

Accounting for achievement in parent-teacher interviews*

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Abstract. This paper examines features of the talk in a number of teacher-parent interviews recently audio-recorded in a secondary school in Brisbane, Australia. The central topic of the talk is the academic achievement of the student. In offering accounts of the student's achievement, participants offer 'moral versions' of themselves as parents and teachers. These institutional identities are oriented to and elaborated in the course and in the organisation of this talk. The student about whom the talk is done is present but largely silent, an 'overhearing audience' to this talk. The analysis shows how parents and teachers talk two institutions, and the relation between them, into being.

1. Introduction

The study of parent-teacher interviews is of interest for education as a significant site (among others) in which institutional identities and relationships are assembled. In a larger study from which this paper derives, Keogh (1992) linked the analysis of such interview talk to "identity, ideology and power". In this paper, attention is given to the practices of "accounting for achievement", drawing on selections from a larger collection of interview materials, and focussing on the question of how the accountability of teachers and parents is conversationally organised and achieved.

Within educational literature, "the home-school relationship" is an important and pervasive abstraction. Similarly, "communication" between school (teachers) and home (parents) is assumed to be a good, worthwhile and effective practice (Blakers, 1983; Cattermole and Robinson, 1987; Connell et al., 1982; Connell, 1985; Jenkins, 1982; Mittler, 1987; Power, 1985; Sharp and Green, 1975; Stafford, 1987). Although much has been written about the

*We wish to thank the participants in the interviews for their agreement to have the interviews audio-recorded.

value of and the need for such “relationships” and such “communication”, we have found little analytical work on actual encounters between homes and schools or teachers and parents. Apart from a brief study of notes sent from home to a primary school teacher (Shannon, 1986), Mehan’s (1983) study of educational decision-making involving professionals and parents, and the work cited and analysis presented in Smith (1987: 168–173), we have found no studies that examine the actual texts, written or spoken, of interactions between parents and teachers.

Thus for education, the study of this inter-institutional contact language is in part a reply to an absence noted by Mehan (1979: 5–6):

... what are lacking ... are descriptions of the actual processes of education. If we want to know ... [what] actually influences the quality of education, then we must be able to show how they operate in pragmatic educational situations ...

... Because educational facts are constituted in interaction, we need to study interaction in educational contexts, both in and out of school, in order to understand the nature of schooling.

In the case of studies of actual encounters between parents and teachers, this “absence” has continued. Although, as stated above, home-school contact is professed to be very important (Bell, 1985; Corwin and Wagenaar, 1976; Elliott, 1980; Griffith, 1986; Limerick, 1987; Meade, 1984, 1987; Mellor and Hayden, 1981) actual instances of it have not been studied directly in terms of examining parent-teacher talk within the educational literature.

One reason for this continuing absence could be that within educational folklore, teacher-parent meetings, particularly of the routine type studied here, are taken to be essentially a public relations exercise where nothing much is accomplished. They are understood and talked about as ritual or ceremonial encounters, in which teachers go through routine expressions of interest and academic diagnosis, and which parents attend in order to show their “interest” in their children’s schooling. Among the conventional complaints about such meetings is the teacher claim that the parents you need to see are not the ones who come, a complaint that buttresses the notion that such meetings are not particularly useful for resolving teachers’ problems with students. In addition, these parent-teacher meetings are understood within the teaching profession and by parents as not particularly enjoyable, and indeed,

[secondary schools] are anonymous impersonal places which do little to make students feel welcome, let alone the parents. Parent-teacher evenings, which may be the only contact many parents have with the school, rank close to a visit to the dentist in terms of discomfort. (Limerick, 1987: 52)

The study of talk in parent-teacher interviews contributes also to growing bodies of work on professional consultations and on institutional talk within ethnomethodology and conversation analysis.

First, when parents and teachers meet, we can see occurring a process of talking not one, but two institutions, and the relation between them, "into being" (cf. Heritage, 1984: 283). As the analysis will show, both "home" and "school" are constructed in the course of talk about a student's achievements. "Home" and "school" are constructed not as physical or material spaces or places, but as idealised courses of morally accountable action. Therefore, it is not only the student's achievement at school that is "accounted for" in this talk. While this is the ostensible topic of the talk, participants describe their own achievements as parents and teachers, by offering "moral versions" of themselves (cf. Silverman, 1987) in the course of talk about the student. Taken further, they can be seen to be accounting for their own achievements as participants *in the interviews*.

Second, the popular characterisation of teacher-parent interviews as events in which "nothing much is accomplished" is an invitation, if not provocation, to ethnomethodological inquiry. Although these may be ritualised events, they are not scripted, and hence the problems remain for participants of how to organise the conversation. They need to find a way of "formatting" the interaction (cf. Liberman, 1992) and of "surviving" the inter-institutional encounter. In other words, once there, the assembled participants have to work out what to talk about and how to talk about it.

Since the analysis of teacher-parent interview talk has not been undertaken before, there is no site-specific precedent within the educational or the ethnomethodological or conversation analysis literature for the analysis presented here. Instead, we draw on work undertaken on medical and clinical consultations (Davis, 1988; Fisher, 1983; Silverman, 1987; Silverman and Perakyla, 1990; Strong, 1979; ten Have, 1989, 1991; Todd, 1983; Todd and Fisher, 1988; West, 1984, 1990; Voysey, 1975), as well as on other work in conversation analysis. The use of medical encounters as an analogy makes sense in that they are also examples of professional institutional encounters; also because in some of these there is a "third party" or "overhearing audience" present to the talk (Silverman, 1987); and because within medical/clinical encounters as well, practices of diagnosis, assessment, reassurance, and prescription are evidenced.

This analysis is based on transcripts of audiotapes of six parent-teacher interviews that took place in one state secondary school in Brisbane. In all the interview transcripts analysed here, students are present in addition to the teacher and one or both parents. The analysis is organised around our observations of some features of the talk that relate to what appear to be problems and solutions for the participants. Some of these are conversation-

organisation issues related to making the interview work as an interview/consultation; others are issues related to working out some articulation of home-school relations and responsibilities. However, the conversational and topical aspects of these interviews cannot be separated absolutely.

We begin the analysis by presenting the whole of Segment 1, then working with extracts from this segment to show the presence of the features of interest here. As these features are presented, we introduce extracts from five other interview transcripts (here called Segment 2 to Segment 6, provided in the Appendix) to elaborate on the observations, showing differences and similarities across interviews, from which we derive our conclusions. All of these segments are drawn from longer interview transcripts, and most are drawn from the early part of the interviews. The analysis is undertaken to show different possible ways that the organisation of this inter-institutional event could be done. Our ethnomethodological interest in how the interviews/consultations are accomplished is matched by our educational interest in how versions of relations between home and school are discursively produced, and particularly, how it is that parenting is made “a work process articulated to the work process of schooling” (Smith, 1987: 172).

