



# A One Day Conference for Parents

**Parents and Schools –  
*a Two-Way  
Partnership***

**Carnoustie Hotel  
Angus  
Saturday 25 October 2003**

in association with



**Summary of Contribution made by William French as part of Seminar on Secondary Schools and Parents, part of ‘Parents and Schools – a Two-Way Partnership’ Conference held on 25 October at Carnoustie.**

William French is headteacher at Craigmuir Primary School (Pilton), on secondment at the City of Edinburgh Education Department as Development Officer for ‘Partnership with Parents’

Much work is going on in different schools and authorities, about the issue of parental involvement. Apologies were made, should people feel ‘we’re doing that already’, what follows is some outlines of existing good practice.

It is noticeable that there is, generally, effectiveness and ease in engaging with parents in Nursery, Nursery/P.1 transition, Infants/Early Years. This contrasts with **the difficulties** involved in engaging with parents in the upper stages of primary, during the **transition from P.7 to S.1** and in secondary schools.

The socio-economic background of Craigmuir Primary School, West Pilton, was outlined. The school has the second highest take-up rate of free school meals in the City of Edinburgh, and is an area of multiple deprivation. Some of the problems faced by parents include: single parenthood, drugs, low income and unemployment.

The City of Edinburgh Education Department employs a ‘Cluster approach’ with each secondary school working closely with its ‘feeder’ primaries.

There are vast extremes within the socio-economic structure of the Broughton High School Cluster, (extremes of wealth and poverty) and this leads to some difficulties.

**Much work is undertaken to broaden the understanding of transition from primary to secondary by involving and informing parents as much as possible.** Here follows a number of attempts made to broaden parents’ perceptions:

- 1) Transition programme starts in Primary 6, not in Primary 7. This gives both children and parents more time to prepare and familiarise themselves with the move from primary to secondary. Therefore, pupils and parents visit the secondary school and meet with staff in Primary 6 and then again in Primary 7. **Key aspects here are: -**
  - ❑ Children accompany parents
  - ❑ Creche facilities are provided
  - ❑ Consultation on nights that suit best
  - ❑ Transport provided from Primary School, and return
  - ❑ Not always formal, part of evening might be dance, drama or music performances
- 2) A member of the Broughton High School Senior Management Team attends all feeder primary parent consultation evenings. Careful cluster planning ensures that primary schools use different dates and planning ensures that attendance at these meetings is shared by Senior Management Team.
- 3) Transition Day visits have been increased from one and a half days to three and a half days. **We are presently attempting to identify ways in which parents can join children for part of the time, or receive better information regarding the visit.**

- 4) Sweatshirts and polo-shirts are provided free of charge, ensuring that all pupils can wear the informal uniform, recognising cost implications for parents.
  - 5) Broughton High School has produced a Transition Video. Designed for pupils and parents, it was made by interviewing P.7 pupils as they approached transition, then follow up interviews with the same children at the end of S.1. This video also includes interviews with S.5 and S.6 pupils sharing their memories and outlining how they assist and advise S.1 and S.2.
  - 6) Based on need, some years there are Transition workshops and discussions.
  - 7) We, the primary school, pass on parental concerns, via discussion, to our secondary colleagues.
  - 8) 'Holiday Headstart' Summer camps are held at the secondary and staffed by secondary staff to target for e.g. shy/vulnerable pupils or pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties. Parents are well informed and invited along to selected sessions.
  - 9) Flexible Learning in the Community (F.L.I.C.) – Broughton High School and its feeder primaries have been used for the pilot of this. It has been used to enhance Modern Languages between primary/secondary and for Transition. We have held 'talk-ins', discussions and question/answer sessions between primary and secondary pupils. Parents have been involved in asking questions from the primary side.
  - 10) Each primary school has a Broughton High School notice board. Secondary notices are put on them and included in newsletters too.
  - 11) Other projects are: Modern Languages – accelerated Maths group – Learning Dance workshops – Creative Writing Group – Sports Co-ordinator (P.E./Games/After School Clubs) – **the aim is to share some of the work/results with parents.**
- ❑ **I believe there are issues for Secondary Schools to inform, advise and include parents in ways where they could support their child's education.**
  - ❑ **All schools within the cluster agree that one of our main aims is to outline that transition from primary to secondary should be a continuation, a progression – to be seen as a fresh start or starting again – but the natural building on primary education, knowledge and skills.**

This might sound as if we are far on BUT provision like this is dependent on the level of:

- ❑ STAFFING
- ❑ FUNDING
- ❑ RESOURCES
- ❑ COMMUNICATION
- ❑ SHARED/COMMON AIMS