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Academic Remediation of Non-Disability, Middle School Students

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ACADEMIC REMEDIATION OF
NON-DISABILITY, MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

By
Merilee Ann Redberg
July 2004

DEDICATION AND APPRECIATION

This project is dedicated to those who have loved and supported me in my quest for knowledge and understanding: my husband Norman, my children; Simeon, Kent, Jessica and Timothy, and my encouragers; Mom, Daniel and Patrick. This is also dedicated to my Heavenly Father who has lead me every step of the way.

Heart-felt appreciation extends to the professors and staff at Central Washington University who have challenged and encouraged me. This especially includes those on my committee: Dr. Henry Williams, Dr. Alberta Thyfault and Dr. Osman Alawiye. I am also very grateful for the added support of Dr. Steve Schmitz, Dr. Andrea Sledge and Ruth Ann Stacy who invested their personal time in my success.

ABSTRACT

ACADEMIC REMEDIATION OF

NON-DISABILITY, MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

Merilee Ann Redberg

July, 2004

Strategies were developed to address perceived teacher practitioner concerns regarding three areas considered to be negatively impacting student academic performance and three skills perceived to be crucial to student academic success. The six categories addressed were identified through the author's development and implementation of a survey used among middle school teachers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	
1	THE PROBLEM1
	Overview1
	Significance of the problem.2
	Purpose2
	Limitations3
	Assumptions3
	Definition of Terms4
	Sequence5
2	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE6
	Introduction6
	Non-supportive and Absent Parents.7
	Poor Student Attendance11
	Related Issues13
	Comments for“Other”.....14
	Reading Profeciency.....17
	Listening Skills19
	Writing Skills20
	Conclusion.....22
3	DESIGN OF THE PROJECT23
	Introduction23
	Methods23
4	THE DATA26
	Introduction26
	Results of the Survey26
5	SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....38
	Summary38
	Recommendations.....38
	Conclusion.....49
	REFERENCES51
	APPENDIXES59

Appendix A—Completion Certificate	59
Appendix B—Human Subjects Review Committee Consent	60
Appendix C—Yakima Public Schools Letters of Cooperation	61
Appendix D—Ellensburg School District Letters of Cooperation	65
Appendix E—Survey Questionnaire	67
Appendix F—Sample Follow-up Letter	68
Appendix G—Raw Data from Survey	69

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Overview

National attention has been focused on the increasing discrepancy between academic achievement of America's students, and academic achievement standards set by districts and legislation. Language barriers, disabilities, and curriculum ineffectiveness attempt to explain many of the reasons for poor academic achievement. However, there are a growing number of students who are also falling behind but for whom there are no clear or documented explanations. This is evident by the fact that they are not performing acceptably in academics, yet they are not eligible for any special services.

Students who do not meet learning requirements have two options: the first is retention, the other is progression to the next grade without demonstrating grade-level appropriate academic achievement. Research indicates that retention relates to negative effects which include dropping out, increased emotional problems, and continuing failure to meet academic expectations (Myers & Curtiss, 2003; Ruebel, Ruebel & O'Laughlin, 2001). Allowing students to progress to the next grade almost always leads to certain academic failure if there is no intervention. A non-favorable paradox exists.

Steps must be taken to remediate the needs of non-disability students who are not performing well in America's public schools. These needs must be addressed if the educational system is to see gains in the standardized test scores and percentages of well-qualified high school graduate students.

Significance of the Problem

School districts nationwide are in an uproar over high stakes testing. Some tests are used by the state or district for the purpose of gathering data on student achievement. If the tests have a serious impact on the student or the educator, they are considered “high-stakes”(AERA, 2002). High-stakes testing is used regularly due to accountability mandates created by legislation (Myers & Curtiss, 2003). Legislation is, in turn, being driven by the overwhelming crisis of low performance school systems. According to available statistics, the national dropout rate of students between the ages of 16 and 24 was estimated at 11% in 1998 (Ruebel, Ruebel & O’Laughlin, 2001). This means that about 3.4 million students were considered dropouts. Two point seven percent were from high-income families and 23.9 percent were from families of low income. Seven point nine percent were white while 13.6 percent were black and 27.5 percent Hispanic (March, 1996). Risk factors include poor attendance, low levels of engagement and feelings of not belonging.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to identify areas negatively impacting the academic success of non-disability, middle school students, specify skills most necessary to succeed in a general education classroom, and explore avenues through which the areas may be addressed and the necessary skills strengthened. Grounded Theory Method was used in that organization and analysis took place before the literature review was conducted. Grounded Theory Method (GTM) was designed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss and introduced to the research world in 1967 through their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. While this project is

a simplistic representation of GTM, it is, like GTM, based “on the systematic generating of theory from data, that itself is systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.2). It also attempts to “understand the action on a substantive area from the point of view of the actors involved” (Glaser, 1998, p. 115). Three areas negatively impacting student academic success; non-supportive parents, student attendance and absent parents, as well as three most needed skills; reading proficiency, listening skills and writing skills, were identified through teacher practitioners’ perceptions as revealed in a survey.

Limitations

This study has the following limitations:

1. This project was designed to explore the needs of students between the ages of 11 and 14.
2. The instrument used in this project was designed by the author and was piloted with a limited number of individuals before being implemented with the sample of teachers.
3. The sample was limited to middle school teachers in two school districts in central Washington. Participation was entirely voluntary.
4. Definitions of terms on the survey were left up to the individual teachers participating in the survey. Meanings of responses, therefore, may not be consistent.
5. Data collection was limited to the spring of 2004.

Assumptions

1. It was assumed that those who filled out the survey would do so honestly and responsibly.
2. It was also assumed that the survey would reveal the greatest perceived needs of academically struggling students and the teachers who serve them.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined operationally.

1. Inadequate home schooling: The generally accepted requirement of one parent providing at least 51% of the educational instruction of a child (www.kosherhomeschool.org, 2004), in which the parent is not performing the task to the degree in which the student can progress academically at the rate of his or her peers of similar age.
2. Listening Skills: Reception of information through both physical and interpretive/analytical processes (Mead & Rubin, 2000).
3. Non-disability students: Any students that falls under the legislation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (www.nichcy.org, 1996).
4. Parent: A parent is the biological, step or adoptive parent who lives in the home of the child (<http://policy.ssa.gov>).
5. Parental Involvement: The supportive or active of parents relating to the child's academic experience (<http://www.mcrel.org>).
6. Reading Proficiency: The ability to engage in level-appropriate transactional processes between the text and the reader's mind (Tompkins & Hoskisson, 1991).

Sequence

This project is divided into 5 chapters. The significance of the problem, definition of terms and limitations are introduced in the first chapter. Chapter 2 discusses related literature covering the six areas identified in the survey as stated earlier. Chapter 3 explains the creation and use of the survey, and how the project was designed from that context, while chapter four presents the project itself. Summary, conclusions and recommendations are in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature reviewed in this chapter covers a specified list of issues relating to challenges of educating middle school students. The chapter is broken down to reflect six areas. The first three are areas teachers perceived to impact student academic performance negatively. These three areas are non-supportive parents, absent parents and poor attendance. Because subsequent literature research combined non-supportive parents with absent parents, the author also combined them in this document. The next item designated by the data, Comments for “Other”, was chosen as the third category. Comments listed for “other” predominately represented concerns related to parents and comments related to student attitudes. Again, parenting issues have been addressed in this project, therefore student attitude issues were selected as the third area of focus. Three skills perceived to be most important to classroom success include reading proficiency, listening skills and writing skills. This chapter will discuss what literature has to say about the three areas as well as what steps research offers to remediate students’ low academic performance.

In order for non-disability students to be identified, an understanding of who students with disabilities are must be clarified. In 1995, according to the Department of Education’s *Seventeenth Annual Report to Congress*, more than five million children

between birth and their twenty-first birthday were identified as having a disability that adversely affected their academic performance in some area (<http://www.nichcy.org>). Notwithstanding, disabilities such as emotional, behavioral, fetal alcohol affected, and learning delays are often present, but going undiagnosed for a variety of reasons (<http://www.nldontheweb.oreg>, <http://www.reedmartin.com>). These students are considered non-disability students. These individuals continued to lag farther behind their peers as they proceeded through their education, until they were struggling beyond hope. Behaviors such as disruptive attitudes, truancy, and non-compliance have also inhibited students' progress (<http://welfarelaw.org>). Non-disability students include these sectors as well as the general population.

Non-supportive and Absent Parents

“Because parents serve as the first teachers in a child’s life, they are considered to be the primary educators of their child” (Trotman, 2001, p. 275). *Causes of Delinquency*, written by T. Hirschi, in 1969, made a statement still relevant today. According to Hirschi, “The more strongly a child is attached to his parents, the more strongly he is bound to their expectation and therefore, the more strongly he is bound to conformity with the legal norms of the larger system” (p.299).

Trotman (2001) stated that parental involvement has a myriad of definitions and perceptions. He defined it as “providing their child with home learning activities, parents serving as decision makers, providing a place for the child to study, helping with homework, setting curfews and monitoring the quality and quantity of such activities as watching television and ‘hanging out’ with friends” (p. 276). A second definition states that parental involvement is a partnership of the home, school, and members in the

community, which support the student (Perroncel, 1993). Notice the definitions listed do not say anything about parents in the classroom or, in fact, on the school grounds at all. Definitions definitely involve parent participation in the child's life in the home. The question arises, then, in what way is parental support perceived to be lacking?

First of all, Trotman encourages educators to recognize that familial life is busy and that parents cannot commit to things that will place more time constraints on them. Teacher expectations of parent involvement should be aligned with the community dynamics. More affluent socio-economic communities enjoy more parental access than communities struggling with poverty.