Segment 1 can be read first as if it were a medical consultation, in which it is possible to hear the collaborative activities of diagnosis working their way towards prescriptions or remedies in relation to a particular student’s academic well-being. Parties to the talk can be shown to treat the interview as having such diagnostic and prescriptive purposes. Read as an inter-institutional encounter, it is possible to hear the subtle politics of home-school relations, essentially moral-organisational work, being put into play in respect of a student, with a focus on the teacher’s and parents’ work in accounting for their own achievements. Parties to the talk can also be shown to be oriented to their institutional identities as teacher and parent(s) and to the moral implicativeness of their talk. In this analysis we have not made central the students’ work in the interviews, although we have recognised the student’s presence sometimes as participant and often as “overhearing audience” (cf. Heritage, 1985).

Our analysis is organised around a number of observations deriving from this second reading of the transcript, with reference to the “medical consultation” analogy where this assists with the analysis.

Segment 1

Teacher: Ellen
 Student: Donna
 Parent(s): Mother and Father

1 T Ok all right we’ll just forget it I should cover it up or something I hate tape recorders! (hh) Right um Donna um I just took over Mister Jay’s

class um four weeks ago so, I don't really know a lot about Donna's work I've had a quick look at her work in her folder, and from her marks she um, you seem to have, passed in the first part of the year and then really gone down in last two um, pieces of work which was a poetry oral? and a um a novel (2.0) a novel in another form that was putting part of the novel into another style of writing. Now um (2.0) in class (1.0) Donna's a little bit distracted? often? down the back there, with um the girls that she sits with, though she does give in class when she's asked to, she does do all her work, um I'm (1.0) would you like to- do your work with Donna at home with her schoolwork at all? do you see it at all or?

- 2 F Not really no=
- 3 M =(We very rarely) see her schoolwork
- 4 F they generally disappear off to their bedrooms with their homework and um=
- 5 T =Ye:es (2.0) Well um
- 6 F We don't see much of (it)
- 7 T Let me see yes I didn't mark this this was all Mr Jay's. (1.0) This is a summary, they had to summarise um this (1.0) um let's see where her, mistakes seem to lie. (3.0) Oh it seems alright. (3.0) Why did she only get four and a half for that. Hmmm. It's awful when you're when you're talking about, something another teacher's (hh) done! (5.0) Only seems to have limited English grammatical mistakes, um (4.0) oh it seems fine it's not covered all in red,
- 8 F mm no
- 9 M ()what's the problem with it then ()?
- 10 T I don't know. Obviously maybe it's the the standard or the um (4.0) the ideas I'll see what Mister Jay's written here let's have a look. (2.0) Good more impact in conclusion is possible. That doesn't really say a lot does it.
- 11 M Not really, no ()
- 12 T No. (3.0) Uh this is, I'm sorry about this because I haven't, been with Donna's class so I'm not sure, I've only just come back from leave. I know, the piece of work that I've done with the class was a, radio play which we've just done. And (2.0) we spent a couple of weeks in class learning about it and then we did um had some time to prepare it, and the girls the group of girls really didn't do a lot of work on it I wasn't really happy with the work that was done, and the work that did come out was um, read from Dolly magazine or Cleo just onto the tape? So

- I found that um, that wasn't not just Donna the three of them together working together really didn't put a lot of work into it an' [I
- 13 M [Who was she working with?
- 14 T Umm (2.0) Joanne someone and Vicki (3.0), Joanne Williams
- 15 M ()
- 16 T an' Vicki (2.0) Hawkins
- 17 M ()?
- 18 T No. So on on the whole, um that's the only work I have real experience from, from (2.0) Donna. Um,
- 19 F She said she wasn't keen on this oral
- 20 M No she hates oral, she hates getting up an' [(standing up in front)
- 21 T [Speaking, right
- 22 M ['N if she ever has to stand up in front of the class, or anything like that she's not that
- 23 T Yeah, [well
- 24 M [() you know I suppose that a lot of kids are the same
- 25 T Yes well this is um (1.0) this is where she's got a very low mark here. Wonder if her oral, oral paper's here. Oh it hasn't been put into her folder. Um, she would lose marks for ner- uh- well not nervousness but when you y'know if you move your legs 'n speak to the floor'n the way you you're not speaking out looking at the audience 'n if you're nervous you do that sort of thing so that's what she would have lost marks for also, you had to understand the poem, in a lot of detail () and because because I didn't hear and I wasn't here and I'm not sure what sort of standard she gave there.

2. Openings

The initial problem-resolution in these interviews is the determination of who, situationally speaking, the participants are and what, situationally speaking they are doing there. This is decided relatively easily and early in each interview, and although the trajectory of the talk changes in the course of some interviews, the omnirelevant categorical incumbencies of teacher, parent(s) and student do not.

In every case studied, the academic achievement of the student is “found” as the opening topic. It is so found in every case by the teacher, who in these transcripts is first speaker. It should be noted that we do not have the very beginnings of the interaction recorded, as there was in each case an initial explanation by the teacher regarding the tape recording and seeking parents’ agreement to it. This procedure (whose permission to record was sought) could have been a significant move (a pre-sequence, in effect) in the organisation of participation to be described below.

Segment 1 illustrates this initial process of locating a topic and establishing participants for the talk, as well as several other features to be described below.

- 1 T Ok all right we’ll just forget it I should cover it up or something I hate tape recorders! (hh) Right um Donna um I just took over Mister Jay’s class um four weeks ago so, I don’t really know a lot about Donna’s work I’ve had a quick look at her work in her folder, and from her marks she um, you seem to have, passed in the first part of the year and then really gone down in last two um, pieces of work which was a poetry oral? and a um a novel (2.0) a novel in another form that was putting part of the novel into another style of writing. Now um (2.0) in class (1.0) Donna’s a little bit distracted? often? down the back there, with um the girls that she sits with, though she does give in class when she’s asked to, she does do all her work, um I’m (1.0) would you like to- do your work with Donna at home with her school work at all? do you see it at all or?

It can be noticed how quickly the teacher enters into talk about Donna, Donna’s work and her work folder, her marks, her progress and her classroom behaviour in relation to her marks. This opening talk about Donna’s achievement at school is presented as if in answer to the unstated question “How is Donna doing academically?”. The teacher offers the parents their reason for attending the interview. This teacher uses her opening turn also to explain her ability to answer this question, as if in response to an unstated further question “How do you know?”. Her pre-empting of what the parents can expect her to provide is consequential for how the interview proceeds.

The folder and the marks are consulted as records of Donna’s achievement, and in this case the teacher passes quickly from them first to her own observations of Donna’s classroom behaviour and then quickly through to the parents’ home behaviour. Donna’s classroom behaviour is presented as an initial account of her (recent) poor achievement; what status the reference to parents’ home participation will have remains to be seen.

In an extract from Segment 2 also, the teacher in her first recorded turn formulates the topic of the talk as “how Barry went”, and she could be referring to a report card in this case. Who is holding the report card is not known

to us, but again this could be consequential for how participation in the interview is organised. As in Segment 1, the topic of the student's achievement is traced quickly to a possible reason, this time Barry's many "activities".

