Qualitative Assessment of Climate Within Small, Stand Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools

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QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF CLIMATE WITHIN SMALL, STAND ALONE, SECONDARY MAGNET SCHOOLS

BY

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative assessment of climate within small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools since small public magnet schools are perceived as being community-like. Therefore, education policymakers should ascertain if small magnet schools have fewer problems than those associated with large schools and have positive climates.

Four small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools, in Connecticut, Delaware, and New Jersey, were studied. Themes of schools included Visual and Performing Arts as well as Engineering, Math, Science, and Technology. Two schools were county based, one multi-city/regionally based, and one statewide. Three schools had competitive application procedures; the fourth a lottery admissions system. Variables addressed include: 1) overall school climate; 2) relationships among students, teachers and administrators; 3) student academic achievement; 4) teacher performance; 5) student absenteeism/drop-out rates; and 6) pride.

Literature on small school climate and addressed variables is reviewed. A discussion of design-methods and procedures – including the interviewing of 4 principals and 8 teachers and the convening of three focus groups of teachers - at four small stand alone magnet high school programs – is included.

Environment in schools studied is positive. Violence and substance abuse are rare, relationships between students and staff members are positive, most students are academically succeeding within a college-preparatory environment, teachers are committed, and absenteeism/drop-out rates are insignificant. Threats to student achievement and staff member morale, however, are discussed. For instance, Federal
statutes, such as NCLB, and district emphasis on basic skill competency leave behind the
motivated and/or gifted student, as well as their teachers, in these small high schools.

Administrator recommendations include: 1) exploring options for co and
extracurricular activities; 2) developing interdisciplinary programs; 3) researching grant
monies; 4) disclosing school mission prior to admission; and 5) investigating options for
further professional development and school based leadership. Research
recommendations include: 1) replicating this study in other small schools; 2)
distinguishing small magnet high schools with different application procedures; 3)
studying small magnets with broadened curriculum; 4) reviewing emotional and social
needs of small magnet students; 5) analyzing parent influence in these schools; and 6)
assessing value of professional development.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract of Study ........................................................................................................ ii

Copyright ................................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................. v

Table of Contents .................................................................................................... vii

Chapter I: Introduction

  Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
  Historical Overview .............................................................................................. 2
  The Problem .......................................................................................................... 6
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................. 11
  Research Questions ............................................................................................... 12
  Limitations of the Study ....................................................................................... 13
  Significance of the Study ...................................................................................... 14
  Definition of Terms ............................................................................................... 18
  Organization of the Study ..................................................................................... 24
  Summary of the Introduction ............................................................................... 25

Chapter II: Literature Review

  Background on School Climate ............................................................................ 26
  Existence of Positive School Climate in Small Schools .................................. 28
  Relationship between Students and Teachers in Small Schools ....................... 29
  Academic Success of Students in Small School Cultures .................................. 35
  Teacher Performance in Small School Environments ....................................... 40
  Small Schools and Student Absenteeism/Drop-Out Rates ................................ 44
  Summary of Research ......................................................................................... 52

Chapter III: Methodology of Study

  Introduction ........................................................................................................... 54
  Design Methods and Procedures ......................................................................... 54
  Sampling ................................................................................................................ 55
  Instrumentation .................................................................................................... 58
  The Data ............................................................................................................... 61
  Data Collection ..................................................................................................... 61
  Data Analysis ....................................................................................................... 61
  Specific Treatment of Each Sub-Problem .............................................................. 62
  Summary of Chapter Three .................................................................................. 64
Chapter IV: Analysis of the Data

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 65
Organization of the Analysis ............................................................................................. 67
Presentation of Overall Responses ..................................................................................... 69
Analysis of Overall Responses .......................................................................................... 70
Summary of Chapter Four .................................................................................................. 85

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations for Further Research

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 87
Summary of Study ............................................................................................................... 87
Research Questions ............................................................................................................ 88
Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 88
Conclusions of the Investigation: Relation to Existing Research ........................................ 99
Relation of Findings to Specific Research Questions ....................................................... 98
Recommendations for Administrators ............................................................................... 101
Recommendations for Further Research .......................................................................... 106

References ......................................................................................................................... 112

Appendices

Appendix A: Superintendent Solicitation Letter ................................................................. 127
Appendix B: Principals/Teachers – Request to Participate Letter ....................................... 129
Appendix C: Consent Form ................................................................................................. 131
Appendix D: Sequence of Study of Schools in Sample ..................................................... 136
Appendix E: School A/Subject A Transcript ....................................................................... 151
Appendix F: School A/Subject B Transcript ....................................................................... 167
Appendix G: School A/Subject C Transcript ....................................................................... 177
Appendix H: School B/Subject A Transcript ....................................................................... 189
Appendix I: School B/Subject B Transcript ....................................................................... 209
Appendix J: School B/Subject C Transcript ....................................................................... 217
Appendix K: School B/Focus Group Transcript .................................................................. 224
Appendix L: School C/Subject A Transcript ....................................................................... 252
Appendix M: School C/Subject B Transcript ....................................................................... 271
Appendix N: School C/Subject C Transcript ....................................................................... 285
Appendix O: School C/Focus Group Transcript .................................................................. 293
Appendix P: School D/Subject A Transcript ....................................................................... 322
Appendix Q: School D/Subject B Transcript ....................................................................... 335
Appendix R: School D/Subject C Transcript ....................................................................... 348
Appendix S: School D/Focus Group Transcript .................................................................. 364
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This study purposes to assess school climate, through the perceptions of principals and teachers, in small stand alone secondary magnet schools.

This study is based on the replication of the research methodology employed by Joyce (2002) when she assessed school climate in small Catholic schools. Joyce interviewed nine subjects – principals and teachers – in small, Catholic schools, in New Jersey and Rhode Island, in an effort to ascertain the perceptions of climate within small, mostly urban, school environments.

While many teacher respondents reported to Joyce (2002) that small schools supported a caring environment that led to orderly, safe and attractive academic settings, as well as dialogue among staff and students, several teacher and principal respondents also reported that some teachers actually had lower academic standards for urban students, in particular, feeling that these students were less capable of following the prescribed curriculum. In reaction, Joyce recommends the employment of directors of curriculum, further professional development for teachers, and the replication of her study in additional, small public schools as a means by which to increase the applicability of her findings. This study aimed to produce findings that either confirm or reject those of Joyce and other researchers, on climate in small school settings, in small, stand alone public magnet secondary schools. As with Joyce, principals and teachers were individually interviewed at four different small, stand alone secondary magnet schools. However, in addition, three focus groups, comprised of either three or four teachers each, were convened at three of the four participating schools.
As small magnet schools continue to grow in popularity, as one school choice alternative to large scale schooling, it is becoming increasingly important to observe the current school climate in these types of schools. This type of study can then act as a precursor in helping to determine whether or not school climate in small magnet schools maximizes opportunities for academic achievement and whether or not the small school findings of Joyce (2002) and others are also applicable in this small school study.

The researcher’s own tenure as creator and principal of a small, stand alone, urban magnet secondary school prompted this inquiry. His experiences in helping to establish positive small school attributes, such as community, thematic curriculum, and school-based leadership, while managing issues such as attendance, neighborhood violence, large-scale bureaucracy and school politics, financial limitations, physical constraints, and lackluster student achievement both invigorated and frustrated the researcher. The researcher was interested in discovering whether or not the perceptions of other small, stand alone, secondary magnet colleagues are comparative and/or divergent.

Historical Overview

On the whole, American secondary schools are, and have been, large in size. While both Los Angeles and Miami, for example, currently have high schools with enrollments of 5,000 students, De Witt Clinton High School, in the Bronx, New York, already boasted an enrollment of 12,000 by 1934 (Allen, 2002).

The movement to consolidate American schools and school districts is associated with several historical precedents. After World War I, urban schools, in particular, expanded to instruct the growing number of immigrants in the American ideals of
efficiency, differentiation, specialization, depersonalization, and standardization in an effort to produce effective human capital (Allen, 2002). At the same time, Progressive Era reforms against child labor made it difficult for children to find adequate employment and, as a result, it became more common for them to stay in school, while reformers such as Ellwood Cubberley and John Dewey stressed the importance of education for all regardless of whether or not students intended to attend college or enter a vocation and/or profession immediately after secondary school (Hylden, 2004).

*Brown v. Board of Education* 347 U.S. 483 (1954) further required many school districts to merge in order to be in compliance with Federal desegregation initiatives (McClen, 2006).

The Soviet launching of the Sputnik satellite, in 1957, led many American educators to conclude that, in order to compete in the arms race with the Soviets, American schools needed to be bigger to produce better scientists and mathematicians (Allen, 2002; Joyce, 2002). In *The American High School Today*, Conant (1959) stated that in order for students to have a full grounding in all disciplines, in particular in science and mathematics, it was necessary to have a school of sufficient size to provide the varied curriculum in a cost effective manner not possible in a small school. In addition, extensive post World War II state and Federal highway construction only made it easier to bring students from a larger geographic area to centralized comprehensive high schools (Lawrence et al., 2002).

Conant's calls (1959) for cost efficiency in education are still heard today. As public education costs continue to rise, small schools face increasing pressure to join with other small schools (Schoggen & Schoggen, 1988). Indeed, larger schools are
popularly believed to create economies of scale that allow expansive access to specialized courses, libraries and extracurricular activities (Lashway, 1999). Some states go as far as to link specific minimum enrollments to funding for school facility improvements; In Kentucky, a high school must have 500 or more students to be eligible for 100% participation in capital projects, 800 or more students must be enrolled in West Virginian high schools for such schools to participate in capital improvement projects, and, in some districts in Georgia, administrators must show a 1.5 growth in the student population and a projection of at least 65 additional students per year to qualify for funds (Lawrence et al., 2002).

Despite a 70% increase in population between the years of 1940 and 1990, the number of elementary and secondary schools nationwide has decreased from 200,000 to 62,037 and, while there were 117,108 school districts in 1940, there are only 15,367 districts today representing a decrease of 87% (Joyce, 2002). Sixty percent of American high school students also attend schools with enrolments of over 1,000 students (Hylden, 2004).

The implications of housing students in a smaller number of large schools can be significant. According to a 1998 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), (as cited in Klonsky, 2002), for example, violent crimes were eight times more likely to occur in large schools. Thirty-three percent with 1,000 or more students experienced serious violent crime as compared with only 4 to 9% in small and medium sized schools while the larger the size of the school the greater the chance of another Columbine High School shooting occurring (Klonsky, 2002). While there has been a trend to respond to violence like that of Columbine with police, metal detectors, zero-
tolerance policies and video cameras, there exists some question as to whether this creates an expectation of violence (Lawrence et al., 2002).

In New York City alone, there are 1,300 schools serving over one million children. Yet, Huebner (2005) has found that only half of all high school students in New York complete high school in 4 years, one-third of ninth graders are not promoted, and less than 40% of students in large, low-performing schools graduate at all. According to the NCES, (as cited in Vander Ark, 2002), one in five seniors cannot identify main ideas in their readings, and two in five are not proficient in computing fractions, percents, and averages. In addition, each year, 1 in 20 high school students drop out while, in many urban areas, drop out rates can exceed 50% (Vander Ark, 2002). While Haller, Monk, Bear, Griffith, and Moss (1990) find that large comprehensive high schools are better able to offer more diversified curricula inclusive of alternative and advanced courses than smaller schools, these courses are taken by a relatively small minority of students.

Studies show that teachers felt less committed to the success of children in larger schools and tended to report less of a professional community than teachers working in other types of high schools, and had reported a higher level of dissatisfaction with administration (Cotton, 1996b; Wasley et al., 2000). Many teachers do not know the names of students well into the academic year (Joyce, 2002). Secondary level teacher perceptions about how a principal manages the school also have been found to be strongly related to the manner in which the administrator is perceived to organize the school program and the role of the principal in fostering a productive school climate (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993).
Evidence suggests positive outcomes associated with extracurricular participation. In particular, a recent meta-analysis of 73 recent studies, conducted under the auspices of the University of Illinois Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), found that after-school programs, inclusive of skill-based training and leadership development, promoted student self-confidence, self-esteem, school bonding, positive social behaviors, and academic achievement (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Despite these findings, however, student voluntary participation has been found to decrease as school size increases, even though the total range of available activities is often greater in big schools (Schoggen & Schoggen, 1988). Jimerson (2006) states that decreased student voluntary participation in large schools could be the result of a limited number of slots available for student participation and leadership and/or an inconvenience factor associated with longer distances between home and the comprehensive high school. Students in large high schools also have a tendency to be polarized with some students participating in many extracurricular activities whereas other anonymous students choose to opt out of involving themselves in their school culture (Joyce, 2002). Large schools can also become havens for exclusionary cliques where those students who do not fit in can become targets for bullying and/or harassment (Klonsky, 2002).

The Problem

Having arisen largely as a way to tame and socialize immigrant children, often only through rote learning and memorization and having never been designed to promote individuality and/or productive learning, the existing governance system of
education is not able to be rescued (Sarason, 1997). As Tom Vander Ark (2002), Executive Director of Education for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, states, the problem is multifaceted:

Our schools are not failing – they are obsolete. They foster anonymity and stifle learning by systematically inhibiting those things that are most important: powerful sustained relationships; students’ ability to address complex problems individually and as members of a team and to communicate in various ways; and the ability of teachers and administrators to take on increasing responsibility (p. 56).

The report - *A Nation at Risk* (1983) - echoed many of the same sentiments over 20 years ago. While the report found that the average student today is exposed to more knowledge than that of a generation ago, when a smaller proportion of our population completed high school and college, they are not able to reach understanding on complex issues especially when called upon to produce this awareness on short notice and/or if given conflicting or incomplete evidence.

Educators must:

eschew the imagery of the vessel [that] must [be] filled, and to give up the myth that it is only when we fill the vessel to the brim will students be capable of making choices...Intellectual growth...is a continuous process dependent on inside and outside factors. The vessel gets filled as much (if not more) by what goes on in and comes from
the inside than from the outside, and if we ignore or downplay that inside world we may end up with a filled vessel at the end of formal schooling...except that the student is relieved that his or her years of imprisonment are over (Sarason, 1997, p. 130).

Students must also be able to develop their individual mental and spiritual capabilities so that they can function as independent citizens. To do this, schools must develop curriculum that reflects a broad commitment to educating the whole child, inclusive of socio-emotional objectives. Students must be provided with meaningful and active ways in which to become involved in their own higher order learning, and individual schools must become self-directing where teachers have a say in the selection of new staff, budget allocations, curriculum (Goodlad, 1984).

Even when teachers wish to exhibit leadership outside of and in addition to the classroom, the traditional school system often limits the ability of staff to do so. Teacher willingness to go beyond what is normally required of them, for instance, can be undermined by the mainstream culture of teaching itself (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

Colleagues often resist the work initiated by others. This is because it is often seen as an inappropriate intrusion into another’s instructional space and because some teachers also believe that those who wish to engage fully in the process of learning view themselves as more expert, and that these individuals are merely looking forward towards career advancement and/or may wish to undermine the authority of both other teachers and that of the current administrator (Danielson, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson). When teachers do take on additional but official and hierarchical leadership roles as department chairs and/or grade-level advisors and mentors, this is often done at the
pleasure and/or direction of the principal and, as a result, such leadership is usually not viewed as an effective means by which to achieve meaningful change in education (Lord & Miller, 2000 as cited in Berry, Norton, & Byrd, 2007). As a result, in anticipation of the fact that veteran teachers might criticize instructional staff members wanting a leadership challenge on the grounds of perceived inexperience and/or alleged favoritism by the principal, many potential teacher leaders interviewed by the Johnson and Donaldson (2007) Project on the Next Generation of Teachers stated that they refrained from volunteering, even if they wished to do so, until drafted.

As Sergiovanni (1996) states, general improvements in student performance will occur only when classrooms become learning communities inclusive of student self-reflection, an acknowledgement that students develop at different rates, celebrations of diverse student talents, student discourse on school values and ideas, a commitment to caring and respect, and student acceptance of responsibility and obligation to the school community. Inquiring classrooms, as proposed above, can only result when schools become collaborative learning communities and centers of ongoing professional development for teachers.

Since a commitment to problem solving is difficult to instill in students when taught by teachers who are unwilling or unable to problem solve collegially, instructional staff must collaborate (Sergiovanni, 1996). In positive learning communities, where success can be defined by measurable student academic and/or socio-emotional achievement, the prevailing norm is one where teachers share ideas, critique suggestions, visit each other's classrooms, celebrate diversity, and wonder continuously about "what if"(Sagor, 2000).
Whether a school operates as a community or a bureaucracy must be a vital consideration within education. According to Raywid (1998), such a determination dictates whether staff members see their jobs as delivering services or succeeding in educating. At the same time, such a determination affects whether teachers are grouped in departments, or together in smaller units, and students are placed in tracked classes or in smaller, heterogeneous groupings. Indeed, as Raywid states, “there is enough evidence now of devastating effects of large size on substantial numbers of youngsters that it seems morally questionable not to act on this evidence (p. 35).” Indeed, many teachers are well aware of and disturbed by the fact that, in large schools, they do not have the time to give some children the help they need; help that is not the result of any basic intellectual defect (Sarason, 1996).

Meier (2000) writes that, in American society, it is unfortunately quite common for teenagers to be isolated from adults even though they will soon enter the adult world. By the time adolescents reach their later teens, Meier argues, it is not uncommon for youngsters to not know any adults outside of their families and, even if working, far too often, adolescents are employed in the company of peers (i.e. McDonald’s, The Gap, etc.) more so than as apprentices to professionals.

Students dropping out of school also present costs to society that are enormous, progressive, and long-term. Not graduating high school can affect a person’s health, the chances of being on welfare and/or being dependent on other social programs, the ability to obtain productive employment, the chances of being incarcerated, and relationships with family and friends (Lawrence et al., 2002).
Although a recent Harris Poll (as cited in Bushaw, 2007) of over 1,000 middle school students found that 93% believed that they would go on to graduate high school, the actual national graduation rate hovers around 83% with only 66% moving forward to attend university. While survey results clearly indicate that our students want to graduate from high school, something must be going wrong in high schools thus dissuading or preventing children from achieving this goal (Bushaw, 2007). Thus, we must ascertain why our high school students are not achieving and, from this assessment, begin to attempt systemic educational reform within American high schools.

Purpose of the Study

There already have been many attempts at educational reform. One approach at reform has been to create small secondary schools in order to address four specific problems: (a) to create small intimate learning communities where students are well-known and are pushed to excel by adults who care about them; (b) to reduce the isolation that breeds violence; (c) to reduce achievement gaps that affect children; and (d) to encourage teachers to employ intelligence and experience to help students succeed (Wasley et al., 2000). Magnet secondary schools are one such small school model that attempts to address the problems associated with large schools.

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of principals and teachers of the climate within a small, stand alone, secondary magnet school environment. This study replicates the research methodology conducted by Joyce (2002) that assessed the perceptions of principals and teachers of the climate within a small Catholic school environment. This study followed-up on Joyce’s recommendations for future
investigation of school climate within a small, public school environment by conducting individual interviews with principals and teachers, working within this type of environment, as well as expanding on Joyce’s methodology by hosting additional focus groups with teachers employed in these same small, stand alone, magnet high schools.

Research Questions

As per the research questions posed by Joyce (2002):

1. How is the overall climate of small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools family and/or community like?

2. Why does the climate of the school, particularly within a small stand-alone secondary magnet high school, allow students to have the personal relationships with their teachers that research tells us is important?

3. Does the climate of a small, stand-alone secondary magnet high school help students reach high academic success? Are behavior problems a concern?

4. Do teachers perform well in small, stand-alone secondary magnet high schools?
5. How does the climate of a small, stand-alone secondary magnet high school help reduce absenteeism by students as well as the student drop-out rate?

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in scope and design. The research was limited to education professionals at four small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools. The research was limited in that it focused on select stakeholders within the school community: administrator and teacher perceptions on climate. The school-within-school magnet model was not assessed, be they multi-school or small-school-host sub-models, nor were other small school models – charter schools, private, and/or parochial - addressed.

Small magnet schools also differ as to selection criteria, that is, selective application processes versus standard lottery schemes. One might hypothesize that schools with specific selection criteria would attract high performing students whereas those programs with lottery selection would enroll a high percentage of at-risk children.

However, in one study that ascertained the percentage of at risk versus non-risk students in small, Boston city pilot schools, findings indicate that neither method of student assignment guaranteed a certain student population. In this study, pilot small schools, regardless of assignment process, seemed to attract a disproportionate number of students without risk factors (Tung & Ouimette, 2007). Tung and Ouimette further added that the "good schools" profiled in the Boston study appealed to the interests of a high number of the college-bound thereby suggesting a corresponding smaller proportion of those with risk-factors seeking enrollment(Tung & Ouimette, 2007).
However, more research may be warranted on the relationship, if any, between admission criteria on academic performance in small schools.

The results of this study, which included one school employing a lottery system of admission and three with a selective application process either based on past academic performance and/or demonstrated artistic talent, may not, therefore, be general to all secondary magnet school environments and/or other small schools of choice.

Significance of the Study

Given the research base that indicates that there is a relationship between small school size, academic achievement, safety, and a sense of school community, especially in a stand alone environment; freestanding magnet high schools are proliferating across the country. Organizations such as the Small Schools Workshop in Chicago, Big Picture Schools in Rhode Island, and the Center for Urban School Improvement and New Visions for New Schools in New York are just a few of the entities currently assisting public school districts in their reorganization efforts to create small, freestanding magnet programs while financial backing from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s 1.5 billion dollar campaign is also being provided in order to raise the number of students who graduate from high schools ready for work and/or college (Keller, 2007).

Over 184 separate, small, stand alone secondary schools have opened within the New York City Public School District’s governance structure since 2002 and another 25 schools are expected to open in 2007-2008. Also, in Chicago, there are more than 20
separate small high schools under district governance with additional sites planned (Keller, 2007).

In 1991-1992, there were already 2,400 magnet schools and 3,200 magnet programs. 1.2 million students participating in such schools, and over 739 million dollars in instructional support for such programs (Hadderman, 2002). By 1990, a National School Boards Association (NSBA) study (as cited in Kelly, 2004) found that 34 of 52 urban school districts had magnet schools and, by 1996, 1.5 million students attended magnet schools and over 120,000 were already on waiting lists. Andrea Mastrobuono, (personal email communication, Sept. 10-11, 2007), Communications and Marketing Director of Magnet Schools of America – a Washington, D.C. based membership organization, further added that, in 2007, Magnet Schools of America had a membership base of 1800 schools while, concurrently, there were also approximately 4500-5000 magnet programs operating in the United States.

The Federal Government also supports the establishment of new magnet programs as well as the growth of existing schools. Operating under the Office of Innovation and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education, the Federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), in 2004, the latest year for which information is available, provided 50 3-year school district awards collectively worth over $100 million dollars (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). These grants are awarded, yearly, to support not only diversity within education but also academic achievement.

Results have been mixed. Data for the FY 1998 cohort of MSAP grant recipients, the latest cohort for which performance data is available, indicates that, of the 295 schools affected by these grants in 1998 and targeted with desegregation objectives,
47% either showed some progress towards or achieved their desegregation benchmarks (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In regards to academic proficiency in language arts and mathematics, half of the FY1998 cohort had met their benchmarks by the end of 2001 and the conclusion of the 3-year grant (Christenson et al., 2003).

While the results are not dramatically positive, Christenson et al. (2003) state that performance findings were influenced by performance objectives as stated in MSAP grant applications and, as a result, school districts applying for such grants may have initially been overly optimistic when determining their 3 year goals and/or in estimating the ease with which achievement data could be collected. Further, Christenson et al. suggest that magnet school performance must be taken into context and compared with achievement in non-magnet schools.

In the Christenson et al. study (2003), elementary magnet schools were also found to be more successful in meeting academic benchmarks than corresponding magnet high schools. The researchers suggest that school size could have been a factor in overall school performance since the elementary schools in their study tended to be smaller than corresponding high schools. As such, elementary schools may have had a streamlined curriculum that could have been more easily tracked and adjusted through coherent educational initiatives and/or reforms than at the high school level. This study, therefore, aimed to observe secondary magnet schools that were small, in nature, in an attempt to see if school conditions mirrored those found more often in small elementary magnets.

Because of the growth in the number of small magnet high schools, the numbers of students affected, and current projections that additional schools are to be created, this
study is significant for magnet high school administrators, teachers and other
stakeholders interested in the learning and safety of students in their care. The study also
has significance for individuals, for profit and non-profit organizations, and public
school districts that are in the process of implementing additional secondary magnet
schools.

Despite magnet program popularity, the vast resources invested in them, and the
fact that such schools have existed for almost 40 years, there is still relatively little
known about outcomes associated with them or the variance in outcomes associated with
particular magnet school structures (Hausman & Goldring, 2000). Therefore, this study
adds to the general research base on the qualitative assessment of school climate in small
public magnet school environments. Focus was given to small, stand alone secondary
magnet schools since limited research finds advantages to this environment over that of
school-within-school systems (Hausman & Goldring, 2000). Additional research in this
area, however, is warranted.

As in the Joyce (2002) study, this research was qualitative in nature, thus
allowing for a discovery approach that fostered deeper reflection from 23 respondents on
climate that develops within small, secondary, stand-alone magnet schools. From
findings, educational policy makers will be able to better design new small schools
having the rich, detailed data from those educators already in the trenches of this
innovative initiative.

It was not the intention of this research to discuss the merits of criticism that
suggests that magnet schools remove the best students from a comprehensive school
environment thereby undermining the effectiveness of such schools. It also did not
evaluate whether or not better behaved students are also removed from comprehensive high schools.

Definition of Terms

*Alternative School* – Such schools tend to focus on a broad programmatic goal that tends to differ from comprehensive school practice, in that such schools often hold the premise that the standard school movement needs revision (Raywid, 1994). Freer from external regulation, such schools tend to shape themselves as an extension of staff personalities and are often concerned with building the school as a community (Raywid, 1994).

*Charter schools* are a form of alternative schooling. Given a “charter” by the state, charter schools are allowed to operate legally, as public schools, with less state department of education regulation, in exchange for a commitment to improve the academic performance of students, particularly, in high-failure communities. Every several years, charters are reviewed by the state/Federal Department of Education. Funding is provided to the school from the school district and/or state depending on enrollment. Many charter schools, once funded by the district/state, control their budgets directly. Magnet schools, private schools, and home schooling are also alternative types of school structure.

*Catholic School* – Parochial schools that emphasize sustained academic endeavors of a college-preparatory nature and on developing character by exemplifying and instilling a set of certain values consistent with the Roman Catholic faith (Raywid, 1994).
Choice (in Public Education) – For the purposes of this study, choice will relate to the belief that individuals, be they students and/or parents, should have a say as to where and how they are to be educated as opposed to being forced to either enroll at their local comprehensive high school or pay private school tuition fees.

Climate - For the purposes of this study, is defined as the combination of beliefs, values, and attitudes shared by all students, teachers, principals, and others who have an important role in the school (Joyce, 2002).

Community - A group of people bonded together at will and who hold similar ideals and values (Joyce, 2002). Community could also be viewed as a loose collection of individuals that comes together to become a “we” (Sergiovanni, 1996).

Comprehensive High School – A high school, grades 9-12, whose programs correspond to the educational needs of all youth within a community (Conant, 1959). Comprehensive high schools are denoted as such due to their “degree of comprehensiveness” in offering a curriculum inclusive of academic, professional and vocational offerings (Conant, 1959).

Culture – For the purposes of this study, culture is defined as the interactions among the students, teachers, and principal. Culture also involves the language used, the traditions upheld, and the beliefs shared by a group of people (Joyce, 2002).

Large High School – For the purposes of this study, a large high school, or Large Secondary School, will be defined as schools with more than 500 students in grades 9-12 (Joyce, 2002).

Magnet School – Schools within traditional public school districts, many magnet schools, but not all, are urban and/or suburban. Magnet schools usually have explicit
themes (i.e. technology, science, history, etc.) but most also have an intense academic focus across all disciplines (Raywid, 1994). Such schools provide distinctive curriculum, or an instructional approach, drawing students from beyond an assigned attendance zone. Some magnet schools have selective application procedures, others do not. Since teachers are often required to develop unique curriculum, teachers and staff in a magnet environment are often empowered to think and work both independently and cooperatively in small professional learning communities (Raywid, 1994). Magnet school budgeting, in contrast to charter school budgets, is usually controlled by the school district in which the magnet school is located.

Magnet schools can be large, medium or small in nature and can be stand alone (freestanding and/or whole school), and/or school-within-school (school-within-host models). Research indicates that magnet schools support academic achievement over that of comprehensive high schools (Crain, Heebner, & Si, 1992; Musumeci & Szczypkowski, 1991, as cited in Raywid, 1994).

During the late 1960s, school districts were forced to develop desegregation plans. As a consequence, theme schools were formed that would attract diverse students to apply to desegregated schools voluntarily. By 1975, the term “magnet” was then being applied to describe the type of funding available from the Federal Government given that students were attracted to these theme programs like “magnets” (Kelly, 2004).

While one of the primary goals of magnet schools may have been initially desegregation, recent court rulings — *Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (57 F. Supp. 2d 228 [4th Cir. 2001]); *Eisenberg v. Montgomery County Public Schools* (19 F. Supp. 2d 449 [1999]); *Tuttle v. Arlington County School Board* (195 F.
3d 698 [4th Cir. 1999]); and Weissman v. Gittens (160 F. 3d 790 [1999]) are finding magnet schools that act as tools of racial desegregation are unconstitutional (as cited in Goldring & Smrekar, 2002). Magnet schools are therefore restructuring to focus their efforts on strengthening academic rigor as opposed to racial integration (Straus, 2005).

All magnet school formats can, however, suffer from drawbacks. One study (Lee & Ready, 2007) indicates that only a small minority of students reported choosing schools, and/or subunit programs, based on career aspirations or theme as opposed to those choosing a school in order to be grouped with people like themselves. This, therefore, can create social and academic stratification rather than diversification. Transfer from one magnet school to another, or even to a comprehensive environment, may also prove problematic when curriculum is stratified as students may not have certain skill sets necessary in a new academic program; this can be particularly true when trying to move from a themed school thought to be less academically rigorous (Lee & Ready, 2007). State and Federal policy, in regards to high-stakes testing and standardization, for example, NCLB, also threatens institutional autonomy (Lee & Ready, 2007).

In order to combat some of these potential problems, researchers suggest that magnet school developers eliminate all self-contained remedial courses opting, instead, to create curriculum across all themes that is seen as equally challenging and inclusive of higher ordered learning thereby keeping future options open for students (Lee & Ready, 2007). For students entering magnet programs with academic deficiencies, double-dosing in core subjects such as Math and Language Arts should be mandatory as well as inter-disciplinary instruction, for all students, which could reduce academic
stratification (Lee & Ready, 2007). School staff must also always be open to monitoring academic programming and student progress while maintaining a commitment to guiding principles around which the school should be organized (Lee & Ready, 2007).

*Multischool* – Multiple stand-alone magnet schools housed inside of one large building but which operate independently of one another enjoying, for instance, budgetary autonomy (Wasley et al., 2000).

*School-within-school Magnet (SWS)* – A small school located within a larger school also often known as the host school. SWS may also be classified as academies. While SWS schools have a unique curricular focus, they do not operate independently of the host school and remain subject to the budget and leadership of the building principal. This can be problematic in that it could be difficult for staff members to obtain sufficient separateness and autonomy to create a unique culture and vision for their magnet school (Cotton, 1996a; Lee & Ready; 2007; Wasley et al., 2000). SWS must also share space (auditoriums, cafeterias, etc.) and there is some indication that SWS promote tracking (Lawrence et al., 2002).

Reid (2007) recently conducted a study on culture in small, school-within-school, academic programs in the Cleveland Ohio Municipal School District. Her findings were similar to those of Cotton (1996a), Cotton (1996b) and Wasley et al. (2000) in that student-teacher relationships were found to not be particularly strong, a family atmosphere did not exist, and academic achievement was assessed as marginal, at best, in these types of magnet programs. Cleveland teachers also were shown not to feel a sense of community, in part, because many had not initially chosen to be a part of their
assigned school. Lee and Ready (2007) further suggest that resentment among teachers across subunits can actually increase as certain schools within schools, seen as elitist, are allowed to limit enrollment thereby increasing the size of other programs and the duties of teachers working within non-favored academic houses. Subunit autonomy, according to Lee and Ready, is also undermined when, in an effort to best operate low-enrollment, specialized (i.e. AP), and/or remedial courses (i.e. bilingual and/or special education), schools choose to locate all such courses in a single subunit.

Stand Alone (Freestanding) Magnet – Like conventional schools, these small schools have their own space, budget, and principal (Wasley et al., 2000). While Hausman and Goldring (2000) have found that the internal community in both stand alone and SWS models is high, teachers in stand alone magnets indicate clearer goals, more frequent collegial relations, and higher levels of commitment since teachers with similar philosophies are more likely to work within them. Further, a high percentage of teachers in stand alone magnets have chosen to work within that particular school and, because many stand alone schools are academically selective, stand alone schools tend to serve students of a higher social-economic status and, therefore, teachers in stand alone schools may have greater success with students (Hausman & Goldring, 2000).

The average size of a school in the United States is 741 students, but many high schools range in size from 800 to 3,000 students (Wasley et al., 2000). For the purposes of this study, a small high school, or small secondary school, will be defined as a high school with 500 or fewer students in grades 9-12 as per the Bank Street College of Education Study on Small Schools (Wasley et al., 2000) definition of a small school. The Bank Street Study (Wasley et al., 2000), an early exploration into the small school
movement, focused on Chicago Public Schools as being representative of many other cities in the United States (Wasley et al.). The Bank Street Study also provided the definition for “small school” used in the Joyce (2002) qualitative assessment on small school climate which this study replicates.

Although reduced size has desirable effects, in itself, size is a “frail reed” on which to place high academic expectations for students without the overarching purpose of the school being taken seriously by staff (Sarason, 1997). Because the ideal school size often depends on its purpose, there is, however, no clear answer as to optimum number of students be it 500, 600, or 700 (Sarason, 1997).

Specialty School - Often resembling magnet schools with respect to theme, such schools emphasize academic excellence across disciplines. Admission standards are high and often these schools only select the highest achievers counting success in terms of the number of students winning scholarships and national awards (Raywid, 1994).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I presents the Introduction to the Study which includes the following: (a) Introduction to the Research Problem, (b) Statement of the Problem, (c) Purpose of the Study, (d) Research Question and Subsidiary Questions, (e) Significance of the Study, (f) Limitations and Delimitations of the Study, and (g) Definition of Key Terms. Chapter II presents the Review of the Literature. Chapter III presents the Design-Methods and Procedures. Sampling, Instrumentation, the Data, Data Collection, and Data Analysis and the Specific Treatment of each sub-problem and Chapter IV presents the Findings. Chapter V
presents the Summary, Conclusions, and Implications and Recommendations for further study. References and Appendices, inclusive of interview and focus group testimony, are included for complete documentation.

Summary of Introduction

Chapter I presents a brief historical overview on the move towards and reasons for the large scale consolidation of the American public school system. Concurrently, the lower academic achievement of students, the alienation felt by both staff and students, disconnected curriculum, decreases in student participation, school violence, and the overall problem of anonymity, so often found in large schools, is discussed. Research questions, in the proposed study, are presented along with limitations of the study, significance of the study, key definitions, and the organization of the study.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II presents background literature and previous research findings on the variables that will be assessed in this study on school climate in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools. The literature review is divided into the following sub-categories; (a) the general background on school climate and the effects of positive school climate; (b) the teacher/student relationship in small schools; (c) the academic success of students in small school cultures; (d) teacher performance in small school environments; and (e) the student absenteeism/school drop-out rate in small schools. The pitfalls of small school implementation are also discussed.

Background on School Climate

Over the last two decades, researchers have not only been documenting the complex elements that make up school climate - Environmental; Structural; Safety; Teaching and Learning; Relationships; Sense of School Community; Morale; Peer Norms; and School-Home-Community Partnerships - but have also been investigating the importance of school climate on individual experiences in school(Cohen, 2006; Freiberg; 1999). In particular, research reveals a relationship between school climate and self-concept (Cairns, 1987; Heal, 1978; Reynolds, Jones, & Murgatroyd, 1980; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979).

Other research finds a relationship between climate and absenteeism (Dejung & Duckworth, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Reid, 1982; Rumberger, 1987; Sommmer, 1985). A positive school climate has also been linked to effective risk prevention and
health promotion given that "connectedness", a critical dimension of climate, has been found to be predictive of both good health and academic progress (McNeely, 2002; Whitlock, 2006). Connectedness and the development of a positive school climate has been found to be fostered when students are provided with opportunities to actively participate in the process of their own learning, for example through extracurricular activities. Such activities help students to add to others' ideas or projects (Torney-Purta, 2002; Wentzel & Watkins; 2002; Youniss et al., 2002). Positive school climate augments cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust, and, therefore, an overall environment of learning (Finnan, Schnepel, & Anderson, 2003; Ghaith, 2003; Kerr, Ireland, Lopes, Craig, & Cleaver, 2004).

Based on these and other studies, a positive high school climate is necessary for high school academic achievement in that specific positive qualities of environment must be present to influence school effectiveness (Mclean, 2006). Climate also acts as a powerful determinant of school effectiveness, in that climate is a concept that transcends any one stake holder's perceptions (Mclean, 2006).

Yet, at the same time, variables such as leadership, teacher behavior, student behavior, and instructional resources also cannot be underestimated as to their relationship to academic achievement (Mclean, 2006). Leaders and teachers still not only need to be willing to implement the goals of the school and support the vision, as defined in the culture, but also must know how to do so. Indeed, research indicates that the manner in which principals govern the school and communicate mission and/or vision, how they build strong school climate, how they maintain visibility and presence in the school, and organize the school's instructional program and resources are
important predictors of academic achievement (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Sarason, 1997).

Existence of Positive School Climate in Small Schools

In previous studies, teachers and principals in small high schools have stated that smallness in itself was not sufficient for improving student achievement (Wasley et al., 2000). Rather, educators have stressed that a positive climate was fostered when the school size was small enough to allow for collaboration among adults and when students were known (Wasley et al., 2000).

In many ways, small schools are positively affected by the conditions that underlie Behavior Setting Theory. As stated by Schoggen and Schoggen (1988), where there is a shortage of people relative to the number of positions to be filled, the behavior settings place greater pressure on those people available to participate in the operation of the organization. When surplus people are scarce, and alternates unavailable, each individual is more important to the successful operation of the outfit. In the case of small schools, this often leads to the empowerment of teachers and, concurrently, the active participation of students in school activities (Schoggen & Schoggen, 2001).

In general, several key conditions have been found to be present in small high schools. These include: (a) a significant awareness on the part of teachers of students; (b) a high expectation on the part of teachers for students which leads to the same in the students themselves; (c) a fostering of critical judgment and self-concept in students and a reduction in substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and pregnancy; (d) a feeling of safety in school; (e) a broad range of instructional strategies; (f) and a system of accountability
among parents, students, and teachers (Cotton, 1996b; Jimerson, 2006; Raywid, 1998; Wasley et al., 2006). Some surveys also reveal that small schools are congenial sites for school-based management to be an effective reform strategy (Hess, 2000; Raywid, 2003).

Small schools promote a climate of educational equity (Lee & Smith, 1994). Since it is often the case that low socioeconomic students are concentrated in states with large school districts and, consequently, school districts with large schools, such students are often prone to have low school achievement, high drop-out rates, and the least favorable teacher-student ratios (Cotton, 1996b). In contrast, poor students in small schools tend to receive the attention and focus that they need. Prior studies have found, for instance, that the correlation between poverty, regardless of race, and low achievement is as much as 10 times stronger in large schools than in smaller ones (Howley & Bickel, 2000).

**Relationship between Students and Teachers in Small Schools**

In 1996, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), in *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, proposed that American high schools commit to personalization (National Association Of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), 1996). NASSP followed the 1996 proposal, in 2004, with *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* which characterized personalization as a learning process in which schools help students assess individual talents, plan a pathway to their unique purposes, work collaboratively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of explorations, and demonstrate their learning
against clear standards in a wide variety of media, inclusive of close support of adult mentors (as cited in Keefe, 2007).

Research shows social and educational benefits of surrounding children with caring adults (Cotton, 1996a; Cotton, 1996b; Herrera, Sipe, & McClarahan, 2000). Noddings (as cited in Newman, 2002) has found that, when teachers are personally involved with students, children tend to experience a sense of belongingness in school while, concurrently, instructors who are perceived as caring often provide a learning context characterized by inter-subjectivity – i.e. the attunement of teacher/adolescent purpose, focus and affect.

Inter-subjectivity, which reduces the power differential common to student-teacher relationships, provides the context for democratic interaction, and fosters positive communication where teachers are seen as effective and trustworthy helpers (Newman, 2002). Further, children, when seen by adults as partners in education, can be used for the personal and intellectual benefit of all students and become resources that, in economic terms, contribute to an increase in productivity without increase in costs (Sarason, 1997).

Indeed, for high schools to be effective, teachers, students, administrators and parents must share a sense of purpose and be clear on what is trying to be accomplished in school while instructional staff must go beyond merely keeping students in school and out of trouble (Boyer, 1983). High schools must help students develop the capacity to think critically and communicate effectively through the mastery of language, assist students in understanding the human experience and the importance of relationships in an interdependent world, provide advice and mentoring on further work and education
opportunities, and demonstrate the relevance of social and civic obligations through school and community service (Boyer, 1983).

Indeed, when ninth-grade students were interviewed by Allen (1986, as cited in Wentzel, 2002) about their school-related goals, students stated that, among their main desirable outcomes associated with their education, were an interest in being social as well as a wish to be dependable and responsive to their teachers’ wishes. McKeachie, Lin, Milholland, and Isaacson (as cited in Wentzel, 2002) also found that some of these student desires may even extend into university with college students, in high need for affiliation, working harder and getting better grades when their instructors were supportive and friendly as opposed to when the instructor was not socially oriented.

In order for high schools to establish both the nurturing environment capable of supporting the fore-mentioned goals for effective high schools and a climate that encourages students to be friendly and to see their teachers as trustworthy role models, instructional staff will have to go far beyond teaching just their mandated course loads. Contemporary schools, and, in particular, its teachers must acknowledge that every learner has a unique experiential background and a particular set of innate talents and personal interests, no two students demonstrate the same behavioral patterns or possess the same goals or levels of aspiration, no two people solve problems in the same way or are motivated by the same incentives, no two individuals are ready to learn at the same time or to the same degree, and that learning for each pupil is unique (Keefe, 2007).

Teachers who are perceived as having a caring attitude, who are interested in interpersonal dealings with students, and who provide constructive non-critical feedback tend to have students who pursue academic and social classroom goals more so than
those who are not viewed in this manner (Wentzel, 2002). This unofficial contract between teachers and students assumes that:

teacher and student know each other and that know means much more than what is characteristic of superficial interpersonal relationships where thoughts and feelings remain largely unexpressed and private. That kind of knowing is virtually impossible ... in a high school that is at least twice the size of a middle school and often up to three or four times larger (Sarason, 1997, p. 123).

At many small high schools, students are often fortunate to participate in an advisory -- a small group of students and one teacher who work together on socio-emotional and/or academic issues over the full four-year period of high school -- which is often impossible in larger schools where teachers are responsible for hundreds of students (Levine, 2002). Other small schools have students work with the same teacher for two years in a process known as "looping" which allows teachers to develop an acquaintance with students, and/or to grasp individual strengths and weaknesses over a two year period of time (Copland & Boatright, 2004). Because of the commitment to community, many small schools also become involved in community service projects -- such as recycling, gardening, participating in donation drives, painting murals, - that help students to learn about their neighborhoods; often, community service requirements in small schools go above and beyond those of comprehensive high schools (Wasley et al., 2000).
William Glasser, M.D., president of the William Glasser institute and quality school consultant, finds that the inability to relate or connect is the root cause of school problems (Glasser, 2000). Glasser argues that the only way to prevent school violence, and/or any other undesirable behaviors, is for teachers and administrators to build strong satisfying relationships with the unhappiest students and with students who can find troubled youth and are trusting in deciding to share this knowledge with adults. Teachers and individuals can begin to build these trusting relationships by understanding that all humans share a psychological need to belong, have power, freedom, and fun (Glasser, 1997). By listening to students and discussing differences, rather than forcing certain behaviors through punitive punishments, students can begin to feel that educators actually care about them and will place these caring individuals within their “quality world” – a world inclusive of all things that matter to them. It is inclusion within this realm that affects positive change in students (Glasser, 1997, p. 598).

Teachers and students in small environments, the majority of whom self-select participation in small high schools, can come to know and care for one another and actively participate in school. This is an aspect of a pleasant school climate that is not only necessary for school success but can also have long-term effects on an individual’s wellbeing beyond grades 9-12 (Cotton, 1996b; Cotton, 2001; Schoggen & Schoggen, 2001).

As a result of knowing the educational and personal circumstances of students more thoroughly, teachers are deeply invested within student academic success (Lambert, Lowry, Copland, Gallucci, & Walluch, 2004). For some educators, this level of commitment results from knowing that they will be involved with their students, and
their families, for more than one class and, most likely, for more than one year
(Lambert et al., 2004).

The human connections that engender strong student-teacher bonds can also
affect post-high school behavior such as college attendance and life plans (Downey,
1978, Wahlberg and Wahlberg, 1994, Martin and McIntire, 1992, all as cited in Raywid,
1998). In addition, minority students and those of lower socio-economic status, in
particular, benefit academically from the social interactions among students and teachers
(Cotton, 1996a; Cotton, 1996b; Lee & Smith, 1996). This will be discussed further in the
next section.

Indeed, in small schools, teachers tend to have high expectations for all students,
foster critical judgment in their students, and seek to develop a culture of accountability
among students, parents, and themselves (Wasley et al., 2000). High expectations can
only be internalized and manifested when caring relationships and communities of
support are present and students are aware that they are held responsible for their actions
(Wasley et al., 2000). As Meier (1995) states:

We teachers are trying to convert our children to a set of
adult intellectual standards and appreciations ... This in
turn requires joint membership in an attractive community
representing such values as well as a myriad of interactions
across generations. Small schools produce innumerable
natural opportunities for both. And they create numerous
kinds of apprenticeships, not only between students and
teachers, but between younger and older students at
different stages and phases of expertise. They offer a chance...that children will glimpse possibilities that make them want to be grown-ups (p. 113).

Academic Success of Students in Small School Cultures

In 2002, New York City began its ambitious campaign to transform its large, only marginally successful, at best, high schools, graduating only half of their students, into small schools. In 2006, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation conducted a study on 14 of these new small schools and their first graduation statistics. The new small schools reported an overall graduation rate of 79% while, of the 81% of seniors who applied to college, approximately 85% were accepted (Huebner, Corbett, & Phillippo, 2006). In 2007, Policy Studies Associates, Inc. conducted a follow-up evaluation of small New Century High Schools (NCHS) also in New York City (Foley, Klinge, & Reisner, 2007). The researcher found that, in 2006, NCHS graduated more students on time than did larger New York City schools, with comparable youngsters, by 18 percentage points (Foley et al., 2007)

In 2000, the Bank Street College of Education (Wasley et al., 2000) also conducted a study on the achievements of small schools operating within the Chicago Public School System. Students’ grade point averages in small stand-alone high schools, a determinant of college options, were also found to be slightly higher than those of students in more traditional school settings; however, while language arts achievement was slightly higher in freestanding small high schools than in comprehensive high schools, math grades tended to be slightly lower while failure rates, in general, were
equal to that of comprehensive high schools, thereby suggesting the need for further professional support and academic rigor.

The New Century High School study (Foley et al., 2007) also found that, while climate was positive, engaging, and conducive to learning in small NCHS schools and were among the best options the system had to offer in keeping educationally at-risk students in school, academic achievement was marginally equivalent to the system as a whole. Thirty six percent of NCHS students earned a New York Regents or Advanced Regents diploma, as compared with 41% of comparison-group students at large in the New York Public School System, which reiterates the need for instructional staff to be assisted in framing expectations for student learning, in optimizing value from instructional time, and in working collaboratively (Foley et al., 2007). Findings from some other small school studies show that, while school climate is positive in many small schools, academic progress is not, as yet, pervasive (Wallach et al., 2004). The Tung and Ouimette 4-year study (2007) of Boston's small pilot high schools, for instance, also found that minority students in small schools did not out perform academically, or equal, their white cohort members. However, students with risk factors did perform better in small pilot high schools than in standard district schools, minority students in small pilots did perform better than counterparts in traditional schools, and that the graduation rate for 2006 was 23 percentage points higher for small pilot high schools at 75.7% than for Boston Public Schools as a whole (52.2%).

Cotton (1996b) has reviewed multiple studies and found that, while some studies did indeed show no significant academic achievement in small schools over large ones, the other half of studies found achievement to be superior thereby indicating that
academic achievement in small schools is at least equal to, if not superior, to that of large schools. In a study on academic achievement in small schools in California, Eddy (2003) has found, as with Howley and Bickel and Lee and Smith (1996), that students in small schools did experience academic gains, over that of counterparts in large schools, if students were of lower socio-economic status. The Report Card on American Education (as cited in Lawrence et al., 2002) also noted that high SAT and ACT scores as well as high graduation rates may be associated, to a greater extent, to school size rather than to race. Researchers at New York University’s Institute for Education and Social Policy (as cited in Lawrence et al., 2002), in examining 128 high schools, also found that 64% of small school students graduated in 4 years as compared with only 51-56% of students in large schools with 1,200-2,000 or more students. More research is thus warranted in the area of academic achievement in small schools.

As seen, being small is not sufficient in itself in fostering academic achievement (Eddy, 2003). Teachers still need to want to go above the mandated curriculum in instructing students. In the Bank Street Study (Wasley et al., 2000), students, for instance, noted that it was the support of their student peers combined with the “unrelenting” pressure of teachers that was crucial in keeping them in school and studying harder so as not to fail courses. Teachers also must remain invested in a discussion of what should be taught, and to whom it should be taught, while also ensuring that collaborative work on curriculum and pedagogy remains a firm organizational priority (Foley et al., 2007; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

According to Robert J. Marzano (as cited in Scherer, 2001), senior fellow at the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning Institute (McREL), since the central
focus of public education should be academic achievement, the move towards state
and federal curriculum standards and mandates has actually had more positive effects
than negative. Yet, to implement standards effectively, school administrators, regardless
of size of school, must begin to assist teachers in cutting the plethora of standards down.
Marzano believes that this can be done by focusing on what is essential in learning and
for educators to develop a monitoring system that allows the tracking of student progress
inclusive of grading based on rubric scores for specific standards covered in a particular
course and/or on a project (Scherer, 2001). When teachers know what’s essential,
Marzano believes, it is easy to make decisions on appropriate curriculum in terms of
which parts of a textbook to use and on which parts to supplement, while also knowing
which resources and instructional strategies to adopt (Scherer, 2001).

While the question of upper and lower limits of optimum school size persists,
some studies claim that the upper limit of “small” should be 900 for high schools (Black,
2006). Others argue that it is not how small a school is, but, in contrast, how it operates
(Abramson, 2005). For example, effective operations can be inclusive of the offering of
a full range of subjects, if even on a tutorial basis, the creation of a large media center
with small conference rooms in which groups can meet, the provision of a desk and
computer station for each student, an emphasis on independent research that utilizes
technology, the use of local community college resources to provide opportunities for
students to take the equivalent of advanced placement courses for college credit, that
reduce financial burdens that prevent students from attending or completing college, and
the employment of resources offered by local businesses which can range from the
provision of supplies and/or laboratories to the establishment of career training opportunities (Abramson, 2005; Bushaw, 2007).

It might happen, as it frequently does, that a school is already sufficiently large, active, and enthusiastic to make it inadvisable to give up its identity and become merged in the larger consolidated school. If there are twenty or thirty children and an efficient teacher we have the essential factors of a good school (Kennedy, 1915, p.64).

As previously suggested by Lee and Ready (2007), instructional staff in small schools must take advantage of the opportunity afforded in getting to know students to assure that, while small instructional settings might preclude all but a few AP, remedial, extracurricular, and/or bilingual offerings within the curriculum, students in small schools remain enthusiastically engaged in what is available. Further, teachers in small schools should want to meet collectively and to promote the goal of developing curriculum that involves higher ordered thinking and essential skill/standards development, while also being inter-disciplinary and academically rigorous, for all students, regardless of student school entrance ability and/or school magnet theme.

Small schools provide the environmental setting to allow for dedicated and interested teachers to work together around the review of individual student work, for teachers to develop concentrated and connected curriculum, for staff to be able to meet
as an entire school body, for staff to be able to communicate more often and directly with parents of students experiencing problems and/or doing well, and for all involved to be held directly accountable for student academic progress. Other studies also confirm that, as small learning communities were developed, teachers developed self-efficacy, and school agendas were focused around student needs, gains in student achievement resulted (Baldwin, 2006).

Teacher Performance in Small School Environments

Teachers in small schools are not better educated or more experienced than peers in larger systems but, rather, have comparable levels of education and experience (Wasley et al., 2000). Yet, teachers in small schools generally feel more committed to and more efficacious in small schools, tend to report a stronger professional community than teachers working in other high schools, are more likely to collaborate with other colleagues, to engage in professional development that they find meaningful, exhibit a greater sense of responsibility for continual and focused student learning, and, therefore, are able to build a cogent instructional program for students between disciplines and across grade levels (Febey, 2006; Wasley et al., 2000). Indeed, research shows that teacher attitudes and morale are important in that an increase in morale is linked to increased student learning (Lee & Loeb, 2000; Lumsden, 1998; both as cited in Jimerson, 2006).

In keeping with these findings, several states – Louisiana, Georgia, and Illinois – have even added endorsements to state teacher licensing systems which recognize educators who complete coursework in teacher leadership and then return to their
schools to implement school reform, revise instructional programs, coach fellow teachers, foster a school environment conducive to learning and/or assume other non-administrative leadership duties (Olson, 2007, as cited in Scherer, 2007). Concurrently, there is a growing acknowledgment that teachers’ tenure in schools is often longer than that of administrators and, as a result, it is these instructional staff members, who hold institutional memory, whom should be the custodians of school culture (Danielson, 2007). Further, while high school principals may be scholars on research-based practices within their particular subject areas, different expert groups of secondary teacher leaders can supply the variety of professional knowledge needed for sustained school improvement (Danielson, 2007).

Although some teachers may, initially, question the increased professional responsibility that comes with a strong school community, many others have a passive desire or need to be intellectually stimulated and to have horizons expanded (Sarason, 1996). For a group to achieve agreed-on goals requires the commitment of those who own the problem because, when that sense of ownership is weak and/or balkanized, accountability for progress is marginalized as responsibility is attributed to others, problems of attitude and goals will be submerged, and alternative ways in which problems can be solved will never surface (Sarason, 1996; Sarason, 1997).

While teachers in small schools do report better working conditions, it is important to note that effective leadership in all schools, including small ones, is a critical factor for successful collaboration (Maniloff, 2004). Successful collaboration does not just happen when people are given the time to meet collectively. For instance, an offer of servant leadership, whereby the administrator agrees to act as a research assistant in
retrieving data and/or information teachers want while also allowing instructional staff a certain amount of professional autonomy, can set the stage for long-term comfort with both peer coaching and collaborative action research (Sagor, 2000).

Professional autonomy, however, does not imply a “keys to the kingdom” or “sink or swim” approach (Sarason, 1997). Rather, in allowing a certain amount of autonomy, it is assumed that: (a) teachers are willing to embark on a collaborative venture; (b) they have been provided with and discussed materials, such as journal articles and/or films illustrating contexts of productive learning; (c) they are enabled as a group to observe such contexts; and (d) they have been given access to consultants, sounding boards, and professional support and development from other individuals (Sarason, 1997). Indeed, teachers should be assisted as they learn cooperatively since educator preparation programs vary widely in fostering a spirit and application of collegial study (Sarason, 1997).

Administrators should also do well in explaining to staff how leadership at all levels would contribute to the school’s efforts in achieving its goals, discuss the purpose of school-based leadership, and establish qualifications and responsibilities (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Principals can also develop the school schedule around the work of teacher based leadership thereby establishing it into the structure of the school; examples of this not only include the incorporation of common planning time, but also substitute coverage for peer observations, and the use of faculty meetings for professional development (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

In examining eight measures of professional community, created from teacher responses to a 1997 survey of teachers, the Bank Street College of Education study
(Wasley et al., 2000) found, in particular, that there was a very strong sense of school community in the stand-alone high school environment. This effect was also seen, to a slightly lesser effect, in school-within-school settings. In the Bank Street study, faculties in small schools were found to be significantly bonded, and trusting, as they struggled to make their individual small schools work. Teachers felt empowered to dictate the direction of curriculum and develop school efficiencies (Wasley et al., 2000). In part because of the ability of teachers in small schools to affect school direction, to develop the school mission, and to unite the curriculum and/or instructional strategies, such teachers in the Bank Street study also reported that their professional development experiences were more sustained, focused and peer-led than in the comprehensive school setting (Jimerson, 2006; Wasley et al., 2000).

A study on professional community in seven small schools (Wallach et al., 2004) found that, in four of the schools – slightly more than half - there was evidence of particular strong professional communities inclusive of a common theme and/or vision, a shared curricular goal encompassing “essential questions”, and teachers expressing a sense of professional cohesion, a sense of mutual accountability that affected positive systemic change, and overall group commitment. All of the small schools in this study were relatively young thereby suggesting that their professional communities will need more time to develop further; however, teachers are clearly learning together and the evidence of adopting new practices is a promising indication of support for professional learning (Wallach et al., 2004).

Since teachers in small schools are often forced to take charge of their own growth and that of the school, because of the lack of senior staff, novices in small schools may
be more likely to be the ones deciding on the school's focus area/vision and on the issues that might benefit from collaborative action research (Sagor, 2000). Therefore, rather than being constantly reminded of what they lack, novice educators in such settings can develop their own positive self-image and commitment to school goals (Sagor, 2000).

In a study of professional development at three small schools, findings correlate with research that found that professional development is highly encouraged in small school settings (Angel, 2002). Teachers take advantage of classes sponsored by the district, study for advanced degrees, attend workshops and summer seminars, and implement organizational changes driven by a grand vision (Angel, 2002). Dr. Seymour Sarason (1997), in How Schools Might Be Governed and Why, also argued that all schools, regardless of size, should engage in forums, comprised of three or four other similar schools, as a means by which its members can become available to each other through the temporary exchange of resources, visits, observations of classes, and discussions on instructional pedagogy.

Small Schools and Student Absenteeism/Drop-Out Rates

In 2000, 10.9% of young adults aged 16-24 were not in a high school program and had not finished high school (Lawrence et al., 2002). According to NCES (2000), although students of low-income families are six times as likely to drop out of school, 57% of drop outs are from middle income families that account for approximately 60% of the American population. Also in 2000, 13.1% of African American students had dropped out before finishing their high school education, while Hispanic students were
also found to drop out of school (27.8%) much more frequently than their Caucasian counterparts (6.9%) (NCES, 2000, as cited in Lawrence et al., 2002).

High school drop outs are almost three times more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates (17% to 6%) and can also expect to earn one-third less than their peers who graduate (Lawrence et al., 2002). A sobering 82% of those incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system are high school drop outs and, as of December 2000, there were approximately 1.4 million people within the federal/state prison system at a cost of over $20,100 per prisoner annually (Lawrence et al., 2002). Since research suggests that there are equal to superior academic benefits to attending small schools, particularly for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, combined with a greater sense of community in such schools, the cost savings that are possible from attending and graduating from small schools is clear.

Strictly from the perspective of avoiding high rates of dropouts, it may be that smaller is better (Toenjes, 1989, as cited in Cotton, 1996b). The Bank Street School of Education (Wasley et al., 2000) found, for instance, that there is a relationship between attending small schools and drop-out rates. In their study, from 1998-1999, 11.1% of students in SWS environments and 8.4% of students in stand alone schools dropped out, in comparison to 19.8% of students attending SWS host schools and 10.8% of students attending other comprehensive schools. When controlling for demographic differences, all small schools in the study had drop out rates of at least four percent points lower than more traditional schools. Lawrence et al. (2002) have also reported that small schools, with fewer than 600 students, had a 5% drop out rate while larger schools averaged a 13% loss even though these small schools serve a higher percentage of poor and part-
time special education students (Steifel et al., 1998, as cited in Lawrence et al., 2002). Students in Boston's pilot small high schools study also had consistently high median attendance rates, over the four years studied, at around 94%, a favorable 2-week differential when compared to Boston's traditional high schools, lower suspension rates than at traditional high schools, declining even more rapidly during the last 2 years of the 4 year study, and, during the last year of the study in 2005, a drop-out rate of 3% as compared to 6.5% in traditional large high schools (Tung & Ouimette, 2007).

In Cotton's study (1996b) on literature related to drop out rates in small schools, 9 of the 10 documents studied that addressed this topic revealed differences favoring small schools while the other document found mixed results (Feller, 1989; Gregory, 1992; Jewell, 1989; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Rogers, 1987, Smith & DeYoung, 1988; Stockard & Mayberry, 1992; Toenjes, 1989; & Wahlberg, 1992, all as cited in Cotton, 1996b). Toenjes notes that "it may be that...the relevant conditions that exist in the smaller high school are much more conducive to keeping students in school than are conditions in the larger high schools. If this is true, it raises a new equity issue, based not on how many dollars per pupil are spent, but on the size of the school to which pupils are assigned" (Toenjes, 1989, as cited in Cotton, 1996b, p. 7).

Taking into account the extensive class cutting that exists nationally in high schools, studies have also assessed attendance rates in conjunction with that of drop out rates at small schools. In a Chicago study (Wasley et al., 2000), in both 1997 and 1999, students in small high schools attended school more often than students in large comprehensive high schools, attending, on average, 4 or 5 more days of school per semester. Additional research on student attendance also favors small schools including
attendance rate improvements for students changing from large schools to small, alternative secondary schools and, in particular, minorities and students of lower socio-economic status (Bates, 1993; Duke & Perry, 1978; Fowler, 1995; Fowler & Walberg, 1991; Gregory & Smith, 1992; Kershaw & Bank, 1993, McGanney, Mei, & Rosenblum, 1989; Robinson-Lewis, 1991; Rutter, 1988; Smith & DeYoung, 1988; & Wahlberg, 1992; all as cited in Cotton (1996b). However, because students are still missing almost two weeks of school, small schools still need to focus on increasing attendance and reducing truancy rates (Wasley et al., 2000).

Pitfalls of Small Schools

There is a prevalent assumption that small schools are easier to manage than large ones; however, it is not sufficient to run a school when the academic achievement of all students needs to be the goal (Mohr, 2000). A small school is not just a change of scale but one of intensity; this requires both a new set of responses and leadership strong enough to be sensitive while, at the same time, able to affect difficult but necessary change (Mohr, 2000). Small schools cannot be run simply as miniature large schools for to do so means to be no different than the status quo and, therefore, destined for mediocrity (Mohr, 2000).

While it might be tempting to believe that the democratic and collaborative culture often found in small schools requires less leadership, in reality, it needs stronger, more courageous individuals at the helm (Mohr, 2000). Leaders in small schools must: (a) assure that all voices are heard; (b) set the parameters within which collaboration can flourish, (c) influence social justice; (d) keep the focus on student learning rather than on individuals’ rights; (e) maintain core values; and (f) be open to/not critical of taking
chances at innovation (Mohr, 2000). Students must see humane leadership in action if they are to practice it themselves (Mohr, 2000).

Indeed, leadership in all schools is essential to student success. For instance, McREL (as cited in Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004), in a recent study that reviewed over 70 quantitative and standardized studies that examined the effect of leadership on student achievement, has ascertained three key conclusions: (a) there is a significant and positive correlation between effective school leadership and student achievement; (b) there are 21 key areas of leadership responsibility that are correlated with student achievement; and (c) effective leaders know what to do, how, when, and why to do it.

Of the key areas of effective leadership, administrators must have a grasp on, in particular, fostering shared beliefs and culture, order, discipline, the provision of teacher resources, solid curriculum and assessment, a clear focus at the forefront of the school’s attention, administrative visibility, a recognition of individual accomplishments, communication, community outreach, input involving other stakeholders in the decision making process, relationship building, change, monitoring and evaluation, and flexibility (Waters et al., 2004). Administrators can act like effective leaders but if they fail to guide their schools in making the correct changes at the right time and in the proper areas then changes can actually have a diminishing effect on student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). This is a tall order for any administrator, let alone for those in small schools with limited staff.

The pitfalls in running small schools can be many. Everything in a small school has an amplified impact, be it one act of vandalism, or one line of graffiti. Mohr (2000)
states, for instance, that large schools are like ocean liners – steady, for better or worse, in their course – while small schools are analogous to little sailboats; maneuverable but easily tipped. Small school leaders must view all problems as school-wide, maintaining solid relationships and multiple lines of communication to solve them (Mohr, 2000).

Teachers and principals in small schools are often unprepared for the multiple demands that besiege them when dealing with students with varied needs but a limited non-instructional/instructional support system, a myriad of meetings and committees to attend and on which to participate, a large share of other leadership tasks that can often overwhelm them, and the obligation to follow overall district mandates but, at the same time, translating them into the language of a small school (Jehlen & Kopkowski, 2006; Mohr, 2000; Wallach et al., 2004).

It is not possible, nor perhaps advantageous, to reproduce a system, which works in a school of 2,000, in a small school; principals (and teachers) in such schools cannot do the multiple reports, form the multiple committees, write grants, juggle community resources, run the increased amount of professional development needed, and keep the school in compliance with local, state, and Federal mandates with far fewer resources (Mohr, 2000; Raywid, 2003). Further, while many of these mandates and district policies do not support the innovative practices that help small schools succeed, it often proves ‘impossible” to convince those monitoring district policies, not conducive to small schools, to adapt such policies or exempt small schools from them (Raywid, 2003). There may also be impatience for achievement changes on the part of those outside the school (Cotton, 2001).
Perhaps, one of the most fundamental needs of small schools is the installation of actively supportive leaders and structures. Not only principals, at the building level, but supportive central office assistants to superintendents, assistant superintendents, and superintendents themselves must be present in the process (Raywid, 2003). Without the active support of highly placed administrators, understanding of the vision and innovation of small schools, the specific needs of small schools and its teachers/principals, and differences between small schools and large schools, it will be difficult to have successful small schools (Raywid, Schmerler, Phillips, & Smith, 2003; Wallach et al., 2004).

The frequency of turnover among superintendents can also make it counter-productive for teacher and principal self-preservation to invest the energy in new school reforms unless provided with some type of guarantee or commitment that any new small school will endure for a minimum period of time and/or that the teachers and the school community, in general, might have a voice in its discontinuance (Raywid, 2003). Since placing responsibility for new and small schools with assistants to high officials may not be appropriate, a specific line office with authority over such schools is a possible policy alternative (Raywid, 2003). Changes in other staff, including teachers and principals, is also consistent with turnover in traditional schools and can also be a point of stress when trying to build a sense of community and shared vision (Wallach et al., 2004).

Union contract provisions that demand that teachers with seniority fill openings pose a significant challenge to small schools in that, often, these teachers have no knowledge and/or interest in the vision of the school to which they are assigned
Union contract provisions can also affect the time allotted to the professional collaboration so crucial to small school success.

Small schools are also criticized for not providing a large variety of courses and activities. Proponents of small schools argue, however, that one should not confuse "intelligent" choice with variety as a large menu is not always better than a carefully chosen, consensus learning agenda (Copland & Boatright, 2004; Jehlen & Kopkowski, 2006; Mohr, 2000). Without staffing and/or financial efficiencies common in a large school, one cannot have, for instance, a large number of junior varsity and/or varsity sports teams or offer many advanced placement courses while addressing the needs of all students (Desoff, 2004; Jehlen & Kopkowski, 2006; Mohr, 2000).

As already cited, Haller et al. (1990) have found that, while larger schools offer more advanced courses and variety, only a select few participate in them. Small schools, however, have the ability to meet the needs of individual students with multiple abilities through the use of groups, anecdotal evaluations, and individual conferences, which is not possible in a large school, while, at the same time, maintaining heterogeneous, more equitable classes (Mohr, 2000). Some research also indicates that computing costs per graduate rather than by student actually gives an economic advantage to small schools (Lashway, 1999).

Districts successful in implementing small school reform provide time to teachers, students, and principals to meet with peers so that they do not feel alone in facing the challenges of a small school environment (Mohr, 2000). At the same time, however, successful small schools do not get caught up in the continuous maintenance of the community and "pleasant climates". Although leaders in small schools must
provide avenues for dialogue as a means by which to deal with issues of race, class, gender, and homophobia, as well as conflict resolution, they must, at the same time, keep student socio-emotional and academic progress as central to the core mission of the school (Mohr, 2000).

Summary of Research

This chapter began with a general overview of research on school climate that stresses that, while small school size alone does not sufficiently provide for improved school achievement, a positive climate is often fostered when school size is “small enough” to allow for collaboration and relationship building. The chapter then presented a summary of research on the positive school climate that is often found in small schools, with particular attention to: (a) Student teacher relationships; (b) academic success; (c) teacher satisfaction; and (d) student absenteeism and drop-out rates. The chapter concluded with a review of the pitfalls that are inherent in the creation and maintenance of small schools that can affect teacher/principal attitudes and, therefore, school climate.

Research cited in Chapter II indicates an association between small school size and positive student teacher relationships. Such intimate environments often allow for the implementation of advisories and school-wide involvement in community service projects while concurrently enhancing one’s general knowledge of peers and superiors and sense of empathy towards others in the school community. A review of literature also indicates that academic achievement in small schools is at least equal to, if not marginally superior, to that of large schools. While teachers in small schools are not significantly different than their counterparts in larger schools, small learning
communities have also been found to allow for greater collaboration and commitment and, therefore, teacher satisfaction. Past researchers have also noted that relevant conditions may exist in small high schools that are conducive to keeping students in school.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Introduction

This chapter presents the design, methodology, and procedures of the study. It explains the instrumentation, the subjects, the procedures for data collection and analysis, and the specific treatment of each sub-problem.

Design-Methods and Procedures

This study qualitatively assessed a climate within four small, stand-alone, secondary magnet high schools inclusive of grades 9-12, as perceived by teachers and administrators in such schools. In keeping with the parameters set by Joyce (2002), a small school is defined as a school with 500 or fewer students. It was necessary to assess schools with a full 4-year cohort as this enabled the researcher to assess student absenteeism and drop-out rates most effectively. Four schools, fitting the criteria, were selected from four different school districts that host such schools in Connecticut, Delaware, and New Jersey.