Again, Trotman states:

Most low-income urban children live in a growing number of single parent, female-headed households. Consequently many teachers believe that parents with low-income families do not value education highly and have little to contribute to the education of their children. They may also be unable to attend meetings because they do not own an automobile. They are hard to contact because the phone is disconnected. Their absence may lead teachers to make the erroneous conclusion that the parent does not care about their children's education. (p. 278)

One of the reasons parents may stay removed from their child's education is that they are unsure how they can contribute (Plevyak, 2003). "Parents are very aware of the disparity that exists between themselves and the educational system" (Trotman, p. 279). They are baffled by the material their child brings home, and feel that since it is incomprehensible to them, they have nothing to contribute

Eunjung Kim (2002) conducted a most interesting study on Korean immigrant families. She examined independent dimensions of parental involvement as they related to the academic performance of the children in the families. She found that the factor that had the most impact on student performance was parental expectation. This was “in spite of [the family’s] negative relationship to financial capital or insignificant relationship to parents’ English proficiency” (p. 531). She attributes the parental expectations to be cultural Korean values. Certainly, in light of these findings, every parent has a very valuable contribution towards their child’s education, regardless of circumstances.

The positive impact of parental involvement is beyond question. Alyssa Gonzalez (2002) found, through her study published in *The Clearing House*, that the parents’ taking an active interest in the education of their child directly influenced their child’s ability to master material. Students were more willing to take on or pursue challenging tasks, were more resilient, and showed greater satisfaction in their accomplishments. The key here is in the way the parents communicate their support to their children.

Legislation mandates that educators establish relationships with parents. These include the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Linda Plevyak (2003) comments that the hardest step to parental involvement is having open communication channels between the classroom and the home. While students can enhance this by being positive about their school experience, the responsibility still lies with the educators. Plevyak also comments: “When children first enter formal education, they bring with them varied cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds that require diverse ways of teaching. This means that, to be successful with all of these children, school

administrators and teachers will have to know about the home environment and the expectations their parents hold for them” (p. 34).

Because there is such a strong correlation between parental support and student achievement, schools need to develop a new perspective on family and community involvement (Epstein, 2004). Although parents have limited family time and resources, there are still avenues through which schools and families can approach education as a team.

A number of approaches have been attempted to connect the home and the school. Parent meetings and individual conferences, evening educational opportunities, written correspondence, and communication via telephone and e-mail are all forms that require the home to extend to the school. Research indicated that a lesser-used avenue might be the most effective. Gary Reglin (2003) conducted a home visit survey with 80 families considered to be high-risk. Ninety-one percent of parents surveyed believed that home visits would enable them to be more supportive to their children and increase their involvement in the educational process. Seventy-nine percent felt that a home visit by the teacher of their child would be most effective, while 43.8% believed a home visit from the school counselor would be somewhat effective and 42.5% felt a visit from the principal would be barely effective.

The Socorro Independent School District in El Paso, Texas developed a home visit initiative which allowed middle school teachers to visit the homes of their students (Acosta, Keith & Patin, 1997). The student population was 97% Hispanic with 93% qualifying for free or reduced lunches. Over the two years the program had been in operation at the writing of the article, the program was seen to be highly successful.

Teacher referrals had facilitated intervention or assistive services to a sizable number of parents, ranging from nutrition assistance to property management. Student behavior improved and grades went up as much as 20%.

Similarly, the Hollinger Elementary School in Tuscon, Arizona requires every teacher to conduct home visits. Again, the student population is 98% Hispanic. One of the goals connected with home visitations is the opportunity for the teacher to enhance curricula by what is learned from student homes. Family history, interests and abilities are then recruited to give more meaning to instruction (Zaidel, 1996). One of the teachers involved in the program, Cathy Amanti, found that home visits increased student pride in their families, increased student engagement in classroom activities, and built confidence in the parents regarding school involvement and home support (Zaidel, 1996).

Poor Student Attendance

According to Martin, Tobin and Sugai (2002), regular attendance can have a powerful influence on whether or not a student completes his or her schooling. One reason is because attendance impacts academic engagement. A study on student mobility (multiple transfers between schools or living relocations) in Minneapolis Public Schools found that highly mobile, and consequently often absent students, had a documented “connection between attendance and student achievement. Students with nearly perfect attendance on average had reading scores 20 points higher than those who attended less than 84% of the time” (Hinz, Kapp & Snapp, 2003, p. 142).

Factors other than mobility which were impacting student attendance were researched by Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro (1998). They examined the

variables of personal student characteristics, student's family relations and school characteristics as they related to student attendance. They found that "student dissatisfaction with school was the most important single variable marking a difference between attenders and nonattenders" (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro, p. 637). However, they also acknowledged the facts that absentees were more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior and perceive difficulties in their families. Through their research, they came to the conclusion that the most significant step toward remediation of repeated absences requires communication with the student. "In other words, we must understand the absenting child's explanation of the source of his or her difficulty, and the role that the child sees him[self] or herself, family, or school playing in the decision to be absent" (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro, p. 638).

Bullying may also play a role in a student's attendance. A study cited by Dake, Price and Telljohann in *The Journal of School Health* in 2003 revealed that between 9% and 11% of students in United States middle schools "were bullied 'sometimes' or more frequently" (p. 173). This study also found that students who are bullied have lower GPAs than other students. While an absolute correlation between victimization and absenteeism was difficult to establish, their study did suggest that victimized students are absent more frequently.

In an effort to counter high absenteeism, many schools reported introducing incentive programs (Barton, 1995; Haslinger, Kelly & O'Lare, 1996; Morgan, 1995). These incentives included coupons to local food stores, certificates and public acknowledgement, culminating prizes at the end of quarters or academic years and affirmation of supportive home environments.

The Minneapolis Public Schools system developed a Comprehensive Attendance Plan that addressed changes in policy and procedures, the use of data and technology, engaging students in learning, connecting with families and drawing in support from the community. They clarified expectations of both students as well as staff. With the changes brought about by the plan, the district saw an improvement in attendance from 47% of students attending at least 95% of the time during the 1999-2000 school year, to 59.9% attending at least 95% of the time during the 2001-02 school year (Hinz, Kapp & Snapp).

One approach to involving the community was explained by Barton Phillips (1995), principal of North Schuylkill Junior/Senior High School in Ashland, PA. He approached business owners in his school district and received enthusiastic response. Students who demonstrated perfect attendance were eligible to receive meals at restaurants, gift certificates and merchandise. The local bank even offered a savings account as a reward. Not only has attendance gone up, but the SAT scores have as well.

Langly Park-McCormick Elementary school which goes through the 6th grade has instituted an intervention program for students with high absentee rates. They “Established a Prompt and Present Club for the 27 students who had missed more than 15 days during the school year” (Haslinger, Kelly & O Lare, 1996, p. 49). The club meets monthly to celebrate those students who have maintained a high or perfect attendance. Out of the club, 40% have achieved perfect attendance.

Comments for "Other"

Poor academic performance also reflects issues that include apathy, lack of opportunity, negative environment and low student motivation. More often than not, these are associated with poverty. Dorman (2001), a school psychologist who studied poverty among students, concluded that, even though students who live in poverty can excel, poverty still appears to be an important predictor of students who achieve low academically. Poverty is a demographic characteristic, a societal problem that impacts the level of student ability as he or she enters school, thereby becoming an educational issue (Myers & Curtiss, 2003). "As a result, economically disadvantaged students as a group are at high risk for being retained, being denied graduation, and attending a school that lacks adequate resources" (Myers & Curtiss, p.73).

A significant amount of concern regarding student attitude was noted on the surveys by teacher respondents. Aggressive attitudes certainly impact behavior. Aggression is most prominent during the middle school years (McConville & Cornell, 2003). Students who display aggressive attitudes are more commonly considered bullies, have more discipline infractions and tend to be more non-compliant (McConville & Cornell). One study conducted to assess the effectiveness of training young adolescents to demonstrate appropriate assertiveness skills found that, while students seem to have the instructed knowledge down and were able to demonstrate that knowledge in controlled settings, the process broke down when it came to generalization. The possible reason presented was that their cognitive thinking might still be too concrete in the early adolescent years. "They may have responded to cues without thinking through the social situation to consider a set of possible behaviors and outcomes before choosing their

responses” (Thompson, Bundy & Broncheau, 1995, p. 724). Certainly we have seen examples of that among the higher educators in the field. Why, then, is it so unsettling to see this occur among adolescents?

Perhaps, in looking at attitude among students, it would be wise to consider the dynamics that leave students vulnerable to acquire and maintain an attitude. Garance Frank-Ruta states that “it is the curse of many poor students (and this can be true of other socioeconomic levels as well), to go from unpleasantness to chaos to danger in the course of their daily journey to and from school, never setting foot in a quiet, well-ordered, physically decent environment” (2004, p. 55). Teachers are often unaware of the events that a student progresses through during the course of a twenty-four hour day. For certainly valid reasons such as time, lack of sociological training and professional limitations, teachers often respond to attitude instinctively rather than reasoning through root causes. Their prime focus is to keep the classroom on track and running smoothly.

Boredom is another avenue through which poor attitude can gain a foothold. Teachers routinely administer pre-packaged lessons in disconnected, factual ways to students who cannot identify with the content. Creative thinking strategies are minimized in favor of meeting learning benchmarks. This is very repetitive and unmotivating (Lee, 2003). Successful schools focus on learning modes that stimulate intellectual effort, activities that incorporate a high level of student involvement and relevant forms of assessment (Lee, 2003). The idea is to facilitate the student in making choices, sharing judgments, and coming to conclusions.

