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ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT TEAM - A SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL PROGRAM

DOES SPECIALIZED REMEDIATION INCREASE TEST SCORES?

By
Donald F. Mills

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Arts Degree
Of
The Graduate School
Of
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Approved by
                    Professor

Date Approved _May 16, 2002_

ABSTRACT

Donald Mills

Academic Achievement Team - A
school within a school program does
specialized remediation increase test
scores?
2002
Dr. Kathy Sernak
Educational Leadership

This research is being done to assess the tenets of the Academic Achievement Program.

Those tenets being that a school within a school program devoted to those students who did not

successfully complete any of the three parts of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment will help

them to catch up and successfully pass the High School Proficiency Assessment. This program

will also reduce behavior problems and absenteeism while simultaneously increasing the

student's feelings of success and accomplishment. To test these tenets a set of surveys will be

utilized along with report card grades for two sets of students. The students enrolled in the

program will be compared with a control group of students from the regular program. The

research seeks to compare the relative improvement in grades/performance of each group during

their first year of high school compared to their eighth grade year.

The results of the grade data comparing the Academic achievement students to the

regular program show greater improvements in all subject areas as well as attendance over the

regular students. This leads to the conclusion that the Academic Achievement students are

outperforming the Regular Program students and "catching up." Further the behavior data

remains constant at three referrals on average between the two groups for the first semester of

their ninth grade year. Based upon these results it can be concluded that the program is

accomplishing what it set forth as its goals.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Donald Mills

Academic Achievement Team - A
school within a school program does
specialized remediation increase test
scores?
2002
Dr. Kathy Sernak
Educational Leadership

Will a school within a school program help to remediate students who did not successfully complete the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment and to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment while reducing behavior problems and absenteeism and increasing the student's feelings of success and accomplishment.

The Academic Achievement students are outperforming the Regular Program students and "catching up" and it can be concluded that the program is accomplishing what it set forth as its goals.

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I wish to thank my family for all their support and encouragement throughout the time while I worked on this degree. I also wish to thank the staff and students of Cumberland Regional High School for their continuing support and guidance. I especially wish to thank Kathy Kelk, Robert Vanella, Carole Laster and Robert Bumpus for all the help and guidance that they gave me this year. And last but not least, my university mentor, Dr. Sernak for all her insights and guidance with my thesis and project.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

Twenty-five percent of the eight graders in the County have failed the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment. Every day students from across America are lost between the cracks in the education system. Low standardized test scores and poor academic success leave dismal futures for these students. Something must be done to help these students regain their potential. Regional High School is instituting an innovative program to identify these students and assist them in becoming successful. This program will be led by an experienced group of four teachers, called the Academic Achievement Team. The success of these students must be measured to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the students involved in the program.

Focus of the Study

The focus of this study is to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Achievement Team's program on students who have failed the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment upon entering Regional High School in order to increase their academic skills so they will be able to successfully pass the High School Proficiency Assessment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Academic Achievement Program on its ability to improve scores on standardized tests of those high school students who failed the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment. This study will result in an

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evaluative report on the first year of the program informing teachers and administrators where more instructional time will need to be spent in the following year. The Academic Achievement Program provides students with an environment where specialized instruction will assist them in passing the High School Proficiency Assessment.

This study seeks to provide the intern with an opportunity to promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

The Academic Achievement Team seeks an organizational change which provides a environment and instructional program that remediates as well as educates students for the purpose of passing the HSPA.

Definitions

Academic Achievement team is defined as a group of four teachers that will work collaboratively together on the curriculum, instruction and program decisions regarding the Academic Achievement program. This group is represented by one Language Arts teacher, one Science teacher, one Math teacher and one History teacher.

GEPA will be defined as the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment.

HSPA will be defined as the High School Proficiency Assessment.

Limitations

The study will involve the ninth grade students of Regional High School who are involved with Academic Achievement Program as well as a number of stratified randomly selected ninth grade students involved in the regular program. The study will utilize a sample size of 70 individuals, thirty-five participants of the Academic Achievement Program as well as thirty-five regular school participants randomly selected in a manner which mirrors the ethnosocial demographics of the Academic Achievement Program. These two group's test scores and percentage improvement will be compared to each.

Setting of the Study

The Academic Achievement Program is located within Regional High School. Regional High School is located in rural southern New Jersey. This is the poorest area of the state. Regional High School maintains a student population of approximately 1200 and 90 faculty. Regional High School serves a student population makeup of 70 percent Caucasian, 28 percent African American and three percent other nationalities. Regional High School receives its students from seven diverse sending districts. These districts vary from upper middle income being the norm in the district to those where lower income is the norm. Some districts annually send over 100 students to Regional High School where others may only send between one and two dozen annually. Regional high School utilizes and "4x4" style of block scheduling. Each block is 84 minutes in length with four minutes for passing between classes. Four classes are held daily for each of two 90 day semesters.

Students take eight classes a year, four in each semester. Regional High School also utilizes a 35 minute activity period in the middle of the school day along with a 35 minute lunch. The Academic Achievement Team is given three classrooms in one hallway to use. The team is given a common planning period at the end of the day and has the freedom to create their own schedule for classes as well as how many students will meet in each class. The team has the flexibility to change this schedule, etc. at will. Thirty-five students have been selected to participate in the Academic Achievement Program. These students were selected due to their poor performance on the GEPA. For the purposes of this study, these students 'progress will be compared to 35 randomly selected 9th grade students in the regular program. The selection process from the regular program will further seek to match the ethnic data for the Academic Achievement Program.

Significance of the Study

The study will contribute to the concerns of practice of those teachers and students involved with the Academic Achievement Program of Regional High School. Areas where the program is not achieving intended results will need revision and the study will identify these areas and help to identify means by which they can be improved.

Organization of the Study

The next chapter will review the literature that provides support for the formation and utilization of the Academic Achievement Team. Chapter Three will discuss the design of the

study while Chapter four will provide the data collected and its significance. Chapter five will provide conclusions and indications concerning the practices of the Academic Achievement Team as well as implications for further study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The current climate of high stakes assessment as a graduation requirement mandates a rethinking of teaching -learning process in high school. For students entering ninth grade without proficiency in multiple content areas, intervention is a matter of fundamental fairness (Jones, 2000). One method of combating this lack of proficiency in ninth grade students is to create a small school environment utilizing a school within a school program. The Academic Achievement Team at Regional High School is a school within a school model that is designed to meet the 21st century challenge requiring all students to meet high academic standards. The Academic Achievement team seeks to create a student centered and work related environment that also includes the benefits of small school setting, a closer connection between staff and students, "fewer discipline problems, lower student tardiness and absenteeism, lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates; and higher and more varied extracurricular participation, which promotes academic success, better attendance, positive attitudes toward school, and enhanced social behavior" (Bailey, 2000).