Because existing research is mostly limited to comparisons between small and large schools, Joyce (2002), in her qualitative study on the climate in small Catholic schools, developed a set of interview questions for teachers and administrators with the discovery method in mind. This study administered this same set of interview questions, to stand-alone magnet school principals and teachers, to qualitatively assess the climate in small secondary magnet schools. Interviews with four principals and two teachers, in each school, were face-to-face. Such face-to-face interviews fostered data from the
perspective of the stakeholders themselves and, therefore, were rich in detail (Joyce, 2002). Three focus groups, each one conducted at three of the four participating schools, and each comprised of either three or four teachers, were also convened to allow for a rapid and diverse exchange of ideas while the individual interviews allowed for candor. Those principals/teachers chosen for face-to-face individual interviews were not included within the focus group.

Interview questions were open-ended and were initially developed by Joyce (2002) to satisfy her interest in discovering more about the climate within small schools. Such general questions, therefore, are appropriate and applicable in ascertaining the climate within a multitude of small school environments including the climate within small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools. As a former magnet school principal, this researcher wished to adopt Joyce’s interview questions in a similar attempt, to that of Joyce, to satisfy his curiosity about the climate in other magnet schools specifically.

Sampling

The subjects of this study were teachers and principals at four small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools. The number of subjects (23) will be kept small because the qualitative methodology of this study allowed for rich, descriptive detail from even a limited pool of respondents. One principal at each of the four schools was individually interviewed. Two teachers, from each participating school, were also individually interviewed at each of the four schools that agreed to participate in the study. Three or four teachers, from three of the four participating schools, also participated in focus groups convened at their school location. Schools A, B, C, and D were selected based
on those school districts, which host small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools, and teachers/principals within such schools that agreed to participate in the study.

School A combines intensive arts training with an interdisciplinary academic program from middle school through high school. The full-time school’s mission is to provide a quality education to those who want to explore the creative and performing arts. The academic curriculum, inclusive of college preparatory, honors level, and/or advanced placement coursework, is stated as being comprehensive and is developed for success in higher education, employment and the arts. Overall, the main goal of the school is to nurture students towards excellence. The comprehensive, interdisciplinary curriculum and 4 year sequence of courses for School A can be viewed in Appendix D. Enrollment is limited to students residing in-state and all entering ninth grade students are assessed for admission in at least one, possibly two, arts areas inclusive of communication arts, dance, drama, instrumental music, visual arts, vocal music, and/or stage technology.

School B is a 9-12th grade county-based full-time college preparatory and/or honors program inclusive of curriculum designed in partnership with the local community college. As such, students can take courses at the college for dual credit although advanced placement courses are not offered. The school focuses on pre-engineering studies but also maintains a comprehensive multidisciplinary course of study. The 4 year sequence of courses for School B can be viewed in Appendix D. Enrollment is limited to students residing in-county and all entering ninth grade students are assessed for admission via a competitive academic process based on elementary/middle school grades, standardized test scores, and a school admissions test.
The school's mission is to provide a challenging, project-driven curriculum in a technology-infused structured environment.

School C is a 9-12th grade inter-district school partnership among six local school districts. The full-time school's mission is to engage students in curricula enriched by the power of information technology resources and, as such, the technology focus is built around a core elective program of information technology and pre-engineering courses. All courses are college preparatory, honors level, and/or taught as advanced placement classes. Students also have the opportunity to take courses on the college level at local colleges and/or universities. The curriculum and 4 year sequence of courses for School C can be viewed in Appendix D. Entering ninth grade students are not assessed academically for enrollment; rather, if the number of applications filed in a given year exceeds seating capacity for that class, a lottery is convened.

School D combines an interdisciplinary academic program with specialized programming in engineering incorporating the disciplines of science, mathematics, and technology in grades 9-12. Each student is also required to take some college courses as part of their course sequence of study and can also take college preparatory, honors level, and/or advanced placement courses within the theme area. Mentorship with local engineering and technology firms is also offered. The school's goal is to foster and nurture the curiosity and commitment that one needs to bring to work every day. The curriculum and full time 4 year sequence of courses for School D can be viewed in Appendix D. Enrollment is limited to students residing in-county and all students are assessed for admission via a competitive academic process for students entering at the
ninth grade level. Courses taken must include English, Math, Science and Social Studies.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used was face-to-face interviews, with four principals and eight teachers, in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools. Three focus groups, of either three or four teachers, were also be convened, onsite, at three of the four participating schools.

The literature review presented in Chapter II indicated that small schools have a climate that tends to support the growth of interpersonal relationships, are less impacted by violence, and stress academic rigor. Experience demonstrates that students are more satisfied, more academically productive, more likely to participate in school activities, better behaved, and less likely to drop out in small schools than in large ones (Raywid, 1996).

Subjects participating in face-to-face interviews and/or focus groups signed a consent form, prior to participation, informing them that their involvement was strictly voluntary and that their names, schools, and answers to interview questions will remain confidential. Permission to conduct these interviews was also requested of the superintendent of each participating school district prior to the scheduling of interviews with subjects. Subjects were notified that interviews were to be recorded for later data retrieval by the researcher of this study. These records are on file, in a secure location, with the researcher.
In this study on climate in small, stand-alone magnet high schools, interview questions were developed with the discovery approach in mind, as in the Joyce study, and were the instrument through which qualitative data in both individual interviews and the three focus groups were gathered. These questions were based on the literature findings. As in the Joyce (2002) study, the following interview/focus group questions were divided into five categories and used as the protocol in this study:

1) The first category addressed the overall climate in small, stand-alone secondary magnet high schools; (a) How many incidents occur involving the use of drugs? Alcohol? Weapons? Physical Disturbances? Please explain (Klonsky, 2000). (b) Describe the atmosphere in school. Is it one of feeling safe and secure (Meier, 1998)? (c) How can you tell when students/teachers/administration are being respectful to one another (Cotton, 1996b)?

2) The second category addressed relationship of teacher to student in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools; (a) Do students feel comfortable when talking to teachers? Administration? Do they greet each other outside of class? Please explain (Clinchy, 1998; Gottfredson, 1985).

3) The third category addressed academic success in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools; (a) Is the curriculum college-preparatory? Does the curriculum stress higher order thinking skills? Do teacher expectations of students match the rigor of the curriculum (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993)? (b) How far will teachers go in helping
students? Do they go the extra mile (Gottfredson, 1985)? (c) In which types of co and extra curricular activities are students involved? Is it a large percentage of the student body? Can staff regularly be seen at these events (Wasley et al., 2000)?

4) The fourth category addressed teacher performance in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools; (a) Who makes the follow-up telephone calls to parents when students are struggling academically and/or excelling? When during the day does this occur (Joyce, 2002)? (b) Are teachers involved in the decision-making process in areas such as curriculum, discipline, and the budget (Bachus, 1992)? (c) Are there many opportunities for staff development, both in and out of house? What are some examples (Fine & Somerville, 1998)? (d) Is the administration supportive and available to the staff? Does the staff receive praise? Does the staff feel appreciated? Please describe. Is the morale of the staff good? Describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high (Gottfredson, 1985).

5) Category five addressed student absenteeism and drop-out rate. (a) In your opinion, how significant a problem is student absenteeism in your school? The drop out rate (Bryk & Driscoll, 1998)? (b) Who follows up with students and/or families when students are absent? When during the day does this occur? (Joyce 2002). What procedures are put in place for often tardy/ absent students?
6) The sixth category was inclusive of all five categories: (a) Are teachers, administrators and students proud of their school? How is this demonstrated (Hoy & Sabo, 1998)?

The Data

The data was derived from answers to questions posed to subjects during their interviews. Data was divided into the five sub-categories of climate within small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools listed above.

Data Collection

Once permission was received from respective superintendents, teachers were picked at random while the principal of the school was chosen solely on the basis of his/her position as instructional leader of the school. Principals and teachers then signed consent forms. Permission from superintendents was sought first through formal letter and then follow-up telephone call to see if a mutually agreed upon time and place for interviews could be determined.

Data Analysis

Interviews were conducted, in person and by the researcher, at the school worksite of each interview subject. In order to maintain a free-flowing conversation between the researcher/interviewer and the interview subject and to allow for an exact transcription of each interview, thereby increasing the accuracy of the data obtained, all interviews were audio-taped. Transcripts of these interviews are included as appendices
at the end of this study (see Appendices E – S). After subjects’ answers to interview questions were recorded and transcribed, the researcher looked to see if there were patterns, commonalties and/or differences in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools, with prior research, on specific aspects of school climate within small schools: (a) climate in small schools; (b) relationship of teacher to student; (c) academic success; (d) teacher performance; and (e) student absenteeism and drop-out rate.

Specific Treatment of Each Sub-Problem

Climate in small schools – Researchers have found that large schools are more disorderly than small ones (Copland & Boatright, 2004; Haller, 1992; Klonsky, 2002). Further, students in small schools experience an increasingly positive attitude toward school and particular school subjects, and a sense of belonging as school size decreases. Extracurricular participation also increases with reductions in school size (Cotton, 1996a; Cotton, 1996b; Jimerson, 2006; Schoggen & Schoggen, 1988). After subjects’ answers to interview questions were recorded and transcribed, the researcher looked to see if there are patterns, commonalties and/or differences in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools with prior research on climate in small schools.

Relationship of teacher to student – There is evidence to suggest that increases in social bonding to teachers result from participation in small school settings (Cotton, 1996b). After subjects’ answers to interview questions were recorded and transcribed, the researcher looked to see if there are patterns, commonalties and/or differences in
small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools with prior research on relationship of
teacher to student.

*Academic Success* – Research on various indicators of student achievement
indicates that students may learn better in small schools and make more rapid progress
 toward graduation (Copland & Boatright, 2004; Cotton, 1996b; Jimerson, 2006;
Nguyen, 2004; Raywid, 1998; Raywid, 1999). After subjects’ answers to interview
questions were recorded and transcribed, the researcher assessed whether or not there are
patterns, commonalities and/or differences in small, stand-alone secondary magnet
schools with prior research on academic success in small schools.

*Teacher performance* – Research indicates that small schools promote positive
teacher perceptions of school administration and positive staff morale (Cotton, 1996a;
Cotton, 1996b). Moreover, teachers report “elevated conversation” when discussing
student needs and classroom practice with one another (Wallach et al., 2004). After
subjects’ answers to interview questions were recorded and transcribed, the researcher
looked to see if there are patterns, commonalities and/or differences in small, stand-alone
secondary magnet schools with prior research on teacher performance in small schools.

*Student Absenteeism and drop-out rate* – Studies have shown that absenteeism is
less of an issue in small schools than in large schools and, the smaller the school,
students are less likely to drop out (Copland & Boatright, 2004; Cotton, 1996b; Nguyen,
2004; Vander Ark, 2002). After subjects’ answers to interview questions were recorded
and transcribed, the researcher looked to see if there are patterns, commonalties
and/or differences in small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools with prior research on
student absenteeism and drop-out rate in small schools.

Summary of Chapter III

This chapter presented an overview of the qualitative methodology that will be
used in this study. It included a discussion of design methods and procedures, sampling,
instrumentation, data and data collection, data analysis, and the specific sub-treatment of
each subsidiary question.
Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of principals and teachers on the climate within small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. The small environments were four stand alone magnet high schools having no more than 500 students each in Connecticut, Delaware, and New Jersey.

The themes of the various magnet schools were inclusive of the arts, engineering, mathematics, science, and technology. Some schools were strictly 9-12th grade environments whereas others were in 6th-12th grade format; however, those schools that were 6-12th grade enrolled no more than 500 students in their 9th-12th grade component. School A had less than 200 students, School D had less than 300 students, and Schools A and C had between 400 and 500 students. School C is projected to increase enrollment, next year, to approximately 600 students. However, at the time this study was conducted, it maintained a student enrollment under 500 children. All schools enrolled inter-district students be that on a regional, county, and/or state basis. The student selection procedure for the participating subject schools was a lottery system for one, School C, a competitive application process, based on academic performance, for two others (School B and D), and academic performance/talent for the last (School A). Two schools were administered by county vocational and technical school districts (Schools B and D) and two were administered by city public school districts (Schools A and C).
The purpose of this chapter is to present the research findings from this study. Twelve subjects were individually interviewed from these schools: four principals and eight teachers. Three focus groups comprised of either three or four teachers were also convened within three of the four magnet high schools. Staff was not available for a fourth focus group. The 14 questions asked of individual principals, teachers, and focus groups, presented below, were identical and based on research and educational findings that suggest that positive climate plays a large part in fostering a productive environment for student learning. Participating subject responses, presented below in the Presentation of Overall Responses section of Chapter IV, are, at times, edited for the purposes of continuity. Complete transcripts of all individual interviews and focus groups are attached as appendices to this document.

The 14 identical interview/focus group questions were taken from the Joyce (2002) study on climate in small, Catholic schools and based on research undertaken in their study as well as within this dissertation. The specific source of each interview/focus group question is indicated by a citation. Each one of the 14 interview and/or focus group questions address at least one of the five different main research questions posed in this study. The overall climate of small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools is addressed by interview/focus group questions 1, 2 and 5. Relationships among students and teachers/administrators are addressed by interview/focus group question 6. The academic success of students in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools is addressed by interview/focus group questions 3, 7 and 8. Teacher performance in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools is addressed by interview/focus group questions 4, 11, 12, and 13. Absenteeism/drop out
rates in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools is addressed by interview/focus group questions 9 and 10. Interview/Focus group question 14 is inclusive of all categories.

This chapter is comprised of an introduction, an organization of the analysis inclusive of interview questions, presentation of individual and focus group responses to interview questions, and an analysis of the overall responses. The chapter concludes with a summary of Chapter IV.

Organization of the Analysis

The following interview questions formed the basis for this study:


2. Describe the atmosphere in the school? Is it one of feeling safe and secure (Meier, 1998)?

3. In what type of co and extra curricular activities are students involved? Is it a large percentage of the student body? Can staff regularly be seen at these activities (Wasley et al., 2000)?

4. Is the administration readily available and supportive to the staff? Do they receive praise? Do they feel appreciated? Describe. Is the morale of the staff good?
Describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high (Gottfredson, 1985).

5. How can you tell that students and teachers/administrators are respectful to each other (Cotton, 1996b)?

6. Do students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers? Administration? Do they greet each other outside of class? Please explain (Clinchy, 1998; Gottfredson, 1985).

7. Is the curriculum college preparatory minded? Does it stress higher order thinking skills? Do teachers’ expectations of their students match the rigor of the curriculum (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993)?

8. How far will teachers go to help students? Do they go the “extra mile” (Gottfredson, 1985)?

9. In your opinion, how significant a problem is student absenteeism in your school? The drop-out rate (Bryk & Driscoll, 1998)?

10. Who makes the follow-up calls to parents when students are absent? At what time of the day does this occur? What procedures are put in place for often tardy/absent students (Joyce, 2002)?
11. Who makes the follow-up calls to parents when students are struggling academically and/or excelling? When during the day does this occur?

12. Are teachers involved in the decision-making process in areas such as curriculum, discipline, and the budget (Bachus, 1992)?

13. Are there ample opportunities for staff development, both in-house and out? What are some of them (Fine & Somerville, 1998)?

14. Are teachers, students, and administrators proud of their school? How is this demonstrated (Hoy & Sabo, 1998)?

Presentation of Overall Responses

The subjects individually interviewed for this study were four principals and eight teachers employed within small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. One principal and two teachers were interviewed at each of the four participating schools. Focus groups were also convened at three of the four participating schools. There were 14 questions asked of each participant and focus group. Occasionally, the researcher asked follow-up questions or clarification questions in response to answers given to the 14 primary interview questions asked. This section presents the responses to these questions.
Analysis of Overall Responses

In Chapter II, this study presented the literature and research related to school climate within small schools in five distinct categories: (a) Overall climate of small schools; (b) relationship of students and teachers in small schools; (c) academic success of students in small schools; (d) teacher performance in small schools; and (e) student absenteeism and drop-out rates in small schools. This section presents an analysis of the responses provided by the twelve individual respondents and the three focus groups.

The following questions were asked of interviewees and focus groups under category one (1) of climate in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools: 1. How many incidents occur involving the use of drugs? Alcohol? Weapons? Physical Disturbances? Please explain (Klonsky, 2000). 2. Describe the atmosphere in the school? Is it one of feeling safe and secure (Meier, 1998)? 5. How can you tell that students and teachers/administrators are respectful to each other (Cotton, 1996b)?

Twelve subjects individually interviewed stated that there was a low occurrence of the use of drugs, alcohol, use of weapons, and/or physical disturbances in their schools. Twelve subjects individually interviewed stated that the school environment was safe. Twelve subjects individually interviewed also noted that the school climate was one of being quite respectful. While two subjects noted that their schools were respectful, overall, they both thought more can be done in this area. One of the two further noted that this was an area that teachers, in particular, grow into when they, themselves, have confidence in their abilities.

Of the three focus groups, all participants, within each grouping, agreed with all other colleagues. Three focus groups thought that their school had a very limited number of incidents involving illicit, illegal, and/or physically dangerous activities. One focus
group noted one stabbing with a pen, several years ago, and another mentioned one
drug use incident on school grounds. Off campus, however, several focus group staff
suspected that some substance use might be occurring. Three focus groups thought that
their school was safe and secure; one focus group noting that the school was
"overwhelmingly" safe. One focus group thought that their location, on a community
college campus, inclusive of a police presence, and an open locker policy assisted in
establishing a safe and secure environment.

Three focus groups thought that their school environment was respectful citing a
willingness on the part of students and staff to talk with one another, as well as an
interest on the part of students to sign up for classes with teachers seen as hardworking
and/or interesting. Some staff did note, however, that there was a visible minority of
students not proficient in social skills, perhaps even "geeky". This phenomenon was
believed to be associated with a student addiction to technology. Therefore, in response,
School D has provided lessons on table manners, shaking hands, and on how to politely
interrupt when others are talking and so forth.

Reasons cited for the low incidence of drugs, alcohol, weapons, and physical
disturbances, the safe environment, and the climate being respectful included the belief
that the small environment allowed both staff and students to get to know one another
very well thereby developing a family-like community value within the schools and that
students were, therefore, willing to work hard for their teachers because their teachers
were aware of the children, appreciated the students as individuals, and wanted to see
the adolescents succeed. Noted by one subject, students were more willing to confide in
teachers when they knew that other students were being tempted to act improperly.
Further, because students were interested in the overall theme of the school, pupils wanted to be at school, and to do well.

Some subjects also noted that many of the students attending these schools come from whole nuclear families and, therefore, are, perhaps, subject to more scrutiny as to their academic performance and that, indeed, these students might be attending these types of schools precisely because they are small, safe, and secure. Parents might, therefore, be demanding that their children maintain this climate within their schools. Further, of interesting note, several subjects noted that it is a common occurrence for alumni to return to these schools to share their college experiences with currently enrolled students and, therefore, the sense of community expands. Some subjects also noted that their security cameras and a new visible school complex, with an open architectural design, have aided in establishing a safe and secure environment, while new infrastructure also fosters pride and a community ethos of respect.

The following question was asked of interviewees and focus groups under category two (2) of the relationship of students and teachers in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools: 6. Do students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers? Administration? Do they greet each other outside of class? Please explain (Clinchy, 1998; Gottfredson, 1985).

Twelve subjects individually interviewed stated that they believe students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers and/or administrators. Only one subject individually interviewed and one focus group specifically stated that students, teachers, and administrators greet each other outside of class. Of the three focus groups convened, all subjects concurred with the other members of their individual focus group.
Three focus groups stated that they believe students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers and/or administrators.

Reasons cited as to why students feel comfortable in approaching teaching and administrative staff include the fact that the small environment breeds familiarity and that, when adult staff reaches out to each other and to students, students can readily see this and then reach out to adults in kind. Student interest in use of guidance counseling services was also cited by guidance staff on one focus group as evidence. E-mail was also cited as having increased communication between students and adult staff. In fact, some subjects noted that communication is so loose that there is often the risk of students forgetting manners and addressing adults as they would their friends and/or students not hesitating to point out teacher mistakes and/or complaining/bargaining over homework assignments.

At the same time, however, subjects felt that, while students are empowered to reach out, not all students take this opportunity nor do all teachers as this is a matter of personality. Subjects stated that, culturally, some students are brought up not to discuss personal and/or family issues in school while others, especially underclassmen, might not be used to an approachable staff. Some subjects on one focus group also stated that some students prefer to follow hierarchy by discussing issues with the vice-principal before approaching the principal of the school.

The following questions were asked of interviewees and focus groups under category three (3) of academic success in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools: In what type of co and extra curricular activities are students involved? 3. Is it a large percentage of the student body? Can staff regularly be seen at these activities (Wasley et al., 2000)? 7. Is the curriculum college preparatory minded? Does it stress higher order
thinking skills? Do teachers' expectations of their students match the rigor of the curriculum (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993)?

Nine subjects individually interviewed agreed that a large percentage of students are involved in activities such as theme related and non-theme related clubs, that is technology clubs, science clubs, math clubs, and, in the case of the performing and visual arts magnet school, drama and performing arts events. Other clubs include Key Club, civics and volunteering related clubs, academic honor societies, world language clubs, and so forth. Often, these schools also host school dances, and academic awards nights as well. Clubs are mostly academic, cultural, and/or social in nature. None of the four schools in the sample had athletics programs other than the occasional intramural club.

Three subjects individually interviewed, however, thought that a large percentage of students were not involved with school activities. Reasons cited for lack of overall involvement included a belief that it is the same students who are involved in and dominate most of the activities, a lack of after school transportation be it for club meetings and/or transportation to/from competitions, as often these regional schools do not have after school busing, as this is provided and funded by home school districts. Parents are often called upon to provide transportation. In addition, even though subjects stated that some students wanted more choice in extracurricular activities and are frustrated that this can not happen with the limited staff size, often the case in these small schools, even when there are a multitude of clubs, many non-theme clubs fail to thrive as they compete with theme-related clubs and a very limited student body from which to draw members. One subject also noted that they had many students working after school and, thus, not participating in extracurricular activities.
One focus group and other subjects individually interviewed from School D, in particular, further noted that some of their students were obsessed with solitary computer related activities and described some students as formerly bullied "geeks" with poor social skills, vis à vis peers, who suffered from Asperger's Syndrome. Subjects from a second school also stated that some of their students may also have Asperger's Syndrome. This may or may not be affecting club participation but lies beyond the scope of this study. It is also beyond this study to ascertain whether or not such magnet environments attract a certain similar type of "geek" and/or "brainiac" unaccepted in traditional school environments.

Eleven subjects individually interviewed agreed that staff, in addition to the sponsor, can also be seen at activities especially during academic and chess challenges as well as at school awards ceremonies, talent performances, and school recruitment events. One subject stated, however, that staff is not currently seen at events as all funding for club sponsor positions was cut and, therefore, parents are now volunteering their time to chaperone and lead these activities.

Of the three focus groups convened, all subjects concurred in their opinions with the others in their particular focus group. Three focus groups believed that a large percentage of students were involved in activities such as those mentioned above. One focus group stated a "90%" participation rate. Three focus groups also believed that staff can be seen at activities and that, sometimes, staff will assist staff sponsors by chaperoning and/or by participating in academic challenge clubs, and so forth. However, one focus group noted the lack of transportation as a complication, while another suggested that their limited number of students was overextended with activities and,
therefore, a sign-in and attendance policy has had to be implemented in some clubs.

One focus group cited the lack of a school gym as a limiter of available activities.

Twelve subjects individually interviewed agreed that their curriculum is college-preparatory. Many even suggested verbally that the curriculum was beyond college-preparatory. Although subjects may or may not have explicitly stated whether or not the curriculum stressed higher order thinking skills, from their discussion and examples of activities within the curriculum, the researcher can ascertain that the majority of the 12 subjects individually interviewed discussed activities that would be considered higher-ordered. Examples include an emphasis on honors and AP courses, college experience during high school, writing across the curriculum, technical writing, class discussions on relevance of learning, and overall student responsibility, as opposed to administration, in making curricular choices, and learning that was problem-based and inclusive of the discovery process.

Ten subjects individually interviewed also felt that teacher expectations of students match the rigor of the curriculum. Two subjects individually interviewed felt that not all students matched the rigor of the curriculum. However, while these two subjects noted that not all students received As, the number of Ds and Fs, if mentioned, were only a handful. Indeed, one subject mentioned that their students often thought they were better than they were.

Still, this seems to fit with organizational climate. Two school administrators noted that their students always made the decision as to whether to take advanced classes, as opposed to teachers and/or administration, and a third administrator notes that all of their students were gifted and that it was the responsibility of the teacher to find diverse teaching approaches to reach that child.
Three focus groups believed that their curriculum was college-preparatory and three focus groups also thought that the curriculum stressed higher order thinking skills. One group cited their emphasis on writing skills, technology use, and research methodology as evidence. Two focus groups thought that teacher expectations match the rigor of the curriculum and the third thought most but not all students matched the rigor.

Two focus groups thought that their students, used to being in the top academic tier during middle school, are initially not used to being in a cohort where all students were initially part of this same tier but now were in an even more competitive academic environment. This prompted some teachers to state that they have now, in response, adopted a discovery approach in instruction. Another focus group participant stated that some students, although motivated, may struggle academically because they are geared away from the theme of the school but remain in the program because of parental pressure. Higher order math instruction, inclusive of student cooperation, was also seen to still be a challenge area for one math instructor. Still though, focus groups agreed that all of their students attend college, and, indeed, all four school administrators further stated that their school mission was to have 100% of their students attend college.

Schools differed, however, in how to provide an advanced college preparatory curriculum. Some subjects felt that the overall student population of the local colleges did not match the academic capabilities of their students and, therefore, it was more appropriate to provide honors level classes and advanced placement classes as part of the high school curriculum. Other subjects felt that students taking classes at the local college, and obtaining college credit, was preferable to having to pass an advanced placement test and hoping that the college in which the student wished to enroll would
accept the score. Three of the four schools (Schools B, C and D) however, also used physical and virtual connections to provide a diversified curriculum given their limited staff size.

School A had honors level classes as well as advanced placement classes. It did not offer students an opportunity to take college courses while still in high school. A second school had no advanced placement courses and only the opportunity to take college level classes, and obtain college credit, at the community college on whose campus the school resided. Students, however, could prepare for any/all advanced placement tests on their own and, indeed, some students opted to do this. A third school provided the opportunity for students to take honors levels courses, advanced placement courses, virtual courses online, and/or courses at the local community college. A fourth school offered honors level classes, advanced placement courses in the specific theme area, college courses taken with high school staff certified as college adjuncts, and some theme related courses at the local community college on whose campus the school resides. The principal at the fourth school also allows students to take any/all advanced placement tests if they can prove that they are preparing on their own.

The following questions were asked of interviewees and focus groups under category four (4) of teacher performance in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools: 3. Is the administration readily available and supportive to the staff? Do they receive praise? Do they feel appreciated? Describe. Is the morale of the staff good? Describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high (Gottfredson, 1985). 8. How far will teachers go to help students? Do they go the “extra mile” (Gottfredson, 1985)? 11. Who makes the follow-up calls to parents when students are struggling academically and/or excelling? When during the day does this occur? 12.
Are teachers involved in the decision-making process in areas such as curriculum, discipline, and the budget (Bachus, 1992)? 13. Are there ample opportunities for staff development, both in-house and out? What are some of them (Fine & Somerville, 1998)?

Twelve subjects individually interviewed stated that administration was readily available and supportive to staff. In connection, 12 subjects individually interviewed felt that staff felt appreciated while also stating that they thought morale was good. Activities mentioned that aid in morale included breakfasts, luncheons, and other food related activities such as picnics and staff parties, awards ceremonies, culture days, and teacher appreciation weeks. In addition, subjects felt appreciated when principals would provide supplies and materials to the teachers, when asked, and when administrators would extend their appreciation or thanks be it verbally, in person, or on school websites, e-boards, and/or through letters of commendation and nominations for various community honors. Subjects at two schools (School B and C), in particular, also mentioned that their administrators had been the founding directors of their schools and were, by nature, innovative and open to curricular suggestions from academic staff. Other focus group participants also mentioned that administrators were open to discussing extracurricular programming options with teachers as well.

Although all 12 subjects individually interviewed felt supported, overall, in their duties, there were some issues addressed that have negatively affected morale. Subjects at one magnet noted that, although there has been better collaboration and a proactive response from administration, this year, there is tension between teachers deemed academic and those thought vocational even though the vocation is the theme of the overall magnet school. Other subjects also noted stress between theme and non-theme
educators; some non-theme teachers felt that there was limited interest and funding for non-theme related activities, while another suggested the potential of scheduling discrepancies if theme related teachers are asked to carry a heavier course load/activity burden than non-theme educators.

All three focus groups also agreed that they felt appreciated by administration and that morale was good. One focus group stated that the building was a “wonderful” place in which to work. However, two of three focus groups clarified their responses by noting that they did not feel appreciated by district administration beyond the building. They cited several reasons. Some members of these focus groups felt that district administration demanded academic excellence, rather than to appreciate when it happened, did not offer praise for magnet school successes beyond that of the theme area of the school, and that the district demanded of teachers that they attend professional development workshops on Federal holidays. One individually-interviewed subject thought that this might be the case because the district feared angering other district schools already bothered by the loss of better academically performing students. Others felt that building administration was being pressured by the district to accept and then to retain students who did not necessarily meet entrance requirements and/or meet behavioral standards.

All participants in the study thought that teachers go the extra mile in helping students. This, they believed, was demonstrated by the willingness of teaching staff to tutor students before school, during lunch, and after school. One subject even mentioned touring college campuses with students when parents were unavailable. Other subjects mentioned the chaperoning of events and sponsoring of clubs, when unpaid, responding to email inquiries from students well into the evening, and coming
into school for weekend and evening events. Subjects in one focus group also mentioned that teaching staff helps prepare students for advanced placement tests in course areas not taught at the school.

Eight subjects individually interviewed stated that it was the domain of the teacher to contact parents when students were either struggling or excelling academically. Four subjects individually interviewed thought it was a joint responsibility of both teachers and administrators. All three focus groups thought it a joint responsibility. While phone calls are made at no specific time, in reality, many subjects felt that email was a more useful way by which to contact parents as was the posting of grades, by student number, and assignments online. Some subjects also mentioned that, after they contacted a parent, they would involve the guidance department in helping to solve issues. One subject mentioned the implementation of a pupil improvement plan (PIP) process. Not one subject mentioned calling a parent when a student was performing well other than when the child had demonstrated improvement over that of past behavior. In regards to parental notification of student success, many subjects stated that they record these comments on interim and quarterly progress reports.

All subjects felt that they were involved to a large extent in the process of adopting curriculum and instructional materials. Many stated that their administrators, as “innovators”, were very open to this discussion with staff. Some subjects, especially if they were theme area instructors, felt that they were afforded this luxury because they were only one or two teachers inclusive within a small academic department, others thought that they had to augment state curriculum as their students were well beyond the level of proficiency required by their state, and because theme related electives have not,
otherwise, been created. Some noted that curriculum was not only determined, independently, but also through teacher leadership meetings, summer curriculum workshops, and at department meetings.

In relation, all subjects felt that, after the curriculum was determined and instructional material needs were assessed, they had the ability to order what they wished. However, all subjects stated that they had no input in determining the amount of funds to ultimately be budgeted to them, as individuals, or to their academic department.

All subjects felt that they had input into discipline policy and academic honesty procedures, and some also noted the presence of teacher led discipline committees and instructional councils and/or discussions as to such policy currently taking place within their schools. As some stated that discipline was not much of a concern, in their school environment, this was felt to not be a major issue. Subjects stated that they usually take care of minor issues within their classes and that, after this, more serious behavioral issues and suitable punishments are discussed, on a case by case basis, with the principal as final arbitrator. School D has instituted a teacher-led lunch detention procedure. However, as stated elsewhere, some subjects wish that discipline policy, once determined, be stringently enforced. One focus group felt that, sometimes, district discipline policy and sentences for various infractions was intentionally weak so that student records would not indicate suspensions and, therefore, such actions would not negatively impact student college acceptance rates.

All subjects believed that there were opportunities for both in-house and out of district professional development. Such activities have included workshops led by internal staff, professional development committees, book club readings, in-district
professional development/in-service half and full days, summer conferences, academic fairs and conferences held during the school year, and so forth.

However, with that said, two of the three focus groups felt that their district's in-service training was either useless and/or insulting to their professionalism. Some felt that district training was confined to either generic, one size fits all, concerns such as bullying, or meeting basic state and national standards, such as those established in NCLB. As such, some subjects felt that these trainings did not meet the needs of their unique and particular student populations or those of more senior educators. Also, when magnet school staff provided training for others in district, these non-magnet school educators were also bored with these presentations. The third focus group also felt that one needed to find individual training for professional development to be most useful.

Some districts surveyed are allowing certain magnet school teaching staff to remain behind, during district professional development, to develop curriculum. However, one teacher subject noted that servicing the district in this manner was not, in reality, developing the teacher’s professionalism. An administrative subject added, however, that some teachers need to realize that sitting back to grade papers is not professional development either.

While all subjects stated that out of district professional development was a possibility, several mentioned that district financial constraints are limiting both the amount of funding available per teacher, and that, concurrently, there is an increasing amount of paperwork and extending timelines, necessary for district approval, since districts must now meet state/national accountability measures. One focus group mentioned that the out of district professional development approval process was extensive even when the professional development being offered was gratis. This was
enough to prohibit some of the educators surveyed to apply for such training as the approval process was seen to be demoralizing. Several stated that their districts are moving towards a “service your own” and/or a “turn key” model in response. Some focus group staff, however, took umbrage that they were expected to turn-key their training without financial remuneration. The School C administrator noted that they had grant monies available for the purpose of professional development.

The following question was asked of interviewees and focus groups under category five (5) of student absenteeism and drop-out rate in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools: 10. Who makes the follow-up calls to parents when students are absent? At what time of the day does this occur? What procedures are put in place for often tardy/absent students (Joyce, 2002)?

Six subjects individually interviewed stated that there is an automated telephone service that notifies parents of student absence. This call could be received in the morning or afternoon depending on the particular school. Five subjects individually interviewed stated that administration, either the principal, vice-principal, and/or guidance deals with this issue. One subject individually interviewed was unsure of the process. All three focus groups stated that administration and guidance will deal with the issue after initial calls made by either the secretary or an automated system failed to solve the problem of tardiness or absence.

In one school, the office secretary will call the home and, after this, a letter is generated after 5, 10, and then 15 days of unexcused absence or tardiness. The attendance committee will then handle this issue and determine if credit is to be awarded. In another school, the principal will contact the home after three days absence
per quarter. Several subjects noted that this issue affected but a handful of students as students usually attended school on a regular basis.

The following question was asked of interviewees and focus groups and is representative under all categories in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools: 14. Are teachers, students, and administrators proud of their school? How is this demonstrated (Hoy & Sabo, 1998)?

All subjects interviewed and/or involved in a focus group stated that teachers, students, and administrators are proud of their schools. Many individual and focus group participants recognized that they were in a very unique teaching situation and took great pleasure in teaching motivated and/or academically interested students. Subjects stated that pride is demonstrated in a number of ways. Indicators of pride include the efforts that students put into exhibits, their studies, and/or productions, awards ceremonies that are well-attended, the large number of students and faculty that attend recruitment events, the wearing of school related paraphernalia, the low absenteeism rate, and teachers are not only happy working in these school settings but are keen to discuss their work and student/school awards with others outside the school community. Some subjects mentioned the cleanliness and lack of vandalism in their school buildings as evidence of pride.

Summary of Chapter IV

Chapter IV commenced with a brief introduction followed thereafter by an organization of the analysis composed of the responses given by the twelve individual interviewees and three focus groups. An analysis of the overall responses followed. Major findings include: (a) that there is a low level of violence and/or substance abuse in
small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools in this study; (b) relationships among teachers, administrators, and students are generally seen as being comfortable, respectful and family-like indicative of caring, and warmth; (c) students and staff participated, to a large extent, in extracurricular and co-curricular activities although there are limiters, as discussed, to overall involvement in school activities; (d) curriculum is, at a basic, college preparatory but, more so, inclusive of honors, advanced placement and/or college and virtual offerings; (e) advanced curricular offerings differ based on administrative philosophy; (f) teachers and building administrators feel that they go the “extra mile” in assisting students and are recognized for this by building administration but not by overall district management; (g) teachers have large say in curriculum development and some in discipline procedure but limited, if any input, into budget allocation; (h) professional development offerings, although sometimes available, are either becoming bureaucratically and/or fiscally prohibited and/or of limited use to this population of teachers; and (i) absenteeism of students and drop outs rates are seen as being insignificant in the small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools in this study. The chapter ends with a summary of the chapter.
Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

The last chapter of this study offers a summary as well as conclusions and recommendations that result from the analysis presented in chapter four. This chapter is divided into five sections: (a) Introduction; (b) summary of the study inclusive of research questions; (c) conclusions of the research on small school size, magnet/theme-based schools, school culture, positive school climate, relationship between student and teacher, academic success of students, teacher performance, and student absenteeism and drop out rates; (d) recommendations for administrators in charge of small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools; and (e) recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of principals and teachers on school climate within small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Having been an initiating principal of a small, stand alone, magnet high school, I was interested in observing the perceptions of instructional colleagues in similar school environments as to the amount or lack of violence, high school absenteeism and drop-out rates, academic achievement, teacher and student relationships, teacher performance, and overall school morale.
Research Questions

As per the research questions posed by Joyce (2002):

1. How is the overall climate of small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools family and/or community like?

2. Why does the climate of the school, particularly within a small stand-alone secondary magnet high school, allow students to have the personal relationships with their teachers that research tells us is important?

3. Does the climate of a small, stand-alone secondary magnet high school help students reach high academic success? Are behavior problems a concern?

4. Do teachers perform well in small, stand-alone secondary magnet high schools?

5. How does the climate of a small, stand-alone secondary magnet high school help reduce absenteeism by students as well as the student drop-out rate?

Conclusions

The subjects for both individual interviews as well as focus groups responded to the above research questions which were asked by the researcher during face-to-face meetings, at school sites, in December 2007 through February 2008. Meetings were concluded in a manner that did not impact student instruction. Each individual and
focus group subject signed a consent form indicating their awareness that responses would remain anonymous and their permission to audio-record responses for the purposes of this study.

Chapter I presented an overview to the problem of large, comprehensive high schools as not being conducive to academic learning and small schools, in particular magnet programs, being advocated as a solution to this problem. Chapter II highlighted current research on small schools, magnet programs, positive school climate, teacher and student relationships, academic achievement, teacher performance, and student absenteeism and drop-out rates. Chapter III indicated the qualitative methodology for this study being individual interviews of principals and teachers and focus groups comprised of teachers in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools in regards to their perceptions on school climate. Chapter IV presented data collected during individual interviews and focus groups in regards to perceptions of principals and teachers on climate within small stand alone, secondary magnet schools. The conclusions and recommendations for policymakers charged with the promotion of small stand alone secondary magnet high schools as well as for future researchers are offered in chapter five.

Conclusions of the Investigation – Relation to Existing Research

Positive School Climate in Small, Stand Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools

Category one encompassed questions concerning overall climate in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Specifically, this included interview questions 1, 2, and 5. Overall, subjects in this study found there to be low incidents of drugs, alcohol,
weapons, and physical disturbances, combined with a school climate that is both safe and secure and respectful in these types of schools. These findings would seem to correlate with existing research that finds that small school settings, in general, experience less violence and less substance abuse and are, in relation, safer and more secure (Cotton, 1996b; Jimerson, 2006; Klonsky, 2002; Wasley et al., 2000).

Relationship between Students and Teachers in Small, Stand Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools

Category two encompassed questions concerning the relationship between teachers and students in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Specifically, this included interview question 6. Overall, subjects in this study found that students are empowered and comfortable in speaking to teachers and administrators. These findings would seem to correlate with existing research. In small magnet schools, as in other small school settings, teachers have the opportunity to know students as individuals. As previously stated, research shows social and educational benefits of surrounding children with caring adults (Cotton, 1996; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). The social and educational benefits for the secondary magnet schools surveyed, in this study, were specially noted in chapter four.

Indeed, when teachers are perceived as caring, students pursue academic and social goals more so than when the counterpoint is the case (Wentzel, 2002). Lambert, Lowry, Copland, Gallucci, and Walluch (2004) further found that when teachers more intimately understand the individual circumstances of students, they are deeply invested within student academic success. Indeed, many subjects in this study specifically stated
that they were committed to their students’ successes and took personal pride in their students’ acceptances to college.

Because of the commitment to community, Wasley et al. (2000) found that many small schools also become involved in community service projects. Several of the schools in this study also noted the presence of such projects.

Relationships between students and teachers in the schools surveyed in this study were positive. As in research conducted by Hausman and Goldring (2000), which found that a high percentage of teachers in stand alone magnets have chosen to work within this type of environment, which also tends to be academically selective, teachers in stand alone schools may have greater success reaching students. Three of the four schools surveyed herein did, in fact, have competitive application procedures (Schools A, B, and D).

*Academic Success of Students in Small, Stand Alone Secondary Magnet Schools*

Category three encompassed questions concerning academic success in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Specifically, this included interview questions 3 and 7. Subjects were split, although more were positive, on whether or not a majority of students were participating in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Concurrently, the majority of subjects felt that staff was visible at co and extracurricular activities when they occurred.

As discussed, while most subjects felt that there were a lot of academic, social, and cultural activities open to students, all schools were limited in not having athletic programs, and some schools, according to other participants, were constrained by the
lack of after school transportation, and conflicting student schedules where one's overall club participation competed with other club responsibilities and/or work. Indeed, other studies have also shown a decrease in extracurricular participation in correlation to the length of bus transportation in consolidated school districts (Tonn, 2007). Because active participation in club activities has been shown to positively affect students and the development of a positive school climate, more research should be conducted to determine the actual level of club activity in small, secondary magnet schools as this study proved inconclusive (Schoggen & Schoggen, 1988; Torney-Purta, 2002; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002; Youniss et al., 2002).

However, most subjects in the study did mention their willingness to assist in each other's extracurricular activities and often participated in them. As stated by Schoggen and Schoggen (1988), when surplus people are scarce, and alternatives unavailable, each individual is important to the successful operation of the outfit, and, in small schools, this often leads to the empowerment of teachers. Wasley et al. (2002) have further asserted that small size does often lead to collaboration among adults as well as students. Therefore, in terms of the findings of this study, in relation to visibility of staff at events and club activities, results seem to be associated with other research cited in the literature.

All subjects stated that their curriculum was college preparatory. Some subjects went further in stating that the curriculum was either beyond college preparatory or even college level. The majority of subjects also thought that their students matched the rigor of their curriculum. Even these subjects who stated that some students might have found receiving As to be difficult, they, at the same time, did not argue that these students were failing out of the school. Indeed, all schools stated that the vast majority,
if not all, of their students, upon graduation, attended college. While results herein would seem to correlate with those of Haller, Monk, Bear, Griffith, and Moss (1990), as well as Schoggen and Schoggen (1988) that, indeed, curricular choices might also be limited in small, secondary magnet programs, three of the four schools surveyed did expand their catalogue of courses through physical partnerships with colleges and universities as well as virtual connections with same through the use of technology (Schools B, C, and D).

Christenson et al. (2003) found that elementary magnet schools, usually small in comparison, were more successful than magnet high schools in meeting academic benchmarks. This study finds that, at least in the case of these four small magnet high schools, there was also a high academic benchmark that most students met. Wasley et al. (2000) further found that, within small schools, in general, teachers tended to have high expectations for all students, fostered critical judgment in their students, and sought to develop a culture of accountability among students, parents, and themselves. Indeed, this was the case in this study as well. Some subjects, particularly administrators, also mentioned that the responsibility for choosing the student’s academic course load and/or level was often at the discretion of students and their families.

Lee and Ready (2007) found that only a small minority of students, however, chose magnet schools based on career aspirations but rather decided upon a school in order to be grouped with like people and creating academic stratification. This study did not assess the level to which students chose to attend the schools in this study for the above reason. However, some subjects did note that students, on occasion, did choose to come to the school for the wrong reasons, such as family pressure, as opposed to coming because of the theme. Since three of four schools surveyed had selective application
processes based on academics and/or talent/affinity for a theme, there could be an association with academic stratification in these schools (Schools A, B, and D). On the other hand, some subjects in this study noted that their students had been bullied in traditional school settings and find it pleasurable to be among students like them. Indeed, Klonsky (2002) has also found bullying to be a greater factor in large comprehensive schools. More research should therefore be conducted in these areas.

*Teacher Performance in Small, Stand Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools*

Category four encompassed questions concerning teacher performance in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Specifically, this included interview questions 4, 8, 11, 12, and 13. All subjects felt that building administration was supportive and morale was good, even though district support was seen as weak and there were some tensions between/among theme and non-theme teachers. All subjects also felt that most staff members went the extra mile in assisting students, that they and administration were, either individually or combined, responsible for the academic performance of students, and that they had influence over curriculum, mostly, discipline somewhat, and no influence over the budget other than in ordering. While all subjects felt that professional development in-house and was available, in differing degrees, participants felt differently as to usefulness.

The fact that these schools, and the teachers within them, operate like communities, may be a determining factor in why these schools seem to be succeeding in educating their students (Raywid, 1998). Further, as with Raywid (1998) and Wasley et al. (2000), since teachers are often required to develop unique curriculum, teachers
and staff in a magnet environment are indeed often empowered to think and work both independently and cooperatively. This can be seen within the schools in this study as teachers tend to develop and enhance their own curriculum as well.

Staff, at times, can also view themselves as being independent from the district, at large, as observed by some participants who claimed that their overall district is remote and/or is not in tune with the magnet school’s particular needs. While this may be a negative condition, allowing staff a certain amount of professional autonomy can, at the same time, lead to comfort with both peer coaching and collaborative action research (Sagor, 2000).

Although some subjects did note internal tensions between academic and vocational programs as well as theme versus non-theme subjects, within themed secondary magnet schools, morale was noted as good by all participants. Appreciation from building administration was also seen as good from all participants, and, indeed, in two of the four schools surveyed, administration was aware of these into the overall mission and curriculum of the school. Subjects in all schools noted that their administrators were open to teachers directing the curriculum. As indicated by Heck and Marcoulides (1993), as well as Andrews and Soder (1987), how principals govern the school and communicate mission and/or vision, how they build school climate, how they maintain visibility and presence in the school, and organize the school’s instructional program and resources are important predictors of academic success. Effective leadership in small schools is also critical in establishing successful collaboration (Maniloff, 2004). Research has also demonstrated that teacher morale can be linked to increased student learning (Lee & Loeb; Lumsden; both as cited in Jimerson, 2006).
One area of discrepancy with existing literature relates to professional development. While all subjects stated that professional development was available, some subjects stated that district financial pressures were having a negative effect on this area of teacher performance. As with the findings of Lee and Ready (2007), district need to meet requirements set forth in NCLB, and within other high stakes testing schemes, might also be threatening institutional autonomy of stand alone, secondary, magnet schools, at least financially. This finding would seem to run counter to those found, by Angel, in their study on professional development in small schools that suggests that professional development is highly encouraged. Here too, there also seemed to be a discrepancy between the level of encouragement from building and district administration, as perceived by subjects in this study. More research, therefore, could be conducted in this area.

Small, Stand Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools and Student Absenteeism/Drop-Out Rates

Category five encompassed questions concerning student absenteeism and drop-out rates in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Specifically, this included interview question 10. All subjects generally felt that, initially, parents receive either an automated telephone call and/or an actual telephone call from a secretary or administration. After this, letters are sent home to parents, and, as a last resort, meetings are set up for students, parents, and guidance/administration. Despite the presence of this process, many subjects noted that absenteeism and tardiness was not a serious issue within their schools. These are important findings as research finds a relationship
between climate and absenteeism (Dejung & Duckworth, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Reid, 1982; Rumberger, 1987; Sommer, 1985).

This research is corroborated by that of the 1998-1999 Bank Street School of Education study (Wasley et al., 2000) which further found that there is a relationship between attending small schools and drop out rates with only 8.4% of students in stand alone small schools dropping out in comparison to 10.8% of students attending comprehensive schools (Wasley et al., 2000). Lawrence et al. (2002) have also reported that small schools had lower drop-out rates, while Cotton’s meta-analysis (1996b) of literature related to drop-out rates in small schools noted that nine of the ten documents studied revealed favorable differences for small schools in terms of drop-out rates.

Some subjects did, however, note that students, especially underclassmen, more often, choose to leave rather than drop-out. Subjects, however, stated, at the same time, that was not a particularly common situation. Withdrawals in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools can be due to many factors; top among them are the missing of one’s peers and a misconception of the school’s core mission, values, and/or theme after having been pressured by parents to attend. This finding would relate to those of Lee and Ready (2007) which also indicated that students often chose schools, and/or subunit programs, based on reasons other than career aspirations or theme of school. More research should hence be conducted in this area as this researcher was unable to investigate the actual level of occurrence of this phenomenon.
Interview question 14 addresses all category areas. It asked about school pride in regards to administrators, teachers, and students. All subjects indicated that they were proud of their schools, in part, because they felt that their students worked very hard and were good kids. To be able to know that a student worked hard would imply that the subjects in this study had the opportunity to get to know their students in a more familial or intimate way, and, therefore, the literature cited that advocated the benefits of small school environments in developing positive student/teacher relationships are, therefore, applicable in this case.

Relation of Findings to Specific Research Questions

Because interview questions and research categories were rather broad, this section is included so as to tie the research findings to answering the specific five overall research questions in a manner in which the specific research question was posed. Research questions are stated on pages 11/12 as well as on page 87. Research question 1 asks how the overall climate of small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools is family and/or community like. In addressing the amount of school violence, substance abuse, or lack there of, and the level of community service, school community interest and pride in the successes of students, and overall intimate relationships of teachers, administrators, and students, seen to be overwhelmingly positive, one might state that, indeed, this is how the overall climate of small, stand-alone secondary magnet manifests family and/or community like attributes.
Research question 2 asks why the climate of a small stand-alone secondary magnet high school allows students to have the personal relationships with teachers that research has shown is important. In such small schools, there are small numbers of students in conjunction with small staff sizes. As a result, staff and students are often in direct contact with one another. As stated, when teachers have the opportunity to invest time and energy in knowing only a select number of students, as individuals, these same children are apt to work hard for their teachers thereby furthering strengthening the socio-emotional bonds between educator and pupil. Further, all educators surveyed in this study "personally" chose to become faculty members in their small, theme-based, magnet schools and continually enjoyed working with students who were perceived as being interested in learning thereby prompting staff to extend themselves even further in reaching out to students. Secondary magnet school teachers also saw themselves as experts in their selected fields, and students, interested in those same themed areas and/or being part of a theme-based school, often seek out this expertise.

Research question 3 asks if the climate of a small, stand-alone secondary magnet high school helps students reach academic success and if behavior problems are a concern. Data collected shows that all schools in the study had advanced curriculum and three offer duel college/high school credit. Many subjects also mentioned that they, and their schools, pushed students to excel and that they took great pride in all types of academic awards. Extracurricular and co-curricular student participation, as stated, could, however, be increased as participation has also been linked to academic success. Recommendations on how to do so are given below. Behavior problems were not seen to be a major issue in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools.
Research question 4 asks whether or not teachers perform well in small, stand-alone secondary magnet high schools. Subjects all felt that they went the extra mile and, indeed, often had to extend themselves with in and out of class activities as staff sizes were often small in the schools in this study. Subjects also often wanted to go above and beyond in meeting the interests and perceived aptitudes of their students.

This desire to assist their students' is seen, most often, through advanced curriculum writing since teachers, as experts in their fields, had the interest and aptitude in advancing curriculum. Some teachers also acted as adjunct college staff at the high school site. Teachers had minimal control over the determination of the budget but were allowed discretion in the ordering of supplies. Professional development for teachers in small, stand-alone secondary schools, however, can be made more relevant since some subjects claim that available professional development opportunities are either becoming bureaucratically and fiscally limited while also being geared towards the passing of minimal standards, such as NCLB, rather than towards the assisting of the gifted and motivated student. Recommendations for policy and practice, in this regard, are discussed below.

Research question 5 asks how the climate of a small, stand-alone secondary magnet high school helps reduce absenteeism and/or affects the student drop-out rate. Since the climates of the schools in this study were geared towards theme-based learning in an area of interest to students, who applied to attend the schools, absenteeism was found to not be an issue in this study. Staff is also able to keep abreast of potentially problematic students since enrollment is limited. Again, because children often choose to attend these schools, drop-outs are rare, and, in fact, some subjects noted that it was
more common for students to be asked to leave because of poor academic performance. Even this situation, however, was seen as uncommon.

Recommendations for Administrators

The following recommendations for administrators are based on the findings of this study. The results were drawn from fourteen research questions asked of eight teachers, four principals, and three focus groups each comprised of three or four teachers. All subjects are employed in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools.

Recommendation 1: Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Activities and Early College Experiences within Curriculum

Activities that occur during the school day are often considered co-curricular, while those occurring after school hours are extracurricular activities. Activities can be either co-curricular and/or extracurricular depending on when during the day they occur. In small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools there will continue to be a dearth of faculty available to supervise extensive co-curricular and extracurricular activities. This will continue to limit the number of activities available, in particular, developed sports programs. Further, the lack of after school transportation, for extracurricular activities, also remains a deterrent to student involvement in extracurricular activities. The lack of after school transportation, as indicated by some of those interviewed, may be associated with budgetary constraints faced by the district when dealing with other priorities such as the meeting of basic academic performance benchmarks. Students in small stand alone, secondary magnet schools, having largely achieved standards proficiency, are therefore being underserved in this regard.
However, despite issues with extended bus transportation, and the potential association with limited student co and extracurricular activity participation, one of the schools surveyed scheduled an activity period within the body of the regular school day. One administrative subject noted that this may be having a positive effect on student participation. Since the schools surveyed in this study have limited control over the type of transportation services provided by sending school districts, administrators may want to explore different options by which to increase co and extracurricular activity participation, such as scheduling activity periods throughout the normal daily schedule if public transportation is not otherwise available, researching the availability of corporate and/or foundation fiscal support for co and extracurricular activities, as well as the extension of curricular offerings, and/or the forming of partnerships where an after school activity is run by a community organization, with external administrative and/or fiscal supports, with the consent/support of parents of students involved and school district management (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005).

As shown, small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools, like other small schools, do suffer from a limited number of both school activities as well as curricular choices. While most students are aware of limited opportunities, say in athletics for example, before admission, and therefore must make a choice as to whether or not this is an appropriate educational environment for them, knowing this, educators would still be committing a gross injustice to these same students if they do not find ways to both exploit the benefits of a small, family like, environment while also offering the most varied academic choices for students. Indeed, students must compete, not only for college admission, but on the global stage. As shown, most schools in this survey did this by maximizing physical and virtual school partnerships. Longitudinal studies
further show that there are concrete advantages to doing this: (a) Boredom is reduced; (b) Pre-College experiences are ultimately viewed more positively; and (c) Accelerative experiences seem to be critical in developing future world leaders of industry (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). Another study on post-secondary achievement of participants in duel enrollment programs in two states, during high school, also found that, three and a half years after college enrollment, such students had significantly more credits than those students who did not take this option (Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeoung, & Bailey, 2007).

Hence, other small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools might do well to investigate the possibility of developing college partnerships that encompass duel high school/college credit for courses taken, off campus, at university. This can reduce the time commitment involved in obtaining an undergraduate degree, mitigate the overall costs of advanced education, and help students to more fully explore if they wish to continue to major in the theme area of their magnet school and/or to pursue other academic opportunities and/or interests. Further, small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools might find advantage in seeking college pre-accreditation for advanced placement courses so that this student work is also recognized, in tangible terms, as some advanced students may prefer to remain with friends at their high school rather than to attend college courses (Colangelo et al., 2004).

When small, stand alone, secondary schools begin to place value on higher order thinking skills and met cognition, it becomes important to move beyond a focus on basic skills and Federal mandates such as NCLB. Yet, gifted and/or motivated students in these environments are often marginalized when overall district curriculum, budgetary outlays and professional development is geared, in large part, towards meeting
proficiency with basic standards. Indeed, no teacher subject in this study stated that they control the amount of funding they receive.

As stated by Ramirez (2007), there is a cruel irony of NCLB policy; that is high-achieving kids who pass standardized test requirements are often overlooked as schools focus on raising the scores of those students in the middle of the curve. Other literature also echoes the sentiment that gifted and/or motivated students do not count for much within the federal accountability system (Davidson & Davidson, 2004; Gessner, 2008). What is labeled as “cool” by traditional high school students, often, is also seen as irrelevant and/or boring to motivated students who, more likely, love learning and multiple subjects (Colangelo et al., 2004). As a result, maximizing partnerships, both in terms of administrative and fiscal support, might help districts inclusive of small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools to supersede the effects of the NCLB law and other basic skills mandates on the progress of gifted and/or motivated students.

**Recommendation 2: Interdisciplinary Vision**

As found by Lee and Ready (2007), in their study on schools within schools, inter-disciplinary instruction can reduce academic stratification, cut down on department balkanization, and, ultimately, help improve the overall climate of small school within schools. Indeed, interdisciplinary programs were also found to be at the heart of the well-performing small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools in this study. Administrators creating additional small magnet schools may, therefore, wish to investigate the merits of offering an integrated curriculum.

As one subject stated, while world language may not be within the main technology theme of their school, their students do live in an ever-increasingly globally
connected world. Indeed, all educators within schools in this study felt connected to the overall goals and mission of the school, regardless of main theme, while also feeling that their administrators appreciated all teacher efforts. Administrators were noted for saying “thank you” and, indeed, the administrators within this study were aware of the importance of giving back.

*Recommendation 3: Admissions Procedures and Disclosure of School Mission*

Although subjects have indicated that school drop-outs concern, at most, a handful of students, each year, small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools should make an effort to explain their mission, to the best of their ability, before middle school students apply to attend. Most schools in this survey make a conscious and deliberate effort in recruiting students who know the intensity of the environment that awaits them. However, School B has adopted an application process that involves separate interviews with both students and parents. In this manner, even if a child is academically competitive, it can be ascertained if they are equally interested in the overall theme subject or if they are receiving outside pressure from parents to attend. In these schools, it is rare to accept a student beyond the ninth grade. As such, if mismatches can be avoided, students who really want to attend the school, but who have, perhaps, been waitlisted, can attend. Therefore, small, stand alone, magnet high schools should adopt an admission process that can determine if the child is the stakeholder with the primary interest in attending the school.
Recommendation 4: Professional Development and School Based Leadership

Since many subjects have noted that in-district professional development is lacking in usefulness, out of district training is becoming costly, and there is a disconnect and disparity between the needs of other schools within the district and these types of schools, administrators of small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools may wish to conduct action research on varied and creative means by which to offer appropriate training for teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is recommended because of important implications resulting from this study.

Recommendation 1: Conduct a Replication of Study in Other High Schools

The results of this study were limited to instructional staff in a small number of small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Since small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools, proliferating across the United States, are just one alternative choice option to large comprehensive high schools, it is recommended that further climate studies be conducted in additional small, choice environments such as in elementary/secondary charter schools and in other types of magnet programs, such as those receiving funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and/or other grant providers. The Gates Foundation has been, in particular, a key partner in providing large and public school districts with the funding necessary to start and then operate magnet school programs. No school in this study has received Gates Foundation
funding and, therefore, an analysis of small magnet schools receiving such funding might prove a useful addition to the body of knowledge on such school environments.

**Recommendation 2: Conduct a Further Comparative Analysis of Schools with/without Competitive Application Procedures**

Some schools in this survey had competitive application procedures while others were lottery application schools. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in other small, secondary magnet schools to ascertain whether there are significant climate differences and/or similarities between schools with competitive and non-competitive application procedures.

**Recommendation 3: Conduct Further Analysis on Curriculum, Co and Extra-Curricular Activities and Projects Offered**

Subjects in this study differed as to the level of student participation in co and extra-curricular activities within small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in other small, secondary magnet schools to ascertain whether or not students in these environments are or aren’t participating, to what level, and how the level of participation can be increased if necessary.

The results of this study also indicate that all schools surveyed are college preparatory in nature, and perhaps some even more so, as they are focused on honors, advanced placement, and/or the college experience. As also indicated, however, schools differ as to the preferred option for providing a more college like experience in high
school. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools on which option provides students with the most college credits upon entering four-year universities and which options, if any, lead to expedited graduation from an undergraduate program.

College cost savings, resulting from differing options, could also be assessed. For example, further research could be undertaken as to whether or not students in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools who choose to enroll in duel admission college credit courses, at university, complete their undergraduate studies sooner, and/or at less cost, than those pupils who choose to remain on the high school campus to take advanced placement courses and/or duel credit courses taught by high school faculty also certified as college adjunct instructors. Research, as indicated above, does show benefit to accelerated study but additional information could be gleaned as to the amount of benefit derived from the various advanced curriculum options (Colangelo et al., 2004; Karp et al., 2007). For example, colleges may limit the number of advanced placement courses that can be applied towards graduation, while some students who participated in accelerated curriculum may actually choose to remain in college past the point when they have the requisite number of credits to graduate (Oxtoby, 2007).

The level to which current college students felt prepared for college, having had advanced placement study, college courses with high school staff that also served as college adjuncts, and/or college courses taken on site at a local university, while in high school, should also be studied. Some college administrators, for instance, wonder if an emphasis on advanced placement courses in high school, while preparing students for advanced placement tests and possibly college admission, undercuts a student's grasp of the basics while in university (Oxtoby, 2007). Clearly, there are many further
opportunities to conduct comparative studies in regards to accelerated curriculum and college preparedness.

The academic and socio-emotional effects of interdisciplinary and project based curriculum in small secondary magnet schools, with such methodology, can also be further studied.

Recommendation 4: Conduct Further Studies on Interpersonal Skills of Students in Small, Stand-Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools

Some subjects, particularly in technology themed schools, mentioned that their students were “cool with not being cool” and/or “geeky”. Some subjects further mentioned that some students, while academically high achieving, suffered from social deficits in dealing with peers. Some subjects also mentioned that students had been bullied in traditional environments. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools, of differing themes, to ascertain whether or not higher achieving students in such environments have adequate age appropriate interpersonal skills and/or whether they suffer from social deficits more so than contemporaries in traditional high schools. Researchers could also study whether or not students entering small magnet high schools were bullied more so than those entering traditional high school environments during their K-8 years.
Recommendation 5: Conduct Further Inquiry into the Usefulness of Professional Development Opportunities in Small Schools

While professional development opportunities are present for teachers in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools, some subjects mentioned that professional development was either of limited utility in-district and/or harder to come by outside of the district. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted within other school districts with small high schools to ascertain the current level of satisfaction with teacher training in these environments.

Recommendation 6: Conduct Further Study on the Role of Parental Influence on Student Acceptance and/or its Association with Student Academic Success

Drop-outs and tardiness were found to of limited concern to subjects within this study. However, when children choose to leave the school, it can be for a number of reasons other than poor academic performance. One reason cited, however, was parental pressure to attend a particular small magnet school. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in small, stand alone, secondary magnet schools in this area. Although not reviewed in depth, School B, within this study, had an application procedure that was inclusive of separate interviews for both students and parents. It might be interesting to ascertain whether or not applications, inclusive of parent interviews, have a significant effect on student resignations, from magnet schools, later on in the academic process.

Several subjects also noted the importance of parents of children within small, stand alone secondary magnet schools, that is through the providing of transportation to
and from activities as well as through the establishment of parent endowments. Two out of four administrators surveyed also mentioned that, despite differences in socioeconomic status, many of their students came from whole nuclear families. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted on the role of parents, and/or whole nuclear families as opposed to broken families, within this type of school community, and whether or not there is an association between parental involvement and academic/school performance. Existing research, conducted within other school venues, does indicate a moderate relationship between parental involvement and the academic success of students (Catsambis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001).
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APPENDIX A

Superintendent Solicitation Letter
Dear Superintendent:

I am currently a doctoral student within the Seton Hall University Executive Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program. As I have finished my coursework, I am now writing my dissertation on "Perceptions of Principals and Teachers on School Climate in Small, Stand-Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools".

As your district has been identified as hosting small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools, I am writing you in the hope that I might gain permission, from you, to individually interview one of your principals, at such a school, and two teaching staff members, in this regard, should my research be approved by the institutional review board of Seton Hall University. I would also like to convene a focus group comprised of three or four teachers at one of your small, stand-alone secondary magnet schools. Interviews and the focus group would be conducted at the employee's place of employment. The interviews and focus group will last approximately one hour in length and will occur during the 2007/2008 academic year. Participation is strictly voluntary.

The anonymity of participants can not be maintained as the subjects will be known to the researcher and participants involved in the focus group. However, all reasonable efforts at confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher. No names will appear on any data transcripts as participants will be noted as informant A, B, C, D, etc. All data will also be kept in a locked cabinet, owned by the researcher, for three years. After three years, data tapes, USB memory keys, and transcripts will be destroyed. No data will be stored on any computer hard drive.

If you were to agree, I would make arrangements with you, and your staff, to visit one/few of your small academies during this academic year. As I am sure that you are busy, I will contact you shortly to see if this arrangement can/can not be made. In the meantime, should you wish to contact me, you can do so at the above contact address. Regardless, I thank you for your time and attention in this matter, and I look forward to talking further with you.

Sincerely,

John Schembari
Ed.D. Candidate
Seton Hall University, Educational Leadership
Appendix B

Principal/Teacher Request to Participate Letter
Dear Principal/Teacher:

I am currently a doctoral student within the Seton Hall University Executive Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program. As I have finished my coursework, I am now writing my dissertation on "Perceptions of Principals and Teachers on School Climate in Small, Stand-Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools".

As your district has been identified as hosting small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools, and has given permission for me to conduct this study, I am writing you in the hope that I might either individually interview you or include you in a focus group. I would like to individually interview four principals and four teachers, while also conducting a focus group comprised of four teachers at your small, stand-alone secondary magnet school. Interviews and the focus group would be conducted at the employee’s place of employment (i.e. your school). The interviews and focus group will last approximately one hour in length and will occur during the 2007/2008 Academic Year. Participation is strictly voluntary.

The anonymity of participants can not be maintained as the subjects will be known to the researcher and participants involved in the focus group. However, all reasonable efforts at confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher. No names will appear on any data transcripts as participants will be noted as informant A, B, C, D, etc. All data will also be kept in a locked cabinet, owned by the researcher, for three years. After three years, data tapes, USB memory keys and transcripts will be destroyed. No data will be stored on any computer hard drive. There is a $50.00 dollar stipend per selected participant.

Should you wish to be included in this study, please feel free to reach out to me at the above listed contact information. I will contact selected participants shortly as to the specifics of our meeting. Regardless, I thank you for your time and attention in this matter, and I look forward to talking further with you.

Sincerely,

John Schembari
Ed.D, Candidate
Seton Hall University, Educational Leadership
Appendix C

Consent Form
CONSENT FORM

1. Researcher’s Affiliation:

The researcher of this study, John Schembri, is currently a doctoral student within the Executive Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program of Seton Hall University located in South Orange, New Jersey.

2. Explanation of Purpose of Study:

The focus of this study will be to provide a qualitative assessment of perceptions of principals and teachers on school culture in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools. The expected length of time commitment for each subject, who voluntarily agrees to participate in the study, is one hour.

3. Description of Procedures:

As the school in which the potential subject is employed, as either principal or teacher, has been identified as being a small, stand-alone, secondary magnet school, the researcher is seeking voluntary permission from said potential subject to be individually interviewed, if they are a principal, or, if they are a teacher, to be individually interviewed or to be part of a focus group of teachers employed at their small, stand-alone, secondary magnet school. Individual interviews and the focus group would be conducted at the employee’s place of employment, for all participants, during the 2007-2008 academic school year.

4. Instrument of Study:

The instrument used within the Qualitative Assessment of Culture in Small, Stand-Alone, Secondary Magnet Schools Study will be an open-ended individual and/or focus group questionnaire. Questions will address the variables of overall culture, the relationship of teacher to student, the academic achievement of students, teacher performance, and student absenteeism/drop-out rates. Sample questions include: 1) Describe the atmosphere in the school; 2) Do students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers; etc.

5. Voluntary Nature of Participation Disclosure:

Subject participation in this study is strictly voluntary and, as such, refusal to participate or discontinuing participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.
6. Anonymity Protocols:

As the identity of the participants will be known to the researcher and those participating in the focus group, anonymity cannot be given. However, all reasonable efforts will be made by the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

7. Confidentiality Protocols:

Participants in this study will be noted as informant A, B, C, D, etc. only. All data retrieved from participating subjects, during interviews and/or the focus group session, will be kept in a locked cabinet, owned by the researcher, for three years. No data will remain on any computer hard drive. After three years, all locked data tapes, CDs, and/or USB memory keys and transcripts will be destroyed. As such, all reasonable measures will be used to maintain the subject’s confidentiality and the circumstances, if any, under which identifying data may be used or disclosed without the subject’s express consent.

8. Assess to Data:

Records will be kept confidential. All data retrieved will be used solely by the individual researcher of this study and the individual researcher’s faculty advisor.

9. Anticipated Risks to Participating Subjects:

There are no anticipated risks to participating subjects.

10. Disclosure of Direct Benefits of Participation in Study:

Participating subjects can expect to receive findings from the research on culture in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet schools. This may result in an increase in knowledge concerning the local perceptions of staff concerning overall school culture, academic performance of students, teacher performance, student absenteeism and/or school drop-out rates in small, stand-alone, secondary magnet school environments.

11. Remuneration of Participating Subjects:

Voluntarily participating subjects will each receive $50.00 U.S. dollars payable at time of the commencement of the individual interview and/or focus group session.

12. Anticipated Risks and Associated Compensation:

There are no anticipated risks and, therefore, there is no compensation associated with risk through participation.
13. Courses of Treatment through Participation:

As there are no anticipated risks associated with participation, there are no suggested courses of treatment.

14. Contact Information:

The principal investigator/researcher, John Schembari, can be reached at: Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy, Room 406, Jubilee Hall, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079. Tel: (973) 313-6032.

