teaching and learning program, despite the warnings of its Principal at the time, that we 'needed to know what we were getting into', and that considerable caution was necessary. His expression of caution was not without basis; his experience and our experience in hindsight, gives some account at least of his trepidation. Put simply, the program was not an easy one to plan, implement and evaluate however strong our beliefs were in its value.

Despite his warnings, the staff at that time felt strongly about the worth of such a program, particularly in view of the unique aspects of the school's program, which has been so strongly geared toward achieving learning outcomes in pastoral areas. So after some time was spent discussing and drafting our plans, the program began: In broad view, the plan was to invite parents to join their sons in a hike. The activity (in a graded fashion) was offered each term, and parents were asked to reverse their roles and 'hand over' leadership to their sons throughout the weekend. Since its beginnings, it has become more sophisticated, more challenging, and is now more than ever, achieving the sorts of outcomes that were originally envisaged.

Project aims and intended outcomes

By inviting parents to join their sons in special hike weekends, the school hoped to:-

1. Provide parents with opportunities to observe and experience their son's experience.
2. Build a greater understanding of the breadth and depth of their son's learning.
3. Allow parents to experience the style and methodologies of teaching used at the school.
4. Build a sense of community through shared challenge and achievement, and thus a strengthening of family and group relationships, including the role of the teacher.
5. To stimulate a sense of importance in parents in their roles as stakeholders in their son's education through an active involvement (rather than passive).
6. To promote the relationship of mothers and fathers in their special roles as parents.
7. To promote greater understanding of parents by their sons.

8. To provide opportunities where boys and parents can view each others personal 'growth'.

If these aims were to be achieved we would have expected a number of observable outcomes:

<u>In relation to:</u>	<u>We would expect:</u>
aim 1.	Parents to be able to record/articulate observations of their son's experience and acknowledge the extent of their importance.
aim 2.	Parents to be able to record/articulate understandings of the breadth and depth of their son's learning.
aim 3.	Parents to be able to understand styles and methodologies of teaching approaches first hand.
aim 4.	Parents and their sons to be able to record/articulate beliefs about strengthened family relationships and awareness of the teachers' roles.
aim 5.	Parents to be able to record/articulate increased sense of self-awareness and power in their roles as stakeholders.
aim 6.	Parents and their sons to be able to feel a greater sense of understanding about their separate roles as parents.
aim 7.	Students to be able to demonstrate a greater understanding and awareness of their parents.
aim 8.	Parents and their sons to be able to express a mutual, increased awareness of their respective growth.

Aspects of quality

Clearly, the attainment of all of these expected outcomes is difficult to ascertain, though some will be more evident than others. A discussion of the actual outcomes follows, but first - a discussion of aspects of quality that are likely to be relevant to the program: It will suffice at this stage, to say that while greater parent participation in schools by parents is still regarded by many as threatening, others put the alternate view strongly:

Building up the capacity of the families to understand what's going on with their children and to make serious inputs into the educational process; building up the capacity of teachers to cope with their children and to relate to the families: that is the essence of

quality control. Aspin, Chapel & Wilkinson (1994, pg 92). A senior administrator in a school...Went as far as to suggest that the relationship between schools and the community is the most important relationship in the provision of quality.....this is the key relationship to work on.

The issue of quality is thus very much associated with this type of program, and its place in it appears not only significant, but also complex. The program addresses a number of quality aspects relating to teaching and learning: The NSW Department of Education's discussion paper on Quality Teaching and Learning (1994) provides a useful framework for analysing these aspects in Glengarry's Parent Participation Program:

Aspects of quality teaching in the program are likely to include:

- A wide range of organisational and instructional strategies in a disciplined and purposeful outdoor classroom.
- Monitoring of individuals and group learning and giving feedback through informal debriefing.
- Fostering independent learning and responsibility for learning.
- Teaching ethical relationships based on good communication and mutual respect.
- Teachers are enthusiastic proponents of the program and its teachings.
- There is critical reflection on program outcomes; strong collegial support and a commitment to comprehensive, professional development to meet the demands of a program that requires a heightened attention to risk minimisation through quality training.
- Teachers are required to articulate their purposes and beliefs about learning and the principles which underpin their teaching. This typically takes place in briefings and debriefings.
- Teachers embrace the view that all parents and boys undertake meaningful learning, and that this learning is mostly interdependent in the program and convey this expectation as a matter of importance.
- The teachers engage students in learning experiences and issues which students and their parents regard as important to their lives.
- Teachers foster a sense of relevance and connection between the programs learning and other learning areas.