The team plans an activity based, integrated approach incorporating inquiry and collaboration, higher order thinking and workplace readiness skills through an interdisciplinary program. With a focus on progressive remediation, the Academic Achievement Team pursues student achievement through the empowerment of learners as partners. "There is compelling research evidence to support the contention that student-involved...classrooms...can give a big boost to standardized test scores" (Stiggins, 1999). The ultimate vision of the Academic Achievement Team is to "expand the range of students who want to succeed and who feel capable of doing so" (Stiggins, 1999). A school within a school setting should provide the flexibility and small class size that encourages this type of positive learning environment.

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Splitting existing schools into smaller "schools within a school" has gained popularity even bringing in political support "Vice President Gore urged school officials to "stop herding all students ... into overcrowded, factory-style high schools." Praise also comes from child development and mental health professionals. Dr. James Gabarino of Cornell University and a noted author recently said, "The most despicable thing we've done to American teen-agers is put them in large high schools." (Bailey, 2000)

"Research indicates that small schools produce equal or better achievement for students in general, effects of small schools on achievement of ethnic-minority and low-socioeconomic-status (SES) students are the most positive. Teachers in small schools are more likely to form teaching teams, integrate subject matter content, employ multiage grouping and cooperative learning, and use alternative assessments. These schools also have greater emphasis on learning that is experiential and relevant to the world outside school."(Galletti, 1999) These concepts and successes are exactly what Regional School District seeks in creating its school within a school environment. Other side benefits from schools within a school settings are a greater sense of belonging, a more positive school climate, especially among the low socioeconomic status and minority students, greater student participation, and more favorable interpersonal relationships not only between students but also between students and teachers.

Positive results have been the selling point of school within a school programs but research does indicate problems as well. Galletti himself indicates that his experience as a principal in three middle schools, sized 450 to 900, has seen that the larger the school, the more difficult it was to provide instructional leadership and cultivate teacher and student leadership resulting in problems associated with the school within a school program. "Schools-within-schools can result in elitism, competition, and professional rivalry among teachers. It is

questionable that the advantages of small schools outweigh the disadvantages of fragmenting current large schools."(Galletti, 1999)

Surprisingly some research indicates that a school can be too small. Research done by Gerald Bracey shows that math achievement rises as school size increases to about 600 students, holds steady to about 900 students, and then diminishes. Many schools within a school programs including Regional High School's seek to have a student population well below 600 students. The idea being as close to a one to one student teacher ratio as possible. The more individual attention that a learner receives is thought to correlate to better achievement.

"Schools-within-a-school plans have potential for producing results like those of small schools provided they are distinct administrative entities within the buildings that house them" (Cotton 1996) "The major challenge to schools within schools," writes Mary Ann Raywid, "has been obtaining sufficient separateness and autonomy to permit staff members to generate a distinctive environment and to carry out their own vision of schooling" (1985, p. 455).

Chapter Three

Research Design

General Description of Research Design

This research is being done to assess the tenets of the Academic Achievement Program. Those tenets being that a school within a school program devoted to those students who did not successfully complete any of the three parts of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment will help them to catch up and successfully pass the High School Proficiency Assessment. This program will also reduce behavior problems and absenteeism will simultaneously increasing the student's feelings of success and accomplishment. To test these tenets a set of surveys will be utilized along with report card grades for two sets of students. Of course the ultimate assessment of the program will be when the students take the HSPA. To test this program along the way the process described here will be used.

The students enrolled in the program will be compared with a control group of students from the regular program. The research seeks to compare the relative improvement in grades/performance of each group during their first year of high school compared to their eighth grade year. The researcher wished to compare performance on standardized tests but the testing done did not conform to needed time frames for this research. Since both groups are to be taught the same materials and achieve the same standards according to the NJ core curriculum content standards for each course they are enrolled in, the grades for these groups' grades can be compared to each other.

This research also seeks to compare the attendance and behavior records of each of these groups. According to the ideas and goals that this program is founded upon, the program will be successful if students in the program show a greater improvement in grades, performance, and

attendance than those students in the regular program. This greater improvement is based upon the "catch up" concept of the program.

The research also seeks to measure the impact on the participants of the attitudes that the regular teaching staff have towards this program.

Description of Development of Research Instruments

The research instruments used to evaluate the Academic Achievement Program participant's improvement in grades were developed utilizing the following criteria. First since the Academic Achievement Program uses a year long four marking period grading system and the regular program uses a two-semester 4x4 block schedule only the first two marking period grades will be compared for the ninth grade year. Both marking periods begin and end on the same dates within the school. The first two marking period grades will be used from the eight grade year. The attendance and behavior information will also be compared for the same time periods.

The surveys are designed to indicate the attitudes of the respondents towards the program they are involved in and/or their attitudes towards the other program. This survey process is divided into two focus groups, the teaching staff and students. The student's survey will seek to identify how the students perceive their academic performance as well as their personal opinions regarding the program they are enrolled in. The teacher's survey will seek to uncover their thoughts about both programs. Both surveys will employ a Likert scales to indicate the respondents agreement with specific statements as well as some yes/no responses. The Likert

scale employed uses a 1 to 4 response scale to require respondents to make a decision regarding their attitudes as opposed to choosing a response that falls in the middle which would not easily indicate the positivity or negativity associated with their attitude.

Further the Academic Achievement Program's teachers will be interviewed to identify their attitudes. The interview will be a group interview lasting approximately one hour.

Description of sample and sampling techniques

There are two major sample groups used in this research, the teachers and the students. The members of both groups will remain anonymous. The teachers sample group is divided into two groups, the control group and the focus group. The focus group consists of the four teachers who teach the Academic Achievement program. The Control group consists of the eighty-one teachers who teach students in the regular program.

The students' group is also divided into two groups, the control group and the focus group. The focus group consists of the 34 students enrolled in the Academic Achievement Program. These students must have failed all three sections of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment. The control group will consist of 34 students within the regular program. These students are chosen using a stratified random sampling process. First all of these students must be ninth graders. Second, these students as a group must meet the same ethnic makeup as the focus group. Third the students in the control group must also meet the same sending district makeup as the focus group that is to say that since this school receives students from seven different sending districts that each district is represented equally between the two groups. Next, the students in the control group must be taking science, math and language arts during the first

semester. This will allow a valid comparison between these two groups since the focus group is taking these three courses at the same time. It is important to note that the control group will have completed their course work in the two marking period time frame whereas the focus group will have only gone through half of their course work. One of the concepts that the Academic Achievement Program is based on is that the students involved in the program are not ready for the intensive block schedule utilized by the regular program. One process for comparing these two groups on a more equal setting is to compare the first marking period grades of the regular program students with the average of the first two marking periods for the Academic Achievement students since for both groups this represents coverage of one half of the coursework for a given subject. According to the concept of block scheduling the time spent on each subject for both groups should be the same, the only difference being that the regular program spends more time (84 minutes) each day on a subject for a shorter course duration (90 days) where as the Academic Achievement Program spends less time a day on a subject for a longer course duration (180 days.) In essence one aspect of the Academic Achievement program being evaluated is whether or not the time framework of the program is effectively helping the students involved in the program to be successful.