The research faculty adviser, Dr. Anthony Colella, can be reached at: Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy, Room 406, Jubilee Hall, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079. Tel: (973) 313-6032.

The Institutional Review Board (iRB) Office can be reached at: Seton Hall University, IRB Office, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079. Tel: (973) 313-6314.

Please feel free to contact these references for answers to pertinent questions about the research proposed in this study and/or the rights of research subjects.

15. Request for Written Permission of Taping of Subject Consent:

As taping will occur as a means by which to record data for later retrieval by the investigator/researcher, it is necessary for the voluntarily participating subject to give written consent for such taping. Subjects can give written permission for taping under their signature agreeing to participate in the overall study.

Subjects will be identified on tapes only as informant A, B, C, D, etc., and the investigator/researcher will be the sole owner, reviewer/listener, and transcriber of all data tapes, CDs, and/or USB memory keys. Tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet, owned by the researcher, and destroyed after three years.
16. Signature of Voluntary Participation of Study Subject:

Subject Signature ___________________________ Date ________

Subject Signature allowing Taping ___________________________ Date ________

Subject Contact Address:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Subject Contact Telephone Number: ___________________________

All subjects voluntarily participating in the Qualitative Assessment of Culture in Small, Stand-Alone, Secondary Magnet School Study will receive a copy of their signed and dated Informed Consent Form before their participation begins. Copies of all completed Informed Consent Forms will be maintained by the researcher for three years and then destroyed. The researcher will contact the subject at a later date to arrange time/date/venue for the interview and/or focus group session.
Appendix D

Sequence of Study at Schools in Sample
## School A

### Freshman Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Major</td>
<td>.25 to 2 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English#</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French; Spanish</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra I or Geometry</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>.50 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; Health or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Theory for Instrumental</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Vocal Majors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Science</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US History</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sophomore Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Major</td>
<td>.25 to 2 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English#</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver Education</td>
<td>.25 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French/ Spanish</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>.50 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry, Algebra II, or higher</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World History or</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European History*</td>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Junior Classes**

- Arts Major and/or Arts Minor
- Computer Literacy\(^*\) or
- Elective
- English\(^#\) or
  - Language and Composition*
- Foreign Language#
  - French; Spanish
- Mathematics#
  - Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus,
    Statistics, Calculus or
  - AP Math Courses
- Science#
  - Chemistry
  - Physics or
  - AP Sciences Course*
- Social Studies#
  - Government/Economics or
  - AP Social Studies Course*

**Senior Classes**

- Arts Major and/or Arts Minor
- Computer Literacy Requirement\(^*\) or
- Electives
- English \(^#\) or
  - AP Literature*
- Foreign Language#
- French/Spanish
  or Elective
- Mathematics#
  - Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus,
    Statistics, Calculus or
  - AP Math Courses*
- Science#
  - Anatomy & Physiology, Chemistry,
    Physics or
  - AP Science Course*
- Social Studies Elective\(^#\) or
  - AP Social Studies Course*

\(^*\) = AP Level Course
\(^#\) = College Prep or Honors Level
= The Computer literacy requirement may be satisfied through 1) district computer literacy exam; or 2) 1 Credit of approved coursework; or 3) a Computer literacy portfolio.

Volunteer Credit Program

Students can earn one elective credit towards graduation after completing 45 hours of community service for any two semesters during high school for a total of 90 total hours.

24 credits in total must be received for graduation.

Arts Majors & Minor Courses

Communication Arts: Introduction to Communications; Computer Applications; Communication Arts; Journalism; Yearbook; Web Design & Graphics; Creative Writing; Videography & Cinema Studies

Dance: Beginning; Intermediate; Advanced; High School Dance Company

Drama: Drama I-IV; Shakespearean Studies; Stage Technology I-IV

Instrumental Music: Wind Ensemble; Symphonic Band; Competition Marching Band; Parade/Pep Band; Band Front; Jazz Ensemble; Fundamentals of Music Theory; Harmony & Analysis I-II; Piano I-IV; String Orchestra

Visual Arts: Visual Arts Foundations I-II; Advanced Visual Arts; Advanced Placement Studio Art Portfolio; Art History; Introduction to Museum Studies; Museum Studies Practicum; Drawing; Painting; Sculpture & Ceramics; Fiber Arts & Crafts; Architecture; Interior & Set Design; Industrial & Product Design

Visual Communications: Visual Arts Foundation I-II; Communication Arts; Web Design & Graphics; Videography & Cinema Studies; AP Studio Art (Drawing, Painting, Two-Dimensional Design)

Vocal Music: Vocal Music I-IV; Fundamentals of Music Theory; Harmony & Analysis I-II; Musical Theatre; Introduction to the Music Business

Grading System

93-100 (A)
85-92 (B)
77-84 (C)
70-76 (D)
0-69 (F)
School B

Freshman Classes

English 9#  5 Credits
Foreign Language
  Spanish 1  5 Credits
Health & Physical Education 9  1 Credit
Mathematics 9#
  Geometry  5 Credits
Science 9##
  Environmental Science  6 Credits
Social Studies 9
  World History  5 Credits

Sophomore Classes

English 10#  5 Credits
Foreign Language
  Spanish II  5 Credits
Health & Physical Education 10  1 Credit
Mathematics 10#
  Algebra II  5 Credits
Science 10##
  Biology  6 Credits
Social Studies 10
  US History 1  5 Credits

Junior Classes

English 11#  5 Credits
Foreign Language
  Spanish III (elective)  5 Credits
Health & Physical Education 11  1 Credit
Mathematics 11#
  Pre Calculus or  5 Credits
  Pre Calculus#  5 Credits
Science 11##
  Chemistry  6 Credits
Social Studies 11
  US History 2  5 Credits
Senior Classes

English 12#
   Creative Writing 1, Creative Writing 2, 5 Credits
   Technical Writing 1, Technical Writing 2, 5 Credits
   Rhetoric & Public Speaking
Health & Physical Education 12 1 Credit
Mathematics 12
   Calculus# or 5 Credits
   Finite Math 5 Credits
Science 12##
   Physics 6 Credits
Social Studies 12 (elective)
   American Government, World Studies, 2.5 to 15 Credits
   Economics, Problems in American
   Democracy

Electives at school and/or college experience

Students can take up to 15 credits through school based electives and/or through classes at the local community college for double high school and college credit.

Engineering technologies classes

Curriculum is also inclusive of a four-year 40 credit engineering program that explores the areas of civil/mechanical and/or electronic/computer engineering technologies from theoretical and applied perspectives. Included within this are applications of computer aided design, automated data collection techniques, and the combining of academic research and technical studies (CARTS Project) with a senior thesis.

Career Majors

Exploratory (45 days each engineering major) 9th grade 5 Credits
Engineering (either Civil Mechanical or Electronic Computer)
   Remainder of the 9th grade (90 Days) 5 Credits
C/M Engineering 10,11 20 Credits
C/M 12 5 Credits
E/C Engineering 10,11 20 Credits
E/C 12 5 Credits

CARTS (Combining Academic Research and Technical Studies)
   C/M Senior Project 5 Credits
   E/C Senior Project 5 Credits
160 credits are needed to graduate. All classes are college prep or higher.

#    = Honors level
###  = Honors level with lab

**Grading System**

All courses taught are college prep, honors, and above. Grades are weighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>(B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>(F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School C

**Freshman Classes**

- English 9 .......................... 5 Credits
- Foreign Language
  - (Arabic 1-2; French 1-4*; Latin 1-4*; Mandarin Chinese 1-4
  - Russian 1-2; Spanish 1-4*) 5 Credits
- Heath 1 ............................ 2.5 Credits
- Physical Education 9 .......... 2.5 Credits
- Mathematics
  - Ramp-Up to Algebra (accelerated) or 10 Credits
  - Algebra 1# .................. 5 Credits
- Science
  - Science 9 or .................. 5 Credits
  - Physical Science (CP) ...... 5 Credits
- Social Studies
  - Modern World History # .... 5 Credits

**Sophomore Classes**

- English 10 ......................... 5 Credits
- Foreign Language ................ 5 Credits
- Health and Wellness 2 ....... 2.5 Credits
- Physical Education 10 ....... 2.5 Credits
- Mathematics
  - Geometry# .................. 5 Credits
- Science
  - Biology# or ................. 5 Credits
  - Biology* .................. 5 Credits
- Social Studies
  - Early American History (CP) or 2.5 Credits
  - Pre-AP Early American History plus 2.5 Credits
  - Elective .................. 2.5 Credits
Junior Classes

English 11 or  
   English Language &  
   Composition 11*  
5 Credits
Foreign Language  
5 Credits
Mathematics  
   Algebra 2#  
5 Credits
Science  
   Chemistry#  
5 Credits
Social Studies  
   U.S. History (CP) or  
   U.S. History*  
5 Credits

Senior Classes

English  
   English 12/UNI 111 or*  
5 Credits
   Alternative Realities/Humanities or  
5 Credits
   Contemporary Book Club or  
5 Credits
   Creative Writing/Drama  
5 Credits
Foreign Language  
5 Credits
Mathematics  
   Algebra 3/Trigonometry or  
2.5 Credits
   Statistics & Probability or  
2.5 Credits
   Pre-Calculus or  
5 Credits
   Calculus or  
5 Credits
   Calculus AB*  
5 Credits
   Computer Programming 1,2 or  
5 Credits
   Oracle 1 Database or  
5 Credits
   Computer Science*  
5 Credits
Science  
   Physiology (CP Only) or  
5 Credits
   Physics# or  
5 Credits
   Physics* or  
5 Credits
   Medical Anthropology (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Forensic Science (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Oceanography (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Environmental Science (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Biotechnology (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Microbiology/Bacteriology (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Anatomy/Physiology (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Photonics (CP) or  
5 Credits
   Science Research (CP)  
5 Credits
Social Studies
(Electives) 2.5 to 5 Credits

* = Advanced Placement
# = College Preparatory or Honors Level
CP = College Preparatory
UNI = University Course

**Note:** Students are expected to take, in addition to the above courses, six classes in Fine/Unified arts and a total minimum of eight elective classes. Students need a minimum of 100 credits to graduate.

**English Electives:**

Web Newspaper

**Fine Arts Electives:**

Music – Band, Piano, Chamber Singers, Concert Chorus, Digital Music Production, Digital Music Theory and Composition, and Guitar 1


**Health and Physical Education:**

Archery, Racket Sports, Social Dance, Physics of Sports, Student Leadership, Football/Soccer, Fitness, Basketball/Volleyball, and Problem Solving/Strategy Games

**Unified Arts Electives:**


**Social Studies Elective Offerings:**
World History Elective Offerings – Ancient World History, African History, Latin American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Modern Chinese History, and Russian Studies

Other Social Studies Electives – AP/UNI European History, Debate & Rhetoric, Electoral Politics, Media Technology, Pearl Harbor to the Atomic Bomb – VHS, Psychology, Sociology, UNI Microeconomics, and UNI Macroeconomics

**Technology and/or Engineering Concentrations**

**Information Technologies Concentration** – This concentration enables students to develop advanced computer skills to use in an IT related field.

*9th Grade: Pathways*

*10th Grade: MS Office or Multimedia Presentation 1 or GIS 1 or Digital Electronics*

*11th Grade: Cisco Networking Academy (Semesters 1&2) and Oracle Academy 1: Database, GIS 2, and Electives*

*12th Grade: Cisco Networking Academy (Semesters 3&4) and AP Computer Science, Internships, and Electives*

**Architectural and Engineering Concentration** – This is a pre-engineering based program providing knowledge in design, manufacturing and technology.

*9th Grade: Pathways and Introduction to Engineering Design*

*10th Grade: Architectural Drafting/CAD Technology, Digital Electronics, and Electives*

*11th Grade: Civil Engineering & Architecture and Principles of Engineering, Advanced CAD Technology, and Internships*

*12th Grade: Engineering Design and Development, Electives, and Internships*

**ACE (Architecture, Construction, Engineering) Mentoring Program** – The ACE Mentoring Program provides educational and field experience with local architectural, construction management and engineering firms.

**Grading System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>(A-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>(B+)</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
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<td>63-66</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>(D-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>(F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School D

Freshman Classes

Biology 6 Credits
Computer Applications 5 Credits
English 1 5 Credits
Health/Physical Education 4 Credits
Introduction to Engineering Design 5 Credits
Mathematics
   (Algebra 1, Geometry, 5 Credits
     Algebra 2/Trig)
Research/Data Analysis/Guidance 3 Credits
World History 5 Credits
World Language
   (French, Spanish, Latin) 5 Credits

Sophomore Classes

Computer Integrated Manufacturing 5 Credits
English 2 5 Credits
Health/Physical Education 4 Credits
Mathematics
   (Geometry, Algebra 2/Trig, 5 Credits
     PreCalculus)
Physics 6 Credits
Principles of Engineering 5 Credits
Research 2/Data Analysis 2/Guidance 3 Credits
United States History 1 5 Credits
World Language
   (French, Spanish, Latin) 5 Credits
Junior Classes

Chemistry 6 Credits
English 3 5 Credits
Health/Physical Education 4 Credits
Mathematics
   (Algebra 2/Trig, PreCalculus,
    AP Calculus BC) 5/6 Credits
Technology Options:
1. CADD at Comm. College 11 College +
2. Computer Programming at Comm. College 8 College +
3. Cisco Networking Academy I/II 10 Credits
4. Digital Electronics< 6 Credits
   Engineering Physics< 4 Credits
United States History 2 5 Credits
World Language
   (French, Spanish, Latin) 5 Credits

Senior Classes

AP Biology, Chemistry, or Physics 6 Credits
English 4 5 Credits
Mathematics
   (Pre-Calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus AB/
    BC, Multivariable Calculus) 5/6 Credits
Mentorship 5 Credits
Current Global Issues (elective) 5 Credits
Environmental Science (elective) 5 Credits
World Language (elective)
   (French, Spanish, Latin)< 5 Credits
Health/Physical Education 3 College +
Statistics (elective) 5 Credits
Technology Options:
1. CADD at Comm. College 4 College +
2. Computer Programming at Comm. College 4 College +
3. Cisco Networking Academy III/IV 8 Credits +
4. Engineering Design & Development 5 Credits
The Short Story 3 College +

160 credits are required in order to graduate.

+   Appear on a college transcript.
<   Option to receive college credit.
^   Includes Mentorship.
Note: Course titles in italics are courses taught with an integrated curriculum.

Grading System

All courses are taught at the Honors level and grades are therefore not weighted or inflated.

92-100  (A)
85-91   (B)
77-84   (C)
70-76   (D)
55-69   (F)
Appendix E
Transcript: School A/Subject A
TRANSCRIPT: SCHOOL A/SUBJECT A

QUESTION 1:

S: Um...Very few, I would say you know in any given year. Weapons? We...It is a non-issue. I have occasionally had a kid who will bring a pocket knife. We have never had any other issues with weapons. Um...Drugs and Alcohol? We will have one or two incidents maybe per year. Um...Most often if that happens, it's like someone comes to homecoming dance, you know, or prom. that happens on occasion. So, you know, a couple. Um...physical disturbances? We occasionally have students, I mean I don't know what you mean by physical disturbances, I'll occasionally have kids who will they'll have a disagreement with another student very rarely does it get to a situation that it is a fight especially in high school. You know, they know to come get intervention for the most part first and they also know that they'll also get in trouble. You know. So, it just, you know, we are fortunate that we can deal with things like tardies to school and, you know, cutting class on occasion. You know. Things like that.

R: What do you think adds to you being able to deal with those situations?

S: Ah, one we know all the kids because we are as small as we are. We're very community oriented. You know, and that's not just...you know there are only you know two administrators. So it is not just the school administration but, you know, the guidance staff, the teachers, everybody is on the same page. So, a lot of times, like, a teacher will notice that there is potentially something happening or that, you know, they are concerned about the student because he is not quite himself today and they'll alert us to that so you know we can be a lot more proactive.

R: Is this discussed when you are recruiting students?

S: Um...not formally per se. Although, certainly there's a choice policy meaning students can be exited if they, um, get into a lot of trouble if they have a major suspension or if they have a number of suspensions they can be exited at the end of the school year. So, Um...and we do make students aware of that and we do send warning letters to students who are perhaps on that you know like if they have had two suspensions we'll send them a letter and say you are in jeopardy you need to be careful. So, um...you know, but in the recruitment process, it is not really discussed other than a lot of times parents will ask well what situations do you have with discipline? So they want to know what kind of environment we have. I mean we are very fortunate that we can say you know that it is a great environment to be in.

R: Do you have many exists per year or per couple of years?

S: Um...no. Ah, I'd say like last year we had four. And that's out of our entire program. So, over 800 students.

R: And then, is there a progressive discipline policy?]
S: We follow the same policy as the rest of our district. So, there is a district code of conduct. And, so, if, you know, there are certain things that are detention, there are certain things that would be suspendsable offences, Um...there are some things that there there's no that have to be reported you know like if a kid brings drugs to school that's reportable to the state. Um, so, is it progressive? Yeah, you could say first offense, second offense, there are things that happen on the first offense versus the second. Um...Some of them are, no matter what, this is what will happen. You know, if you bring a gun to school [laughter], the police will be contacted.

R: How involved is the guidance staff? You were mentioning the teachers and the guidance staff Um...being involved in setting up this sense of community. Are there specific programs or what does the guidance department do in particular?

S: Um...well since we are talking specifically about the high school, we have one guidance counselor for the high school and she’s amazing. Um...she works with all 400 students. Obviously, more, a lot more, with juniors and seniors Um...because she does all of the college applications with them and helping to place them, you know, getting them into the right colleges and making recommendations so she is very close to and knows the kids very well. Not as much during the first year unless there are extenuating circumstances. But, so, like with freshmen, she meets with them in groups but, by the time they get to junior and senior year, they have individual conferences at least every year and then students that have greater needs like students who have 504 plans or have disabilities they get...whatever. I mean anytime a parent calls and they want a conference...she'll set up a conference. A lot of times she'll have a conference every day after school. You know, for weeks at a time, because we just do that.

R: Do you often 504 or have IEPs for the high school students or if they do not already come with one? Or have you more or less handled that by the time they get to high school?

S: Um...it does happen that a plan is implemented in the high school. It is a lot less often I would say than in the middle school level because Um...you know because we keep our kids so we know them. So, they already have plans in place. And we just do annual reviews and revise them. Um...and in terms of special ed I mean that's all Federally mandated. So, you know, we do offer special education services.

QUESTION 2:

S: I would say yes, absolutely. Um...you know, we've had Um...occasions where ...we always practice like fire drills and walk down drills. We had one occasion last year where we had to go into a lockdown situation but it wasn't anything related to this school. Someone had come in and saw that something had been reported, you know, in the neighborhood/community, a little ways back, so, as a precautionary, you know, I think parents really feel good about that because they know we will always error on the side of caution. Um...but it's a great environment you know. And we have kids here 24/7 practically. We have to kick them out the doors at night.
R: Why is that? What do you have going on?

S: Ah, well, there's a lot of after school activities. So, because we are a magnet arts school, you know, there are all kinds of after school dance, drama, vocal, you know, instrumental music. There are things happening all the time after school. Plus, there's also, you know, Science Olympiad and Math League and Mock Trial and all of the normal things that many of the other schools have as well. So, Um...and the other thing is because Um...we're not. A lot of kids have, like they don't live right here in this community, so they are waiting for transportation like from parents or whatever so they try to find things to do after school until the parent can come and get them at four of five. So, Um...

R: So, besides the activities, are there, is there anything else you do to establish a sense of community that this is [school name] and that these kids are part of this school?

S: Um...I think we pretty much instill that in the kids from the time they get here. You know, like, we say things like, you know, when you are out in the community you are a [school name] student and you are representing our school. And many of our kids perform in the community and they, I think, they're, mostly, very proud to say "I go to [school name]". So, Um...yeah, even when Um...you know we have conversations with kids just informally that we always come back to remember you are always representing our school and we are very proud of our school and so, when kids do things that are disappointing, it's not just disappointing here in the building it's disappointing because you're representing our school. You know, that's important to us. And, you know, that's not like somewhere written in stone you know but sort of an engrained part of our climate in the building. Um...and we do the same thing when we have the parents that are extremely involved and, you know, that makes such a big difference to have a high participation rate, you know.

R: Where are the students coming from?

S: Mostly this county but they can come from out of the county. Overall, so we do get some students from outside of the county. They have to reside in the state.

R: Realistically, do you get a lot of students from say the southern part of the state?]

S: No. Um...I think the furthest we have gotten students from would be about 45 minutes away.

R: And how do/or do the older students help with the acculturation process with the younger students?

S: Um...we don't have anything formally set up but we do, for example, you know, like we have ah peer tutor programs so that students in the like in our middle
School can be tutored by high school students. And the same thing, you know, like we’ll have juniors and seniors who are tutoring freshmen and they set that up through the guidance office and my guidance counselor actually oversees that. After school individualized tutoring. Um... and I would also say, informally, like if a child comes and they are having concerns about X and we know that there is another student who could perhaps relate to that, because we are so familiar with kids, we can, you know, there is that sort of informal mentorship. And the same thing in their majors because they all have, you know, like in visual arts, for example, and you will talk to the visual arts teacher, he teaches them, for the most part, 9th through 12th grade. So, he knows which seniors might have the same kind of interest as the freshmen.

R: And now, me coming in as an outsider, how would I know walking around that this is a school for the arts?

S: Um... well, we have dance studios for example. [Laughter]. I mean there are some things that are very obvious. The dance studios or you’ll see kids in their dance attire because they’re, you know, going down the hall to get drinks of water... and whatever. Um... I don’t know that you would know necessarily so much other than there are murals in the building and some things like that that happen creatively as a part of it. But, I mean we look pretty much like any other normal high school. Um... the difference would be if you look at our faculty, about half of our faculty are arts members. And you know, and we don’t have things like home economics and agricultural science and so that becomes pretty obvious when you walk down the hall and you have instrumental, instrumental, visual, visual, vocal, vocal, dance, drama. You know.

QUESTION 3:

S: Um... I would say pretty much almost 100% of our kids are involved in some after school activity. Um... you know, there are a few exceptions to that but because they all have a major at least at some point during the year they’re involved in some kind of event. Um... for example, there is a great big variety show that happens in the fall that is 6th through 12th grade and at least 50% of our students are involved in it. You know, then the students who are in the other areas, like visual and communications arts, that are not necessarily performance-based, they do things like, they do, Um... visual arts exhibition in the gallery that coincides with that. Or they’ll do, Um... they do the Um... video. You know, like, they’ll do the video that is shown during the performance that is a part of that. So we try to find ways to involve all of the arts areas. Um... at the high school level, there are especially, I mean there are so many after school clubs and activities that they can get involved in like Math League, Science Olympiad. They even have that in middle school so lots of kids do those kind of things as well... very academic oriented. It’s a pretty high academic.

R: Do you or does your staff, not target so much, but look for students who are not participating in after school activities... to get them involved?
S: Um... we don't necessarily, like, we don't go down the list and say well this student is not involved per say. But I can tell you that when we are having conferences with students that we are concerned about, a lot of times what will come up is well what is the child doing after school? And, like, we even have an after school homework club. So that is always one of the things we say, you know, at least a couple days a week, it's staffed by our teachers so, you know, there you have that connection.

R: How well attended is that?

S: The after school club? Um... I would say it varies from depending on, you know, where they are in the year. Like, right now, probably more because we are about to go into mid-terms. You know, September is pretty light. But I mean there are some kids who just stay every day just because they have no place to go. Um... but, you know, if we have roughly two teachers every day, I would say probably four to eight kids. Um... but there are also informally other kids that will stay after school with a teacher for individual help and, Um... in terms of all the different clubs they have, primarily, all staffed by our staff members. This year is kind of an exception because we went to referendum and our referendum failed last year so the after school pay was eliminated so many of the clubs are being now done by volunteers for this year but any other year I would have like a hundred different contracts for after school clubs.

R: Now when you say doing it on a volunteer basis, is that still the teachers doing it on a volunteer basis or other volunteers?

S: Mostly parents this year. And then, there are other ones like most of our after school arts programs are still being supported so, like, high school drama productions for example are still happening and there's a jazz choir that performs after school in the community and...

R: And those are contracted ah positions for staff?]

S: Yeah.

R: Do you see that situation changing in the future?

S: Yeah, we're going to go back to referendum in February this year so Um... I'm assuming hopefully it passes. And those will all be reinstated, you know, so. This is my ninth year and this is the first year where there has not been funds for the after school program so, and that is across the district. It's not just our school.

R: And when there are funds, you find that most staff gets involved?


QUESTION 4:
S: OK, Um... that is kind of a loaded question, isn’t it? [Laughter]. I mean, obviously, I’d like to say absolutely I appreciate my staff and I try, you know, I know, the assistant dean and I try very hard. Like, I’ll tell you one thing that I do. Every Friday I send out this thing – almost every Friday. This thing called Fabulous Fridays. And I just try to notice like nice things that the staff members are doing. Or good things they are doing instructionally and then I send it out as an email to the staff and say, you know, like thank you. So, ah, we try to do things like that. Um...this year, we started doing, Um...one breakfast a month where we provide breakfast for the staff and they can get together first thing in the morning and have breakfast. Um...I think morale has been difficult this year because of the whole financial situation and our budgets were cut and, you know, there’s always Um ..., you know, when you have to consolidate classes and deal with some of those financial pressures certainly. Um...and you are always going to have some staff members and I can probably say in any given year I probably have four to ten people who are not happy with me but that is part of being a school administrator. Um...but, if you look at the big picture, and I hope my faculty was, I mean, it is a really nice place to work. And most of the staff recognize that. In fact, we always have people who want to transfer in here. And people rarely want to leave here. I can’t even remember the last time somebody wanted to leave. So, you know, even though you can get sort of bogged down with the day to day, like, oh my gosh, I have five preps, or whatever. Um...it’s a really nice environment and they have great kids and, if you, you know, it’s, I would not want to be anywhere else.

R: Now ah, on a given, or in a given year, how many positions would you say you are trying to refill?

S: I would say two to four.

R: Out of a staff of?

S: Um...I have 46 teaching staff members. So, really mostly because of Um...like, if someone retires for the most part. I haven’t had anybody...Oh I had one person transfer out last year because she wanted to teach something different than what we could offer. And, the only other time would be if like a contract isn’t renewed for some reason like lack of certification. Or. So.

R: In the case of, you go in, and you see that a teacher needs a little something...or the staff needs a little something...how is that handled?

S: You mean instructionally?

R: Whatever. Yeah. Instructionally, you think that another method could be used or just going around and hearing what the teachers are saying. What is your style in terms of supporting the teachers?

S: Um...my style is pretty much, in terms of teachers, you know, an open door kind of policy. So, if, you know, I say to my staff, if you need something, you come tell me. You know, and we’ll find a way to make it happen. You know. I don’t mean like,
you know, come and tell me you need three thousand dollars worth of, you know, whatever. But, I mean, but really, I mean, I have had a science teacher who came to me last week and he said, you know, we really need these and it’s going to cost a couple thousand dollars. And I said, well, now is a good time to do that because we’ve just raised this money and we can put this in, and, you know, so, in terms of that kind of support, I would say, you know, it’s a matter of just keeping that communication open and people asking. And I’m pretty informal, and I think pretty flexible, I mean I try to be.

Um...in terms of instruction, I mean, we have, for non-tenured teachers, there’s a very/pretty strict observation process. Like, we try to observe the teachers at least twice formally in October and November so if there is a problem we know right away. If there is a concern, and then, how we handle that is, it really varies depending on, I mean, a brand new teacher, you know they are going to struggle with some issues and so we work with them. Everyone has a mentor. Um...we find someone on the staff. Or, if we know that someone is having difficulty and they need some extra support from another staff member we hook them up with, you know, so that it’s not like that we’re out to get you we’re trying to help you to be a better teacher. Um...and even with Um...teachers who have been, who are experienced and have been here for a long time – I just use this as an example - we had a teacher who sent an email to a parent, last week, on Friday, and, it probably wasn’t the best thing to do in the way that it happened. And, so, you know. But he was so comfortable just coming back and saying oh, you know, how could I have done that...what would you have done differently? You know, like, so. I think that kind of - That’s not to say that we don’t ever have a situation where you finally have to start taking action when it is not happening, you know, that does happen, and I’m not hesitant to do that because my ultimate goal is to provide the best program for the kids as possible and, if it is not happening, I have to do something about it. But, that isn’t how we are set up per say...we want to help people be better teachers.

R: What about if there is a issue, and I don’t necessarily mean this in a negative way, that you see school-wide? How do you deal with professional development?

S: Um, professional development, in part, is mandated by our district. There are some things we have to do because we are a part of our district. Um...however, with that being said, I have a team of teachers who are part of what’s called our leadership team or team leaders. And, we actually plan the staff development together and they represent all of the different areas in our school. And this year, in particular, we have made a concerted effort to try to incorporate Um because.... as I am sure you know, there is a huge push for English and Math, Science and Social Studies next. And passing the tests and making sure that you meet the standards for NCLB, and so you never get away from that, even though we excel as a school, we’ve been ranked second or third in the state for the last, probably since the testing has started. Um...you know, we get ranked with the AP, you know, we’re in good shape and most of our kids are at standard or above standard but that is not to say we can’t improve. You know. But when you work within a larger system like our district where you have several schools that are not, obviously the focus is much different than what our focus needs to be. So we have to tailor it to meet our needs and they are very different. You know. Um...so,
and especially when you consider twenty staff members who are arts teachers, and so we’ve tried to do things this year where we actually focus on the integration of the arts or bringing that arts component into staff development. And we create most of it ourselves when we are able to do that.

QUESTION 5:

S: How can I tell they are? Um…they listen to each other. They are responsive to each others’ opinions. Um…even if they disagree, they are OK with having that conversation and saying, you know, Um…it’s just I have never thought about it, really. It’s really a non-issue. They are just are. You know. The kids will open the door for you. You know. Or if you are carrying something, they will help you carry stuff. You know, it’s just a real nice place.

R: And do you find that the teachers are respectful to the students as well?

S: I. Yeah. Yeah. They are conscious of you know like when kids are having off days. Not that there aren’t, you know, I mean, there aren’t times where you have had it up to here and, you know, in hindsight, you probably would have done something differently. But, yeah, I think they’re real receptive and caring people.

QUESTION 6:

S: Yeah, they do. Like, I have kids who come in here and if they want to get water, or I always have Um…hot chocolate. You know, they always come in. I mean, not all of them obviously but there’s some…because you have them for seven years. They get used to you and so there is that kind of nice camaraderie. Or they’re very comfortable with the guidance counselors. You know, if they are having an off day, or the school nurse. She’s another one that you know she just will drop everything to do whatever the kids need and is not hesitant to say, you know, let’s call a parent. And you know, if we need to sit down to meet and talk about how to make this better then yeah.

R: Now, what kind of policy do you have with students? Can they just come in anytime they want? How do you engage with the students?

S: Ah, they have to have a pass. Um, you know, if they are coming out of a class, they have to have a pass. They have to have permission from that teacher. If they are coming on their lunch period, or in between classes for just a minute, then that’s a non-issue. Or, if they are an office aide, if they are like upperclassmen who, like, aide in the guidance office or the main office, then, you know, it’s sort of a slower time, that’s fine but they just can’t come during their academic class and hang out. [Laughter]. No. And most of them don’t even try to do that.
QUESTION 7:

S: Yes. Yes to all of those. In fact, when I started nine years ago, we barely had an honors program. It was all basically college prep. Which college prep right now is, the idea is for every student in the high school to be prepared for college. So, college prep is our most basic level now. So, and then we have honors and then we have AP. And we probably have fifteen AP classes now. So, we’ve added all of those AP classes since we/I started here nine years ago.

R: And where do you find most of the kids fitting?

S: Where do most of them fit? It’s really a broad range. It’s a broad range. I mean, I would say more of our kids do honors than AP. Probably 50 to 60% of our kids have taken an AP class by senior year. I have kids now that are taking four AP courses at a time. You know, three and four at a time, in junior and senior year. They can take two in their sophomore year. So, a lot of kids will do that. Um...I mean, we’ve really expanded significantly in the last several years. And, we try to encourage, you know, not that we want, there are kids that are taking AP classes that are probably not prepared for AP classes but the goal is to help them be better prepared and if they’re willing, and their parents want them to, and there’s a possibility that, you know, then we’ll air on the side of it’s better for them to be exposed even if they don’t pass the AP exam because they have had exposure to a college-level curriculum. You know. So, we have a tendency to do that probably sometimes not to our...well, because then you are ranked based on how you score, and we’ll have students that we knew probably were not going to pass but, you know, [researcher: but, given your philosophy]...right. And that has been our philosophy from the start...is we try to encourage kids to get into as high a level as they can. You know, so I mean I say to kids in college prep, if you can even take one honors class or two honors classes, pick your best subject. You know. And let’s do that. So.

R: Now, how do you do that? Given that you have a small number of students compared to say other schools with two thousand kids, how are you able to offer this diverse curriculum?

S: It’s very difficult. It really is very difficult. Um...sometimes we do things like we’ll offer an AP course every other year. So, maybe this year, we’ll offer AP US and next year we’ll offer AP Government. Um...but that’s even maybe more of the exception. One of the advantages we have is the [charter school name] is here so we share with the [charter school name] so there are some classes like we don’t offer AP Calculus because we only have four or five kids who want it. Or, AP Economics, we’ll have three or four kids, but they can take it through [charter school name]. Um...we’ve also done Um...online AP classes. So, they have been able to take independent study AP and do the online program through AIPACS. Um...and then it’s a balancing act. And, I mean, we’ve had, every year the scheduling process is a complete nightmare. And the guidance counselor and I would tell you, it’s, you know, 50% of the junior and senior class can’t get everything they ask for. And then you have to figure out how do they/what trade offs do you know...OK, I can’t get AP Psych because I have to be in
Dance 4. So, what can I take instead? Or, how can I rearrange the schedule to make it work? How do I do that?

R: How do you justify that to the parents? Like if I am a parent and I say, you know, my kid is not getting these AP courses. I’m sure this comes up.

S: It does come up. And at some point we say, looK, in this case, I mean, sometimes we can do it year to year. Like, OK, you can’t get Honors Geometry this year but you can get Algebra 2 Honors so you can flip it. Or, I can’t get you into Biology but you can get Chemistry. You know, so there are trade-offs like that but I know you know by the time they get to Senior year and they have to have this dance class or this AP Bio class and then, they’ll have to make a choice. Although I will say that our teachers have been pretty flexible in terms of students, like, maybe they couldn’t get into the Honors section but they could be in the CP but they’ll still give them Honors work independently. You know, so there are ways around it. Or, Um...like, in the visual arts honors, or in the visual AP class, they’ll come for one period, and then they’ll do, instead of two, and then, they’ll go to their AP class and then come back another period and do an independent study. So, we do things like that.

R: And one thing I have actually been discovering in talking with principals in small magnets there is this ongoing debate between do we have AP or do we have say our kids going out and taking college courses at the local community college. Do you do any of that and what’s your take on that?

S: We haven’t done that Um...really too much at all. Maybe because our choices for...I mean, there’s only a limited number of schools in the state. Um...and we have done some consortium with the [state university] for example but nothing has really played out to be too terribly effective. It has been easier for us to offer it here in the building and just do the AP here.

R: So then you are planning on continuing your current strategy then?

S: Eh huh. And yeah really, I mean, we have kids that can get two, three, four because we offer so many different ones. Like, sometimes they have to choose, well, I can’t get AP Government but I can get AP Psych and then the teachers are just they have to be learn to be flexible about the sUmer work because they didn’t get the sUmer work. And, you know, that’s not always easy...and they’ll probably tell you it makes them crazy. But, we do it. You know.

R: And do you find that the majority of your kids are getting credit when they go to college for taking their APs?

S: That would be a better question probably to ask our guidance counselor. Um...I would say yes, like, they know, up front, which schools...by the time they are juniors and seniors, like, our guidance counselor has a real good handle on which schools accept what credits so that kids are pretty tuned in to whether or not they’re going to get credit or not. And it really varies, it’s all, I mean, all of our courses were
approved by the College Board, so if the school offers it they're getting it. So we did go through that approval process last year. And they are all approved.

**QUESTION 8:**

S: Most of them yes. I mean, I could probably name on my hand a couple that wouldn't but, you know, they'll go the extra mile.

R: Can you give any specific examples of things you've seen?

S: Um...ah, teachers who stay after school for free. Ah, teachers, who, like, recently, I had two teachers who've offered to do home bound instruction for a student whose out on a medical leave right now. Um...I have students who will come in...or teachers who will come in at 6:30, they'll give up their lunch periods to, you know, go out of their way, they'll call parents after hours, they have conferences whenever is necessary...not that they are always thrilled about it. You know, I mean, Um...you know, they'll notice when something is not right with a kid and come seek someone out and find out or they'll send a quick note and say, you know, she wasn't quite herself today. Can you check on that? And, you know, Um...and then in terms of all the different after school, you know, arts things. I mean, that takes a huge amount of commitment. Any time you do a production...I mean, yeah, you get a stipend but, in reality, you know, a one thousand dollar stipend when you are doing twelve weeks of rehearsals, you know, is involved. Yeah.

**QUESTION 9:**

S: Um...our drop-out rate is almost none. So, I mean, I can probably name in the last five years the 3 or 4 kids that have dropped out. When that happens, there was one this year and one two years ago. Cause we sit down with then right here at this table and try and talk them out of it. And if, you know, and with the parent, we don't let them do it unless they have the parent with them. And so we really try to do everything we can to make that not happen. And there are a few exceptions, but...so I am not at all concerned about our drop out rate. Um, I forget what the other part of that....

S: Absenteeism.

S: Absenteeism...um, we have the highest attendance rate of all of the secondary schools. So....

S: In the state.

S: In [district]. I don't really have a comparison to the rest of the state. Although its high, I mean, we average a 95% attendance rate. So, its very high. And students know they can also be exited if they have poor attendance. So what we do is as soon as we see a pattern developing, we make sure that we have that meeting with the parent. We send letters, we have a visiting teacher. You know, and the person I have in charge of attendance is meticulous. So, you know, we try to deal with it right away and,
for the kids that really do have serious attendance issues, there aren’t that many. But there are good reasons why, like, it’s all documented as to what the issues are. So, I feel pretty good about, you know, I don’t see that as a big problem because we are on top of it.

QUESTION 10:

S: OK, so when they’re absent, the parent gets an automatic call. We have a service. An automated phone call. So they get a call at the end of the day. It’s like between 4 and 6 o’clock. Or 6 or 7 o’clock. Or whatever. That their child was absent. And that gives them at least an indication that, you know, cause, a lot of times they’ll call and say, “No, he wasn’t absent, he was late but you know, didn’t sign in”. So it gets those kind of problems corrected. Um, then once they get to 3 unexcused absences, 5 unexcused absences, we actually send a formal certified, you know, letter. Um, but, even before that, you know, like, the nurse knows or the guidance counselor knows, that we just set up a meeting and have, talk to the parent, find out what is actually going on and intervene. I already talked about the visiting teacher process, so....

R: Now, what is that? They go to the home?

S: Um hmm....they actually will go to the home and we have filed charges, um, you know, in family court for the children who are under 16, um....so... and most of the time, you know, that that takes care of it, it...it, it is a chronic ongoing issue and we deal with it the best we can.

R: How often in a year, would you say, that it gets to more than a parent meeting?

S: I would say, in a year, we probably refer 3-5 kids to the visiting teacher. But that is out of our whole school. And they can be referred after 10 unexcused absences, which doesn’t take...we can actually refer them for that, but, it doesn’t take much to get to 10 unexcused, and if...for example, if you take a 5 day vacation, we consider that unexcused. You know, um...so...

QUESTION 11:

S: Um...that is first on the teachers. Like, first we try to get kids and parents to be proactive, and we have an online grading program now, starting this year we did. So, parents can access how their child is doing in any class at any time, which has made it really nice, because then, they just email and say, I see that, you know, uh, Sam has missed 3 assignments and he’s got a 69%, you know. And then they get feedback, so we try to put that ownership on the student and the parent first. And then, uh, teacher’s actually send, besides actually having online grading which they have to keep updated weekly, they send, every 4 and half weeks there’s something that happens. Like, interim progress report, and then depending, and then we also do parent conferences, like, we’ve already had 2 different parent conferences this year. And at the high school level how we’ve done that is, we do an evening where we have a drop in and teachers are here all,
you know, from 3-6, and any parent can come in. Um...so that they are available to talk if they need to do that. And then, otherwise its done through the guidance counselor. Like, if there's a child whose really not doing well across the board, then she'll call or schedule the appointment and have a whole parent conference. And a lot of times parents will ask for that themselves, "No, I would really like a conference with all my child's teachers, cause he's not doing well across the board". And then we set that up and we do it after school too.

R: What about the other end of it? The kids that are doing really really well, or done something really unique and profound. How is that handled here?

S: Um...we usually do, like, right before Christmas, well...just at the high school level, we don't have anything formal like on a quarterly basis like we do at the middle school. Um...we're...with the middle school we actually have an honors assembly. At the high school level there is national honors society and they meet every 2 weeks, cause I'm actually their advisor this year too. Um...so there are, there are those kind of things, but then we do, like in December we had a, we had an all school assembly. So at those all school assemblies, like at the start of it, we'll do the recognition, like we have, um...students, a couple of students who got scholarships and then a couple that were recognized for, you know, different programs that...and so, we actually presented those for the first 20 minutes of...and it was 4 or 5 different things, so we do that as a formal recognition. Um, we also do the announcements, so like when students get in to college, we'll say that the guidance counselor writes a congratulations to so and so. And that goes out across the teachers (muffled), but it also goes, you know, on the announcements here at school. And then, I do a monthly report that goes home to every parent, like, its called, like the Dean's report. And so I'll do, like, student highlights, like, all those kids who got recognized for whatever reason. It goes home to, in a bulletin that goes on email and also on, um, a hard copy right now.

QUESTION 12:

S: Um...yes...in terms of curriculum, absolutely. Because, that's really mandated at the district level, but, but...out teachers serve on committees all the time. Not that they always have as much say as they, perhaps, want to, but like when they did textbook adoption last year for English, we had representatives from all the schools and they selected the material that they felt was the best. Um...we do, in terms of staff development, I already talked about that...and then I forget what else you asked.

R: Discipline and the budget.

S: Um...discipline, we have an actual discipline committee. So we have a group of teachers that gets together a couple of times a year and, informally, I mean, if something doesn't seem to be working then we know about it and...and we can make revisions then. So, that really hadn't been a high need. Um...budget...we don't really have control over the budget per se. This is how much we have and then, how I've handled that is, as I say...I don't give people a budget, I just say, "You tell me what you need and then we'll find a way to make it happen". Cause we draw
from...like...like...if we can’t do it from our instructional budget, then we’ll go to PTA or we’ll go...we have a [school] board and they help fundraise. So, there are times, like, my 2 art teachers just said they wanted to go the AP training, and its $300 each, and the district said, “No, absolutely not, we don’t have the money”. And so the [school] board said, “We’ll pay it”. So, you know...I mean...there are a lot of different sources where we can find ways to make something happen. And that’s not to say, like, if someone came and said they said they wanted a grand piano, well, there’s no way they’re getting a grand piano. That’s been one of the things...for the last 9 years they said, “We’d like a grand piano but we’re talking $50,000”. Well, you know...that isn’t very realistic, but...

R: Now, what committees are teachers involved in here at the school?

S: Well, I already mentioned the school leadership teams, so they sort of act as the oversight for...and...and help...helping to make the whole thing happen. Um...there’s already...there’s a discipline committee...they’re involved in all kinds of committees at the district level. You know...so...like, there’s a map committee, there’s a science committee, there’s lead teachers on Science...um...there’s social studies committees. So, there...and then I have teachers, like, art educators of [state]. So, like...one of my teachers is President of the art educators. So, there’s a variety of different ways that they’re involved.

QUESTION 13:

S: Um...I would say we would love to have more staff development. I mean, we are limited by our district schedule. Although we have done several things after school. Like, for example, the faculty initiated a faculty boOK club. So they choose select readings, educational reading that they want to focus on, and then they meet and I give them...um...like they can get...um...we have this day called a PIP day, so they have to do 5 and a half hours of professional development on their own time, and then there’s a day during the year where they get the whole day off. So, they’ll...they often do that boOK club as a part of...as a part of that and we meet for dinner and...um...and then we’ve done other things like...on their planning period, we’ve offered things where they can just get, like, technology is a good one to do, where we’ll have a technology specialist come in and they can come on their planning period or after school. We’ve given them a choice, so a couple times a year they can do that during the regular school day. Um...if a teacher asks to go to a training, like...I just mentioned the art teachers and they wanted to go to AP training, you know. If its something that we can make happen, I mean...the most difficult part of that is getting substitutes. You know, if its on a school day. Um...so...you know, we try to find ways around that, but like, that as an example I...once I got the $600 covered, then I call someone in the district and say, “Can you pay for a sub? Would you please support that”? And they say, “Yes”. I mean...how can they turn it down? Um...and then we try to tailor as much as we can, the 6-10 days that we have during the school year to be productive for our staff.

R: And that’s designed mostly by the administration or the teachers themselves, or a combination of both?
S: It's mostly designed...when we have control over it its designed by that whole team of teachers. And frequently its actually led by our teachers, our teaching staff...you know...like the last couple of times we've had 2...an art teacher and an English teacher who did one. We had a math/social studies teacher who presented a workshop and...you know...and then teachers can choose, kind of, what fits for them in that, so.....

QUESTION 14:

S: Oh, I think I'm proud of my school. Um...yeah, I...I mean...how is it demonstrated? Um...

R: Or how do you demonstrate your...your...your honor at being Principal here?

S: Its easier for us to talk about it, because....I mean, we have people...like right now we have people that are applying for next year. So, we have a captive audience to even just put out there and say...you know...and then...and then... I have one teacher who...um...acts as, like, the PR person. So, anytime students get recognized or a teacher gets recognized...like this year we had 2 national board certified teachers. And so we get that in the community news or in the newspapers...so...um...I don't think we are ever hurting for good PR in terms of that. Um...we also do things like through the [school] board where we have these things called "Breakfast with the Dean". So, a couple times a year we invite community members in. And sometimes...like...one time this year one of the ones we did is the community that's right down here [subject states local community name] and so we have asked the people from the community to have their regular monthly meeting here, and we gave them a tour of the school. You know...and we have another...like the [city] West Rotary is coming in in February and we are going to give them a tour of the school. So we try to do things like that where we're basically marketing and just making people more aware of what we have here. So...

R: Well, [subject], thank you very much, this has been great.

S: Thank you.
Appendix F
Transcript: School A/Subject B
QUESTION 1:

S: In a year or... in a year’s time? I don’t know. We don’t have too many problems. I suppose there’s probably, if there’s more than two or three a year, I’d be surprised. Ah, very little fighting. Um, yeah, really drugs and alcohol maybe three times in a school year. It’s a very small school but also a lot of the kids don’t really bring those problems into school. Um, maybe one or two fights in a very public area like the cafeteria. In a year and that’s about it.

QUESTION 2:

I think so. I think the students feel really secure and safe here. I know the teachers do.

R: Why is that? Why do you feel secure?

S: Cause I think that students are comfortable here and because of the size that it is. Ah, it doesn’t really create room for a whole bunch of cliques. The kids can’t segregate themselves and spread out all over the building cause it’s very small... everything is very small. Um, and I think because our students are grouped by what they are most interested in. I just think it creates a different kind of community.

R: So, you say, that them being all together with the theme does matter?

S: Yes, definitely.

QUESTION 3:

S: Yeah, most of the after school activities all revolve around the arts. Either specific performing groups or, ah, or like in art, we have several different clubs that are associated with visual arts. Um, of course, every school has to have a student government, an honors society and, ah, because we have a partnership with the other magnet school here, sports. Um, seem to be attracting a few students.

R: Um, they can, ah, participate in the sports with the other magnet school?

S: Yeah, the charter school [name]. Um, all the sports are associated with their school so our students can participate?

R: And how bout staff? Is staff excited about getting involved in all these things? Does the staff get involved?

S: Oh, definitely. In fact, there are so many clubs at this school that there’s not
enough ... money for extra responsibility. There's not enough money to go around so a lot of us find ourselves, are finding ourselves, getting paid half of what would be expected to operate a club.

R: How do you feel about that?

S: Well, it's not fair but, Um, everyone is still willing to do it. It's ... the money has never been so good that that's why you did it. It was always just the involvement and doing something extra with the kids.

R: And now are there any clubs that you supervise?

S: Yeah, I supervise, Um, the art honor society... the National Art Honor Society, Um, an art club, and, Um, a, Um, architects and engineers and designers club.

QUESTION 4:

S: I think for the most part ... I think everybody here feels appreciated here by the staff. I mean, I guess there are times when you feel like you really, and I think this would happen in any school, sometimes, the things that you really stuck your neck out the most for seem to be the least recognized. I... it can happen anywhere but, I think, for the most part, we're, you know, our contribution here is very very well acknowledged.

R: So then those issues that you were just talking about... are, they are not so bad that you would seek employment elsewhere?

S: Oh, no. No.

R: Is the morale of the staff good? And describe some of the planned activities to help keep the staff morale high.

S: Well, there's always an ongoing conflict between how much of an artistic institution we can be as opposed to how academic we need to be. And, at times, the art teachers feel their feet getting tramped on or getting squeezed out and I think it probably even happens more to the academic teachers. So, there's also been a little bit of friction ongoing about our identity, like, how artistic are we as opposed to how, um, academic are we. Um...

R: How do you try handling that?

S: Well, it's kind of led to some special interest groups mainly by grade level. And, um...oh, and the other identity crisis is how much of a high school we are and how much of a middle school we are. It's really two, Um, completely different trains of thought as far as how teachers operate and collaborate in the high school as opposed to the middle school. I think there's a... much more room for collaboration among the middle school and, Um, just because of, Um, the nature of the beast. Um, so, there's even a little bit of animosity, Um, between the middle school and the high school.
R: When you say "nature of the beast", what do you mean specifically?

S: Well, middle school is, Um...well, there's common planning periods by grade level and it's to do that kind of community planning that collaborative planning so that, Um, the year can be divided into units. That's impossible to do in high school. Um, possibly because of the schedule...it just can't be scheduled that way. We can't be scheduled to be/ale have planning at the same time. And, ah, I think that, Um, we just have too much to get accomplished in a year that there just isn't that kind of room but those are probably two areas of friction that occur here. Everyone is very supportive of each other...if anybody needed, like, emergency coverage for anything, everybody would be willing to do that more so if a teacher asked a teacher than if the administration asked a teacher. But, we were supposed to have a Christmas party and they...it just kind of fell through. We haven't had one for a couple of years and, I mean, that's just an example of where, you know, you fall out of having something and it's just really hard to get everybody back involved to commit that way. But, Um, I think that the staff is very, um, respectful of one another. Like I said, if I was in a pinch and I had to go pick up my granddaughter, or something, I know I could find, easily find, somebody to cover. Everybody would be willing to help you in a situation like that.

R: What do you think might improve morale a little bit? Besides what you've just mentioned.

S: Well, I actually think the administration has taken some steps, this year, by incorporating some art, insert art training, in some of the professional development inservices. Whereas before, we were kind of always forced to learn about testing and, Um, data driven results and making/meeting test standards in our area of teaching, to the point where we just getting, really, kind of fed up with it and, Um, so I think now the administration realizes that and we're having a much more balanced professional development program.

QUESTION 5:

S: Well, I already told you how easy it is, like, if in a pinch, you needed coverage. Um, I think, um, the students feel very close to the teachers, so they'll be very honest and upfront with situations and problems they're having in other classes. And you never would have a teacher here that would side with a student. I mean, every teacher would be very supportive, and they also know and realize that what they are hearing is pretty one-sided. But, they'll always be very supportive of the other teachers. Um, we do, at Christmas time, we raised a whole lot of money, um, to buy, ah, food for some of the needy families in the school here and it was, um, I mean, it was just all the doings of the teachers. The students had nothing to do with it.

QUESTION 6:

S: Yeah, I think there is a much closer relationship between the students and the teachers here. I think, um, um, at times, they're so comfortable talking to you that they
end up having to apologize for using certain language or, um, something...a phrase that they would use with friends as opposed to a teacher. Um, and I think, when they have a problem in another class, they're real willing to discuss that with another teacher. Um, I see some of my students for, uh, 90 minutes...no, two of my classes are 90 minutes, per day, and then some of those students come in for additional...I have students that I have for four periods lucky for three hours of the day. Half the day I see them. Or over half of the instructional day, they're with me. So, you can't help but to get to know students a lot better in that kind of a situation.

QUESTION 7:

S: Well, I'll answer yes to all of those. Um, we're very college-prep oriented. We have one of the highest, eh, rates for, um, placement in college for students that continue their education. Um, probably the last three years, there's been a real thrust because we have, um, writing standards and the evaluations in the writing have suggested that we need to create opportunities for the students to handle more higher level thinking questions that, um, we do that all the time. It is not unusual for students to write in any of their arts classes. Um, reflect, or, ah, plan, or explain a process, um, it's pretty normal in any arts class. Um, interestingly enough, I'll point out that, um, I have some very bright students in my classes and a lot of them are very committed to the arts which, I think, shocks and surprises some of the academic teachers. And, um, there have been times when teachers have actually tried to, um, um, counsel those students into thinking beyond arts school which drives me and my colleague a bit crazy...cause/just cause they're smart doesn't mean they can't...in fact, it'll just lead to more success through the arts if they are allowed to stay in the arts. But, that has occurred here before.

R: I think that goes along with what you were saying before about that dichotomy or that split.

S: Right.

R: Do you feel that...

S: You know, because some of the academic teachers still feel like a kid is wasting his time in art school. I mean, as much as they support the school and what it stands for, when it comes down to this really bright kid ending up in art school, they just can't seem to fathom that.

R: Do you find that, either in your classes or in your peers' classes, that the kids are meeting the challenge of the curriculum? Are they meeting the rigor? You were mentioning something a little bit before about writing...that the students' writing needs to improve.

S: Well, in the, yeah, through the [state] standardized test, it was reflecting that students need to explain better, they need to incorporate more detail, so, um, higher order/higher level questions kind of encourage that kind of process in writing. Um, you
know, occasionally...I have a ninth grader right now – well, he’s not in my
class...he’s in the other intro class – and he’s not sure he wants to do this much art. But,
his came here – he wasn’t here for middle school but he thought he wanted to come here
because he likes art, but he’s kind of weighing whether he really wants to commit to
doing this much art and working this hard, in an art class, um, as to whether he is
actually going to stay here at this school. So, I think, the standard is very high, and the
students do want to do their best, but, like, with this kid’s case, you know what, he’s not
so sure he wants to work that hard in something that he enjoys like art.

R: Is that a common situation?

S: No, I don’t think so but it does, I mean, it does happen. I mean, art especially
can be very therapeutic and people, um, kids especially, I mean, love it because of the
therapy, but I’m here to teach a lot more than just provide a room/an outlet for therapy.
So, um, maybe in the earlier years, we had a lot more problem conveying what this
program was all about but now, for the most part, I think the students come with
the...with knowing what’s expected and how hard they need to work.

QUESTION 8:

S: Well, the extra mile like...I’ve taken students to tour colleges because their
parents don’t have time to, I’ve, um, ...we work really hard at, um, helping the students
submit portfolios for college, ah, to submit portfolios to competitions. um, to just
encourage them to enter contests and competitions because that's how they get
recognized and that recognition leads to someone taking notice of a college resume. We,
um, yeah, yeah, I think everyone is willing to go to the extra mile. It is not unusual to
see teachers here working with kids past four o'clock, when dismissal is at 2:30, um,
whether it be an academic problem or, um, a project in an arts class or a rehearsal for
something totally outside of, .. The music teacher will assist students with projects
they’re working on outside in the community. She’ll rehearse with them.

QUESTION 9:

S: Absenteeism really isn’t a problem. Um, maybe tardiness by the students
once they start to drive...getting here on time. But, for the most part, they’re all here for
classes. The drop-out rate is very low here, um, probably the lowest in the district for
high schools. And, um, like I said, we have a really high college placement level. I think
there was one student last year that didn’t go to college out of the senior class and that’s
about 80 some students.

QUESTION 10:

S: Up until this year, that was probably pretty inconsistent and everyone would
give you a different answer but now there is a computerized system that calls everybody
when they are absent. So, it happens before lunchtime everyday and it’s the
computerized secretary that calls and reports that their child was absent.
R: Do you have a problem with... Like, how do you handle when students come tardy to your class?

S: I make a note of what time they get there. Um, I ask if they can get a pass they’ll usually admit with. If they can’t, um, supposedly, after three, I give a detention. We’re all supposed to give them that after three tardies. We keep track and then we assign the detention.

R: Have you ever called a parent to explain that this is an issue?

S: Ah, tardiness? Yeah. It doesn’t occur very often. I mean, usually, once they’ve been late, the next time they’re late, it does have a pretty amazing effect. But then there are a few, ah, I have one girl that, I mean, she can’t be on time to probably any class in the building and she... right now she’s suspended for that. So, um, I suppose there’s a few people who just don’t get it and all the detentions in the world aren’t going to change them. They just serve the detentions and come late.

QUESTION 11:

S: That would be the teachers. And, uh... see, this year is so different cause they... we’ve gotten a whole bunch of improvements. We came back from Christmas and we all have phones in our room. So, you can call anytime during the day, you know, which makes it really amazing. But, up until that point, when you were limited to, um, your planning period and after school to get up here to, um, fight over the four phones that we were allowed to use, um, it was probably a little more of an issue. But, um, if anything, it just saves me the trouble of having to do it at home. But, um, it’s just become so convenient for both problems, well, probably more problems the, um... we probably never praise students enough. But, um, I mean, I have made a phone call but, as many calls as I have had, do I make an equal number of calls to praise as I do to complain about behavior? No, it’s probably pretty poor behavior sided. It’s, um, should I do more? Yeah, I probably should. Now that there’s a telephone at the tip of my fingers, I hope to do that more.

QUESTION 12:

S: Curriculum, discipline, and the budget? Yes on the curriculum, um, as long as it falls in with, um, the guidelines of the state. Um, discipline? Yes and no. Um, um, and I guess what I’m saying, and this would happen in any building, the administrators that handle the discipline have a general idea of who the fairest teachers, who the fairest, most consistent, organized teachers are. And when they send a student to the office, I think that there’s more merit to a teacher that is sending people right and left for every little infraction and there are teachers that, there are a few teachers like that, here too. But I think, I think, when I write up a kid if I think they should be suspended, I write that on a post- it note and, nine times out of ten, they do exactly what I suggest. And, um, and at the same time, if for some reason they couldn’t, the administrator will come back and talk to me and tell me why or, um, get more information. So, I do... I think, I think we do, um, and there’s a leadership team of teachers that, um – they’re all the team
leaders – they develop policy. There’s been other years where we’ve had a
discipline committee that would develop policy, um, but now the leadership team does
it. And I, so I think we’re listened to and have, um, input in discipline. Budget? That’s
pretty much set but there’s enough play in the budget that, if you really want something,
you should be able, um … I think we could go to [the principal] and [he/she’ll] find a
way to get it as long as you can convince [them] how important it is.

R: How bout curriculum? What are some ways that the teachers have input in the
curriculum?

S: Well, my colleague and I pretty much have developed the whole art
curriculum, ah, just based on the … um, the six standards from the state are really very
loose and they haven’t…they’ve just started develop a curriculum with, um,
performance indicators that show what a child should be able to do at each level. So,
we’ve pretty much had to develop that ourselves cause that’s just now…um, the art
curriculum is just becoming full and going into effect this year. So, everything…we’ve
pretty much done that at our own level. Now, what we need to do is to compare what
we’ve done to what they’re recommending and, since we’re an accelerated program, we
probably exceed that. So.

QUESTION 13:

S: Um, that would be a yes. I told you about how one sided or uneven the
professional development seemed in the past. But, this year, it seems to be very
balanced and everybody seems to be pretty happy with what we are trying to do. The
leadership team has a much greater say in what our building needs whereas the district
was deciding what needed to be rammed down everybody’s throat last year. Um, ok.
Well, one, ah, good…we have a book club that usually takes a book that takes an
educational topic like, um, we just had a book club that completed Daniel Pink’s book,
um, um, what is it called, “How Right Brain Thinkers Will Rule the World” … that’s
not the, um…”A Whole New Mind”, it’s called “A Whole New Mind.” And, um, it’s
really a very good book for an art school to read because it’s all about, um, um, how the
creative right brain thinking is what the business world needs more now than ever.
And how, in Japan, they’re learning that and now their totally rethinking how they train, um,
people to be managers and stuff. That, um, the West can always supply all of the idea
people…well, they’re tired of that. They want their own …they want to be able to
create/have their own creative, um, division and idea people and they realize that they
just produced fabulous workers. Now, they have to produce fabulous thinkers too. So,
that’s what this book…the premise of this whole book, so it was really good, um, here
especially also after what we went through with professional development last year.

R: Who chose the book?

S: Um, I met Daniel Pink at a conference so I recommended the book, you know.
So, um, there’s an English teacher that runs the book club. She started reading the book;
she said “yeah, this is perfect” so, um, we did that. So, there’s usually, ah, one book that
the book club reads every year and we go out and have dinner somewhere at a restaurant
where we can talk and we talk about different chapters of the book. So, that’s something that people do outside of school.

The state has a cluster system, um, that causes small increases in pay, and, um, it’s an educational program for professional development that a lot of teachers take advantage of. Um, and that’s another area where, um, people get together and work on projects and things. Um, and like I said, the leadership team produces/creates probably 90% of the professional development that we do within the building as opposed to the district always mandating what we are supposed to be doing.

R: What are some of the examples of the professional development that the leadership committee is planning?

S: Um, well, I did a, I led an aesthetic, um…there was a contemporary art exhibit here at the museum gallery, ah, last month. And it was, ah, Iranian and American printmakers, mainly, but it was artists from those two…it was called [exhibit name], um, and a, so it was all contemporary art. Well, a lot of people don’t know how to, um, talk about contemporary art or how to, um, how to read it…you know, what you’re supposed to be looking at when you’re look at modern art. So I did a couple of lessons on, on how, um, how to look aesthetically at artwork and how you can use this as a writing, um, prompt for a writing activity. So, that’s what I did. We had, um, relaxation training one day from the dance teacher…we had, um, relaxation and stress management. Um, and, we try to provide choices so that you had a choice of what to go to instead of having just one thing. So.

QUESTION 14:

S: Ah, well, I think everyone is really proud of the school. Um, um, I think what brings our students their pride – ah, they don’t have sports teams to rally behind but they do, there is some support of the charter teams like the kids, I think, they, we had, um, there’s like six kids wrestling and there were like four kids that played football. And, probably, the more that are involved the more of our students will follow that sport but – our kids take pride in the productions and the art exhibits and the band and, um, and the, um, competitions that they win in those areas.

R: How bout the teachers?

S: Well, the teachers are very proud of, um, our very good, ah, rating due to our test scores. We have really high test scores, um, usually number two to the math and science academy. Like, they’re first in the state, we’re usually second. Um, actually now that some of the schools are starting to become, um, more competitive and better at taking tests we kind of…we’re not in sole possession of second place every time. It fluctuates a little bit so it just makes all of us try a little harder. Um, so, yeah, you know, I think we’re proud of our test scores and our ratings and the students and the staff are very proud of the productions and the accomplishments that come out of…um, I mean, I want my students to get in the best schools and I, I mean, I just, when they do, I think, whether they end up going there or not, um, that just makes us very proud. I have, um,
above my board, I have sort of like the college hall of fame where all the elite art schools that some of our students have gotten accepted to ... and, I’m, I mean, I, I’m always proud when I can add another name to that list. So, you know, I think we’re very proud of our students here.

R: Well, thank you very much for your time.
Appendix G

Transcript: School A/Subject C
TRANSCRIPT: SCHOOL A/SUBJECT C

QUESTION 1:

S: Alright, ah, that’s a pretty good question. I’m… Very little. I think I have been here… This is my fourth year here at this school. And, ah, and I’ve only seen one physical confrontation. I haven’t seen any Um… confrontations like drug ah use or any of the other things like weapons I know that, I mean, that’s not to say I like they haven’t happened. But, as far as me, I haven’t seen it or haven’t heard about it here. I did see one, ah, personally, saw one physical confrontation and I think I heard about maybe two others during the school day and that’s been the four years I’ve been here. So, that’s pretty much it. Yeah. I’m … don’t really get that a lot here.

R: Why do you think that is?

S: Well, I, I think it’s the type of student, they’re just, you know, they want to be here. It’s not like you got to get up for high school. I’ve got to go to high school this morning. You know. You know, some days… I went to private school and even then you would still get up, “Man I’ve got to go to school.” It’s different here because you know those kids audition to get in here. And they, you know, it’s not the same, you know, as the day to day, you know, classes over and over again. You do get something in there that you like. You know, the reason why you wanted to be here. And I’ve taught in other schools before and still it’s so different. You know. Not to say that the kids, you know, the kids are bad or good, you know, compared to another school, it’s just… cause you can get those same kids in that other school. But, if they want to be there, it makes a difference. And that, those kids are… You know the kids here… I love them. They’re great. Ah, they just, you know, come every day. And they have their bad days but they still want, they would rather be here, I think, than in other schools.

R: And you teach, ah, 9th through 12th grade?

S: 9th through 12th. I have mostly 10th graders.

QUESTION 2:

S: I, yeah, I think a lot of the kids here, ah, feel safe and secure. Ah, you know. It’s just a lot of happiness and, you know, Um… guess… safe and secure is probably a good thing. Um… There’s like another word for it too and I just can’t really think of… you know, more than just content. But they definitely, I would say, in fact, to that question, they definitely feel safe and secure. I’m not, you know, saying they don’t but there is probably more to it than that. I think.

R: How bout you?
S: Oh, yeah. Ah, I taught one year at a public school before and it was outside, you know, in [another state]. Ah, grew up in [state of current school], so I never, you know, really been out of state to travel but not anywhere else to live, and, you know, there were fights, ah, just a regular public school, just a local, you know, twelve hundred kids or so. Um...we usually had to break up a fight once maybe every week...or every two weeks. And not that, like, anything personal against me. It was just like, you know, when you do stuff in those situations you wonder if you are going to get hurt. You know. And definitely there were a lot of racial issues involved there too. Um...I mean, it was the South. So, still it was, you know, ah, even today, you know, you still have racial tensions. I mean you can find that anywhere. But, definitely, I don’t feel any threats at all here. None.

R: How’s the racial atmosphere here?

S: What?

R: How’s the racial atmosphere here?

S: Oh. Ah, I think it’s pretty good. I mean, it’s a good mix. Um...we have, ah, a lot of Latino students, more than you think, you know, maybe not some of the other schools, but, Um, we have, we definitely have a large African American population and that’s kind of mixed in. And, really, there’s no, you know, animosity between, ah, any of the races. And it’s just...I think it is fine. I mean that could be just me but I have not seen anything to say otherwise.

QUESTION 3:

S: Well, there’s a lot to do. I mean, for them, after school, especially for such a small number of students in Um...the student body for the high school. I do have to say that you will find some of the same students doing the same...different activities so, it is the same number of students just doing different activities. So, you know, eh, school extracurricular activities...now, a lot of these students here, have their arts extracurricular activities that their own, like the dance majors here, they don’t have a lot...they don’t do a lot with school but they have, on their own, they have dances and, you know, they have, ah, they have to go to dance studio at night like, you know, some private one or something. But, as far as school extracurricular activities, you know, I, I’m student government advisor so I run student council. I also do mock trial. And, you know, you get, you tend to get the same students doing that. So, I’d say it’s small but there’s a...you know, of the ones who do it, they are dedicated. It’s unbelievable. What was the second part of that?

R: Can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S: Yeah, Um...you know, with the sports, it’s a little different here because we share the building with [different school] and they have the sports teams. Um...but our band, you know, we get a lot of, eh, members in that. And you can see a lot of teachers going out to...like, eh, especially when they have a concert, eh, like let’s say the after
school, eh, Jazz chorus. Um...it’s a high school singing group. They have, eh, little concerts outside of school and you can see teachers show up there all the time. You always see them. The, eh, plays we have. Eh, The after school musical. like the musical, we have a musical every year, we have this great show, and we have a couple of other concerts regularly teachers, teachers, are always there. Teachers are always there.

R: Now, do you personally, or have, do you know what happens when you might see a kid who is not getting involved in anything? Do you do anything about it?

S: I see it at a lot because, again, since I am the student government advisor and I do mock trial and I do some other things, I tend to see it more because I think I deal with more of the students on a daily level more than any of the other teachers...not saying they don’t, I just do it more cause I, you know, ah, I’m in those positions. And I try always, I’m always looking for people to come out for student council. I am always trying to get as many people in...you can see, you can just tell the ones that would be good for it and you try to push them a little bit. Some of them respond. Some of them ...for the first time, you get someone for the first time, I remember I had a, ah, girl she wanted, you know, she wanted to do something but she was never really — not that she wasn’t interested — she just kind of, like you know, “I don’t really know. I don’t, you know, have much popularity” but she got involved in student council and she loved it so. You know, I try as much as I can. It’s kind of nice to get new kids.

QUESTION 4:

S: I think the staff here feels appreciated more than any other staffs that, I mean, ...not that I have been on many but of hearing from other teachers that teach at other schools...we’re constantly getting. Um...you know, especially at every faculty meeting or every professional day, we’re always, you know, “we did a good job”, you know, the principal is always telling us we’ve done a nice job. Even the district, you know, our tests scores, for our state test scores, you know, we usually finish, you know, in the top five with like, for the last three or four years, it’s been the top two...like, number two the whole time. [Mumbled] and stuff like that, people come and present to us, and it’s like, you know, hey, we’re doing a good job, “keep up the good work”, it happens a lot. And their, administration is always available too. I mean, if you ever want to talk to them, they’re there. They’re kinda...They’re very supportive of the teachers.

R: How bout you? Um...do you feel acknowledged here?

S: Yeah. Yeah, I definitely do. You, I can talk to them about anything. If I’m...Um...you know, sometimes. I feel like I’m getting too far behind or something, I’m doing, you know, I just don’t think I’m doing enough, you know, they’re there to support you there. They’re behind you 100%. They’re... I haven’t seen any occasions where they’ve, you know, gone with let’s say the district or a parent over a teacher. I’m not saying they wouldn’t but they are always supportive of the teachers. That’s definitely the feeling here.

R: Is the morale of the staff good?
S: Um...Right now?

R: Be honest.