Aspects of Quality learning are likely to include:

- The Parent Participation Program seeks to challenge boys in particular, in a purposeful leadership role. Few boys do not see this as a significant demand so there is a real feeling of importance in the exercise.
- While hikes generally require a navigation from 'A to B' there are opportunities for risk taking, creative as well as conventional strategies in solving problems and arriving at decisions.
- Boys are critically involved in the planning stages of the hike and are required from the outset, to embrace a sense of personal responsibility for the outcomes

of the experience. This begins during the Outdoor Program briefing lessons, later in checking food and equipment and the readiness of their parents, then on throughout the hike.

- As in all hikes, boys are encouraged to believe in their ability to learn and are regularly required to reflect on their learning through debriefing exercises.
- The Program encourages boys and their parents to work together in groups in navigation, camping etc, and task delegation to individuals requires individual participation and responsibility.
- The Program requires a commitment by all but possibly in different ways from boys and parents: Boys are pursuing the role of leaders and the resourcefulness that this normally requires is fostered and encouraged in the preparation and briefing of the hikes. Similarly, parents are encouraged to go beyond their usual physical and intellectual resources and invest in trust and stepping back from control.
- The integrity of the hike groups underpins all the areas of safety and effectiveness of hikes. The spirit of appreciation and respect and care for others takes prominent place in teaching for group effectiveness. Parents are briefed on ways to fit this expectation.
- Through all of this a boy's family is made to feel welcome in the school but more importantly a boy is helped to see that this is so. Such a goal serves to help validate a boy's feelings about the worth of his education.
- The hikes serve as a metaphor for life in many respects and help a boy to understand issues such as democracy, fairness, equity and justice and relate them to their own lives.
- The Program presents a very strong sense of shared purpose and togetherness and for this reason helps promote positive relationships with their teachers (hike-masters), other students, their parents and other adults.

Stages of development

While there was never any intention to introduce the Parent Participation Program as a staged development, it has nevertheless, shown a development over time, and the analysis of parents' comments perhaps bears this out. As an observer and participant in the exercise since its commencement in 1990, a number of comments can be made (It should be noted that no parent comments were recorded by way of the Parent Journal record prior to 1992 even though a variety of trials were run before this time). Some general observations include:

- There has been an increase in the sophistication of the program since its commencement. This has been marked by the development of clearer goals, greater educational challenge, and a growth in the knowledge and understanding of the outcomes.
- Staff are more highly trained for the program and so too are boys and their parents through a number of briefings that take place for them.

- Greater attention has been given to the importance of debriefing for all participants, so that higher degrees of awareness of outcomes is now being achieved.
- There has been a shift in focus from a whole family experience to a parent-son experience where a boy's mother and father are invited to attend on separate occasions.
- The hikes are generally requiring higher skill level of the boys and fitness levels of parents now more than they have before.

Program Outcomes

While there are other means of doing so, the sole source of analysis of outcomes in this report is based on comments made by parents at the conclusion of each program (hike) in a Parent Journal Record which has been kept since March 1992. My analysis of outcomes was based on the following approach:

Firstly, I selected three sets of comments representing the early phase (March 1992); the middle phase (September 1995-November 1996); and the recent phase (March 1998). The following table outlines these. In the next step, I examined each comment, highlighting typical 'descriptor' words or phrases that could be associated with the aspects of quality outlined in my earlier discussion eg. 'the staff are...welcoming' or.....'a great opportunity to share part of the (school) culture'.