Description of Data Collection approach

Data will be collected by reviewing the students' records after the end of the second marking period to obtain grades, attendance and behavior data. This information will be written down on a spreadsheet.

Survey data will be collected from the two student groups by having each group respond to a survey (see Appendix A) on the 10th day of the third marking period. This day was chosen

to allow the regular program teachers the time to get acquainted with their new students and to establish a routine with them. Doing the surveys earlier than this might disrupt the establishment of this routine. The focus group will be surveyed together during one of their classes since they are all in the same room. The surveys will be given to their teachers to distribute and collect. The control group of students will be surveyed the same day and the same time period by having their teacher's distribute and collect their surveys. The students will be rewarded with a Hershey bar for filling out the survey.

The teacher group surveys will be distributed via the teacher's mailbox and asked to be returned within three days. To help facilitate a large return from the teacher group a "reward" will be used for returning the survey. This reward will also be a Hershey chocolate bar.

Description of Data analysis plan

Data from the both the teacher and student surveys will be averaged per question for the control and focus groups. These averages will then be compared to each other to identify any substantial differences and any substantial commonalities.

The student's grades and attendance data from the eighth grade year and ninth grade year will be compared to each other to identify the degree of improvement a student has made in their ninth grade year. Comparisons will be made separately for their science, language arts, and math grades separately. The degree of improvement for each course will be identified for each individual student. In order to compare the groups, the average improvement of all the students in each subject area in the focus group and of those in the control group will be determined. These group averages will be examined to each other to identify any differences. Further, the

overall improvement for all three courses combined will be computed for each group. These group averages will also be compared to each other.

Behavior data will be collected by comparing the amount of discipline referrals between the focus and control groups for the ninth grade year and by comparing discipline records from their eighth grade year. The data will be identified for individual students as well as being averaged to receive group discipline data. The group and individual data will be compared to each other to see if any differences in discipline problems have occurred between the two groups since entering ninth grade.

Chapter Four

Presentation of the Research Findings

The overall purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academic Achievement program. Two areas were studied to gather data regarding the Academic Achievement Program, first the beliefs of both groups of teachers in the school, those involved with the Academic Achievement Program and those involved in the regular program. Secondly the students in the school, those involved with the Academic Achievement Program and those in the regular program. Each group of students was surveyed as to their beliefs and experiences, grade data was also collected. The sum of the data was used to draw conclusions about the program and its effectiveness.

The results of the regular teaching staff survey outline how these staff members feel concerning the Academic Achievement Program. Sixty-six of the eighty-one teaching faculty returned the survey representing an 81% response. The survey responses can be viewed in appendix B. This survey was designed to cover all programs within the school as to prevent anyone from inferring which program was being targeted in the school. If the teaching staff in general was aware of which program was being targeted that could influence their responses. The questions that were used for this study relate to the Academic Achievement program and those that refer to the class or students that any teacher within the school system is directly involved with. Also used in this survey were the questions referring to communication between faculty members within the entire school. Of note for this study is the regular teaching staff response to questions three and four (data numbers shown in bold).

Question 3:
With regard to professional communication between yourself and other teachers in our school:

There is:
(no communication) 1   2   3   4 (a lot of communication)
                   (4) (33) (16)   (9)

Question 4:

With regard to knowledge about academic programs offered at our school (other than the subject area(s)/level(s) that you teach):

I have no knowledge: 1   2   3   4   I have extensive knowledge
                           (6)   **(31)** **(19)** **(3)**

Based on the response to question three, sixty percent (37/62) of the regular teaching staff believed there is little communication between teachers within the school and this directly relates to the response to question four which shows that most teachers (63%) have little knowledge of other subject areas or levels than that they teach.

Even though there is little communication or knowledge of the Academic Achievement Program among staff members in general, the regular teaching staff expressed their beliefs regarding the students involved in the Academic Achievement Program through their responses to questions one and two. Question one refers to the Regular program Teacher's beliefs about students that they teach. Question two had the Regular Program Teachers express their beliefs about the students involved in the Academic Achievement Program. The regular teaching staff also expressed their beliefs regarding the Academic Achievement Program in general through their responses to questions 5i and 5j. These questions asked the Regular Program Teachers to express their beliefs concerning how the Academic Achievement Program has affected the overall learning environment of the school as well as the overall learning environment of their classroom. The results of these questions are best expressed in the graphs that follow. Each graph has two lines, one line represents beliefs about the Academic Achievement Program students and the second represents beliefs about the Regular Program students. The area between the two graphs indicates the difference in beliefs. The greater the area between the two lines relates to a greater difference in beliefs concerning the Academic

Achievements Program students and those students in the Regular Program. Since the regular

program teachers have shown in their responses to questions one and two that there is little

knowledge or communication concerning the Academic Achievement Program as was discussed

previously, these differences could be best interpreted as stereotypes based upon previous

experiences of the regular program teachers.
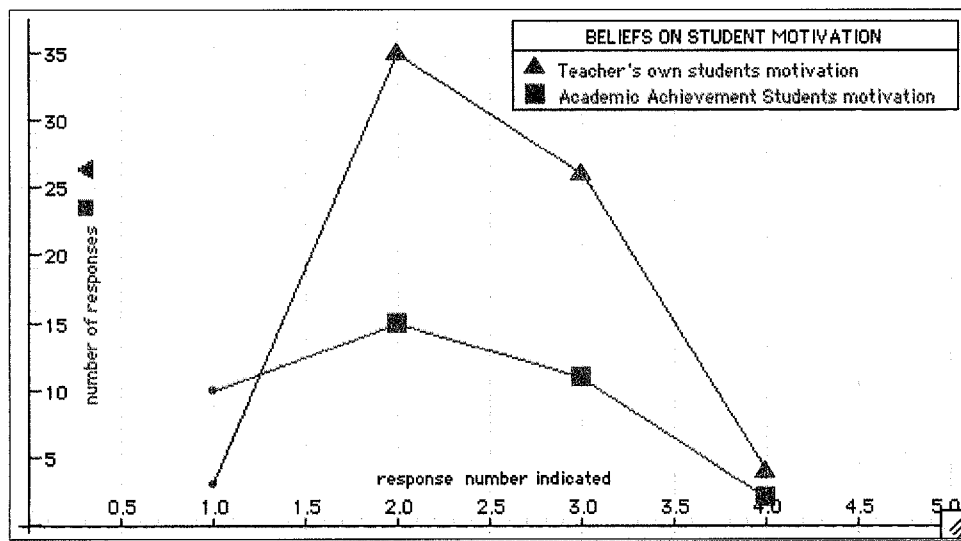
This graph indicates that the Regular Program faculty belief that the students they teach are

more motivated than the students in the Academic Achievement Program. The large area

between the lines on the graph indicated that they believed that the Academic Achievement

students are far less motivated than the regular program students.