Segment 2

Teacher: Rosemary

Student: Barry

Parent(s): Mother

- 1 T Right now *Barry*, (2.0) how did *you* go can I just have a look at that?
- 2 M Not real good actually [we're not really happy with it
- 3 T [No
(3.0)
- T I think Barry's he's had a lot of activity
- 4 M Mm

In both of these interviews the opening move by the teacher (there are two teachers represented in this set of transcripts) proposes that discussion of the academic results of the student are the reason for the interview; it assigns a diagnostic purpose to the talk that will follow. In both openings the student is cast as a part of the case load of the teacher: "right um Donna um" and "right now *Barry*", as one of a series of students the teacher will talk about that night. The parents could have more than one child to talk about that night and more than one teacher to see, but the talk does not open with a parental "right now *Mrs Baker*". The membership categorisation device [(this) teacher - (her) students - (their) parents] provides the categorical incumbencies for the talk that follows. The parents are assigned an identity as parents of one of the students in the teacher's classes, only one or one set of the parents she will see that night. Thus the local institutional "context" of the talk is achieved straight away. This set of category incumbencies is also one axis of "asymmetry" (cf. ten Have, 1991) in the talk.

3. The overhearing audience

The interviews took place in a large room containing several sets of desks, with teachers behind the desks and two chairs in front of the desks for the parents. When two parents were present and seated, the student stood beside them; otherwise the student sat in one of the chairs. From reading the complete set of interview transcripts, we do not think that standing or sitting was

consequential for how much or how the student participated. However, the parents' seating priority and the provision of only two chairs, although students were expected to be present, is indicative of the institutional construction of who should be central parties to the talk.

Through the use of address terms, pronouns and turn distribution, the teacher in Segment 1 both acknowledges and resolves the problem of who are or could be the speakers during this interview. In this transcript, as with several others, the student is soon referred to in the third person thereby becoming an "overhearing audience" to the talk. The initial reference to Donna:

1 T . . . Right um Donna um I just took over Mister Jay's class . . .

is ambiguous. It cannot be determined from the transcript or the audiotape whether Donna is being addressed directly at this point. This remains a possibility. However, by the next use of her name, it has become unambiguous that Donna is being talked *about*, rather than being talked to or with. This is continued by the use of the third person pronoun, "she". Similarly in Segment 2, with additional transcript shown:

1 T Right now *Barry*, (2.0) how did *you* go can I just have a look at that?

2 M Not real good actually [we're not really happy with it

3 T [No
(3.0)

T I think *Barry's* he's had a lot of activity

4 M Mm

5 T with his um, er rap dance=

6 M =Yeah yeah=

7 T the rock eisteddfod

8 M He's had the rock eisteddfod and he's had ((theatre group)), yeah I know, that's all finished now

We can see the pronoun shift occurring as the talk gets under way. Who the "we" is in line 2 is not determinable; it could be Mother and Barry or Mother and (not present) Father. In any case, the mother establishes herself as primary participant very early in the interview, in a collaborative diagnosis with

the teacher. Together they find quickly a possible reason for the poor results. But, as will be traced below, this reason itself launches further talk about whose responsibility this “reason” is, and extends the working out of “the home” and “the school” as morally accountable courses of action.

Segment 3 below shows a case in which the teacher addresses the student in the initial part of the interview, and in which the parent (father in this case) inserts himself as answerer to the teacher’s questions to the student. The father in this case builds his turns in such a way as to eventually position himself as the interviewee.

Segment 3

Teacher: Rosemary
 Student: Leanne
 Parent(s): Father

- 5 T =that was um, that was a good result. You’re going to have to keep working in order to keep it though=
- 6 S =Uh huh=
- 7 T =because it y’know it, was a fairly *borderline* HA (2.0) and um as long as she keeps up the work, I’m sure she can maintain it
- 8 F ((odd sighing sound/exhalation??))
- 9 T (hh) How’d you go in the other subjects
- 10 S Huh, oh, all, all HAs, and VHAs and one SA
- 11 T Well that’s good, well you must be pleased with that=
- 12 F =Yeah *very* pleased
- 13 T Mm, that’s great
- 14 F () she’s starting to do some work now
- 15 S (hh) yeah
- 16 T No d- you weren’t working in, grade eight
- 17 F Not really=
- 18 S =Uh=
- 19 F =I don’t think so

The father, through this initial and continuing turn construction, (see Appendix for a continuation of this interview) effectively takes over the interview, and in later stages participates not as question answerer at all but as an expositor. The student is heard to speak only 7 more times in the next 260 turns in the interview, much of which is the father's display to the teacher of his knowledge of educational issues and systems.

The interviews vary in terms of when, whether or how the student is made into overhearing audience; however in the majority (but not all) of these student-attended interviews, the student is from the beginning, or soon becomes, an "overhearing audience". What is accomplished is that the main participants in most of these interviews are the teacher and parent(s).

4. "Moral versions" of parents and teachers

In the speaking spaces that they thus claim, and in the conversational relationship thus established, teacher and parent(s) provide and develop "moral versions" of themselves through their talk about the overhearing student. For example, in Segment 1 presented above, the teacher steps immediately into a justification of her possibly not knowing enough about Donna's work by specifying that she "just took over Mister Jay's class um four weeks ago so, I don't really know a lot about Donna's work". In this she appears to be acknowledging what she should, as teacher, be able to say, although in this instance she may be unable to deliver fully the information the parents may require.

Segment 1 continues:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | [. . .]work, um I'm (1.0) would you like to- do you work with Donna at if home with her schoolwork at all? do you see it at all or? |
| 2 | F | Not really no= |
| 3 | M | =(We very rarely) see her schoolwork |
| 4 | F | they generally disappear off to their bedrooms with their homework and um= |
| 5 | T | =Ye:es (2.0) Well um |
| 6 | F | We don't see much of (it) |

The teacher gave a speaking turn to the parents in asking them whether they supervise homework. This provided them with a space in which to describe and account for their parenting practices. In this case, their potential lack of

supervision is accounted for by the father in terms of children's practices of "disappear[ing] off to their bedrooms with their homework". This makes it both a possibly insufficiently supervised home, but also one in which the children appear keen to get on with homework even without parental intervention. The father's reference to this normal, natural behaviour of children effectively takes these parents off the hook in terms of acceptable surveillance. When both parents are present, the distribution of talk between them is hearably part of the picture they draw of what kind of home they have, and of what kind of parents they are. In this extract, as in some others, mother and father together build the story of how things are done at home, itself a description of parenting as a team effort, a good home. Thus "moral versions" of parenthood are inevitably provided as part of the diagnostic talk.

Drawing again from Segment 2, and presenting more transcript, we can see how easily and quickly the social facts of the student's achievements and even the reasons for them become morally accountable matters.

- 3 T [. . .] I think Barry's he's had a lot of activity
- 4 M Mm
- 5 T with his um, er rap dance=
- 6 M =Yeah yeah=
- 7 T the rock eisteddfod
- 8 M He's had the rock eisteddfod and he's had ((theatre group)), yeah I know, that's all finished now
- 9 T Yeah, but that's good, I mean I don't think there's anything *wrong* with that and I think it might um perhaps, had something to do, perhaps, with his results
- 10 M Yeah

The mother and teacher agree that Barry's cultural activities have been responsible for a not very good report card. The mother's "yeah I know, that's all finished now" (line 8) is heard by the teacher (line 9) as possibly expressing guilt or wrongdoing by the mother/parents: "Yeah, but that's good, I mean I don't think there's anything *wrong* with that" and then proceeds to soften the impact of Barry's cultural activities on his performance (which had first been raised by the teacher in line 3), twice using "perhaps". This interview talk, throughout, both addresses and avoids "delicate matters" such as the quality of parenting that could be occurring.

