



From the Principal:

Date:
Issue: 34 Of 09
22nd October 2009

Outcome Statements:

The way reports are written has gone through many changes over my time as a teacher, both in terms of style and content. In the early days students simply received an overall mark for English, Maths, etc – either a percentage, or a mark out of ten or a letter score from A – E. In the last 15 years or so it has been recognized that these ‘big picture’ scores or marks that rank a student from top of the class to the bottom of the class are not helpful to most students or their parents – only to those who are ‘top of the class’. This kind of thinking is driving changes being imposed on schools from Governments; it is easy to make political mileage from generalised summaries. As a parent and a teacher, I prefer the reporting mode of **outcome statements**.

Outcome statements provide a much more detailed picture of how a student is progressing, and what is expected of a student of a certain age in terms of skills and understandings. Take English, for example. If I tell you that your child got a ‘C’ for English, it only tells you that he or she is kind of in the middle. It does not tell you about the elements of an English course, or variations that really matter. English is made up of:

1. Reading
2. Written expression
3. Speaking and Listening
4. Grammar
5. Logical Thinking
6. Creative thinking

If a teacher tells you that your child got B for reading, D for writing, B for Speaking and Listening and D for Grammar, suddenly you have a clearer picture that it is the Writing/Grammar aspects of English that need work. Averaging out the scores to a C means nothing. However, good reports can go much deeper, and teachers can assess students in far more detail than this. Take just the Reading element as an example. Reading involves:

- a.. Comprehension of meaning
- b. The ability to tackle new and difficult words
- c. Reading age compared to actual age
- d. The ability to read aloud fluently
- e. The ability to reading with expression.
- f. The number of books read in a term
- g. Whether the choice of books is age-appropriate and varied.
- h. speed and accuracy

This amount of detail can make reports too long, but you can see how it more fully informs a parent about the process of acquiring a skill, rather than the ranking system.

The reason I am reflecting on this is because in my discussions with prospective parents I often ask, “What do you expect this school to provide for you and your children?” – in other words, “What are the outcomes in your mind that you want for your child when they graduate as a young adult?” The answer is never, “I want my child to be top of the class.” It usually is a combination of the following:

1. I want my child to be able to learn in a safe nurturing environment, with teachers I can trust.
2. I want my child to be challenged to learn and perform to the best of his/her ability.
3. I want my child to have a broad range of opportunities and experiences in their education.
4. I want my child to (learn to) be a good person – someone who has faith, has clear moral values, who know who he/she is and cares about other people.

As the government pushes us toward generalized grades and further away from holistic reporting, be assured that the aim of Northside Christian College continues to be to provide a balanced, holistic education that is concerned with the twin processes of living and learning. We want students to be strong, vital people who have a sense of direction and purpose for living in a people-serving, God-honouring way. We will strive in our reporting to reflect this.

Stephen Leslie