The Regular Program teachers also believe that the Academic Achievement students are far less intelligent than the students they teach as shown by the large area between the lines on the graph.
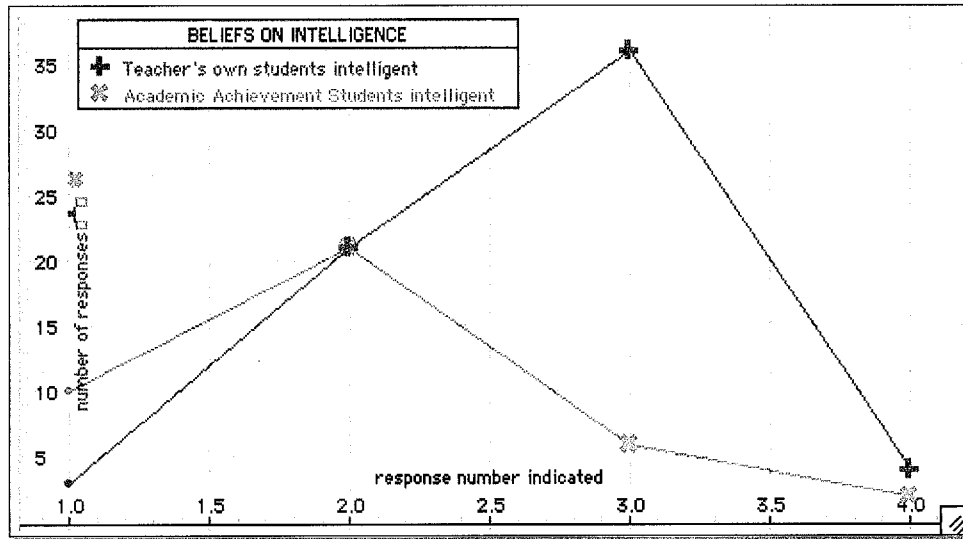
The Regular Program Faculty also showed that they believed that the students that they teach are far better behaved than the students in the Academic Achievement Program through the responses resulting in the large area between the two lines on the graph regarding behavior.
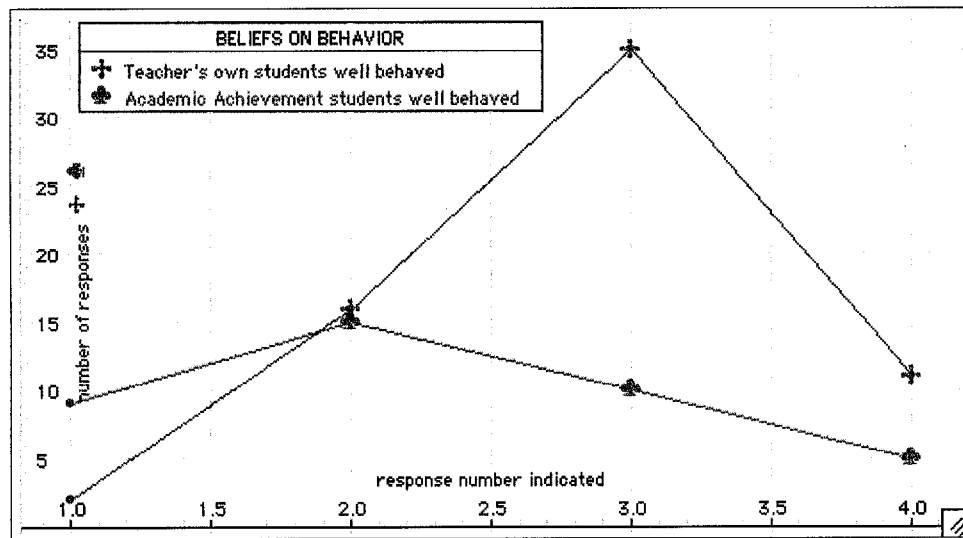
The Regular Program faculty further expressed their beliefs regarding the Academic

Achievement Students with their responses to the survey questions regarding student

successfulness; here once again they rated the students they teach far more successful than the

academic achievement students which can be seen by the large area between the lines on the

graph.
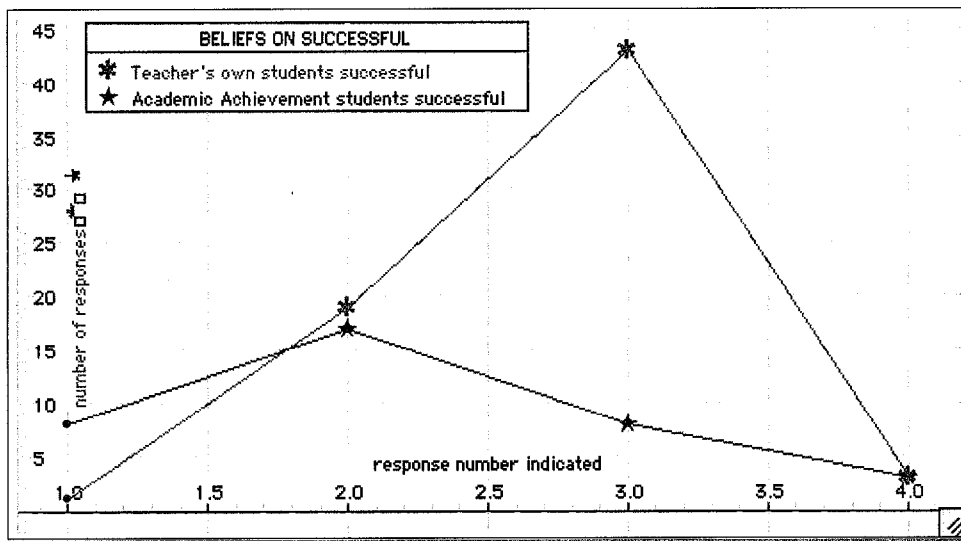
The survey also indicates that sixty-nine percent of the Regular Program faculty believes that the

Academic Achievement program has not impacted on their classroom. More Regular program

teachers indicated that the program has made a positive impact on the school showing that in

both cases that a minority of regular program faculty believe the Academic Achievement

program has had a negative impact on the school. This can be seen in the following graph for

school and classroom environmental impact.