S: Ah, I will. I don’t think as much as it used to be. When I first got here, and, I mean, again a lot of people have been here longer than I have, and it was...and it might have been just because I was young and just new and I wasn’t really noticing anything, but it was fairly good. I just think, I think the one thing that keeps morale, not that it’s low, I think in any other school this would be average morale and maybe even a little bit above average, but in here, I think, since we’re such a smaller staff, we could stand to be better with our morale. I just think with the fact that we’re a middle school and a high school...it hurts because our morale. Not anything else. But, Um...because you just kind of feel its middle school against high school. And it’s also you have the arts against the academics sometimes with the staff. The kids, they don’t even know that goes on...you know, they don’t even see that. They don’t, like, cause they’re all arts kids and all academics kids, they’re the same thing. But the teachers aren’t. The teachers are academic somebody like I’m history and there’s another art teacher. Sometimes you have a little bit of that...it could be, you know, they just want to work out...there’s compromise and a lot of compromise here because of the scheduling, you know, the art teachers want more and the academics want more. And I think that sometimes that weighs on the morale a little bit.

R: Um...can you describe any activities that might help to mitigate that or to help the morale along?

S: Yeah, I think, ah, maybe some more Um...I guess common time with everybody, together. You know, a lot of times we have those professional days or faculty days, you know, it’s a, you know, either you have some presentation you got to listen to or some professional development or you have a, time to work in your room. I think that maybe some morale building as far as like, you know, team, like organizational things where you get together and do something like team building. I just don’t think there’s not a lot of that going on. I think that might actually help a little bit.

R: Has there been anything to address those issues that you mentioned about the spread between the middle school and the high school and the academic and, ah, the vocational?

S: Well, I think that, you see, I think that’s fairly new. This year it’s been more noticeable. You know, Um, like I said, when I was first here, it was great. It was a high. Ah, I mean, because I was new and I didn’t notice it, but, Um, it’s fairly new and I think that we started actually this year having, ah, a monthly, like, breakfast with everybody. You know, like a whole team thing. Like, you go in the library or after school, like, you know, a monthly, not like a party, but like a gathering. And just, you know, get everyone together. I think more can be done. And I just think, you know, I still think it’s early. I don’t think it’s completely awful. But I think it needs to...maybe...a little
bit more before it gets that way... not, you know, I don’t know if it will or not. But, you know, I think a little bit more. And, but it is being attempted right now so we’ll see.

R: So the administration is aware of these things?

S: Oh, yeah. They’re not ignoring it. I think they’re just thinking of different things and the good thing about the administration; they the leadership team here. And, Um, they consult the leadership team. There’s like a number of teachers on it – I think there’s like four or five teachers on that and they work together. That’s the good thing. You know, they are, they’re always trying to work on things. That’s the best part of it. They don’t let it get to where it shouldn’t get.

QUESTION 5:

S: Oh, I think they are very respectful to each other. You said students and teachers?

R: Yeah, students to teachers, teachers to students. Teachers to administrators, administrators to teachers.

S: I think the students to teachers, like, the students here, I think, are a little bit more willing to work a little bit harder for the teacher cause they, you get, since it is just such a smaller staff, and they get more one on one time with the teachers, not that it is great, I mean, it could be better. But, if you are comparing it to another high school there’s more time with your teacher than you do at another school if given the chance. And I think they respect that and they like that. So they feel...they always feel a need like to do better for you. And the teachers and administration, I think it’s, I think it’s great. You know, I have, never have a problem where, you know, I respect the principal and the assistant principal. They’re always willing to help. So, I don’t see anything wrong with that.

R: How bout teacher to student?

S: Oh, teacher to student? I think, I think most of the teachers, you know, I can’t speak for all of them, ah, I think I respect my students a little bit more than I would in other schools. Because of what...you know, their schedules are demanding. You know, they have a lot of stuff to do in a day and then they have a lot of them again. Like, they go at night, and they have, you know, some dance class to go to at night, or some other thing they have to go to, a drama club [mumbled] or something. They’ve got a lot on their plate and they get everything done. So, I think teachers, not that we expect more out of them, you know, but I think we respect them a little bit more because they do all their work with all that balancing, you know. And the kids that don’t have the arts stuff...they do have...a lot of the kids here work...and you know, and they get their stuff done. So, I think they respect them a lot.
QUESTION 6:

S: I think students feel very comfortable talking to their teachers here. Again, like I said, with the one on one thing, you see it more. It's almost like...a lot of teachers here...almost like kind of double as guidance counselors and we've got a great guidance counselor too. It's just that, you know, she's one person and the school is like 400. You know. And I think they get on a more respectful level with a teacher that they've had maybe for a couple of years and they can...I do have kids over and over again. In another high school, you might get that kid once and never have them again. But I've had students here for three years, you know, and you see them more and more as they get...it's almost like they get a comfort level with you and they have no problem, you know, talking you things about. You know, looking for advice for things outside of school, you know, they're always looking for help. So, not just school work, you know, I think that is pretty high here.

QUESTION 7:

S: Ah, definitely college-prep level here. Ah, we don't have any general level classes. If you go to another, again, another school in the district, or some other school, they have the general level/they have college-prep honors, we don't...our lowest level is college-prep. And, you know, honors is very...I think honors here is a little more difficult than in some of those schools and we stress a lot of the AP classes. You know, I teach three...two but I have three classes; I have two classes of AP European History and a class of AP Government and there is a lot of higher order thinking going on; not just in the AP but even in the college-prep and honors. You know, that's the one thing...I think that's...as younger teachers, we've been stressed that in college when we were, you know, studying. I remember me/my class...they were always on that with higher order thinking. That wasn't too long ago but they were on that a lot. And, ah, the third part of that question?

R: How bout when you teach? Um...do you stress the higher order thinking skills?

S: Yeah, I do. Yes, especially because we do a lot of discussion. I'm not big on, like Um, you know, differentiated instruction is good and everything, and I do it once in a while, but I think, you know, if you get more of the students involved in the lesson at once, you know, like, we talk about a lesson. It's not just/really a lecture but if I have some sort of Power Point going, we talk about it. And we get a lot of...I usually throw out questions just out there that aren't in the book, they're not anywhere else again things to challenge their thinking to go a little bit deeper. And, they're good with it...they like talking in front of their classmates and things like that. They're very good with...these students here are very good with discussion. I've been at other schools where they're not so...you know, they kind of like hesitate and need just to do their regular work. You know, they're good at discussion. I would think.

R: And the students here...they meet the curriculum? Like, they can handle the curriculum?
S: I think so. I think they can handle it. I think a lot of students can handle curriculum anywhere, they just need to do it. They need to try it. And I think, we just...it's almost like we just force it and they do it. You know, I think they all can do it, and they try to meet as much as they can. There's a lot of hard workers here that may fall by the weigh side I think at another school cause they don't have to...it's just like "OK, I'll just take the lower class." Like, a lot of students here...that's why I have two sections of AP Europe because so many of them take that challenge. And, they do well. You know, they try real hard. I mean, they may not get A's all the time but they're going to try real hard.

QUESTION 8:

S: I think 75%, I think 75% of the teachers here stay, I mean, late hours just to help somebody. Um, I stay until like 4:30/5:00 o'clock. Ah, a lot of teachers stay. I mean, there are only like two or three off hand I can say that leave after the bell rings...they go home ten minutes later. Everybody else, you walk up and down the hallway, you're going to see a student in with a teacher. You know, you're going to see...a lot of...I email. Ah, I give my students my email address. Um, honestly, I think, some students, ah, it depends on their level, ah, like high school like seniors or AP. I have...on my syllabus, I give them my cell phone number. And, you know, if there's a problem with the work or something and they can't get to me and they really need something desperate, I'll/I don't even mind them calling me. I know that some teachers kind of look down on that but, you know, that's just personal style. I think it's easier if they can contact you when they need some help. So, I don't mind. I go, whatever they need, I there's my first priority. So.

QUESTION 9:

S: Drop-out rate, I think, is very minimal. We've had, I think, 98% and more of our students...and I've been here four years. Ah, the first two years I was here, actually, the first two or three, Um, 100% graduated. And then, I think, maybe there's one but that wasn't, actually no, they all graduated. College...98% went to college. And I think a couple other ones went to the military. So, all of, you know, no problem with the drop-out rate here. Um, absenteeism this year is getting a little bit...not that it's horrible but, again, I would say it's bad because you notice it more when you are in a school full of students who tend to come to school a lot. There's a couple of students...it seems like the seniors, I mean, it's just maybe it's senioritis, or whatever, but, you know, a lot of them, a lot of them already missed, you know, fifteen, or fifteen to twenty days already and, you know, we're not even close to the end of the second quarter. So I think it's not terrible, but you see it. You are going to get a lot of absentee... and you also you do get it because of the arts oriented, oriented thences. A lot of the kids sometimes have shows [mumbled] requires them into a day show for/they're doing it for, like, an out of town production that does not involve the school at all. They're doing it for days so they miss for that too. So you do see a little bit of absenteeism out there. I mean, it's not, I guess it's the same as other schools but you notice it more because there are less students.
R: What do you, as a teacher, try do to address that?

S: It’s tough. I mean, that’s the one thing that I have trouble with. I mean, that’s my toughest thing cause I’m not the most organized person/teacher in the world. I mean, I, my desk is a mess and my table is a mess but it is kind of like controlled because I know where everything is at. [Mumbled] But my hardest part is just getting those things made up...just making up tests. You know, and I try, and my syllabus, I, for myself, you know, so I can be more organized, I put in a policy on, you know, you miss a certain amount of days...You know, say you miss three days, well you’re going to get three days when you get back. It’s just...It’s so hard to get...cause I rely on the students to say “hey, you/I missed a test. I need to take it” cause I will/I’m going to flat out. Now other teachers I know some of them are good about it. They write their name, the kid’s name, on the test right away when they miss and they have it ready for them. I, you know, I just rely on the kids to tell me. They’re generally pretty good with it but it’s something I could probably do better at.

R: Do you contact the parents at all about it?

S: Yeah, when it gets really bad. I do. You know, if it is a couple of days or so, you know, it’s not a problem but when it starts getting like chronic like OK, they’ve missed...let’s say, you know, once a year, there’s always one student who misses a day every time there is a test. It just happens. And that’s when you notice after the first couple of times, like, OK, they’re generally getting sick on the day of the test. It’s not...You know, so, you know, you email the parents, you know, definitely. And they/you know...and the kids are usually good about it. The ones that do that usually make it up the next day. It’s just that I think they need another extra day. But, you let their parents know that, you know, every time they’re absent or they’re telling you they’re not feeling good it’s because we have a test today. So.

QUESTION 10:

S: OK, that I know is an automated system. When there is ah, a student absent...it’s in...because we have online attendance and we put it in online, and, I think, and I’m not exactly sure what time it is, it maybe some time around between ten and eleven, or maybe ten and twelve...I know it is before lunch...I believe that a call goes out. It just, you know, it’s like an automated call and it leaves a message [mumbled] “your son or daughter is not here today”. And the other thing is, this year, it just added the online grade book. Parents can actually access the grade book from home. They have a website and they have a password they can use. And it shows you what days they were late and what days your student was absent. It’s actually pretty cool. You know, that’s something new. So, it’s not...because a lot of times they miss the call. The kids will come home and they’ll erase the message that they were absent. This time, the parents and the students have a different password for that online grade book. So, the parents can go on anytime and check and see when the kid is absent or late or, like, look at what the grades are. I think it’s one of the best things we’ve implemented this year. It’s a whole district wide thing.
QUESTION 11:

S: I think that is both administration and just teachers. Um, you know, like, a lot of teachers here and myself, ah, you know, we definitely either make a call or an email about a student struggling. You know, we have interims. You know, I don’t know what they call them in the main office but, you know, the progress report in the midterm – between/in the middle of each marking period. And, ah, they help but even before that, because sometimes they just go out too late, like they’re in, and then they don’t get mailed until a week later. So, like, by the time you get them, it is almost two and a half/three weeks before the marking period ends. [Mumbled] So, the student strategy is to use email; A parent will email; a parent will call. Ah, if it’s, you know, usually in the second or third quarter, starting to get towards the end of the year, sometimes, the administrator will make the call and say, “you know what... you know, they’re just not... maybe a little bit more help there.” But, you know, it’s a lot. A lot of the students are doing well [mumbled] especially on the interims. I give the kids extra, you know, like, little boosts, put some comments, or whatever, and say, “Hey man, they’re doing a good job”, you know, we have commendations where we give them, if they are doing a really good job. And I tend to do that a lot, if kids are doing well, cause they need to know they’re doing well and sometimes you just tell them they’re doing bad all the time. It’s whatever.

QUESTION 12:

S: I think curriculum definitely. Ah, you know, we are always having faculty meetings and team meetings and leadership meetings and professional development days. I know with even the district, you know, for our district, I’m on the social studies curriculum team and its teachers in the district developing the curriculum. So, in this district and this school, I think teachers have more than a majority of the say in the curriculum about what goes on. Discipline? I think they have somewhat of a say. Um, you know, maybe 25%, maybe less... because/but we do... you know, when we have a problem with a student, we do recommend what the student should receive whether it is a detention or, you know, a suspension. And they take it up for consideration. 85/90% of the time, it is what you requested. So, I think, somewhat there but, if, you know, sometimes, if it’s something that broke a specific rule, they follow with what the book says, you know. With the budget one? Teachers really don’t have a say. Um, I mean, we say what we want and they try to get us what we want. I mean, they request what we want for teachers... [mumbled] “what do you need for the next year”... “what do you need now.” And we fill out the forms and everything but we may not get it all because we may not have the money. But, you get to, at least, get an input of what we want. It doesn’t mean we’re going to get it but, at least, we can tell them “you know, hey, this is what I need and this is what I’d like to have” but, as far as getting it, you know, it’s not really up to us.
QUESTION 13:

S: Ah, I think in the past year, there's been a lot of staff development. I think it's something...our district is kind of in some financial trouble right now and I think, as far as outside of the school...We have a lot of school staff development. Our faculty days, our faculty meetings on Wednesdays, that we have once a month, they're not just faculty meetings, like, "hey, you know, what are we doing"; they're usually staff development days. They're usually something for professional development or staff development. So, they are for the use in the school. For the district, like, out of school wise, there's kind of few anymore. And, the one thing I did like about when I was in [another state] in a regular public school, you know, the district did pay when [mumbled]...a social studies conference on the other side of the state to pay for room and board and everything. You don't really get that chance here. If you have to go somewhere for, like, a conference, or something, that will help you as a teacher, you know, you've got to put up your own funds. So, you don't see a lot of it. You know, last year, like a really, like a well established teacher who has kind of got the money, you know, and the years to do it...but you don't really see that much as far as out of school staff development. I kind of wish there was more of that...but any school staff development.

R: Such as?

S: Um, usually a lot of it is on integration with the arts. How you can integrate, you know, your lessons with arts. And it's kind of cool. You know, we did a thing down in the gallery. Um, we did a...a lot of our teachers went to Japan, ah, for the Fulbright Memorial Scholarship, ah, for three weeks, and he came back and gave us kind of like, [the Fulbright Scholars on staff], you know, matched up everything like what they did. It was a really good course. It helps you and you can use stuff in your class too. So, a lot of stuff that can help you use in the classroom. A lot of arts oriented integration. Um, a lot of technology, ah, staff development, you know, new things, especially with the new grade book thing. You know, a lot of stuff that is going to help us everyday.

R: Who is leading a lot of the professional development?

S: Usually it's a teacher who did the professional development or, it's a, they get somebody from district office who, let's say, when they were teaching us the new, ah, grade book system...it was someone from district office that was trained on it and everything. So, it's usually someone from district or its, ah, a teacher...you know, teacher run which is kind of cool cause, you know, it's tough. I think teachers are the hardest people to teach too. I think people think the students are but the teachers are the worst. They never shut up. You know so especially in talking. So, it's actually nice to have a teacher, another fellow teacher, actually do one of those staff developments cause you, you know, I think you pay more attention. They know what you are looking for, you know, they're not going to make it boring and they're going to actually give you something that you can use in the classroom. I think it's better than the district ones.
QUESTION 14:

S: I think...here, I think they're proud of the school a lot. I'm proud of the school. I mean, it's nice to be...you know, it's demonstrated usually when you go to a, um, like a district wide, ah, thing with other teachers. You know, like, where you always stand up and say "Hey, I'm teaching at so and so academy" and they just look at you like "Ah, Man I wish I was there." You know, look. I mean, the past four years, again, ranked number two in the state test scores, and they know the kids are, not that...I hate saying this, but they're better or that they're well-behaved, they are, but it's just that I think it's a product of the school, you know, not because of who they are. It's just a product of the school. Ah, you can take, you know, a kid that maybe has behavior problems in another school and stick them here, it's different. They make act different. You know, they just generally are different here. I think a lot of teachers recognize that outside of district so, when you see them, they're kind of, like, you know, "that's nice", you know, they are always like, pretty envious and jealous of you for teaching there. I've gotten it a couple of times and I'm sure that the teachers who have been here longer have gotten it a lot. So, you do recognize it and parents, um, the parents, kind of thank you for teaching here. You know, they, you get more thank yous, I guess, from parents than you would in other schools. I'm not saying that the other parents don't thank you...but you just see it more and they kind of respect you a little bit, so. You know, interesting.

R: Good. Thank you very much. This was great.
Appendix H

Transcript: School B/Subject A
TRANSCRIPT: SCHOOL B/SUBJECT A

QUESTION 1:

S: In the eight years that I have been here, I've had no weapons offenses, um, I've had, um, run the question again? Alcohol no, weapons no, physical disturbances, you know, maybe somebody pushing and shoving. I can think of one suspension for that in eight years. And, I, I can only think of having one other time having a student tested for drugs which came back negative.

R: OK. And why do you think this is the case?

S: Um, one of the things I think that I found which is unique with the student body here is that...uh...most of these students come from whole nuclear families. I mean, there's a percentage that's single head of household, but...uh...when, cause I look through all the information that's here, especially on a school master, and I can look at Mr. and Mrs. Whose got OK for pick-up, you know, whose got custodial care, I mean, its all done on machine. But...uh...the great preponderance of these students come from whole nuclear families that may or may not be, but I just find that's an unusual occurrence when you think of the rates of single family...uh...households. Um..and I just think that the other kids that are here, you know, I mean, I've heard of parties on the weekends and somebody comes in, oh yeah, you know, somebody was all fuzzy on it. You don't hear about it happening here. It just doesn't.

QUESTION 2:

S: Very much so. Matter of fact that's something that students will tell me. They'll just tell you, "I feel safe here". I mean, kids leave their laptops, their pocketbooks there, their calculators, their ipods. I haven't had a theft...we lose stuff all the time, and we'll go look, and we'll find it or they, you know. "I left that right there", I'm telling you [subject name], "I left it sittin' right there" and then we'll put an announcement out, that they're looking for an ipod, it's a pink one, and, you know, we know who owns it, if you can help us, and 10 minutes later it comes in the office. It was in the Library. You know, it wasn't where they said it was. The kids, I think, have that...unfortunately at times, they have that great feeling of safety. But yet, when my students go down to the Health and Phys Ed center, which is off campus, which is now with 10,000 adults running around here, and they'll take their wristwatch and leave it in an unlocked locker and come back and find it missing. So, every time we leave the building, if we're going down to the PE center, for whatever reason, it's the first thing. You got your gym gear? Leave all your stuff here. Most of 'em take stuff off and leave it on the table here. But now they know not to take it down there. So, in one way they've become so comfortable that if they ever went back to a, you know, real high school, it would be a real learning curve. A little bit.
QUESTION 3:

S: Absolutely. Matter of fact, [mumbled] These are the, I mean, national honors society, student council, project Lead The Way, peer mediation, model UN club, peer tutoring, chess club, GALS...that's interesting, I'll come back to that. Spanish honors society, uh, mastermind media. My varsity team in soccer, here's a school with 144 students. I have 43 students participating on varsity and junior varsity. I have girls who play on the men's league. We were gold division champions. Here's a school, right, that these kids don't play through the ranks and through buddy ball, and they move their way up, and then they're playing rec league, and then they're playing junior high, and then they're playing high school. There's kids that come here that never played soccer that played on a championship team this year. Um, safe schools committee, mock trial heroes, that's about drunk driving. That's where you have somebody assume control, take it, and, you know, that's where that John Elliott, uh...he had just graduated from Annapolis, and, uh, he was coming home, cause his family lives in [the state], and he was killed by a drunken driver. Uh, he had graduated literally that afternoon from Annapolis. Um, and where we actually have a whole group here, we've met with Mr and Mrs. Elliott, and it was a state police initiative that you would actually, you know, go out and push this with other people to be part of the heroes team. Uh, the foundation golf club, the math league, the science league, yearbook, robotics, conflict interaction, drama, ping-pong, intramural sports. Um, we have, its, we encourage everyone to be involved. Um, I have a first year teacher. She's trying to start a future business leaders of America. I have a debate club. I have things that aren't even listed there. Um...why? These kids need these outlets. I try to make sure that we do not develop a one-dimensional person. You know, looks good like this and then it turns like that and there's no substance to it. I have those students that just go home and study. They get their straight A's and they don't get into the national honors society because they have no community service. Which I gotta find out what I did with that envelope that that girl gave you this morning, its right here. Uh, and, uh, the thing about it is that we encourage it, I mean, uh, we have pedals for progress here, where we collected bikes from all over the townships here and we donated 76 bikes that were going to be containerized, then shipped to South America, and, I mean, girls and guys...they learn how to take bikes apart and put them in storage, shipping, and everything else. And they had a great time. We had a barbeque going, and the kids were in shorts and they were just having a great time. But I think that says a certain amount of community involvement, like wow, like, those people don't even have a bike, you know, um. We spend a lot of time, I think, with these youngsters. They need it, but they also accept it and they follow through with it. They're, it's a, I try to give them a dimension, and, um, I think we're very successful at it.

R: Excellent. Excellent. Um, then, how about staff? Can they regularly be seen at these activities?

S: Absolutely. Um, if you're an advisor, it's a paid position. But there's a lot of them that are not paid positions, like the ping-pong club and GALS. Girls against low
self esteem. We happen to, I happen to take 6 young girls every year, 6 young ladies
every year to the knack yack, the, um, whatever this is. It's the National Council on
Alcoholics and Drug Dependence. And we go there every year and they do terrific, I
mean, absolutely terrific seminars. Its an all day program. And, uh, the girls came back
after, you know, they had some women tell them the struggles of their life and what
happened, and that they're, you know, it's a tough road to hoe, what you have to do.
And they came back and they actually melded that a little bit differently. I mean, you
have 47 girls here in a very competitive tough environment. And a lot of them get
stressed out. And a lot of them, you know, just get frustrated they can't compete. But
[teacher name] who is my Health/Phys Ed teacher and varsity coach actually. And, uh,
she worked at putting together a package for them where they can talk to each other or
bring people in and they had their own day where they could just, they, they, after
school they brought in different foods, they did henna, they just relaxed as girls and they
didn't have any pressure on them. And its one of the things that I think, that's what kind
of makes us unique in a way, because if I had a student come to me and say, "You know,
we're gonna open a group [mumbled] really think that we wanna do this". "OK, fine,
see if you can find an advisor and get somebody to do it and we'll take it on". Um, that,
I'm just telling you that I think that's a unique thing with academies. I can't say that all
of them have the same things we do. I can only tell you what I'm doing. But, I've never
said no to any student here. We may get to no at the end, but I'm never going to say no,
let's stop right there.

QUESTION 4:

S: Um, my door is always open. And you saw where I had my office out in the
lobby because that's where we get a lot of traffic and a lot of stuff done. We get stuff
set up for the day. You know, you get students applying, or I gotta get this for my
college app. You know, its great, see first of all I do both lunch duties. And that's
because you get a chance to wade in to the kids, and you see them, and you find out
what's going on. My staff here, I think, the greatest praise you could ever issue to an
educator is when my alumni come back, and they go to [teacher name], who you
interviewed, and say to him, "I have to thank you for preparing me for school because its
unbelievable how comfortable I feel in that chemistry class". Or, in that math class, or
during Calc I, I'm doing Calc II now and you, my Calc I was tougher with you. Um, I
think that's where the teachers, uh, they get their satisfaction. I know that I do. My job
as an administrator is not to make them better teachers. Its to give them everything they
need so that they can go as far as they can go to teach their subject area. That's what,
I'm like a facilitator. Um, some people don't like that thought or that concept, but that's
what it is. Um, you don't see me necessarily...I mean, I love, I just...yesterday I was up
in Bio and they're doing DNA extractions and using a micro pipette. And they're
doin'...its [mumbled] they're using various, uh, concentrated colored chemicals, that
they're doing with them. I mean, the kids are just glued to it and they're just
watchin' it...and they've got, they're actually applying a low voltage across the face of
the gels, so that's what actually moves it, separates it. And they, they...kids are on it.
They're just lookin' at it, and they're talkin' about it and they're, they're focused on it.
And that's what happens. I think it becomes infectious. And then a teacher goes,
"Wow, you know, I taught that, and look at these kids, and they're like, right there".
That gives you that immediate feedback. I don’t think there’s anybody, uh, who would be in education that wouldn’t get a rush from watching somebody take what you’ve given them and it just draws you into it. Because, all of a sudden, there...wow, you know. And that’s how I got involved in education. I mean, you’d like to be able to teach something, I could teach you something, and then you could turn around and teach it to somebody else. Man, you made it.

R: Right. Do you think that the staff does feel appreciated?

S: I'm just telling you I would have to think that they do. I mean, you’ve interviewed them. I would hope they would say that. Um, I tell them at every faculty meeting, you know, that this was a great job, or, you know, the science league is doing great, you know, under your leadership. Uh, I make sure over the holidays that I, you know, I express my thanks to them. I may not actually say the word to them. I think they have to realize they are in a pretty special place.

R: Is the morale of the staff good? Describe some possible planned activities that help keep the morale high.

S: Um, we...its interesting...uh, we had, uh, the teachers set up a Christmas lunch away from here. I won't mention where we went, but, uh, about half the staff goes there. I mean, everybody has their own...you know, its tough. I know that when I started in 1975, I mean, like as a group, we would all go together. You, know, like on Wednesdays we would go someplace, and um. Here, a lot of people, their time is just being drawn in so many different directions. So, I mean, like we do Culture Day here. A really neat experience. At 1:30 at the end of our teaching day, and we encourage kids to bring in a chaffing dish of some unique food related to their culture. And if you wish, you can dress up in your culture. So, I mean, we had people here in Polish garb or German, or Italian or, or, from Israel or...and they actually had this and we actually set up areas, like, this is middle European, and you're gonna have Kielbasi and sauerkraut and you're gonna have Pierogies and your gonna...and they had bobka and they, I mean. And the amazing thing is...and they had people who do dancing, an some sang...sung songs in their language. And you just look at that...I don’t think it could work anywhere else. But it works here. And the teachers just wade in and they're talking to the kids and their finding out about this food, and you know, whether its Indian or Pakistani, or Asian...whatever it is, I mean. We had food from...they had, um...in the lobby actually, um, Portuguese. Each was better than...and all the kids eat. I mean, its from 1:30 to 3 o'clock and then we have our NHS pinning of officers and then we always have our last round-up for our fall sports, uh, which we unveiled our, uh, championship winning, um, placard that was installed and we, matter of fact, all got our championship jackets. Its something that [bell rings] the teachers are involved. They do come into that.

Well, I think one of the things is that, uh, we do have teacher appreciation week, um, our educational foundation buys then a beautifully catered lunch. Um, we do things here for the holidays, um, we have cookies, we have cake, I have bagel breakfasts for them. You know, to thank them along the way. Food is always a good motivator.
Um, but again, um, there are groups that get together, whether its picnics or we actually have an entire school wide picnic in June where we actually have the student’s parents and staff go to that. Um, and also prospective incoming Freshman students can actually come. So, we have like 180 or 200 people...and its fully barbequed catered picnic, its usually in June. And its in, its off of [street name], in [local town] where we actually take the permit to park out. And we’re there all day.

QUESTION 5:

S: All you have to do is just watch how they treat each other. I mean, you’ve been in the building so you can just see it. Um, I actually...its interesting that if another student saw somebody leaning with their foot on the wall, a student would say, “Don’t do that”. Um, even when you look at our bathrooms and they’re pristine...its 8 years old this building. I think that the way they’re treated, the way they...they may never have expected it, but they’re treated as a young adult. Their opinion counts. Um, whether it’s the staff...I’ve never had somebody, you know, get all bent out of shape and leave in an outburst. You know, I’ve had...students might get into a discussion with a teacher at the end of the period about something that might have been discussed, but, no, you just...it’s a...I liken this whole school, and I say that to the parents, when actually we’re starting the whole process of beginning to come in, I said, “its like a family”. I said, “You know, we all might not like one another, but we’re certainly going to get along with one another”. And I think it just kind of runs through it. Um, I, you know, I know all the kids names and I always address them, you know, as Mr. or Mrs., or you know, Miss, and, uh, and the thing there is that uh, they know that when I call them by their first name there is an issue. So, we could...its, I think its self-fulfilling. If you put it together and plan it, it will fulfill what you plan. If you don’t have a plan, or you allow it to happen, then you will get what you allowed to happen. Um, you know, uh, at times, you know, it starts getting warmer and the girls wearing shorts or the guys are wearing shorts, whatever, and, you know, I mean, its not unusual for a teacher to say, you know, “One hand above your knee”, or you know, “the hip-huggers are great but they’re not gonna be here”. Or Juicy, you know, that ain’t happening. And, they understand. They don’t give you a hard time about it. It’s a neat group of kids. It really makes you think that we’ve got a great future ahead of us because you get kids like this who are gonna be in all important phases of our future lives.

QUESTION 6:

S: Absolutely. Matter of fact, you’ll see at the end of the day if you stayed late enough, till 3:30, that, uh, at times you would actually see kids give each other a hug, you know, “See you tomorrow”, you know, “I know it was a rough day, we did this or that”. Um, but I mean, they are respectful. I mean, I’ve got a lot of athletes that are out here participating in our other school districts. You know, they’ll come in, you know, give each other a big pat on the back. “Hey, that was great. I read about it in the paper”, or something like that. And...it’s a unique group of kids here and I think, you know, when I go up to [another district] and see [another administrator’s] group up there, I go down to [another district] and I see their schools down there, I think it draws a unique
individual to this school. I mean, that’s one of the things I was gonna show you.
Oh, here it is as a matter of fact. That, you know, when you look at all the top schools,
now this is off a year old, but when you start to look at it, this is by the [state newspaper]
report. Now, mind you, this is for the ’05-’06 school year. Here’s the top 10 schools in
the state, and here it is. There’s an academy, an academy, an academy, an academy, an
academy. There’s one public high school. An academy. There’s us. Now here’s
another, I mean, top rate…you know, so you got…here’s your…your probably top 3
high schools in [state] surrounded by academies. Its, its one of those things that I just
think that we attract a group of kids that just blend together well.

R: And now, how does adult staff, teachers and administration, how do they
interact with the kids?

S: Something that we work on all the time, um, and I ask them to be very very
cognizant. I mean, I cover that every year in my opening faculty meeting, that, just
remember, that you’re talking to a young adult, and you never want to be
condescending. You never want to put something down. “Oh, you don’t want to go to
county college” and you find out their entire family graduated from the county college.
Um, cause we’ve had that actually occur. And, I said, everybody is just kind of…they
get to their point that they feel they made that, that, what’s the best way to explain it,
that uh, that was their target, that they’ve met their target, and they have successfully
gained that target. It is never your right to say, “that’s not your target”. So the thing
there is, is that, you know, we do and, you know, sometimes, especially like, when
they’re talking about national honors society and they’re starting to look at community
service, and they’re talking about 15 or 20 kids, and you have to be very very cognizant
of what you’re saying, where you’re saying it, and how you’re saying it. So, it is
something, that I do probably at least twice a year, cover at a faculty meeting on an
agenda. And its maybe, its not even necessary, but I find that I feel better when I say it.
Because I may be goofy with the kids sometimes, and say some things, you know, ie:
knucklehead, you know, “What are you doing? You could have done better on that test
than that”. But I think you have to…it was…you wanna talk about something really
wild? We had some program going here, and it just came out, its just my upbringing. I
said, “You can’t run around like a bunch of Indians”. And everybody stops. I said,
“Not that kind of Indians. I’m talking about the other kind....”. And they go, “Oh,
OK”. You know. You know what I’m talking about.

QUESTION 7:

S: Yes, yes, and yes. First of all, one of the beauties of having to design this, I
had the luxury of having [name] who is the chair of the math department, [name] who is
the chair of the English department, [name] who is the chair of the science department
here at this college, they, along with unique individuals that I hand picked, not these
instructors, who I hand picked to be on curriculum teams, because that is my prior life,
that I actually sat with them and I tasked them to…I wanted them to get to a point where
we would have a seamless transition moving on to college. Everything we talk about
here, we sound like were talking about college...You’re going to matriculate into your
major, you’re going to write a letter to [teacher name] talking about your strengths and
weaknesses as to why you should be taking electronic and computer engineering or civil and mechanical. My teachers have office hours; office hours are from 8:35 to 8:55 every morning. Its things that what we do but our program, I believe, is not only college prep but, my English, math, science are honors because of the additional time, writings, readings, and assignments. And that, our expectations...we have never once ratcheted it back one click. We’ve actually ratcheted it up.

When I look at my overall student, uh, application procedure here to this school, students who entered in the fall of 2000 might not have made the hurdle in the year 2008 and the reason I can tell you that is that, when I can find it, there’s someplace here, my detailed statistical analysis of...this was my first graduating class and I can tell you what their 8th grade GEPA scores were, what their 9th PSAT’s are, what their HSPA scores were, what their SAT’s are so I can see if there is any kind of continued growth and I look at what our, ah, admission score was – private, parochial or public school – what was their standardized test score when it was taken in their 8th grade, and I can look at this overall. So, we’re looking at a 1288 SAT but as we start to move on, 12-94, and, again, my classes, we can actually see some students who stayed flat across here and we begin to question why, I mean, very high functioning students. It’s hard to believe that you can spend four years here and not have any growth. But maybe they were so high that even this was boring. Um, but we actually have [mumbled] – I always want to look at where we’re going – and that you can see the, you know, 1905 to 1992 to 1998. Now, this year we’re going to be in the stratosphere over 2000. And, again, I can see the growth and things that are in it. So that, in our math scores, here in this building, we’re 98% advanced proficient HSPA, um, I mean, that’s not some let’s jump up and down benchmark but it is by the state as far as the assessment is. Our language arts is 82% advanced proficient.

Um, I have, I think, we have developed a fairly rigorous curriculum so much to the point that we’re at – when I started in 2000, we had physical science and Biology...physical science morphed into environmental science. The Bio morphed into a very structured 12 dissection two hour and 15 minute laboratory experience. My physics morphed from a straight physics to an integrated physics so it has more hands on, it has more learnings associated with what’s happening in the career majors. I have taken my other course, um, let’s just use Algebra II, [teacher name] talking about matrices in Algebra II and they go down into, uh, electronics and they’re actually doing matrices in the development of their program. They go “look at the relevancy of it”. Um, our electives here, like in technical writing or in creative design or creative writing, we you can actually take, uh, if you are working on a technical document for perhaps your independent research project, you can actually learn the ins and the outs of writing/doing the technical writing that comes with it.

I think we have an excellent handle on it. Um, I’ve gone through three science teachers here. And, um, in my beginning science because it just wasn’t what I felt would fit at the level and a complexity and what I wanted in a laboratory experience. Um, I’ve gone through two language arts teachers here.
R: So, if I can interject, would you say that those original teachers were, more or less, dumbing down the curriculum for the students? Or, why wasn’t it a fit?

S: I'll use one as an example. I won't give you the subject. People have told me that I expect nothing less than perfect. I've been told that. I kind of say that in not so many words. When I know you only have 88 minutes in front of a class, I value every one of those minutes. I don't need you to be worried about "I didn't get something copied", or "this thing's not working." Well, that was your job to get that copied, it was your job to run that through. That's not to say Murphy's Law in action something goes FUBAR. OK, I'll give that to you today. Now Tuesday it's going to be the same thing, and Wednesday. Then I would come in and try to work with that instructor, um, and just say, OK, listen. Well, I'm going to tell you how I would do this. But, that's not my specialty... but I'm just telling you I can teach it. I can get by probably good enough that no one will really know that I don't know that subject. So, if I don't know it, and I can get by, you, this should be a snap for you. And, what it means is, if you got to make an outline of what you're going to be teaching, or you got to have your supplies ready to be doing that laboratory, or that your... And, I'll give you the doubt once, I'll give you the doubt twice, but when you can't show me that you can't change now I begin to wonder how effective you can be with a student who may not be able to learn that subject and you can't even make a little mid-course change... you're like the Titanic going for the ice... so, the thing there is, those teachers who aren't here just didn't accept a little helpful criticism.

Because when I go... this building has all glass in it if you walk around. I had a film crew here, with two cameras running, and, do you know what? They were in and out of classrooms and there was nobody swiveling heads around. The kids were focused... they're doing their thing. The two camera people they couldn't believe it. This was Optimum Cable... they were doing network journaling because of the US News and World Report. They wanted to see what we were all about. So they came down. They filmed for two and a half hours here. They were amazed. Um, but the thing there is, I never say that I can teach that subject material but I can tell you what, within ten minutes of sitting in your classroom, I can tell you if learning is going on. I'm not special, there is no special gift here, but it's, um, the thing about it is, you just get a sense, I mean, when the students are focused, and their eyes are there, and man, everything is on. [mumbled] You are firing on all eight cylinders. [Mumbled]. You can just see it, and I'm just telling you right now. You can walk around here for 180 days and you are going to see it. If I see some kid's head down, they're probably sicker than a dog, but they came here because they got some test they're going to take and then they're going to go home.

Um, it's a great place to work. I've got to tell you. Um, the staff is good. Um, Science League, I mean, 4th in the state for Bio, 5th in the state for chemistry, and 1st in the state for physics. That's 155 schools we're competing against.

R: In the past when we've spoken about, uh, or I should say even here, you've spoken about all the different things the kids can do. One thing that's come up is, in a
small school, it's sometimes hard to offer electives, uh, or to offer all the honors courses that you want. How do you mitigate that?

S: Well, in our 11th and 12th grade schedule, there's a block of time set aside for electives. We have a whole tier of electives we have in-house and, in-house electives are taught by our staff. And, just let me see what we have here for electives...we have Technical Writing I, Technical Writing II, Creative Writing I, Creative Writing II, Public Speaking I and II, we have Spanish 3, which is the third level Spanish, Spanish 4, which is a fourth level Spanish, um, we have here American Government, Sociology, Problems in American Democracy, Contemporary World Studies and Economics, basically, again, that is a social studies group stepping up because I have got time slots where they teach electives and my English.

The beauty of being here on a college campus is that we have the opportunity, because of our unique schedule, which took us four years to work on because we kept fine tuning it...this is my junior and senior class. Anything that's in yellow shows that this student is taking a Tuesday/Thursday, or Wednesday/Friday college class during the elective slots that we're offering. So, in this particular case, this youngster here is taking a second level Psych that meant that they've already taken Psych 123, they've taken 125 or 127, and now there on a second year psych class. This is a junior. So, that, you've got Business 101, it's a first level course. Here's a beginning Psych -- 123. Here's another second level Psych. Here's somebody here that's taking, um, that is Conversational Spanish and she's taking that here on the college campus. I've got people here taking, um, this is, um, 123 is Probability in Statistics and they're taking it via the Internet. Sociology. Here's a second level Physics. Actually, that's a fourth semester Psych class that you can take. History, Sociology...So, we have students here -- now, you see this here, this group opted for a Wednesday/Friday and they're taking, uh, American Government. We do Contemporary World Studies in the fall and then we do American Government, that's a component class. So, we have a group of students, some are taking two college classes, as seniors, others opted with [high school teacher] to block in, uh, and we have twenty seats available, to take his American Government class. Since there are seventeen here, we'll run one section. If I got over twenty, I would split it and run two sections.

So, we have a very flexible schedule for our students but we have the super, super luxury of being here on a college campus where they just become indoctrinated to, I mean we log on to the Web CT, we go on to their server, we can do classes. um, I can look and see how many seats are available on that so if I have a student. Uh, and we always, it's a beautiful program here it's called, uh, High School Scholars Program to encourage students to take college classes here on the campus. A three credit college course has no registration fees, no supplies or anything that's required, it's a $100 dollar flat fee for three college credits. On the average, graduates from this school have, minimally, twelve to eighteen college credits. My high water mark is a girl this year whose going to [college name] on a free ride scholarship. She has forty-two college credits. My, uh, second is [college name] [student name], he's going to be graduating this year with...not only is he an undergraduate in chemical engineering but a masters,
in four years, because he left here with thirty-eight college credits. So, he is coming out of [college name] in four with a masters.

R: What do you do about AP?

S: I just explained it. We don’t do AP. Do I have students who take AP away from us? Yes, the young lady I was speaking to before you came in from lunch, uh, she and another are excellent. Uh, I mean, they speak Chinese and one of them is not Chinese but she speaks it, she reads it. Uh, they’re setting up to take, uh, AP Chinese level, uh, class, or AP test... we have probably maybe ten kids a year, um, that they get their own books, they do their own tutoring, they go take the exams and I’ve never had anybody less than a four. Um, but the reasons...one of the things that we don’t stress it here, I don’t have the place to teach it. Uh, I am not going to force someone to go into an AP class and you say no...what do I do with you when the rest of your class is taking it? Uh, it costs you, what is it, $60 or $85 dollars to take an AP class, to register with College Board. You know, the other thing is, “I have an AP class”, and the college goes “that’s nice.” “I have a college transcript”, and they go, “OK, we’ll take it.” I, we’ve lived it, we’ve learned it, and, every year, I have parents come to me, every year, “why don’t you teach AP?” And I say because I give you the college.

QUESTION 8:

S: Absolutely. I’ve seen [teacher name], who you spoke to this morning. I’ve seen her eating her lunch at her desk and the room is mayhem. There’s thirty kids in there, they’re working in groups, they’re asking her questions, they’re trying to get some last minute thought about something. [Teacher name] sits in his room and has his lunch, [teacher name], who you spoke to this morning, is upstairs and has his lunch.

The thing about it is, is that, before school, after school...one of the things, that I think that, I try, I try, I try... is I’ll have a student come to me. “You know, I really think, that you know, I don’t think that was fair. I studied for it but I really didn’t get it. And the first thing I said is, well, did you talk to your teacher? “Well, no.” And I said, that’s what you’re going to have to do first. I’ll come to bat for you later but you’ve got to go do this now. I have a student who...uh, he’s a very good student and he likes to share stuff with other kids. So, what he wants to do is he has his laptop that he’s busy...just, he’s a very good typist...busy ripping the notes through...they were doing about this, uh, electrophoreses, yesterday, and, uh, he’s typing notes and he just asked the teacher if it’s ok to share this with other students. And he said, absolutely, he said it’s not a problem. But it’s getting to ask the teacher, whether it’s an issue about understanding it or just getting something clarified, and I think, one of the things that is a really good strength here is our open line of communication between staff and students. Um, you know, there...we’re trying to get them ready for the next step.

And, um, it’s just something that [mumbled]. I had a parent call me and she was all upset. And, uh, you know, the teacher hadn’t...of all things, they were talking about the assassination of Bhutto in Pakistan. And he just said, he said, the teacher happened
to say that, Well, It's a blow for democracy that, you know, you just can't go around assassinating people you don't like.” And this parent took umbrage to that. She was upset. I never ask you what your background or ethnic grouping is, but she said “but no one ever asked me and I'm Pakistani and I'm just telling you that I think it was a great thing.” Well, I'm not sure I'd ever go to that level, that it was a great thing, but “Well, that person shouldn’t say that then” you know, and I said, is that an untrue statement that, in a democracy, you can just do stuff like that? “Well, you don’t understand. When we lived there under her tyranny, right before she was exiled.” And I said, but, I think you're taking it out of context. I think you're trying to run the two together and he's just trying to say, “Well, if you just eliminate everybody that way in that kind of democracy”. So, you run into some of this, like that, sometimes, you have to be super careful and, you know, all that political correctness stuff. It is kind of interesting and we've had some discussions on it, you know, whether you're a Republican or Democrat or whatever. So, we do try...and that's one of the things we do on culture day, you know, and we have, once a year, where you can dress up in your ethnic stuff, and you can come in, and kids go “Ah, man. I didn’t know.”

R: Right, so all part of that open line of communication?

S: Yep, exactly...very much so.

QUESTION 9:

S: Drop-out rate is zero and my absenteeism is non-existent because I have one of the highest attendance rates...I have a 99.8...kids come to school, I'm telling ya. They'll come in here, dragging themselves, sniffling and snorkeled, go up, take their exam, have their parent come and take them home. When you're doing the right thing, you don't have to worry about them kids getting here. Now, do I have somebody who presses that button? Absolutely. I've had somebody whose mother goes to work, single mom, the kid comes in late everyday...9:30, 9:45, 9:50, 10:00 o'clock. And I said, you know, I'm tired too but I got here on time. And we have an ARC committee, you know. an attendance review committee, and it was somebody we said, “If you're going to keep this up, it's going to be simple, you're not going to graduate.” I don't care...you can be a straight A student. You are not going to graduate. There's a policy. We've got a policy manual. It's right here. It says this is what is going to happen. So, you know, you always have the Bartlebee Scribners, I prefer not to, so, we have a few of those every year. So, we have to work on that.

QUESTION 10:

S: Yeah, um, my secretary pretty much handles that. All of the attendance cards go through her. She actually inputs that all into the computer and the computer does a printout. It will just show you if there's a pattern that's starting to show up. She's been the first one to tip me off, like, you know, this person's been out three days in this quarter already. And then it's either, it's generally myself or my assistant principal/counselor. Um, you know, we'll call. So, we've gotten the parents to be pretty attuned to...they call, we get the phone call. It's once in a blue moon you'll get, you
know, somebody was out when you get a phone call and they get a, uh, you know, an unexcused absence or tardy on the report card and all of a sudden their questioning it. You know. You just don’t have it.

QUESTION 11:

S: Um, well, we do two different things. We do, uh, interim reports just like every other high school. The only thing is the interim reports here are all done on a single page. If it was coming home to you about your son and daughter, it’s broken into eight sections. So, if you happen to pick it up, and look at, there’s English and there’s Math and there’s Science and there’s Health and Phys Ed, and there’s Engineering and then so on and so forth. Now, what we do is, right after they go out, the interim report happens twenty two days into every quarter, they go out. Ah, sometimes there’s mail that goes with it, a letter or something is happening, some calendar, anything goes out. I personally sit and review the interim reports. Anybody, anybody that says potential failing or has earned a D or less, I usually write up a little list, and we hit every one of those kids. They come in. If I see two quarters in a row, we bring the parents in, in January, and, at that time, we actually contract with them.

This is simple. Our tests scores, wherever I put them, over here, on your admission, said that you can do this work and all the things that we have and all your packet says that you can do this work. You can do this work. Why aren’t you doing this work? “Well, I don’t like it”, “I don’t want to be here”, “I don’t understand it”. Ok, now, you don’t understand it. Let’s work with that part. Have you worked with the peer tutoring group that we have going here? I mean, I have seniors tutoring juniors in Chemistry. I’ve got, I have seniors that are working with kids in Algebra, Geometry. We have two days after school that they work with them. I have one kid that he is like a croupier. He does four levels of math. He goes from table to table to table to table and he is working with all the math. Uh, so, but then there are those students, by January, what we’ll do is, uh, you know, we’ll start making plans. And if this is not what you want to do, most of your schools, get a fresh start, get back there in February, that way you got the whole second half of the year to get yourself organized. Do we have students take advantage of that? Maybe one. Mostly everybody else gets on track.

Some people...you’ve got to understand, I don’t care if you have all Einsteins here. There’s going to be somebody who is going to score higher than the other one. So, do you have students here who are steady eddy C’s? Yeah, you do. But that student work in here on a C, because they are challenged, would they be a C student in their other high school? Maybe, Maybe not. Maybe, because they are pushed here, maybe there, with nothing, they’d fall through the cracks and not even finish school. I don’t know? Uh, I think though, all-in-all, is that we have a handle on it and the parents are involved. Uh, the parents call and make the phone call appointments or they come in and meet or I have to sit down and try and mediate something.

Uh, I had a, you know, student who was cheating on a, uh, science, uh, test and we had the parent come in and we, you know, went through the whole thing. We happen to have a plagiarism and, uh, cheating policy in our district and we enforce it strictly
here at the school. Uh, and, um, you know, we sit down and we talk about it. I said, you know, do you realize, that if you’re doing something like that and you’re going to Rutgers University, you can be suspended for a year...a year. That means no college, no county college, nothing. You would just be sitting at home. I said, it just can’t be. Or, you know, writing. We use Turn it in Dot.com. So, every kid’s paper gets cranked through this stuff. Actually, they, we don’t even see it. They send it through it and then they print it. They actually know that it’s going there because they send it there. Uh, and that’s not, you know, that you have to have Big Brother watching, it’s just do it right and be done with it.

Um...they know that we are always keeping an eye on their grades. They know it. [Student name] uh, I was talking to her, out here, and I happened to say to her, [student name], really, come on, you know, I was looking at last, you know, semester’s Bio class and, you know, I was upstairs yesterday in the lab and I said you can’t participate from fifteen feet away when they’re looking at this. I said. I want to see you in that group. Find somebody, buddy up with somebody, get in there, and get going. “I am going to work on it.” OK, I said. Well, I’m going to come up and make sure you’re doing it. I’m going to watch. So, you know, we...there’s probably fifteen or twenty kids that’s on my radar screen, that I’m always making sure, giving them a pat on the back. You know, when you can see they’re all stressed out, you go, what do we got to do? Let’s get one thing done at a time. So, again, it’s nice when you have a smaller school. You can deal with that population. That’s what makes it unique over, you know, a comprehensive school that’s a giant machine with three thousand kids in it because you’re only seeing the fish on the top.

QUESTION 12:

S: OK, let’s do budget. They actually have to ... uh, we have a budget line that’s given to me by our business administrator. The budget line that we have, each year, actually I just had to go through with this whole process, look at my overall expenditures, and find out if I needed to increase or decrease, and I had to put my stuff that goes with it. Uh, the teachers themselves they would meet as the English department, or math or science and they would sit and they would look at, you know, you got $8500 dollars for the science department so now, you know, there’s one over the other, so those two sit down and they try and order out. It’s not like, “I want my $4250”, “you get your $4250, because maybe that we’re putting in some [works], technical equipment, like the micro pipettes, things like that. So, maybe [teacher name] gives up to [teacher name]. Um, so as far as the budget goes, they don’t necessarily say, you know, “I need $5000 dollars” because I’ll go make the pitch but the thing is there that I run against the confines of the budget.

OK, the curriculum themselves, right now, we’re starting our revision process. As you know, textbooks have, uh, at least by [state], and [state organization], have a ten year life cycle or whatever it’s...from its date of publication. So, we’re in the process right now of looking at our English. Uh, Science, we’ve already made three evolutions in eight years. So, the thing there is, they go out, they do the research, they get the books. [Teacher name], on her own initiative, flew to California for a key curriculum
[mumbled]. That was a conference learning how to teach Math in a different presentation situation. What does that mean? In actuality, you can start off teaching your lesson perhaps chalk and talking on the board and then, all of a sudden, you work in these four small student groups. And, then, you can actually have them working on different things - where that person may never ask that question out in front of everybody in that room, although everybody in that room had that question, and wouldn’t ask it, now, all of a sudden, they’re working in a small peer group where they can actually work through that process and do that. She needed that Geometry book… I went out and I bid for the $5400 dollars to get it done. She’s just changed all of her Algebra II. So, the thing there... Are they involved? The answer is yes. Do they go out and get the textbooks? Yes. Are they the ones who sit and write the curriculum? Yes. Nothing that I do... all I got to do is to get whatever they need to get it done.

R: Excellent. And then discipline?

S: Basically, we have so little here that if there is anything that ever, you know, somebody is talking, or somebody is just not paying attention, it’s dealt with in class. Do I have, sometimes, uh, you have to execute someone at dawn, sure. Well, you know, the teacher will just send someone down here because they finally have had it with them. And the kids will tell you. It’s the last place I ever want to... I mean, you’ve seen kids running in and out of here, you know, after picking up cameras because they’re out filming things... and the last place you ever want to be in there is being disciplined by him because you just don’t want to be there. And the thing about it is, you know, I mean, have we had kids who, ah, ah jees, I’m just trying to think here, uh, the kids were driving their car in an unsafe manner here on the campus and the campus police stopped them and they brought them up here and, you know, I had to suspend them actually. Um, you know, but that’s just kids. They could be doing it at home or here on the college campus. Uh, um, so the thing there is that, you know, we, the teachers are aware of – they actually have to sign for a student handbook each year, I make them initial for it, uh, besides their own handbook – and then basically everyone one of us gets one of these which is our policy addition newsletter. In here is a thing called the student code of conduct. The student code of conduct, it’s not grey, in this case it’s blue, but it’s black and white. They know what’s going to happen. So, if they send a student down here, uh, you know, and if they say, you know, “they’re vandalizing property” and it’s detention, well, detention, if it was in your class, you’re giving detention. Now, detention might mean different things to different people. I mean, uh, they were cleaning stuff in Science, you know, because people were leaving a mess in that room, so.

The thing there is they don’t necessarily said it, uh, um... our group of teachers got together to write the cheating and plagiarism – um, actually, we don’t call it cheating and plagiarism, it’s honor and something. I’d have to find it – uh, our/this instructors here who wrote the actual piece that goes in the handbook... so, they do have a certain... but it’s a process, you know, it’s just not like you can come in, you know, just like... talk about cheating and plagiarism, you know, you have somebody who forgets to cite it correctly. Or, uh, you know, it’s not like they covered, you know, copied it verbatim, you know, you going to beat them up over the head? It’s a freshman... the kid’s here six weeks. What are you going to ruin his life? I mean, but the teachers... some teachers
have a three strike rule with the kids and other ones, you know, it’s [slap of hands]. You have to let them go that way. You know, I can’t force that issue then, eventually, they come around to saying, you know, did you ever make a mistake, ever? You perfect? You never made a mistake in your life? Are you sure? Not one. So, I mean, [mumbled], they’re willing to work with me.

QUESTION 13:

S: Our district has two six and one half hour in-service days that the...there’s a what’s called, uh, I want to say it’s a professional development committee made up of teachers/representatives from each of the schools that meet each year and look at various topics. We have one coming, I think, this month...in March, actually. And, uh, what will happen is that the ...it isn’t in March. It’s in April on April 25th. Yes, in-service day. Yes. Um. They put together topics, they may hire professionals from the outside, uh, um,[teacher name] teaches a class, oh, I want to say time manager but I know it’s not that exactly. But what he talks about, uh, is how to help students do a better job at managing your time and he actually teaches it to teachers here. Now, we take all 400 teachers and we go to a separate site. Uh, those are the two days. In the teacher’s contract, they have a $200 stipend that they can use and, like, uh, one of my health and phs ed teachers is going away to a coaching clinic. So, there’s a whole process within the application. Under the new expenditure guidelines, it takes like three months of a mountain of paperwork to get through to spend $200 dollars but they have that possibility. They can do that. And, it’s by their contract. Um, I have, uh, [teacher name], who you saw here, uh, he spent, uh, a whole weekend, on his own, going through...Um, about Model UN because we’re very competitive in the [college name] Model UN. And it’s a, it’s a lot of different things, how they prepare to do their job, um, uh, you have [teacher names], the two career people, I mean, they keep in good contact with engineers that are still in the trade that are still working. They meet with their advisory groups. So, there’s ample opportunities, uh,...[teacher name] goes to the [college name] one day Math Clinic. [teacher name] spent two days at the Science Teachers something, and it was talking about the hands-on approach, specially it was about Chemistry, um, Chemistry and Integrated Physics. So, I mean, they’ve never been denied, if I can somehow weave my way through the process. It has never gotten stopped here. It might get stopped someplace else.

R: Do teachers here lead professional development, here at school, for the other teachers that work here?

S: The answer is yes. Uh, matter of fact, I have here, someplace...Um, he actually spent time developing the, uh, new interim report where instead of a teacher writing on the interim report, I was telling you about, now they’ll being able to go in, it’s all drop-down screens. So, that you can just go to the name, drop it, and this the comment section that you can type in. So, he is actually going to do a presentation here. I mean, I’ve had bullying not with a staff member from this building but a staff member from another building come here about, ah, bullying and, uh, harassment in a school setting. Um, basically, uh, the counselor here, he has done some things about how to prepare better for, you know, taking a statewide test and, you know, anxiety and stress
dealing with that. So, the answer is yes. Maybe we can do more. Uh, but it is just asking more and more time of a teacher away from teaching to go do this. You know, that whole one hundred hour stuff is going to fade here because, now, they’re, I guess what they’re saying is that it’s become a hundred hours away from my teaching so I’m going to take my hundred hours of teaching.

QUESTION 14:

S: Oh, absolutely. Um, when you walk later and you look at the pennants there, those are the things that I ask to come back for the students, I say each one of them is a story. When I have a new parent come in, and, you know, “what are you going to do for me”, [mumbled] I’m not going to do anything here. Your son or daughter is going to do something great for themselves if they decide to attend here and do what they can and be the best that they can be. Um, you know, here you have a group of people playing soccer, some never even set foot on a soccer field. But, yet, they went through the winter clinics and they worked with others and they had captains, practices and here it is a little school took on a school with seven and eight hundred kids in it and they’re gold division champions. Half that team never was on a soccer field prior to walking on freshman year. Um, when I, I’ll tell you, we have a, in May, we have a half day program, it’s seven to nine at night, and it’s actually called the Academy Awards and it actually has a statue on the front of the program and it talks all of the achievements of the students and this place will be packed to the rafters. And whether you have this student... these are the Blaustein Scholars, this is the Physics Team, and they’ll have a roaring applause for the kids. When I get back the [state testing] scores, and I call all the kids downstairs and I’d say I’d really like you to show appreciation for this student, and that student, and that student for having perfect three hundred level scores. And they just go wild because they know it took a lot to get to that point. Um, they appreciate how hard it is what they have to do here. So, uh, if you were just here for a while, these questions, the questions would just meld into it because there wouldn’t be a question.

R: Are you proud of being here?

S: Absolutely. You have to think about it is that I’ve been in education thirty three years. I’ve done everything in this district except be a superintendent. I graduated college, came to this district, and never left. I’ve worked every job that they’ve had a certificate for in this district.

Um, but, then all of a sudden, in 1995, the superintendent, the prior superintendent said, you know, we really need to get an academy off the ground. So, and I have all of my original documentation. My community studies, and I was looking at growth trends, and where the kids were, and where we should locate. I have two big banker boxes upstairs. That’s worth money... the total design, how to bring a school in. And I used to go to school house planning and department of school services cause I designed it, I had the educational specs sheets, and I know what the designs are — that’s my construction background — so, we sat down and we designed the whole school and we had one freeholder who just took the plug out of the boat and watched it sink because it wasn’t [their] cup of tea. “How dare you, when we have students that need help, those
underprivileged, those weary and worn out ... and you’re going to build that for those kids... absolutely not”. I just packed up my whole show, put it in storage, and we just called it quits.

Two and a half years later, my same boss gets called down to the freeholders and he says, “how come we don’t have one of these schools”, and, God bless him, he said “I don’t know but I’ll check into it”. Because he knew why... he was there... He was not about to say, well, that person sitting right over there. So, he comes back and he says to me, “you know, do you have this thing?”. And I said, I don’t know, I’ll have to look... I knew right where they were... they were underneath the table in my room. Two days later, he came back “have you done anything”. I said I can’t find anything because I was, I’d be damned if I was going dig that all out and go through this whole, you know, just exercise. Finally he came in and he said “you don’t understand”... he said, “this is going to happen”. I said, OK, I’ll go look for it. I could see it out of the corner of my eye. I knew where it was. And, um, so finally he came in and I kind of cleaned it up. Thank god,... I was one of the first people in the district in 1982 that had an IBM PS2 computer. So, you know, you put it on the desk, and you fix it up and you print this stuff out and he’s like amazed you know. So, we go down and we make the pitch and, uh, all of a sudden, it just went from we’re gonna get going to where I started having meetings with curriculum people, to actually meeting with the architect to try to put together a sketch.

And the building that you see here, when I first sat down with them and I said it looks like, I said, one of the things it will not look like is a school. And the architect and my boss is looking at me, and now he’s got a lot of Italian and he’s starting to lean already. And I just said, you don’t understand. These people aren’t gonna be in a school, they’re going to be tomorrow’s industry leaders. They’re going to people that are going to be captains in industry, they’re going to be people in medicine doing research. Generally, we design a school that could be school, penitentiary. It may look [mumbled] just like it. I said we’re not going to have one of them. Now, by boss is leaning a little bit further. And I, I know I’m getting close now. And so, so then the architect leaves, and my boss calls me in the office and he says, “I don’t know what you’re doing, you’re really starting to piss me off”. And I just said, you know, I just, I want you to be really, just, just, let it go a little bit. See, like when you go upstairs and you see the chairs at a slant in the room, he’d go apoplectic. They got to be lined up, you know. And I, sometimes they’re in clusters or sometimes they’re not even in the room. And he, you’d have to get the AED and run after him to get him started again.

And, so, he left me go. And then when we started doing the design of the school, and I said, I like different colors and I want it to look different. And I like a lot of glass and I want to see different fits and finishes and that the things that run a school that make it interesting. And his parting shot was, he just said to me “I don’t know what you’re doing, I don’t understand it, just don’t F this up. Just leave me alone”. And, with that, I had the luxury of, I was here everyday when construction was going on, I worked with every one of the engineers on the job, I was here everyday. Uh, we built a school that was supposed to take thirteen months to build, we did it in ten months and one day.
I was on the job, we could change stuff, no change orders, we could get things done and accomplished here.

I had the luxury of hiring my own staff which was unheard of. The administration, assistant superintendent in charge of personnel was out ill and I could put adds in the papers and I got 150 people applying. I was like, you know, an interviewing fool til I found the people I wanted and I went in and I’m trying to sell them. Look, come on, this person has got six years experience with a masters degree. And you know, you can’t start them off on their first step, it’s just not right. You know, can you help me? They’re making this amount of money. “What do you think?” I said, I don’t know [hands slapping] and so, he would sign the contracts and, I mean, we’ve never looked back.

And so, then, all of a sudden, then he says to me, um, “aren’t you going to be the principal there?” And I said, no, I’m not going to be the principal there. I like doing what I’m doing here. He said, “you sure?” And I said, no, I’m not going to go there. And then I thought about it, and thought about it, and thought about it. On the last day that the job posting was available, I put my name in. So I said, you’re kinda stupid [mumbled]. I designed it, I hired the people, I actually interviewed the first group of kids. And I’m going to hand it to somebody? And I said, that doesn’t make sense. And that’s how I wound up here and I’ve been here eight years.

So, it’s, you know, if you’ve ever had the opportunity to take something from inception and bring it to this point and the satisfaction of seeing these kids, it’s, yeah, it’s unbelievable. I mean, it’s not necessarily why I got an education. I just saw my father work six days a week and chase money seven days a week as your businessman and I just said I’m never going to do that. So, that’s always led to hard feelings because I’ve never taken over the company. But the thing there was, that I think, this has been…hey, look I’ve had a great life. Education has done well for me. Um, you know, I’ve got three grown sons, uh, the house is paid for, I mean, it’s taken care of me.

I might have made more money doing other things but I think there is a certain satisfaction when I go home here, you know, whether you’ve solved some issue or…that’s one of the things that’s really neat too is that, you can take an issue here, you kind of, like, put all the little pieces together and come up with something. Like I’m working on a, um, interim, um, um, midterm schedule…I’m doing it a little bit different because of for exams. Um, I want to get it done in two and a half days instead of four because, you know, it just kills a lot of time. I want, you know, to get more productive time on the other side of it. And you can do it, crank it out, maybe fine tune it a little bit but you’re good. It’s a solution. It works.

And you can go to other…I worked in the board office for nineteen years and I worked for three different superintendents, one, two, three different assistant superintendents, and we can take minutia and hammer forge it into two pieces of minutia and, you didn’t, and never had a solution to it. You know, you just created a whole other minutia. And I just, that, at times, was beyond frustrating because you couldn’t get anything really solved. Here, I mean, you get, you might get fifty things solved in a day.
You might get nothing done tomorrow, but there's always the satisfaction of getting something done whether it's, you know, charging stuff, you get the bill, and the budget, and you're fighting for money, or working with kids. We're starting to, you know, we're starting our interviewing process for our upcoming freshman class and, um, there's always something. You can see these people, you talk to the parents and the student.

And we do an unusual, uh, interviewing session. Uh, we actually bring mom and dad, you know, if we're lucky enough, or, at least, one of the parents, and the child and we sit down and we start the interviewing process. And there's thirty nine questions on the interview. And, uh, and, uh, then we ask the child to step out and the parents are here. And there's questions for them on the interview. And they get to leave and the child comes back, kind of interesting. You want to see digression occur when the kid don't want to be here but the parents want to be here. So we bring that all together and just say since you want to go to school here but your son doesn't, when can we expect you? And that kind of stuns a little bit. And I say, we got to come to a meeting here. We got to come to an understanding because what will happen in October when this really comes unglued? Now, I may not be able to fill that seat. Maybe a youngerster who can taste it, who wants it so bad, they're going to work hard. Now, you know, sometimes I get parents and that student to walk away. And that's, I think, that is a super strength of our interviewing process that [assistant principal] and I came up with. Um, it, it, I, it's not always perfect but it at least keeps people, since I can't charge them a deposit, at least makes them understand that I think I kind of got your number here now. Just don't do this to me because, I'll tell you what, every year, somebody hears the first day of school one is telling me, you know, we've got to track these couple of kids down. You know, at home. You call a second day and you get a hold of the parent and "Oh no, he's going back to his district". That's nice. When did you know? "Oh, right after the interview, he decided." OK, March, April, May, June, July, August.

I pick up that phone and I go on that list and I take the first one off the waiting list. I have parents cry on the phone. They couldn't believe that their kid could get in there. And you just want to go back and throttle those SOBs that sat on that seat. And I'm just saying, how dare you? You know, that's unbelievable. I tell that to the parents. I have a freshman orientation here in December, before they come and take the test, and I tell them that exact story every year and, every year, I have them. Every year I do.
Appendix I

Transcript: School B/Subject B
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL B/SUBJECT B

QUESTION 1:

S: I am only aware of one incident where, um, a student had been using drugs. And I’m not so sure, I don’t believe he was using them here but, uh, he had been using them. And so that’s the only one. It’s been a couple of years now since it happened. Um, and that student was removed from the school.

R: How bout physical disturbances or weapons? Alcohol?

S: I have been here six years now. We haven’t had one incident of any physical disturbance, weapons, anything like that. It doesn’t exist here so far.

QUESTION 2:

S: Definitely. Uh, it’s just... we like to consider this school a family and it really is. I mean, because we’re small, we get to know every student and every student gets to know us. Uh, you can just see. You walk in, in the morning, and there’s just excitement and enthusiasm. Uh, students will run up to you and tell you the latest thing about... I teach History so something will go on and, well, like, now with the primaries, I can’t get in the door without kids approaching me with something and that’s the enthusiasm that gets, you know, carried over into all of the subject matter... they’re just... they’re happy to be here. They’re glad to be here and they want to learn.

R: How bout you as a teacher? Do you feel safe and secure here?

S: 100%. Yeah. Um, you know, like I said, I’ve been here six years. I was, uh, thirty years in another, uh, school and, uh, as time went on I didn’t feel all that secure but here I never think twice. Totally secure and it’s because, it’s because of the kids we have. It’s not anything I would do or, you know, it’s the kids that we’re recruiting. They have a purpose.

QUESTION 3:

S: Um, yes, considering, again, we’re a small school about 140 student population. Um, the activities that we have... I am the advisor to the Model UN and we’ve been averaging about forty students per meeting. So, again, out of 140, you do the math, it’s pretty good. Uh, the turnout for the clubs and the activities is very high considering the number of kids we have. A lot of the kids are involved in, you know, in numerous clubs and to get those numbers I guess you have to be. But, um, yes, they’re willing... and they want to have more activities, more clubs and the limiting factor on that is our small faculty. You know, we can only do so many things. And, uh, but yeah, the kids embrace the activities after school. And It’s all after school on weekends. Um, yeah, I do the Model UN. We just came back from the Princeton conference. It was a four day conference and it was, you know, over the weekend, Friday, or Saturday and
Sunday. And we had, uh, what was it? Twenty three kids show up. So, they give up their time.

R: Now can staff regularly be seen at the activities?

S: Yes. Yeah. Uh, at, I would say every activity we have after school meetings or clubs or something, yeah, the faculty advisor is always there. There is always a staff member there. Uh, sometimes, you’ll have faculty that will just drop in that are not affiliated with the club or the activity just to be part of it.

QUESTION 4:

S: Yes. Um, the administration is very accessible, um, very supportive, and when we do something good or the kids do something good, very little time passes before you’re recognized.

R: How are you recognized?

S: Uh, either personally, you know, the principal will come up to us and, you know, thank us. Uh, they’ll be announcements over the PA system. They’ll be, uh, on our website, uh, you may be recognized that way. So, there’s various ways that he shows it. One, he knows what is going on and two he appreciates what we do.

R: Is the morale of the staff good? Describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high.

S: I would say the morale is high. Um, planned activities as far as morale boosting? I don’t think we really have anything that...oh, like, we’ll all go out for, uh, lunch during the holidays or something like that but there’s no planned meetings to keep it...just everybody, in my opinion, everybody is just, they love it here and that keeps our morale high.

R: OK, why do you think it’s so loved?

S: Uh, I think, one the kids that we get. Uh, two, the support we get from, uh, the administration. I mean, if we’re willing to try something, they’re willing to go along with it. Uh, very rarely, are you told, “No, you can’t do anything.” “Um, go ahead with it...you know, if it’s going to work, fine.” And, I mean, they’re even willing, to come in on their own time, to help us out. Like, we were planning but, uh, we ran out of time. We were going to have a weekend conference here – Model UN Conference – and the principal was going to come in on Saturday and Sunday to help us out with it. Things like that; they’re, you know, very supportive.

QUESTION 5:

I think it’s just the way you’re greeted in the morning, in the hallways, you can’t pass a student without them saying hello to you, how are you. Um, in the classroom,
it's...their manners are something to be admired. Um, there is no disrespect. There is no disrespect. I'm sure there's students that, you know, may not like certain teachers or like me but, you know, it's never brought out to the open and, you know, you're never confronted, no confrontation.