My next task was to contrast and compare these descriptors and thus identify any noticeable changes over time. From this analysis I felt it was possible to broadly track outcomes, as perceived by parents, over time.

early phase (1992)

- the staff were welcoming, efficient
- I felt to be in another world..my son was superb
- the boys look after their parents and show their skills
- I didn't think I would make it but I did
- thanks for the opportunity
- will keep in training for the next one

middle phase (1995-96)

- the fitness and skills of the boys most impressive
- a wonderful experience
- takes boys and turns out responsible young men
- staff are excellent-warm and hospitable
- the boys were so helpful
- well organised

recent phase (1998)

- lots of time to develop my relationship further with my son
- the dorm seems to be a great group of young boys
- my son really looked after his old dad and made this weekend an experience I won't forget
- my son has grown tremendously since I saw him last
- I think it made him start to think about his future
- a fantastic opportunity to spend time with my son without other family

- great organisation
- most enjoyable
- enjoyed the parents' company
- really the only way to get to know each other
- well-organised and friendly people
- a marvellous way you are teaching and training our sons
- a great experience
- a great opportunity to share part of the (school) culture
- I am on the way to getting back a young man
- experience first hand the incredible experience the boys go through
- just wish I had been fitter
- enlightening experience
- I didn't realise how well the boys got on together
- however daunting you encouraged all of us
- thank you for the privilege and the discipline
- I just loved having time with him (son)..talking late into the night
- a great experience of a little of the (school) happenings
- thank you to staff for their guidance
- it would be difficult for parents to replicate these experiences as a family unit.
- All parents would have been impressed with the collective changes in maturity..as they demonstrated their development skills
- I enjoyed the challenges..I was most impressed with the boys' performance
- congratulations.. for their development and ability to adapt to and deal with adversity
- the greatest benefit was being able to share these challenges with my son
- my son has shown a sense of determination and self-possession which I didn't know he had
- great achievement all round
- boys have obviously developed a great sense of independence and resourcefulness and easily assumed the leadership role over their.. parents
- I am in awe of his fitness
- its great to see such development in the area of confidence and personal achievement
- the school appears to continue to provide fantastic challenges for all the boys
- the boys seem very confident and relaxed with each other which definitely rubbed off on the parents
- an unbelievable experience..it must be the first time I have ever spent time with my son (just the two of us)
- very impressed with the organisation
- its an emotional experience to see your son changing and developing...the program is playing a big part in this
- its incredible the change in my son. He has turned from an adolescent pubescent to a really earnest young man...someone I can really relate to
- you're doing great things down here..keep up the good work

- I feel even stronger about this outward bound education after the experience
- I wish there was more parent involvement
- mission hard but not impossible
- I enjoyed the challenge and it was certainly worth the effort
- It was good to be part of the hike when the boys were in charge
- a hard test for both boys and parents
- the support of the boys and the other parents made the hard bits easier
- good to see the boys improving in stamina and ability

On the basis of these comments I have drawn a number of interpretations:

NB. The varying number of comments taken from each of the three phases is of no significance. This is a result of the numbers of parents who attended the hikes and took the time to record a comment.

- Overall, if the comments are checked against the listed program aims, there appears to be support for the view that the program aims are being achieved. Aim 7. however, is uncertain since students' comments have not yet been sought.
- There is a noticeable increase in the depth of reflection evident in the comments, perhaps indicating an increased breadth and depth of outcomes over the period. Put simply, the comments have become less superficial in nature. This may be attributable to improved briefings and program refinement overall, as well as higher quality and more effective teaching approaches during the hikes.
- Throughout the period of the program, parents have consistently described very strong appreciation of the inclusive nature of the exercise, which has allowed and encouraged them to be a part of the activity.

Conclusions

Aspin, Chapel & Wilkinson (1994, pg 83) in discussing 'working together' as a theme for schools suggest that:-

schools have to start building partnerships and supportive relationships with all elements of their local communities.suddenly parents had to be made to feel welcome, had to be enthused, had to feel that they were deeply involved with the school on more than peripheral matters .