	BELIEFS ON ENVIRONMENT
◆	Academic Achievement impact on classroom
◈	Academic Achievement impact on school

number of responses

response indicated
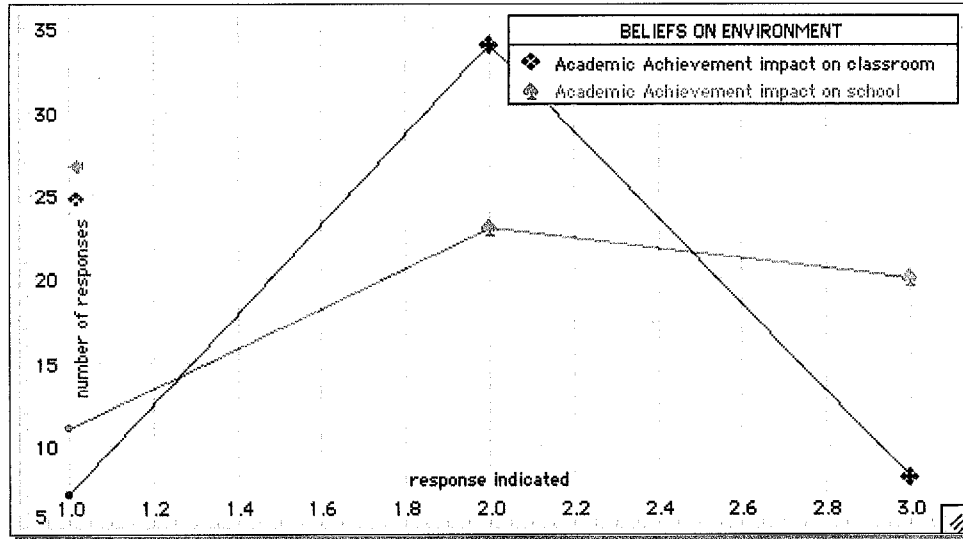
The faculty members that are directly involved with the Academic Achievement program were interviewed and have a different set of beliefs. The Academic Achievement faculty members indicate that they believed these students can be successful. Faculty member A responded that "these children just need more attention and a schedule that is more suited to their needs than that of the regular program." The team members theorized that these students are not as motivated perhaps because of past failures, but that "they can learn and be successful if given the opportunity to experience success." The team members all agree that these children can pass the HSPA and with the a little help they will be back on the pathway to success. The Academic Achievement Teachers further believe that if the Academic Achievement students are left without help they most likely will continue to experience failure. When comparing the Academic Achievement faculty responses during their interview with the survey responses from the Regular Program teachers a simple difference can be seen. The Academic Achievement teachers believe that the students they teach are the "equal to the students in the regular program with the exception of those involved with the Honors program." The Academic Achievement

teachers as a whole believe there students to be as intelligent as the "regular" student. The students they teach are also believed by the Academic Achievement teachers to be capable of success as well as any other student in the school. This is in direct contrast to the survey results from the Regular Program teachers who have expressed their beliefs to show the students in the Academic Achievement program to be less capable in every area of concern on the survey as was previously shown.

The results of the comparison of survey data between the students involved in the Academic Achievement program and the regular program can be seen in the charts in Appendix B. Both groups replied almost identically to question one which compares how they believe they are doing this year compared to last. That is that sixty percent of the regular students feel they are doing better this year whereas seventy-two percent of the Academic Achievement students feel they are doing better this year. A greater disparity exists between the student group's beliefs concerning their teacher's interest in their success. Forty-five percent of regular program's students indicate they believe their teachers are interested in their success. Seventy-five percent of the Academic Achievement students indicated they believe their teachers are interested in their success. A greater percentage of Academic Achievement students also indicated that they like how their classes are taught than the regular program students, specifically sixty-six percent for the Academic Achievement students compared to fifty-one percent of the regular program students. The only area where the Academic Achievement students indicate a more negative than the regular program students is question four concerning having been made fun of by others. Here fifteen percent more students indicate that they were made fun of because of the classes they were enrolled in. Thirty six percent of the Academic Achievement students indicated they were made fun of compared to twenty-one percent of the regular program students. The two

groups had very different responses to question five concerning what would most help them become successful students. The most notable being that none of the Academic Achievement students indicated more individualized instruction would help them be more successful compared to fifteen percent of the regular program students. Also forty-two percent of the Academic Achievement students indicated completing assignments compared to twelve percent of the regular students. Forty-five percent of the regular program students indicated better understanding compared to twenty-seven percent of the Academic Achievement students. Twenty-four percent of both groups indicated that the students feel more time studying would make them more successful. Overall the most important difference is that most of regular students indicate better understanding of material will make them more successful compared with most of Academic Achievement students indicate completing assignments will make them more successful. The important point being that the Regular program students are indicating an answer that requires more instruction or instructional change by the teachers, whereas the Academic Achievement students' response is dependent on a personal change.

A comparison of the grade data seen in Appendix B shows that the students involved in the Academic Achievement Program have been absent on average one less day, are scoring two points better in Language Arts, are scoring nine points better in Science, and nine points better in Math. Further the behavior data indicates that both groups are identical in the number of discipline referrals they have on average. This shows that these two student groups are equally predisposed to get into trouble. The reason for this may be as simple as kids are just kids and they all tend to behave similarly. This is especially true when the children from these two groups are coming from environments that are very similar in their socio-economic structures as these two student groups are. One interesting difference is that the control group of students from the

regular program has a larger number students with greater numbers of discipline referrals than the Academic Achievement student group has. This would show that the students with the worst behavior problems exist in the regular program, not the Academic Achievement program. Behavior data was not available from the students' sending districts to make any comparisons between eighth and ninth grades.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

The major point of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academic Achievement program. The effectiveness of the program was based upon the students enrolled in the program making improvements in their academic performance from eighth grade to ninth grade. The improvements made by the Academic Achievement students should be greater than the improvements made by the regular program students during the same time period, since the concept of the program is to "catch up the Academic Achievement students." The Academic Achievement program is designed so that the ultimate goal is for these at-risk students to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment. To accomplish this, students enrolled in the program cannot work at the same caliber as they have in the past. In fact these students must outperform their peers in the regular program so that the Academic Achievement students can close the grade point average gap between themselves and the regular program students. Once this gap is closed and the Academic Achievement students are performing at the same level as the regular program students, then successfully completing the HSPA should not be a problem for the Academic Achievement students. The results of the grade data comparing the Academic achievement students to the regular program show greater improvements in all subject areas as well as attendance over the regular students. This leads to the conclusion that the Academic Achievement students are outperforming the Regular Program students and "catching up." Further the behavior data remains constant at three referrals on average between the two groups for the first semester of their ninth grade year. Based upon these results it can be concluded that the program is accomplishing what it set forth as its goals.