It is impossible to discuss attitude without discussing behaviors, and these include behaviors of students who are emotionally and/or behaviorally dysfunctional (EBD).

While this is a disability category, there are students who may be undiagnosed, yet function at a low level of competency in these areas. Statistics show that EBD students drop out of school during grades 9-12 at the rate of forty-eight percent, while their fellow disability students drop out at the rate of 30 percent and dropout rate is twenty-four percent of high school students over-all. EBD students are also most likely to be transferred among schools, classes and teachers (Osher, 2003). Would it not make sense, therefore, that borderline EBD individuals are also significantly impacting the classroom?

A third factor to consider lies within the student's personal concept of appropriate classroom behavior. A study by Gabriel Kupermine and Joseph Allen (2003) looked at delinquent behavior in adolescents to determine if social skills or social orientation played the stronger role in the unacceptable conduct of young people. They found that for some, conduct that was seen as negative for others, was not seen as problematic by the individual. They also found that "social orientation explained variance in problem behavior both jointly with, and independent of, social problem solving skills. This suggests that knowing whether youths believe in their capacity to behave competently is as important for understanding their decisions to engage in problem behavior as it is demonstrated levels of social problem solving skills" (p. 607).

In this situation, what the teacher may see as attitude may not, initially, be attitude at all. The initial attitude may actually spring from the approach the teacher utilizes to adjust undesired classroom behavior. The key may come through reinforcing the student's ability to conform to required behavior while maintaining a positive attitude.

Personal concepts of appropriate social behavior also stem from developmental factors. Middle school students are developing autonomy, often expressed in defiant

behaviors, their social skills are struggling to become more sophisticated as exemplified in their compulivity in interactions, and developing reflective and abstract thought are reflected in their egocentric behaviors (Irvin, 1997). While negative attitudes cannot be allowed to control the learning environment, they certainly come with the developmental stages of middle schoolers.

Reading Proficiency

Around the fourth-grade level, reading requirements begin to shift from decoding to the use of reading material for instruction. As students enter middle school, narrative text, to a large extent, gives way to expository text. Students often find this transition shocking (Street, 2002). It is up to middle school teachers to facilitate the transition from one form of reading to the other. Middle School instructors usually see themselves as content instructors, not reading instructors. While it may be true that they were not hired to teach reading, reading strategies still need to remain integrated into instruction in order for students to experience success.

Most difficulties in reading proficiency can be linked to either decoding or reading comprehension. The researcher found numerous articles regarding reading skills, difficulties in teaching reading and reading disabilities in a variety of publications, from *The Reading Teacher* to *Parent Magazine*. Students who find decoding difficult usually exert all of their energy in pronouncing the word and do not connect the words into a fluent thought (Street, 2002).

One cause for poor comprehension relates to limited knowledge of vocabulary and use of ineffective strategies (Harmon, 2002). Hibbing and Ranking-Erickson

published an insightful article in the May, 2003 issue of *The Reading Teacher*. They shared:

We noticed that many of our reluctant and low-ability readers with comprehension difficulties were not able to describe the pictures in their minds as they read. Over the years we've had several students who claimed to "see nothing" as a result of their reading. This is not surprising given the issues faced by many of our students, specifically limited vocabulary, little background knowledge about many topics, lack of understanding of the relationship represented in the language of the text and the lack of awareness that attempting to visualize what is happening might be helpful (p. 758).

They observed that the most proficient readers were able to create mental images in their minds as they read and, in fact, if the mental images were not there, the readers realized that comprehension was not taking place. Low- ability readers often could not visualize what they were reading, even with concerted effort. These readers resorted to decoding the words accompanied by little understanding of the meaning.

These observations carry a great deal of weight with the social science teacher, the language arts teacher, the math teacher; the entire educational process. It is up to the teacher to enable the student to create strategies for understanding. Rather than skipping potentially crucial words, students must have ways to create meaning of the text (Harmon, 2002).

A study conducted by Barbara Taylor looked at the relationship between student reading achievement and approaches in teaching. Her findings with reading teachers can easily be generalized into the content classroom. It was found that when teachers

challenged students with higher-level questioning techniques, reading comprehension made a dramatic increase. Students also improved their comprehension when they were given responsibility for discussions regarding text, which also enabled them to maintain high student involvement (Taylor, 2003).

Reading is also connected to the ability of students to think in an abstract manner.

This ability is yet another that is rapidly developing through the middle school years. "As students become more proficient in abstract thinking, their written and spoken language matures and they are able to read and listen more analytically. In turn, reading, writing, speaking and listening all enhance proficiency of thought" (Irvin, 1997, p.292). Every educator in the middle school level can enhance the reading ability of their students by encouraging them to think abstractly. This strategy can be incorporated into the classroom instruction daily.

Listening Skills

The topic of listening in the classroom was almost non-existent in research literature. Listening skills were almost always linked with parent-child issues or instruction in music or language.

Listening can be connected to student engagement and the willingness or ability to pay attention. Research has recognized that disengagement from school can start in the middle school years. A study released by the Brookings Institute found that 20 % of students reported they had trouble paying attention in the 7th grade as compared to a 33% positive response from 9th graders (Olson, 2002).

School districts in New York have recognized the importance of fundamental listening skills (Volo, 2003). In 1999, only 34% of Hudson Falls eighth-graders tested proficient in their Language Arts exams. The district as a whole identified poor listening habits as a cause. A biology teacher, Kevin McIntyre noted that active listening is not automatic for some students. "It's mechanical and uncomfortable for some kids", he states. "It's like learning how to retype using both hands" (www.nysut.org). One approach being used in the Hudson Falls school district involves teaching note-taking strategies. Discerning important information from lecture and discussion creates noticeable targets for effective listening.

Listening skills do not only lie in the listener. The speaker, or the teacher in this situation, needs to possess skills that encourage listening (Queen, 1995). Belittling, moralizing, or having a commander-in-chief mentality can shut down a student's willingness to listen. An active listener focuses on the speaker. Tone and body language play an important role in listening (Perkins, 1999). Teachers cannot teach listening skills if they are not effectively modeling them. This can be difficult in a hectic and harried classroom situation.

Writing Skills

"In the past, learning theorists have considered literacy's psychological and linguistic aspects, but only recently have they paid attention to the social aspects of reading and writing" (Irvin, p. 290). Reading, listening, and writing are pivotal to effective communication, and communication is the root of societies. The only two forms of communication not yet mentioned are oral and body language, both manifested

observably in attitude and listening as well as implied in writing and reading. Experience and facts cannot be transferred without them. Is it any wonder, then, that these are so key to the success of the middle school student?

Students must understand that writing is for meaning. Before students begin to write, they need to understand the purpose (Saddler, 2003). Students, especially those who are at-risk, previous exposure, personal values, and attitude toward self affect the way a subject is handled. It is through understanding personal relevance that students become motivated to write (Ryan, 1990).

“Parents, as children’s first teachers, play an important role in the development of young writers” (Beck, 2002, p. 48). With guidance and communication, parents can become valuable participants in the students’ writing process (Beck, 2002). When parents take an interest in the work their student is performing, student interest and value goes up. This is one more example of how parental involvement can make a difference in the achievement of students.

Writing for publication, or for any audience including the parent, can make a significant increase in the level of personal involvement in writing. Publication heightened student awareness of the mechanics of writing for Angela Conner’s middle school students (Conner, 2000, p. 72). Knowing that the written material would be read by others, and even preserved for future reading, gave the writing process validity for students.

Students may not feel a personal responsibility for the written work they attempt. While teachers have student writing goals, those goals need to be clear for the learners in order for the learners to assimilate them into their performance. “A basic tenet of all

effective teaching/learning interactions is the transfer of responsibility from teacher to learner” (Glasswell, 2003, p. 298). Students who are not held accountable for their performance will continue to experience unsatisfactory academic progress.

Conclusion

Research literature identified a number of areas in schools and society that may act as barriers to student academic progress. The areas of focus; parental issues, student attitude, reading proficiency, listening skills and writing skills, were clearly identified and discussed in a number of sources. Practitioners have this foundation to build on when creating steps toward remediation. These include building stronger ties with parents and community, targeting instigators and reinforcements of poor attitude and addressing needed skills in middle school students. Literature indicated that the united collaboration between school and community is the greatest support for student success.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to identify areas negatively impacting the academic success of non-disability, middle school students, specify skills most necessary to succeed in a general education classroom, and explore avenues through which the areas may be addressed and the necessary skills strengthened. Because this author's classroom experience was limited to two years of full-time teaching in a private school and three years as a substitute teacher in the public sector, the researcher did not feel qualified to determine the areas of greatest need in the public middle schools. In order to approach the subject as productively as possible, the decision was made to launch the project with a survey (see Appendix E) to provide guidance for project focus. With information gained from the survey, the scope was narrowed to specific areas, and the literature research progressed from that foundation.

Methods

The qualitative approach of this project reflects grounded theory. This is an approach in which "one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Five phases are involved in grounded theory: research design, data collection, data ordering, data analysis and literature comparison (www.nova.edu).

The author developed a survey with the help of insights gleaned from research journal articles. Survey questions were attitude based (Nogami, 1996), because teacher

perceptions were desired. The intention was to take a look at student academic progress through the eyes of the general education instructor. Attitude questions were presented by requesting estimations and perceptions rather than concrete facts. The convenient sample of teachers was chosen by their occupation and grade level taught in order to obtain a sample from middle school teachers in two school districts in Eastern Washington.

Nogami and Hodges (1997, May) stressed the importance of the target of the data. Therefore, the attempt was made to be specific and eliminate irrelevant questions. Response options were simple and concise, which revealed strengths and weaknesses. The original survey was vague regarding prioritizing answers from one to three.