R: How can you tell that the teachers like the students? Are respectful to the students?

S: Well, one, the respect is you see it the way, you know, they treat the kids. Um, again, in the halls, in meetings, uh, in the faculty room, uh, there's really no bad mouthing of the kids. It's, you know...we talk about how they amaze us, you know, the things that they've done, what they've been, awards they've received. You know, it's, again, it's, I think, that positive attitude just spreads. You know, when you have, and I'm sure you've seen that, where you have negativity, it's very easy to become negative and, you know, I've experienced that in the past but here you don't have that or you don't...I'm not saying everything is perfect but, uh, even the things people might complain about are very minor compared to, you know, what they're complaining about (elsewhere).

QUESTION 6:

S: Oh, I think, definitely, they feel comfortable. I think these kids bring a maturity to the school. And with that maturity, they're comfortable talking to the staff, to the administration. There's no fear. Uh, they just feel comfortable.

QUESTION 7:

S: Um, most of, probably half the courses are college prep and the others are honors. Um, my History course is labeled college prep when I put on a college application, I'll put down high college prep because, you know, I try and make it, you know, almost, you know, an honors course. It really is an honors course but it's not recognized. Why I don't know. But, um, so, yes, the courses...and then our Math and Science are definitely, uh, honors courses. Um, and the engineering courses, I'm sure they have to be conducted on an honors level. And the second part of the question?

R: Sure. Do teachers' expectations of their students match the rigor of the curriculum?

S: Yeah, I believe they do. Uh, these kids are constantly bombarded with homework. Uh, reports, uh, projects, and, you know, we expect a lot of the kids. We expect when they come in that they're prepared, and they are. I mean, I have...there are very few times where if it is a homework assignment, or presentation, or project that they don't have it when it's due.

R: OK. How are the students doing as a whole in your classes?
S: Very well. Um, I have a total this year of... I have close to fifty students. I had one student fail the first marking period. Uh, very few Cs and the rest are Bs and As. Uh, even that one student that failed, is now, at least, up to a C. So, he got the wake up call. Uh, I'm sure there will be a couple of, you know, Cs this marking period. But, on the average, they do A and B work. And at first I was a little concerned, am I giving too many As and Bs? And, then, you know, I looked, and looked at their records from grammar school and I talked to our assistant principal, and I talked to the principal and he said "No, don’t feel bad about it because that’s what these kids were achieving all along.” So, I don’t feel its grade inflation. I just think that this is their ability. And, again, you know, sometimes, History is not as demanding as your Math or your Science. You know, in a different way it is, but, uh...

QUESTION 8:

S: Uh, I can’t speak for others. I think our staff does. I mean, when I see them here after school working with the kids. But I know I would. I do, you know.

R: How do you that?

S: What ever it takes. Um, I meet with them in the morning. I’ll meet with them on my, uh, prep periods. Usually, I am in the commons area here. Uh, if there’s a problem, I will go over something. I’ll see them after school. Uh, a couple nights a week, I work here at night so I’m here til 9:30 at night. So the kids know that, you know, I’m available. Um, I haven’t had that many kids that... they’ll come in and talk to me, uh, shoot the breeze, ask me advice about college, things like that. Uh, not that many kids in danger that need extra help. They pretty much get it as far as, you know, the academic part of it. But a lot of them have other questions. And it’s usually college related, or, usually, college related. Some boyfriend girlfriend thing but, uh, you know, I don’t get that many demands for extra help. You know, in the past, I have had, and, uh... we had a couple of kids that, uh, were classified so they, uh, in their IEPs, you know, I would sit down with them and work one on one. And, uh, you know, that’s basically... if there’s a kid that, you know, needs extra time on a test or something, and I know he’s struggling, again, I’ll do it on my own time to meet with him.

QUESTION 9:

S: No. Uh, our attendance rate is outstanding. Um, the district allows, which I think is high, they allow sixteen days per year. Our kids average under five. Um, we have numerous kids that have perfect attendance. Um, it’s almost, I can, when I walk into class, again, we only have twenty kids in a class, it’s the maximum you can have, some have a little bit less, I pretty much know, and I have twenty desks. I can pretty much count on all twenty desks being filled. Uh, they come to school, there’s, you know, even sometimes probably when they shouldn’t, but the attendance rate here is real... I’m sure we lead our district.

R: OK. How bout the drop out rate?
S: Uh, we’ve never had a student drop out to my knowledge. We’ve had a few who have been asked to leave because of academics and they didn’t drop out. They went back to their sending district. Um, we may have had one two years ago that... and she was having a lot of family problems. Um, I’m not so sure how she wound up, uh, whether she did go back to her hometown high school or not. Um, she was a senior. So, I don’t know. I really don’t know what her... she’s the only one I know that could have been labeled a potential dropout. And maybe even her, she did, you know, go back to the sending district.

QUESTION 10:

S: OK. It would be the attendance secretary, the vice-principal’s secretary. Um, I don’t know what time she calls, probably in the morning. I know in the other school I was at they did it in the morning so I’m assuming they do it here. Um, as far as tardies, usually, the only reason a kid is tardy is because, all the kids are bused here, uh, the buses are late. And that doesn’t count against the kids, you know, it’s not their fault. And, basically, what happens, they just come in and report to the office, and, you know, their attendance cards are pulled.

QUESTION 11:

S: Probably, for the most part, teachers. I know that’s what I do. If a student is in real danger, then the vice-principal/guidance counselor will make the call but I believe, you know, like in my case, it’s usually the teachers that are first to initiate either with a phone call or, once we’ve established, uh, email with the parents, I will and I have emailed them and they may email me back with questions and things like that, uh, even if their student is not doing well.

As far as recognition of excellent work, I probably should do more calls home but, um, they are recognized when we send out the, uh, marking period progress reports but I would have to say no, I really don’t, although we see the parents a lot, uh, picking up the kids because they are all involved in activities. And that’s a good time. I know I’ll go up to a parent and say, you know, Johnny or Sally is doing, you know, excellent and, you know, give them an example of what they’ve done but, uh, the only thing I probably should do is maybe some more calls home to reward them because you always get the call when the kid is not doing good. Yeah.

QUESTION 12:

S: The budget, not really. I don’t think... I mean, as far as we’re given a budget, a departmental budget and, you know, I’ve never had to ask for more money. So, I don’t know whether I would have gotten it or not. So, I would say I don’t have a lot of input in the budget. Uh, curriculum, yes, I mean, we do curriculum development as a district. Um, and, basically, I have drawn up the curriculum for the electives. The curriculum for the mandatory courses – US History, the World Histories – uh, they’re pretty much set in place already by the district. But, because the district doesn’t offer
things like Contemporary Studies and American Government, I've drawn up the curriculum and gotten it approved by the district and the board. But, uh...

R: How bout, um, is there a culture of, uh, professional learning communities or school leadership committees here? Like, do you get together with other teachers to discuss curriculum?

S: Well, the, again, because we're so small, there is only one other history teacher so, and, basically, in every subject, there's two of each. So, um, and it seems, you know, speaking for the others, that they work hand and hand and I know, my colleague in History, we work hand in hand. And we try and coordinate. He does the World History and the US History I. I do US History II and the electives. So, we and try and make sure that, you know, what I need covered in the 10th grade gets covered so they're ready to move on in the 11th grade. So, we do, but it's informal. There's nothing formal that, OK, this is your period where, you know, you guys have to sit down cause we do it all the time. It's an ongoing process.

We do have professional development days and sometimes they're devoted, and that's district wide, and sometimes they're devoted to specific subject areas other times, it's just, you know, whatever, affirmative action, or things like that.

R: OK. How bout discipline? Are teachers involved with that decision making process?

S: Uh, again, because we have so few discipline problems, when you do have a discipline problem, uh, the normal procedure would be to write up a report and give your recommendation and, you know, again speak to the principal or the vice principal but, uh, serious discipline problems really don't exist. But we have had kids that were acting up in class and, uh, I may have in the six years written one and, you know, there was follow-up but I forget what it was. But, again, most of the time...but, and I'm sure, school wide, we've had a couple more serious ones, and I would guarantee that the first step would be, you know, a report written up by the teacher, and then a conference with the student and the teacher and, if need be, parents brought in to solve the problem.

R: OK. Going back to curriculum for one second, is there much interaction let's say between you and the History Department, let's say, and team planning with English, or Science, or anything like that?

S: Yeah, we do, uh, especially with the English Department. Uh, we try to coordinate the books that they're reading with the time period and we try and keep on track that way. If we're doing the Holocaust, we try and time it so that the kids are reading one of the Holocaust books. Um, so, yeah, we do work together on that. Um, not so much with the Math, and Science, or Engineering but we will work pretty closely with English. I do anyway.
QUESTION 13:

S: Yeah, I mean, uh, basically, in house, you know, our district, uh, they offer them twice a year. Uh, we can request personal, not personal days, professional days, to attend other conferences, uh, meetings, things like that and I've never been denied it. Um, yeah, it's basically, if there's something out there that interests you, that, you know, my boss feels will be helpful to the school, and me, uh, it's never been denied. Uh, probably the biggest thing would be cost and, again, not from the building wise, but district wise. That's probably the one thing that might trigger a denial. But, you know, you're encouraged to go, and nobody's ever said "no, you can't go."

R: How bout the hosting of professional development in the building? Do teachers host professional development for one another here in the building?

S: No. Um, although they've started something, this year, for the first time where, rather than going to our, uh, district wide professional days, you can stay in the building but it's pretty much you're working alone on curriculum development or things like that. We haven't gotten to the stage yet, but it may happen, where we can sit down as a building and, instead of going to one of our other schools, uh, where we could work together to, you know, maybe come up with more sharing of the programs between, you know, especially like between Math and Science with a History or an English.

But we haven't gotten there yet, but I have a feeling that's the next step. That they're going to allow that. They've never allowed anything. Everybody had to go, you know, whether it was a good program or not, you still had to be there. But now I think, because people are saying, you know, "we're wasting our time", and, uh, so, now, you know, this is one thing that people feel. I haven't done it yet because they've only offered it once but, you know, as the selections get fewer and fewer, you know, I think that'll be a real alternative to stay here.

QUESTION 14:

S: Well, I mean, I am so proud. Uh, I just think one of the ways is the way we talk to the public outside of school. Just, I mean, it's...people say "what do you do?" And, you know, you're a teacher. And "Where do you work?" "Oh, I've never heard about that...that place" and, you know, And I start to tell them. And, I think it's the pride we have, here in the building, that gets past on to the community. Um, we have, usually on Fridays, we wear our, um, staff shirts with our school name and, you know, everybody's got, a handful, you know, a number of them. It's just we feel good about the building. Um, we feel good about the kids and I just think we have a pride. At least, I do...and everybody here does. Yeah.
Appendix J

Transcript J: School B/Subject C
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL B/SUBJECT C

QUESTION 1:

S: Uh, to my knowledge, in my class, none. Zero.

R: Uh, How bout in the school as a whole?

S: Uh, as far as I know, the same.

R: OK. See that was easy. Why do you think that’s the case?

S: I, uh, think this particular school is so small and, uh, that the students are aware they have no anonymity, in a sense, because everyone knows everyone and, uh, also the physical size of it means that, basically, the students are always visible by someone. Uh, that coupled with the, uh, admissions process, which does involve an interview of the students, I think, gives us a selection process that, for the most part, gives the students who, even if they engage in those activities, don’t do it here.

QUESTION 2:

S: I think, uh, that’s one of the drawing points. It definitely is. And I think, uh, a lot of the parents realize that and, uh, I think a lot of the interest, uh, may not... So, in many cases, I think the, uh, attraction of the school, for parents, is because it is safe and secure, more than the educational aspects.

R: OK, how bout for you as a teacher?

S: Oh, it’s fine. Uh, there’s absolutely no problem associated with, uh, anything here.

QUESTION 3:

S: OK. Percentage, I don’t know, have a firm grasp in. But, I think that it’s well over 50%, um, but exactly where I don’t know. Our, um, the types of activities, we have a soccer team, which has very large numbers of participants, um, and then we have after school activities which include the Science League which I’m involved in personally. Uh, the Mathematics League, uh, the math teacher is obviously involved in, um, Model United Nations, um, we have several, um, service related clubs that – Interact Club, um, something called GALS, um, and we had some programs involved with, uh, drug driving awareness, uh, we have a ping pong club, uh, we have a... someone, started, I think, a book reading club I don’t know how active it is this year..., we have a chess club. Um, we had, in the past, participated in, um, Mock Trial although that’s not currently ongoing. Uh, we compete in the RoboRocks Competition which is a Robotics, uh, competition although funding for that just ended this year, um, for the competition itself, not our part. Um, I’m probably missing some others but that’s the gamut. So,
there’s quite a few going on, and I, as I said, there’s at least 50%. It may even be as high as seventy-five, eighty percent. I don’t think we have very many students who don’t do anything or, at least, one of those.

R: OK. And then can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S: Uh, by definition, yes, cause it can’t happen without them.

QUESTION 4:

S: OK. Uh, the answers to all of those are yes. Now, in my particular case, I’m a Science teacher, um, the support for that activity has been, uh, incredible because I’ve had the opportunity to purchase. um, I consider top of the line, state of the art equipment. Um, and continue to do that on a regular basis, year after year. So, um, that’s an absolutely critical aspect of a science teacher’s function, I think. And, so, that’s been maintained and also, um, the atmosphere has been very supportive.

R: So, do you feel appreciated?

S: Yes.

R: OK. And is the morale of the staff good? And describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high.

S: Uh, the morale is good. I don’t think there are any activities necessarily. We all appreciate the particular, uh, situation that we’re in here which we like. You know, we like, going back to one of the earlier questions, not having drugs, or etc. etc. to deal with, uh, so we can focus on teaching and, uh, that’s really what keeps the morale up, you know, not having those issues.

QUESTION 5:

S: Oh, um, I, nothing out of the ordinary except that it’s just a polite atmosphere. Um, there’s no yelling, there’s no screaming that might go on in other places. I don’t know, but it doesn’t happen here.

QUESTION 6:

S: Uh, yes, I think, uh, I think, there’s a cordial atmosphere, again, fostered, in part, by the fact that it’s such a small place and that we, and the additional part which is possibly unique to our school is that I have students for two years. So, they have me as juniors and, again, as seniors. Um, the theme of school is engineering so the engineering teachers have their students for four years. Um, so, there’s a pretty, uh, well established relationship, um, and, at worst, it’s, you know, just polite and, at best, of course, it’s quite friendly and very cordial. So.
QUESTION 7:

S: OK. Um, the curriculum to a large extent, in my area and then I know in the engineering areas, is developed pretty much by the teachers. It’s not an imposed curriculum. It’s what teachers think is appropriate. It is beyond college prep. It’s strictly an honors, from my case, an honors curriculum and I think that holds for most of the courses. Some of the Math ones, at the upper level, are intentionally, only college prep not honors. Um, and, uh, so, we, in my classes and in I know the engineering classes, especially Computers and Electronics, we’re pushing the envelope of what the honors level is. So, many of our students, when they go to college, report that they’re not doing much cause they’ve already done it here.

R: So, are you then finding that the students are also able to keep up with the curriculum?

S: Yes, for the most part. We do have drop outs. Um, they tend to occur, mostly, in the freshman and sophomore years, but we still have people who have left us as juniors and as seniors both. Um, so, for whatever, sometimes it’s because of non academic reasons, um, personal illnesses, or problems, things of that nature, sometimes it is, us, but I’d say, uh, except for those few individuals, they graduate so they’ve keep up to the least of the minimum of the standards. High order thinking skills I think are included, uh, and, at least in my courses they definitely have to keep up with the standards because that’s what I’m about.

R: Excellent. Now do you find that the drop out rate has been significant?

S: Uh, usually, it’s on the order on the freshman or sophomore level, uh, maybe two on average a year. Now, the percentage basis, it’s two out of forty, so, that might be a very high percentage but in terms of absolute numbers of individuals, it’s pretty much expected, uh, and, part of it, is not so much people not keeping up but they realize that they thought they may have been interested in science and technology, or their parents thought they were interested in science and technology, and, once they really find what’s actually involved, they say no. “It’s really not for me”, or “No, I really want to have a school with a basketball team or cheerleaders or whatever.”

QUESTION 8:

S: Uh, I try to although, I think, part of this is an aside, part of the culture here is fostered by the fact that the majority of teachers are alternate route. It’s not the minority, it’s the majority, probably, I think, 60 to 70%. So, we’re all, uh, second career people here; Uh, the majority of us are second career people, and have had other responsibilities. So, part of the atmosphere is, we expect you to do a lot of the work, as a student, that you need to do to help yourself. So, there’s an atmosphere of helping but it’s helping with the idea that we’re not just going to hand you this material and spoon
feed it to you. We’re going to help you, as necessary, but we’re also, there’s a part of it, at least from my perspective, that, uh, you’re going to have to do some extra work, uh, to move yourself along. Uh, and, so, it’s not a freebee, uh, “I go for help and, you know, don’t have to do anything. You get the answer from the teacher.” You’re going to have some responsibilities that go along with that.

QUESTION 9:

S: Uh, absenteeism is virtually...is none. We have a very, very high percentage of both staff and student attendance rates.

QUESTION 10:

S: I have nothing to do with that.

QUESTION 11:

S: Uh, the usual course of events is our vice principal/counselor reviews progress reports or report cards. So, there’s a mid, uh, marking progress report and then report card. So, upon review, it’s obvious who’s doing poorly and usually calls to students are affected at that point and some of those get parental calls. We also field calls directly from parents. Uh, although not too many. I mean, it’s, we might get one a marking period, that’s it and often I don’t get any so. Uh, I think, there’s a, uh, well, I think that most of them who are struggling are, know, the parents already know or the parents don’t care. You know, I can’t tell which but there doesn’t seem to be many issues that come out, so.

R: How bout with, uh, students excelling?

S: Students excelling? I don’t think we have a good mechanism...we don’t have a mechanism for recognizing that except, you know, what we check off on the progress reports.

QUESTION 12:

S: Uh, curriculum is a mixed bag. I said it before, for my area, for the Engineering areas, for the Math, upper level math, uh, we pretty much did it our own. All right, this is the name of the course, this is what I think goes along with that at, you know, the honors level. Uh, and, so, and no one has ever, ever approached me saying “what are you teaching”, “what are you teaching” so I file a, you know, a piece of paper that says what the subjects are but no one has ever questioned that. Um, for the other areas, in Social Studies, I think, I mean, there is, there is curriculum. I think for, I’m not as familiar with those teachers as far as, uh, details, but I think for the most part, they also, they follow general guidelines but the specifics are pretty much unique to here. Uh, because the other schools in our system don’t attempt to impact or have, uh, use of that curriculum.
R: Uh, is there much of a culture of, like, professional learning communities or school leadership committees here where you would get together with other teachers to develop, like, interdisciplinary curriculum?

S: Uh, some in the, um, in the Social, English area. Uh, when you only have two teachers per subject, it’s only two science teachers, and the other science teacher teaches two different subjects, um, we interact a little bit but there’s really no driving force to do that or need to do it as far as I’m concerned.

Um, budget? Um, I mean, I’ve been treated very well on the budget but I have no input as to, uh, how many dollars I should have. Uh, I don’t think anyone has that. Um, but I don’t have any complaints about the system except the complaints that go along with the state requirements; um, so, my specific complaint, for example, is we need to submit the majority of our budget in December for the following September. Um, it’s often impossible to predict some of those needs. Uh, those, the driving force behind doing that is that these things are supposed to go out to bid. So, uh, I specify, for the most part, especially in building my program, single vendor items that can’t be bid. I select them because that’s the vendor that supplies exactly what I want. Uh, and need for my classroom. And, so, uh, it goes into the system, it comes back saying we can’t bid it, uh, there’s no bid. So, it isn’t even ordered. Then, we, come September, and find that none of this stuff’s been ordered. We have to reorder it, which we get the order frankly, at that point, directly from the person [mumbled]. So, the whole, the state system, which I understand some of the reasons behind, um, complicates the process and also, uh, makes it very ineffective. Um, so, that’s my only issue on the budget.

Um, we do have some input on discipline issues although discipline issues are not so big. I think the bigger impact has been on the academic, uh, honesty policy. Uh, one of our math instructors sort of spearheaded an, um, initiative and we’ve come to an agreement that if we have students who violate our academic honesty policy, the faculty, as a whole, will not write recommendations for that student. Um, and, so, uh, but it’s carefully explained to the freshmen, what this all means, and what the consequences were, and, also, the parents are informed and, uh, so far, it’s been, that’s seemed to have worked.

QUESTION 13:

S: OK. There are opportunities twice a year. Uh, they are completely useless, or next to completely useless, for my needs. Uh, but, because they’re completely generic, oh, for example, a typical in-house offering, things I have to go to, might be on bullying, or reading across the curriculum, or things like that which have absolutely no use, no use at all. And things I do care about, I do have opportunity to do, but I have to do it outside of the district, um, professional development offerings. Now, that’s changed this year, because, for the first time, they’ve allowed us, on the district, uh, professional development day which is held at a central location, um, they’ve allowed us to stay here if we worked on a specific project that we say, in this case, technology development now, since that’s a lot of what I do. So, for this year, I developed, uh, two new physics labs to go with two of the new pieces of physics equipment that I had ordered and so I
can say, here's what I did, I spent the day profitably, um, it's great. So, um, if they continue that, that will be nice. I've had the opportunity to go to lots of, uh, out of district science conferences and things like that. The, um, only issue is budget. There's a $200 dollar total a year limit, which is a little restrictive, uh, so there's a lot of out of pocket, uh, money involved, but, uh, at least the opportunity to go is, that's supported.

R: What about professional development teacher to teacher here in the building?

S: Um, I think there's some going on but not with me.

QUESTION 14:

S: Oh, uh, well, I think there's a lot of school spirit so the students really, um, show it while they're here and we get a pretty high year to year, uh, alumni return. So, over this, you know, it's now the winter break, uh, season for most college students, so, we've seen, uh, you know, twenty, thirty alumni come back and, you know, just say how they're doing, and see how we're doing and so on, so. So, at least those that have graduated, uh, certainly have that, and I think that also, you know, shows up here. We have open houses, um, for prospective students and we get a lot of student volunteers who are willing to, uh, come volunteer their time to show, uh, and prospective students around. And we're, I'm always a little surprised at some of the comments they make, uh, about the classes and so on. You can tell from the comments that, you know, they, even some of them may have had a rough time in class, they appreciate, you know, what's going on here, so. I take that as pride in the school.

R: How bout you?

S: How bout me? Uh, how do I show, oh, I'm very, as you can tell, I'm very upbeat on the school with people that I talk to. I don't think I have any other way of expressing it.

R: OK, great. Thank you very much. That's it.
Appendix K

Transcript: School B/Focus Group
TRANSCRIPT: SCHOOL B/FOCUS GROUP

QUESTION 1:

S1: I believe that in our seven, this is our eighth year in existence, we’ve had once incident of drug use where a student took prescription medication from the parent’s home and brought them into the school. Whether or not there was an intent to distribute was not made clear to the faculty. Um, or whether the student was showing off what he had, and, by, that was on a Friday. By Monday, the student was gone. Um, I do not believe there have been any weapons. Um, there have been misuse of things like cans of silly string but, um, I don’t think there has been any weapons. Um, somebody set their pants on fire with hair spray once. [laughter].

S2: I don’t know. I don’t think so.

S3: I don’t think there has been anything.

S1: You weren’t here for the drug episode?

S3: I wasn’t here.

S1: I don’t think you were here.

S2: I was here for the drug episode. It was my first year here. But, I don’t think anything…

S1: I don’t think you could have been because …Oh yes, you could have been.

S3: I was. It was my first year. I remember.

S1: Well, I know that things go on after prom. Um, I don’t think the school has any ability to respond to things like that.

S2: I know things happen on the weekends. Just conversations I’ve heard. I know students who probably, you know, do like, smoke pot, stuff like that. Outside of school, weekends…

S3: That’s the thing.

S2: But in the school, I don’t think so. But, and students who do, who we suspect, we have a, um, students assistance counselor who comes in and talks to them.

S3: Yep.

R: Have you referred anybody, individually, to the counseling services?
S1: I have not.

S3: No.

S2: I think I did last year for one student.

QUESTION 2:

S1: Oh, definitely. Um, that's one of our big claims to fame. Uh, although we're in a high school for engineering, many students will tell you that the reason they're here is because their parents are fearful of their home public districts. Um, so, they come here not because they're motivated by engineering but because they want to be in a safe environment. Yes.

S2: Oh, I agree.

S3: I agree with that too.

S1: Overwhelmingly.

S3: Sometimes I think they take it for granted though. Uh, for example, leaving everything out in the commons is not something I would personally do, even though we don't seem to have that issue, you never know who is going to [end up] walking through.

S1: Oh, we have a lot of flow through traffic after school hours.

S3: Yeah, that's why.

S1: There are, um, county college classes at night. And some type of certificate program so there's a lot of people in the building but the students, uh, treat it like their home. They leave pocketbooks...

S3: Yeah, they do.

S1: Computers, they leave calculators, they leave books and rarely are things moved from the spot...

S3: Exactly. From where they're put down. [laughter].

S2: And when they are, and when they are, they're usually found.

S3: Yep.

S2: Yeah.
S3: Yeah, it is pretty safe. Although I think it’s a bad practice to get into. It is really...

S2: I mean I’m guilty of it myself.

S1: I left my pocketbook downstairs in the commons area for an entire morning cause I just forgot it. I stopped to talk to a student

S2: and it’s there.

S2: and it’s still there.

S3: Hmm, um. It doesn’t change.

R: Has that always been the case?

S1: Yes, without a doubt. Maybe, you know, you hear one incident of somebody on the, uh, morning announcements “I lost my IPOD”.

S3: Except, usually, they even come back.

S1: Yeah, they come back.

S3: Usually, they’re lost. Or maybe somebody picked it up and tried to give it to them later. You know, you never know what happened. But, no, they almost always come back. Almost always.

R: Why do you think that’s the case?

S1: I think it’s because it’s a matter of respect for property and of individuals. I think that, um, in general, students feel that they are, as individuals, respected by the faculty and by each other. And, you know, the Ten Commandments rules...you know, do unto others as you want done unto yourself. You know.

QUESTION 3:

S2: The only activity in school is soccer, um, outside of school, they’re, I would think they are involved in a lot more than soccer.

S3: No, we have clubs and things along those lines.

S2: Well, we have clubs.

S3: We have the UN and there are other activities in there. You know, there’s math league, science league, ping pong, there aren’t as many activities as other schools but sports there is just soccer.
S1: They also play indoor soccer.

S3: Yeah, they do.

S1: And we have the beginnings, for the past two springs, of a golf program and there's a... I'm not sure what they called it... volleyball? Where they have a tournament?

S2: The intramurals. Yeah.

S3: The speedball stuff, the Speedball, the racquetball? They have tournaments usually for that. Look, so there is, there are some after school activities not as much as other schools...

S1: With athletics, some of our children go back to their home district to participate.

S3: That's true too.

S1: We have one girl that, um, she was written up in the Home News for a championship field hockey maneuver. Her team won, uh, GMTs, I think and we've got two kids that are swimmers and do we have anybody doing, we don't have any basketball players this year, right?

S2: No.

S3: I don't think so.

S2: We've had bowling in the past.

S1: That's right.

S2: We've had bowling...

S3: There's the marching band kids, too.

S2: Yeah, we have marching band. Um...

S1: It really depends on whether or not the parents are able to come back to get the child, to get them to where they need to be.

S3: But, even so, I think we have a large percentage if you think about it. We have 140 something kids, right? How many people...

S1: We have less than 140.
S3: Yeah, less than 140 now? So, if you know, for a percent, if you were to compare it to another high school, I would think that we have a pretty large percentage involved in something.

S2: It’s one of the things the kids complain about the school is that there is not enough to be involved in. Even though we have, well, we have the soccer, even though we have all these other clubs, a lot of the kids say “that’s just not enough.”

S1: Well, this year, somebody started the choral or the chorus? And somebody started some type of math club. I don’t...

S3: chess? I think they did that too.

S1: The chess club? No. [Teacher name], that was last year they had chess.

S3: I didn’t know they had it last year.

S1: Um, yeah, they just need somebody, an interest and they just need to find somebody that’s going to be hanging around...

S3: That’s what it really comes down to.

S1: to kind of watch them. Um, because of the transportation issues here, everybody comes from so far away and we don’t have any late buses here. Lucky, they get a ride home in the beginning.

R: Do you think that the teachers agree that there aren’t enough activities for the students?

S3: I think it’s hard to have very many activities with such a limited amount of faculty, um, the facil..., you know, just thinking about how would you...let’s say you wanted to field, Oh, I don’t know, a football team. You don’t really have that many, um, students to even select from. It’s not a large school. It’s difficult, in some cases, to get activities going because of limitations, um, based upon the number of students, based upon the number of staff, based upon the facilities in general. Um, it’s a small building and.

S1: We don’t have a gym.

S3: And, transportation. Yes, we don’t have a gym. We’re at the mercy of [the county] which usually works out pretty well.

S1: But not always.

S3: But not always.

S1: But not always.
S3: And, um, that's also an issue. So, and, just like I said that the transportation, and she's been saying, the transportation issue seems to be an overriding theme as well. So, um, we do have a fair number of activities but to have every, you know, every single possible activity would be impossible if you're not going to have a staff of 200. You know, we don't have that.

S2: I remember at one point we had a drama club. Kids wanted a drama club. So, we started a drama club. And then, in the end, there wasn't a lot of student participation because they were involved in other clubs that they had to attend.

S1: That was a, like a failure as well. The art club, somebody wanted to start and that fell on it's face. Um, we started a mock trial program and I think for two years they did mock trial. Um, with difficulty getting enough people, you need, cause you need to supply extras to be a jury.

S3: Yeah.

S1: And what happened, is that eventually, the person who that was in charge had been working so hard and putting in so many hours, that she made it into a course. Um, what does she call that course?

S2: Uh, Speech and Rhetoric. Speech and Rhetoric, yeah, something along those lines.

S1: So, I don't know if they prepare to, um, compete in mock trial but many other schools do do mock trial as a course.

S3: Yes.

S1: So, I don't know what happened

S3: Right.

S1: but there is no more mock trial after school.

S2: One club that, I think, has been pretty successful is...

S1/S2/S3: Model UN.

S2: Model UN has been very successful. The kids seem to get into that.

S1: Do they go to many conferences? I'm not sure.

S2: I believe they do. They've gone to Princeton, they went to DC a couple of years ago...
S1: So, do they go to one a year...two a year?

S3: I don’t know that.

S2: I’m not sure.

S3: I know they went to one already this year.

S2: There are a few a year I would say.

S1: I think there’s more.

S3: I think there’s more, yeah, I know there all over the place.

S2: Another problem also with these activities is that, um, transportation, there’s no transportation from the building to wherever they’re competing.

S3: Yeah, that’s true too.

S2: So, um, you know, you end up carpooling...permission slips for one parent to carpool three, four kids because we don’t get the busing for it.

S3: That’s an issue.

S1: And, you know, there’s insurance issues for a teacher putting a child in the car. So that’s a problem right there.

S3: So, for example, I have a science league, um, meet tomorrow. Which if I didn’t have, um, one father staying home and taking off for the day, not particularly, not for science league, but just happened get lucky enough that this person can drive five students, uh, we were looking into taking the public bus because that was our only other option. We were going to take the bus to [local town] high school which is basically ten minutes down the road. We just had no other way to get there. Um, I would have taken the bus with them obviously. But, um, that was our option. And just because they will not...we put in every year for science league, for example, to have, we only have four meets, to put in for four buses. But we do not have the funds available as a district so they treat it like, I guess, so they treat it as a class trip and they just don’t approve it. And this is the second year in a row since I’ve been doing it. The first year we did have buses that I was doing it and the last two we have not. So, we’re at the mercy of the parents and I personally only have five students. So, I have a choice of five parents to drive. It’s going to be a long year.

S2: And that’s the same problem with Mock Trial as well. When they were, you know, they were running Mock Trial, it was also a problem when transportation getting the kids to wherever it was where they competed. Um, that I think, that’s a big problem.
S3: And those are a lot of students for Mock Trial as well. So, that's an issue too.

S2: It's not like one parent can drive.

S3: No, not at all.

S1: Even if you can find somebody that's willing to. And then you have the issue of the parents that work and work far away and work late. And so, your activity is supposed to end, say, at five, and the parent doesn't show til seven. And, you know, a teacher will probably only settle for that once and then that's it. And I think in a small district you find that it's the same teachers always signing up to make themselves available. And, um, you know, as long as people are willing, that's fine but some people are not willing. And as long as it's confidential, I'm one that's not willing. I have things to do. I mean, when I started here, I had an invalid mother and I had responsibilities. And even now, you know, life goes on and I'm not interested in staying here til five o'clock every night. I've had enough with my day.

S2: I'm in the same boat. When I first came, I used to take on, you know, the clubs but now I have a newborn. And I can't be hanging around here.

S3: I have, right now, at my house, four kids, but two of them are mine.

S1: But you also have a, teach...

S3: And I teach at college at night so I really do have a pretty packed schedule too so I try when I can, um, sometimes. Uh, but I really don't have the time.

S1: You know, most of the clubs are not given any, um, compensation.

S3: They're working on that, I think, over the last year...

S1: But that would not be a motivating factor for me.

S3: No, because it's really minimal, anyway.

S1: But it's just the point that, you know, it's the same people. When you have such a small faculty, it's the same people over and over again.

S3: Yes, it is.

S1: When those people change, you know, you might not wind up with anybody willing to do anything because your issue was what? How are people happy here? Are the students happy with the offerings and are the faculty happy with the offerings? I think the faculty are probably saying, you know, we're here for our themed engineering and let everything else go by the weigh side.
R: Well, let me ask about that. In terms of activities in the theme, you were mentioning a little bit about what you did with the science league. Are there, I guess, extra activities in the theme area? Or how does that work?

S2: There are…Roborocks.

S3: There’s Roborocks but, unfortunately, they’re cutting funding for that next year. That’s not our funding. It’s the state college funding. Who ever is doing it.

S2: Roborocks for engineering. There’s math league, there’s science league.

S3: Yeah, but that’s not engineering?

S2: Yeah, but that’s math and science.

S3: Yeah, you’re right.

S1: Isn’t there an AIT contest that they participate in?

S3: Yeah, I thought there was.

S1: but I don’t know what it’s called.

S3: I don’t know either.

S1: I don’t know what it’s called. And that’s generally through the computer and electronic engineering. I don’t civil and mechanic, I don’t think they’ve got any outside...

S3: outside? No. I don’t think they do either.

S2: There’s also a, um, with the cards program, with the seniors with their senior project with [teacher name]. He has, um…and I don’t know if this is so much an activity but he has a lot of people from the college come over and just look at the projects and he has the students working with the college on a lot of the engineering, um, works. That would be an extra activity but they do stay after school.

S3: Yeah, they do a lot during class, I guess, is the point.

S2: They also stay after school, a lot, at the college.

S3: Yeah.

S2: To get a lot of their circuit boards working.

S3: They do that too.
S1: Oh, definitely for when it comes time for college applications, these senior projects really hold these kids in good stead. They can really have lots to show about what they’ve done.

QUESTION 4:

S1: Yes, Yes, Yes. This is a wonderful place to work.

S2: At least here in this building.

S3: Yeah, let’s put it that way.

S1: As long as we clear that up.

S2: Not out of the building...the [school name]. [Laughter].

R: Can you give some examples?
S1: Well, this school was the principal’s, um, concept. And, so, he was, you know, out working and trying to sell a population to even get students before he had a building. And, yeah, he takes such pride in his surroundings, um...

S3: Yeah.

S1: because he really created all of this. So, he made...I’m an original person and I also came from another building in our district so I know what it’s like on the other side as it were. Um, he made us all feel so appreciated to be part of this new endeavor where we’re really going to do something that was so special for our county and, uh, I’ve never felt more appreciated ever. I mean, you know, he can’t give me any money but he always takes the time to say “thank you”...

S2: Yeah.

S1: and, you know, available to say hello and goodbye. It’s the little things that count. And you go to him, an open door policy. You know, I have a white board in my room and something happened. I don’t think I did it wrong but “we’ll replace it, maybe not today with the money, but we’ll replace it.” Whatever you need, supplies, gadgets, anything that you want...

S2: Here is, I needed, yesterday, for example, um, a part for my scanner to scan my books. I come in, in the morning, he says, “OK, I have a job for you. Drive over to Radio Shack, go buy this part,...

S3: Hmm, um.

S2: come back, I’ll reimburse you with petty cash.” It was as simple as that.
S1: As opposed to waiting eight weeks for an order, a purchase order and, you know, not being able to get the thing done.

S2: Exactly. Now, is there a downside to this?

S3: To what?

S2: To all the support and all the thank yous, and?

S3: Thank you is not a bad thing.

S1: Only, really, that he’ll leave.

S3: You know what, that’s an actual, that’s an actual concern.

S2: That’s an actual concern because he is...

S3: You don’t know who is going to step in. And, especially, in a school like this, it’s easier to hide in a school of 2000 students and 200 faculty members, it’s not as, it’s important, but, um, you truly interact with the principal everyday when you’re a staff of, how many people do we have?

S1: I don’t know.

S2: Thirteen, fourteen?

S3: Less than twenty. You need, you know, really is, to have a horrible administration would be, you know, would make life very unpleasant in this building.

S1: We have some issues as a faculty...

S3: There’s always issues.

S1: with how, um, and it’s specifically academic dishonesty, that’s one of our major concerns. I think and we have some issues when we know a student has been caught cheating. And, of course, that covers a wide range of sins. And what happens to that student. Um, we also feel there is pressure on our administration to fill up seats, taking students that are not appropriate...

S3: Yes. Hmm, um.

S1: And, they also, you know, hard place and a rock, you know, do the best that we can. And so they understand our predicaments, um...

S3: Yeah, for the most part, the students that come in are not appropriate in an academic sense but not really in a behavioral sense at least. We could wind up with all sorts of other issues which we don’t. They fail.
S2: Yeah. It's usually academic. It's usually academic.

S3: You know, that's not good for them and it's not really fun to watch but, at least, it's not disruptive.

S1: I think that we would like to see a stronger stand on tolerance. You know, like, if you get bad grades, you should be gone, quickly. You know, things like that. But, of course, we don't see, you know, what pressures are being placed on...

S2: Yeah.

S3: Yeah, I think that's part of it too. I agree with that.

R: Reads second part of Question 4 on morale.

S1: Oh, I think ...

S3: I think it's high.

S2: I think that morale's high. Um, how do we keep it high?

S3: Through activities? I don't know.

S1: I don't think we do anything. I think we're just all happy to be here.

S3: We don't need to. It's OK, yeah, we're OK. We're doing fine.

S1: You know, I mean, it's a pleasant place to come.

S3: Yeah.

S1: You know, the kids are nice and, I mean, occasionally, I mean, I've had, in my years here, I've had a year where there were parents that were really displeased with me and it made life difficult. So, you know, this year, I don't have it. So, let's knock on wood. But the administration has always been very supportive and always tried to keep interaction between you and the disgruntled parent to a minimum so that he's run all the interference. So, you know, he kind of does all that for us. So, I mean, you know, you feel that you can just come in, do your job and try and teach your material. And, um, discipline is just never an issue.

S2: And he always says, "Just don't worry about it." I'll handle it, just don't worry about it," which is really nice when you have a disgruntled parent.

S1: Yeah, he takes care of all that.
S2: You know, and you’re like, oh my god, I got this email, what am I... "Don’t worry about it, don’t worry about it, just don’t even worry about it," and he always takes care of it which is really nice.

S1: And if you think that a child is beginning to act out, or whatever, you know, like, you’re questioning certain kinds of behavior like they’re snippy to me, throw up the book, or whatever, all you have to do is go ask and they make sure that, you know, somebody talks and sees that there’s something going on. I have limited problems. You don’t have to send people out for doing bad things.

S2: You don’t really, like, we don’t ask kids to leave our classrooms.

S3: Hmm, um.

S1: Only if they’re bored. [laughter]

S2: I mean, I mean, I’ve had kids, you know, in the past but that’s, it’s not something that happens a lot.

S1: Yeah. Like when I was in [another school] for instance, you know, you’d have an incident every class.

S2: It’s like you dread a class. I also came from another school in our district and it was like there were classes that you would dread when they came in...

S1: All 180 days of that school year. It’s just not like that here. I think our size, while there’s negatives to being so small, um, this is one of the positive aspects. Everybody knows everybody.

S3: That’s true.

S1: And, um, you know, every body kind of really understands that they have to work together. We have limited space as well in that regard, so.

R: How is the collegiality among staff members? Do you ever, you know, um, work on a project together? Is that something you like doing? Not like doing?

S1: I don’t do anything interdisciplinary.

S3: I’m thinking about it.

S2: I used to, when I was in the English classroom, I used to with History and with the library and with the engineering, with senior project, with engineering. So, I did a lot of it and I always enjoyed doing it. And now that I’m here in the library, I would like to get more involvement from, you know, every one else, bring their classes, let me teach them certain... you know, these are the books I have, I would like to do that now that I’m here and get organized.
S1: I think the English/History still goes on.

S2: But like English/History, I did 1920s history. Did 1920s and then we did a project down here. I know History used to a Holocaust project with the media specialist. Um...

S3: Then they do something. What the heck do they do with, um, [teachers]? I think they do something.

S2: They do 1776 together. I know History also did, um, the Renaissance. They did a major project with the Renaissance, with the media center. Um, what else?

S3: I think next year I'm going to have an English teacher help me out grading papers. [laughter].

S2: I don't think they want to ... thank god, I'm not involved. [laughter].

S3: No, No, No, I talked to [English teacher]. Cause the scientific papers. I grade them for, I do grade them for grammar now at this point, but I think, you know what, might as well get their English teacher involved as well. So, I'll grade them for what I'm looking for and I'll have her involved as well, I think. And I talked to her about that already.

S2: Which is what I used to do with CARTS with the, um, engineering teachers. Um, when they had, you know, either presentations or papers to write, the engineering instructors always graded them based on, you know, engineering, based on, you know, whether or not they followed, um, all of the guidelines in the engineering aspect and I always graded them based on speaking skills, writing skills, and all of that, so.

S1: They have to make presentations, right? I think they do a lot of presentations.

S2: Yeah. Yes, they did a lot of presentations, so, they always looked at the presentation's, you know, technical aspects where I was, since I didn't know so much about the technical, I was more, you know, how are you presenting this, your body language.

QUESTION 5:

S1: Well, the property not being disturbed, um, our classrooms. I mean, look, our desks, my desks are perfect. They're not damaged in any way. No type of vandalism.

S3: That's true.

S1: you know, people come in, they say "good morning", they say "good afternoon", "have a pleasant weekend". At Christmas, we get gifts and cards. And, one
of, I think, the real telling tales, is how many of our alum come back to visit. We’ve been inundated since Thanksgiving.

S2: Every day, we have students who just, they come in every day. “Hi, how are you?”, “I’m doing well in college,” “I’m graduating”, “I’m doing this”, “I’m doing that”, “you guys really helped me.” You get that all the time.

S1: They just like to come back and see us.

S2: And they like want to sit down and converse with us. As opposed to when they were here and they wanted to get out of our classrooms. And we’re like, please, goodbye, I have a class to teach. [laughter]

S1: But I have to prepare. [laughter] But I think that really speaks volumes.

QUESTION 6:

S1: Oh yeah, yeah. I think so. And I think also because, um, I don’t know, if it’s like this in other schools, but the email. We get a lot of email correspondence. You know, like, “Hi, My name is blah, blah, blah and I’m in your fourth period Math Class”. You know, I’ve had you for two years. [laughter] “And I’m going on a trip to India for two weeks”. But, I mean, you know, but they, sometimes, the student can, you know, put that all out on the email and then you can go to them and say I’ve got your email and, you know, this is the list of assignments or this is how we’re going to handle this, or whatever. So, you know, you don’t have to, like, stand there and wait. You already know that you need to approach them. And that way, they can also, at home, when their parents say, “we’re going to do this, this, and this”, they can go jot off an email and know there’s going to be some action there.

QUESTION 7:

S3: Uh, it’s an advanced curriculum. At least, yeah, we’ll stick with that. It’s an advanced curriculum. Um, do my students always match up to my expectations? I guess the answer to that is there’s never going to be an instance when all students measure up to anyone’s expectations I would think at least not mine. Um, but there are some students that perform quite admirably, and then there are some others, like, I don’t know some sophomores that come in who were not here for freshman year, you know, there are some others that just really, that she mentioned previously, that, uh, just do not fit in. I guess that’s the way to put it.

S2: Academically.

S3: Academically do not really measure up. But, um, that once again, that’s everywhere I think.

S2: I think one of the issues also is these kids, um, they get a lot of pressure from home.
S3: Yes, they do.

S2: So, they get a lot of pressure from their parents. "You've got to get an A", "You've got to get an A", "You have to be the best" and because, um, I think our curriculum is very challenging the kids are not meeting what their parents, or what they've been for years and years told, throughout the years, they're not meeting those expectations. So.

S1: Well, [teacher name] and I teach 9th grade. [teacher name] taught 9th grade and she also taught 11th. But, the kids, the 9th graders, they come, basically they were the top of their little land and many of them just had to smile and look pretty or handsome, as it were, and had no sense of study skills. And, while I think we all believe everybody could get As, we don't have any problem, we don't need any normal distribution, it's just that a lot of people don't have the study skills or the organizational skills. Uh, I know in my time here I have definitely changed my viewpoint on how to run my course and, I don't want to say lowered expectations but more or less changed. I started out more, um, with a, you know, lecture arrangement and I've moved probably 180 degrees to a more discovery approach so the students could hopefully take some ownership. Um, Mathematics is an advanced curriculum. Supposedly, students have had, in 8th grade, in Algebra I, and continually students are admitted that have not met that. So, that's always a problem because you have people that all over the spectrum. We feel that if they, somebody would just stick to and take what they say they're going to take, it would be a lot easier. Um, but definitely college prep. The expectation is that everybody will go to college.

S3: Yeah.

S1: And from our first graduating class, I know that we had a couple of dropouts um, but there wasn't anyone that didn't go even if it was to the county college.

S2: Yeah, they, I think in the past they all have gone to college. All of them. 100%.

S1: Yes, everybody goes to college. Every body. Um, and where the first graduating class we had maybe had six go to county college, our last graduating class, we had one go to Princeton and one go to MIT. So, we're talking maybe a little bit different, you know, caliber of student. Um, you know, we would like everybody to do well but not everybody is really even interested.

S2: But another thing also, another thing also, these are kids. A lot of them are lazy, a lot of them procrastinate. And that's another issue, you're dealing with.

S1: And you find the students that are, some of them are just so focused on engineering..."I'm going to be a computer programmer my entire life and this is what I live for so why do I need to study English." Um, or history. And then you have other students that, you know, are really not so focused on the engineering, they're here for
other reasons because their parents wanted them to be in a safe environment. And so they’re maybe a little better in the humanities and they struggle with the more quantitative aspects and I’m standing here thinking, did you look at the name on the front door? Did you bother to look at it?

S2: And I’m like that kid did wonderfully in my class.

S1: Yeah, you know, we all expect them to go to college but.

QUESTION 8:

S1: Well, I know [teacher name] will spend lunchtime, every lunchtime, and I think all of us would stay after school.

S2: Of course. Prep periods if the student’s available. I mean, you know, I mean, with English, not a lot of students come for extra help so but I know for Math and Science [the science teacher] is here after school. Uh, you’ve worked in the morning with them.

S3: Yeah, I’d rather do mornings and lunch than after school.

S1: Yeah, I’m here every morning.

S2: You know, [teacher name] is here after school.

S1: I think the students, over the past year, they’ve tried peer tutoring?

S3: Yeah, they do some of that.

S1: I think that they kind of serve themselves rather than looking to us. My feeling is you have me for 88 minutes and I’m no different in the morning or at lunchtime.

S3: You’ve got a point there.

S1: Um, maybe you need to hear it from somebody else’s voice, so, you know, not that I discourage. I’m there. But I think that you need to look for something else.

S3: Well, I think that helps too, yeah.

QUESTION 9:

S3: Not much.

S2: Not a big problem. Very...

S3: There always a couple of students that are absent a few times, you know, but not like other schools.
S2: Oh gosh, no.

S3: No where near.

S2: We have very few kids have attendance problems.

S1: late, coming to school late.

S3: We do have some lates but, un, some of that might even be understandable. I don’t know.

S1: Well, some is the parents and some of it is the students once they get their license.

S3: Yeah. Well, that’s their own fault.

S1: And, you know, I mean, or the issue that students are absent because their parents want to take a ski vacation. You know, that kind of…or go to India. That kind of thing, yeah. Students, they do not abuse.

S3: No.

S1: They just don’t stay home to stay home. We’ve had a few students leave but not like a dropout, not like, not finish school. They go to another school that’s just foreign to us.

**QUESTION 10:**

S1: I have no clue.

S2: I don’t know.

S3: I would think it’s…

S2: I would think it’s [the guidance counselor].

S3: I think it’s [the guidance counselor] too.

S2: But I would think, that usually, the parents call their children in. They usually call their children in, um, being absent, so.

S3: It’s not like the students are home cutting. Let’s put it that way. No, they’re really legitimate absences and we don’t have that issue.

S2: And even if they are home, like even if they are home and they’re not sick, the parent will usually call in anyway.
S3: Yeah, that's true. So, they're excused by somebody let's put it that way. Maybe not legitimate, but they're excused. [laughter]

S2: They have permission to cut. [laughter]

S1: Yeah, it's not like it was in [former school districts].

S3: No.

S2: And, I mean, if attendance, usually if we do have students that have attendance problems, um, they usually just handle it in the office.

S3: Yes, well, that's true. I've seen that.

S1: And, you know, we'll raise the issue of a student that will be continually absent on the day of a test...

S3: On exam day.

S1: And it only takes one or two times to get that number, you know. We usually nip that one in the bud.

QUESTION 11:

S1: Again, I don't think anybody really does that.

S3: The parents pretty much keep on top of us if anything.

S2: Well, what we usually... and we have progress reports every marking period and that's usually when, you know, parents get information as far as their child is concerned and at that point the parents contact.

S3: I post my grades as well too.

S1: We all have an EBoard and I, we, and I do every week, and I assume it's parents that are reading my EBoard, not students, and so I'll say, we had this week or we're going to have a test next week or we had a quiz or whatever. So, you know, my feeling is, that in high school, parents should be asking their students, you know, like, "I know you had a test. Let me see the grade."

S3: Hmm, um.

S1: But, you know, we don't usually make that initiation.
S2: Yeah. Unless, it's, I know I use, sometimes, I used to, um, to the office, I would just let the guidance counselor know that, listen this child is going to fail. You know.

S3: Yeah, something along those lines.

S2: Is there a problem? And at that point, guidance would usually address it. Sometimes call the parent in or...

S3: Yeah, if it's a big problem, we do that.

QUESTION 12:

S1: Not the budget.

S3: Not the budget whatsoever. Uh, curriculum, we go to all that fun professional development and, um, sometimes work on curriculum. I did this summer for example.

S1: But, like, Biology is not what anybody else...

S3: But here it's different than the curriculum for the district.

S1: Yeah, we kind of do our own thing.

S3: Yeah, we kind of do our own thing curriculum wise.

S2: Yeah, I know with curriculum I used to do my own thing. You have to teach American Literature so I would do whatever I wanted in American Literature. Order my own novels. It wasn't like you have to teach this, this, this, and this. I don't know how it is with you.

S3: No, I do the same thing. I have my own book. I don't adhere to the district but I influence the district. I have fun with that. But, um, curriculum, we're pretty much in charge of that on our own. Budget, no.

S2: Budget, we're basically told what to spend and that's it.

S3: What's the third one? Discipline? Discipline is not that much of an issue. I mean, it just comes down to that, in this school, discipline is just really not much of an issue at all.

S2: I mean, even if there is a discipline problem, I mean, usually, we can make recommendations. Listen, this child did this. This is what he or she should get but it's really not an issue ever.

S3: No.
S1: No.

R: Now, in terms of the curriculum, just a quick little follow-up, do you have any kind of, um, school leadership committees or professional learning communities amongst yourselves?

S2: Amongst us? No.

S1: No. We’re all stand alone. No body else teaches what any of us teach.

S3: I am half the science department. Think of it that way. Yeah. There is no one else teaching Biology in this school, no one else teaching Environmental Science. I’m half the science department. I mean, so, there’s no one to talk to.

S1: There’s nobody to share it with.

S2: With like English though, um, you know, many times, I would sit down with the other English teachers, and say, at what point did you end last year? Cause it’s American Literature I and American Literature II. So, I would communicate with her, listen, where did you finish so I can start? Chronologically, cause I always like to go chronologically and there’s communciation in that sense. For us, for me, for English.

S3: I’d like to have that because there is nothing that really carries through. Mine is pretty much stand-alone. Except I do have some Chemistry and Biology and I do tell him what I do. But that’s about it.

QUESTION 13:

S3: Well, we have to go to two, have to, go to two, um, professional development days in district a year that, somehow, you can opt out of I think, right?

S2: I guess. I didn’t go to one when I was on my honeymoon and I didn’t go when I was on maternity leave. [laughter]

S3: They’re really not that good. They’re easily available and, um, they provide opportunities for people to go to lunch, sometimes, but that’s, and they actually do give you coffee and, um, darnishes but I guess that’s about it. That’s all I really get out of those. You do have the opportunity to go outside of district as well. Uh, the process, from I what understand, almost everywhere [in state], the process is painful, long, agony, and has to be done very much so in advance. Um, and that’s not, so I don’t blame any one on that, I guess, except, maybe [the state]. But, um, so you can go to other professional development opportunities.

S1: Yeah, I don’t think anybody goes during the year. They made it too difficult.

S3: It’s pretty hard.
S2: Well, also though, most of us would rather be here teaching because
taking a day off you’re behind in your curriculum.

S3: Yeah, but you have to meet the…

S2: But then you have to put, you know, you have to put the letter in before the
board meeting, and they have to reimburse you…

S1: It’s like months.

S2: It becomes such a hassle and most of us just don’t want to go through that.

S1: You just can’t…

S3: It doesn’t matter even if it’s free.

S1: Yeah, it doesn’t matter.

S2: It doesn’t matter.

S3: It doesn’t matter if it’s free or not but I think that’s the state from what I
understand.

S1: I went last summer. I did a week with the chamber of commerce which I
found very interesting and then I didn’t have any trouble because it was on my own
time. Um, but, in general, um, the stuff that our district supplies to us is useless.

S3: I agree with that.

S3: What do you think? Even when you were in [another district], were they
awful too?

S1: Oh, yeah.

S2: At least to the people, at least to us in this building. I don’t know how, I
mean, the other buildings, but the other buildings also complain. I’m part of the Union.
I’m Union Treasurer so this is a huge issue at our meetings where, you know, everyone
in the district complains but, especially in this building, a lot of the offerings are just…

S3: Useless.

S2: They’re useless. I mean, you have Power Point class, you have how to use
Microsoft Word, you have…

S3: Behavioral issues in the classroom.

S1: Bullying.
S2: Yeah. And those are all issues we don’t have in this building.

S3: Disaffected students…Not in this building.

S1: I mean, I almost walked out on the woman who wanted me to make. I can’t tell you, lessons about doing something with a break pad and the area of a circle. I mean, you know, here, we teach area of a circle in two minutes. What do you want from me for four hours? You know, I don’t teach with anybody that does break pads. It’s of no use to me. But we have the requirement to get our hours so we kind of look at it as, we try to get all the computer stuff so people can leave us alone...

S2: So, we check our email and stuff like that. [laughter]

R: Let me ask you a question. Do you try compensating or have you compensated for that in the building? Like, for example. I’ll give an example, do teachers do professional development for other teachers here in the building?

S2: No, it never happened.

S1: No.

S3: No.

R: Is that an interest or not?

S1: No.

S3: I don’t think so either.

S1: Because we all do our own thing.

S3: If the science department was larger, then maybe that would be helpful. But it’s, I can go talk to [other science teacher] anytime I want.

S1: All of us have given courses at our district.

S3: I haven’t.

S1: Uh, district professional development. I’ve done Geometer Sketch Pad two or three times. People are not interested. So, it’s boring for them and it’s boring for me. I did one session on the graphing calculator. People are not interested, so. I don’t care. You can sit and play with the calculator or not. I don’t care. Um, [other teacher] does something on common sense. We all took it.

S2: I never took it unfortunately. I had to go to some [state testing] which has absolutely nothing to do with this building because we have 100% of our students pass.
So, I had to sit there with you know, teaching a student how to write an essay and I’m like, wait a minute. All of my students are passing.

S1: So, as long as we are required to do these two days, I don’t think anybody is interested in taking any extra time to, you know, do something like after school.

S3: I do if I find something really interesting.

S1: You know, block scheduling or something. But to do for each other, I don’t know.

S3: Yeah. From what I understand, they did something on block scheduling this last professional development day.

S1: I wasn’t there.

S3: I wasn’t there either. But they did it, but it was really just, um, they went into the psychology of learning.

S2: Oh god, you see. Don’t tell me the psychology of learning, uh, Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences…[laughter]

S1: Bloom’s Taxonomy. [laughter]

S2: let’s spend ten minutes doing something with you work mathematically…Ah, god. [laughter]

S3: That’s not block scheduling.

S2: I’ve been to so many of those. The colors… About the one with all the colors, if you’re blue, you’re emotional…

S3: You know, that’s fun. It’s useless but its fun. [laughter]

S1: It’s totally useless.

S3: It’s absolutely useless but its fun though.

QUESTION 14:

S2: Of course we are, we love it here.

S3: I think we’re proud of our school.

S2: How is it demonstrated?
S1: Well, first of all, every thing is squeaky clean and taken care of. You
don't see anything vandalized. I think the students are very proud of that. You don't
see students looking like garbage, either. Um, they come to school, they're neat, they're
clean. And we don't have really dress code issues with improper t-shirts or things like
that. Um, you see, a lot of students wearing paraphernalia; you know, the jackets, the
soccer kids always wear their jackets.

S3: That's true.

S1: But, in general, the t-shirts and the sweatshirts they buy all that.

S2: They're neat. And they bathe before they get here. [laughter]

S1: The parents have a foundation kind of separate from the district PTA. I don't
know what it's called.

S3: I don't remember either.

S1: Um, but they do their own thing and they raise money and it's just for us.
Um, they give out scholarships at graduation about, I think, $1000 dollars worth.
They're always pretty generous to the teachers. They treat us to lunch once a year.
Maybe they bring in or whatever...

S3: And all the food drives and charity drives.

S1: Yeah. A woman comes every week with Shop Rite Certificates.

S3: A ridiculous amount of food. And that whole thing, county wide...

S1: Oh, yeah, the food drive. We won that two years in a row.

S2: The food drive is...

S3: We have 100 and how ever many kids and we beat much larger schools.

S1: Any school in the county. We always bring in more for that.

S3: The poundage of food, I mean, is absolutely amazing.

S1: Box after box after box to Iraq...one of our student's fathers is in Iraq. And
we, you know, I mean, anybody asks for anything and everybody's there.

S3: Yep.

S1: Um, you know, I mean, it's just, I think, you know, we're kind of all are just
so happy about everything.
S2: And, I mean, the competition, like, for the food drive for example. You’ll have, like...The way these kids compete with each other. You know, a certain class will go out on the last day of the food drive just to win the food drive and just bring in tons of food.

S3: I think it was soda last year.

S2: And soda. [laughter]

S1: Yeah, or whatever. Rice.

S3: Cases of soda.

S2: You know, they just, they like it here.

S3: Yeah, they do.

S1: Most of them like it.

S3: Yeah, most of them.

S1: Well, we have a very small transfer rate. Um, last year, we lost three freshmen, two because they moved away. So, only one of our freshmen decided to not return. He thought he’d be happier somewhere else.

S3: Yeah, I wrote [student] a recommendation.

S2: Yeah, I actually have to do that also.

S3: Oh, he sent it to you too?

S2: When is it due in?

S3: I don’t know. I did it yesterday. So, it’s a big, long, annoying form. Have fun.

S2: God.

S1: You know, we can see all the college pennants; all of our alum. You know, a decent amount, I think, of student recognition, student of the month. Like the senior, you know, I think they’re all real happy to be here.

S2: And even the ones, I think that even the ones who are not happy, in the end, they end up realizing “this was a nice fit for me.” “I like it here, I like the high school” which is nice. Like, I’ve had a couple of kids who have been complaining for three years, you know, freshman, sophomores, junior year, now that they’re seniors, they’re like, “you know what, looking back, I’m happy I attended this school” which is nice.
S1: Absolutely, I mean, I'm real happy to tell people I work here. And, um, I happen to spend New Year's Eve with our, every year, for the past number of years, uh, with a gentleman, who is our board attorney, and, you know, I never miss an opportunity to tell him how wonderful it is here, and he is just so happy to hear. And I know that when he goes back, "you know, these teachers are really happy. You know, they go to work and look at what we produce." I mean, we get a lot of nice press about things but, you know, in general, every day, people are happy.

S2: You know, I have a few friends who are realtors. So, you know, a few of them have actually approached me and said "Don't you work at that [school]? It's come in number one" or number two or whatever it is.

S1: Because they need to know about the schools.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Because the parents want to move to the area. So, you know, then I feel great because, you know, they think I'm this genius which..."you work in that school? How do you get into that school?" So then you sit down and you explain to them with, you know, how students apply and the selection process.

S1: We have a lot of families, legacy types, you know, siblings. It's not always a good fit for the siblings but we, you know, have a lot of that. The family gets attached to the school.

S3: Yeah, that's true.

R: Thank you so much for your time. This was great.
Appendix L

Transcript: School C/Subject A
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL C/SUBJECT A

QUESTION 1:

S: Um, over the school is now in its eighth year, and over the past five years, the number of incidents have been relatively few. Um, physical contact, we rarely have a physical contact. I like the last one we had of any significance was over two years ago. And the reason that we don't have them, for the most part, is it's a small school, we pay very close attention to the youngsters, uh, we have teachers who are paying attention and watching, and the kids are pretty good about understanding our school rules. We have very few rules in the school but they know that, uh, the norm in the building is that if they get into a physical conflict, uh, that is of what I consider to be, and I evaluate the fight, if it's a pushing and shoving thing, it's not major. If it's a fistfight, I have them suspended immediately. And that has been my prerogative and I have done that. If you fight, you get suspended, even if you are the victim. And it sends a message. And so far, we've been pretty good about that.

With regard to, uh, drugs and alcohol, they come and they go, and, uh, again, the norm in the building, and since we are a small building and we watch our children very closely, uh, we get a sense of the youngsters under the influence or we have suspicion. And when they do match our suspicion, we deal with the parents. We have a health center right here who we involve, the hospital and the police. Um, but I can't, you know, I can think of perhaps only two situations in the last two or three years that involved drugs. Uh, every once in a while, you're surprise that somebody shows you a bag of marijuana was dropped here or there was a scent of something and you do your research and your homework, and you don't find the culprit, you report it to the police. Needless to say a lot of our youngsters are involved in drugs and alcohol abuse but primarily away from the campus. Again, the norm in the building has been that we do not tolerate, uh, misbehavior and we're fairly quick in dealing with, and I have no hesitation to have youngsters arrested.

If we find a youngster in the building with a weapon, or a facsimile weapon, or drugs, I have them arrested immediately. And I make a big to do about it. I don't hide it. So the kids know, in this building, if you act against the law, then you'll get arrested. And in the past, uh, I would say in the past three years, we've had one student, uh, arrested and suspended for carrying a knife in the building and two students, uh, arrested, suspended and expelled for bringing a facsimile gun into the building. Uh, since then, knock on wood, this year, nothing, of any type, of any major significance. Our biggest incidents are disrespect and talking back.

Uh, the last thing about this school in this building, since the building is relatively new, uh, is we have, uh, security cameras throughout the hallways. And we let the children know that there are security cameras. In fact, they can see the TV sets upon which the monitors are showing them and that has a controlling influence too, because the kids know that we know who they are and, if we can see them on video, it, you know, so, we're sort of, it's passive but aggressive at the same time on our part.
R: Excellent. And this is out of a student body population, or student population of?

S: About 490 students.

QUESTION 2:

S: Well, for the most part, I think, you know, that's the atmosphere it is – safe and secure place. Youngsters, uh, know each other, even though we have students who come from fourteen different communities as an inter-district, uh, magnet school, they feel pretty safe and secure here. Teachers know their names. Everyone says hello. Uh, and, every now and again, there are, there is tension that comes. I mean, right now, I don't know if you feel the tension in the building but there's a full moon. So, the kids are acting a little jumpy. And it's a very real thing in education.

U, but, yes, a safe and secure building. Our response to rumors, our response to incidents is fairly quick. And the team that deals with that is substantial. It's not only administration and teachers, uh, but we have two security officers, our special ed staff, our guidance staff, uh, anyone who hears anything reports back rather quickly. And we have a large number of students who are very quick to come to us and say they overheard something or somebody is doing something that they think will end up in some kind of issue. And, uh, just in case, point in case, we had a three day weekend this past weekend, and an incident almost took place at the mall in downtown [district name] involving four of our students. And, when we arrived back to school, yesterday morning, we heard about it right away. And we brought all the kids in, and had a confrontation with them explaining to them anything that has to do with our students anywhere in the world affects our school life and the message gets out about that.

So, incidents will take place. Uh, insecure issues will take place. Anytime you bring, uh, teenagers together in large numbers, you always have the potential of something going awry. And, occasionally, it does. Often times, in this building at least, with our community, it hasn't. But having said that, there are, uh, eighteen exits, there are sixteen bathrooms, there are stairwells, there are kids who are dealing with issues and sometimes they flow out to, into an incident that we're not happy with, so. The norm though is relatively safe and secure and quiet.

QUESTION 3:

S: OK, I'll answer the second question first. It's not a large percentage of, uh, the student body. I would say less than 40% of our students are involved in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. Part of the answer for that is that a third of our students live in districts outside of [this district] and therefore transportation is a major factor. While we provide transportation, uh, to and from our school, for everybody, uh, after school activities, the only transportation at the end of the day, which, for us, would be 3:30, which is an hour and a half after the regular school day, is for in-town students. So, the youngsters who live somewhere else needs a parent or a ride to get home. So many children don't stay for that reason. Reason number two is, I would dare say, that maybe
thirty five to forty percent of our students work after school. So, they’re away. But for those youngsters who do remain, uh, we have about forty clubs in the building that are interest based clubs, whether architecture and engineering clubs, robotics, uh, service type clubs and activities. We run a sports program, intramural sports program, uh, four days a week, and a lot of youngsters hang out for that. The exercise room is open every afternoon after school. Uh, the National Honor Society, and a few other societies, meet on a regular basis. Uh, we do mentoring and tutoring after school, so there’s a whole array of, uh, activities.

Obviously, because we are a small school, and we don’t put up the money for it, we don’t have a sports program. So, right away, that’s one allure that’s not here that kids will go elsewhere and we do have, uh, thirty eight students who are student athletes that play for their home school. So, they’re gone right away.

Uh, but, when we run a dance, movie night, or special events, we get a good turn out. We probably get close to fifty percent of our students turn out. So that, on a regular basis, after school, you might find, uh, about 100 youngsters in the building; some are here for clubs, some here for activities, some are just here because it’s a nice place to hang out and we let them do that. So there, you know, there are youngsters in the building and, again, clubs are a diverse number of clubs and activities.

R: Excellent. And now the last part of that question, question number three, can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S: Well, none of the activities take place unless they’re supervised by our staff. So, uh, so, yes, depending on what the event is, there may be six to ten adults, staff members who are participating in various events. My, uh, administrative intern is the also the director of student activities so she’s there for all of them. The assistant principal is there for quite a number. I come up to a few of them. Uh, but, depending on what group is running the event, if it’s a, uh, class event, senior class event, junior class event, there are two advisors. Uh, and we try to make sure there are six to seven to eight adults at each one. Then we have a number of, uh, teachers who live very close to the school. So, if they know there’s something going on, on a Friday night, they’ll drive by, stop in, pop in for a little while. So, uh, again, a small percentage of the faculty, uh, show up at these events on a regular basis, uh, about half of the faculty rarely shows up. But that’s not unusual.

QUESTION 4:

S: Well, there are only two administrators in the building so, yes, we are open to everybody. My door is always open. I’m in the hallways. I visit classrooms as does my assistant principal. So, we are approachable and fairly easy to get to and it’s not only face to face but emails, phone calls and so on. Thanks to the nature of our building, eh, we have an Internet capability where we communicate, eh, on a regular basis. I send emails out to my faculty, two or three formal ones a week, in which they respond, and then as an as needed basis. But, yeah, it’s a small community so we get to see each other every day. And my availability and my assistant principal’s availability is all the
time. Plus, we’re here for many hours. So, uh, the teachers who want to see us can stay here after school. In fact, when I exercise in the exercise room, I do that with a handful of teachers. So, you know, as far as compliments and so on, yes, we do informal, we do formal, eh, we have the practice of writing letters to their file, eh, complimenting them for nice participation at events or special events they’re doing. Uh, we have a number of teachers who are lead teachers in special events. In fact, uh, we have a teacher who was, uh, nominated by me to, uh, as one of, uh, non-uniform heroes. And she was selected by the Red Cross and last night received recognition from the board of education. Tomorrow, they’ll be here doing photographs and so on and so forth. We have teachers who receive recognition for the work they do in the building and the special work that they do.

We have a number of our teachers, either in their classes or their clubs, uh, doing special projects or participating in contests and when our youngsters participate I send them letters and, when they win, of course, we send them all letters. And last night, for example, at the board of education meeting, one of our teachers who runs a multimedia class, uh, his class of students submitted an entry into a, uh, an Apple Computer contest and they were one of fourteen schools in the nation selected as finalists. So, you know, we make a big thing of that, put it into the newspaper and so on. But, the fundamental is, all teachers get recognition in one fashion or another, uh, for their good work and special time that they, uh, volunteer.