A secondary point to this study was to assess the effects of the school staff's belief systems on the Academic Achievement Program. Communication between staff being the major conduit for beliefs. The results of the teacher survey show there is little communication between

staff members. This combined with the results that state the staff believe they have little knowledge of programs other than their own indicate that the regular staff has been poorly informed about the Academic Achievement Program and its progress. The lack of communication regarding the program leads to the staff making their own uninformed judgments regarding the program and its participants. These judgments are most probably based upon stereotypes. The result of these judgments are a poor image of the academic achievement program in the minds of the regular program teachers, which is indicated in the graphs discussed in Chapter Four. Based upon those results it can be concluded that the staff not associated with the program have a generally negative impression of the program and its participants when compared with the classes and students that they teach.

The beliefs that the Regular Program staff hold are directly in conflict with the results being shown by the program. The Regular Program staff believes that the students in the program are less intelligent, less motivated and less successful than the students in their classes. When compared to the control group of regular program students with the same sending district and ethnic codes, the Academic Achievement students outperform the regular students in every one of those areas, that is the Academic Achievement students are scoring better than the regular students for every subject. That implies that the Regular Program staff has the wrong impression of the program and its participants. Further the staff feels that the students enrolled in the Academic Achievement program behave poorly compared to the students they teach. The reality is that there is no difference between the groups based upon the results of the behavior data collected. In fact the students with the greatest discipline referrals come from the regular student group. Again this implies that the staff has the wrong impression of the students participating in the Academic Achievement Program.

Another indication of the program accomplishing its goals in the reduction is absentee days for the Academic Achievement program. This reduction in days absent implies a greater motivation on the part of the students involved with the program as well as an improvement in motivation over the past year. This once again implies that the staff has the wrong impression of the program's participants. Couple the behavior results with decreased absenteeism and the conclusion that the Academic Achievement students are feeling better about their classes and being in school can also be made. This conclusion is further supported by the high percentages of positive responses the Academic Achievement students made on the student survey concerning their classes.

The staff directly involved with the Academic Achievement Program has beliefs that are much more in line with the performance of the students enrolled in the program. The lack of communication amongst staff at the school and the limited knowledge of programs other than that which a teacher is involved in restrict the possibility of changing the staff's beliefs about the Academic Achievement Program or its participants. The staff involved with the program should be communicating with staff not involved with the program and informing them of the students' success. The staff of the Academic Achievement program should take every opportunity possible to talk up the program, especially when confronting members of the Regular Program Staff who feel negatively about the Academic Achievement Program. Other communication could be made through newsletters or other forms of printed communication. Currently there is no printed communication for the staff of the school other than that used for faculty meetings. The creation of such a device could not only help to communicate the successes of the Academic Achievement Program but the successes of all of the other programs within the school. This communication will help promote the program and its students. It would seem that the students

enrolled in the program have been incorrectly stereotyped. More likely, the learning environment in which they find themselves now is more conducive to their success than the learning environments they have found themselves in the past. The overall belief of the staff about the impact of the program on the school shows that the majority of the staff feels there is no impact or that there is a positive impact on the school. Greater communication between the staff involved with the program and those not involved would move more staff to believing there is a positive impact on the overall school environment. This change in belief would help to generate more support for the program and its students within the school population. Greater support can help internalize the program within the school creating greater collegiality concerning the Academic Achievement Program which will help to improve the program.

Another belief system within the school is student beliefs. The results of the student survey indicate that the students in the program are not only doing better, but that more of these students feel that they are doing better as well. The control group students feel they are doing better in the ninth grade compared to the eighth grade on average, but are actually not doing as well as in ninth grade as they did in the eighth. What the reason is for this belief is unknown. The survey also indicates that the students in the Academic Achievement program believe that their teachers are interested in their success and also like how their classes are taught more so than the students in the regular program. The program, therefore, is having a positive effect on these students, another reason to conclude that the program is reaching its goals. The fact that none of the Academic Achievement students indicated more individualized instruction was needed to help make them more successful as a student combined with fewer Academic Achievement students having indicated better understanding as reasons to become more successful than the regular program students leads to the conclusion that the program is meeting

the needs of the Academic Achievement students. Based upon the responses to this survey one would conclude that addressing "completing homework assignments" within the program would only lead to greater student success. The remaining student survey question indicates how the students communicate with each other about what classes the students are enrolled in. The results of this question indicate that more students in the Academic Achievement Program are made fun of because of being enrolled in this program than in the regular program. Again greater communication could diminish this problem. In this case the communication would have to be between students and teachers to help remove the stigma associated with being enrolled in a "special" program.

Overall the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are that the Academic Achievement Program is achieving its goals of remediation or "catching up" the students. Further it can be concluded that the lack of communication between staff within the school impairs the Academic Achievement Program's reputation amongst the Regular Program staff while largely having no direct effect on the program. If the Regular Program staff are communicating this opinion outside the school to friends and members of the community support for the program could be questioned especially in times when school budgets and school taxes increase. An attempt to improve communication regarding the Academic Achievement Program should be made at the school and local level, especially considering the negative reputation the program receives. This only serves to point out how important communication is to a school system, especially when the message you want to deliver is positive. Too often schools do not make the effort to counteract negative reputations, especially when controversial topics or programs are involved. As a result of this study the Public Relations Committee at the school

will be preparing a newsletter article to highlight the successes of the Academic Achievement program thus far. This article
will be shared with the public as well as within the staff. It also would be beneficial to encourage the staff of the Academic Achievement Program to talk about the program and its successes with other members of the staff.

A further result of this study has the school leadership team considering changing this program to a ninth grade program only. The reason for this change being that possibly these students only need an extra one year transitional time period from eighth grade to block scheduled high school classes instead of the three year program originally envisioned. The switch to block scheduling may be too drastic for these at-risk students. Currently this decision has not been made. It would be better to wait for this decision to be made after further study can be conducted.

Suggested further study would be to compare the results of standardized tests that all ninth graders are to take and then compare the test results between these same two groups. The standardized test chosen by the school will indicate progress made since the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment towards the High School Proficiency Assessment. The ultimate goal of the program is to ensure that the students enrolled in the program will pass the HSPA and thus a true evaluation of the program could be conducted by studying the results of the HSPA between these two groups of students when they complete the eleventh grade. It would also be interesting to see how the reputation of the program and its participants changes a result of increased communication about the program, especially communication between the staff involved with the program and other staff.

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Appendix A

Research Instruments

LIST OF INSTRUMENTS

Teacher Survey

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your input is appreciated.
Please respond by choosing the one choice which you most agree with and circle it.