To determine the reliability of the survey questions, the survey developed by the author was piloted on eight fellow graduate students who were working in school districts. The pilot group recommended that the prioritization of negatively impacted areas be more clearly defined.

The survey was limited to six questions developed by the author and were based on the author's teaching experience. The possibility existed that the author's experiences may have been isolated to a specific geographical area. Through the survey, the author hoped to differentiate between those experiences which were isolated encounters and those which were common occurrences in the public general education classroom.

To initiate this project, the Human Subjects Review Committee Office (HSRC) at Central Washington University was contacted requesting permission to conduct the survey. The author completed the certification workshop relating to Human Participant Protections Education for Research on the Internet. The questionnaire went on file in the HSRC office and can be found in Appendix E. Letters of cooperation were then sought

from the Academic Assessment Directors in both school districts, followed by requests to the five principals of the schools targeted (see Appendix)

The author's goal was to ask questions that tapped into prior thought and observations. "Respondents do not simply answer researcher's questions by retrieving preexisting answers from memory. Instead, respondents are often faced with questions about issues which they have given little prior thought: their answers to these questions are likely to be constructed on the spot" (Simmons, Bickart & Lynch, 1993, p. 316). Even though an attempt was made to avoid that possibility, some responses reflected that difficulty. Individual respondent definitions for selections of "home schooling", "non-supportive parents" and "absent parents" lead to extra comments regarding teacher frustrations. Some found response options irrelevant and added their own, more focused ideas.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Because a grounded theory approach was used, the literature review evolved from the information gleaned from the data. Survey questions were based on the researcher's classroom experience, and teachers were asked to validate and clarify perceptions through the survey. The survey was used with a pilot group, then presented to the school districts. The literature review was conducted on areas of greatest response from the survey, and steps for remediation of those areas identified.

Results of the Survey

The following summary of survey results was based on the combined data from all four middle schools that participated. For the purpose of this project, only the resulting data for the topics covered by the project were discussed. Complete results can be found in the appendix.

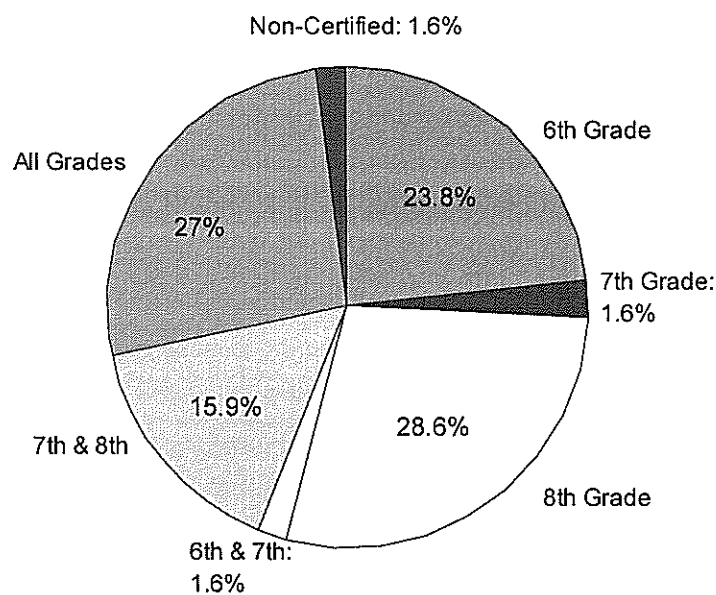
Individual schools granted different levels of permission regarding faculty participation in the survey. Permission was granted by four principals. One school agreed to involvement of all interested personnel, two allowed only certificated teachers to participate, and the fourth school granted access to their teaching team leaders only. Teachers who completed the surveys were from grades six through eight and included those who taught in both general education and special education classrooms. Non-teacher respondents were counselors, administrators, and paraprofessionals.

The survey was administered in to the first school district on February 24, 2004, and administered to the second district on March 3, 2004. A total of 155 surveys were distributed in schools, and a total of 63 surveys were retrieved.

While some teachers taught one specific grade, a majority taught a combination of two, or all three grade levels. Twenty-four percent of respondents taught only sixth grade, and almost 29% taught only eighth grade. Twenty-seven percent taught all three middle school levels and 16 % taught both seventh and eighth grades. One point six percent did not teach any grades, accounting for school administrators and counselors. Data generated for percentages of grade levels taught are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

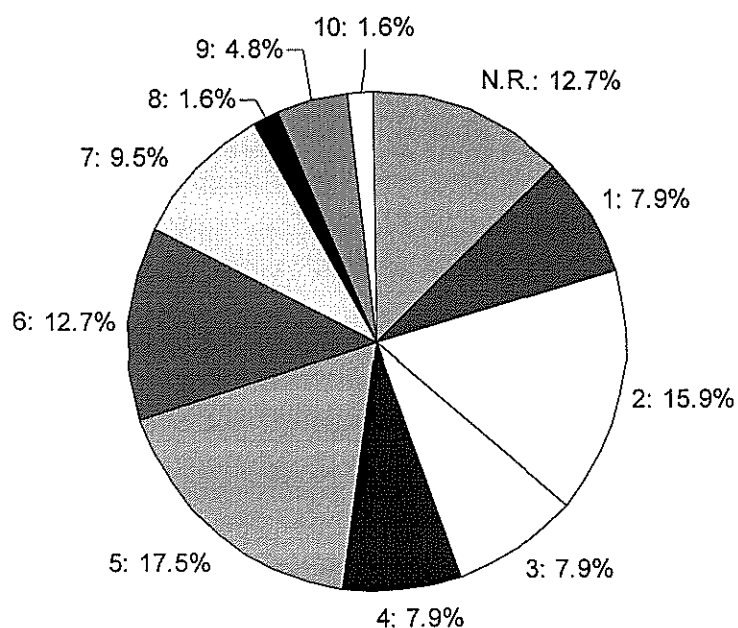
Percentages of Grade Levels Taught by Respondents



Results revealed that the average estimate of non-disability middle school students not performing at expected grade level in two or more areas was 43%. The mean was 35.7 % while the median was 40 % (see Frequencies in Appendix C) Values were given to percentage responses in increments of ten. Data generated for middle school students perceived to be performing below grade level in two or more areas are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

**Percentage of Students Behind in
Two Or More Areas as Indicated by
Respondents**

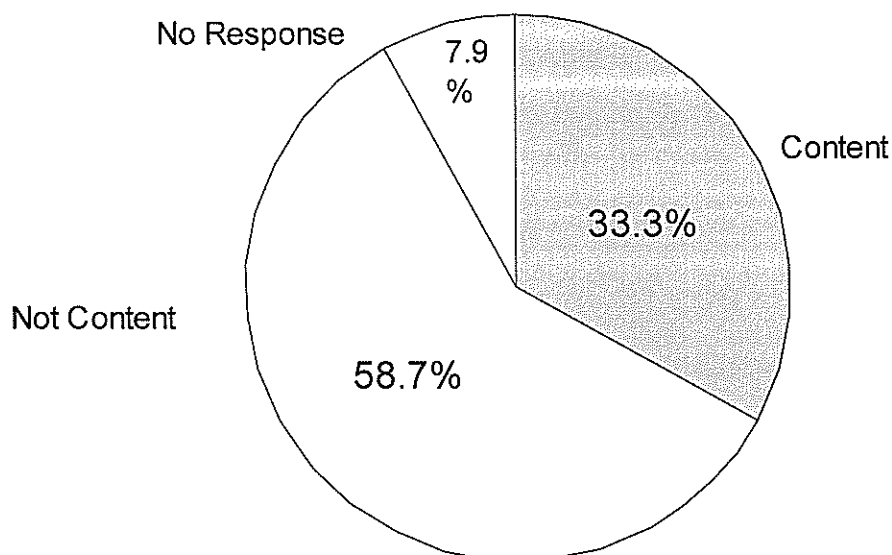


These responses have tremendous implications for high school teachers. While it is not unusual for a student to be struggling in a class because of the content area, to be academically behind in two or more areas indicates a problem with the students' skills related to knowledge acquisition or the ability to communicate knowledge. This places these students at risk in all areas of study as they progress to higher levels of learning.

When respondents were asked how content they were with remediation programs already in place, 33.3 % stated they were content, 58.7 % stated they were not content, and 7.9% did not respond. Data generated for respondents content with existing programs are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

**Percent of Respondents Content With Programs
Already Implemented by School Districts**



Programs considered to be most effective in meeting remediation needs are listed in Figure 4. These items were taken directly from surveys and are not listed in any particular order.

Figure 4: MOST EFFECTIVE REMEDIATIVE PROGRAMS

Before and after school tutoring	BECCA
Teaming	Power Hour
Parent conferences	High Point
Teaming/House Concept	Saturday School
REWARDS	ELL
I-TAP	Tracer
Prentice Hall Intervention	Nutrition Programs
Child Study Team	Summer School
Small group intervention with diagnostics	Reading

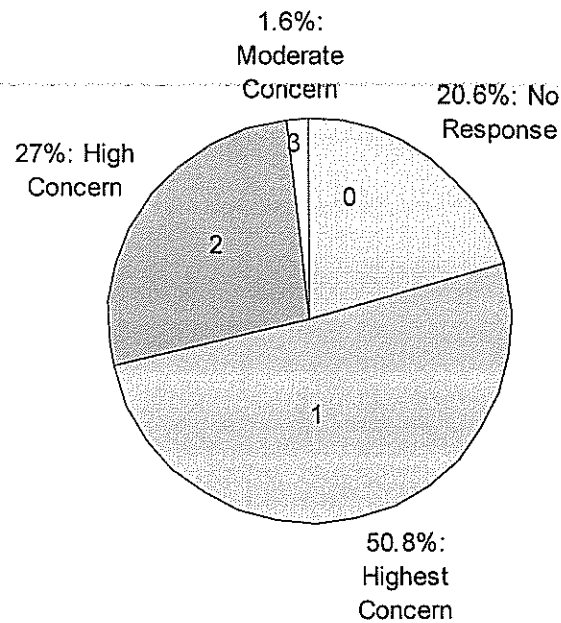
The above programs listed are either building-specific or state recognized and/or legislated. Because they are already in wide-spread use, they will not be discussed here, although aspects of them may be included in strategies later on.