You know, for example, as a school of choice, we run open houses. And, uh, I don’t pay the teachers to show up at the open houses. Many of them do. So, it goes into their file, complimenting them. And I spend a great deal of time and money feeding them. And feeding is always a good way of complimenting your teachers, so. You know, it is a very important function of administration to make sure teachers feel appreciated and recognized. And, you know, this is a unique building and a unique school. And, from my view, administrative view looking down, if I can say it that way, or looking up because I believe that I’m the least most important person in the building, is, you know, it’s a privilege to work in this environment because it is a unique, special environment, and much calmer and different than what many of my teachers who have been in the profession for many years, have experienced in other buildings. So, yeah, the recognition is very important.

R: Excellent. And then the last part of that question is...is the morale of the staff good? And describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high.

S: Ah, well, morale is an ebb and flow type of thing. So, uh, you know, the morale is adequate. It’s not terrific. It’s not exciting. And it depends on which teachers you speak to, so, that there are a core teachers who are, uh, let me just say passive about everything. Passive to negative about everything, even though they love working here and they enjoy working here, you know, it’s always, you know, an adversarial environment because of, uh, the views they have. I have a number of departments that are just so enthusiastic and bubbling that whatever I ask them to do is fine. Uh, on the other side of the coin though, I have a large number of teachers who don’t wait to be asked but do the asking themselves. They would like to, uh, do certain projects or
classes and so on. The program of studies that we offer is, uh, is, uh, is about, I would say, and I hate to use percentages, but about forty percent of the program of studies that we offer, the courses were created by the teachers. Uh, my philosophy and policy has been that if, uh, a teacher wants to try something new, the answer is yes, let’s try it, and if it works, great, we continue it, and if it doesn’t work, we don’t continue it. And that has something to do with the morale, at least in my interpretation where the teachers feel comfortable to experiment and try new things because they know that it is a positive environment where they can take the risk because there is no risk.

Uh, when it comes to, uh, purchasing equipment, materials, and supplies, there is no issue with our building. Fortunately, we have the funding to do that. So, I guess, depending on who you speak to, you’ll speak to certain people and they’ll be very excited about this building because they have a sense that it’s a nice place to work and they’ll be recognized for the work that they do. Uh, we have, uh, four teachers who came to me over the course of the last couple of years, and said “would you mind if I didn’t work full-time? I have either family issues or educational issues and I want to work part-time”, and the answer is yes. Uh, teachers come and said there’s training in this place, “I want to go. Can I go?”, the answer is yes. It depends on who you speak to and what’s going on. If the teachers’ union, uh, decides that they have to fight a fight, then they’ll rally everyone around. I have no problem with that, to be honest, unions are important and I have no problem. When I was a teacher, I was a union organizer, so, I understand that side of the table. Uh, but, uh, around here, it’s an iffy thing. It’s an iffy thing. You know, it ebbs and flows, uh, and, depending on what’s going on and what’s happening in the community, and what’s happening with budgets, all of those things impact it on the short term.

On the long term, I think the morale is fairly, is fairly good, uh, for the overwhelming majority of teachers. I’ve had very few teachers in the seven and a half years that we’ve been running the school who have asked to leave the building. By that what I mean is some teachers have left because the fit wasn’t right. Some teachers have left because their families were moving elsewhere but I think there’s only been two or three teachers who felt that this is not the place for them and they asked to move to someplace else which is fine.

R: What is your yearly staff size?

S: Uh, my total, my teaching staff is forty eight teachers, uh, I have sixty six people who work in the building. And, next year, it’ll expand by about another twelve as we continue to grow.

R: Excellent. And what is your ultimate, uh, expected enrollment size.

S: Uh, we will grow to 650 students over the next two years. The building was built to house 650 students and we will get there. Uh, this coming September, I anticipate opening with approximately 600 students and then, one more year after that, we’ll reach maximum.
QUESTION 5:

S: Well, we, uh, supervise by walking around. And, uh, as you walk this building yourself, you’ll see that, uh, we can peer into every classroom because of the way we’ve constructed the rooms and many teachers teach with their doors open. But there are windows. So, we get a sense of, uh, the tone of the building based on what we hear as we walk around. Uh, because of the nature of the environment and the fact that teachers are not reluctant to tell us about what’s going on in their classrooms or the fact that we frequently visit their classrooms, you know, you get a sense of what’s going on. So, as I said, my biggest discipline issue here in this building is disrespect where kids, uh, will forget that they’re talking to adults because they think they’re talking to their friends. And the way they blurt out to their friends or blurt out to a teacher, again, is part of the educational process, not just even academics, but the social responsibility and techniques and clues as to how to deal with this appropriately. So, uh, when kids act out and are disrespectful, a teacher may email me, a teacher will write up a child, or they may even send a child out to my office and then I have to deal with the child’s disrespect.

Uh, the youngsters are equally eager to come and let me know when a teacher, when they feel the teacher has been disrespectful, the teacher has said something inappropriate. Uh, we had an incident a couple weeks ago where a group of kids thought that the teacher was being disrespectful and the teacher was having a difficult day, because that person was only human, and said something that was inappropriate. So, I had to counsel the teacher, calm down the kids, talk to the parents, which is just part of the territory. But, we get a sense, again, a small school, a small school, you know, you feel what’s going on in a small school. In a bigger school, it’s a lot harder to know all of the particulars although you get the same tone. And those of us who have been in education a long time walk into a building and within ten, fifteen minutes, we have a sense of the norms in that building. Uh, so you’ve been here enough that you know that it’s a very quiet place except during the change of periods which is natural. But, uh, again, as I said, the biggest issue we have is disrespect and, uh, it’s something we’re working on with the kids and with the teachers as well.

R: Right. How big of an issue is it teacher to student? You were just mentioning one incident.

S: Uh, a few teachers, you know, there are a few teachers that whose style of classroom management encourages children to think they’re being disrespected. Uh, we have a couple of teachers whose tone of voice is harsh and firm and students who misread that. Uh, I don’t think there are any of my teachers who just don’t like the kids and make it obvious but, you know, again, we’re dealing with human beings who come and who don’t often times leave their baggage at the door – both adult and student. So, we deal with that and this, in education, in particular in this building, it’s the building of relationships between students and teachers, both ways, that is really a critical aspect of success in the classroom. Uh, so, if a child feels that the teacher is disrespecting them and harsh, then the youngster, even though the youngster wants to learn, will back off and put up barriers. Teachers feel the same way and, uh, so, it’s a matter of coaxing, and
reeducating, and constantly reminding them about appropriate behavior, tone of voice, and so on.

QUESTION 6:

S: Uh, again, it's a sliding scale. We have youngsters who are, uh, very shy, uh, very introverted, and they walk into the building with blinders on. And they may say hello to a teacher or they may not. Then we have other youngsters who are more comfortable with being outgoing. Uh, a lot of our teachers are the ones who initiate this and say hello, and so on and so forth. Uh, yeah, I think there's a lot of that. Really all you have to do is stand in the hallway during the change of periods and the end of the day and you hear a lot of that. And, of course, certain teachers have their groupies; the kids that always hang around them and so on. And there are certain teachers that have that, uh, sense about them and kids know, well, you can go to this teacher because this teacher is always happy, always joyful, will always listen to you, and, if you are in his or her class, you're going to have a great time. And, you know, everyone says hello and so on. And because we're a small school, again, we only have one cafeteria so when teachers go into lunch they go into lunch at the same time as the kids go into lunch so there's that exchange.

So, I think, uh, it depends on the youngsters, I believe that we do have pretty good communication. And, obviously, when I walk down the hall, a lot of kids want to say hello and so on, or I might say hello to them. Uh, most of my teachers would do the same thing. Again, it depends on the teacher, depends on the day, the month, what's going on in the school. Uh, you know, last week, I would have said no because it was exam week so everyone was tense. Now, everyone's more relaxed. Next week will be tense again because report cards are going to be sent home. You know, so, you know, there's a dynamic to what goes on. But, uh, by and large, uh, what we have tried to, uh, create in the building and reinforce is adult to child, recognizing the child, and even if you don't know the child, just saying hello, how are you doing, and so on, so they have that sense of belonging. And it's more the adult responsibility to do it towards the kids. Uh, the kids, you know, give it back.

QUESTION 7:

S: Uh, yes, yes, and yes. Uh, this is a college preparatory high school. The children choose to come here because they're planning to go to college and they want to have an educational experience that will challenge them, uh, to achieve the success necessary for admission to college. Uh, the use of technology and the integration of technology is not cutting edge; its, we have an advantage, that the youngsters all have their laptop computers and they learn with and through their technology. The expectation on the part of every teacher is obviously the child will reach mastery level and, uh, again, depending on teacher, depending on content area, uh, the level to which they are striving to the highest degree of success will vary. Uh, all the courses are college preparatory classes so there are no, uh, introduction to or watered down classes, or review classes. The children come with the expectation that they're going to be challenged and, uh, we have the expectation that they will achieve success.
We run a large number of honors classes, a large number of advanced placement classes, uh, a large number of early college experience credits, credit classes. So that, a youngster who, uh, who wants to challenge themselves can take these courses. The other piece is that the requirements to attend our school are different than a traditional high school. We require every child to take a minimum of a four year sequence in English and Math, Science, Social Studies, and a world language. Uh, and that’s the requirement. You must take four years of each of those five content areas. You must take a minor sequence in an elective of either Architecture and Engineering or Information Technology. The other high schools, the traditional high schools, all offer the same courses but the selection is up to the child. The child could choose to take a world language or not at all because there is no state requirement for that. They could choose to take four years of Science or only take the state requirement which is two. Uh, so, we have changed that rubric in saying you must take the four year sequence in each of the five. So, the children who choose to come here are accepting that. So, we have an expectation that, uh, that since they’re challenging us to give them the four year sequences, we better provide them with the four year sequence that makes sense and is challenging to them. So, yeah, this is a college preparatory place and we do that by expectation.

R: Let me ask you a follow-up question to that. In my research with some of the other principals that I have been talking to, there’s this debate, given the small environment, one is apt to not to be able to offer as much. And different principals have felt differently about whether or not to focus on AP, whether or not to focus on the college experience. I’m just curious, what is your take on that?

S: Well, there are two parts to my answer. The first part is I would prefer more of my children to take early college experience courses because it is more realistic. It is more realistic in the sense that they’re taking the course over a semester or two semesters and they’re doing the same work the college students are doing, and they’re getting a grade in a similar fashion that they will when they get to college. It’s not just on one test that they take for a couple of hours and, depending on the score they get, whether or not they get the credit for it with a three, four, or five. Uh, that’s the first part.

The second part is, taking early college experience course that we offer here, [local university and community college names], you’re earning credits and when you succeed and you graduate and you go on to college, regardless to which college, you’re graduating with advanced standing because you already have credits. Most of the colleges, not all, most of the colleges will accept those credits as legitimate, particularly if, and as we do, we document the actual [university name] course. So the child has the chance to take the advanced standing.

We don’t discount the requirement or the decision of the child to take an AP class because we offer that. Either one looks fabulous on a transcript. So, you know, it depends on the philosophy. But the last part of the question, which is more significant, is we also offer virtual high school courses where many of my colleagues in various
schools don’t. We have an extensive virtual high school program. So, we have many children who are taking eight classes with us and another class with virtual high school. Or, uh, children who have, who want to take a course that we don’t offer, because we are small, we have to make tough decisions as how to spend the money, and they’re taking courses that they might in a larger traditional but they’re doing it, online, through the virtual high school program. And I have four virtual high school teachers here in the building to mentor them and they also teach and, uh, this has been a great extension. And that’s all this is – a great extension. Uh, and it’s valuable on, uh, many planes. On one hand, it’s allowing the child to take a course that they may require or may have interest in and earn credit because these are all accredited courses. Number two, it’s teaching them the soft skill of responsibility. Uh, of completion of the work, on time, without mom, dad, or a teacher sitting over him saying, you know, “did you do work homework?” and so on and so forth. So there are many levels of enjoyment to this. And, uh, we’ve been doing this now for six years as far as virtual high school.

So, not only do you take more classes here in this school, because we offer eight classes a year where all of the traditional schools offer seven, but you can take course number nine and ten. And then, in addition, on top of that, even though we have the early college experience with the various colleges, we have youngsters who go to community college, in the evening, on their own, with our blessing but not with our money. They pay for it themselves. And they take college courses there. So we have youngsters who attend school here during the day, and may, in fact, take an early college experience course with us, then, later in the afternoon and evening, they go to community college and they take another course for college credit. And, uh, so, we have encouraged our youngsters to do that so that they can earn credits, in school, in virtual high school, or at the college.

R: Excellent and one other quick follow-up to that. In terms of the, again, the teachers’ expectations of the students, do you find, given that your curriculum is college-prep and advanced college-prep, do they feel the kids can meet that challenge or do they complain about that?

S: Uh, they think they can make it and they also complain about it. We have a, uh, practice here in our building where a youngster can challenge any level they want to. So, a youngster who was in middle school or even in ninth grade and never took an honors class and decides they want to take an honors class, they can. They can sign up for the first, uh, marking period which is a ten week period. A child who has never taken a college course or an AP course wants to try it, they can. We don’t have entrance exams [mumbled] or anything of that nature. But we give them the first semester ten weeks in which to, uh, challenge the course. And if they’re, uh, successful, and they want to stay on, they stay on. If they’re not successful, or they feel it is too much for them, they go into the equivalent college preparatory class.

Some of my teachers, of course, find that to be upsetting because, you know, they want the consistency of the youngsters being in there, the ebb and flow of students is troublesome to it. Uh, some children are reaching too far. But, uh, on one hand, we may look at it and say, well, you know, they’re reaching too far that’s not good for them.
But, on the other hand, if they're reaching too far, because they want to challenge themselves and maybe they have to learn that they, sometimes they can do it and sometimes they can't. It's, the struggle is fine. So, uh, depending on the teacher, some of my teachers are so focused on content that they will say, well, the child doesn't have the skills, or the understanding, and, therefore, they should be in a different level class, But, you know, that's part of, uh, the learning process.

It's also part of the teaching process. Uh, we have a lot of staff development that goes on in our district and one aspect of that is differentiated instruction where, regardless of who shows up in your class, you're going to teach them. And, maybe, teacher, you have to change the way you are doing business to accommodate the skills and knowledge and understanding and abilities that come to, of the students who come to your class. So, um, yeah, there are teachers who complain that the children in the class are not prepared. Obviously, if you speak to any of the Math teachers, ninth grade Math teachers, they'll tell you very few of the children show up with good math skills and all those middle school teachers don't know what they're doing. But, it's really not the case, so.

QUESTION 8:

S: Again, depending on the teacher, uh, the answer is yes they go out of their way to help. And, uh, they will go the extra mile. Uh, the nature of any school building is that there's some teachers who are superstars, some teachers who are stars, and some teachers who work and when the day ends they're done. The exception to that, uh, picture is -- we are a technology based school in many regards so the intent is there and we advocate for teachers and students and parents, that since every teacher has a web page and on that web page they can list classroom work and so on and so forth, and they have an email address, that a student can email the teacher or visa versa. And, the teachers who are interested, or for the administrators, and I'll give you the example of myself, we are available to our students seven days a week, twenty four hours a day, every day of the school year even when we are on vacation. And we do communicate on vacations, on weekends, and so on. So that teachers will stay after school, that it's something, they're not paid to stay after school, but they'll stay after school and, give, help the youngsters. Uh, they will make themselves available online. Uh, we have a group of teachers who before mid-term exams or final exams do cramming sessions. They volunteer to sit in the library or cafeteria and they say "if you're having problems, if you need to practice Algebra I, just come, I'm here. It doesn't make a difference whose class you're in, just come." And we have a group of teachers who do that. We have a group of teachers who will now plan to prepare our youngsters for the [state] examination that will take place in March.

So, again, it depends on the individual teachers. We have some teachers who, when the bell rings, at 2:05, they're out the door and that's fine, I mean, they're meeting their contractual obligations and that's fine too. Uh, I often ask the question of my teachers, and I don't ask for the answer, "if a child was in distress in this building, academic, social, whatever, would you be one of the people that child would think about to come to," and I have a good number of teachers who kids would just go to in a moment if they felt they were stress, or duress, or needed help and so on and so forth.
And I have quite a number of people in the building, both teachers and staff members, my secretaries for example, a lot of the kids in the building call them “mommy” because they know they can come and these women will help them. I have security officers in the building who the kids will go to with issues that they might not tell their parents, or my guidance counselors, or my psychologist, or me.

So, uh, yeah, there are a large number of teachers who go the extra mile, who are always there for the kids, who will hang out after school. Uh, we had, just to give you an example, we had a most unfortunate circumstance. Uh, one of our students, uh, lived at home with his father. His mother passed away many years ago. The father died very suddenly, and, uh, one of our teachers contacted the family because the rest of the family lived out of state and said “until or unless you are prepared to deal with this, this young man can come and live with me.” Very few people do that. OK, uh, and another one of the guidance counselors said, “you know while”…fortunately the young man’s uncle came to live up here, he’ll live up here until the young man graduates from our school, which will be another year and a half, so, one of our teachers said, “well, you know, the uncle is coming up here, everything is in disarray,” so, a collection was organized. And Hundreds of dollars were brought together to provide food, and services, so that people go out of their way to make sure they can extend themselves to the school. Uh, the last thing, above and beyond, I was just telling you about this teacher who is a hero, who is designated a hero, uh, this teacher has for the last two and half years run a program to, uh, supply materials and food and products to send to a platoon in Iraq. She did this without any desire for anything other than to do a good deed. And large numbers of students and teachers have rallied around her in this. So, yeah, teachers go out of their way academically, but socially as well. And, uh, it’s remarkable but, again, every building has that dynamic. There are three groups of people in every building and you just deal with them.

QUESTION 9:

S: Well, we have a zero dropout rate so that’s not a problem. We do not permit a child to dropout. A child may not finish with us, but, uh, I will not permit a child to leave our building unless they’ve already signed up into another educational institution. So, a child who says “the work is too hard for me”, “it’s too far for me to travel”, we make sure they go back to their home school or to another school. We have a couple of young men who have struggled with academics, uh, so they’re leaving the building this week, to go into night school. And the night school is run by a colleague of ours who will know if these kids show up because we signed them up already. So there is a zero dropout.

If the child is a no-show, we go after right away. Again, small school, so, you know the attendance. Uh, so, there are no drop outs, there has never been a drop out in this school in the seven and a half years of doing business. The first part, on attendance, we average about ninety three percent attendance on a daily basis, so, we don’t have an attendance problem. However, with individual students, who will demonstrate, uh, truancy, if there is a truancy issue, uh, we follow board policy. We send, uh, one of our security officers out, we make phone calls, we do home visits, the police help us as we
go find the child. Uh, if the child is home because they’re ill, or something like that, we deal with that. If the child is home because they are, you know, school phobic, we deal with that and get them counseling with the parents. If the parents are asking the child to stay home to work, or something like that, we go to the courts. We do child neglect. Uh, we have cutting which is, uh, standard. You know, they’re young, for example, I see some of my kids walking around out here. And, uh, we deal with that. We get reports on a daily basis. But, uh, attendance has not been a major issue. We don’t suffer the same issues that bigger schools do because of the numbers. We’re on top of the numbers.

We also, again, practice is what, you know, makes life easy. Our day begins at 7:25. By 7:45, we know every child that’s not in their first period class. We make phone calls right away. We call the house, “Where’s the child?”, and so on and so forth. Uh, “the child’s sick”, uh, you know, “we have a court appearance”, “a doctor’s appointment”, whatever the case may be. “What do you mean my child is not in school?” And, once the youngsters know that you’re following up on them, that helps. At the end of the day, there is an automated phone call to the house of every child who missed a class. Not if they were absent, if they missed a class, “your child was reported absent in one or more classes.” Parents call “what do you mean my child was absent?”

I mean, so, it’s a process of staying on top of the children. And when you have smaller numbers, it’s easy. When I was in school in New York City, with 2700 kids, you know, it was impossible, not impossible, it’s very difficult to stay on top of who was there and who wasn’t there. So, the numbers make it so much easier to stay on top. Uh, and, we’ve been pretty good about it. We know who our cutters are, we know who our possible truants are, and so on, and we deal with it and, fortunately, the parents support us. So, when we call, the parents will show up here and we’ve had many embarrassing incidents for the kids where we called the parents, the parents show up here looking for the child, and the parent calls the child’s cell phone, “where are you?”, “Well, I’m at school”, “where exactly are you in school?”, “well, I’m in class”, “well, I’m sitting in [the principal’s] office. How come you’re not here?, “Oh, what do you mean?”. So, small school can do these things. Bigger schools want to do the same thing. Many of them do it.

But, again, there’s a relationship between attendance and what’s happening in the building. So, if you have a functioning building, a positive building with strong teachers and interesting curriculum and so on and so forth, attendance is going to be pretty good. On the other hand, the downside of that is if you have a community, and you know, I come out of New York City, you know, I taught in buildings, municipal buildings, where social and economic issues were just rampant, terribly rampant. Uh, kids come because it’s safe. Kids come because it’s free food. You have good attendance there for the building but not for class. So, we look at attendance by class as well as for the entire building and our statistics are pretty good.
QUESTION 10:

R: Now, question 10. I'm just going to read it but I think you've pretty much addressed it. [Reads question]. Is there anything you want to add to that?

S: No. We don't have a, you know, probation officer, you know, a truant officer in the city but, uh, [the city] calls itself a city but it is really just a town. So, it's a small place and even though we have a lot of youngsters who come from out of district, we still have a closer relationship with those districts. So, uh, we're paying attention. So, I really don't think there's that much more. It's just to reinforce the idea that a small school has the luxury, the great benefit, of you know, to have that contact.

QUESTION 11:

S: The, uh, primary group of people that deal with that are the guidance counselors. Uh, I would dare say that sixty five percent of our parents have email addresses that we have provided them. So, there's a communication link right away through email. If a child is struggling, the guidance counselor through conversation with the teacher, initiated by the teacher, will reach out to the parent. Uh, or a teacher may come to us and say "this kid is struggling", or so and so forth, "we should invite the parents in and have a conference." So, the guidance counselor is the, uh, hub of this whole activity. Normal practice is if the child is not doing well in class, we ask the teacher to contact the home. That's the first line. The teacher communicates with the home either by phone, or email or letter, and tells the parent "there's a problem here. The child's not doing homework" and so on and so forth. Uh, if it is a continuous problem that doesn't go away, the guidance counselor is called upon to bring the parent in and, on any given afternoon, we may have all eight teachers meeting with the parent to talk about their child. And that's outside the realm of special education, this is just any child.

Uh, we are dabbling in online grading and half of my teachers have their own process that they use. So. I have a number of teachers who, at the end of the week, will send a blanket email using the student ID number, not their name, and say "these are the students who do well, poor, whatever the grade may be" and anyone who wants to look at it can read it. Many parents do take advantage of that. So, there is a lot of communication. uh, between teacher and home and between guidance counselor and home. And, if a child is struggling, for example, when report cards come out, uh, my guidance staff and I look at all the kids who have failed two or more subjects. And then we jump right in, and then I jump right in. And say what have the interventions been up until now, have there been any interventions, is this a surprise, what do we know about the child, is there anything going on at home, things of that nature. So, teacher, guidance counselor, then administration as far as that.

Uh, by offering parents a free web account, uh, that they can communicate with the building, that has proven to be a successful tool. Uh, we're open all the time. If, uh, parents want to come in during the day, they can come in. We run most of our parent meetings at two o'clock at the end of the school day. We run a couple of open school
nights which is traditional. Uh, this year, the board of education has instituted two afternoon report card conference days which is, you know, unheard of in high schools but we are doing them anyway. So, the communication is there and, needless to say, uh, I get to look at all the grades, I get to do reports, and show how many kids are failing and how many teachers are failing their kids, and so on, and we have those kinds of conversations.

And then there’s a building management aspect. And that is, we have organized the structure of our schedule so that every department has a common planning period. And we use that common planning period for multiple reasons. But one of them is to build what we call the professional learning community so that teachers can talk about best practices, grading policy, they can talk about students, and so on. Uh, we meet twice a month as a faculty to talk about those kinds of issues.

And, on top of that, the entire special education wing, which includes a psychologist, and child study team, so, if a teacher feels that a child, you know, in conversation with other teachers, that we have a child who is suddenly struggling, they bring that child to the child study team, which is run by my assistant principal, and he will begin to explore that child, and interview the child and parent, so that there are many mechanisms that we use which are standard in any school. But, again, we are pretty fortunate. We do have another aspect, because of the nature of our school, a small school, and when we advocate for our kids, we have a growing number of students who come to us with social disabilities, not learning disabilities, but social disabilities. Uh, and, so that...we have a number of kids with Asperger’s, we have other types of, uh, not deficiencies, that’s the wrong word, but they come with baggage. Where, academically, they’re proficient or high but, because of behavioral issues, that interfere, you know, they become difficult in the classroom, they become, uh, harder to teach even though you give them a book and they devour it. You know, so, you know, we deal with all that.

Question 12:

S: Uh, curriculum yes. The entire curriculum is really teacher driven. As I said before, in an earlier question, about forty percent of the courses we offered were designed by teachers. Uh, we don’t stick by the, uh, state template or the city template in terms of what we should offer. Uh, we’re the beta school, we’re involved in educational reform, so, uh, the state, in it’s wisdom, has never said what science classes students should take. They should take two years of science. We say four years of science. Colleges, traditionally, are looking for Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. But we offer, uh, sixteen other classes that are not in the traditional three that I just mentioned that colleges accept. Teachers come to me. Earlier today, I had a teacher, a science teacher, who wants to do a comparison anatomy class instead of doing a regular Biology class; interesting concept. You know, we’ll do Biology and that. Many of our Math classes, uh, English, Language Arts classes, Social Studies classes, our entire Social Studies curriculum is different from the rest of the world I would imagine. We only, we teach Civics cause you have to and I agree we should. And a year of American history but, otherwise, we do everything different. Better perhaps? I’m not sure. So the curriculum is driven through collaboration with, uh, with the faculty.
Discipline is, you know, it's a two way street. We have a discipline committee that wants to be very stringent. We have, and unfortunately, the building has a principal that wants discipline to be a little more relaxed who wants the children to take responsibility for themselves. Uh, but we do discuss discipline issues and, for the most part, it is a collaborative thing. We struggle about, about, uh, interpretation and that's a difficult thing. And, when I was a principal of a traditional large school, discipline policy was very rigid, very narrow, black and white. It was a big school, different environment. This is a school of choice. This is a school where kids come, a lot of, uh, different dynamics going on, so I'm trying to do a more laxed approach to discipline but, at the same time, when a child crosses the line they're going to suffer, they're going to suffer, and, as I said before, the biggest issue we have with discipline is disrespect. Now, if that's the only discipline issue you're dealing with, when you look at schools that are dealing with really terribly serious and dangerous situations, well, you know, we're in a castle here, you know, this is, this is wonderful. But for the teachers who are here, this is their reality and they don't want disrespect in the class or have disturbances in the class that interfere with the learning process and I understand that. But, you know, I come from a much more difficult environment so I don't think that's a big deal and, then I look back to my own experience, I never had those issues in my class because I guess I was a disciplinarian. Or, I was a good teacher. I'm not sure which one.

So, uh, and the last thing on the budget. Uh, the budget is, uh, is about an eighty twenty deal. Eighty percent my input and twenty percent the faculty input. The faculty gets to determine how they want to spend the budget once I give it to them. Uh, obviously, the biggest budget issue is personnel. Once, uh...and that's really my, my take. After that, once we have the money allocated for textbooks and resources and so on, it's up to them to spend it the way they see fit and priority is given to, uh, to new ventures and things of that nature. So, uh, you know, faculty has a chance to comment and participate across the board, uh, it depends on what the circumstances are.

QUESTION 13:

S: The district has organized, uh, the first Monday, I'm sorry, the first Wednesday of every month as professional development day. It's a half a day of school for the students. Uh, we have three hours, one Wednesday a month, for professional development. Often times, it's directed by what the school wants. Teachers may decide they want to do something special, or I may decide in collaboration with them, or may be moving towards a new operation and the management of the building. Uh, so, that's one aspect. The second...The third Wednesday is a faculty conference day. Which I don't use for a faculty conference because we do most of our faculty conference via email so the departments have the time, for an hour, after school, uh, to meet about issues or to do some cross department work. I've already mentioned that we have common planning period so, every other day, every department has the opportunity, not the requirement, the opportunity to meet, discuss, and so on and so forth, and, uh, we've invited guest speakers in for that because that [mumbled] day, common planning period is almost two hours in length. So, you can have someone come in, in two hours, and do a presentation.
On the other hand, out of the building, you know, fortunately, because we are funded the way we are, I can afford to send teachers to professional development activities outside the building that makes sense for them in terms of their activities in the classroom. So that, uh, my world language teachers participate in two or three world language seminars that take place here [in state] on a regular basis. It's for the language organization — it's the [state] organization for language teachers. They meet a number of times a year and I send teachers to that. Teacher goes there, comes back, and has to present. Uh, technology teachers, math teachers, whatever is availability that makes sense, I fund and the school has to fund their transportation and registration and, uh, we get the substitutes and so on.

Uh, during the summer, I usually send up to twelve teachers away for anywhere from one to three weeks for staff development based on what they need to do. For example, we run an architecture and engineering component here at our school so the courses that are taught are accredited by [local university]. So, my teachers go there for two weeks to either learn the new material, or upgrade the new material that's all paid for by the school at no expense to them otherwise than their time. Uh, if the teacher wants to become an advanced placement teacher and they see that there's a course somewhere in the Northeast, in the summertime, which is a one or two week course, we make it available to them as well. So, we promote the education. I don't believe that a teacher once they have their master's degree is done. You have to be constant upgrading. And, even though the state requires you to make so many CCUs and so on, uh, the good teachers want to go out, find more, learn more, and so on, and we make it available and it's available in the content areas, and it's available in academic areas, and in elective areas, whatever makes sense. We have an affiliation with [local university] downtown, their business school, and they teach a very dynamic graphic arts program so I've had my graphic arts teachers go and take courses down there. Uh, regular college courses in the evening, we pay for, they get the credit, but they bring back the expertise.

So, staff development is really critical and it's going on. In fact, behind me, as you look at this, we're reading it now, What Ever it Takes. The entire school is reading this book. How to build small learning communities...all my teachers got the book Fish which is a promotional book, and many of my teachers are reading Take the Lead which is about every teacher leads. So, we do some of our own stuff. I bought those books for the faculty. Everyone has a copy of them. Every once in a while, I give them a homework assignment and, at our professional development meetings, on Wednesdays, we talk about it.

R: And the reason why you can do this is your budgetary process is a little different from the rest of the district?

S: Yes, we are a inter-district magnet high school so the state funds one third of my operation. And, as a consequence, I am able to use that money in a way that, uh, that I choose and it lessens the load on the city budget, and, uh, the city budget is unfortunately always tight. So, there's not a lot of money for books, materials, and so on, and part of the state requirement is that I offer something more and better. And, uh,
and they watch over me and the city board of education very closely to make sure that the city board of education doesn’t say “well, you know, you got X amount of dollars from [state name] that’s how much we’re taking off your budget.” So, my budget is a budget, it’s one hundred twenty five, one hundred thirty percent budget, versus what a traditional school would be at the same size.

QUESTION 14:

S: Well, I think, they show up everyday so, yes, are they proud of the school? I think they are. I think, uh, again, depending on the day, the week, the month, and so on. Uh, this is a brand new building. It’s a unique educational environment. Uh, the learning, uh, activities and the processes that we use are innovative. I think that the, by and large, the overwhelming majority of students and faculty are really excited about being here in this building and that they are, they have the privilege of being here, uh, and that they’re not unhappy about showing up here everyday, and that, uh, they’re glad that we’re doing this. So, I think, overall, the answer is yes. Again, on any given day, three or four of my teachers may say, you know, “if only” and then give you a whole litany of what has to change and half of those students will do the same thing. but, by and large, I think that what we’re doing here makes sense for us. And, uh, let’s put it this way, every year, we have a waiting list of students who want to come to the building, and, every year, we have a waiting list of teachers who want to teach in this building. So, we must be doing something. Whether it’s good or bad, I’m not going to evaluate, but we must be doing something that’s attractive that will allow students that wants to come here and allow teachers to work here.

And, when I go out and do recruiting, and I do recruiting at fourteen middle schools, around the area, and I talk to parents and kids, I use the following statement: On every given school day, there are over one hundred students who are getting up between 5:00 and 5:30, in the morning, to get out on the street by 6:00 o’clock, so they can be here by 7:00 o’clock to come to school, and some of them are traveling thirty five, forty, miles to get here, and passing more than one high school, that they can go to, but they’ve chosen to come here. So, what’s the key? What’s the answer on that? This morning, it was twenty two degrees out. Students were waiting outside at 6:00 o’clock in the morning for the bus or the train to get in here, to come to this building, in [city name], even though they live in other communities far away, and their home school, their local school is probably across the street. That’s the most telling evidence I have that the students will come from far away, and get up, real early, an hour before their peers, and that teachers, who also live far away, will travel to get here. There are teaching jobs elsewhere. But they’re willing to come here. So, there’s got to be a combination of circumstances between the program we run, the environment we have, the building that’s being established, that makes it worth while for them, and enjoyable for them to come here and get an education here or earn a living.

R: Excellent, and one last follow-up question. You are a lottery system, correct?

S: Yeah, it’s a blind lottery. Once our, uh, date of, for accepting applications closes, uh, we’ve set a target for one hundred and seventy five entering ninth graders for
next year. If we have more than one hundred and seventy-five applicants, we do the lottery. If we have less, we just take everyone. And, uh, for the last five years, we’ve had a lottery, so. And as I said, as I advertise vacancies, we get a large number of teachers from within the community, from within the system, who want to come here. So, again, there’s something going on here that’s a little, that’s different than, that seems to be interesting to them.
Appendix M

Transcript: School C/Subject B
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL C/SUBJECT B

QUESTION 1:

S: This year?

R: You can do it this year. You can do it in general. You can do both.

S: The only reason I want to do over a period of four years is because that's how long I've been here and we've had physical disruptions, uh, when I first came here, and they are no where near the amount I had when I was in the public school, uh, district setting that wasn't a small magnet. Don't worry. It doesn't even compare but my point is, I'm trying to bring it up is, that, uh, every year, it's gotten better to the point where, the last two years, I don't even think about that happening.

R: Why do you think that is?

S: A small setting, number one. The second reason, I think, probably the most important, teachers get closer to kids. So, it's almost, almost like family. I mean, my kids come in with smiles on. I mean, I've had that a lot in thirty two years of teaching but it's, there's a greater amount of kids that come in that/who want to come in even though they don't like the subject.

R: How bout the use of drugs? Alcohol? Weapons?

S: Uh, I haven't seen that at all here in the four years I've been here...which is probably more than four but I'm old, so.

QUESTION 2:

S: Oh, there's no question about that. Just because of the fact that - I'm only speaking about the kids, I don't know every single student - but I teach, uh, 10th, 11th and 12th grade, so I know three quarters of the school population and they come in happy and they want to be here. Kids have problems, there are kids in special ed, emotional problems. Um, even they come in, some kids are depressed I can see it, but at least they're respectful. So, um, by that, I would say students feel safe here. You know, they want to be here. I think they feel it's a safe environment. I do. There's no question in my mind about it.

R: And why do you feel safe or why do you think the kids feel safe?

S: Uh, because I think the kids know the teachers care. That's the first thing, and I think the teachers know that the kids are sincere in their, uh, respect for teachers. That's sincerity on both ends. Um, reciprocal sincerity is what I've experienced here.
QUESTION 3:

R: Question 3. Part One. In what type of co and extra curricular activities are students involved?

S: Um, because of the nature of the school, we don’t have athletics. We’ll have clubs that run athletics. But, for the most part, it’s, uh, academic. Science research clubs, chess clubs, debate clubs and then there’s a lot of, um, school year activities, senior activities where the kids get together and plan things, there’s a lot of that going on so that extracurricular is more confined or focused to community, uh, relationships.

R: Now, given the small size of the school, one thing that’s come up in my other interviews is that there might not be as many activities as the students would like because there aren’t that many teachers to support them? Is that your finding here or not really.

S: Not really because the number of teachers are proportional to the number of kids in the other schools. So, we’re small. We’re only given a certain amount of teachers that, um, are equal to the number in other schools though they have a lot more teachers, they have a lot more students. So, um, I think that’s equitable.

R: So then are you finding that teachers are able to have the number of extracurricular activities that the students want to engage in?

S: That’s a different question to me. What they want is never going to happen because we’re small. We can’t have that level. Of course, they want athletics. They have to go...well, let me back up. They do have athletics but it has to be a school in their district. So, it’s not that they don’t have it but then you’re taking it away from the other kids who wouldn’t get involved in the other schools who normally probably would get involved here like cheerleading and, um, maybe girls athletics if they can’t make the team in the other schools because we have less of a talent pool from which to draw.

I think...that’s not to say that we’re going to be bad in everything because we’re small. But I don’t think kids are getting what they want. But, at the same time, they’re volunteering to come here knowing that. So, they’re, um, they’re prioritizing what’s important – school or the athletics. There are kids who don’t come here because they want the athletics. Um, and there are kids we get here from the other schools who come here because they want this setting. They still have the athletics there but, uh, you know, it kind of works that way. I don’t think there’s a lot.

R: How about extracurricular activities that don’t involve sports, say, various clubs? Would students want more of those or do you think they are pretty well covered?

S: Um, you know, I don’t know departmentally how many clubs there are cause it’s focused in the department. Uh, so, there very well may be a French Club I don’t
know about. I know there’s a club that goes on trips in the language department. Uh, and I know we have a, uh, Science National Honor Society that I advise that the kids apply to. We take part in that – that’s an after school activity in the Science Department. Uh, I’d have to go through the yearbook. That might be a good idea for you if you want to... thumb through that and see what extracurricular stuff we have.

R: Question 3, Part 2. Uh, is it a large percentage of the student body that is involved in at least some kind of activity?

S: Uh, in my opinion, I don’t doubt that very much. I see who’s here after school. There are a lot of kids but there aren’t five hundred of them. So, I would be surprised if it was more than twenty percent. Not to say that they’re not, but probably twenty percent of the student body is here for that.

R: Now why do you think that is?

S: Well, I think I have a pretty darn good answer for that cause we always talk about it. Busing is an issue, a big issue. We have kids coming from twenty-five, thirty miles away. I don’t know offhand exactly what. Oh, we have kids coming from [a town] up by me. Uh, the closer kids I guess get rides from their parents but this is a public school. We’re supposed to offer that and we do have late buses but I’m not sure and I doubt that those late buses go to [that town]. So, that’s a big problem. Now, who, uh, pays for the buses? Their school districts. We’ve gotten kids from [a town] about three years ago I think that didn’t get busing. They said, “Yeah, you can go to the school if you want but you have to find your own ride.” We have teachers bringing them in. So, that’s, I think, that’s the reason why. If that was straightened out, I don’t think we’d have a problem at all.

R: And then the last part of question 3. Is/Can staff regularly be seen at after school, or whatever, kind of extracurricular activities that you have both in terms of sponsoring them or running as well as just participating?

S: Does staff seem actively involved in these activities? Yes. Yeah. Uh, you have to go in the room. Although, in the spring, there are teachers who run clubs that do the athletic parts outside. You know, they’ll play soccer and, uh, basketball. I mean, in the winter, there’s a group that plays. I forgot about them. Um, yeah, they can be seen. On any given day, there’s somebody here doing something I just don’t know what.

R: How bout other teachers basically checking out what other clubs are doing or participating as a school community?

S: Well, I can only speak for myself. Uh, I have to communicate on what day I’m going to have a, uh, an activity. My activity is floating and it has to be because I want the kids to come. So, I have to arrange a date along with the students and the other teachers. And, for the most part, it’s pretty much the same day. It’s worked out. But, the debate club has had guest lecturers come in and they had to change the date which is no big problem. I just change my day so I get my kids and he’ll get his. The next
question might be do you get the same kids in the clubs? Well, what I mean to say, is do you get the same kids in different clubs? Is it the same type of kid that stays after school? Um, I don’t know. I know some of my kids take part in other clubs. You know, but then when I go in there to see them, trust me, there’s a ton of other kids in all 9 through 12 in there, so, I don’t know about that.

R: How bout staff? In other words, when you’re having a debate club or you have guest lecturers coming in, do other staff members, not necessarily affiliated with your club, come in to participate or just see what’s going on?

S: Oh, yeah. I’ve had the honor of getting thrashed many times by kids in the chess club. Uh, I’ll go into the debate club and the, uh, there’s a lecture series. Only it’s not just a lecture series – it’s a give and take between guest speaker and audience. I go in there.

R: Now, when you go in do you see colleagues also doing the same thing?

S: Yeah, I mean, not a lot. Um, but a lot of times if I’m here and unscheduled after school, longer than I normally stay and see something going on, I’ll go in but all the teachers are like that. Uh, so, again, this is from my point of view.

QUESTION 4:

S: Um, most of the people...see now, this is my opinion, but I’m also talking about a number of teachers I surround myself with because we’re all in the same boat. Uh, I don’t think there’s any question about whether we’re supported or not from our point of view. Our principal doesn’t give us a blanket order, say “do whatever you want,” but we were just down there – the other Science teacher and myself – and we were talking about establishing two more clubs, NASA and scientific research, and, uh, she had an idea for a course and he was open to that. Uh, I don’t think there’s any problem with us even to the point where we can go in and express our displeasure with something whether it was initiated by the principal or another administrator, or a teacher, whatever it is, uh, and he’ll take it. He’ll give you a reason and it’s very respectable and, uh, in the situation I think.

R: And now, do you feel that, as a staff, you are appreciated and/or receive praise? Or how might praise be shown if it exists?

S: Um, I did one thing; it was after school. It was for the parents. The next day, not the morning but sometime during that day I don’t know when, I get a letter of thank you. A sincere letter from the principal – now that’s happened a number of times. There are times where he, uh, signed up for a conference, actually in Louisiana, New Orleans, and he couldn’t go because of a death in the family. Anyway, he came to me and asked me, like, two days, um, before would I take his place, and, of course, I’ll do anything. And he knows I had to do a lot of work for my classes the two days I wouldn’t be here. And then do a lot more work when I came back to correct it all. He understands but felt
free enough to ask me and I, you know, I'll do anything for him. You're asking the wrong person when it comes to that.

R: All right, the second part of question 4... Is the morale of the staff good? Describe some of the planned activities to keep the morale high.

S: Uh, we have a lot of lunches together that are funded by, either the principal, administration, the district, or the other ones I like, more than anything else, is certain departments they just get together at faculty meetings and provide a lunch. I mean, departments will take turns. Um, I think that makes that atmosphere just so conducive to, uh, sincerity of purpose on everybody's part that it works well.

R: Now do you find that the morale is high, low, in the middle?

S: It depends on who you talk to. People are people. You can't please them all. You can't go out of your way and please them all. You have a job to do. Uh, again, I'll surround myself with people who I think are happy here. Um, if I were to give you a list of people who I think are not happy here and leave in a New York minute, I couldn't and, speaking honestly, I know some people who are, you know, upset about things. I mean, you got to be when you are passionate about your work. You're going to be upset when not when it doesn't go your way, when you have strong beliefs about something and the powers that be don't, at least you talk through it. Yeah, there are people who get upset at times about things with guidance or the principal, or the vice-principal but it's not enough to get on the list to get out or you want to transfer. Uh, I couldn't begin to give you a percentage of the entire faculty that's that discontent [mumbled]. Yeah, nor do I want to waste my time trying to find out.

QUESTION 5:

S: I have three kids last class who have been expelled. They came in with their sheets and said they're leaving the school. So, I told them [mumbled]. One started crying. Whatever the infraction, I don't know. I don't know anything about it. Um, but I've always had a good rapport with those kids all year long. I had to get them back on task. They were respectful enough to stop that destruction, whatever it was, and get back on task. Um, these kids who got expelled aren't leaving til Friday. So, they're coming to class. They had the notebooks open and they were taking notes. I did not even know they were expelled and leaving until, oh it had to be twenty minutes into the class. You know, the kid had a face on, and was kind of sad. You know, he tried to be a tough kid but he had that paper, this green paper, it's a withdrawal slip, so I went to him. I feel badly about those three kids but they came in and did their work. You know, as the class went on, they started feeling more and more upset about it but they were not destructive and the other kids knew before I did they were getting expelled. And they didn't get into any kind of... they kept doing their work. I gave a lot of work today. I mean, that says a lot, especially for kids getting, uh, expelled for such behavioral disruptions in classes, and disrespect I just don't see it. I don't see it.

R: So you see that respect across the board then?
S: Yeah. I, yeah, I mean, we have some hard kids, out of jail, on parole. Other kids have been in, uh, level 9 in the local hospital, you know, psych ward. And, uh, they’re in the mainstream. And I’m just not seeing it. You can see there’s, they have issues and they have baggage. So long as I respect that, I deal with them accordingly, and, uh, they just show respect to me. I know there are kids who don’t like me. They’re in my class. But they probably don’t get destructive or attack me because maybe the other kids but I don’t think so cause I can see the kids, not that they’re failing, I mean, actually, none of the kids I’ve just alluded to, uh, whatever that word is, um, are failing. That’s why I was so surprised about that too. But...

R: Ok. How bout teachers to students? Do you feel that they show respect to the students?

S: In some situations, I have seen, uh, there are a few that, I think, uh, don’t cause they come back towards a student in a way I would never do, you know, but that’s me. And maybe the kids need that sternness but it just transcends being disciplined. It goes into abusive and, you know, that’s not good but I’ve seen that. So I just don’t go to that teacher’s room anymore.

R: How bout when you look, and I’m not necessarily looking for a percentage but just your gut, when you look at the staff as a whole. How many of the teachers do you think fit into that abusive category versus respectful category?

S: Uh, maybe it’s thirty percent, I would say. I’m sure that would be accurate.

QUESTION 6:

S: Well, again, my point of view, the kids do. You know, they disagree freely and even they’re able to listen with reason as I do for them and administration, um, again, my dealings with the principal have been that he’s very receptive to kids. Uh, and, I think the assistant principal and intern, I think are, I haven’t seen them in those situations that require that type of, uh, you know, heated debate and arguing, so I don’t know about them but I think the kids are free enough to go. I mean, I’ve sent kids to, not during my class, but I say, you know, when you’re free or if you see him or her go to them and explain the situation. They’ve gone. I mean, it’s not that they’re afraid to go. So, I think they’re alright with that.

R: How bout, um, students? Do they greet each other outside of class? Or do administrators and teachers say hello to students outside of class or each other outside of class?

S: From what I’ve seen, yeah. I mean, I’ve seen teachers who just walk by students and I’ve seen a lot go out of their way to say hi or pick on them. Kids are so...the kids are always picking on me about The Bears and The Cubs. I give it back to them [laughter].
R: How bout teacher to teacher? How would you say the collegiality is?

S: Oh, I have never, never, had a teacher ignore me in the hallways or on the way to meetings or be disrespectful enough to yell out when I'm talking in a meeting. I've never seen it. I think we're very collegial. This is a one-sided opinion here, you know... just my experience.

QUESTION 7:

S: Uh, I think the, um, faculty meetings...there's such a focus on stressing higher order thinking skills and college preparedness that we don't have a choice. If there's a teacher in here that doesn't think that, they need to do a little work from missing the mission. We are not guaranteeing every kid's going to college but we are saying that we are going to prepare every kid to go to college. Uh, there's a big push, and I don't think it's just us, I think it's within the district, but we started it first. So, yeah, I do think even the lower level classes, meaning, uh, General Bio and not AP or Honors classes, even those classes are preparing kids for college. Um, so, yeah, I think we are.

R: Now would you say that there's a high prevalence of AP or advanced courses here? Or honors courses?

S: I don't think there's anywhere near enough but then we're getting into the same discussion we had about athletics and extracurricular activities. We can't offer all those courses to kids when you don't have the kids. Uh, you can't have more, we don't want more than twenty four kids in a class, although sometimes we don't have a choice. So, if that means we have to sacrifice something, so, if I want a newer curriculum, a new, uh, course next year, I'm going to have to drop one of my electives. And I've done that in the past.

R: How do you mitigate then, as a school, the situation where you might not have the teachers or the availability of the advanced courses or the honors courses? How do you mitigate that?

S: Well, you know, it's not that we don't have them. Uh, we have, uh, we have AP and I teach a [university name] departmental science course. If they pass it, they get [university] credit. It's not like AP where you have to take a test. They graduate high school with college credit. So, um, you know, we have the upper level classes whether we have, uh, [university name] environmental science offered or AP Biology offered, we have to make a choice. Which one do we want? ... cause we have Honors Bio and we have Forensics which is an honors class. Uh, so, this year, we're just making a commitment to [university name] to do that there to do the program. And that's why we don't have AP although we were just downstairs talking about that which means something else has to go. Um, yeah, I wish they were all that level courses but I wish we offered all of them. The only reason we don't teach all is because you don't have enough kids for a class. I had eight kids signed up for Oceanography, Introduction to Oceanography, but, you know, I needed twenty four, or twenty. [The principal] will run a class with twenty. And we just didn't have it, so I couldn't do that.
R: So, now, getting back to the [university name] discussion a little bit, you said that you teach the course as a [university name] professor, as an adjunct. Do students have the availability to take courses with teachers not affiliated with here but affiliated with [the university]?

S: Oh, yeah. I think we have quite a few kids taking courses at [a number of local universities]. You have to look up the facts. I think a kid graduated with twelve college credits along with a high school diploma. Uh, I don’t know if she got an AA degree and a high school diploma the same day, I can’t remember but it was close. Another kid went to [university name] with twelve, um, college credits. I don’t know if I answered your question?

R: I think so. Basically, I was saying you are an adjunct at [university name] for these kids.

S: There are about five of us.

R: Right. But are there kids who can take college courses with teachers not affiliated with this school but affiliated with the university system.

S: Well, they leave here and take courses [in the university system].

R: The next part of that same question, question 7. Do teachers expectations or do your expectations of students match the rigor of the curriculum? Can the kids handle the curriculum that you are giving?

S: No, not all of them. Um, some of them will drop it, some will come for extra help and they’ll get by it, they’ll get through it, but you can’t get college credit with a D. You’ll pass the course. Uh, do I have a lot of that? No. Usually the kids come and know what to expect. So, they’re pretty qualified but I’ve had kids in the past, um, you know, but I’ve taught kids in the AP class that only got a 2 on the test and really need 4 or 5 to get college credit. So for the most part, and I’m just talking about my class, you know, they’re pretty much maybe eighty percent of all of them. So there might be two kids that, they won’t get an F, but they may get a D or C. You know, they’re trying. Uh, and personally, I like it because we’re really pushing them and they’re accepting the fact that, maybe not need to be pushed but they have to be pushed a little harder for a course like that. And I haven’t had anybody drop it so far and rather stay in that with a D and keep plugging at it.

QUESTION 8:

S: I know a lot of teachers that will come in on the weekend or stay nights and do activities. I’ve had AP Bio labs on Saturdays for a while because we didn’t have the labs at our school. This is the first year we’re in here. Um, I don’t do that anymore. I’m getting too old. But, uh, I’ve seen it. What percentage of the faculty? I doubt there’s more than five, maybe less, maybe three.
R: So you’re saying five or three teachers?

S: Well, no, percent.

R: How many teachers are there here?

S: I think there’s sixty. I think there are.

QUESTION 9:

S: Gee, I...uh...that’s a good question. Uh, mostly all the kids I have come to school...I don’t...I can’t remember a kid, maybe 4 years ago. They’d missed a lot of school. We have a policy about that. I think 8 times and you have to fail a course. Something like that...I haven’t seen that in years. The absent...the other one was the drop out rate...uh...I think I only had 4 kids since I’ve been here...who actually dropped out and went to night school. Now that’s over 600 kids I’ve had. You know, so, I mean, it’s very small. It might be for somebody in a different course, might be higher, but, not mine.

R: Now you were mentioning, just an example, of some kids that were expelled recently. How bad of a problem is expulsion here, or suspension?

S: The suspension thing is...I thought, was non existent. I was very surprised when kids..I’m sure they get...you’re gonna have to look up records for that. But from the kids I know, I was very surprised at this. I mean 3, actually within the class...I have no idea what happened. I couldn’t begin to tell you.

R: In your opinion is that common, not common?

S: No, its not common. Not at all. If anything, I’ve got more kids in my class from all the schools who come in this time of year. I...don’t know why...I know one, I had a kid 2 years ago who dropped out. Who went to night school instead of leaving school altogether. Other than that, I don’t know, maybe other teachers...

R: OK, and tardies? Is tardiness a problem here?

S: Yeah, first period. I just told [a student] yesterday. [Student] came 5 minutes late. [Student] lives down the street. “[Student], was the bus late”? “No, [teacher name]”. “Did mom drive you late”? “No, [teacher name]”. “Did you have a big breakfast”? “Oh yes, [teacher name]”. “I’ll have a small one tomorrow because..” “Get out of bed and get in here”.

R: Now, that again...and I’m sorry to kind of bring this back to that, but, is that common, not common?

S: No, no, my morning class is...its only 2 different classes, cause you teach every other day. And, uh, they’re in, they’re smilin’. You know, some kids, especially
first period, kids who are really not academically oriented. Have to go to school because the law says so, but, they’re in, they’re not hanging around the hallways. They’re not talking to their friends, they’re not sitting in the library waiting for someone to tell them to go. They’re in.

QUESTION 10:

S: Uh, I think, uh...its maybe an administrative question. But if I’m not mistaken, we do our attendance every period. And they go downstairs and put it in the machine, and the machine calls the parents for that period. So, I don’t think it’s a waiting...the old days are waiting till the end of the day. So, if the student in school and skipping, its...to go to Burger King and come back, the parent would know. They do it early. Uh, I think. And how much of a problem that is, I don’t know.

R: Have you ever called a parent to discuss personally a student’s attendance issues?

S: I haven’t had to. Uh, most...mostly I think because I think, uh, in the past, uh, I’ll write him up and administration will do that. So, if you get an administrator they might give you a lot clearer picture of...

QUESTION 11:

S: Uh, the teacher. When the teacher has time. Uh, I don’t make a call to the academic excellence, uh, nor would I always make a call because of, uh, a problem. Uh, we stay in communication and its very effective, through our school website. The parents are listed there and active. They go into the, uh, website and see the student’s work for the week. Homework or..but I, I go into the parents and, boy, when you write a letter like that...let’s say, normally today I have 2nd period free. I always {mumbled} the parents about last period if there’s a problem. I get a response before this period is over. And I have to write back, “No, please don’t kill [student name]. I’ll just watch, I’ll let you know”. When it comes to, uh, accolades, I’ll, I’ll email the kid and cc his parents. There are some kids who do some pretty good stuff. Uh, who are recognized for it. And I’ll write. Even thought it wasn’t my class. A lot of times my kids in my class will, especially a kid who, uh, who’s been doing D work all year long all of a sudden starts doing C & D, you know, a major test gets a B, I mean, you gotta go crazy. You gotta go crazy and let the parents know, because the household has to reflect that. If it doesn’t, the kid’s not getting that reinforcement. I mean, the parents are very good about that.

QUESTION 12:

S: The budget, no. Uh, otherwise cutting...well, I’ll take that back. Of course..we order stuff and if we know what we want we’ll put it in. Sometimes we’ll get it, sometimes we won’t. Most of the time we don’t. So whether we have a say in the budget or not, we can’t tell [the principal] we’ll have to take books away from English so that we can have our thermometers. Uh, that I don’t know. But the other 2, most definitely, and there’s no question in my mind about that. We have lengthy faculty
meetings with questionnaires... it's almost like a wish list, and debate. Administration left the room and let us talk as a group. With no leader. Just a respectful discussion.

R: About?

S: Discipline issues. We wanted to restructure our... how things are handled. Yeah, we have a big say in that. And there was more than one meeting. It took awhile. Maybe some teachers thought it took too long, but, hey, I know schools where they don't have a say. Uh, in curriculum, every, every single year at this time we are asked. [The principal] wants to, uh, doesn't want a stale curriculum with the same old thing. Any new courses you want to offer, go ahead. Offer 'em. And we do a lot of talking at our meetings, departmental, about curriculum. We share with each other about activities, different ways of doing test assessments. So yeah, I think we have a great deal to say about that.

S: Now, in terms of, I guess, discussions for curriculum or discipline, do you do that in addition to those big open meetings? Do you have anything like a professional learning community here, or a small learning community?

R: Well, yeah, we... we're encouraged to have those professional meetings, group meetings. Uh, so much so to the point that [the principal] will throw out a reading and say within your professional learning group, if you have nothing else planned, do this reading. Talk about that.

R: How big is the professional learning group and how often do you meet?

S: Well, I think it's school-wide and its as needed. Uh, but there are other teachers who, I'll tell you, they meet once a week or once a month.

R: In a smaller group?

S: Yeah, yeah.

R: Are you part of one of those groups?

S: Uh, I was. I had surgery. I was out for 2 months. I just came back last week. So I'm gonna get back... active again with it.

R: Can you tell me a little bit about that group?

S: Yeah, we have 4 questions we had to answer. It was brought up in a faculty meeting. The whole faculty had to do those. But then there were a number of other books that we could bring to the group. And we'd go over.

R: And that's in your small group?
S: Yeah, we usually do that in the Science meeting too. But there's another small group that meets for [AP accreditation process], where we're getting accredited. We're going through that process again. And I'm on the...

R: And you're involved with that?

S: Well, we all have to be. Uh, it's a pretty lengthy...this is our second year just getting prepared. And I'm on a small group committee that has a focus on curriculum.

R: In terms of [the accreditation process]?

S: Yup. We usually meet just for...during faculty meeting time. So, every Wednesday there might be a faculty meeting. Um, or every other Wednesday, I'm sorry. There...its between 2 and 3:30. Uh, there's purposely nothing planned so that we can have our meeting. We kind of design that.

**QUESTION 13:**

S: Yes, there are ample opportunities for it, but its also a question of money. District hasn't given subs any more for professional development. Uh, its got to come out of our budget. So, that's kind of been limited. But, uh, I've even gone to a professional development that, that dealt with safety in the school. I'm an EMT, and I go to an EMT conference every year. And I'll bring stuff back and present it at a faculty meeting. There's one coming up in March. But [the principal] allows me to go to that. Uh, [other science teacher] is going to a NASA meeting in professional development for that. Those are 2 of some examples.

R: And then is it common for teachers to come back and turnkey it to the staff?

S: Yeah. We have to share.

R: How about district professional development? Is there a lot of district professional development?

S: Yeah, there has to be. There has to be at least 9 CPU hours, which is a heck of a lot of meetings if you only have a meeting for one hour. Uh, and one hour is so many hours per unit. I think its 3 hours for one unit. So its about 30 hours...

R: Are they effective?

S: Yeah, well most of the time yeah. When a program first started about 10 or 12 years ago, it was...everything from how to wash your hands. Right, to knitting. But, ever single one of these has to be focused. And that's been, maybe, 5 years ago they established a little bit more clear cut thing.

**QUESTION 14:**
S: Uh, I think we are. It's demonstrated to the fact that teachers give up there time and do what is asked of them. I mean, maybe not every single time, but if they go above and beyond what's required. People I surround myself with anyway.
Appendix N

Transcript: School C/Subject C
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL C/SUBJECT C

QUESTION 1:

S: Um, I’ve been here for five years and I would say that, over those five years, I know of about ten incidents with drugs, um, either being consumed or used in school, um, you know, in the parking lot sort of thing, um, and then students arriving at school under the influence of that. Um, I don’t recall any incidents with alcohol. Um, in terms of physical disturbances, do you mean just disruptive behavior?

R: Uh, something that resulted in a fight.

S: OK, um, I would say, on average, there’s probably two to three a year. Um, yeah, I’d say about two or three a year.

QUESTION 2:

S: Um, in terms of the atmosphere of the school, I’ve always felt that it is a small school environment. Um, we’re more like a family than a large school where you really only know your particular teachers and don’t interact. Um, there are plenty of students who know my name, who say hello, I’ve never had as a student but I’ve done other things with and even students that I haven’t worked with, um, know my name and I would say I’m comfortable. I know certain people have had things happen where they might not feel comfortable. A colleague had her cell phone stolen, you know, perhaps it’s her fault for having it out in the classroom, but, at the same time, um, she feels a little sort of apprehensive during that...when that class was in her classroom but I’ve never felt that way.

QUESTION 3:

S: Um, yes. I’ve done student council and very regularly all the other student council advisors are there, um, even people who aren’t involved in it do show up and participate. Um, I’ve also worked with community service type things. We’ve definitely had a lot of students across the board, a lot of teachers across the board, participating in those types of activities.

R: And now, do you find that there are enough of activities for students, or no? Please explain.

S: Um, actually, that there are activities that students would love to have such as intramural sports that we just don’t necessarily have the facilities, have the coaches, things like that for. Um, but I feel that we are responsive to their requests whether or not it can be fully staffed or, you know, if you need a certified person to do it, we just don’t have that. Um, but I do think we try and listen, um, to what they want and try and provide it. Um, but there’s all sorts of stuff...we have a ski club. There’s a gaming club. There’s a debate club. There’s all sorts of stuff.
R: And now, again, can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S: Mostly. Obviously, the advisor's there. Um, I think it depends on interest. Um, you know, kids go play basketball after school on Fridays and teachers who like to play basketball go. I would never go cause I can't dribble and run at the same time. Um, but I would say so. And, I guess, at times, it's the same staff members going to a lot of different things. You know, there's sort of a group who goes to the dances and chaperones the dances, um, that could just be that other people haven't been asked.

QUESTION 4:

S: Um, I would say yes. I am fully comfortable. I'm now tenured but even when I was not a tenured teacher, I felt fully comfortable to walk into the principal's office, um, to express whatever concerns I had and to the vice-principal's office and express any concerns I had there. Um, I would say they're readily available. I received a number of letters, um, saying "Thank you for being at this open house", or "Thank you for participating in this", um, you know, "We're very proud of you for this", "Congratulations on this." So, I would say yes. Now, maybe that could be because I tend to be a more active teacher. But, um, I would say that my actions are recognized.

R: Excellent. And now is the morale of the staff good? And describe some of the planned activities to keep the morale high.

S: Um, I think, as in any school, morale can be based on who you're talking to. Um, there's obviously people who perhaps this just isn't the right profession, um, but they're here, and they show up to work, and this is their thing. Um, but I would say morale is generally higher than most schools. We don't tend to have the griping and the complaining that a lot of other schools do, and, when I do get together with colleagues from other schools, twenty to thirty minutes of the conversation is the complaints whereas we try to get beyond that as soon as possible.

R: Why do you think that is?

S: Um, they are in larger schools. I think they are more departmentalized and, if you have an issue within your department that can be very difficult. Um, we tend to be more heterogeneously grouped, in terms of our classes, so, all of us have, we run the gamut, in terms of abilities, and, um, special needs students, and accommodations, and all that sort of stuff, within our classes, whereas, um, some of the other schools track. So, one teacher might end up with, you know, six freshmen classes and they're just torturous for the year, so, I think that, um, will be part of it.

QUESTION 5:

S: Um, we do do a lot of. um, sort of cooperative teaching and communicating...things like that. Um, in terms of my own classroom, I can tell my students are respectful of me because their behavior stops when I ask them to stop, and, um, even when I ask, if I have to ask twice, it does stop. Um, I've always taken more of
a personalized approach to it. Um, if a student’s really off one day, I sort of touch base with them or try to about it. Um, I think other teachers might have issues with that but again that goes back to classroom management and some people say it can be taught. I’m not sure it can be taught. I think it’s really just you got it or you don’t.

QUESTION 6:

S: Um, definitely. I would say most of our students are pretty open, um, to coming in and talking to a teacher whether it’s “I just broke up with my boyfriend and I just need somebody to talk to” or “Mr. Principal, I can’t stand that teacher. You have to get me out of that class.” I think most of our students are, they self-advocate very well. Um, and I would say, most of the staff has an open door policy. Again, it goes back to who you are as a person.

QUESTION 7:

S: Um, I think our curriculum, at times, can be very, um, teacher organized if that makes sense. Um, the principal always stresses, um, depth over breath, and I, um, at least in my teaching, my fifth year, and this year I decided, you know what, kids actually need to learn how to speak, not just conjugate verbs in Spanish. Um, so, let me back up, and let’s work on the speaking part, and let’s, maybe, we don’t cover eight chapters, or nine chapters, or ten chapters, but, if they are able to cover six and really articulate those words and use that stuff then that’s really what the aim is. Um, so I would say that is college prep, because most kids go to college having no idea how to speak a world language, um, and then they’re stuck with a college professor who only speaks that language. Um, and they have a panic attack. But, um, I would say that it can be very, sort of, teacher organized, how much they want to teach, what they want to teach, which is great in terms of having the freedom. It is all aligned to state standards and, um, but I would say that I don’t follow the [district] curriculum word by word by word. Um, I would poke my eyes out.

R: Now, would you say that the students are able to meet the curriculum? In other words, do they have what it takes to do it and do it well?

S: Um, I would say a majority do but that does take a, uh, large variety of accommodations. Um, it takes a lot of, uh, sort of creativity and explanation in figuring out how do I teach a child who doesn’t speak English very well, how to speak Spanish, things like that. Um, so I would say, really working with the curriculum to get them to understand it, and understanding that some kids just aren’t going to.

R: Overall, would you say, what percentage, who’s there with the curriculum, who’s eventually gonna get it, who’s never gonna get it?

S: In terms of students?

R: Yeah.
S: Um, in terms of who's there, I would say seventy. Um, who's gonna get there? Twenty. And not, ten.

QUESTION 8:

S: Yeah, um, definitely. I think, you know, obviously, you're going to have a couple who always punch out at 2:30, but I would say the majority of us, when approached and when needed, and things like that, will definitely stay after. Um, we're always reachable via email. Things like that. And we try to both maintain the balance of I'm outside school and we're not going to be, you know, meeting up on Saturday for a study session kind of thing, but also saying OK, you do have a question, let me take some time and answer it.

QUESTION 9:

S: Um, I would say the dropout rate is not a very significant, um, thing being that we are a school of choice. Um, kids do choose to come here, and, you know, we have had cases in the past where they just don't get to school. They do a fifth year or they go to night school or things like that, but, the majority of the time, we are able to get them on the right path. Um, absenteeism? Um, I would say, for my class rosters, there's always three to five kids who really have issues with absenteeism and absence being, you know, fifteen to twenty absences and we meet every other day. So, that's a significant absence problem.

R: And now, um, who makes...uh, would you say, by the way, the absenteeism problem with those couple of students is that school wide? How serious of an issue is it?

S: Um, I think it is a major issue because if they are missing that many classes. I mean we meet for eighty-eight minutes every other day...

R: No, I guess, I'm sorry. I didn't phrase that...No, it's my fault. I did not phrase that the right way. How many students overall are missing that many?

S: Out of a population of roughly 550/600, ten to fifteen total. Um, and sometimes, it's an illness, sometimes it's an issue at home. Um, I don't know, we've had kids who leave home and, you know, their parents see them walk out the door, and, an hour later, they've worked it out where their parents have left for work and they just go home. Um, you know, kids are bright. They'll figure it out.

QUESTION 10:

S: Um, I would say that, ideally, it would be teachers who are constantly calling home. Um, I know for myself, that I am horrible at calling home. I do try to send emails to just say, you know, your child's been chronically absent. Um, we don't necessarily have like forms or anything like that where we, you know, sort of get to generate it through a machine but we have just started an online attendance thing. So, it's visible
right away. This child’s absent. This child’s tardy and I believe, eventually, parents will be able to see that. Um, so, at this point, I think if it’s a chronic issue, it’s probably some/one of the administrators who calls, um, but, generally, if they are an issue in my class, they’re an issue in everyone else’s class. So, it’s brought up pretty quickly.

QUESTION 11:

S: Um, we as teachers are supposed to make those follow-up calls. Um, I tend, again, tend to send emails. I think it’s easier. Um, a lot of times I get an answering machine or a wrong number when I call. So, if I have their email, Um, I think it reaches them better. Um, and I would do that throughout the day. Sometimes, I would do that right after class when I could remember. Other times, I’ll do it at the end of the day just saying, um, you know, he’s really off today. Can you check in with him, you know?

R: How often would you say you have to do that?

S: Um, probably once every two weeks, and that’s once every five classes or so.

R: How bout when kids are doing something really special?

S: Um, I try to... Well, I give stickers in my class. I know it’s an immature thing but they honesty, they’re high school kids, and they love it. Um, I do a lot of stickers for high points, high grades, things like that. Um, if the class has done really well on something, we’ll do something fun, um, one day, things like that.

R: Do you report it back to the parents?

S: At times, it depends on what happened. Um, I’m not, you know, going to email a parent every time a child gets a ninety or above on a test. I expect the child to kind of go home and take the test home. Um, but if the kid, you know, had a really great day in class, really participated, really interacted well, then, yeah, I would email home.

QUESTION 12:

S: Yes. Um, I’m not sure about the budget. Um, I think we definitely get to put in sort of our recommendations, or our comments. You know, we’re not sure how much the bureaucracy actually listens to us. Um, in terms of curriculum, yes, um, both departmentally and individually, we can really sit down, and hone in, and work with it. Um, and, in discipline, we’re definitely involved in sort of the decision making process in terms of what are the rules going to be. Um, you know, these are these rules. How do we want to adapt them for our school and our classrooms? Things like that. We’ve had this long standing debate about headphones. Certain classrooms need them. You can’t teach digital music without headphones. Um, so why is it ok in that class versus another class? Stuff like that. Um, and we do have those debates and we do have those sort of constructive conversations. I’m not sure we’ve actually come out with a discipline plan yet but we’re getting there.
R: And in terms of the curriculum, can you give a specific example of where it’s able, where the teachers are able to direct it?

S: Um, I would say the depth versus breadth, um, conversation of, ok, you know, we want kids to be prepared for the state test in science. Um, so we really need to gear things towards that or we need to figure out what sorts of things really need to be taught. I mean, we don’t teach all of the extraneous stuff. Um, I know we have, um, department planning time. So, every department has a particular planning time and, periodically, they’ll go through the curriculum and things like that. Um, as a world language department, we do also meet, um, as a citywide. So all the world language teachers from middle school all the way up, um, we meet and discuss things like curriculum and what we’re trying to do as a world language sort of over arching thing, is, as a city, figure out when a child finishes Spanish I this is what they should know.

R: Do you find that helpful?

S: I do. It helps me tailor, ok, depth versus breadth. These are the things that I have to definitely get to...how am I going to do that? figure that out?