With regard to the students you teach:

On average the students you teach are:

(not) 1	2	3 MOTIVATED	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 INTELLIGENT	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 SUCCESSFUL	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 WELL BEHAVED	4(very)

What do you believe about our various student populations?

HONORS:

(not) 1	2	3 MOTIVATED	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 INTELLIGENT	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 SUCCESSFUL	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 WELL BEHAVED	4(very)

COLLEGE PREP.:

(not) 1	2	3 MOTIVATED	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 INTELLIGENT	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 SUCCESSFUL	4(very)
(not) 1	2	3 WELL BEHAVED	4(very)

(OVER)

MIDDLE LEVEL:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			MOTIVATED	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			INTELLIGENT	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			SUCCESSFUL	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			WELL BEHAVED	

BASIC SKILLS:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			MOTIVATED	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			INTELLIGENT	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			SUCCESSFUL	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			WELL BEHAVED	

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			MOTIVATED	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			INTELLIGENT	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			SUCCESSFUL	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			WELL BEHAVED	

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			MOTIVATED	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			INTELLIGENT	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			SUCCESSFUL	
	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)
			WELL BEHAVED	

(GO ON TO NEXT PAGE)

With regard to professional communication between yourself and other teachers in our school:

There is:
(no communication) 1   2   3   4 (a lot of communication)

With regard to knowledge about academic programs offered at our school (other than the subject area(s)/level(s) that you teach):

I have no knowledge: 1   2   3   4   I have extensive knowledge

Please complete the following statements:

Overall you feel the HONORS PROGRAM

  has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the HONORS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM

  has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the MIDDLE LEVEL PROGRAM

  has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the MIDDLE LEVEL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of your classroom.
                                        (OVER)

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Overall you feel the BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted

...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Student Survey

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your input is appreciated.
Please respond by choosing the one choice which you most agree with and circle it.

Do you feel that you are doing better this year than last year in eighth grade?

yes   no

Do you think your teachers are interested in your success as a student?

yes   no

Do you like how your classes are taught?

yes   no

Have you been made fun of because of the classes you are in?

yes   no

Which of the following reasons would you most agree would help you to be more
successful in school?

A) better understanding of material
B) more individual instruction
C) more time spent studying
D) completing all homework assignments

Appendix B

Data Tables and Survey Responses

LIST OF TABLES

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STUDENT ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR AND GRADE

DATA

Student #	Sending Code	Ethnic Code	Attendance 8	Attendance 9	L.A. 8	L.A. 9	Science 8	Science 9	Math 8	Math 9	Behavior 9
500756	6000	1	14	8	78	80.5	79	77.5	75	88	2
505282	4000	3	1	3.5	81.5	85.5	90	82.5	90.5	77.5	0
506488	7000	3	4	1.5	87	84	80	91.5	89	87.5	0
510194	2000	2	3.5	2	77.5	92.5	83	79	74	76	0
516845	2000	2	2	2.5	65	66.5	69.5	73	74	70.5	6
523900	950	2	5	2	71	83.5	81	84.5	73	81	8
523999	950	2	10.5	2.5	82	91.5	88	92.5	87	90.5	4
528286	1000	1	14	7.5	88	79	78	81	77	70	0
528581	7000	1	4	2	96	88	87	97	87	95.5	0
529945	7000	3	4	3	87	84.5	82	92.5	78	86.5	0
532138	7000	2	2.5	0	87	91	78	94.5	85	90.5	0
524064	7000	3	10.5	12.5	88	76.5	93	77.5	88.5	67.5	9
541851	2000	2	2	1	79.5	87.5	79	92	78	93.5	4
541852	2000	2	10.5	5	71	70	71.5	79	75.5	71.5	10
542570	4000	1	6	5	85	91	95	93.5	85.5	88.5	0
544517	4000	1	0	0	88.5	93	90	94.5	91	95	0
546713	2000	2	4.5	1.5	78	71	76	74	81	71.5	7
547133	2000	2	5	10	76	63.5	81.5	77.5	72.5	60.5	12
550241	7000	1	6.75	5	87	85.5	82	90.5	87	89	0
557665	2000	2	2	0	92.5	92.5	87.5	94.5	81	97.5	0
599302	6000	1	2	1.5	76.5	90.5	75	94	87	94.5	0
559619	2000	2	6.5	5	70	73	72.5	71.5	71.5	69.5	7
569265	4000	1	3	3	77.5	86	83	87	77	80	0
573286	7000	2	4.5	3.5	93	80	87	83.5	87	83.5	4
575067	7000	2	4	0.5	87	77	75	90.5	84	87.5	1
575102	950	1	9	12.5	40	76	61	80.5	53	68	0
576261	1000	3	0	4	85	90.5	83	90	80	76.5	0
582387	2000	1	0.75	3	88	93	88	94.5	84	95.5	0
588889	2000	2	3	5	76	64	80	81.5	79	64	7
596405	2000	2	8.5	3	75	78.5	71	70.5	71	70	4
596451	2000	2	0.5	0	81	73	73	77.5	74	78	4
598023	2000	2	3	0	84	87	80	90.5	78	82.5	0
		AVERAGE	*5*	*4*	*81*	*82*	*81*	*85*	*80*	*81*	*3*
		CHANGE		*-1*		*-1*		*4*		*1*	

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REGULAR PROGRAM STUDENT ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR AND GRADE DATA