In order to determine the three most perceived areas impacting academic success, respondents were asked to choose three categories and rate them in order of importance; giving the value of one to the area impacting student academic performance them most, the value of two for the second area, and three for their third selection. These results are significant in that they indicate the number of individuals who considered each a concern at some level.

Analysis of data for non-supportive parents received the highest level of response. Only 20.6% of the respondents did not perceive non-supportive parents as an area negatively impacting student academic success. Data generated for non-supportive parents are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

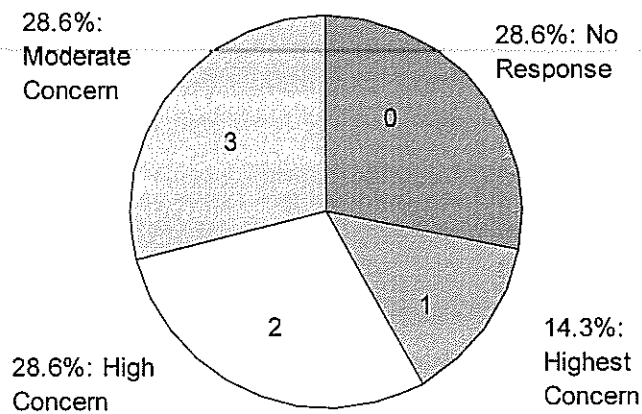
Diagram Reflects Percent of Non-supportive Parents as Percieved by Respondents



Poor student attendance was the next area perceived to be negatively impacting student academic success. Only 28.6 % of respondents did not perceive poor attendance to be of significant concern. Those who perceived poor student attendance to be of highest concern totaled 14.3%, while both high concern and moderate concern were both noted by 28.6% of respondents. Data generated for poor attendance are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

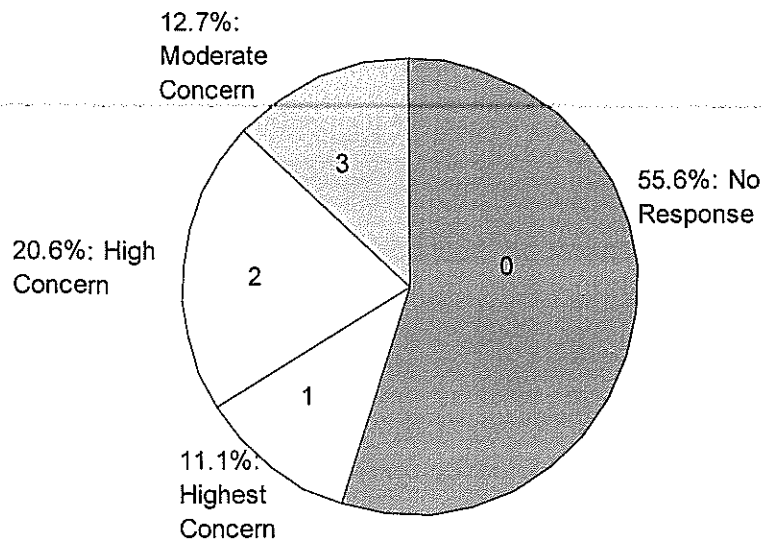
Percentages of Concern for Poor Student Attendance as Indicated by Respondents



The third category was indicated by respondents was absent parents. Highest concern was noted among 11.1 % of the respondents, high concern was noted by 20.6 percent, and 12.7 % of respondents perceived absent parents to be a factor of moderate importance. The total number of respondents who noted this area was 44 percent. Data generated for absent parents are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7

**Shows Percieved Students With Absent
Parents as Indicated by Respondents**



From the author's point of view, non-supportive parents are similar to absent parents. Therefore, the decision was made to combine the two for the purposes of this project. Added importance is also given to research in this area due to marked responses in the category of inadequate home schooling, perceived to be poor preparation during the early childhood years. The literature review reflects this combination as does the recommendations for remediation.

A new third category was chosen through the same methods as the previously listed ones. The response option termed "other" drew a total comparative score of 22% with 33% total marked response. This category encompasses a number of concerns as noted in Figure 8. They are listed in order, beginning with the highest percentage as indicated by the number in parenthesis. While only one-third of surveys responded to this

option, suggestions were usually multiple, accounting for the long list. Respondent comments noted on returned surveys are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: COMMENTS FOR “OTHER”

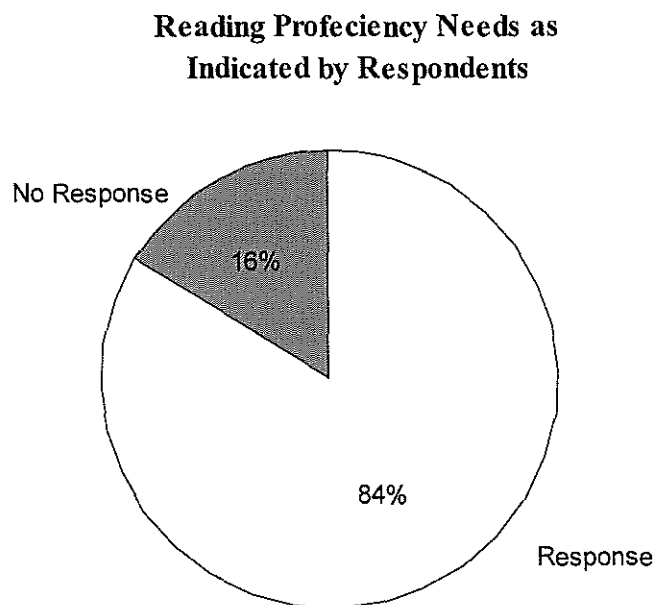
<u>Comments for “other”:</u>	<u>%</u>
Apathy	(59)
Discipline/behavior problems	(58)
Lack of personal motivation/lack of vision = laziness	(45)
Lack of motivation	(42)
Lack of work ethic	(40)
Single moms & overburdened working parents	(39)
Motivation – poverty	(35)
Lack of intrinsic desire to achieve educationally	(33)
Uninvolved parents – home follow-up	(29)
Students don’t care	(23)
School is not priority	(22)
Not holding students accountable to complete work and assignments – students who fail don’t have to make up the work.	(21)
Electronic consumerism (television, computer games or online interactions)	(19)
Poor work ethic	(19)
Apathy, poor study skills	(18)
Inadequate instruction	(14)
My students are all developmentally disabled	(13)
Parents with two jobs & poor parenting skills, gangs	(12)
Uneducated, unskilled parents	(10)
Poverty	(7)
Society	(5)
Social: parenting skills, gangs, poverty, etc.	(1)

The top three areas of skill designated as being of highest concern were reading proficiency, listening and writing. Skills were rated through either placing a mark or leaving the option blank. Ranking skills be placed in order of importance was not required. Occasionally a returned survey indicated more than the three responses

requested. Because it was impossible to determine which three to choose, the total number of responses were recorded. The difference between the outcome percentages was significant enough to enforce the belief that doing so would not influence the final conclusions.

Reading proficiency was clearly the number one concern with a mean score of 84%. This reflects 84% response, or 53 out of 63 returned surveys marked. Data generated for reading proficiency are presented in Figure 9.

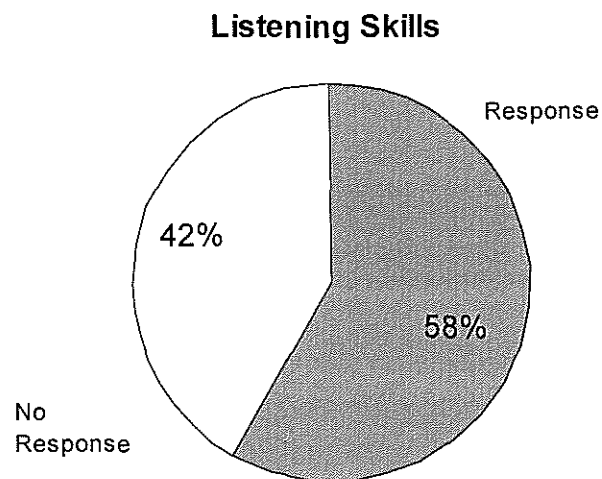
Figure 9



Note that the skills listed are perceived by teachers surveyed to be the most crucial to survive in their content area classroom. These data are not a direct indicator of deficits in student skill, but of perceived importance of the skill for academic success.