The most "delicate" matter of all in these interviews, if we go by pauses

and hesitations and inflections in the talk (cf. Silverman and Perakyla, 1990), seems to be the delivery and reception of poor results. We can see these features in the teacher's delivery of bad news in Donna's case (these recur throughout Segment 1):

- 1 T . . . and from her marks she um, you seem to have, passed in the first part of the year and then really gone down in last two um, pieces of work which was a poetry oral? and a um a novel (2.0) a novel in another form that was putting part of the novel into another style of writing. Now um (2.0) in class (1.0) Donna's a little bit distracted? often? down the back there, with um the girls that she sits with, though she does give in class when she's asked to, she does do all her work, um I'm (1.0) would you like to- do you work with Donna at home with her schoolwork at all? do you see it at all or?

and the pause after the acknowledgement of bad news in Barry's case:

- 1 T Right now *Barry*, (2.0) how did *you* go can I just have a look at that?
- 2 M Not real good actually [we're not really happy with it
- 3 T [No
(3.0)
- T I think Barry's he's had a lot of activity

The search for "reasons" accompanies or follows closely the delivery of poor results and seems to be part of an implicit agreement in these interviews to talk as if improvement is always possible because the lack of success can be traced to some particular situation, practice, accident, or context in home or school. However we should note that the student is present in the interviews discussed here and this must contribute to how the issue of "reasons" is managed.

Just as raising questions about home practice is a delicate matter, equally delicate is the raising of the question of the quality of teaching or assessment that could be going on. In Segment 4, for example, the parents question the assessment practices which led to a particular mark for their daughter. The mother leads the questioning, backed up once, but consequentially, by the father:

Segment 4

Teacher: Ellen

Student: Jenny

Parent(s): Father and Mother

- 10 M Are these her latest two that she's gone down in or is it just [um that particular
- 11 T [Um that particular one? I'll just check on the, [((sighs)) yes
- 12 F [What was the class average for that test?
- 13 T That? Nine out of twenty for that test. Class average over the whole of grade=
- 14 M =Hit everyone like a brick wall then
- 15 T Uhm
- 16 M Is it just a different different layout to what they normally [normally
- 17 T [Um, well it seems to be the first this earlier one (1.0) was (2.0) an essay [. . .] but I think it's it *has* hit everyone so they're having another one and if we do this little bit more preparation. The problem was . . . [continues to explain]

The mother suggests unfairness to the students in line 14 (“hit everyone like a brick wall then”) and then, in her next turn, tries to help the teacher find an explanation for it (“is it just a different . . . layout to what they normally”). The teacher picks up on this possibility and eventually agrees that the test “*has* hit everyone” but goes on to explain how the students will be better prepared in future. There appears to develop a contract between parents and teachers never to be too explicit or to go too far in challenging the practices of the other institution (home or school) in the interview. Some of the parents sound clearly disappointed in their children’s results, but then, being disappointed with their children’s low marks is in itself the mark of a good parent, just as being able to explain how it could have happened is the mark of a good teacher. At least, if these interviews are something to go by, this talk (and other talk like it) is where and how “good” parenting and teaching are produced.

Among the displays available to good parents is first-hand knowledge that the teacher may not have of the student’s particular personality or interests. This shows that parents have at least talked about school work, even if they have not been able to help. From Segment 1 again:

- 19 F She said she wasn't keen on this oral
- 20 M No she hates oral, she hates getting up an' [(standing up in front)
- 21 T [Speaking, right
- 22 M 'N if she ever has to stand up in front of the class, or anything like that she's not that
- 23 T Yeah, [well
- 24 M [() you know I suppose that a lot of kids are the same
- 25 T Yes well this is um (1.0) this is where she's got a very low mark here. Wonder if her oral, oral paper's here.

And from Segment 5, another case of parents' accounting for achievement in terms of first-hand knowledge:

Segment 5

Teacher: Ellen

Student: Christa

Parent(s): Mother

- 106 T Then you've got another dramatic presentation, which is um, performing
- 107 S [plays
- 108 T [in front of the class (2.0) so
- 109 S And so I'll fail that one ((laughing))
- 110 T No, don't say that, you can do well, [Chris
- 111 M [Christa's got a *very low* self esteem when it comes to all these an' I'm al- I'm always sure that's what holds her back in English because I know that her, um, her grammar and all those sort of things and her spelling, she's got good skills in [those sort of things
- 112 T [Yes, she has, [yeah
- 113 M [But it's putting it from here, well having the courage to get it out of here onto there
- 114 T Yeah, you get [embarrassed
- 115 M [She, she gets really [stuck

116 S [*((laughs))*]

In this case the teacher is able to draw on her own first-hand knowledge of Christa, showing the parents how carefully she also has followed Christa's career as a student, and that she also has a shared history with Christa:

117 T [Ye:es I remember in grade nine she, you got really embarrassed doing that play we did a play, [and you didn't project yourself an'

118 S [*((laughs))*]

119 M Yeah

120 T You know, which you *can* do I mean=

The mother counters with an assessment of her own:

121 M =She's she's definitely um *improving*, you know, she's a hundred percent on what she was even two *years* ago

122 T Yeah

123 M But that I'm sure is what holds her back with English because it's not lack of um oh () of English

124 T Yeah

and reclaims the longer history of Christa as in her keeping and in her knowledge. The mother designs her talk to invite the teacher's agreement with her assessments (cf. Pomerantz, 1984) throughout this sequence. In achieving these diagnostic agreements, "home" and "school" are described as harmonious, overlapping courses of action.

5. Home as an extension of school

The relation between home and school in these interviews is, however, not produced as symmetrical. The interviews took place in the school, not the homes, and the consequentiality of the openings has been discussed above. The teachers had, in addition, the upper hand in terms of reference to marks not only of the particular students but also class averages and other such data that equipped them to speak more authoritatively. As has been shown already, some of the reasons for levels of achievement are situated outside the school, and by possible implication inside the home.

From Segment 1:

- 1 T [. . .] Now um (2.0) in class (1.0) Donna's a little bit distracted? often? down the back there, with um the girls that she sits with, though she does give in class when she's asked to, she does do all her work, um I'm (1.0) would you like to- do you work with Donna at home with her schoolwork at all? do you see it at all or?
- 2 F Not really no=
- 3 M =(We very rarely) see her schoolwork
- 4 F they generally disappear off to their bedrooms with their homework and um=
- 5 T =Ye:es (2.0) Well um
- 6 F We don't see much of (it)

In Segment 1 it was the teacher who introduced a presumption that homework should be done, that it should be done at home, and that parents should possibly supervise it. Parents are thus positioned as ancillary teachers, and the work of the school is extended into the work of the home (cf. Smith, 1987). We could call this a "curriculum for the home". The parents here receive the schoolwork as homework; in fact they receive it and acknowledge that it is naturally and even automatically done at home.

The teacher re-enters the conversation with a topic shift, back to herself as a knowledgeable teacher, as a professional reader of school documents.