There is ample evidence in this analysis to support the view that this example of parent participation, has produced high quality outcomes through the school's

approaches to Teaching and Learning, particularly, though perhaps not exclusively, in this area of the program. Aims are being met by clear outcomes and these are, by their nature, likely to have a wider impact on the broader curriculum and achievement of the school. While it is not intended as a therapeutic program, it nevertheless shares a similar kind of enrichment. Such programs are designed (in broad terms)...*'to assist families in discovering and enhancing their strengths and resources.'* Denton(1986, in Gass,1993). Such programs can be *'used as enrichment experiences for families who define themselves as "well functioning" ' and in these cases such programs have the 'the potential to enhance family relationships, accentuate family strengths, and normalise family concerns about negotiating life transitions' Gass (1993, pg 114)*

Section 2. Gauging Parent and student perceptions of the Glengarry program outcomes

The next section examines the perceptions of students but more extensively parents of the overall program (the Glengarry semester) outcomes. The first part records the outcomes of a broad debriefing process involving, in the first instance, comments from the students who are nearing completion of the program, followed by comments from their parents. This serves two purposes: One to start the boys thinking about their own achievements and two, to provide comment that will generate discussion among parents.

The students debriefing takes place as either a dormitory or whole-group meeting in the last week or fortnight of the semester. While other debriefing activities are conducted with students, for example, by tutors with tutor groups; by dorm masters with dormitory groups; and by subject teachers with class groups, the purpose of this exercise is to seek comment from the student group about a number of questions designed to stimulate general and sometimes specific discussion. A summary of student responses is included in the is list of questions:-

What will you continue at school?

- Prep regime
- Go bush more often
- Hikes on weekends
- Climbing
- Music (rock band)
- Challenges
- Maintain friendships
- Fitness
- Opportunities/options in recreational activities
- Maintaining a routine
- Hike returns

- Empathetic of parents
- Willingness to get on with others
- Knowing more about limits
- Increased knowledge of outdoors
- Friendship memories
- New skills
- New & better self
- Reflecting on bad memories
- Changed attitudes/personalities
- Not taking things/parents for granted
- Good reputation
- Sense of pride
- Environmental knowledge

How will you contribute at home?

- Help more
- More independence, less of a bother
- Take more responsibility
- Daily duties
- More understanding
- Decision making
- Initiative
- Improve communication

How should your Parents treat you?

- More independently
- Same!
- Realisation that things may have changed
- Flexibility
- Greater respect
- Expectation that you can do/contribute more
- Can make own decisions
- Trust - more of it

What will you take home with you?

- Good memories

The next phase of this debriefing process engages parents in seeking comment about program outcomes and the comments from students are used to promote this process. Parents are invited to an evening meeting at the main school campus in Sydney and attendance usually comprises a third to half of parents of the current intake. The meeting commences with a separation of the group into dormitory groups who are asked to discuss a number of questions (summarised below). The group then recombines and are given a summary of the boys' debriefing comments and discussion is invited.

Parents recorded the following comments in response to the questions:-

What have been the most valuable outcomes of the program?

What new strengths can now be built upon?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Independence | • Developed friendships |
| • Maturity | • Setting goals & achieving them |
| • More organised | • Self awareness |
| • Confidence | • Flexibility |
| • Better self esteem | • Self motivation |
| • Self reliance | • Appreciation of others |
| • Responsibility | • Respect |
| • Developing team skills | • Environmental awareness |
| • Tolerance | • Appreciation of outdoor activities |
| • Positive attitude | • Conflict-problemsolving |
| • Improved health | |

Following are their responses to the second question:-

What will you do to allow/encourage your son to make use of his new knowledge, skills and strengths? (Actions)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Continue independence | • Maintain "the challenge" |
| • Give tasks & responsibilities | • Encourage household chores |
| • Decision making | • Group return to Glengarry |
| • Encourage skill development | • Lead by example |
| • Encourage self management | • Support & let go |
| • Making use of skills learnt | • Application of skills learnt |
| • Maintain friendships made | • Trust |
| • Encourage outdoor activities | |

The consensus of opinions from parents points to a strong acknowledgment that "Glengarry" goals are being achieved with favourable outcomes. Briefly, these include:-

- the development of responsibility and independence
- teamwork
- maturity
- the ability to assess and take risks
- self esteem
- positive attitude/thinking
- a sense of achievement

- the benefits of communal living
- pride
- adventure
- tolerance
- growth of friendships
- Initiative