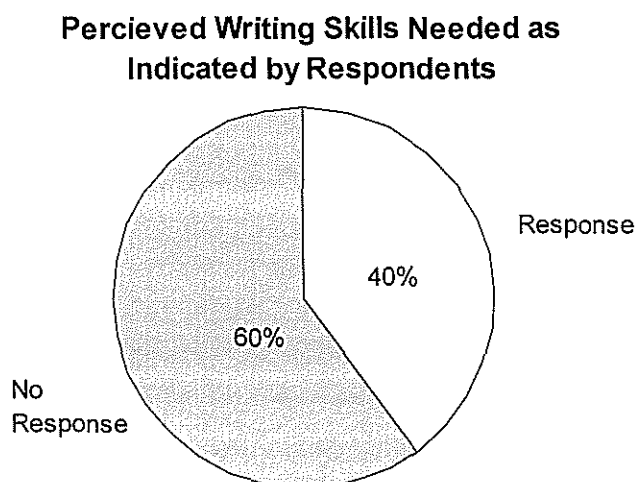
Listening skills were noted by respondents with a mean score of 58%, or 35 out of 63 surveys marked. Fifty-eight percent of respondents perceived listening skills as being crucial to success. Forty-two percent of respondents did not designate listening skills to be of most significant concern. Data generated for listening skills are presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10



The third skill, writing skills, garnered 25 responses, or a 40% score of need. Sixty percent of returned surveys did not designate writing skills as a most significant skill needed. Data generated for writing skills are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11



The survey given to middle school teachers was unique in that it was seeking to measure perceptions of variables rather than establish variables in a concrete manner. This form of measurement was decided upon due to time and financial constraints, as well as lack of training on the part of the author. The information gathered was still considered useful by the author because it created a picture of what middle school teachers were experiencing. Determining survey reliability and validity would be difficult due to the fact that a small sample of teachers were used. Qualitatively, the consistency of responses regarding areas of most concern would indicate that some reliability exists because all four schools designated the same main concerns.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

The purpose of this project was to identify areas negatively impacting the academic success of non-disability, middle school students, specify skills most necessary to succeed in a general education classroom, and explore avenues through which the areas may be addressed and the necessary skills strengthened. Entry into the middle school years involves a number of transitions for individual students. Not only are they moving through changes physiologically, but parents become less involved and teachers' expectations become more rigid. For the student who already finds academic performance difficult, these changes can mean increased chance of failure. An awareness of the barriers between success and failure, and a commitment to addressing those barriers can make a difference for non-disability students who are falling behind.

A survey was conducted among teacher practitioners in four middle schools to determine perceptions of areas that negatively impact the academic success of middle school students, and which academic skills seemed to suffer the most in struggling students. A literature review was conducted to address the significance and implications of these barriers and skills of concern. Strategies were collected from the articles reviewed as well as comments made by the teachers themselves.

Recommended Strategies for Remediation

Responding to the concerns expressed through the survey requires a diverse approach. Negatively impacting areas involve human factors that cannot be changed by school district personnel. However, steps can be taken to work within those areas to

enhance the learning experience of all involved. These steps are presented under the individual factors.

Home Visitation

Based on the comments received from the teacher surveys, a crucial step toward academic remediation of middle school, non-disability students is building a strong connection between the home and the school. Parents are voicing frustration regarding the inability of schools to meet student needs, and teachers communicated a growing frustration toward parents and the lack of support they are giving their children and the schools that serve them. This polarization, if not addressed, could perpetuate the growing number of academic failures.

As mentioned in the literature review, the most difficult step in creating a team mentality between the school and the home is opening avenues of communication. Legislation places this responsibility on the schools. A number of articles read discussed districts' approaches to home visitation. The following home visitation suggestion is based on these artifacts.

Goal: To create diverse opportunities for parent/teacher communication and collaboration.

Objective 1 – Establish consistent, proactive, and effective avenues of communication.

Objective 2- Clarify parental/teacher role expectations.

Objective 3 – Encourage high parental expectations.

Objective 4 – Become a referral resource for families.

Objective 5 – Develop parental empowerment and student confidence.

Objective 6 – Establish home environments as a cultural and social resource.

Objective 7 – Enable students to develop pride in their families' strengths.

Process – The author proposes that teachers become responsible for initiation and facilitation of contact with the homes of the students in their homeroom. In this way, every student has a teacher that is in contact with the home. Teachers make every effort to make a physical home visit, but in the case where this is not possible and there are not confidentiality issues, teachers, at a minimum, do a drive-by in order to see the general living environment of the student. One school researched allowed teachers to order cookies from the cafeteria to take along on home visits. Home visits may take place in the weeks before school begins, on early-release days, or after school.

Home visits are initiated by phone calls from the teacher when possible, or a note mailed or carried by the student if a phone is not available. The teacher arrives at the agreed upon time with a list of possible questions for the student and family, as well as a willingness to respond to the questions of the family members. Visits need not be long, should be informational and informal, and enlighten the teacher regarding the culture, interests and strengths of the family.

Immediate follow-up of a thank you card expressing appreciation for being allowed to visit and encouraging further communication with the parents should be made.

Parental Empowerment

The following is a list of suggestions gleaned from research in light of responses to the teacher survey and researcher observation.

1. Give parents opportunities to make as many decisions regarding their child as possible. Opportunities present themselves in the types of

projects assigned, extensions to learning materials, music played in the classroom, socialization, etc.

2. Encourage students to be accountable to their parents and parents to hold students accountable.
3. Ask for parental views and insights regarding material being taught.
4. Provide parents with learning goals.
5. Stress areas where parents are a resource for the teacher.
6. Be an active listener.
7. Communicate clearly, consistently, and confidently.
8. Be honest and sincere. Provide other individuals to work through when needed.
9. Validate all forms of parental support and reaffirm parenting strengths.

Facilitating Home Communication Through the Use of Technology

The variety of forms of technology through which parent communication and involvement is growing rapidly and often underused by educators. Websites are usually optional and overlooked by teachers because they are maintenance intensive. Many low-income homes do not have computers and some do not have telephones. Technology can still be accessible to these individuals and be designed to be highly user friendly.

Following are suggestions for use of technology to facilitate communication with the individual homes.

1. Design a website outlining the learning goals and sequence of study for the quarter. Opportunity is then given for homes to anticipate topics to be covered, and parents encouraged to share any of their experiences,

3. Post a list, both in the classroom and on the website, of students who are doing well with their assignments and conduct. If a student and/or parent notice a student name missing, they are encouraged to contact the teacher to find out why. Voice messages should be checked daily.
4. Some students begin each morning in a home where the parent is absent. Create a voluntary list whereby the student receives a wake-up call, possibly from a senior volunteer or a volunteer at the school.

Poor Student Attendance

Poor student attendance can be the result of numerous individual as well as blended factors, as reported by researchers Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro (1998). Because of the range of factors, a broad approach to address poor student attendance must also be considered. The personal characteristics of the student, home environment, teacher instruction, adult expectation and social climate are among concerns that must be addressed.

1. Become knowledgeable about student self-concept of academic ability.
2. Define and address reasons for student dissatisfaction with school.
3. Create opportunity for student support groups to address family concerns.
4. Actively engage students in the learning process.
5. Keep families informed of events taking place in the classroom.
6. Clarify attendance policies and expectations within the district and in the parental community.
7. Develop a tracking system to monitor absenteeism.
8. Contact the home of each absent student daily.

9. Implement incentives for high attendance. Reward those who attend classes regularly.
10. Involve businesses in the community in attendance incentive programs.
11. Create a daily sign-in procedure for those who have a high absenteeism background.
12. Hold parental discussion groups to explore solutions for repeated absences. Invite families whose students are frequently absent.
13. Ensure that the classroom is a safe environment for all students. Have a “no tolerance” policy for bullying.
14. Know the students. Communicate with each student individually on a regular basis to maintain rapport.

Student Attitude

Negative student attitudes spring from a wide variety of. Regardless of the events or circumstances, there are series of suggestions that can be made regarding improving student attitude in the classroom.

1. Know the stressors your students are facing. These may include, in part: inter-personal conflict, racism, poverty, socialization, dating, grade expectations and privacy.
2. Maintain a consistent and orderly classroom environment.
3. Give students a choice whenever possible.
4. Reinforce students’ judgments and decisions.
5. Provide learning opportunities for social skills
6. Provide social support networks.

7. Be supportive of family cohesion.
8. Connect student experience to instruction material.
9. Be solution oriented. Do not get bogged down with problems.
10. Model problem-solving strategies.
11. Help students build self-efficacy and create high self-expectations.
12. Initiate a teen crisis line.
13. Be an active listener.
14. Communicate expectations for self and student clearly.
15. Monitor and model a positive self-attitude.

Reading Strategies

Reading concepts and strategies are numerous in literature relating to the pre-first and elementary years. Every one is of importance and can be applied, at least in part, to the middle school years. The suggestions listed here are in addition to foundational concepts. They relate to both the developmental and cognitive level of middle school students and can be incorporated into general education classrooms instructing any content area.

1. Enable students to view reading as another form of social interaction.
2. Focus on ways reading can enhance social understanding.
3. Relate reading material to prior knowledge and personal experiences.
4. Allow for peer discussion of material read.
5. Facilitate understanding of independent word learning strategies.
6. Create a glossary of self-selected words.

7. Focus on the functions of difficult words.
8. Encourage higher-level thinking skills by asking higher-level questions.
9. Model reading for meaning.
10. Have students relate key concepts in the text through class discussion.
11. Build prior knowledge before assigning readings from expository texts.
12. Check students for the ability to develop mental imagery while reading.
13. Implement strategies to visualize what is taking place in the text.
14. Spend time in picture books aligning illustrations with the text.
15. Use movies and artistic mediums and expressions including color and texture to build mental imagery.

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is a technique used in many school districts to encourage reading in the daily lives of students. Often students find the time meaningless. They pick up books at random and flip through the pages without direction or comprehension until the allotted time is up. There are ways to give SSR direction without locking students into assigned material. Motivation comes from student's interest in a topic. A sense of adequacy also motivates students, and reading material often is overwhelming to poor readers. Short selections, reading material in columns instead of across full pages, reading for information or to compare items and reading to expand personal experiences are initiators to engaged reading. A directed SSR program can be implemented using the following suggestions. They include cycling through categories of reading material a week at a time instead of genres or a stack of short novels.