QUESTION 13:

S: I think so. I’ve gone to, at least, three or four conferences every year I’ve taught here. Um, everything from...um, I went to a conference at the University of Delaware on, um, problem based learning. Um, I’ve been to conferences on learning vocabulary, on, uh, teaching African American students and how to deal with, uh, multicultural classrooms and all that sort of stuff, um, to everything to the advanced placement process and figuring out what the heck to do with that process. Um, so, I feel like I’ve always had ample opportunity. You do have to think it out, um, in terms of the out of school type stuff, and we do have half days for staff development every month. Now, we are in the advanced placement process so a lot of our staff development just goes towards that but that’s also, it’s a self study so it’s a very positive process as well as being a pain in the butt.

R: Now, do faculty members here get the opportunity to provide professional development for other faculty members here?

S: Um, I would say yes. I’m not sure how formal it is. So much as, um, you’re having trouble with some classroom management issues, “why don’t you talk to these other teachers, you know, um, we’ll cover your classes while you go and observe them” and try to provide structure with that. Things like that.

QUESTION 14:

S: I would say teachers are proud of it. Um, the majority of teachers are proud of it; so probably, sixty, sixty five, seventy percent are proud of it. Um, we do have a lot of new teachers so they’re still kind of getting their feet wet. Administrators, definitely. Um, you know, both from academy garb that they wear to, um, advertisements at open
houses. Um, the students, I think are proud of their school. I think...it’s a school of choice but we also attract a particular type of student. And, so, if they fit here, they really fit and so they’re, therefore, very sort of proud of their environment, who they are, and what they represent in that environment.

R: If they fit, they really fit. Can you explain that a little bit more?

S: Um, well, we’re a technology based magnet. So, if they’re really into technology, they’re surrounded by people who are really into technology and they really fit in that environment. We have a lot of kids who aren’t the school jock, who aren’t the drama star, who aren’t that sort of thing. And those opportunities are provided at their home school, but a lot of the kids that we get, who come here, don’t necessarily want to be in that environment, so, when they’re here, it’s a very sort of safe, comfortable, intellectually comfortable, environment for them. Everyone speaks the same language.

R: How bout you? Are you proud of the school?

S: Yep. I enjoy it. I actually, I like coming and teaching. I think the kids are great. Um, I enjoy the faculty. Um, we all try and get together sort of outside of school to have sort of that camaraderie. Um, I think it’s great. I think our new building’s awesome but I liked it when we were just two hallways too. I think the kids are fun. I don’t know, maybe I am just a nutty teacher.
Appendix O

Transcript: School C/Focus Group
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL C/FOCUS GROUP

QUESTION 1:

S1: In the seven odd years I’ve been here, on average, zero to one on anything. Uh, usually zero on weapons. Um, you’ll see altercations from time to time, it depends on the wide variety of the student body. Um, you’ll see students of...with different disabilities, or, um, social problems or family problems and they’ll come here and so every once in a while you might find an altercation. But weapons? I think I’ve seen, I’ve seen a kid...I’ve seen it twice. One stabbing, what was it five years ago?

S3: That was with a pen.

S1: Right, that was with a pen. He just lashed out at another kid and stabbed him with a pen. And another time, one kid actually brought a knife to school but didn’t use it. It was like a mistake. He had it in his pocket. Um, but this is the wrong community for that. Drugs? It’s, ok, as opposed to what we started out as, yeah, it used to be kind of a big dumping ground for some of the other high schools. We did have an issue with, uh, distribution, sales and distribution on the premises. Once every one or two years, once every year or so, we might have someone try to smoke. But I would say that, this school year, this year, no, um, and probably the last two years, no. A lot of it had to do with [the principal] selectively, um, excising those students who were identified as having an issue, without prosecuting, just basically filtering them out of the system. And, um, no, the kids just knew we were on top of it. I mean, you just, as a faculty member, you use the kid’s bathroom because I want to walk in and just see what’s going on. I don’t always use the faculty bathroom just because I want to see what’s happening. I can smell what’s going on, I can see what’s going on. Um, you know pretty much who’s dealing what. Uh, if there is any dealing anymore, I wouldn’t be surprised if it’s off premises. I’m not saying the students aren’t using.

S3: Especially with all the cameras. We have so many video cameras now that they really are hesitant to do much of anything on the premises. I think we’d be, uh, remiss to think that it doesn’t happen or doesn’t go on outside of the premise because these are teenagers, and, but it, you’re right, I think, over the years, the population has changed. When ever you start a magnet program, getting a population, in the building, is the hardest thing anyway to keep it thriving. And slowly but surely, it’s become, um, the program has gained a reputation that is the reputation we want it to have and we’re starting to attract students who belong in a program that’s been advertised. So, we don’t see the same issues, as, um, [other teacher] said with the dumping ground.

S1: We have had our problems, but having taught at other schools, this school’s really lovely. Taking a different approach, I’d say a lot of it’s because it’s such a small school, it’s such a small community. This is one of those rare incidences where I know students who I never taught and I’ve seen them go through four years and I know them by first name. I know what they’re doing and what their issues are and you know they know that you know what you know and they know they owe you stuff. And the point is they just don’t do certain things here. And, um, it’s kind of comforting. I would say
the majority of the student body likes the fact [mumbled] because it's an extension of a home or family. For a lot of students, this is the most solid family environment they have.

S4: Right, I agree.

S2: Not just like the kids they hook up with that school. Not like just like some sort of gang thing but this whole school.

S1: And teachers especially.

S2: And teachers, yeah.

S1: You're a surrogate parent to at least thirty, forty kids. Now, you're not the parent obviously but you act parental in some ways. And the kids look to you for stuff they don't get at home. Or maybe they need reinforcement, you know. By the time we get these kids, everything about them has been engrained. It's frozen solid. So, you're dealing with young adults and can you really change much? No, but what you can do is you can support that which is good, and that which is quality inside and you become that reinforcement in those quality issues. I mean, honestly, [mumbled] you go home, maybe you got two or three good ideas in class but you really pulled somebody's irons out of the fire, let's say, you know, it's a mini-crisis, you've done a great job that day.

R: Anybody else want to add anything to question number 1?

S4: I just want to say I know, uh, last year, I did have two students who ended up leaving to go into, uh, drug and alcohol rehab but, you know, I think that stemmed from their outside environment not from the school environment. They were...both those students were having major issues with family. I just want to add that it's very limited and I've taught at other schools as well. I taught at a school in the Midwest where methamphetamines were, you know, very serious and I had a student who was found on the side of the sidewalk who died from methamphetamines and his friends didn't know what to do with him so they dumped him. He was in his senior year and I had him in class. Yeah, that was tough. So, to see that here in this area, it's not nearly as much.

QUESTION 2:


S2: Yeah.

S1: We have students we have to chase out at five o'clock. And it's not like at, you know, some schools...when I was growing up in the sixties, you always had, and it was a parochial school, you had, you know, the young priest or two that would be downstairs shooting hoops with the kids. We don't have that kind of, that rounded classic high school culture of the sports and what not. Instead, what we have, is kids
that will stay after to do work, they stay here waiting for their parents to pick them
up, it’s a safe place.

S2: Or they’re setting up for the dance, and all that technology is done by our
kids. So, there’s kids stringing microphones or speakers, stuff like that.

S3: Or, I mean, you run the, uh, Chess Club. And there are kids that will stay for
Chess Club but then, on other days, they’ll come in and ask for a chess board and the
media center is a place where kids go often, like, to come after school. And you see
them. The way the school is designed with all the little pockets and, you know, benches.
You’ll walk around and you’ll see almost little study groups.

S2: Yeah, it’s like a recruiting brochure for a college.

S1: You think the place is empty and there’s like sixty kids just clumped in little
areas all around the place. It’s because it’s nestled that way. So, you have these
feelings of like it’s big, but you can have your small little private area.

S4: Your own little private area.

S2: It’s so cool because it’s private but not secluded so it’s still safe to allow the
kids to be in these places that they feel comfortable and sort of a little bit private and still
observable. And, that’s really good.

S3: From the other side of the courtyard. I mean, no, but that’s a good thing.

S1: Visibility is a big thing here.

S2: The architecture really contributes to the, um, perception of security here.

S4: And I typically work late, after school, and I’m sometimes here til five, five
thirty, and I have no concerns about my personal safety.

R: Because I was going to ask you about your safety.

S4: Yeah, you know, I think the students feel safe. As a teacher, I feel safe. You
know, I taught at, uh, another school here in the district, two thousand plus students, and
I didn’t always feel safe there and, here, I have no problems whatsoever walking out of
here at five thirty, six o’clock at night. Like, you know, turn a corner, I’ll see a pocket
of students who I had no idea was there but they’re working, no vandalism is going on.
It’s a really nice pretty good feeling.

S2: Yeah.

R: Why do you think that is?

S1: Culture.
S4: Well, that and, personally, I think the new building here has something to do with that. There's a sense of pride in students being here and there's a different...and I'm still feeling it, I don't know about you guys, but, the students are different the minute they walk into school. There's a different atmosphere. I have yet to send one student out for a behavioral problem out of my class this year, and I don't send out a lot anyway, but I just think they're proud to be here.

S3: A lot of people have described this building, and you just said a brochure for a college campus...

S4: Right.

S3: And I think when the students walk in here and even as with the little benches, and there's a sense that, in order to function in this building, you have to be a little more mature. It's more of a mature design. It's, they were sharing a building with middle schoolers, so, you know, when ever, before, so whenever you have a culture like that they're the big guys but they don't have to be that much bigger. This building demands a sense of maturity it seems. Even the freshmen coming in, it seems like they know that they're in a very special place that is quite different from most other high schools.

S2: An interesting thing that I was just talking to a friend of mine about and actually maybe you guys can help me. Maybe it's not as true as I think, but I think it is. Um, a friend of mine is doing some graduate work on the nature of growing up and youth and stuff like that and I was talking to her, and one of the things I realized, that we have here is actual diversity. You don't have domination by any one particular group.

S4: Right.

S2: I might be wrong about this because I don't see enough students but I do feel like it's not just diversity means we have a sample of everybody, we have like approximately equal size groups of everybody, different nationalities, uh, different SES, and things like that. We have actual diversity not something that might look like diversity if you squint. It's actual diversity so there is no one cultural thing that dominates. These cultures are really, really shared, or if not shared, at least happening simultaneously.

S1: You taught in a real white school?

S2: No, not really, it was in [town name] but it was the other end of town where we had some diversity but, yeah, it feels more diverse here than anywhere.

S1: You know, when I was in [school name], and talk about a white, white, white school, and the funny thing is, you really get this whole feeling of like, I don't want to say that you're set up, but there's them and then there's us. And they like that, the kids almost support this chasm between the two of you. And when you have the
teacher that crosses the line, that teacher that usually runs rough shot with the administration.

S2: I don’t know what you mean right now. I might be the only one.

S1: Alright. When you have them...Well, I’m saying there’s the student and there’s the faculty and the chasm between the two. Once in a while, you get those odd teachers that cross over. And, whereas it’s treated with suspicion, and yet relief by the kids, it treated with suspicion and suspicion by the administration, like, come on, what are you doing, you’re breaking the routine. This school’s not really ever founded like this. One of the things [the principal] told me that he worried about coming into the new building – we used to be on the same floor, three halls, we ran into each other all the time, I mean, we’d hang in this room, hang in that room, hang in this room, there was no such thing as a department office or anything – and he said, the culture, he said, “I’ll walk into a classroom, and I’ll see three or four teachers just talking about life, talking about lesson plans, talking about what they’re doing, talking about the subject, recommending new materials, etc., A student will walk in, hey, can I sit here and do/finish a test or a project. Sure, sit over here.” And then, you know, you talk in front of them the way an adult would at home. So there’s that feeling that they’re not being closed down. And he said, you know, “there was a real bond there”. And He said, you know, he was hoping it wouldn’t go away with the new building.

In some ways, we don’t mix departmentally like we used to. But the culture is still here. You know, that it was founded on that. And there’s a certain relaxed feeling by most of the staff. I mean, you can tell if a teacher walks in your meeting and wants to immediately find out, you know, what the same old, same old routine is going to be, then he realizes, wait a minute, slow down, it’s ok, I can be in the meeting and I’ll be appreciated for it and uh, I can enjoy myself for a while. And I think you’d find a lot of professionals come in here and you have an administration that treats you like a professional as opposed to treating you like you’re basically a servant.

R: Actually, let’s, I’m going to skip around a little bit because you’ve touched on many questions. Let’s talk about administration, which you just mentioned. Is the administration readily available and supportive to the staff? And does the staff receive praise and/or feel appreciated? Please describe.

S4: Yes.

S3: Yes, I did. I know that from the moment...I was one of the unique individuals from the last building, I worked for two programs, I worked...I was media specialist for the middle school and also the high school program. And I have to say, from the time [the principal] got to know me, he was wooing me to this program because I was actually hired for the other and just serviced this one. And, one of the prime reasons I came was, he, far more than the middle school administration, he and, um [the vice-principal] certainly respected me, sought my, um, assistance, help, advice and it was, really, I felt far more a professional and appreciated then I have in many
other buildings. He himself is a professional. He’s innovative. He expects it of you but he also, um, goes out of his way to show his appreciation. I think. I think that way.

S4: I have yet to go to [the principal] and ask him for a favor and just tell me no. Teaching Social Studies, I wanted to hold a veterans’ day breakfast and I approached him that I did, he was like yes. And he provided, you know, I was thinking how I’m going to get the food [mumbled]. He was like, “it’s taken care of.” In one of my social studies classes, we adopted a platoon over in Iraq. He has been supportive for that. And, uh, our platoon just came back and I wanted to fly a couple of them to come visit our school and he was like, “it’s taken care of.” And, you know, he recently, I feel, he, as a principal, he nominated me for an award that I had no idea that he nominated me for and I just so happened to win it. So, it’s the Heroes of [county name] for the military.

S2: My son won that last year. It’s really a wonderful thing.

S4: So, I had no idea he had nominated me for this until I got the phone call and, you know, [other teacher] and I were just at the board meeting last night. You know, he submitted stuff to the school board meeting – you know, his media check students had won an award, you know, he mentioned the Heroes thing/me, and, you know, for him to just do that, and all the students in my class last year who thought of this idea to adopt a platoon, they all got certificates from the school board because he was the extra effort to do that. So, I think, not only as a teacher and educator, but also the students here, when they do something as well, he makes sure that they get recognized as well.

S3: Well, also having E-Chalk.

S4: Oh, E-Chalk, yes.

S3: Having E-Chalk, that’s the computer, um, communications program that is an integral part. [The principal] is constantly putting things out on the bulletin board, kind of like a home page, and in our emails and it’s a wonderful way. It very, because of technology, very simple to really holler out for anybody who does something that, even minorly, deserves a holler, he’ll make sure he does it.

S4: Yeah.

S1: Yeah. You know, at fifty six years old, I have had...[this principal] is probably the third administrator I’ve had in my life that I would say is at that singularity where you’d do anything for this man. I mean, I feel you’re lucky if you get one or two bosses like this in a lifetime. I’ve had three. And, um, this guy is just phenomenal. He’ll give you enough rope to either weave a gorgeous basket or hang yourself. So, but the point is he gives you the rope and he treats you like an adult and a professional. And, unless you given him reason not to.

S3: And even if you do hang yourself...

S1: He’ll be there to gently help you down and say, “let’s try it again, dear.”
S3: Right.

S1: As I said, you know, he has a military background, he was a corporal, he was at least ten years in [food company] in development projects, he was the one who started/came up with the concept of, uh, [food company], that was his thing back in the 1970s, uh, before that he was in [different school districts], he retired from [different school districts]. This is like his fourth go around in careers and he knows people. And you can tell somebody that knows people, as opposed to...you know, he doesn’t administer from the office. I’ve worked for principals like that, they’re the kiss of death. He knows virtually every kid’s name in the school and the story that goes behind the name. He knows you as an individual. He may even remember the name of your spouse necessarily. He tries to involve myself, not necessarily in a personal way, but a personable way. And, he keeps it professional but keeps it profound and you’re lucky to work for a guy like that.

S2: I find that I don’t know him as well as you all do, this is my first year in this building, but, uh, one of the things I’ve noticed is, that, that attitude is in the office. I’ve never gotten an attitude look from a secretary. I don’t if it’s their personality, because I don’t know their personalities either, but I know that the professionalism in the main office of the building is at a high level and it’s never “no”. I mean, whatever I need, maybe sometimes it’ll be “I’ll get it to you later” but I’m always met with a positive response and I like that.

R: Let me ask a follow-up then to that. Is the morale of the staff good and describe some of the planned activities to help keep morale high.

S4: I would say our morale is really good.

S2: It’s good. Everything’s working.

S1: In every school that I’ve ever been in, this is probably, this is the healthiest thing I’ve ever seen.

S3: Yeah.

S1: I mean, as I said, I wouldn’t, I’m not going to sugarcoat it or anything but I think it’s very healthy. Do I think we have any glitches? Not from the top down, from the inside out a little bit. You know, you have quirky people, quirky personalities,

S3: [mumbled] as everywhere.

S1: Things like this. But, you know, in general, outside the general mix of people...

S3: I think, in our evolution, it hasn’t always been that way. I think there have been, um, there have been issues as we have grown. But the more, I mean, when [the principal] came on board, he inherited staff members also. And some were hired, you
know, it's, um, been an interesting thing to watch. But, now, coming into this building, I think that it's the best staff we've had, as a whole, uh, that I've worked with, um, so far within this program. And, uh, very professional, very, um...they like kids. You can legitimately see that [the principal]'s first interest, even though he loves developing new programs and he loves this building, and he loves...he loves kids and pretty much, I would say, the people who are hired here have the same interest. And it's really...You know, the kids come first and their success comes first. And we need to figure out how they can be successful first and then and...it really...

S2: One of the subtle things he does that I just put together when you were talking, he calls them children. When we're talking in a group, he'll talk about the children coming through the door and you really have to love kids to see these tall people as children. And they are. I mean, it's nice, and it's good that he reminds us of that all the time. But, it's, yeah, that tells you where it's coming from. They're children.

R: And that actually relates to another question. I just have to find it. Uh, alright, question 5. And, again, I think you were all just alluding to it. How can you tell that the students, and the teachers, and administrators are respectful to each other? I mean, now, you were talking about [the principal], or administrator to student. How 'bout student to student, teacher to student, student to teacher?

S4: I see students helping each other all the time. Um, you know, I don't hear a lot of kids calling, or bullying. I guess is the term. I don't see that, you know, going on and, as far as relationships with students and mutual respect, just on my way down here, I, you know, two kids I've never even had in class before, I mean, I know these kids. And we were talking about that earlier. I have a kid in, who signed up for one of my online courses and then he asked the reason he took it was because he knew me and had never had a class with me. And I think there's just, um, you know...

S1: Well, you hear that in college but you don't really ever hear that in high school.

S2: Yeah. That's interesting.

S4: Right.

S1: You know, where a professor will say, "Oh, I've always wanted to study from you, professor but." And I think it's mostly because, here again, there's a family culture of course.

S4: There is a family culture. You know, yeah.

S3: And it hasn't always been here. I mean, initially, when we first started, we had a very different population.

S1: You're preaching to the choir here. You know, I know what you know and you know what I know.
S3: And I, we’ve been here the longest and there was definitely, um, there was a different culture, there was who’s in charge of the school kind of culture and, um, and…

S1: There was a large level of fatalism in some ways because “Are we going to get this off the ground?”, “Is [the district] going to allow us to go for a few years before they bail on us”. I mean, the last major budget crunch, I mean, we were all predicting that this thing would be folded into [the local high school].

S3: So, but I really feel that this year particularly, I’ve seen far less incidents of students being, you know, blatantly disrespectful to their teachers. I mean, do we have that? Of course, I mean, there are kids who are going to come in tired, at their wits end, and we’re the only ones they can take that out on so they’re going to blast at us. But most often, it’s resolved in a helpful way. But I don’t see as much of that, um, as I did the first few years and, um, I just, I just think that they [mumbled] walk in this front door, it’s not like, even though we call them children, they don’t feel like babies coming into this building. They feel like high schoolers. They feel like, “Oh my god, this is amazing!”

S1: This doesn’t look like a traditional high school. It looks more like a small corporate headquarters. So, it’s almost like they’re going to work. I mean, you know, when the building first opened, just the design of the building, as you were pointing out, it’s was such that it gave a whole new complexion to the way that we’re handling it. I mean, [mumbled] the girls…[mumbled] and it was like, “this is for us”. “Wow, this is the coolest building.”

S3: Yeah.

S3: I think sometimes you get to close to your subject and you have to kind of step aside. And there’s parents that I know that know where I teach that have actually over the last year, especially, have been approaching me, “Do you teach at…”, you know, because it’s gotten good reports, and when you get people up the main route [number] money belt, so to speak, um, coming back and saying, you know, my kid goes to [school name] but I’m thinking I’d like to send them here or my kid goes to [school name] but I’m thinking of sending him here, or, you know, some of these places that are gentrified, uh, it says a lot and especially because parents will be very critical and they’ll ask a lot of questions. But those that know that there’s other forms of education than conventional high schools and are looking for alternatives for their kids who they feel have gifts in different areas, they take a look and they say, you know, this is an alternative.

R: How bout teacher to student? How do you find those relationships or teacher to teacher?

S1: I think you’ve answered it in some way, shape, or form.

S4: Yeah, I think it’s...
S3: As you mentioned, there are some quirky personalities that are not always as respectful to their students...

S1: Right.

S3: Therefore also may not be as respectful to their fellow teachers, but they’re few and far between. I mean, I can’t imagine any environment which you go into where everyone is just, you know, wonderful and perky. And even just minor personality qualities tend to be quirky and will not blend and will never, but it’s, and you want those personalities, those strong personalities, because that’s what makes the school exciting.

S1: It’s the same as having the class with, you know, one girl’s wearing, you know, Islamic headgear, and the other, next to a black girl who’s Jamaican and with gold earrings all over herself and they’re both talking about class with a kid who, you know, came off the boat from, you know, Colombia two years ago and two Romanian, and two Albanian kids in the corner are trying to figure something out. And, you know, in the end, they all speak the same language. Whether we understand it or not is kind of interesting.

S3: An incident happened today in one of the classes that came into the media center and it, you know, is that age-old, “why are you picking on me...because I’m black?”, and, but wasn’t that one of the kids who historically, I’ve known him for years, used to always use that line, um, he, this other kid was sitting next to him, “why can’t I sit down here...because I’m Albanian?”, and he goes, “yeah, because you’re Albanian”. It was like they were taking it to the next level, humor, you know, it was absolutely, you know, they both knew the joke now. I mean, it’s like, what this other kid used to use as fodder to, you know, to be able to do whatever, everybody was kind of, I mean, it was just hysterical, “Why...because I’m Albanian”, it was just very funny. Of course, he sat down and they’re best friends. So, it was just, um, yeah, interesting.

S4: I’d like to say that when I explain the type of students that go here, I always tell people, you know, outside of here that, all the kids are different but they all just fit in. You know, I think that’s really...

S1: You know, it’s interesting. A study back a few years, about three, four years ago, when the last census figures came out in 2000. I think the city of [city name] is something like one or two percentage points off. If you flop the ratios of Blacks and Hispanics, [city name] demographics are exactly those of the United States, the entire country. So, the thing is, if you can go to school here, and deal/work in this community, you’re going to be golden anywhere. So it’s not like you’re dealing with an upper class or a lower class, or mixed culture, or what, it’s here. And in this school, do you know what it’s like teaching Islamic Studies and you have three kids out of fifteen that are Muslim and are looking at you like getting ready to pick your words or they want to know more too, or Russian kids in a Russian Studies class...

S4: Yeah.
S1: And it's like they're just listening and then they can add to it. China Studies, and the kid turns around and says, and corrects your pronunciation because it's not quite right in the Mandarin, so that you get him to get up and he does a whole period on calligraphy on the board and you bring out the white paint and, oh, no, black paint and, water basin, and it washes off the floor and you have just do calligraphy. [Teacher name] loved to do that a couple of years ago where she did a whole class on calligraphy, the art of calligraphy, and had everybody get up...

R: In terms of that, in terms of the students helping you with the lesson or, um, helping to, you know, other kids, that leads actually to what the kids do do here in terms of extracurricular activities. So, in what type of co and extracurricular activities are students involved? Is it a large percentage of the student body and can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S1: Here again, we get a lot of kids, you know, contrary to what most people think of [county name], we are one of those inner city schools, or city schools, where kids, most of our kids don't drive to school. So, they have to take a bus. So, we do provide an after hours bus for them so they can stay after school and take activities. But the point is here, we barely have to provide a parking lot because our kids are from a demographics and from an inner city area where they can get bus transportation.

S3: Well, in the end, there are high schools kids that are living in communities that are just that much farther that might have to drive on [the interstate] as opposed to crosstown. Their parents won't give them a car to drive down [the interstate], you know, or drive Route [number] in the morning.

S1: So, the issue is that...a safety factor. As far as after school, we don't have a sports program yet. And we are supposed to start next year, or this season, with an intramural start, frankly, it can just stay intramurals, or intramural between other schools. None of this varsity, JV stuff because it's, this is not the culture of what the school's about.

S3: Yet.

S1: I'm sorry. Not yet. It can be. No, look. You know what we can do?

S2: They have to leave early and it's...

S1: We have the facilities right now we can do girls JV and varsity volleyball, soccer's a match because we have the field out there, um, those are low-insurance sports anyway. The high insurance sports are always football and the other stuff and they eat up a lot of money. But, like Soccer, uniform socks, and they provide their own cleats, you pay somebody four thousand a year to, you know, be a JV varsity coach, whatever the stipend is. And, we, uh, got the field to do it. We don't really have the lockers anymore.
R: In addition to the sports, in terms of whether or not you get them or you
don’t get them, what do you have now in terms of extracurricular and is it enough? Do
you feel it’s enough? Do the kids feel it’s enough?

S4: I think so. Um, we started a new committee last year, like an activities fair,
where the kids come out and see all the different activities that are sponsored to new
programs – this year, it’s building with books, where the kids raise money and, actually,
two of my students are going to get to Africa and help build a school in Mali. Um,
there’s the Save Darfur, um, and they’re really involved in their classes – you know, as
far as the Freshmen, Junior, Senior, uh, sophomore classes – and they put on dances
which is kind of new for us in this building. Those have been a real big hit.

S3: And they’re held right out here.

S4: Yeah.

S3: It’s amazing.

S4: It is amazing.

S1: Not only is it amazing, uh, I, the very first one, the Halloween Dance…

S4: Oh, Yeah.

S1: I was there to chaperone. And, outside, you know, a few kids who wanted to
go out the back door, I think, maybe, to catch a cigarette or maybe to go out to the car,
um, there was no, like, fights or hostilities, or, nothing, I mean…

S3: They didn’t come drunk…

S4: Right.

S1: Right.

S3: You know, and that’s always a big part of other dances. And in this town,
particularly, there’s been a lot of, there have been, I shouldn’t say a lot, there have been
issues at some of the high school dances where violence has broken out to the point
where some dances were cancelled which is sad. I mean, that’s the one thing, growing
up, I live [in town], my kids have gone to [town] public schools, if they complained
about anything, which they didn’t much, it was that other towns could do far more, in
activities, because of the population. Where we have that right here, right here in
Stanford, and, um, it’s because the other high schools aren’t really knocking on the door
to come to [school name].

S1: Yeah, you know what? I think you just hit it on the head because I was
talking to [the principal] before the Halloween dance [mumbled], and as I was talking to
[the principal], I said “well, what do you think about tomorrow night?”, and he said
“well”, and the inference was that we’re not going to have any problems because
we’re not cool. If we were cool, then all of the kids would want to come here and it
would be party hardy and that kind of thing. But we’re not a cool school. So, as a result,
we’re an interesting school. For parents, we’re very interesting.

S3: There’s cool stuff going on but it’s OK that other people don’t think it’s cool.

S1: That’s right.

S4: We have the tech expo that, you know, the kids do a lot of work. And a lot
of this – you know, this DJ – I’ve worked, um, the homecoming dances at other schools
where we paid out, like, people thousands and thousands of dollars...

S2: I love that about our dances. The students are musicians. It’s amazing.

S4: The students are DJing or playing in the band.

S1: Student bands so they can’t wait to play.

S4: It’s, really, these types of things are student led. You know, we have, I know
for a fact that we have debate, um, the debate club and students do that. We have...

S1: We have a state team that’s doing very well this year. It’s going to a state
competition.

S2: A state competition. We had the challenge team. They were on the TV show
so they were...

S4: And we had the challenge team. Franklin Forum.

S3: Franklin Forum is...

S4: yeah. I mean, and what that is, is students, there’s a controversial issue and
they have these, uh, adults come in and talk to these kids about, uh, I think one of the
last ones was...

S1: The next one coming up is gay marriage.

S4: Gay marriage, you know, and you have these outside people from outside the
school...

S1: You know what they have? They have a fellow representing the gay
community who’s going to be coming in and talking about the gay marriage experience.
He’s coming in with this group of businessmen who sponsor the Franklin Forum.

S4: Yeah.
S1: This is like the fourth year that they’ve been doing it.

S4: Yeah. It’s fantastic and it’s just like, it’s like the world...world

S1: And all they have to do to go to it is, put one foot in front of the other, show up, sit down, and guess what? They have an opinion. They get heard.

S4: We have cramming sessions right before exams where the teachers, you know, we stay after school and tutor.

S1: This place is like a private school.

S4: It’s really nice.

S1: It’s really like, you know, if you’re going to the Gunnery or Kent or some place like this. I mean, our student to teacher ratio, I think, is what, something, until this year was like, you know, one to eleven.

S2: Yeah, we’re going to bring in another hundred students right?

S4: Yeah.

S3: Yeah, but it’s still good.

S1: Yeah, we’re still I think we’re under the one to fifteen ratio which puts you in the private school range.

S2: As far as after school activities go, I know that there’s chess club because I do the chess club. We’re having a competition on Monday, here. There’s a town wide competition that we’re going to send some people to, I think, on Thursday. Um, let’s see, you mentioned, um, what else?

S4: Debate.

S2: Debate. GLASS. Is that an extra group? Is that a club?

S4: There’s GLASS.

S1: If you look at the sheet, [the principal] may have it. I think there was something like twenty or thirty organizations after school.

S4: Yeah, it’s on E-Talk too.

S1: Yeah, that you can actually join too. Some are [mumbled] kids, some are twenty, twenty-five.
S3: And I think we’d have far more if there were monies, you know, to pay the, um, teachers who sponsor these for the extra time. But, with everything else, um, the money is just not limitless so they have to stop after a certain...cause I know lots of teachers have ideas as to what to do. And with the intramurals, I mean, that, they’ve started the volleyball and basketball, I believe. So, that’s going on in the gym.

S4: They have weightlifting.

S1: It’s kind of like [mumbled], I didn’t want to do it but [the principal] pushed me for two years, you know, three years, before we started doing it in the classroom. Well, we’ve been able to pull it together. Money is always been a big issue and it was pulled together with one purpose grant, one and a half purpose grants. One check that I got from, [dollar amount], from the Better Business Bureau Association, yeah, and with that I was able to go out and buy stuff on EBay and different places to start a program. But it worked out well here because the kids won a national award, I mean, they placed in a national competition.

R: In terms of staff, I think you were just talking about it, besides the staff that’s actually running these events or these clubs, do you get a lot of staff members just coming by and participating in them?

S2: In chess club, certainly. There’s a staff member that comes by and sometimes he plays and sometimes he watches.

S1: You’ll get staff that will basically drift down and say, “You know, I can do this too”, um, music stuff...I remember a few years ago [a teacher] was doing something with kids after school and played with their band. You know, so, there’s a lot of things you hear about. “Can I sit in?”, “Can I drop in?”, in fact, you just open the door, I mean, I think [teacher name] is running a class out there, seriously, if I wanted to, a science class, or, some sort of Bioethics thing that he’s doing, if I opened the door right now and walked out there, give me twenty seconds, and [teacher name] will have me take over the class.

S3: Say you have twenty seconds, and give him a half an hour. [laughter].

R: Well, let me ask you, is that how most of you feel then? Do you pop into other peoples’ activities?

S4: Yeah. I think I feel welcome to if I wanted. You know, like, [teacher name] asked me today if I wanted to go next door, and they were, and matter of fact, they were doing for the challenge team that they were on, News Channel [number], I was in there with the kids, you know, because I like that kind of stuff too. And, yeah, most people, you know, we do well...

S2: I haven’t done it but I certainly feel welcome.

S4: Yeah.
S1: You’re not going to find the doors closed.

S4: Absolutely not.

S3: I don’t think, as I said, you know, with quirky, with some quirky personalities, there might be some that feel less comfortable doing it but, for the most part, the majority of the teachers here, you get the feeling that more the merrier. You know, I mean, if you can make it, great. If you can’t, but that’s the other thing, I never, ever, ever feel obligated on any level to have to be here, to feel like you’re doing the right thing, and who’s watching, who’s noting, and, you know, this will appear on your evaluation type thing. Never do I feel that way. If you do come, it’s always, if you do come, “thank you so much for taking time out. I so appreciate you being here. You didn’t need to do that and I recognize that”, and that goes a long way, that makes you jump in the car if you have fifteen, twenty minutes or a few hours to come back to a dance or, you know, come on a Saturday afternoon when they’re having the orientation and just being present and talking to parents who are considering the building. I mean, you will do that for somebody, you know, isn’t expecting it but will appreciate it if it happens.

R: Question 6. Do students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers, administration, uh, we talked about them greeting each other outside of class, please explain.

S4: I think most of them do. I mean, there’s still some students, like my students, I know don’t really have issues in coming to me but I know some might not feel comfortable addressing [the principal] right away. They might go to [the vice principal] instead. But, I think that’s just individual personalities.

S2: People might bring a not quite right attitude about authority with them from where they’ve been before but once people get acclimated here.

S1: Yeah, in fact, I see a lot of new students, it’s a little hard sometimes, because they’re not used to approachability.

S2 Exactly.

S4: Right.

S1: And it’s also, I mean, [mumbled] take the Haitian kids who come in and not quite sure what they can do. These come from countries where they cane kids, I mean, so, it’s not like, it’s you know, discipline is a whole new thing. Here, it’s kind of like, a lot of the international students are started by the students because they feel that someone is actually going to listen. And I think that’s a key thing.

S4: If they want to be empowered they can be.
S1: Yeah, the thing is someone here, they will be able to find someone who will listen. And whereas, in the outside world, that’s probably the number one cause of student violence, student ennui, and psychological issues, suicide, and violence. They’re just trying to talk to somebody.

S3: I have such wonderful conversations in the media center with students. I have a counseling degree, but I’m not at all interested in going into that guidance office, because the kind of counseling I would rather do is done right around that table.

S1: You’re like a bartender. You stand there...

S3: It’s amazing. My assistant and I look at each other sometimes and say is there something written on us? People pour their hearts out to us. We hear things in this media center that probably nobody else – students, teachers, parents – and we get it and it’s wonderful.

R: OK. Question 7.

S1: Um, I wouldn’t say that we teach to college prep, I think we teach, honestly, closer to grad school.

S2: College level.

S1: I think we teach more upper, I think we teach not somebody who’s getting ready to go to college, I think we teach it like college. I’ve had more students come back and say “you know, I took a, you know, English 101A, 101B, Lit course, you know and it’s so easy compared to the papers you were doing here”. But the papers that they were doing, it wasn’t rigorous, it was best, it was innovative, it was stimulating to what they were, it empowered them with the idea that maybe their opinion was worth while, and, you know, the classes we teach, they’ll know go into college classes and I’ve had this feedback from Econ students that are taking Econ at the local community college, they come back and they say “I wouldn’t have done well if I hadn’t taken it here first in high school”. And that’s kind of a strange way to look at it. But the point is I think a lot of us try to prep them not just for next year but we try to prep them for ten, fifteen years from now when they’re in the board room and they have to come up with certain answers to questions and it has to be thought-provoking, and it has to be analytical, and it has to be in-depth. And, you know, they all remember where they got it and they all remember who told it to them.

[S1 leaves the focus group meeting.]

R: And is that how you feel?

S4: I feel that I also have to step back, you know, in this type of building, you know, with the technology. You know, the assumption is, that with technology, students they know more than we tend to do as adults. Sometimes, they know how to do more what they like to do. Not what they are expected to do in the classroom.
S3: Correct.

S2: Yes.

S4: Students could probably show me how to download twenty songs in two seconds which would probably take me two days on my IPOD but, as far as using it for the more appropriate tools, you know, we have to step back as teachers sometimes and believe we’re doing this in using the technology that we have in the schools to fit in our curriculum in the appropriate way. And that, you know, it can get there but sometimes we forget about that and but we’re working towards that. And I do second what [the other teacher] says our curriculum and skills we’re teaching to the kids are definitely Twenty-First Century skills and they’re going to be above and beyond other people. And...

R: So, do you feel that the kids can handle it? Do your kids, overall, do they match your expectations?

S4: Most of them.

S2: Well, if you, Math curriculum is a whole topic unto itself. You know, cause I teach Math, but, and so, the kinds of higher order thinking skills, um, this is a challenge for Math students everywhere and the whole idea of how we teach Math because it’s both a skill set and, um, well, it’s actually kind of interesting that way, it is a skill set and it’s something that they have to demonstrate competence with so they actually have to know how to use it. They have to practice and that means they have to do homework, so, putting that stuff aside, one of the things I just wanted to, um, list is what [other teacher] is saying is that we do teach Math in a Twenty-First Century way. Um, we teach Math by collaboration. Students do have to form groups and, so, I mean, getting them to actually do everything they need to do is what we’re struggling with. But, they are supposed to work in small groups, they’re given open-ended problems that there’s no answer to, how would you figure this out is the first thing, in fact, what are they even asking me, is the first thing they need to figure out together as a group. And then we have them create a presentation in PowerPoint and share that with everybody and stand up and present, as if it were a meeting, and they were presenting the results of some sort of analysis. So, that piece, I’m very happy with, my students are definitely coming along for that, that piece is Twenty-First Century workplace, Twenty-First Century presentation style, Twenty-First Century results. But, in terms of the basic, uh, down and dirty skill levels in Mathematics, we are struggling with that as schools everywhere.

S3: I know from my standpoint, I deal with information literacy. And, uh, just those students who can download twenty songs in a matter of seconds, they’re the ones who that will hit Wikipedia first and that’s their tried and true and don’t try to get me to go anywhere else, until they realize that there are other...and, most of the time, it’s the freshmen and sophomores, and it’s a maturity thing and, eventually, once they realize that Wikipedia is only answering the questions up to a point and, um, you know, when
they see that their name is in the article and somebody put it in there, you know, two
days ago, and it’s still there, then they start to realize, and I’ve even backed off and said
“you can use Wikipedia but you must always have another resource” because...

R: Sure.

S4: Yes. Definitely. I mean.

S3: Because, um, I don’t...

S2: Literally and personally, I’ll read the Wiki article. It’s not enough but...

S3: Oh, I was saying to somebody if I wanted something quick, down, and dirty,
and I wanted just to find a quick fact, usually, Wikipedia is one of the first things, and
I’ll look at it, but then if I’m really suspect, I’ll go somewhere else but that’s another
thing. The databases run the, I mean, if I could only have grown up in this time period.
It is just amazing compared to what we all had to go through in just a matter of five to
ten years ago. Databases are phenomenal.

S4: The content curriculum, content curriculum, and content curriculum and
especially in some of the courses like I teach Math and Social Studies. It is what it is.
But, we are also having the skills curriculum and I think that is where we needed really
to be preparing them. I mean, we do a good job with our content but the skills space set
goes along in measure with that is above and beyond.

R: Superb. OK. How far will teachers go to help students and do they go the
extra mile?

S3: Yes, they go the extra mile. There are teachers here all the time. There are
teachers who come during lunchtime. There are teachers, I mean, that, and nicely, and I
think this new building has really encouraged that. Teachers have space now. It used to
be, during their lunchtime, or during their student’s lunchtime, if they had a free period,
they were sharing a classroom so there was no space to sit down and meet with that
child. Now there is. And it, you see the beauty of it all. And, you know, I have, um, I
have been in and out of class rooms doing presentations and the like and every single
teacher says, “If you’re having a problem, come and see me and we’ll, you know, deal
with it.” So.

S4: Especially with E-Chalk. I mean, I’ll get, unfortunately, emails at 9:59 at
night asking about homework assignments but, which I, have, you know, sometimes,
don’t always answer at 9:59, you know. I think you should have learned that...

S3: I’m not even awake at 9:59 at night. [Laughter]. So, if they haven’t...

S4: That’s right at my bedtime. But, um, you know, I think that open
communication even, um, you know, we had a student, I had a student who had to go on
a family trip to Egypt. You know, she was able to take her test online for my class. So,
we’re there, you know, fortunately or unfortunately, 24/7. You know, we are special in that aspect. Physically, yeah, you know, I see teachers here everyday.

R: And now, are teachers involved in the decision making process in areas such as curriculum, discipline, and the budget?

S4: I don’t know about the budget. No.

S2: I don’t think the budget.

S3: I don’t even think the principal is as active in that budget process right now. We were talking, I think with NCLB and all the grades and all the requirements...

S4: Yeah.

S3: Every board of education is just looking for whatever funds they can possibly do to actually do what they are actually required to do first. And, until this legislation, um, is, is revised or eliminated, this is going, or Federal, there’s funds coming down, budgets are not. But, curriculum, I know [the principal] is constantly, they just went through a whole, “you know, give me an idea of what, you know, you think it should look like next year”...

S4: Yeah.

S2: We wrote the catalogue. We proofread the gallies.

S4: Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, we’re in the process of going through our [college accreditation] and, you know, we had our meeting and, as a faculty, we said, “OK. What do we want as our content goals?” and, uh, you know, that “We decided on this. Are we happy with this one?” “Yes, OK”. And, the majority, we’re good at that.

R: Are there ample opportunities for staff development both in-house and out and what are some of them?

S3: [The principal] encourages any kind of staff development that you, if you find something that you feel you need to go to, I have not heard of any teacher being denied. In fact, for a while there, when we had more grant money,…

S4: Right.

S3: He was encouraging everybody to do everything they possibly thought would help them in staff development. Our schedule now, in the [city] school system, we have one Wednesday, shortened Wednesday, every month, that is for staff development. So, and the system, they’re committed to it, too.

R: Do you find that the offerings, in house, are good and do teachers help each other with professional development?
S4: Well, in house, right now, yeah, that’s kinda our weak area. Again, with [the college accreditation process], that’s a problem because that’s all we can do right now is [the college accreditation process]. That’s our primary focus, but it’s, um, which I happen to be on the steering committee for. So, it’s teacher led. And, you know, it’s committees and we’re having these committees but it’s work that we have to do. But I think we could do better, um.

S3: I think throughout the whole school system I think what’s very difficult is not do we have a say I think it’s if we had more of a say as teachers. We’d have better staff development. So, frequently, and I have to speak, this is my thirty first year of teaching and, I am most often insulted by the staff development that is given.

S4: Yeah.

S3: Often times, I sit back and say, OK, new teachers absolutely do need to hear this. I’ve heard this, I’ve heard this many times but I’ve been around the block many times and for new teachers first off they need to hear this also. So, I can actually stand back and say there’s a need for this. But, um, it’s hard sometimes because things are read to you. I have three degrees. I don’t need...you know, it’s the way in which sometimes they come in. If they feel that you’re a failing school, they’ll come in and say, “well, you’re not doing this” when they really don’t have a clue what you’re not doing.

S4: And that’s more...that’s district.

S3: Right.

S2: In my last district, we would sign up on easy track for staff development offerings and they included things like how to play the guitar in your social studies class, and, um, introduction to signing, and, just, there were a lot of different kinds of more far field offerings. Was that unique to that other district?

S3: Yes.

S4: Yes, absolutely.

S2: OK.

S3: And we could do some of those, but, in the last number of years, because, and I have to say because of NCLB and the need for, um, better skill base and from elementary on up, they have invested most of their money in staff development for new programs that are going to help test scores. And, unfortunately, years ago, we used to have far more interesting things like that. But, it’s, you know, it really has changed.

S4: Yes.
S2: I have to say though that the training that I have been receiving has been excellent.

S3: Yes.

S2: Um, I don’t know if that counts as staff development?

R: Sure.

S4: Yes.

S3: Oh, Yes, absolutely.

S2: This is my third year teaching and this is my third, uh, new math curriculum because everybody’s struggling with how to teach children Math. But this is the first time, excuse me, this is the first time I’ve received actual training in the new curriculum.

S3: That’s a novel new idea isn’t it?

S2: Yeah, it’s great. Everything’s going so much better in all my training.

R: And who’s giving you the training?

S2: Um, the publisher of the curriculum is giving the training. So, it’s expensive training that the district is, um, uh, investing in, and I even have a coach and a mentor who is in my classroom. Um, two or three times, a week. I mean, it’s really great. The training here is wonderful.

R: Excellent. Now how bout teacher to teacher here in the building? Do you provide professional development for each other or is it mostly what you were saying before?

S4: I have. I work as a best mentor.

S3: And I have too.

S2: Oh, my gosh.

S4: Yeah, so in that aspect, yeah. You know, that’s something for the new teachers who come in and have to do the best portfolio. There is that. But there’s also always the informal that goes on, you know, 24/7.

S2: [Teacher name] actually invited all the new teachers into her classroom after school …

S4: Oh, yeah.
S2: at least once, maybe twice, to brief us just on stuff that she knew that nobody else would tell us about. Just stuff that you knew that was going to fall under...that would be any part of any formal thing. And it was wonderful.

S4: Yeah, yeah.

S2: And that was an initiative that, uh,[the principal] approved of, I guess, that you felt comfortable bringing to him.

S4: Right. Yeah.

S2: And it was enormously valuable to all of us.

S4: Yeah, you know, because I’ve been teaching, this is my tenth year teaching and this is my third school. And I just transferred from even within the same city last year to here and there were things that I didn’t know that I didn’t find out about until last minute. And just from that experience, I thought, you know, it was important for [mumbled] teachers teaching twenty years, ten years, five years, for a brand new teacher, it was just procedural things that you just didn’t know was in this building.

S3: And so frequently when the school year begins and the wheels start turning, you forget that there’s new people

S4: Right.

S3: who haven’t watched these wheels turn before and, you know, it’s like, oh, you haven’t seen the, uh, [mumbled] before, oh, I’m sorry. What’s happening? And, you know, it’s, and especially this year, because we’re opening the new building, everybody, you know, we were all kind of elsewhere.

S4: Everybody had a new learning curve.

S3: But, um, yeah, I think that, um, and I, as a media specialist, I’m constantly, I mean, that’s really my job. I mean, I’m always starting a new project with people and, um, especially with the new teachers. A lot of times, it’s so much more fun dealing with the newer teachers because, first of all, they’re far more comfortable with the technology that’s involved, they, um, are still learning and not set in their ways, and it’s so much fun to show them, you know.

R: OK, two, three more. I’m going to combine the next two questions, uh, cause they deal with follow-up calls. In your, uh, well, first of all, in your opinion, how significant a problem is student absenteeism in the school and/or the drop out rate? And who makes the follow-up calls to parents when students are absent AND when they’re doing bad academically or good academically? When does this happen and who does it?

S4: I think, um, it’s both teachers and administrators. Absenteeism, and guidance, guidance, of course, uh, I think it’s a, uh, team effort. I mean, I know students
who have excessive absences. We have an automated machine. The parents can see that, uh, and, they get notified and, if it’s a really big issue, they get called into guidance. Grades? I mean, if guidance catches it, they’ll call home. I’ll call home or even with the email. You know, we have that advantage with the email. Some teachers use an online grade book where, um, which I happen to do, and my parents are checking this weekly, or daily, hourly in some cases, to check their students’ grades and they know immediately. So I think it’s, um, it’s really everybody just takes the responsibility of following over these kids, not let anybody fall through the cracks.

S3: And I don’t think there is, really, um, a significant amount of students dropping out because this is a program they choose.

S4: Right.

S3: Um, if anything, they are asked to leave before they could possibly drop out, because, uh...

S4: Sometimes it’s just not a right fit for a kid and that’s OK.

S3: Right. And that’s it, too. They come with an idea that the program is something that they end up finding out it’s not.

S4: Right.

S3: And so they will leave to go to yet another program but they don’t drop out of school and so that’s more the issue. I don’t...

S4: We have a zero percent dropout rate because they don’t...there’s, uh, another program. Our goal is if our school doesn’t work, then there’s someplace else that does. But, we’ll help you find that.

R: How significant or how often does that happen?

S4: Not very often.

S4: [The principal] would have the percentage but very rarely.

S3: And it has to really involve pretty significant data.

S4: Yes.

S3: I mean, it has to, it’s never for minor infractions.

S4: Right.

S3: In fact, I have known of two or three, and there, I know there must be more, individuals who have been in this building and have not graduated after four years and
[the principal] personally has worked with them on an independent study to get them those credits so they could get a diploma.

R: How bout, uh, student excellence? How is that dealt with? How do you as teachers deal with that? How does the school deal with that?

S4: We have an awards ceremony every year that, you know, honors the kids.

S3: There is an honors society.

S4: The honors society.

S3: Um, there, you know, I believe there’s, uh, there’s a, um, what’s it called when at the end of the marking period where, they, um…

S4: Oh, honor roll. They have honor roll breakfast. There’s been some talk about implementing like a student of the month. Um…

S2: Do excellent students get invited to, uh, tutor? Is that our students?

S3: That’s the Honor Society. The National Honor Society usually has, um, a tutoring session.

S4: Oh, yeah. Right. Yeah.

S3: That’s because with, when you are in National Honor Society, you do have to do a certain amount of community service.

S2: Oh, I think that’s great.

S3: And part of what they tend to do is build that into the program so it’s kind of an automatic service to their whole community.

S4: Right. And then I know of some teachers, you know, who have a Russian Elegant Evening, an International Night, and the teacher says that she prints certificates out to the students who have really gone above and beyond. Yeah.

R: Oh, OK, excellent. All right, last question and then I just have to follow up on one quickly. Last question…Are teachers, students, and administrators proud of their school? And how is this demonstrated?

S3: What’s not to like?

S4: Yeah, I mean, we are in a unique situation.

S2: Yeah, we are. Sure. That’s why we show up on, uh, recruitment days.
S4: Yeah.

S2: We show up to help, uh, show the building. I know, I only went to one or two of them. But still, we show up for those things cause we’re proud. And, um, uh, you know, there’s no stipend for that. [The principal] doesn’t ever ask any individual to do it. We, he just lets us know it’s happening and a bunch of us, by magic, show up.

S4: At this school, the students are at those recruitment meetings as well and they, you know, talk about what they do to get to here, you know, what a kid has to take, what’s that movie... Trains, Planes, and Automobiles? It’s almost like that what each does to get here. I mean, I think for a lot of students...

S3: Oh is that why that Rickshaw is parked in front of...

S4: I know. [Laughter]. Yes, but, I think, this year, especially, you know, they are proud to be here because they have something special. They have something different that, I mean, and that’s unique, and, uh, and you can, just, I mean it’s really the whole atmosphere with the kids coming in. There’s no vandalism. Again, there’s no minor incidences. But, you know...

S3: I think the only incident of real vandalism happened, and it was people outside this program. It was certainly not anyone in this program.

S4: Right.

S3: It happened, you know, at night when there was another, um, group of people in the building.

S4: Oh, OK. It’s, uh, they... The building’s clean. I’m not finding, you know, trash on the floor. I’ve walked into other buildings where there’s trash. I mean, they would walk right in front of me and throw stuff on the floor.

S3: Oh, I can’t even begin to tell you how many books I’ve pulled, I just pull off the shelves and wrappers would be tucked behind it in the other building. And here, they know that, first of all, there’s carpets so that there’s no eating, but that, even if they do eat now, I know that they are ever so careful. They just really, they’re very respectful.

S4: Yeah.

R: Excellent. And the last quick follow up, I don’t think we talked about the teacher’s role in the discipline policy?

S4: We had a meeting, um, as teachers on what we want to do as far as discipline goes. And, you know, we’re still working on that. We’ve got two camps in that. Where, you know, where we think that, some of us think discipline may be...

S3: More punitive.
S4: Yes, and, you know, but we’ve...

S2: But it is a dialogue,

S4: It is a dialogue.

S2: And the teachers have taken, um, taken initiative for that.

S4: They have taken initiative.

S2: We all know what the policy is, um, and in terms of...

S3: Yeah, and, til recently, I mean anyone who’s worked with high school kids knows that freshmen and sophomores are really, you know, the ones who do knuckle head things and really need more of not real severe punitive stuff but they need a very quick, and down and dirty kind of...

S2: They’re looking for the limits. They need to know they found them.

S4: They do.

S3: OK, this is “you need to stay after school.” Yeah, they’re children. They need... “You need to stay after school. You blew it, sorry.” And that’s it. Um, but, listen...

S4: I’ve never had an issue with my students out of class where I didn’t feel like they weren’t punished enough. But I also start at home with myself. First, I give them a detention. I work with their parent before I involve the administration. So, you know, each teacher, we just do things differently. But, what we’re doing, I think, is [mumbled]. Like I said earlier, I have yet to send one kid to the administration, this year, and which is unbelievable to me. I have yet to assign a teacher detention with a kid for behavior. They may come for after school tutoring but no discipline.

S3: And that was one of the biggest discussions we had when we were talking about discipline. It even went beyond behavior. It was really more academic.

S4: Yeah.

S3: When we would say, when teachers would say to a student, “you need to stay after for extra help because you’re not getting this and you’re failing...”

S4: But “you’re not staying.”

S3: And then, they, not only are they not staying, when they contact the parent, the parent says “Well, I can’t get him or her to stay.” And, so, and, or “they have to work” or, you know, so you miss a day’s pay, so you can, and it is, so those are the
issues, and that’s a value system. You know, how important is education to the student? To the parent? And we’re, we’re invested and we’re asked... And that was, that was the biggest discussion, how do we, how do we surmount those kind of obstacles.

S4: Yeah, and, yet, you’re right, it was wasn’t, it was more so getting the kids to help them improve than it was discipline.

S3: Because most of the people who had trouble with the, with the behavior it really is... I mean, you gotta love juniors and seniors. You do... Because they truly are glorious. In fact, you can even have conversations with juniors and seniors and say “do you remember freshman year when you used to suck your teeth at me”. “Well, you know, it’s so much nicer to relate to you now.” They’ll, like, look down, and say “I’m sorry”, you know. One kid, once said to me, when I was talking about some obnoxious freshman behavior, he goes to me, “did I really act like that when I was a freshman?” and I said, “I’m sorry, Andre, yeah, you did” and he goes “I’m so very sorry.” You know, I mean, it’s those kinds of things. They don’t even, they don’t even know they’re being so silly. You know, or so, out there.

S4: There’s no maliciousness. It’s really more angst than major. No.

S2: Yeah, really, the worst is figuring out where the limits are and there some people coming from chaotic backgrounds and they can’t figure out how to function, but, yeah, I don’t get any sense of maliciousness. Yeah, that’s nice.

S4: Yeah, no.

S3: Yeah, functionality is something that works doesn’t it?
Appendix P

Transcript: School D/Subject A
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL D/SUBJECT A

QUESTION 1:

S: This is my sixth year, one alcohol incident, one weapon incident, and both of them were, I don’t even know if you would necessarily classify them that way. The alcohol incident was, well, a student bringing a bottle with him in, uh, his backpack, and the weapon was actually a prop for a class that, uh, was not cleared ahead of time. And it was actually a, like a, samurai sword. Um, you know, uh, a couple other silly things, yeah, I guess you could almost call anything a weapon with intent, but, there’s never been any weapons with intent, um, and, as I said, the one alcohol, uh, incident, um, no drug incidents, um, was there anything else on that list?

R: Uh, drugs, alcohol, weapons, physical disturbances, no.

S: No, I’ve had, again, in over five years here, one time when, uh, one student got upset with another kid and pushed him and that was the end of it, so.

R: What do you think accounts for that?

S: These are, these are very different kids. I mean, you know, just the whole culture with the open lockers and the fact that they, you know, trust each other in that regard. Um, I think makes a difference. Um, I’d like to say that there’s a correlation between the academics and their, uh, mannerisms and their, uh, maturity and, you know, they’re still kids and there have been times that they’ve made some silly decisions but I think they’re responsible and, like, a lot of that comes from home. I think the fact that they attend a school that is as, uh, challenging and as difficult as this is, and our curriculum, uh, I think, yeah, you are a different kind of kid to do that. And, um, I think the schools they came from also make a difference. Um, you know, I don’t think you can strictly say it’s socioeconomic because there’s lots of great kids that come from very impoverished areas and a lot of lousy kids that come from, you know, really good districts, but, there does also seem to be a correlation with the kids that struggle more, um, coming from areas where they probably have not, they probably were very successful in the programs, they got in here, but, the level of challenge in the preparation wasn’t as, uh, significant, so, therefore, the bar has always been lower for them, and when they get here it’s a big change, where, for a lot of kids, it’s, you know, the status quo, this is how it’s always been for me.

QUESTION 2:

S: I think with no question. Um, you know, it goes back to the whole idea of the lockers, you know, not just unlocked but open. Uh, not seen anything stolen in over five years that I’ve been here, um, you know, even the point where a student may borrow a sweater from another kid’s locker because it’s closer and then, just at the end of class, put it back in the locker. You know, it’s that kind of a culture.
Um, you know, safe and secure, I mean, they, I would say it's almost so much so it's almost a little bit of a naïveté on their part because, you know, when I first came here the doors were unlocked, um, all night long, um, until the custodians closed up at the end of the night. So, if they forgot a book, they'd come back at 9 o'clock at night the doors were open. This was five, you know, plus years ago. Uh, you know, we started locking the outside doors at a certain point; this was even before, you know, um, Virginia Tech, and, you know, before, I mean, it's not before Columbine, but, you know, it's just, it's, they just don't see any reason why they, why we have to lock doors, they just don't get that.

Um, we are on a college campus, so there, I think that does add a little bit of insecurity, uh, with the fact that there are adults, young adults, you know, that are constantly, uh, in the area. But, our students go to the college campus, you know, they eat at the commons, they take classes at the school, they interact with the college students, so, parents know that coming in, the kids know that there is a level of maturity that they're expected to display. Um, and they, they live up to that. Um, I think that the faculty, in general, would also say it's a very safe secure environment but I do think that they would not oppose some additional types of security measures. um, just because, you know, you're only as safe as the first incident that occurs. So, you know, keeping, you know, the doors locked and having a buzz in system or cameras or things of that nature, it's hard to justify the need for it but, at the same time, I don't think anyone would be opposed to it, but you've got other priorities to budget, so.

QUESTION 3:

S: Uh, a lot of them are, uh, again, the culture's a little different because they're coming from all over the county so, they're, you know, from anywhere, from, you know, north, they can be, they could live as much as, I'd say, an hour and fifteen minutes apart. So, these are not neighborhood kids. So, a lot of the times, the activities they're involved in are for social purposes. A lot of them are tied to our theme. They're academic in nature, science league, academic team, math league, um, you might even say chess team is, you know, in that regard. But there are others that are service oriented, and they are, uh, like our key club, our multicultural club, aimed at doing good for society. Um, I would say, there's got to, if the question is more what percent of students is involved in an activity, meaning just one, I'd say we're probably somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of the study body is involved in at least one. It also helps that we started incorporating, uh, one day a week as an activity period where we have one hour lunches where not everything has to be after school which is how it used to be. And, uh, that has helped a lot. Um, because a lot of them could meet during the day, the kids who live, you know, an hour and a half away can't stay cause mom can't come get them. Um, so that's helped bring the numbers up.

R: Excellent. And can staff, other than staff assigned, can staff regularly be seen at these activities? In other words, I know...do others pop in?

S: Yeah, absolutely. As a matter of fact, uh, you know, it's a tremendous faculty in this regard. There's a lot of districts where, um, teachers who, let's say, chaperone a
dance, they’re paid for that. Our teachers aren’t paid for that; they’re voluntary. And what you’ll often find is a “scratch your back I’ll scratch yours” where, um, if there’s a, uh, you know, a teacher that’s going to need a chaperone for a dance the next month, they’re willing to chaperone a dance this month, because they’re going to need the favor returned. There are some who are almost at every event. There are some who aren’t at many. Uh, but, that’s to be expected. You have young children, you have other commitments. You know, it’s OK. But those teachers are still visible for certain activities that take place in school, just not generally at those social types of activities.

**QUESTION 4:**

S: Well, you’re asking the administrator that question, so, um, I would, I would almost, I’d defer to my faculty on that one. Uh, I would hope, um, that they would say that they are. Uh, I would hope that they recognize that, um, I am, um, one of those in the trenches types of administrators. I don’t like to sit in my office. Uh, I like to be out there with them and I like to, I like to lead by example. So, I like to delegate…this is something I want them to do, I want to model for them how I want it done. And have them understand, why. You know, have input into it, the process initially, and then, if a decision is made, maybe it’s what they thought, it’s maybe something different but be part of the process. Um, I think they know how much I appreciate them. I think I tell them a lot. Uh, I’d be interested to find out if they did, you know, if they do feel that way. But, um, I think, um, you know, I think I appreciate them and I see that it a lot of the efforts that they do, that they make.

R: OK. Excellent, and, now, is the morale of the staff good? Describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high.

S: I think we’re in a good place now. I think we maybe had to struggle a couple of years ago, um, for various reasons. Um, there are some underlying issues that I think exist. Uh...

R: Such as?

S: Well, I think a lot of it has to do with the schedule. I think that there are teachers who are overscheduled and some who are under scheduled and it’s the nature of the, you know, the area that they’re in. I mean, there are, uh, we tend to max out, you know, math teachers and we may not max out, uh, world language teachers. And, you know what, they may be maxed out in number of meets but they may have only a third of the number of students. So, I think there is always that underlying issue about scheduling. Um, I don’t know. I mean, I would like to believe that I don’t play favorites. I think you have a natural tendency as an administrator to, um, to lean maybe to some over others just because they’ll do anything for you. And then, you’re willing to do anything for them. But I don’t think anybody on the faculty would think, would say that I show favorites, that I’m blatantly, you know, uh, one in favor over the other. That could destroy morale, you know, and in a small environment like this, when you’re talking about, you know, thirty two, thirty three total faculty staff, you know, one thing gets out and, you know, within a matter of a day or two, it’s everywhere. So, I would
say, I think right now we’re in a pretty good place. I think whenever you’re dealing with personalities you’re gonna have conflict. But I do think it starts with the appreciation they feel on this level. I think the support, in difficult times, that they, you know, I think, again, I would say, I hope they feel supported. Uh, so when it comes to disciplinary matters, when it comes to issues with parents or whatever, they know that, you know, they’ve got back up. And I think that, ultimately, is the key to morale.

R: Now, speaking of that. This is just a quick aside. It’s come up in some of these theme based small schools that there might or might not be a tension between the teachers that are teaching the theme subject and teachers that are not teaching the theme subject. Is that the way it is here? How do you deal with that if it is?

S: Well, I mean, I think I alluded to you when we were off the record earlier that I specifically set you up that way with your focus group because I think it was going to come out. And, if you asked this aside question there, I’m going to guess you got, you got exactly what I expected you to. Yeah, I think there’s, well, again, I think the administrator has to play a big role in that. I think if you press the idea of “well, it had nothing to do with the theme” then, all of a sudden, a teacher of a non-theme subject area might feel slighted; might feel like “You know what, I’m not valued”. Every subject has value, whether it directly or indirectly ties to the theme, it ties to the theme. Now, you have, you know, we’re pre engineering school. Sure, your math, science, technology courses are going to get the emphasis but the students can’t read and write effectively. If the students can’t compete in a global market, then what good are we doing them? So, they’re indirectly valuable while they may not be, you know, specifically part of the mission or the theme. So, uh, I do think that can have something to do with it but, again, that may be where some conflict amongst faculty exists, but it’s the administrator’s role I think to make sure they know they’re valued, and, you know, then it’s kind of, like, you can think whatever you want about me but I know where it matters is in the eyes of the principal, and I’m important to him, So I’m going to do, you know, I’m going to work hard.

R: Oh, to follow up on 4. Are there any actual activities you plan to keep the morale high?

S: We try socially to do some, have some get-togethers. Um, I don’t, I tried that at one point. I do a holiday pal thing, kind of like a Secret Santa thing, I actually coordinate that. But, a third of the faculty participate. But it always kind of makes it nice. Um, I will, uh, occasionally just kind of randomly bring in bagels or doughnuts and just kind of say thank you on the board in the faculty room. Um, you know, things like that. The teachers have organized some trips before. Again, it’s hard, um, because you want those efforts to also seem genuine. You don’t want them to seem like, wow, we really need to pick up morale around here, let’s have a big hug-fest. You know, um, so, there are, but I wouldn’t say that, you know, this is specifically for the intention of boosting morale, it’s, you know what, let’s just spend some time hanging out together in a non-academic environment. You know, and just really enjoy each other, and that, there are some times that you just really feel like it’s time to do that.
QUESTION 5:

S: Uh, I think that's something that has also, um, evolved over my time here. Um, you know, my personality is one of not letting, not taking something personally, even if it's intended to be taken personally. Um, because I always know there's something underlying the issue. So, um, I think, when you have a disagreement with someone, when they offer you the courtesy of dealing with you directly on the issue, as opposed to backbiting or bringing it up in a faculty room and venting there about how much so and so really ticked you off especially the principal and whatever else, um, I think that's less effective, and so, what I've always tried to encourage teachers to do is, look, I've got very thin skin. You know, if you don't like something that I've decided to do or the way that I did something, tell me. It's not going to change if you don't tell me, if you just start talking about it somewhere else. I'm always asking them for feedback, electronically if I send out something, you know, asking for their thoughts. Um, and I think that kind of environment takes time to create. But when you do create that, it becomes a mutual respect where I don't agree with you, and, you know, that's OK, but tell me why and let's see if there's a way we can either compromise or that I can, you know, lead you to understand why I made that decision that I made.

R: How bout teachers to students? Do they show respect to students?

S: I think so. Um, I think that's something that, again though, it takes time, as a teacher, to develop that skill. Um, you know, it's hard to admit to a kid, you know, you made a mistake. Because, all of a sudden, you think you lose your credibility. So, if a teacher is confident, in their ability, then, they're not going to be afraid to treat them as they might treat a colleague. I think your veteran teachers are better at that. Um, I've always encouraged them, as I do myself, to let the students evaluate them. Hand out a sheet that says what are my strengths as a teacher, what are my weaknesses as a teacher, what areas do you think I can improve in. Yeah, you're going to get the clowns, but you're going to get a lot of valuable feedback that way too. And if you can, you can trust the majority of these kids to be honest, but respectful if that's what you tell them, "I honestly want to know how I can improve. But, if you're trying to be hurtful, or if you're trying to be silly, I'm going to throw it away. It's not going to mean anything. So, help me be a better teacher, help me be a better...". And then, what's most important, is the kids then need to see you making an effort to change, because otherwise it's just lip service. So, I think that kind of an environment does exist but I think some teachers struggle with it because they're not necessarily confident especially with kids this bright. I think a lot of times they feel like this kid is is smarter than me, knows more than me, can't give them an edge, cause then, they'll just, you know, walk all over me. So, you learn that over time.

R: It's come up in some of my interviews that, again, when you are dealing with very bright kids, choosing to come to a small environment, that they might come with certain issues. Have you found that to be the case or not the case?

S: Well, absolutely, the case. But, in terms of whether it's a big situation, I don't know. I mean, I think, yeah, kids who are very high academic kids tend to have more
social issues in a comprehensive environment where it is not supported. Uh, and I
know a lot of kids who come here and say, "This is great. I can be me. I can like
learning. I can like, you know, reading and not feel like an outsider. Uh, and, what’s
interesting is a lot of kids have come here as someone who considered themselves to be,
you know, a well rounded, comprehensive - "I’m into sports. I’m into music. I’m into
whatever" – who say they don’t feel like they fit in here. I don’t buy that, I think what
they find is though it’s just too much of an academic environment for them. There’s
plenty of kids who are into everything but these kids have always kind of stood out in
their own circle as the academic. Now, they’re, all of a sudden, not the top academic,
and now find other excuses as to why they don’t feel like they fit in. So, I think there are
kids who come with baggage, who come with issues that have never been addressed,
because, you know what, they’ve never been a discipline issue, so, they’ve never been,
you know, seen as someone who needs help. Um, so they exist. I just, I wouldn’t say it’s
a high percentage of kids but I think there are kids that in an environment like this they
stand out.

**QUESTION 6:**

S: Uh, I think they do. I think they’re polite to each other, I think they’re polite
to teachers, I think they even kind of get on a nice rapport with certain teachers where
they’re almost more, I’ve heard some kids say, almost more like friends than teachers.
Um, comfort level? Again, I think a lot of that has to do with their own upbringing. I
think some kids are brought up where you don’t bring personal, and social, and home
issues into school. You don’t talk to anybody at school about that. It’s not their
business. Um, I think, I think a lot of kids are very comfortable approaching me. I think
though, even as approachable as I, as I am, I think there’s still that “it’s the principal”,
so, you know, the thought of coming in and meeting with the principal about anything,
no matter how friendly he is, is still difficult. But, again, I encourage them, I try to
support them. Like the young man that was just in here. You know, come and talk to me
about it. You know I’ll, you know, if there’s something I can do, great, if not, you
know, I’ll let you know that there’s not. But, please, you know, come in and let, you
know, let my door feel to you like an open door that you can come in. So, I do think that
exists.

**QUESTION 7:**

S: It’s beyond college prep. I mean, the whole curriculum is really taught, at
what we would consider, you know, in a comprehensive environment, at an honors
level. I mean, everything is. What was the second part of the question again?

R: Does it stress higher order thinking skills?

S: Oh, absolutely. I mean, the problem solving is part of our mission statement.
Collaboration, team building, um, I think that’s, a lot of times that’s what the kids will
tell you, is that, this isn’t like a regular classroom, I mean, seventy minute classes, it
better not be, where, you know, you’re just in there being told here’s the information,
now do something with it. You know, solve this problem, apply this formula, and do
forty five examples. They’re solving problems and applying them to real world situations.

R: Now, on that note, and then I will do the third part of the question, it’s also come out in my research in looking at small, stand alone magnet schools, that some schools, or administrators, stress AP. Others stress a college experience. Where do you fit in this personally and where does the school fit in?