Comments and discussion

In the normal course of events, feedback obtained from boys of the intake would be considered valuable in its own right and the kinds of responses it includes as supporting the conclusion that the program was producing successful outcomes in a broad range of areas which could be summarised as including:-

- the development of responsibility and independence
- teamwork
- maturity
- the ability to assess and take risks
- self esteem
- positive attitude/thinking
- a sense of achievement
- the benefits of communal living
- pride
- adventure
- tolerance
- growth of friendships

However, for the purposes of this analysis, they are perhaps most useful in contrasting with the comments of parents. Students were assisted with thinking about the four questions provided - parents were invited to respond with less specific questions but interestingly produced, in general terms, similar responses: Key elements appearing in both groups of responses include:-

- friendship
- fitness and health
- independence
- maturity
- responsibility and self-reliance
- tolerance
- environmental awareness
- getting on with others
- respect

The 'actions' listed by parents to build on the new knowledge, skills and strengths only confirms the observation that through the process, parents have 'built' positive perceptions of the program outcomes as well as ideas or means for following them up.

Survey: Parent perceptions of Glengarry semester program outcomes

The last section of this essay examines the results of a survey of parent perceptions of the outcomes of the more significant areas of the program. The survey was a direct result of requests by a number of parents for an opportunity to comment more comprehensively on program outcomes and perhaps more explicitly, on its strengths and weaknesses. The survey followed the most recent parent debriefing night discussions, so parents had, to a large extent, already been primed for thinking in evaluative terms.

Rationale

Obtaining direct data on student performance and program effectiveness will normally be gained through the measurement of certain performance outcomes and criteria, followed by comparative investigations between successive participating groups - in this case - 'intakes', however this hasn't been the intention of this exercise although it could be repeated with future 'intakes'. Alternatively, gathering data from parents in the form of their perceptions of the success (or otherwise) of various aspects of the program is seen to be an effective, though perhaps an indirect means of gauging program outcomes. Such an approach relies on the assumption that parents know and understand their child's experience and are thus 'reliable witnesses'. This is perhaps a not unreasonable assumption to draw, particularly in view of the efforts made by the school to have parents visit and participate as has been outlined in the first section of this paper

Survey Aims

- To gather responses by parents to the significant range of program outcomes and approaches in order to provide a means of gauging the success or otherwise of approaches to these aspects of the program and perhaps the program in general.
- To test the hypothesis that:-
 1. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of dayboy and boarder parents over the range of areas considered; and
 2. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of parents of boys with and boys without siblings.

Method and design

- Key aspects of the program were listed in terms of their significance in achieving outcomes. Input was sought from staff and the data from student and parent debriefings (discussed above) was examined in order to confirm or modify the list of significant areas.

1. My son was well-cared for by his Dorm Masters. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.67 SD= .49 % frequencies 0 0 0 33
 67
2. He showed healthy growth personally. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.75 SD= .55 % frequencies 0 0 5 15
 80
3. His living skills have been added to considerably. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.25 SD= .967 % frequencies 0 5 20 20
 55 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -.833
4. Journal writing has been valuable for my son. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 3.89 SD= 1.18 % frequencies 0 22 6 33 39
5. I intend to continue to encourage journal writing. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 3.72 SD= 1.18 % frequencies 6 6 33 22
 33

The Co-Curricular Program (including hikes): (CP1-3)

1. Has had a powerful positive impact on my son. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.6 SD= .82 % frequencies 0 5 5 15
 75 ANOVA of baorders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -.792
2. It has produced significant growth in his fitness & skills. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.95 SD= .22 % frequencies 0 0 0 5
 95 ANOVA of siblings vs only child SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= .333
3. It has produced significant growth in his ability to cope with challenges.
 mean= 4.84 SD= .38 % frequencies 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 0 0 0 16
 84

Communications: (C1-7)

1. Staff contact with parents has been effective. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 3.95 SD= 1.08 % frequencies 0 11 26 21 42
 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -1.205

2. Information about the program provided before the commencement was helpful and satisfactory. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 3.90 SD= .88 % frequencies 0 5 26 42 26
 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -1.417

3. Correspondence from the school during the semester has been well timed and helpful. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.11 SD= 1.05 % frequencies 5 0 16 37
 42 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -1.298