1. Spend a week reading catalogues from every appropriate area of interest.
Have students compare products, prices and quality.
2. Collect brochures relating to world travel and allow students discuss dream vacations.
3. Provide high quality children's books with rich illustrations or twists on children's stories and fairy tales.
4. Provide a selection of special interest magazines.
5. Compile a selection of movie and book reviews from other countries relating to films shown in the United States.
6. Select "how-to" manuals relating to student interest. Examples include how to paint an automobile, give a manicure, grow mushrooms, train a dog, etc.
7. Allow for discussion regarding what is being read. Encourage students to share their books or areas of interest with the class.
8. Create literacy groups within the class based on student interest.
9. Have a drawing of names monthly from those who have shared. Have the prize be a magazine subscription or a gift certificate to a bookstore.
10. Create a self-contract for individual reading to enable the student to track what he or she read and how positive the material was.
11. Give students extra credit for writing reflections on what they read during SSR.
12. Highlight specific authors at different times throughout the year. Provide their writing for students to browse through.

Listening Skills

As stated earlier, locating research and suggestions regarding listening skills in the general education classroom were few and limited. Listening involves physical, analytical and interpretive processes, as well as synthesis. It also requires nonverbal skills such as understanding tone and understanding body language (Mead & Rubin, 1985).

There are a few strategies teachers can implement to raise listening ability among the students.

1. Model, model, model.
2. Encourage active listening through questioning techniques.
3. Express genuine interest in what students have to say.
4. Be available.
5. Listen to behavior.
6. Align tone of voice with body language.
7. Be sincere.
8. Give students guidance regarding key words or concepts to listen for.
9. Build background information.
10. Ask students to paraphrase what the teacher has said.
11. Encourage students to ask questions for clarification.
12. Be enthusiastic about the contents taught.
13. Ask students to be specific during discussion.
14. Provide opportunities for students to listen to each other.
15. Conduct frequent comprehension checks during lecture or class discussion.

16. Play listening-focused games on a regular basis.

Writing Skills

Parent involvement can be a real plus in the area of writing, both as audience and as editors (Conner, 2000; Beck, 2002). The requirement that a parent or adult mentor sign off the creative or research piece written by a student facilitates dialogue between the two as well as promotes pride in student work. Parents who are comfortable proofreading student work should be encouraged or even required to do so. Parents who do not feel capable as editors can sign the written piece and add feedback on the content.

Word walls are usually seen in early elementary classrooms, but have a place in the middle school as well. Creative writing opens opportunities to broaden vocabulary, and interesting words in student work can be noted and placed on the word wall. Students can be challenged to come up with a certain number of contributions throughout the quarter or semester.

Writing takes place in every content area, but are separated from one another. Students who build a writing folder including samples of every form of writing have the option of observing their writing development in every area. This can increase the value of what is being written, as well as enhance student pride in accomplishments.

Writing skills build on a multi-faceted foundation consisting of vocabulary, experience, understanding of the world at large, internal thoughts and perceptions and decoding. The process of developing syntax, voice and mechanics can be exhaustive to middle school students. Key to becoming an effective writer is understanding how writing is valuable. Purpose creates incentive. Following is a list of strategies:

1. Create audience through publication or oral presentation.

2. Encourage writers to view editing as reprocessing.
3. Allow compositions to rest and revisit them a few days later.
4. Encourage individual voice.
5. Distinguish between revising and editing.
6. Model tough drafts and think sheets.
7. Conference with writers.

Conclusions

While teachers are fairly clear regarding the areas they perceive as obstructing academic performance in their students' lives, research is still just beginning to grapple with the subject. Few articles read involved parent perspective regarding home-to-school communication. Most research theorized or speculated on the causes of perceived poor parent commitment and involvement. It would benefit educators if the parent community had a more active voice in research (Cross and Yager, 1998).

Reading proficiency is a concern among educators starting at the preschool level. However, strategies to enable students to be effective readers are not readily available to the middle school content area instructor. It is recommended that these teachers be equipped with continuing training and insights regarding this most important skill area.

Listening skills in the middle school classroom also remain skills not thoroughly addressed in research. While teachers definitely see these skills as lacking, it would be advantageous for both teachers and researchers to clarify what the students are to be listening to or listening for. This clarification would give more direction in subsequent literature.

Strategies listed in this project are most effective when incorporated into a school-wide plan. It is recommended that teachers and administrators be in agreement with which strategies to adopt. As in any human service, there is always a risk of improper or inadequate implementation, and a support system to ensure quality and consistency is of paramount importance.

General education teachers may be the first to observe academic needs in struggling students. Accurate and appropriate intervention may depend on teacher documentation and referral. Education and ongoing training in the implementation and facilitation of 504 plans and Individual Education Plans for general education instructors is recommended.

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Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

merilee redberg

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 01/13/2004.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
 - ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
 - the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
 - a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
 - a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
 - a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
 - the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.
-

National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nih.gov>



CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

ELLENSBURG • LYNNWOOD • MOSES LAKE • SEATAC • STEILACOOM • WENATCHEE • YAKIMA

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE OFFICE

February 23, 2004

Merilee Redberg
3830 Brondt Road
Ellensburg WA 98926

Dear Ms. Redberg,

Thank you for submitting an exemption request for your study, *Middle School Questionnaire/High School Questionnaire*. Because your study involves collecting from adult participants anonymous survey data of less than minimal risk and because the survey is voluntary in nature, it is certified exempt from further institutional review [see 45 CFR 46.101b(2)]. This certification is valid for five years (February 23, 2004 through February 22, 2009) so long as the approved procedures are followed.

Your responsibilities with respect to keeping this office apprised of your progress include:

1. Send letters of cooperation from any additional schools before recruitment and data is collected at those sites. Currently, this certification includes data collection at the following Yakima schools: Franklin Middle School, Lewis and Clark Middle School and Washington Middle School.
2. File a Project Modification Request form if you wish to modify your study in any way other than formatting of the survey (e.g., any change in recruitment, subjects, script, any procedures). Please call if you have any questions.
3. File a Termination Report form with this office upon completion of your study.
4. Immediately contact the HSRC for further guidance should you encounter unanticipated problems with your research. Follow up with the Adverse Event Report form may be required.
5. Provide current contact address and phone number if a change occurs prior to termination of your study.

All of the forms referred to above are available on our website. Please refer to your HSRC study number (H04028) in all related future correspondence with this office. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact me.

I have appreciated working with you; may you have a productive research experience.

Sincerely,

Ruth Ann Stacy
Human Protections Administrator

c: HSRC File
Dr. Leo D'Acquisto, HSRC Chair
Dr. Steve Schmitz, Faculty Sponsor
Graduate Studies and Research

Please note:

Signature has been redacted due to security concerns



ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

104 N. 4TH AVENUE, YAKIMA, WA 98902-2698 • (509) 573-7014 • (509) 573-7034

February 9, 2004

Merilee Redberg
3830 Brondt Rd.
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Dear Merilee:

Your request to conduct a survey in the Yakima School District at the middle school level regarding "Academically Delayed yet Capable Students" has been approved. It is agreed that you may contact the middle school principals to inquire about their interest level in participating in this project. If given approval by the building principal the process for providing access to staff members would need to be determined. It is understood that participation is voluntary and that students will not be involved in the survey process. Here is the needed contact information:

Ron Gill, Principal, Franklin Middle School
410 S. 19th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902
(509) 573-2101 gill.ron@ysd.wednet.edu

Lois Betzing, Lewis and Clark Middle School
1114 W. Pierce, Yakima, WA 98902
(509) 573-2201 betzing.lois@ysd.wednet.edu

Lorenzo Alvarado, Principal, Washington Middle School
510 S. 9th Street, Yakima, WA 98901
(509) 573-2301 alvarado.lorenzo@ysd.wednet.edu

Janeen Grimes, Principal, Wilson Middle School
902 S. 44th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98908
(509) 573-2401 grimes.janeen@ysd.wednet.edu

Please send a copy of the summary of results to my office when the study is completed.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 509-573-7014.

Sincerely,

Gregory E. Day
Director of Academic Assessment

c Dr. Jack Irion, Deputy Superintendent
Ron Gill, Lois Betzing, Lorenzo Alvarado, Janeen Grimes

Please not:

Signature has been removed due to security concerns lxi

Lorenzo Alvarado
Principal/Director

Cathy Gonzalez
William Hilton
Assistant Principals/
Asistentes del Director

Washington Middle School

510 S. 9th Street, Yakima, Washington 98901

Phone (509) 573-2300 • FAX (509) 573-2323

www.ysd.wednet.edu/washington



February 17, 2004

Human Subjects Review Committee
Central Washington University
400 E. University Way
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7401

To Whom It May Concern:

Merilee Redberg has requested permission to collect research data from middle school teachers employed by the Yakima School District working at Washington Middle School. I have been informed of the purpose of the study and the nature of the research procedures. I have also been given opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of Washington Middle School, I am authorized to grant permission to Merilee Redberg to recruit research participants from our school. Merilee Redberg is permitted to collect research data at Washington Middle School during business hours.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (509) 573-2301.