- 7 T Let me see yes I didn't mark this this was all Mr Jay's. (1.0) This is a summary, they had to summarise um this (1.0) um let's see where her, mistakes seem to lie.(3.0) Oh it seems alright. (3.0) Why did she only get four and a half for that. Hmmm. It's awful when you're when you're talking about, something another teacher's (hh) done! (5.0) Only seems to have limited English grammatical mistakes, um (4.0) oh it seems fine it's not covered all in red,
- 8 F mm no

The markbook or work folder figures in these interviews as a (closed) resource for the teacher to use for diagnostic or prescriptive purposes. The use of such a "closed" document creates a division, a gap between teacher as professional and owner of professional knowledge, and parent as non-professional, receiver/hearer of professional knowledge (cf. Mehan, 1983). In order to help with the work of the school, parents need to know the contents of the school records. But they are given them second-hand, that is, through the teacher in an interview such as this. The parents receive only what the

teacher deems them to need to know or what they think to ask. They are positioned as non-professional adjunct teachers, and other parenting skills or interests are unacknowledged as part of the work of the home. In this institutional setting the work of the home is the extension of the work of the school, and little more.

In another instance, drawn from Segment 6, the teacher questions Jessica about what she does at home.

Segment 6

Teacher: Rosemary

Student: Jessica

Parent(s): Mother

- 10 T Right. It's okay. Do you *write* at home much? Apart from the work you have to do at um, at home? Apart from homework. Do you do any writing, at all?
- 11 S Yeah
- 12 T Do you write letters?
- 13 S Yeah
- 14 T Right. I see, um do you watch a lot of TV?
- 15 S Yeah
- 16 T You do. Do you do a lot of c- of oral
- 17 M Not really none of us really watches a lot of TV () [a *bit*
- 18 T [Oh yeah [we all do
- 19 M [a bit doesn't hurt
- 20 T No oh no, I'm not saying that a bit hurts but, um, I think you've got the *basis* there for um building building (1.0) what do you want to do? Do you want to go on to, to grade twelve?

The questioning is about practices at home, and the mother repairs Jessica's agreement that she watches a lot of TV, by stating that "not really none of us really watches a lot". This insertion cuts across the grain of the questioning sequence between the teacher and Jessica, and is made hearable as a morally accountable fact of family life. The teacher's reassurance that "we all" watch some TV picks up on the mother's interpretation of the "curriculum for the home" which is indexed in the questions the teacher is putting to Jessica. It is a description of what could happen at home, and by implication what should

happen there. It is the mother, not the teacher, who “corrects” Jessica’s account of home activities. The mother’s follow-up, “a bit doesn’t hurt” is evocative of a nutritional issue, and is heard and picked up by the teacher as seeking further agreement from the teacher on this aspect of the diagnosis. The teacher provides this, restoring this home as a healthy one.

6. Implied charges and defences

A number of the exchanges in this and other interviews can be heard as implied charges and as defences or rebuttals (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979). Looked at in this way, the conversational exchanges show some possible tensions in the home-school relationship that have to do with the attribution of responsibility. Much of the talk in these interviews is delicately implicative of the other’s actions or knowledge. The home is made by both parties into a morally accountable course of action, as is the school, on occasion. As shown above, there appears to be some defensiveness in the talk, from both sides but not always in the same instances.

In the first turn of Segment 1, the teacher (Ellen) pre-empted any possible implications of not knowing enough by making clear at the outset that she has just taken over Mister Jay’s class. This is parallel to the observation discussed in Atkinson and Drew (1979), that defences can precede possible accusations. At the end of her first turn, she delivers a two-part question to the parents, about whether they work with Donna or see her homework. This question could be heard as a query or implied charge about the quality of the parenting as homework-help or homework-supervision.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | [. . .] um I’m (1.0) would you like to- do you work with Donna at home with her schoolwork at all? do you see it at all or? |
| 2 | F | Not really no= |
| 3 | M | =(We very rarely) see her schoolwork |
| 4 | F | they generally disappear off to their bedrooms with their homework and um= |
| 5 | T | =Ye:es (2.0) Well um |
| 6 | F | We don’t see much of (it) |

In turns 2 and 3 these parents both acknowledge that the homework is not seen. However in turn 4 the father, in offering his account of why they do not and indeed *could* not see the homework, both raises and deflects a hearing of

the teacher's question as a charge or challenge to their parenting practices. It works. The sequence continues:

- 7 T Let me see yes I didn't mark this this was all Mr Jay's. (1.0) This is a summary, they had to summarise um this (1.0) um let's see where her, mistakes seem to lie. (3.0) Oh it seems alright. (3.0) Why did she only get four and a half for that. Hmmm. It's awful when you're when you're talking about, something another teacher's (hh) done! (5.0) Only seems to have limited English grammatical mistakes, um (4.0) oh it seems fine it's not covered all in red,
- 8 F mm no
- 9 M () what's the problem with it then ()?
- 10 T I don't know. Obviously maybe it's the the standard or the um (4.0) the ideas I'll see what Mister Jay's written here let's have a look. (2.0) Good more impact in conclusion is possible. That doesn't really say a lot does it.
- 11 M Not really, no ()
- 12 T No. (3.0) Uh this is, I'm sorry about this because I haven't, been with Donna's class so I'm not sure, I've only just come back from leave.

In turn 7, the teacher announces again the incompleteness of her knowledge about Donna's work. She searches through Donna's work folder looking for clues that she might pass on to the parents. This searching is marked by pauses which demonstrate that this record of Donna's mistakes and marks is not "hers", but "Mister Jay's". She adds to this account a comment on professional relations, in terms of the difficulty of accounting for what "another teacher's done". Her pauses and other aspects of news delivery here help to secure her work as a professional reading a difficult and somewhat mysterious document, just as a doctor might read the results of a blood test. "It's not covered all in red" is hearably the result of a visual scan, not a substantive reading.

In turn 9 the mother corners the teacher with a direct question about the work: "what's the problem with it then?".

- 9 M () what's the problem with it then ()?
- 10 T I don't know. Obviously maybe it's the the standard or the um (4.0) the ideas I'll see what Mister Jay's written here let's have a look. (2.0) Good more impact in conclusion is possible. That doesn't really say a lot does it.
- 11 M Not really, no ()

This question positions the teacher as someone who should be competent to supply the answer right here and now regardless of the teacher's previous disclaimers concerning Mister Jay. The teacher's response sounds like floundering ("obviously maybe") and concludes with an invitation to agree that the work folder is not helpful. "It doesn't really say a lot does it", which the mother confirms with "Not really, no".