Student #	Sending Code	Ethnic Code	Attendance 8	Attendance 9	L.A. 8	L.A. 9	Science 8	Science 9	Math 8	Math 9	Behavior 9
509258	2000	2	2.5	2	73	94	82	86.5	72	84.5	0
509182	2000	2	1	2.5	81.5	75.5	92	79.5	90.5	86	1
509261	2000	2	3.5	5	80	71	72	69.5	73	60.5	4
518364	2000	2	3	10.5	89	93.5	87	72.5	90	98	0
519195	2000	2	4.25	6	96	86.5	92	73.5	96	69.5	0
537912	2000	2	1.5	6	91	55	84	68	86	72.5	4
541283	2000	2	8	4	95	82.5	93	65.5	93	85	5
551826	2000	2	1.5	5	92	91.5	87	66	87	94.5	0
555199	2000	2	4	5.5	80	88	67.5	75	73	83	4
560525	2000	2	4	0	90	75	88	88	95	79.5	4
561232	2000	2	1	1	96	88.5	85	96	87	72	0
562392	2000	2	4	0	96	74	87	83.5	87	66	7
565075	2000	2	0.5	9	95.5	86.5	98	85	98.5	61.5	1
566333	7000	1	1.5	3	88	88	81	97	79	95.5	7
571834	7000	1	11	5.5	77	74.5	82.5	85	84.5	63	1
575104	7000	3	1	3	77	78	80	89.5	77	87.5	0
505282	7000	3	15	2	96	85.5	96	82.5	92	77.5	2
575766	7000	3	1.5	3	79	90.5	79	90	86	84.5	3
575768	6000	1	3.5	6	94	83	94	82	92	84.5	15
575964	6000	1	12.5	4	84	81	94	93	83	77.5	3
587469	1000	1	2	2	85	88	87	82	85	85	0
587473	4000	3	0.5	1	96	90.5	96	60.5	94	76.5	0
587969	950	2	2.5	0	93	96.5	88	75	83	75	3
588476	950	2	0.25	1	90	78	82	66.5	87	68	0
592107	950	1	3.5	3.5	86	94.5	85	63	88	45	0
595215	4000	1	10	7	60	95	80	81	80	94	0
597164	4000	1	3.25	3.5	92	95	85	96	92	96	0
598188	4000	1	4	2	90	67.5	86	98.5	85	75	1
599201	1000	3	1	8.5	86	83	84	73	90	90.5	5
599312	2000	1	9.75	0	93	89.5	85	98	88	60	20
599712	7000	2	8.5	4	93	89.5	94	70	95	73	0
599614	7000	2	2	2	83	78	78	87	77	79.5	1
		AVERAGE	4	4	87	84	86	81	86	78	3
		CHANGE		*0*		*-3*		*-5*		*-8*	

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REGULAR PROGRAM TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

66 surveys returned from 81 surveys distributed.
Results are indicated in bold parenthesis.

With regard to the students you teach:

On average the students you teach are:

(not) 1	**(3)**	2 **(35)**	3 **(26)** MOTIVATED	4(very) **(4)**
(not) 1	**(3)**	2 **(21)**	3 **(36)** INTELLIGENT	4(very) **(4)**
(not) 1	**(1)**	2 **(19)**	3 **(43)** SUCCESSFUL	4(very) **(3)**
(not) 1	**(2)**	2 **(16)**	3 **(35)** WELL BEHAVED	4(very) **(11)**

What do you believe about our various student populations?

HONORS:

(not) 1	**(1)**	2 **(4)**	3 **(24)** MOTIVATED	4(very) **(27)**
(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(3)**	3 **(32)** INTELLIGENT	4(very) **(20)**
(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(0)**	3 **(30)** SUCCESSFUL	4(very) **(26)**
(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(7)**	3 **(25)** WELL BEHAVED	4(very) **(25)**

COLLEGE PREP.:

(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(23)**	3 **(38)** MOTIVATED	4(very) **(2)**
(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(12)**	3 **(47)** INTELLIGENT	4(very) **(3)**
(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(14)**	3 **(47)** SUCCESSFUL	4(very) **(2)**
(not) 1	**(0)**	2 **(20)**	3 **(39)** WELL BEHAVED	4(very) **(5)**

(OVER)

MIDDLE LEVEL:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)	
	(6)	**(44)**	**(10)**	**(0)**	MOTIVATED
	(3)	**(29)**	**(25)**	**(0)**	INTELLIGENT
	(1)	**(40)**	**(19)**	**(0)**	SUCCESSFUL
	(6)	**(37)**	**(16)**	**(1)**	WELL BEHAVED

BASIC SKILLS:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)	
	(18)	**(27)**	**(10)**	**(0)**	MOTIVATED
	(9)	**(31)**	**(10)**	**(0)**	INTELLIGENT
	(7)	**(31)**	**(10)**	**(0)**	SUCCESSFUL
	(11)	**(15)**	**(11)**	**(0)**	WELL BEHAVED

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)	
	(10)	**(15)**	**(11)**	**(2)**	MOTIVATED
	(10)	**(21)**	**(6)**	**(2)**	INTELLIGENT
	(8)	**(17)**	**(8)**	**(3)**	SUCCESSFUL
	(9)	**(15)**	**(10)**	**(5)**	WELL BEHAVED

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL:

	(not) 1	2	3	4(very)	
	(29)	**(8)**	**(0)**	**(0)**	MOTIVATED
	(19)	**(14)**	**(9)**	**(2)**	INTELLIGENT
	(29)	**(9)**	**(0)**	**(0)**	SUCCESSFUL
	(35)	**(4)**	**(0)**	**(0)**	WELL BEHAVED

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With regard to professional communication between yourself and other teachers in our school:

There is:
(no communication) 1   2   3   4 (a lot of communication)
           (4) (33) (16)   (9)

With regard to knowledge about academic programs offered at our school (other than the subject area(s)/level(s) that you teach):

I have no knowledge: 1   2   3   4   I have extensive knowledge
                     (6)   (31) (19) (3)

Please complete the following statements:

Overall you feel the HONORS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
   (6)   **(33)**   **(19)**
...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the HONORS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
   (4)   **(31)**   **(12)**
...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
   (3)   **(48)**   **(8)**
...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
   (1)   **(42)**   **(12)**
...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the MIDDLE LEVEL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
   (5)   **(53)**   **(3)**
...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the MIDDLE LEVEL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
  (11)   **(43)**   **(4)**
...the overall learning environment of your classroom.
                              (OVER)

Overall you feel the BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
     (13)   **(40)**   **(9)**
...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
     (14)   **(35)**   **(8)**
...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
     (11)   **(27)**   **(13)**
...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
     (7)   **(34)**   **(8)**
...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Overall you feel the ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
     (11)   **(23)**   **(20)**
...the overall learning environment of the school.

Overall you feel the ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

has negatively impacted   has not changed   has positively impacted
     (12)   **(25)**   **(16)**
...the overall learning environment of your classroom.

Student Survey Results

66 surveys (33 for each group) - all surveys returned

Do you feel that you are doing better this year than last year in eighth grade?

	yes	no
control group	20	13
A.A.T. students	24	10

Do you think your teachers are interested in your success as a student?

	yes	no
control group	15	18
A.A.T. students	25	8

Do you like how your classes are taught?

	yes	no
control group	17	13
A.A.T. students	22	8

Have you been made fun of because of the classes you are in?

	yes	no
control group	7	24
A.A.T. students	12	20

Which of the following reasons would you most agree would help you to be more successful in school?

A) better understanding of material	Control (15)	A.A.T. students (9)
B) more individual instruction	Control (5)	A.A.T. students (0)
C) more time spent studying	Control (8)	A.A.T. students (8)
D) completing all homework assignments	Control (4)	A.A.T. students (14)

Biographical Data

Name	Donald Mills
High School	Haverling High School Bath, New York
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Science Biological Sciences Saint Bonaventure University Olean, New York
Graduate	Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, New Jersey
Present Occupation	Science Teacher Cumberland Regional High School Seabrook, New Jersey