4. Staff responses to inquiries have been prompt. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.39 SD= .78 % frequencies 0 0 17 28

56

5. Glengarry Flying Scotsman articles have been informative. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 3.45 SD= 1.15 % frequencies 5 15 30 30 20
 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -1.167

6. Reports have been effective in reporting my son's progress. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.1 SD= .97 % frequencies 5 0 10 50
 35 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -1

7. The debriefing exercise has been helpful 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 3.93 SD= 1.21 % frequencies 7 7 7 43
 36 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -2.833

Visiting Days, Exeat & Open Day: (V1-3)

The Visiting Days, Open Day & Exeat weekend were effective in:-

1. providing a break for my son. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.63 SD= .60 % frequencies 0 0 5 26

68

2. allowing me to meet staff. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.26 SD= .03 % frequencies 0 5 16 26
 53 ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95% mean diff= -1.095

3. allowing me to view the facilities. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5
 mean= 4.58 SD= .61 % frequencies 0 0 5 32

63

Medical and Health Matters: (M1-3)

1. The medical and health supervision/care of my son was thorough.

				1	2	3	4	5	
mean=	4.15	SD=	.99	% frequencies	0	5	25	20	
50	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%							mean diff=	-.875

2. The medical staff were prompt and effective in advising matters of importance.

				1	2	3	4	5
mean=	3.56	SD=	1.55	% frequencies	19	6	13	25

3. I was pleased with my son's general health and fitness throughout his stay

				1	2	3	4	5	
mean=	4.8	SD=	.52	% frequencies	0	0	5	10	
85	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%							mean diff=	-.5

Parent Hikes: (PH1-4)

1. Are an effective adjunct to the program.

				1	2	3	4	5	
mean=	4.83	SD=	.38	% frequencies	0	0	0	17	
83	ANOVA of siblings vs only child SIGNIFICANT at 95%							mean diff=	.875

2. The hikes helped me to understand my son's experience.

				1	2	3	4	5
mean=	4.74	SD=	.45	% frequencies	0	0	0	26
74								

3. The College provided sufficient information for my preparation for the experience.

				1	2	3	4	5
mean=	4.16	SD=	.96	% frequencies	0	5	21	26
47								

4. The hike experience has produced some positive outcomes for our family

				1	2	3	4	5
mean=	4.56	SD=	.51	% frequencies	0	0	0	44
56								

Overall: (01-11)

1. The Glengarry program has provided strong educational outcomes for my son.

				1	2	3	4	5	
mean=	4.41	SD=	.712	% frequencies	0	0	12	35	
53	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%							mean diff=	-.894

The program has helped him to grow in:-

2. maturity

				1	2	3	4	5
mean=	4.68	SD=	.48	% frequencies	0	0	0	32

68

3.	independence				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.5	SD= .71	% frequencies	0	0	11	28		
	61								
4.	fitness				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.9	SD= .31	% frequencies	0	0	0	10		
	90								
5.	self esteem				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.63	SD= .50	% frequencies	0	0	0	37		
	63	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%		mean diff=				- .548	
6.	social skills				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.63	SD= .50	% frequencies	0	0	0	37		
	63	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%		mean diff=				- .774	
7.	self reliance				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.68	SD= .48	% frequencies	0	0	0	32		
	68								
8.	self concept				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.5	SD= .618	% frequencies	0	0	6	39		
	56	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%		mean diff=				- .818	
9.	personal efficacy				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.44	SD= .78	% frequencies	0	0	17	22		
	61	ANOVA of boarders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%		mean diff=				- .727	
10.	The program has met my expectations				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.67	SD= .49	% frequencies	0	0	0	33		
	67								
11.	The program has exceeded my expectations				1	2	3	4	5
	mean= 4.06	SD= 1.16	% frequencies	6	0	28	17		
	50	ANOVA of borders vs dayboys SIGNIFICANT at 95%		mean diff=				-1.26	

1. All items recorded 70% or higher in ratings of 3 or higher indicating a strong positive perception of program outcomes overall. Areas perceived by parents to be mostly strongly achieved were:-