Sincerely

Lorenzo Alvarado
Principal

Please note:
Signature has been removed due to security concerns

Franklin Middle School

410 S. 19TH AVENUE

YAKIMA, WA 98902

(509) 573-2100

Ron Gill, Principal
Dan Garza, Asst. Principal
Angie Girard, Asst. Principal

February 17, 2004

Human Subjects Review Committee
Central Washington University
400 E. University Way
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7401

To Whom It May Concern:

Merilee Redberg has requested permission to collect research data from middle school teachers employed by the Yakima School District working at Franklin Middle School. I have been informed of the purpose of the study and the nature of the research procedures. I have also been given opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of Franklin Middle School, I am authorized to grant permission to Merilee Redberg to recruit research participants from our school. Merilee Redberg is permitted to collect research data at Franklin Middle School during business hours.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (509) 573-2101.

Sincerely

Ron Gill
Principal

Please note:

Signature has been removed due to security concerns

Lewis and Clark Middle School

1114 W. Pierce • Yakima, WA 98902-5899 • Phone: (509) 573-2200 • Fax: (509) 573 - 2222

"Journey to Literacy"

February 17, 2004

Human Subjects Review Committee
Central Washington University
400 E. University Way
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7401

To Whom It May Concern:

Merilee Redberg has requested permission to collect research data from middle school teachers employed by the Yakima School District working at Lewis and Clark Middle School. I have been informed of the purpose of the study and the nature of the research procedures. I have also been given opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of Lewis and Clark Middle School, I am authorized to grant permission to Merilee Redberg to recruit research participants from our school. Merilee Redberg is permitted to collect research data at Lewis and Clark Middle School during business hours.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (509) 573-2201.

Sincerely

Lois Betzing
Principal

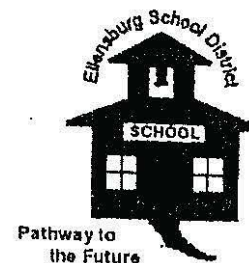
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Ellensburg School District No. 401

700 E. Mountain View Ave., Suite # 505
Ellensburg, Washington 98926-3177
(509) 925-8000 FAX (509) 925-8025
<http://wonders.eburg.wednet.edu>

Dr. Gretta Merwin, Superintendent



February 27, 2004

Merilee Redberg
3830 Brondt Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Dear Merilee,

Your request to conduct a survey at Morgan Middle School, under the direction of Mr. Gary Ristine, regarding "Academically Delayed Yet Capable Students" has been approved. It must be clear that this survey is voluntary on the part of our staff.

We wish you well in your endeavor and look forward to seeing your results.

Best wishes,

Dr. Gretta Merwin
Superintendent

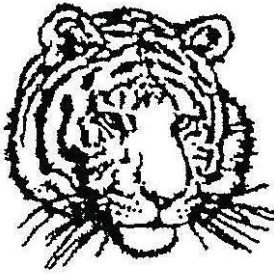
Please note:

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RECEIVED

MAR 03 2004

CWU HUMAN SUBJECTS
REVIEW COMMITTEE



Morgan Middle School
400 East First Avenue
Ellensburg, WA 98926-3398
Telephone (509) 925-8200
Fax (509) 925-8202
Gary Ristine, Principal
Arlen Parker, Assistant Principal

February 17, 2004

Human Subjects Review Committee
Central Washington University
400 E. University Way
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7401

To Whom It May Concern:

Merilee Redberg has requested permission to collect research data from middle school teachers employed by the Ellensburg School District working at Morgan Middle School. I have been informed of the purpose of the study and the nature of the research procedures. I have also been given opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of Morgan Middle School, I am authorized to grant permission to Merilee Redberg to recruit research participants from our school. Merilee Redberg is permitted to collect research data at Morgan Middle School during business hours.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (509) 925-8200.

Sincerely

Gary Ristine
Principal

RECEIVED

MAR 03 2004

**CWU HUMAN SUBJECTS
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Please note:
Signature has been removed due to security concerns

Dear Professional;

The purpose of the following survey is to explore the needs of non-disability students as well as the teachers who serve them. Results from this survey will be used as a catalyst for the project I am doing at Central Washington University regarding the remediation of academic delays in non-disability students. Results of this survey will be provided to your building principal by the end of March. Thank you so much for your time and consideration with this project. It is very appreciated!

Sincerely,
Merilee Redberg

Survey Questionnaire

1. Please check the student grade level you most commonly work with.

6th _____ 7th _____ 8th _____

2. What percentage of non-disability students that you interact with, would you estimate, are not performing at expected grade level in two or more areas?

_____ %

3. Please number, in order of importance, the top three areas you consider to be negatively impacting student academic performance (one being most prominent):

_____ Homelessness	_____ multiple relocations	_____ absent parents
_____ chemical use	_____ inadequate home schooling	
_____ poor attendance	_____ nutritional needs	_____ non-supportive parents
_____ other (please list) _____		

4. Are you content with the support services currently in place to meet the needs of seemingly academically delayed, non-disability students?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Which programs are most effective? _____

6. Which skills are most crucial to survive in your classroom? (Check up to three)

reading proficiency _____	research methods _____	basic math _____
understanding the question _____	writing _____	listening _____
self-confidence _____	maps and diagrams _____	social _____

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Merilee Redberg
3830 Brondt Rd.
Ellensburg, WA 98926

March 31, 2004

Lorenzo Alvarado
Washington Middle School
510 S. 9th Street
Yakima, WA 98901

Dear Mr. Alvarado;

I would like to share my appreciation once again for allowing me to conduct the voluntary survey of teachers there at Washington Middle School. This survey proved to be very valuable for me as I narrow down the research I am doing for my Master's project. As promised, I am sending you the results from your teachers' feedback, as well as an over-all picture of how their responses compared to the Yakima District at large, as two other middle schools also participated in this survey.

It was my intention to gather teacher and school staff perceptions of the students' needs within the building. I realize that these perceptions may not reflect district data nor be an accurate assessment of your community. These perceptions are merely giving me guidance as I prepare myself to be the most effective classroom teacher possible through my studies.

Following are two sets of data gathered from the completed surveys. Of the three middle schools in the Yakima School District that participated, two allowed me to survey all of the teachers, and one allowed me to survey team leaders.

Thank you for your support in this project.

Respectfully,

Merilee Redberg

c Dr. Jack Irion, Deputy Superintendent
Gregory E. Day, Director of Academic Assessment

Frequencies

Statistics

		GRADE	PERCENT	HMLESS	CHEMUSE	POORATT	OTHER	MULTREC
N	Valid	63	63	63	63	63	63	63
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Statistics

		INADHMS	NUTRIT	ABSPAR	NONSUPAR	CONTENT	RDNGPROF	RSRCH
N	Valid	63	63	63	63	63	63	63
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Statistics

		MATH	QUEST	WRITE	LISTEN	SELFCONF	MAPS	SOCIAL
N	Valid	63	63	63	63	63	63	63
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Frequency Table

GRADE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	1.00	15	23.8	23.8	25.4
	2.00	1	1.6	1.6	27.0
	3.00	18	28.6	28.6	55.6
	4.00	1	1.6	1.6	57.1
	5.00	10	15.9	15.9	73.0
	6.00	17	27.0	27.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

PERCENT

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	8	12.7	12.7	12.7
1.00	5	7.9	7.9	20.6
2.00	10	15.9	15.9	36.5
3.00	5	7.9	7.9	44.4
4.00	5	7.9	7.9	52.4
5.00	11	17.5	17.5	69.8
6.00	8	12.7	12.7	82.5
7.00	6	9.5	9.5	92.1
8.00	1	1.6	1.6	93.7
9.00	3	4.8	4.8	98.4
10.00	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

HMLESS

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	63	100.0	100.0	100.0

CHEMUSE

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	58	92.1	92.1	92.1
3.00	5	7.9	7.9	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

POORATT

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	18	28.6	28.6	28.6
1.00	9	14.3	14.3	42.9
2.00	18	28.6	28.6	71.4
3.00	18	28.6	28.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

OTHER

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	42	66.7	66.7	66.7
1.00	8	12.7	12.7	79.4
2.00	4	6.3	6.3	85.7
3.00	9	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

CONTENT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	00	5	7.9	7.9	7.9
	1.00	21	33.3	33.3	41.3
	2.00	37	58.7	58.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

RDNGPROF

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	10	15.9	15.9	15.9
	1.00	53	84.1	84.1	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

RSRCH

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	61	96.8	96.8	96.8
	1.00	2	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

MATH

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	43	68.3	68.3	68.3
	1.00	20	31.7	31.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

QUEST

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	47	74.6	74.6	74.6
	1.00	15	23.8	23.8	98.4
	3.00	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

WRITE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	38	60.3	60.3	60.3
	1.00	25	39.7	39.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

MULTREC

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	50	79.4	79.4	79.4
	1.00	1	1.6	1.6	81.0
	2.00	3	4.8	4.8	85.7
	3.00	9	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

INADHMS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	52	82.5	82.5	82.5
	1.00	5	7.9	7.9	90.5
	2.00	3	4.8	4.8	95.2
	3.00	3	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

NUTRIT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	59	93.7	93.7	93.7
	1.00	1	1.6	1.6	95.2
	2.00	1	1.6	1.6	96.8
	3.00	2	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

ABSPAR

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	35	55.6	55.6	55.6
	1.00	7	11.1	11.1	66.7
	2.00	13	20.6	20.6	87.3
	3.00	8	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

NONSUPAR

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	13	20.6	20.6	20.6
	1.00	32	50.8	50.8	71.4
	2.00	17	27.0	27.0	98.4
	3.00	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

LISTEN

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	27	42.9	42.9	42.9
	1.00	35	55.6	55.6	98.4
	2.00	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

SELFCONF

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	48	76.2	76.2	76.2
	1.00	15	23.8	23.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

MAPS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	61	96.8	96.8	96.8
	1.00	2	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

SOCIAL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	43	68.3	68.3	68.3
	1.00	20	31.7	31.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	