The teacher continues to deflect possible charges against her lack of knowledge in turn 12. Her gap in professional knowledge is posited as being reasonable. However, where she does have direct knowledge of Donna's work, she describes in detail just what was wrong. This retrieval of her competence as able to account for Donna's achievement maintains her moral version of herself as a competent professional:

11 M Not really, no ()

12 T No. (3.0) Uh this is, I'm sorry about this because I haven't, been with Donna's class so I'm not sure, I've only just come back from leave. I know, the piece of work that I've done with the class was a, radio play which we've just done. And (2.0) we spent a couple of weeks in class learning about it and then we did um had some time to prepare it, and the girls the group of girls really didn't do a lot of work on it I wasn't really happy with the work that was done, and the work that did come out was um, read from Dolly magazine or Cleo just onto the tape? So I found that um, that wasn't not just Donna the three of them together working together really didn't put a lot of work into it an' [I

In turn 13 as well, another implied charge can be seen. Here the mother, hearing of Donna's lapse as part of a group of three girls, interrupts and confronts the teacher with another direct query:

13 M [Who was she working with?

14 T Umm (2.0) Joanne someone and Vicki (3.0), Joanne Williams

15 M ()

16 T an' Vicki (2.0) Hawkins

17 M ()?

The mother holds the teacher responsible at least for knowing with whom Donna was working, if not also for ensuring that Donna didn't sit with bad influences. Thus classroom practices and courses of action (implied here as the teacher's possible responsibility for arranging seating) are made morally accountable matters. The mother, in asking for this detail, constructs herself

as vigilant of the teacher's practices in the classroom, thus turning the tables a little way at least.

Unfortunately we were unable to catch the mother's question in line 17, but think it was a continuation of the inquiry about who Donna sits with. The teacher produces a negative reply and then a summation of what she is capable of telling the parents:

- 18 T No. So on on the whole, um that's the only work I have real experience from, from (2.0) Donna. Um,
- 19 F She said she wasn't keen on this oral
- 20 M No she hates oral, she hates getting up an' [(standing up in front)

At this point the parents accept the teacher's summation as a conclusion to the discussion about Donna's work partners, without entering into any explicit recommendation about remedy at this point. Much later in the interview, however, in a segment not presented in this paper, the seating issue is again raised as part of the remedies proposed. The identification of the seating issue as a source of remedy is left to lie on the table, as it were, at this point in the interview. The teacher's summation is accepted as a proposal to change the topic. The parents' compliance with this request, however, introduces another problem also potentially hearable as a charge: Donna isn't "keen on this oral", "she hates oral".

- 19 F She said she wasn't keen on this oral
- 20 M No she hates oral, she hates getting up an' [(standing up in front)
- 21 T [Speaking, right
- 22 M ['N if she ever has to stand up in front of the class, or anything like that she's not that
- 23 T Yeah, [well
- 24 M [() you know I suppose that a lot of kids are the same

Not only Donna, but a "lot of kids are the same", implies that the problem is not Donna, but the setting of oral work. The teacher responds:

- 25 T Yes well this is um (1.0) this is where she's got a very low mark here. Wonder if her oral, oral paper's here. Oh it hasn't been put into her folder. Um, she would lose marks for ner- uh- well not nervousness but when you y'know if you move your legs 'n speak to the floor'n the way you you're not speaking out looking at the audience 'n if

you're nervous you do that sort of thing so that's what she would have lost marks for also, you had to understand the poem, in a lot of detail () and because because I didn't hear and I wasn't here and I'm not sure what sort of standard she gave there.

This response deflects the parents' point about students hating oral by referring to the folder and marks again, and defending the legitimacy of oral work. Students may hate oral, but they will have it anyway, and lose marks for "nervousness". This sequence is suggestive of the *difference* of interest between parents and teachers that Waller (1932: 68) identified sixty years ago:

... both, supposedly, wish things to occur for the best interests of the child ...both wish the child well, but it is such a different kind of well that conflict must inevitably arise over it.

The students' discomfiture in oral presentations is turned into their (the students') problem, not the school's problem. In the parents' presentation, oral work could be heard as the school's problem and responsibility, since "a lot of kids" don't like it. The teacher seeks refuge in the work folder and offers an analysis of how students stand and look and speak as contributing to their oral marks. That oral work could be distasteful to students is overridden by an almost clinical assessment of how marks are lost. In this case again, the teacher is able also to seek refuge in her not having been there, an effective stopper to this topic.

If our analysis of this talk as containing implied charges and defences and other features of "managing accusations" (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979) is convincing, it is pertinent to note further that this work is going on in Donna's presence, but not, at this point, including her. She is not, at this point, herself made responsible for her seating arrangements or choice of work partners, nor is she invited to elaborate her own hatred of oral work, or to tell her own story of how her oral presentation went. What is being worked out here, over her head, is the relation, bordering on conflict, of home and school interests in Donna.

When the report is good, there is less, little or none of what we have described here as charge-rebuttal, in that with a good report or with good achievements, the home and the school can be described and celebrated as harmonious courses of action and interests. Another extract from Segment 3, with the interjecting father, shows how this is built turn by turn, with the teacher and father soon literally continuing or finishing each other's sentences:

23 T Well it's a good idea to start working now=

24 S =Yeah=

- 25 T =because grade *ten*
- 26 S Um
- 27 F () this is right
- 28 T Mm um it's it's important=
- 29 F =if she wants to go for veterinary or something like that
- 30 T Mm
- 31 F she's going to do (well in grade twelve)
- 32 T Mm oh yes=
- 33 F =she needs her maths and her science and her English on the side is a good thing
- 34 T oh yes you need to at least get a, um, an SA [in English
- 35 F [Uhhum
- 36 T to do anything like [that and um
- 37 F [Yep
- 38 T and the higher you get=
- 39 F =the better [the more chance
- 40 T [the greater it boosts your TE score. So um that's good well you *need* to do exceptionally well in maths and sciences to do vet science because there's a very um strict quota

It would be pointless in such cases to engage in the kind of questioning found in Donna's case. Where the results are not good, the very point of being present as a concerned parent is to question how the difficulties have arisen, as in Segment 4:

- 12 F [What was the class average for that test?
- 13 T That? Nine out of twenty for that test. Class average over the whole of grade=
- 14 M =Hit everyone like a brick wall then
- 15 T Uhm

- 16 M Is it just a different different layout to what they normally [normally
- 17 T [Um, well it seems to be the first this earlier one (1.0) was (2.0) an essay, let's have a look, um (2.0) yeah it's the first essay they've had this year really, [. . .]

Nevertheless, in all the interviews recorded, any implications of defective practice are handled subtly and delicately, and the interviews conclude on positive notes.

7. Accounting for achievements as parents and teachers

From the analysis presented so far, the density of accounting by parents and by teachers for their own work as parents and teachers should be clear. The student is often sidelined as overhearing audience of these displays of appropriate knowledge, interests and practices on the parts of teachers and parents respectively. We have selected for analysis interviews in which this was done, in order to highlight the parents' and teachers' work of assembling home-school relations. This moral-organisational work (assembling the responsibilities and performances of parents and teachers) goes on throughout the interviews.

The moral-organisational work occurs as much in the formatting of the conversations as in the substance of the talk. The question of who is to speak, how, or in what order in the interview is not determined prior to the interview. Thus the conversational organisation is central to the kind of accounting work that goes on. As we have indicated, the talk is morally implicative all the way through, and the parties to the talk show their orientation to this feature.

Throughout the interviews also, teachers and parents can be seen to be accounting for their own achievements in the interview. This is strongest and most explicit in the interviews with the teacher, Ellen, who has just taken over Mister Jay's class and is in an awkward position herself. It is available also in the work of parents. For example in the "brick wall" extract, the mother can be heard in line 14 to be proclaiming the success of the parents' team inquiries into a particular test result:

Segment 4:

- 10 M Are these her latest two that she's gone down in or is it just [um that particular
- 11 T [Um that particular one? I'll just check on the, [((sighs)) yes
- 12 F [What was the class average for that test?