- P2 *healthy growth* with 80% at rating 5
- CP2 *significant growth in fitness* with 95% at rating 5
- CP3 *growth in ability to cope with challenge* with 85% at rating 5
- M3 *health and fitness* with 85%
- PH1 *parent hike as effective adjunct* 83%
- O4 *fitness* 90%

Areas that scored lowest include:-

- A1 *academic rigour* 29% at 2 or less
- P4 *the value of journal writing* 22% at 2 or less
- C5 *communication in the Flying Scotsman* (weekly newsletter)
20% at 2 or less
- M2 *promptness of advice from medical staff* 25% at 2 or less

2. Averaging the means of each group of outcomes enabled a ranking in order of degree of agreement/satisfaction:-

<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Average of means</u>
1	Co-curricular	4.8
2	parent hikes	4.57
3	overall	4.55
4	visiting days & exeats	4.49
5	pastoral	4.26
6	medical	4.17
7	communications	4.0
8	academic	3.7

On the one hand, a school could be troubled somewhat by the outcome ranking: Few schools would be happy with an overall program outcome that ranked academic aspects lowest in terms of positive perception. While the mean differences are not great, there is something to think about here and there may be strategies to be considered which if applied, could alter this outcome.

On the other hand, the results may only confirm what might be expected from a program that is so specially geared towards personal/relationship outcomes and, as is evidenced, achieving so well. So much so that we might be left wondering about the success of the program if these outcomes were not being ranked with such positive prominence, relatively and in absolute terms. Nevertheless the data speaks for itself and therefore suggests some matters for further consideration including:-

- repeated testing of future intakes to verify trends

- re-designing survey questions to delve more deeply into each outcome area
- comparing survey data with a student survey examining the same aspects but from the students' perspectives

3. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results also present some interesting differences in the perceptions of Boarder parents as opposed to day boy parents: No less than half the survey items showed a significant variation of means (with a probability of <5% of being wrong) between the two groups. Boarder parent perceptions were lower in every one of these items leaving us to speculate what reasons may be offered for explaining such a significant pattern. Interpretations are however likely to be assisted through a greater understanding of the nature and perhaps -peculiarities - of boarding, but it is likely that:-

- Boarding parents have greater expectations of the school in all respects perhaps since they are at a greater distance from their son's experience and logically, I think, invest greater trust and responsibility and therefore expectation in the school.
- Most boarding students have boarded at the school in the years prior to their stay at Glengarry so their experience elsewhere is likely to impact on their and their parents' perception of its nature.
- Boarding is a much more costly option although it is not an option at Glengarry so it is not unreasonable for parents to generally expect more.
- There are demographic/societal factors associated with the make up of the boarding community that may be impacting on perceptions of outcomes.

A second analysis of variance of means experiment was conducted using the data collected for parents with sons with and without siblings. This was aimed at testing the hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the means for each group. Although the data set is only small, 2 items PH1 and CP2 yielded significantly different means ie. parents of students with siblings held a significantly stronger positive perception of the effectiveness of parent hikes as an adjunct to the program than parents whose sons were an only child. Similarly, though to a lesser extent, perceptions of significant growth in fitness and skills was evident.

Again it is difficult to interpret the reasons for these differences other than to speculate about the background and experience of boys who have siblings and those who do not, though more importantly, differences in parental aspects which may be compelling. Nevertheless, given the fact that Glengarry is so strongly geared toward 'relationship', it is tempting to want to explore this matter further in some extended form of research. But clearly, further research is necessary if any of these comments are to be substantiated.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it has been possible from this survey analysis to draw at least some preliminary conclusions about parent perceptions of program outcomes. These may be summarised :-

- It has been possible to rank the various aspects of the program, each comprising groups of related items or outcomes, in terms of their success at achieving a positive perception by parents.
- The analysis suggests there are statistically significant differences between the perceptions of parents of boarders and parents of day boys in 50% of items analysed. Such differences are more prevalent in:-
 - academic areas
 - co-curricular areas
 - communications
 - medical and health matters
 - overall aspects
- There is less compelling, but significant differences between the perceptions of parents of students with siblings and parents of students without siblings in 2 of the total of 40 items.

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