- 13 T That? Nine out of twenty for that test. Class average over the whole of grade=
 14 M =Hit everyone like a brick wall then

The conclusions to the interviews are handled in different ways, and some of them show formulations of the success of teachers' and parents' work in the interview. The interview containing the "brick wall" reference concluded as follows:

- 24 F [Let's see how she goes in the next test then
 25 M I'm not really worried about her
 26 T Not at *all*, no she's good, yeah. All right is there any o- anything else you'd like to [talk about?
 27 F [No, no

In lines 24 to 26 above, Ellen (teacher) and the parents each do summative work by offering formulations of the gist of their talk so far (cf. Heritage and Watson, 1979) and move collaboratively into concluding the interview (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). Ellen invites conclusion with the question about "anything else" the parents wish to talk about, implying that their previous needs have already been met. The father first says no, but the mother uses this space for launching a series of questions to the teacher. These questions are presented, and accepted as, self-descriptions by the mother and in line 32 by the father of their performance as good parents *asking the right questions in a teacher-parent interview*. Notice the emphasis by the teacher on *yes* and her laughter at line 33, as if the questions don't really need answering.

- 28 M She's doing well in class then?
 29 T *Yes*, no worries
 30 M Participating alright?
 31 T *Yes*, an'
 32 F asking plenty of questions?
 33 T ((laughs)) yep
 34 F Okay then [thank you
 35 T [All right, lovely to meet you

36 M [Thanks for your time

37 T Okay. Bye bye

38 M Bye

39 T Bye bye

Ellen's "is there anything else" in the extract above is matched by teacher Rosemary's invitation to conclude the interview with Jessica and her mother in Segment 6. (This is the interview in which the mother took up the issue of how much television was watched.)

65 T Well, is there, w- is there anything else?

66 M No, no I didn't have any problems, I [just

67 T [Right

68 M wanted to meet you=

69 T =Yes=

"I didn't have any problems, I just wanted to meet you" is received warmly by the teacher. The mother then extends her explanation of why she was there, and this occasions a formulation by the teacher of her (the mother's) accomplishments in attending the interview, including "seeing that [you're] interested" when some others are not.

70 M =[because (teachers you know)

71 T [Yes I think that's an excellent idea

72 M It is, it's lovely

73 T It really is. And it's good to see that er (2.0) well it's good to meet the parents and to see that they're that they're interested because that's also can be a problem, with students *not* achieving that there – that they – there's no interest um

Having been acknowledged as one of the interested parents, and having been spoken to in a way (third person reference to parents) that included her in a teacher's perspective ("it's good to meet the parents") this mother, amazingly, goes on to downgrade how good she is, as in a compliment response (Pomerantz, 1978).

- 74 M Well I don't know. I don't say now have you done, Maths or have you done, I expect her at her age to do her homework
- 75 T Yes
- 76 M You know
- 77 T Of course, yeah
- 78 M And when they're a bit smaller, you know you say, now have you finished your homework
- 79 T Mm
- 80 M Have you finished this, but then, you know, when they get to this age although actually, unless I, just go and have a look I don't really know, what amount of time she does *spend* on each subject, you know

This downgrade might be accounted for by the mother's introduction and teacher's up-take of third person talk in lines 70 and 73. There they engage in an explicit metacommentary on the inter-institutional event. This exchange captures the understanding that these are routine, somewhat ceremonial and ritual encounters. But in her account of not being really all that vigilant of her daughter's work, she invokes a "moral version" of parenthood that encompasses the autonomy – responsibility dilemma described by Silverman (1987) in respect of clinical encounters with adolescent patients. She recovers her competence by alluding to a presumably shared knowledge of what is reasonable vigilance of people "this age".

We have worked in this paper with only some segments from a much larger corpus of data, and have worked primarily with early segments where diagnosis is done, rather than later segments where prescription is done. In other segments of transcript, the ultimate assignment of responsibility to the students (who are, after all, in high school) is available. This is what the mother in the last extract captures in her comment "I expect her at her age to do her homework". There is much more of ethnomethodological and conversation-analytic interest in these interviews, and we have selected for discussion here only some related features of some extracts from the corpus.

8. Conclusion: the home and the school as courses of action

Participants in these interviews refer to homes and schools as physical spaces and places. They are these, but they are also understandable as morally accountable courses of action, and we think that the participants orient to this understanding as well. In these interviews, what counts as "the home" is what happens there, academically; similarly with "the school". Nobody talks

about furniture, swimming pools, food, clothes or playgrounds. They talk about what academic work is done in these places. The parents and teachers hold each other accountable for what happens in each other's domain, as well as claiming accountability for their own spheres of influence.

In this talk, the home is constructed in the shadow of the school. Interest in home events is almost entirely in terms of what school-relevant work goes on there, and in the extent to which parenting looks like surrogate teaching or perhaps some form of educational administration, as captured in our notion of the "curriculum for the home". The inter-institutional talk is therefore asymmetrical (cf. ten Have, 1991), and although two institutions are being "talked into being" with or against each other, the relation between them, the home in the image of the school as described above, is continuously produced in the talk.

Our analysis of some sequences of conversational interaction in some of the extracts has shown the turn-by-turn construction of the "home-school" relationship. Each interview is different in that the formatting, content and length, and the distribution of participation, vary. What we have attended to here is how parents and teachers organise their conversational work around the topic of the student's academic achievement. However, the achievement highlighted here is the working out of a relation, and, where possible, a fit between home and school as courses of action. All of the participants "survived" these inter-institutional encounters, and, as suggested above, were oriented to their own success in achieving a fit between the talk of "parents" and "teachers", their talk as parents and teachers, as representatives of homes and school. This is evidenced also in sections of interviews (not examined in this paper) where remedies were proposed and where idealised courses of future action are discussed.

Educational sociology has long sustained an interest in relations of power, and ethnomethodological studies in education have treated that problem in a distinctive way, by examining the working out of power relations in local instances of talk (cf. Hustler and Payne, 1982; Mehan, 1983; Grønn, 1983). Such working out of power relations is implicit in our commentary on asymmetries, which are not always asymmetries of conversational participation. As ten Have (1991: 162) has noted, "the choices participants have to act more or less in accord with institutional expectation . . . can be exploited by them to create specific kinds of episodes". For example, in one interview, an early part of which is our Segment 3, the father absolutely dominates the talk, effectively delivering to the teacher a monologue about himself and his knowledge about education, with teacher as respondent and daughter as overhearing audience to his talk. The asymmetries we have noted can be summarised in the notion of the "curriculum for the home", which is also strongly part of the prescription phases of interviews not discussed here. This curriculum for the home is a local accomplishment and an agreed outcome of the talk in the interviews; whether or not it is carried out in homes is another matter.

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Appendix

Segment 2

Teacher: Rosemary

Student: Barry

Parent(s): Mother

- 1 T Right now *Barry*, (2.0) how did *you* go can I just have a look at that?
- 2 M Not real good actually [we're not really happy with it
- 3 T [No
(3.0)
- T I think Barry's he's had a lot of activity
- 4 M Mm
- 5 T with his um, er rap dance=
- 6 M =Yeah yeah=
- 7 T the rock eisteddfod
- 8 M He's had the rock eisteddfod and he's had ((theatre group)), yeah I know, that's all finished now
- 9 T Yeah, but that's good, I mean I don't think there's anything *wrong* with that and I think it might um perhaps, had something to do, perhaps, with his results
- 10 M Yeah
-

Segment 3

Teacher: Rosemary

Student: Leanne

Parent(s): Father

[HA means High Achievement, VHA Very High Achievement, SA Sound Achievement]:

- 5 T =that was um, that was a good result. You're going to have to keep *working* in order to keep it though=
- 6 S =Uh huh=
- 7 T =because it y'know it, was a fairly *borderline* HA (2.0) and um as long as she keeps up the work, I'm sure she can maintain it

- 8 F ((odd sighing sound/exhalation??))
- 9 T (hh) How'd you go in the other subjects
- 10 S Huh, oh, all, all HAs, and VHAs and one SA
- 11 T Well that's good, well you must be pleased with that=
- 12 F =Yeah *very* pleased
- 13 T Mm, that's great
- 14 F () she's starting to do some work now
- 15 S (hh) yeah
- 16 T No d- you weren't working in, grade eight
- 17 F Not really=
- 18 S =Uh=
- 19 F =I don't think so
- 20 S It was just a muck around year yeah just (getting) settled in the high school
- 21 T Mm
- 22 S So
- 23 T Well it's a good idea to start working now=
- 24 S =Yeah=
- 25 T =because grade *ten*
- 26 S Um
- 27 F () this is right
- 28 T Mm um it's it's important=
- 29 F =if she wants to go for veterinary or something like that
- 30 T Mm
- 31 F she's going to do (well in grade twelve)
- 32 T Mm oh yes=

- 33 F =she needs her maths and her science and her English on the side is a good thing
- 34 T oh yes you need to at least get a, um, an SA [in English
- 35 F [Uhhum
- 36 T to do anything like [that and um
- 37 F [Yep
- 38 T and the higher you get=
- 39 F =the better [the more chance
- 40 T [the greater it boosts your TE score. So um that's good well you *need* to do exceptionally well in maths and sciences to do vet science because there's a very um strict quota
- 41 F Um hum like everything else
- 42 T Like everything else
- 43 F Anything they () so strange like we had the same problem in England? with the GCEs A levels?
- 44 T Oh yes, yeah
- 45 F An' they used ta, if you had too many apply, they raised. . .
-

Segment 4

Teacher: Ellen

Student: Jenny

Parent(s): Father and Mother

- 10 M Are these her latest two that she's gone down in or is it just [um that particular
- 11 T [Um that particular one? I'll just check on the, [((sighs)). yes
- 12 F [What was the class average for that test
- 13 T That? Nine out of twenty for that test. Class average over the whole of grade=
- 14 M =Hit everyone like a brick wall then
- 15 T Uhm

- 16 M Is it just a different different layout to what they normally [normally
- 17 T [Um, well it seems to be the first this earlier one (1.0) was (2.0) an essay, let's have a look, um (2.0) yeah it's the first essay they've had this year really, essay test as such where you had to write a full essay. The advantage was that they had, it was a *seen* one so I think the subject-mistress thought that would help, but I think it's it *has* hit everyone so they're having another one and if we do this little bit more preparation. The problem was . . . [continues to explain]
- ***
- 23 T That's just a matter of (2.0) the the time, maybe you you were feeling tired or, that sort of thing? (4.0) Yes, [so
- 24 F [Let's see how she goes in the next test then
- 25 M I'm not really worried about her
- 26 T Not at *all*, no she's good, yeah. All right is there any o- anything else you'd like to [talk about?
- 27 F [No, no
- 28 M She's doing well in class then?
- 29 T *Yes*, no worries
- 30 M Participating alright?
- 31 T *Yes*, an'
- 32 F asking plenty of questions?
- 33 T ((laughs)) yep
- 34 F Okay then [thank you
- 35 T [All right, lovely to meet you
- 36 M [Thanks for your time
- 37 T Okay. Bye bye
- 38 M Bye
- 39 T Bye bye
-

Segment 5

Teacher: Ellen

Student: Christa

Parent(s): Mother

- 106 T Then you've got another dramatic presentation, which is um, performing
- 107 S [plays
- 108 T [in front of the class (2.0) so
- 109 S And so I'll fail that one ((laughing))
- 110 T No, don't say that, you can do well, [Chris
- 111 M [Christa's got a *very low* self esteem when it comes to all these an' I'm al- I'm always sure that's what holds her back in English because I know that her, um, her grammar and all those sort of things and her spelling, she's got good skills in [those sort of things
- 112 T [Yes, she has, [yeah
- 113 M [But it's putting it from here, well having the courage to get it out of here onto there
- 114 T Yeah, you get [embarrassed
- 115 M [She, she gets really [stuck
- 116 S (((laughs)))
- 117 T [Ye:es I remember in grade nine she, you got really embarrassed doing that play we did a play, [and you didn't project yourself an'
- 118 S (((laughs)))
- 119 M Yeah
- 120 T You know, which you *can* do I mean=
- 121 M =She's she's definitely um *improving*, you know, she's a hundred percent on what she was even two *years* ago
- 122 T Yeah
- 123 M But that I'm sure is what holds her back with English because it's not lack of um oh () of English
- 124 T Yeah
-

Segment 6

Teacher: Rosemary

Student: Jessica

Parent(s): Mother

10 T Right. It's okay. Do you *write* at home much? Apart from the work you have to do at um, at home? Apart from homework. Do you do any writing, at all?

11 S Yeah

12 T Do you write letters?

13 S Yeah

14 T Right. I see, um do you watch a lot of TV?

15 S Yeah

16 T You do. Do you do a lot of c- of oral

17 M Not really none of us really watches a lot of TV () [a *bit*

18 T [Oh yeah [we all do

19 M [a bit doesn't hurt

20 T No oh no, I'm not saying that a bit hurts but, um, I think you've got the *basis* there for um building building (1.0) what do you want to do? Do you want to go on to, to grade twelve?

21 S Yeah

22 T Yes, that's that's *advisable*, very *advisable* in this um day and age. Do you know what you want to do after that?

23 S Um I was thinking of joining the navy

24 T Yeah. Well you'd need at least a *five* in English a *satisfactory*

65 T Well, is there, w- is there anything else?

66 M No, no I didn't have any problems, I [just

67 T [Right

68 M wanted to meet you=

- 69 T =Yes=
- 70 M =[because (teachers you know)
- 71 T [Yes I think that's an excellent idea
- 72 M It is, it's lovely
- 73 T It really is. And it's good to see that er (2.0) well its good to meet the parents and to see that they're that they're interested because that's also can be a problem, with students *not* achieving that there – that they – there's no interest um
- 74 M Well I don't know. I don't say now have you done, Maths or have you done, I expect her at her age to do her homework
- 75 T Yes
- 76 M You know
- 77 T Of course, yeah
- 78 M And when they're a bit smaller, you know you say, now have you finished your homework
- 79 T Mm
- 80 M Have you finished this, but then, you know, when they get to this age although actually, unless I, just go and have a look I don't really know, what amount of time she does *spend* on each subject, you know