S: Um, yeah, I think we’re in the middle. I think we’ve, I think we of all the, uh, other schools like us in this district, uh, have more AP opportunities than others. We are, do have a new school coming in that is, uh, implementing the IB Program. Um, you know, we never really thought we wanted to go that way because we’re mission driven. And if an AP course can meet the needs of our mission, great, but, if not, just to have it, to have AP just to have AP, doesn’t serve our needs. So, our English curriculum, for example senior year, can probably very easily be modified to be an AP English course, but, instead, they take opportunities to integrate, um, experiences that are going to prepare them for the professional world, um, you know, whether it be presentation skills, whether it be, um, you know, research, writing, you know, technical writings, whatever it is, they try to gear it more around that. So, we do have a balance of, uh, prioritizing the mission but not at the expense of saying AP doesn’t have any place here, it does, but where it does is selective.

R: And what’s your feeling on kids taking courses at the college? Do you do much of that?

S: We, they do. Um, there’s a lot of times that, I think, we find that the kids actually aren’t being challenged as much there as they would be here. Um, and they have been good about adapting. In one case, they actually doubled a course where the kids are actually taking two courses in one semester simply because they move through it so much faster than their typical community college kids. Um, we have to constantly be monitoring that. Um, so, in some sense, they may be getting a better experience here. But they’re not getting the actual, I mean, again, going out to the college, they’re getting the college experience in that regard. And that’s something we can’t duplicate within our own walls.

R: Do teachers’ expectations of their students match the rigor of the curriculum?

S: In most cases. I think there’s a lot of kids who would say, in four years, they’ve still never been challenged. You know, and there are others, who, first thing freshman year, are working harder than they’ve ever worked before because, you know, they’ve always been the best in their class, and the middle schools just love them, you know, and then they get here and, it’s like, “oh, wow”, you know. Plus, they’re taking forty credits a year, so, they’re, you know, working at, you know, at breakneck speed and taking a lot of work. Um, but they are still high performing. And, you know, they’ll be the ones who will come to me and say, you know, something’s either wrong with the teacher or something, if there’s a problem, if they’re getting, you know, an eighty eight. Cause, you know, “we’ve always been able to work harder and still get ninety twos,
ninety threes, ninety sevens”, you know, it’s almost like they just can’t conceive of
the fact that a course may just be so difficult and challenging that they can’t, um...

So, I think the teachers also recognize that, even in a school like ours, there are
going to times when you are going to have students who can’t keep up. And, in fact, I
have, there are times that I have to temper their expectations because when every student
is exceptional, when you have a couple of kids who struggle, they’re still exceptional
kids, but there’s a very easy opportunity to perceive these kids don’t belong here. “You
know, they should just go back to their home schools”. No, you need to recognize
they’re here because they deserve to be here. How are you reaching out to them? How
are you going that extra mile? And that’s something that I think has also evolved. These
teachers bend over backwards. They do everything they possibly can conceivably for
kids. But there are times that kids just don’t put in, they don’t reciprocate. When the
teacher’s working harder than the kid, to have the kid succeed, I think, you know,
there’s some concerns there. And there’s, and those situations are rare, but these
teachers work very hard to ensure that the kids, not just that they get good grades but
that they are proficient in the material, that they’re excellent in the material, that they
can apply it at the next level without any question.

R: What percent of your kids would you say are that bottom tier or not really at
the level of the curriculum?

S: Very small, very small, um, you know, I mean, in a typical class, I mean, five
to eight percent, maybe.

QUESTION 8:

S: Absolutely. I mean, I can’t tell you how many teachers probably never have
lunch, during lunch, because they’re with kids, they’re, and they’re scheduling, you
know, meets, and they’re scheduling, and these are on days even if when they teach five
out of five periods. They’ll throw out, you know, a granola bar and they’ll work with
kids, I mean, constant. And for any kid, to ever say at a conference or with a parent,
where, you know, to say the teacher’s never available, I’m the first person to step in and
defend them because, you know, I can’t name one teacher that does not make
themselves available to the kids if the kid asks. But the kid has to show some initiative.
A lot of times, they’re the ones, the teachers are the ones, who initiate it too, but, never
have I seen a kid turned away, ever.

QUESTION 9:

S: Drop out rate is non existent. Well, I shouldn’t say it’s non existent because
we do have kids who return to their home schools. So, they don’t drop out but they
withdraw from our program. Again, it’s a small percentage, but we have the kids who
are here for all the wrong reasons. They’re here because mom and dad made them come
here. Uh, we were talking about this earlier. They’re here because they kind of just want
to see if they like it. “You know, oh, it’s got great press, you know. It’ll look great on
my resume”, but they just have no interest in the focus and the mission. Um,
absenteeism very, very…the kids love coming to school. So, it’s very rare and the kids,
you know, hate missing a day because they know how much extra work they’re going to have to make up; so, very, very, minimal issue.

QUESTION 10:

S: Um, the, uh, the secretary calls, and our protocol, for parents, and it’s in our handbook, is to call by, uh, 9:00 am, to call in absences. By that time, she has gathered all of the homeroom attendance. I also run a first period attendance check. So, we can validate homeroom attendance. She gathers all the names, and, if we don’t have a message by then, she’ll make calls to the home to confirm absences. We require that every student bring in a note in. Uh, certain absences, we will require doctors’ notes to confirm, especially if it’s during like a mid-term or final exam period. We’ll require that they, if you’re not a doctor, you’re not excused. Um, as far as chronic, again, not a lot of chronic absenteeism, oh, and I’m sorry, I should mention also there is a, um, a system that automatically generates a letter at the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth day of absence; fifteen is the maximum allotted for a year. And, um, so the secretary also prints those out. There’s a standard letter that goes out and it states whether they’re at five, ten, or fifteen, um, and, at fifteen, their credits are withdrawn and then the attendance review committee goes through and determines, you know, if there’s appropriate documentation, well, we will reinstate the credit, but, we need to make sure you’re not going to be out, you know.

Chronic tardiness is a little different. I mean, driving privileges can be taken away, but, I have some students, that the reality is there’s almost nothing I can do that’s going to get the kid here on time. And, you know what, if they’re here before the end of homeroom, not that I overlook it, but I’ve got bigger fish to fry with that kid. So, I can tolerate it, um, but, there are also kids that come in late in first period and, if it’s the same first period class a couple of times, they’re late enough to the class that they’re actually absent. So, while they may not have been absent from school for five days, they might have been absent from that class for five days, and then notification is sent home about that.

R: How much of a problem is that here?

S: Not many. There’s not many but there are some.

QUESTION 11:

S: Um, excelling is, you know, uh, I don’t know that I would say that teachers generally make those kinds of calls. I mean, the majority of our students excel, so, it’s, you know: Something that I do, which is, I think, uh, a lot of parents, I didn’t even realize how much of an impact it actually makes, but, I initial every report card. I go through every report card and I have a, kind of a system, that’s kind of secret, about how I determine, I have stickers. And I have big stickers and little stickers. And so, there’s certain ones that get big ones and certain ones get small ones. Well, it’s basically my way of saying great job, uh, on the report card. Um, progress reports, the way we do progress reports, is it’s not just a number system where you just plug in a one for this, a
three for that. But every teacher is asked to put in something for every student and there’s also a comment field where they type in comments. And they do a great job, every marking period, of personalizing the comments for the individual students. So, a lot of times, four times a year, parents will get “keep up the great work”, you know, “I’ve seen lots of improvement”, “thank you for your hard work”, whatever it is, it’s in there, and it’s words, it’s verbal, it’s not just a one for excellent work.

Um, difficulty, teachers are always very good about communicating with parents about that. We have a personal improvement plan, or pupil improvement plan, system, a PIP system, that, um, is also helped to communicate with parents, let them know this is what the plan is for them to improve. Parents have to sign it. Um, that’s there. Um, and then the guidance counselors, from time to time, will, uh, will reach out based on my request, or parent phone call, or teacher request. Um, there are times that a parent will directly call a guidance counselor and the guidance counselors also do meet, relatively regularly, with the kids that they know are struggling just to kind of gage their progress.

R: And, now, what kind of communication do you have with the community, mostly parents I guess, uh, using technology or email? Is that used here?

S: Yeah, we have a website. I have a web blog. I mean, I don’t keep up with it as well as I would like to but I do have a web blog. We have a parent newsletter that goes out bi-monthly, and, in the off month, I have a letter that goes out usually with the report card, or progress report, or something of that nature. But the website is where a lot of the information is kept up to date.

QUESTION 12:

S: Curriculum, yes, the, we have an instructional council that meets monthly and we usually talk about a lot of the ideas, what we’re proposing, what we’re thinking, and then we’ll take that, throw it out to the whole faculty. Um, so, that’s, yeah, they’re absolutely part of that decision making.

Um, uh, budget, they don’t have a say in the dollar amounts, but they do their own ordering. So, in other words, they know, and I commend them to the hilt for this, they know that I have a figure that I’ve been given, they don’t know what that figure is, I do, so, what will happen, is, I’ll let them know “look, be frugal. Check with colleagues in other areas before you order twelve reams of, you know, graph paper, we may have thirty reams laying around. Um, you know, do that kind of thing”, but then they order, but then they have the opportunity to order their own product. It’s through a, you know, a streamlined, uh, you know, online system of ordering. Um, and they have special requests for equipment, special requests for supplies and resources, things of that nature, they’re very involved in that process. So, while they don’t have a say in the dollar amount, they have a say in what they request, and if I have questions, I meet with them and I’ll sit down with them and say, you know, I don’t know that I can, you know, pull this off this year but I can make it a priority for next year.
Um, the third, oh, discipline. They fill out their own discipline forms. Uh, they submit them to me and then I administer the discipline. But one area where they do have their own opportunity, uh, for discipline, is, I have a lunch detention that is, uh, streamlined part of, I have somebody, uh, assigned to that, every day. Teachers can assign a student to just to lunch detention without going through me. Now, you know, the first preference is, always, that you deal with it yourself. You want to give a kid detention, you keep them for detention. But, it’s possible, it really needs to be a little more immediate, and you can’t get to the kid til, you know, so you assign them a lunch detention for the next day. Um, that seems to, uh, to work. They don’t abuse it. Teachers don’t abuse it and make it, like, you know, you know, “I’m giving you lunch detention for the next two months”, um, so, in that regard, they do have a say. But anything that comes to my office, I deal with and then I give them feedback. The only other place where they might have a say is if it involves a student that’s in National Honor Society where there might be then some feedback where they’re asked for an opportunity to kind of explain it. But, we also don’t want kids to be held accountable for the rest of their life for maybe something silly they did as a freshman. So, there are times when I make the decision as to whether or not something goes any further than my office.

**QUESTION 13:**

S: Well, in house and out, yeah, out, yeah, I mean, you know. I don’t know if I ever really denied a teacher who had found a workshop that applies to their own PIP and their own advancement. Um, so, I can honestly say, I think, in that regard, and they are reimbursed for the cost and, you know, things. So, that, so, in that sense, yes, I think there’s great opportunity for them. In house, is, you know, we have, as a district, uh, a certain number of days built in. Some of the opportunities are district mandated. Some of them building, um, and, again, you know, I wish I had more time to really find a great staff development, but, a lot of times, they just need time to, to develop a common midterm, or update a curriculum, or, you know, make contacts in the community to beef up a particular pro…, you know, so, sometimes, the professional development is, and it’s kind of at their request, “can we just have a day, to work together, to do what we need to do?”. This year, I was able to also build in common time for department areas, subject areas, and I think that’s a tremendous benefit because they’re really taking some big steps, in certain areas, that they weren’t able to do when they couldn’t meet together.

R: How about professional development that’s offered by the district? Is it useful?

S: That you’d have to ask them about. I mean, I think that there are certain things that are and there are certain things that are a waste of time. Um, you know, we don’t have curriculum supervisors. We have teachers who are kind of lead teachers in that area that represent the district, and, I think, that there are times that what they do is effective and there are other times that I think that, again, the teachers view it as this was just a waste of a day. I think that’s going to happen no matter who plans it. You know, because, to a lot of teachers, “if I’m not, you know, able to sit and grade papers then it’s
a waste of my time.” Well, that’s not professional development. So, you know, you’re not going to please everybody that’s for sure.

QUESTION 14:

S: Well, I don’t think there’s any question about it. I mean, I think, you know, we’ve gotten a lot of good press this year. Um, you know, I just think it’s the pride in the parents especially, I mean, are just always talking about how fortunate they are, how thankful they are. Kids, I think, sometimes, I don’t know that they’d necessarily would be verbal about it, there are some who do, but, I think they’re all very happy with the education they’re getting and the opportunity that they’re getting. I think the teachers also recognize this is a special place to be, and, you know, I couldn’t be more proud of what we accomplish. I recognize that we are a specialized school. I recognize that we have a lot of the best kids academically in the county. But, we also, you know, in a lot of ways, have to step up it up a notch, to be able to meet their needs, and, sometimes, that’s more difficult than teaching in a comprehensive environment where the expectations are low, you know, or not great, you know, just improved, just make sure that half the kids pass. Well, you know, what, if we don’t have one hundred percent of the kids in advanced proficient, we’re disappointed in some ways, you know, what did we not do that we need to do or where do we need to focus our energy next year? So, I could, you know, again, I mean, I often times I think teachers and parents and even I think sometimes, you know, you’ve kind of died and gone to heaven. You know, um, but, as the sole administrator, also, I recognize that there’s a lot of work that goes behind it. It’s not a matter of just, “ah, they can take care of themselves. You know, they don’t need us.” Yeah, they do. Yeah, they do. And we work really hard to make sure that the kids are getting the best possible program they can get, and I do think it pays off. And I do think, whether they say it or not, that they’re proud of it, and certainly the parents are, and, you know, and certainly the faculty is too.
Appendix Q

Transcript: School D/Subject B
QUESTION 1:

S: Uh, personally, I don’t, I’m not aware of any. I mean, I, we did find out there was an alcohol incident a couple of years ago. Most of us didn’t even know it was going on. But, uh, apparently, it did happen. But that would be, to my knowledge, one in three years, one in six since I’ve been here.

R: Have you had any incidents of drug use, uh, weapons, or physical disturbances?

S: No, I don’t think so.

R: Why do you think that is?

S: Well, uh, first of all, the students compete to get in here. So, whether they personally were interested in coming here or not, their parents were. So, their parents, uh, have education as a high priority. I think it is a family value where they come from, um, they’re school oriented. The families are, I guess, civilized in some sense. You know, they’re, even if they’re financially disadvantaged, they’re little focused on family life. So, I think, uh, I think it really comes down to the families.

QUESTION 2:

S: I think it is, um, we don’t feel threatened by the students. You know, students don’t feel threatened by us. Uh, there’s this constant, uh, concern about external forces, partially because we are, we stick out. So, we feel like we might be vulnerable because our visibility to external attack. But, uh, so far, we’ve not seen anything.

R: Why do you think you’re liable to external attack?

S: Well, a lot of people don’t like this school, I mean, who don’t go here. Uh, they think that we’re snobby, intellectual, which we aren’t. Um, geeks, which we aren’t, and, um, if they have an ax to grind against that type of individual, there’s a lot of them here. There’s also some ethnic issues, you know, we have minorities represented here. I guess in disproportionate numbers.

R: But has anything like that ever actually happened?

S: I’m not aware of any explicit threat even.
QUESTION 3:

S: Um, pretty much all the students have very active lives outside of school. Uh, many are musicians and athletes. They, uh, join club teams or they play on varsity teams of their sending districts. Um, last year, we had an athlete of the year from [local town] for instance; was a Math and Engineering academy student here. Thought that was unusual. Um, they take dance classes. They, they, they’re involved, they’re very involved, with a lot of things. We have our activities here, um, they’re a little low-key. I mean, we have a chess team. We have, uh, a lot of like, kids go to robotics competitions. And then, once or twice a month, we have a social event like a, um, at a school dance or a class dance. And the faculty are there in the required requisite, uh, ratios and provide chaperoning. Things like, um, we have a drama club. They put on a play once a year. They have rehearsals after school. A teacher’s always there for that. Robotics Club.

R: How many clubs would you say, on average, you have?

S: Well, there’s, uh, clubs which are officially recognized and, you know, uh, teachers get compensation for advising them. They’re like class A and class B, depending on how intense they are. Um, there’s probably a dozen of those and then another, maybe a dozen or so, maybe less, informal clubs where the kids put upon some teacher just to hang out with them while they do something.

R: Now, do a large percentage of the students going to the school attend your clubs here? Or do they go back more so to their sending districts?

S: I think except for athletics and band, uh, they’re mostly doing things here. We don’t have a band and we don’t have athletics so they go back to their school.

R: And, now, how many students do you have here approximately?

S: Totally?

R: Hmm, mm.

S: Uh, on the order of 250.

R: And how many of those students would you say are participating in at least one activity?

S: Oh, I would say probably all but about twenty percent.

R: Are participating?

S: Yes.
R: Ok, excellent. And, now, in addition to teachers who have to be there, or teachers who are getting a stipend to be there, do many of your other teachers just voluntarily walk into activities and participate?

S: Um, walk in, no, but, uh, the students sometimes draft them and they're responsive to that.

R: They are responsive to that?

S: Yeah.

R: Can you give me an example of that of maybe where other teachers have gotten involved?

S: Well, like, last night for instance. Um, we have a teacher who gets a stipend to, uh, coach our science bowl. And, um, so, this teacher is a Biology teacher and there are a lot of Physics questions there. So, we arranged to have me do a practice session with the team where we focused on Physics questions. It turns out, she tells me, she's going to pay me for that. I didn't anticipate that. I didn't expect that. I mean, it's like, hey, it's my subject, it's our kids, you know, of course, I'll do this. Uh, the payment, out of her stipend, is, you know, icing on the cake at this point.

QUESTION 4:

S: Yes.

R: OK, um, and now I'm going to give you, I'm going to ask you a follow-up question. Do they, does the staff receive praise? Does it feel appreciated? Please describe.

S: Yes, um, especially if anything comes out where, you know, um, some teacher, or some, uh, discipline I guess, you might say, uh, gets recognition outside this school. We definitely feel that inside. We don't feel that, by the way, from the, um, superintendent's office. The district wants to, you know, how shall I put it, I think they're under a lot of, uh, political pressure to not have us be outstanding in other ways except, you know, winning robotics contests or something like that. And I'm not sure that they're even very proud of that. So, we never hear anything from the district if we win some sort of a state level wide, or national award even.

R: Why do you think that is?

S: Well, I think, I think, um, I've heard different things. I don't know why that is but, um, part of it is the, uh, the notion that the sending districts think that we're taking their best students and, uh, the superintendent sort of has to justify that as, "well, not your best students, only your geeks who want to become engineers." Right, but then the geeks who want to become engineers, you know, win first and second place in a national Latin contest and that's an embarrassment to the district and they don't want to explain that to, let's say, a local high school's Latin team who got beat out by these two kids, or
something. Right. So, I think, they really don’t like to admit that, um, kids come here because they’re good kids. Uh, they’ve heard that the school has a good reputation and, even if they don’t want to be engineers, they’re willing to put up with that in order to be here. That’s definitely something the district does not want to have out in public.

R: And how bout administration here in, within the building? Do you feel supported by that and can you give an example?

S: Sure. I mean, there’s, uh, I mean, we have our regular staff meeting once a month, um, [the principal] always takes time to recognize individuals who have done something unusual and outstanding resulted at a high level of achievement, um, and, even if not, I mean, he also arranges to have, um, lunches for us and appreciation dinners at certain times of the year and so on.

R: Excellent, and a follow-up to that; still question 4. Is the morale of the staff good? And describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high.

S: Uh, the morale of the staff is very high. I mean, of course we complain about things, right, but, in the end, if we really think about it, we should just keep our mouth shut. We’re much better off here. All of us who have taught in other situations recognize that this is a much better environment and we are well supported by our administration. And, um, we really don’t have anything to complain about. It’s just human nature to complain about little things.

R: Sure. Now, why do you think you really shouldn’t complain about working here?

S: Well, having taught in a, uh, regular high school, uh, the fact that the students, or at least their parents, are motivated, and, generally speaking, uh, a call home will result in some behavioral changes observable in the classroom. Um, you know, that sort of thing. Uh, most…that’s not even necessary. There’s peer pressure amongst the students to perform well. Um, we do a lot of teamwork and they keep on each other’s case because the team product, uh, the highest possible quality. So, it’s very rewarding. You feel really good about the fact that the kids are really achieving things.

R: And, now, are there actually any activities that help keep the morale high or is it more a question of the working conditions?

S: Well, I suppose you could say that these dances and things are aimed at that, but I’m, I don’t know if they have any real effect. If we didn’t have the dances, I think that morale would be the same. And, amongst the teachers, the dances are more of a nuisance; something to complain about actually.

QUESTION 5:

S: Well, most of the teachers that I know, I don’t teach freshmen, I don’t know what that’s like, but, by the time the students are sophomores, um, I think we treat them
sort of as peers. Um, it’s a, at the sophomore level, I teach sophomore pre-engineering, right. So, I look upon them all as beginning engineers not as students I’m trying to draw something from their head, right. So, it’s a lot of coaching and, um, of course, I do expect them to do their share, but, by and large, they do that, and, um, I think that’s the main thing. We, each year, we have more rules that I think are restricting students; mostly, those have to do with security issues and accountability, uh, physical accountability, and so on and so forth. We didn’t used to have that. I mean, basically, they treated the kids like adults. And, for the most part, the kids responded and behaved as adults.

R: Excellent. Now how bout teachers and administrators, towards one another, are they respectful?

S: Yes, I think so. Yes, I don’t have any counter examples.

R: Can you give me an example of where you’ve seen teachers and administrators being respectful to one another?

S: Uh, respectful is kind of a broad term. I mean, I’ve seen teachers willing to help other teachers out. I’ve, uh, I mean, it’s not unusual for someone who’s off duty to be walking along the hall and a teacher sticks their head out and says “can you watch the class while I make a quick trip to the facilities”. You know, there’s never any question about that. There’s nobody that’s too busy to help anybody out. Um, by and large, I think it is a very supportive kind of, uh, relationship we have with each other, and respect, of course, is a big part of that.

QUESTION 6:

S: Um, they seem to. I mean, well, first of all, there’s, you know, I’ve heard, I’ve heard teachers say that there are a number of cliques that are sort of just dropped deep in the, uh, among the students. Personally, I’m not really aware of that. Um, when they’re working in groups in my class, they seem to work pretty well even if, um, they’re working with someone they normally wouldn’t hang out with. Um, it is part of the, you know, the real world work environment so I suck that up a lot of times. I know which students don’t generally seek out group activities and I put them in with some other group and they have to, they have to do it. Um, there’s a certain amount of, you know, childish disrespect in that regard but I don’t see much of it outside of school, I mean, outside of the classroom, like, during lunch or these other activities.

R: Excellent. Now do you know if students comfortable when, say, speaking to you as a teacher or others?

S: Apparently, they do because they don’t hesitate to do it.

R: OK, how bout towards administration?
S: That I can't say too much about. I mean certainly the teachers are comfortable speaking to [the principal]. He's very welcoming, um, and not to say he doesn't have his own opinions about things, but he's always willing to hear your opinion and, uh, to consult you in something that affects you. And, um, I guess the students are pretty much the same way. I don't know.

QUESTION 7:

S: Well, it is a college prep curriculum; it's a pre engineering curriculum. By and large, um, the non engineering courses in Civics, Social Studies, and modern languages, World Languages are also very high level. Uh, they get involved with a lot of social issues and so on and so forth, whereas in Engineering, they tend to stick to the quantitative sorts of stuff. But again, we challenge them to, uh, you know, execute principles of design and things that are a little beyond just applying the formula.

R: Now would you find that the curriculum or the courses do you have a high percentage of, say, AP, average college prep, and/or remedial courses? What would be...

S: If we had any remedial courses, they're sort of handled at the freshman level and I'm not too familiar with that. Uh, they used to accept kids in here that they would teach Algebra I, II, I believe. But I don't think we do that anymore. So, and I don't know what's going on in languages, um. Sciences are all pretty aggressive. Uh, everyone is required to take an AP Science their senior year. And, up to this year, it's sort of broken up evenly between Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Uh, it depends on whether the kids like Math or not but which of those they take.

R: Do you have any students actually taking courses here at the college?

S: Uh, they haven't, well, first of all, yes, I mean, there's a track that involves programming and, uh, yeah, I guess some CAD stuff they used to go over there for. There's also a short story course they take and probably a couple of other things. Uh, do we have anybody doing college level work over there? I'm not aware of that. I think it happens from time to time, it's an individual study thing. And, uh, I just really don't know what the master plan is.

R: You don't have any students taking, say, Science courses over at the college?

S: Our courses are much higher level than the Science courses over there. I mean, if I were teaching, if I were teaching freshman Physics at [state university], I would not have the level of class that I have here with the seniors in AP Physics. I could not be so lucky. Our students go from here to honors programs in, you know, the top-notch engineering schools all over the country including MIT, Harvard, Princeton. I mean, you know, what are the chances I would be able to teach Honors Physics at Princeton? Not too good. So, I get better students here.
R: And, um, oh, let me ask you a follow-up question to that. Why do you think it is that you no longer offer say, remedial courses, like Algebra, to the freshmen?

S: Uh, the problem there is, that, uh, so much of the follow on courses depend upon literacy in mathematics, and actually, in English, so that, um, they just can’t ever get caught up again. If they come in behind the eight ball, they’re always a year behind, and then they don’t fit into, because we’re a small school we don’t have a lot of flexibility. You can’t take, um, Chemistry at any of three different times. You know, there’s only one time you can take junior Chemistry. And, you know, you have to be a junior or it doesn’t fit the rest of your schedule. So, I think it’s mostly a scheduling constraint. But it’s also then these kids then really feel inadequate.

Uh, yeah, well, they do have to take a proficiency test to get in here. So, in that sense, if they are not able to meet sort of the minimum math, literacy, or the English literacy, then they have, they’re probably not going to get here in the first place. Right, and then, I think in the past, we did, if the person could pass one of those and not the other then we sort of accommodated that in a way. But I think, nowadays, they have to pass both of the tests.

[Tape recorder stops working. When discovered, researcher and subject were discussing subsequent questions. Researcher and subject returned to discuss question 7 and beyond]

R: And now do teachers’ expectations of their students match the rigor of the curriculum?

S: Absolutely. And that I think then, when we were talking, uh, we said that, uh, uh, we do things like, uh, team work where we try to pair weaker students with stronger students. Not necessarily the strongest, uh, so there’s a mutual learning experience going on, and we make sure that all of us, because we don’t compromise the course if a student is having a problem.

R: OK, now. I think I also asked you, what percentage of the kids would you say here are OK with the curriculum and what percentage need a little extra help?

S: And I think I said, um, the extra help, the serious extra help, is maybe fifteen percent, ten to fifteen percent a year.

**QUESTION 8:**

S: Oh, yeah, that was the one where I said that, uh, I, personally, don’t seem to have to do that very frequently, but, uh, I’ve seen other teachers spend lots of time with students.

R: Why is that?

S: Why, do you mean why do they do it?
R: Yeah.

S: Well, they all want the students to succeed. Right, and, uh, they also don’t want to dumb down the course to use the phrase, right. So we try to make the courses as, um, aggressive as we can in terms of presenting new and abstract material, and then when the class seems to falter, then we stop, and some of the kids drop off before that and that’s when we need to do these extra things.

R: OK, and how bout social/emotional issues? Do teachers…

S: Yeah, that’s the one where I ducked that question. I don’t have any real good information. Personally, I don’t get involved, uh, with social/emotional issues because I don’t feel qualified to do it and I refer those to the counseling or the nurse.

QUESTION 9:

S: Oh yeah, the drop out rate, we talked about that. Uh, usually, perhaps one or two freshmen will drop out, go back to their home school. Uh, these are kids who passed the test OK and got in, but didn’t really want to be here in the first place, didn’t really want to be separated from their friends, their parents made them come here so on and so forth. Sometimes, uh, we lose one person at the sophomore level as well, but, after that, they’re here to stay. And there is no drop out rate.

R: OK, how bout student absenteeism?

S: Uh, we monitor that pretty closely and, um, if you, like I said, if we know there’s a problem, and either we or the counselors, uh, contact the parents. Usually, that problem goes away rather quickly.

R: Have you noticed that has been a problem here?

S: In general, no, I mean, there’s always a student or two that you need to watch.

QUESTION 10:

S: I don’t know. I mean, we just report it to the counseling office.

R: But again, you’re saying that it’s not much of an issue?

S: It’s not much of an issue and they keep track. We are supposed to notify the counseling office if a student is missed five classes or more, or ten classes or more, and then once they’ve lost fifteen then it’s an administrative problem, right. OK.

R: Now have you ever personally called a parent about this issue?

S: Not about absenteeism. You know.
QUESTION 11:

S: Um, the teachers, if the students are not handing in work or, there’s a, they don’t seem to be studying because there’s a drop off in the grades, test scores, or something like that, usually, the teachers will make that call. Uh, they’ll usually call during their prep period or some free time during the day. Uh, by and large, nowadays, we call the parent’s cell phone number. Uh, if we call at home and leave a message on the answering machine, you never know who’s going to erase it first; so, in any case, the point of trying to speak directly to the parents. Um, and what was the other thing?

R: Um, both struggling students as well as excelling students.

S: Yeah, I guess we’re a little remiss on that. I don’t recall ever having called a parent and said, “you know, your kid just really did outstandingly well on this test”. Um, we do say that if we see them in the hall or, uh, some other occasion, but, I can’t say that I’ve actually made a call and said that, you know, so and so has done really well. Uh, there is a place on the progress reports to mark if someone has done poorly but is now turning around, right, so I have marked that a couple times. But, I must admit, I can’t, I can’t claim to have made a call.

R: Sure. Now, do you use other means of communications to communicate with the parents?

S: We use a lot of email. Uh, and, yeah, I guess, now I didn’t think of that, I have sent email to parents to report that their son had done something unusually well.

R: So how often would you say you call versus email?

S: I hardly ever call. I mean, the students, the students are technical and mostly their parents are as well.

QUESTION 12:

S: Uh, budget, minimally. I mean, we place orders and then we argue about why we need this stuff, but, uh, the level of budgeting and the allocation, uh, I don’t think we have anything to say about that. Discipline, uh, we’re involved, I would call, this is a case that I would call responsible but not authorized. In other words, there’s not much we can do about it except refer it to the principal and, if the principal doesn’t take steps that we thought would have been appropriate, so what. So, in other words, all we, all we do is we point out where we feel a disciplinary action should be taken, what exactly that is. It’s not usually our call.

R: How much of a problem is discipline here?

S: Well, I mean, how much, first of all, it doesn’t involve more than, what, five percent of the students at the top; so, in other words, one person per class or something
like that, um, two people per class maybe. And discipline has mostly to do with, you know, motivational issues. I mean, it’s not, we don’t see discipline because of destruction or fighting or, you know, throwing food. I mean, we just don’t see that stuff.

R: OK, and, now, um, curriculum? How much, uh, involvement do teachers have in curriculum?

S: Well, we pretty much write our own curriculum because we’re writing, uh, a curriculum that pretty much transcends the state requirements. So, all we have to do is make sure we cover the state requirements in our discipline and then we can make it as aggressive as we believe the students can deal, and, uh, like, for instance, in the AP Physics, if I were to write a curriculum that, you know, um, meets state standards in science, like, we’d be done with that in two weeks. On the other hand, the AP organization does audit those courses. So, we need to make sure that we cover the content and we follow the procedures of the AP organization. So, that, but that’s up to us, I mean, you know, the, I mean, we’re the experts in those subjects not the administration.

QUESTION 13:

S: Um, there’s certainly ample opportunities for staff development in-house. I think the district seems to have adopted a policy that, uh, they would rather train us in-house than send us to expensive schools somewhere else. Um, I don’t know, I mean, there is the opportunity to take training outside but it’s not trivial. I mean, for one thing, most of that happens early summer, we’re still in school. So, unless, uh, you can find a course that is mid-summer or late summer, um, you know, you’re not going to be able to enroll in. Uh, I have taken courses outside as part of a specialized curriculum in pre-engineering but that was, more or less, prescribed by the curriculum. They needed to have teachers trained in that curriculum so I’ve done that. I’ve not ever selected a course, like, for instance, preparation in AP Physics, that happens down at the University of Delaware. I’d like to go to one of those sometime. But I never, uh, mostly because it happens when we’re still in school, we have a very late schedule compared with other places.

R: And, now how bout this in-house staff development? Um, do you feel that the district, uh, professional development is useful to you?

S: Ha. Well, they have, I mean, they try. They have a lot of issues, you know, and they try to satisfy a lot of people. It’s a one size fits all and, uh, so, you know, I guess twenty to twenty five percent of it I find really helpful and the rest of it is something you just do.

R: What do you think would make it more helpful?

S: I don’t know. I mean, after awhile, you know, unless you’re deciding to teach a new course, I mean, you know your subject, you’ve learned to deal with the kids, uh, you have some techniques for dealing with the parents and you’ve become acquainted
with the administration. I'm not sure what new training and staff development you need. Unless, like, for instance, you teach Physics, I teach Classical Physics so nothing new has happened there since 1905. I don't need a refresher course in Physics. Uh, Biology, maybe they should, you know, maybe they have more need for that, the languages, most of the languages are not evolving so rapidly, so, I'm not sure that all of the training that's required by the state is really useful. It would be nice, uh, to be able to say, well, look, I've met this in some other way, and I don't need to go to this training as such; not an option.

R: And, now, another question for you in that vein. How much professional development is down here at the school where one teacher provides professional development for the other teachers?

S: Um, I think there, well, we have a large number of in-service days, you know, like eight, which is more than most other schools. They usually have one or two or those that provided workshops with one teacher teaching others.

R: What have been some of the subjects if you don't mind me asking?

S: Uh, team working, uh, how to use a drawing program, uh, refresher course in Statistics, you know, those kinds of things. They're things that sort of help you, you know, maybe, well, integration of technology in the classroom, that's a very popular one, right. Somebody will find some new program or some widget which is fun to use and they'll give a course and you can go and find out how to use that in your class.

QUESTION 14:

S: Uh, we're very proud of this school. Uh, how do we demonstrate it? Well, I don't know. Ha.

R: How do you demonstrate it?

S: I'm not sure that I do. I mean, um, well, I speak very highly of it anytime anybody asks, uh, where I teach and stuff like that and, of course, anytime we win an award, I send an email around to all my relatives. But, um, you know, do I, you know, do I give a testimonial in church or something? No, I don't generally talk about the accomplishments of the school. We do try to get things in the newspaper from time to time. And sometimes those get squashed, I guess, by, uh, the administration, as I said earlier, but, uh, I don't know, it's just, uh, a little club. It's, like, you know, we are who we are, it's a little like a team, and, uh, the students and the staff together, you know, are really, uh, really happy to be here, and, uh, really supportive of each other. I, particularly, I like to have the alums come back and visit my classes and tell us, uh, you know, what college life is like based upon the preparation they had here; how that differs from their roommate who is, who, for instance, didn't have that special training that our students get and how they're struggling with their engineering classes and our students are coasting along for the first couple of years. Now, you feel really good about that. I mean, you know, it's like, I guess its working. You know.
R: Excellent. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate this.
Appendix R

Transcript: School D/Subject C
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL D/SUBJECT C

QUESTION 1:

S: Um, well, drugs, alcohol, weapons, I have no recollection of any occurring at [school name]. Uh, the last one was?

R: Physical disturbances, fights, things of that nature.

S: Um, as far as fights go, um, I don’t think in the last couple of years there have been no what I would call fights. Uh, there have been, I guess, horsing around and physical contact but I wouldn’t call them, uh, well, there wasn’t animosity or malice. Uh, a couple of years ago, uh, you know, this was probably five to eight years ago, uh, there may be one or two, you know, I, one or two incidences where there would be fights. But, uh, I would say, recent history, uh, there would be zero.

R: Why do you think that is?

S: Um, well, I think, I think the nature of a small high school, I think research has shown, you know, I can say, as far as this school goes, that in a small school, enrollment is, uh, approximately 250, everybody gets to know each other. And, uh, it’s just that then everybody uh developments a trust or, uh, at least an acquaintance of everybody. So, um, things work themselves out I guess. Uh, you know, I think fights, uh, are when people are alienated or they bear grudges. Uh, I think, um, cooperation and friendship is a big attribute or something, uh, major benefit derived from a small school atmosphere.

QUESTION 2:

S: Yeah, I think it’s a, you know, it’s, I think that it would be an understatement. Uh, I think, uh, one characteristic of the school has been the open lockers and there’s no need to hide things. People, uh, I see a number of people, people are always borrowing things from each other, people telling other students “Oh, go into my locker. Take this out. Take that out”, uh, so, people are very friendly. Uh, and, uh, you know, treat, uh, pretty much treat each other’s property with respect. And they, uh, they borrow things and they return things. And, uh, um, so that’s, uh, I think, is characteristic of the open atmosphere at this particularly school.

QUESTION 3:

R: Question 3 is a three prong question. I’ll break it up. In what type of co and extracurricular activities are students involved and is it a large percentage of the student body?

S: OK. By the nature of this school, we have no, um, uh, athletic, uh, activities. Everything is, uh, academic or cultural or social. Uh, strictly, we have no, uh, athletic activities. Um, so there’s, I think everybody is involved, uh, with some extracurricular
activities. Um, there’s chess team, math team, science teams, uh, there’s a lot of, uh, you know, social charity, uh, organizations like key club, uh, helping, uh, unfortunates, doing charity work, fundraising, a lot of fundraising efforts, um, and we, uh, have, uh, I guess these, uh, individual clubs. I think, uh, I forgot the exact name for it, gay rights, uh, and, uh, so, there’s also a religious club that meets and prays at school.

Uh, so, um, we have, uh, an open tolerance, and I would, I mean, in other settings, a lot of these, uh, small select groups would be victims of persecution or prejudice. Uh, there’s pretty much open, there is open tolerance of all these, uh, unique groups. And I think that’s a characteristic of, you know, everybody here, because of their, uh, intelligence or intelligence level, they’re unique or they’re, I think, different from the ordinary students. And because of their strangeness, and probably because they’ve been picked on in the past, um, they’re conscious of that and they’re tolerant of each other, and they are understanding of each other, and, and, also, of, their, each other’s beliefs.

R: So you would say a large percentage of the students are involved in, at least, something?

S: Oh, Yes, I think, uh, I think, uh, that’s, the spirit of the school is, uh, a feeling of camaraderie. Uh, to, uh, work in activities, be with their friends, and, so, at this age, uh, they, I think they, a large part of them need to be with other students and work together on different activities.

R: And now the last part of question 3. Can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S: I think, uh, well, it’s a requirement.

R: Right. I guess I should, I should clarify the question. In addition to the faculty advisors, is there a culture here, or what is the culture here in terms of, let’s say I’m another teacher and I want to come in and participate in your activity?

S: Oh, yeah. I think, um, there’s the interest. Uh, teachers, other teachers are involved in many of these, uh, curricular activities, even though they’re not paid, uh, because they’re interested in the activities and also they’re interested in their students. They want to see what their students are involved in, uh, because, um, because it’s a small school, we, many teachers have these students, sometime, during the four years and you get to know everybody. So, um, it’s quite often, uh, you know, all the teachers eventually teach all the students. And so, it’s very common, uh, some of these activities, uh, require, many of these activities require, uh, additional chaperones, I should say, because, generally, there’s a requirement that, uh, there should be one adult, or teacher, for every ten students. And, so, sometimes, you have activities where you have twenty, thirty, fifty students, and, and, it is quite common to ask each other for help. And, and, so this is it, it’s you helping other advisors because, uh, one reason, you know, that they’re going, you need their help later on in your activity. So, uh, there’s a lot of fellowship.
Uh, and there's a lot, there's a big closeness, in, among the faculty. Uh, we have, uh, a common lunch period and even though we’re from several disciplines, we eat together, we talk, um, about, you know, family and other things together. So, there's a closeness among the faculty that, when a faculty member needs help, other people are more than willing and happy to chip in, and we’re also interested in our students and, um, how they’re doing. And, uh, it’s also an interest to see how they’re doing outside of class. Uh, you see another side of the students.

QUESTION 4:

R: This is also multi-pronged so I’ll break this up. Is the administration readily available and supportive to the staff? Does the staff receive praise? Does it feel appreciated? Please describe.

S: Well, in a small school, we have only one chief administrator and, so, he's, uh, this administrator is very much, uh, always, uh, mingling with the students and the staff and involved in, uh, in the activities that are going on. Uh, in fact, I think, sometimes to the detriment of his paperwork and, uh, and, uh, any supervisor has a lot of paperwork, deadlines, and, uh, sometimes, he gets, he falls behind in his own paperwork. Uh, so, I think, uh, and I think, uh, you know, that it provides a climate of students are interested and, uh, if they see the principal, uh, heavily involved in the activities. They feel, they don’t feel any inhibitions to go up and talk to the principals about problems, or, uh, any issues, or getting permission to do different things and, so, it develops a closeness with the students to have ready accessibility.

So, the staff, um, sees that. The staff also sees that the principal is interested in what's happening and, uh, it does, uh, so I can say, that the immediate supervisor here, the administrator is very accessible and, uh, and, uh, there's a, you know, two way relationship here. You know, he definitely, uh, heaps praise for, uh, people going out of their way of contributing or volunteering and he, uh, buys coffee or, and, uh, doughnuts quite often to many of these activities where, especially activities where we’re not paid extra. Uh, in other school districts, I know, by contract, they're paid for, uh, extracurricular activities or doing things extra. Uh, here, by contract, we're not paid extra but he sees this contribution of good will and he, uh, I mean, he does what he can to, uh, lighten things up and, uh, shows his appreciation.

R: Excellent, and, now, the last part of question 4. Is the morale of the staff good? Describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high.

S: Well, I think, again, the morale is, uh, pretty good and I think, uh, the things that helps, one thing that demonstrates that is that, um, you know, the staff, on it's own, holds, uh, parties, uh, birthday, special birthday parties. The secretary turned sixty and they had a special, uh, celebration for her, uh, we have a sunshine club that takes care of special events for individual, uh, staff members, sending flowers, or condolences, or what not. Um, and, uh, we have, we host special things just, just, uh, it’s time, like, soup day. You know, it’s no special occasion, let’s just hold soup day, just take it together,
right, bring some hot lunch soup, and sharing it. Uh, we've had other occasions where, uh, to celebrate other peoples', uh, award or good performance, we, the staff would have a potluck lunch and, uh, so, here's, you know, and many staff members, most staff members, make a special effort to bring a very nice potluck entree. And, so, people take pride in that. They share recipes. I mean, this isn't, there's no requirement here, this is just the fellowship and love among the staff, among each other, and, uh, the respect we show for each other, the care, and, so, this we do among ourselves.

And, you have, uh, many to senior, more experienced, uh, faculty, uh, look out. well, they provide, uh, some leadership in this area, initiating these events, or suggesting it. And, also, I think, uh, in terms of mentorship of the new staff members, uh, helping cut, showing the way, uh, how things are done here, supposedly should be done, and or expediate certain things. That, you know, the staff is, are, always watching each other's back, so to speak, and helping each other out to minimize the anguish, or whatever, and increase and accelerate the learning curve.

QUESTION 5:

S: Well, um, I can tell the students are respectful to the teachers is that, uh, I walk down the hall, not only my students say hello to me and, uh, but when they leave class, they say "have a good day", or "it was a good lesson", but, what strikes me most in this school, is that I have a lot of students, whom I never had in my class, yet, uh, say hello to me and, uh, and wish me well. Uh, you know, since I don't even, I don't know, or I've never had, or, you know, no reason to have connection with, so, I see a certain amount of care and respect by, uh, you know, strangers I would say, or by people unaffiliated with me directly. So, it's one thing to have, you know, your own students say hello to you but, it's a, I think it's really novel to have, uh, you know, students who are not in your class say hello to you. And, then, uh, my alumni, students that I've had in class for a couple, several years ago, they still, you know, come by and say hello, and they, and, uh, make an effort to, uh, establish, continue communications or relationships after they left, after they graduated, after they, you know, even several years afterwards. And, uh, I think that another issue is the alumni. We have a lot of alumni, during their holidays, from school, come by, unannounced, and, sometimes, maybe, unwanted but they love to come back, and they love to say hello, and they want to, they really feel like this is their second home. Uh, if not their first home, so, I see that, uh, yeah, I see that attraction.

R: How bout respect, teachers and administrators, towards students?

S: I think, um, uh, I see the respect comes in the caring. Uh, we care about the performance and, you know, one sign a teacher doesn't care is, you know, it's, uh, quitting time, it's, you know, the end of the day, and people just jump out the door. You have a lot of teachers who, uh, stay behind, uh, who work with the students, uh, tutoring, lunchtime, tutoring sometimes before class, after class, um, that shows a respect for the students. Working to perfect your lessons when students are having trouble; uh, you know, working, you know, reworking the exam, reworking the lesson, uh, trying to become a better teacher. Uh, you know, uh, that shows, I think, respect for the students,
caring, respect for their profession, respect for their job, and, uh, and, the students, uh, are the beneficiaries of all this, this respect.

Uh, I think a disrespect is when teachers don’t care for the students. So, I think the respect comes from teachers caring for their job, trying to be good teachers, uh, trying to improve communications, trying to improve performance even though people could say “well, I put in my time and that’s it”. You know, and, there are some teachers who do that, but very few here at this particular school. Uh, the vast majority puts in, I think, uh, an extra effort, uh, and it goes beyond the clock time, uh, to be the best teacher they can, to help out as many students as they can, uh, to maximize, uh, student performance. And I’m just not satisfied with, well, you know, just not satisfied with the results, they’re looking for excellence. And, so, there’s a lot of shortcuts, there’s opportunity for short cuts, and I don’t see the teachers taking those short cuts, or, infrequently, taking short cuts.

QUESTION 6:

R: Do students feel comfortable when speaking to teachers and administration?
Do you greet each other outside of class?

S: Yeah, I think, um, they’re comfortable talking to the teachers. I think, um, uh, teachers, uh, the older teachers and people, who have been here for a while, have a reputation, uh, and, you know, students are conscious of the teachers reputation, and I think, everyone, uh, I believe, has a reputation for being helpful and receptive to comments. And, um, you know, I have no problem, you know, you give an exam and sometimes the grades turn out, well, they’re not all As, and, you know, but I have no problem. You know, students don’t hesitate to say “well, I made a mistake” or “you know, I didn’t read it correctly” or, you know, and I, you know, I listen to the students. Um, I don’t bark back. And, you know, it’s not a knee jerk reaction, well, I’m right and you’re wrong. And, I listen, or it’s something I didn’t see, or, you know, um, you know, I think, uh, there is that communication. I think teachers, uh, do listen to the students or, teachers, students are aware that teachers do listen to their comments. And I think students are not afraid to talk to teachers if they know that they’re going to be listened to. And they are afraid if, or, teachers are hesitant, students are hesitant if they know, well, the teacher’s not listening or you’re just getting a knee jerk reaction. And, uh, stuff like that. And, so, I would say that, you know, on the whole, teachers take the time to listen to the students and, if they are legitimate concerns, address them.

Uh, and, you know, I think, uh, you know, as a parent, you know, having my own children, one of my concerns, having more than one child, you know, the key thing that’s always stuck in my mind is trying to be fair to both children. When one child demands one thing, am I being fair to both? You know, I can easily give into one but am I being fair to the other? And, you know, when you’re a teacher, you know, one of the concerns here is not playing favorites; being fair to all the students in the class. So, that is one of my concerns and, so, and so, I have a policy if I do something for one, I do it for everybody. And, you know, to try to minimize, it’s human nature to have
favorites, or, to, you know, so I try to implement policies, you know, to be fair and, uh, to everybody.

R: And you would say the kids are responding to you positively?

S: Yeah, I would say, yeah, the kids are, I think, they appreciate that. They respect that. And they are aware of that. Uh, so, I think, uh, you know, I've learned, you know, I've learned from experience, uh, that, you know, you get this respect if you...I try as early as possible in the school year to tell them what my expectations are. If they live up to my expectations, then I'm willing to, you know, uh, you know, be more accommodating to their request. All right. So, you meet my standards and then, you know, you meet what my expectations are or what I'm asking for then I'm, you know, but that comes first. And then I'm more than happy to, you know, listen or give you more leniency or whatever your question may be. So, I think, uh, all of this comes from, uh, establishing, uh, the teacher establishing their expectations early on. And, uh, you know, and, also, they have to be a model, I believe it's important that the teacher has to be a role model, or to illustrate that behavior or that level of performance. Uh, so, uh, it's a, I think, students, especially teenagers, are very sensitive to hypocritical behavior, say one thing and do something else. So, you know, why, you know, set a rule and I should, you know, I should, you know, be able to follow it too.

R: Now, how bout student to student? You were talking about this I think a little while ago. How is the interaction between students or among students I should say.

S: Well, I think, uh, relationships between students are at all levels because you have, uh, you have, one of our chief concerns in a school like this is that, uh, the male-female relationship, some of them are, uh, too intimate. Uh, and so, uh, you know, we have a certain responsibility to, uh, prevent, uh, relationships from becoming too intimate at least in our presence. Or, you know, uh, to remind them of, you know, proper behavior at least in public, uh, and what's appropriate for public behavior. Uh, we have a dress code, uh, and so, what was the original question again?

R: Do they greet each other outside of class?

S: The relationship between students, I think, uh, you know, occasionally you have some friction or fights over a certain aspect, uh, certain item, uh, and, you know, people, uh, I think, uh, you know, they're pretty respectful. I think, uh, there are some cliques and groups, I think the teacher, you know, tries to promote, uh, harmony or, uh, conflict resolution. And, uh, and the purpose of, you know, experienced teachers rotate groups, uh, provide opportunities for people to work with other people, uh, and, uh, promote tolerance. So, there's occasionally some friction between certain students and others, uh, and or those people with especially abnormal behavior can be feel ostracized or made fun of and I think most teachers are cognizant of that and try to, you know, remind students of, you know, what is proper behavior and to show tolerance. And that everybody is at least a little bit different. Uh, and, yeah, in a school like this, everybody is, at least, a little bit different. And some people are more different than others, act more abnormally than others. Uh, and, so, we want to, uh, practice, you know, tolerance, uh,
restraint, give everybody opportunity. Uh, so, it does, there is some, uh, dissoning, I guess, of certain students by others.

QUESTION 7:

R: And I'm going to break this one up. Is the curriculum college prep minded? Does it stress higher order thinking skills?

S: Yeah, I think by the nature of this school, by definition, uh, this is college prep and, so, the expectation here, at least at this time, uh, that everyone goes to college; in fact, goes to above average college. In fact, uh, we would, the faculty would actually say that there's too much focus on the Ivy League schools. I mean, a dozen schools, or two dozen schools is the main focus of most of the students, vast majority of students, and that's too much. There are a thousand colleges out there or several thousand colleges. There are several hundred good schools out there not just the two dozen to focus on, and, so, uh, if anything, there's too much focus, or obsession, about the Ivy Leagues. There's too much Ivy League obsession. And, uh, so, [mumbled] everyone, if anything, there's too much obsession with the Ivy Leagues. And, uh, you know, everybody has their, and, going into one may be good for bragging but really may not be in the best educational benefit of each student.

R: Now, whether or not kids go to an Ivy League or not, your curriculum, you're saying, is college prep or higher than college prep?

S: Well, I don't know what is higher than college prep.

R: Well, I guess, I'll rephrase. Do you have many remedial courses, basic college prep, honors, AP, college courses? How do you work that here?

S: Um, I would say everybody is college prep. Uh, we don't have, uh, we used to have, uh, remedial classes, uh, in math, or lower track classes in math. And, uh, at this, we try to tell students that this is our entrance requirement, entrance data on math, and that you're supposed to take, uh, well, the recommendation that you take remediation before you come in, in, September. And, so, we don't have any remediation classes per say. Everything is at grade level or higher, and, so, we provide a lot of opportunities for advancement. We essentially have no remediation classes. And so you're either at grade level or you're above grade level, and many students are not just one level but two levels ahead. And the, the principal and guidance goes through torture trying to customize everyone's schedule to give them all the benefit of as many advanced classes as they can. Uh, so, everybody is college prep and, you know, and many take, uh, several AP classes and not just one level, sometimes two levels above their, uh, grade level. And, uh, so, you know, that's basically it. Everyone's prepared for college. You know, so, I think, statistically, maybe only one or two students who go to community college out of our class each year, right. The rest go to four year college. Everyone goes to four year college, right.

R: Do teachers' expectations of their students match the rigor of the curriculum?
S: Uh, I think, um, I think there’s a natural trend for students, uh, to think they’re better than they are. Uh, part of the pressure may be, uh, peer pressure to be with their friends, so. Not everybody in the class, I teach advanced classes, and, I know other teachers, a lot of people sign up for classes that they’re really not prepared for, or they don’t have the full ability, um, they’re ambitious. In fact, I think, you know, uh, it seems natural. When I was in college, you would oversubscribe, you know, the normal course load is four or five, and, but people, it seems to me, a lot of people just signed up for six and seven, and it was natural to, you know, to drop one or two during the year. But, you know, so that’s part of being, you know, educationally minded. You think you can do more, you can handle more, you want to do more. And then you find out the hard way, “well, I can’t”. Uh, so, in a class, there’s always, in any class, there’s a distribution of ability, and, but, so, you have the tail effect is that you have students, in every class, that want to be in that class, and, uh, not just want to be, they have, not because they just have the ambition, part of it may be social because their friends are also in that class. So they signed up for that class.

Uh, so, but I think, in all classes, there’s a distribution. Uh, as a teacher, there’s always a distribution. Uh, a, it would be ideal to have everybody get A’s, um, and deserving of the As, but there’s going to be, you know, A or B. Or, they be A, B or C. You know, somebody gets a C. Uh, and, we, uh, as a teacher, we spend a lot of time with the bottom third, bottom quarter, uh, students. But, uh, I think, uh, right, there’s always a portion and it varies from class to class.

R: Let me ask you; Is there a proportion of students failing or getting Ds in the curriculum?

S: There is, uh, I think, statistically, there are Ds, or people, are failing, uh, those are a handful of cases. Uh, and, you know, we, this is why, you know, from experience, we try to be very careful when talking, when counseling every student about their program and what they select. And, so, I know from my end, I counsel, uh, students what they ought to be taking next year. Uh, sometimes they follow my counsel, sometimes, they don’t. Uh, I have the benefit of experience. I mean, I try to tell them how difficult it is for those people I think are where they select...the students make the course selection. Basically, it’s their parents can essentially override a teacher’s recommendation or the principal’s recommendation. So that’s the policy of the school. So, you have the parents and the students come in and say they definitely want to take it even though it’s against our advice. Well, ok, I mean, that’s your waiver. That’s your right. You’ll have the opportunity but, you know, nine times out of ten, the teacher was right. So, there is an exception. I mean, yeah, one out of ten, the student does succeed and even against the teacher’s recommendation. But nine times out of ten, the teacher was right.

QUESTION 8:

S: Yes, I think, uh, in most cases. It’s just not enough time. All the teachers want to help, uh, especially people who need help. Uh, and these people are easily, well, uh,
in a school like this, they need help every year. The people who need help in year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4, and, in isolated cases, it’s one class, and those things you help and, right away, it’s fixed, short term problem. Um, the, I think, the majority of cases who need help are those, are chronic, those people are chronic. You can help in many courses and year after year after year, and, for those students, I would think, you know, it was a bad placement to be in this school.

R: Are there many of those students?

S: There’s a handful, and, well, just a handful. But, uh, they’re well known to the faculty, their names come up every year, uh, and, uh, so, uh, but everyone else, uh, you know, so, I would think, the majority of cases that need help are the repeaters. The others are isolated. It doesn’t take much to help them.

QUESTION 9:

S: OK, um, absenteeism is not a problem, um, at all in this school because this is a school of choice. People want to be here. Uh, they enjoy their company and their friends. So, they come here, so the absenteeism, I’m sure, statistically, will show, it’s very low. I worked in a regular school and you have much higher absenteeism. They look for excuses not to come to school. Huh, here, people want to be here because they want to be with their friends, they, in general, they want to learn, uh, they like their teachers, and, uh, so, I see a lot of students, uh, you know, do special things for their teachers on a number of occasions.

Uh, so they like their teachers, they want to be in school, they want to meet with their friends, so, uh, the absenteeism we have here in the school to the degree it’s a problem is because they go to special events. They go to awards, award ceremonies, they go to special fairs. We have one student right now who’s at MIT. He wins a special award, one of three in the nation, he gets to spend a whole week at MIT. He’s missing five days of classes. You know, so, it’s great for him and it’s a great experience. But, uh, from a teacher’s end, he’s missing five days of classes. So, we have some really scholars who they go to one science fair after another and so you can go to half a dozen, a dozen science fairs, and be out a dozen days, because they’ve gone to so many science fairs. They’ve won first place here. They’ve won first place there. They’re going to take another first place award. They’re meeting, they’re going to the White House. So, how can you say no? On the other hand, they have absenteeism. But, these people are winning awards left and right.

R: How bout the drop out rate?

S: The drop out rate? What? One. I think, uh, I think if you use statistical averages, maybe one per year, per class. Uh, and, uh, and the drop out rate among the early students in the lower grades is because they’re homesick. You know, this is a regional school. So, they want to be with their friends. We had one, I had one student who was an A+. Uh, she was the highest in my class but she dropped out in the first month because she was homesick. You know, she wanted to be with her friends. You
know, so, it wasn’t academic drop out, and so, you have, in the first year or two, this is the problem with these regional schools is that, you know, they’re, they may not have enough, they come here, they don’t have their friends from junior high school. They’re the smartest in their school, and they come here and they’re the only one; they maybe the only one from their school. And, or, most of the students here, maybe only one or two students. So, they come here as loners and they just miss their friends so much. Uh, the, so, but you have isolated one or two drop outs in the higher grades, uh, for academic reasons, but, the first year, the first two years, most of, the reason for the drop out is not academic. It’s, uh, homesickness.

QUESTION 10:

S: OK, the, we do an attendance check, uh, in homeroom and then we do a double check on attendance first period. So the secretary correlates that information. Our secretary calls home to check if the student is sick or is not lost or truant or whatever.

QUESTION 11:

S: OK, um, if the child is struggling, the first responsibility is the teacher. The teacher, uh, in each class, does it. Uh, it’s their responsibility. This what I, when I give advice to the new teachers, “you should call right away”. And, you know, nine times out of ten, they’ll be very, extremely receptive to that information. They want to know the information. And, it’s, uh, always done in the afternoon, or, after the school day, because we’re teaching the whole day. We don’t have time, in general. Uh, some teachers do call during the day but I wouldn’t think, uh, I would say the majority of phone calls are done after school. I know I personally call after school. Uh, I, and I do, sometimes, call during the school day when I know the parent is not at home. And, so, that is the first thing. I try calling after school, but if there’s no reception, if all I get is the, uh, answering machine and I haven’t gotten any feedback, uh, then I call during the day and call at work. Uh, and that’s the first, the second, and, you know, if we don’t get sufficient response, then the principal makes the phone calls. But, the first, the primary responsibility is the teacher’s, then, after, uh, unresolved situations, or no communication, a lack of communication, then you push it upstairs to the principal.

R: What about email communication? Do you do much of that?

S: Yes, I, uh, promote email, uh, because the problem with the telephone is phone tag and, uh, so, on back to school right, and my communication to the parents, in general, is, “here’s my email address”. And, uh, I was shocked to learn other districts do not allow that. I promote email because it’s more frequent contact and it’s, just, more immediate. Uh, because it’s so hard to get, to get a phone contact, someone’s not available. And, I just, while the issue is hot in my mind, I can just write an email and explain everything, and then, uh, when I have time, I look for the response. Uh, so, I find it, uh, uh, more response time, I believe it is more response, more complete, and it’s more timely. Uh, because, you know, in fact, in, there’s some parents who, uh, actually ask me for a weekly report. And, so, when I have time, at the end of each week, uh, I go
through, and give, here's my weekly email report on those students’ grades and students’ performance. And I summarize what's happened.

R: If I can interject for a second there? With these weekly reports, or your email communication, or your phone conversations with parents, how often would you say you're doing that for struggling students?

S: With struggling students, you know, I, uh, that's where, uh, I'm doing it on a regular basis with struggling students, and, because, if I'm not getting a response, from the parent, if, especially, well, the nature here is, I'm giving this response, when is the progress report on the students, and, uh, normally I don't send a message if the student is doing extremely well. Uh, most of my time is devoted for the students who are not. I'm trying to improve their performance. And the worst that the students are doing the more urgent my communication with the parent, and the more urgent, uh, I try to get the parent involved. And, uh, so, continued non-performance generates more constant stream of emails on my part.

R: How, I guess, what percentage of your students, would you say, on average, you're following up on with communication with parents?

S: Following up on?

R: Yeah, like, in trouble, where you feel the need to contact the parents?

S: I guess is the question what portion do I need to feel I need to contact. That varies tremendously from year to year, uh, because, uh, the classes I teach each year is different. And I know some teachers teach the same class year after year after year. In this school, because it's so small, uh, in my curriculum, I teach different classes every year, and, so, uh, the ability is different. And, uh, this year, uh, is a good year in that I don't have that many, uh, people on the lower end of ability. Uh, I can just, in class, or just strictly working with the students, get the performance, uh, raise their, uh, output, when I... So, I have students where do occasionally get a C, and I speak to them right away, and it just amazes me how they can get a 99, on the next, after I talk to them. So, they have the ability; just they need to be prodded. It's when the students, uh, don't respond to my initial, uh, to my prodding, then I talk to the parent. And get additional support, or feel that something's going on, uh, to further motivate the students. Uh, also, I would, so that varies, bottom line is there, from year to year, class to class, and, um, so, in some years, I would talk to, you know, half a dozen parents, uh, or even a dozen parents, uh, this year, I can't remember talking to any parent. But, uh, I do, this is things, I try to instill in new teachers or new teachers to the school is that you have to get the parents involved right away, as soon as possible. Uh, and that, you'll find that, I find that, after I talk to the parent, I see a response to the student's performance, so, I've learned, early on, you know, calling a parent is beneficial nine times out of ten, you know.
QUESTION 12:

S: OK, I've been a teacher for, you know, only about ten years and I find that, uh, curriculum changes, of course, slowly. In any institution, and, so, um, I think, uh, and it takes a certain amount of receptiveness by the principal, uh, to do this. And, this principal, I've been able to, I've initiated many curriculum changes. And, uh, it takes, it doesn't, uh, even though it takes years, uh, to actually implement the change. Sometimes, they'll listen right away and they'll work on it next year or, you know, but, in any school, where I know curriculum, it takes, usually, it takes several years to actually implement a change. And, So I've had odd years, I've talked about it, I, and part of it is, getting cooperation or getting the consensus from the faculty. So, my idea is, if it's going to be worthless, unless I can get agreement or consensus from the rest of, the, my discipline. And, so, that's part of how I, you know, I'm, how I know to implement change, you know, and, so, I implement it by first, getting consensus in my department, and then, you know, and then presenting it to the supervisor. And part of it is timing, you know, part of it is timing, is when it's appropriate to, and I'm experienced enough to know when to do that. Sometimes, you know, a kid can have an excellent idea but the timing is off and, you know.

R: So you are saying that you can do it?

S: I have done it and I have made changes in my discipline and I've tried to share some of my, help some of my colleagues in other disciplines to implement similar changes. So, I, you know, I can say I accomplished that but, part of that is I've had, uh, two principals. And, I know the first principal wasn't receptive and, uh, didn't have that interest but the second one, uh, was understanding and understood what I was talking about, and, uh, was receptive to improving the curriculum. And, so, part of it is, that you have to have, uh, there has to be an openness, by the principal, to that, and a certain awareness, so. I mean, we're doing the teaching, we're in the profession, we know what the changes are; an administrator may not. But the administrator has to, at least, be receptive to the need to continually examine the need to upgrade the curriculum, you know, because this is a dynamic environment.

In this dynamic environment, if you teach the same thing, year after year, or the curriculum doesn't change, or doesn't operate with the times, it's going to be state and obsolete, so, uh, we're, you know, what is state of the art becomes stale or just becomes average after a few years. Uh, because, other schools improve their curriculum, so, one is, uh, you know, I happen to know what's going on at other schools. Uh, in other magnet schools, and, uh, and, well, part of being aware, comparing what you are doing with other schools, or doing, and also, I came from, uh, I was not educated as a teacher. I'm a professional, as a professional engineer, so, I know, in a school like this, in an engineering school, what's important in an engineering school. And a teacher, uh, who was raised as and educated as a teacher may not be aware of the engineering, the needs of engineers, and, so, I think, this is one of the, uh, key assets of this particular school that many of the teachers in the technical fields are professionals in that field.

R: What about discipline and the budget?
S: OK, discipline, um, we have a faculty committee, and we, uh, we, it's in the faculty interest to have discipline, because to have order among the students, uh, and we contribute and give feedback to the principal of how he should be disciplining the students. I think every principal has their own style of discipline and, and, uh, so, in our case here, we're not entirely, I think the faculty is not entirely happy with the level of discipline, you know, uh, in the, uh, school. So, but we, we have plenty of opportunities to provide that feedback. And the feedback, and the, I would say, the principal is receptive to the feedback, and, uh, how he incorporates it, you know, or tries to implement it, there may some disagreement with, but, at least, he's open minded about it and he's receptive to and understands the need for feedback and contributions.

R: How bout budget?

S: Budget, um, this is really depends upon the principal, how closely, uh, you know, some principals are protective of that, their, ability. And part of it is also determined by district policy. And, uh, being a school board member, I'm aware of the, uh, administrative end. So, he, the principal works within the guidelines that are given to him. Uh, so, I believe it's more in a district like this, in this particular district, uh, teachers have limited, uh, control over the budget and it's pretty much, uh, this is the philosophy of the district. In other districts, they have, uh, some, I think, in other districts, we have teachers who say that the teachers have more control, or, you know, so, we, I would say that, even though we don't have, uh, control over the budget, the, at least the district and the principal is very fair in asking us always for input to expenditures. So, we don't know how much money we have, but they do constantly ask us "what do you want to buy" and they are, and they are very open about that. Uh, they're very closed minded about how much money they have, but they are very open to saying "Well, we have some money to buy equipment. What do you want to buy?" And they constantly remind us about that, but, uh, we would want to know, well, how much money you have? And we want to make the decision what to buy. But, at least, they do ask us what our desires are, but they make the decision what is it for.

QUESTION 13:

S: Um, well, in [state], there actually is, uh, a two hundred hour requirement, or is it a one hundred hour requirement, uh, for professional development? And, so, you have district run workshops, uh, in this district, uh, and, also, um, a teacher can sign up, request professional days, to go offsite, to go to a workshop, uh, seminars, uh, in fact, even to take a summer course. And, so, I've done this, uh, myself, is that, I've gotten them to pay for some daily, a couple of professional days, where I go out during the school year. Uh, they pay for professional workshops, uh, in my discipline, also, I've gotten, I have received money to attend a one week workshop over the summer. And they paid the tuition. They didn't pay for travel, but they paid for the tuition, uh, and, in this workshop, I think there was a, there might have been a hotel fee requirement. So, they paid for the out of pocket expenses and, so, there is a, they have a budget, and which they don't tell us, but, they do, uh, they do solicit and encourage professional development. And they leave it up to the individuals to, uh, make requests for out of
district, uh, so, I’ve used it, and, I’ve, uh, never been turned down. So, I can say, I’ve never been turned down, and, I’ve, in fact, been encouraged to go, uh, but I felt that my time was more important, for my students, not to go. And I know some people abuse that but, you know, uh, this is a personal judgment. Uh, but, I’m happy to say that I’ve never been turned down on any professional development request that I’ve made.

R: How bout, uh, professional development offered by the district? Do you find it useful for your purposes?

S: Well, um, I find it, uh, they do solicit our advice on what to offer and, uh, I think, uh, one problem that we have in our contract is that, uh, we have, uh, above average amount of time allocated for that, and, so, uh, to fill up that time, I think, some of the activity they prescribe is not, particularly, uh, useful. Um, and part of it, I think, is the timing. You know, at the end of the school year, people are not receptive to that. People are also not receptive during Federal holidays, or national holidays, to come in for professional development. Um, and, I, you know, I see, objectively, looking at what they offer, they, you know, are asking us to be open minded and they, and some of this is worthwhile. Uh, I think it really depends on the openness of the teachers and the pressures that they’re under. You know, some teachers would rather have the extra time grading papers or working on in-house, or in-school, activities. And, rather than having so much time dedicated to district training. So, I think, in terms of comparing alternatives, I think, uh, objectively, you know, these are worthwhile workshops, but, uh, I think, in some cases, It’s more worthwhile for the staff to talk to each other about students.

And this is what I’ve been reading, also, in the literature, that, instead of professional development, let’s say conflict resolution or professional learning communities, I think, uh, what I’ve been reading, recently, is that it’s beneficial for, let’s say, all the teachers to get together to talk about certain students, to improve, uh, this intervention policy, work on intervention, working on certain students, or working on, uh, in an interdisciplinary manner, working on teaching classes, how to teach classes or scheduling or curriculum. Uh, so, rather than doing generic professional development, something more related to the school, related to your building, uh, more closer to home versus a lot of this esoteric, uh, higher-level, uh, professional development. So, I think, in that regard, because it’s, uh, further related from everyone’s activity, some, there are substantial numbers of staff members who feel that it is not useful.

QUESTION 14:

S: I think, um, well, I’m proud of this school. And I think people are proud of this school because of its awards. You know, I think that, uh, the, this school has been cited by national magazines and, uh, gotten a number of citations. Uh, we have a couple of teachers that received presidential awards; individual teachers who’ve gone through a certification process and gone through this recognition process where there’s extensive amount of documentation that’s required. So these are not, uh, just, uh, you know, casual awards. These are really serious efforts; um, so, people, making an effort, uh, shows that they care for their profession. Um, I think, uh, you know, peoples’ attendance, you know, I don’t know what the absentee rate here is, but I think it’s, you
know, probably fairly low. I know for a large school, it's, you know, the industry average is, I believe, three percent. So, I don't have the statistics to say that our absentee rate is below three percent, but, uh, I know, well, there's always, I think, last year, I had zero absentees. And I know, every year, there is somebody who has zero absentees. Uh, I know the faculty, uh, well, they have families. They have other obligations. And, they come in, uh, I think, by the things, activities they do, I think, uh, advisors, um, you can tell, uh, if they care about their job by how extensively, are they just going through the motions or they putting that extra effort, and, uh, I can tell a lot of teachers are putting in the extra effort. They care about the school. They care about the students. And, uh, I think, uh, you know, I'm proud to say that, you know, on, uh, the vast majority of students that pick, the faculty is making an extra effort. They are not going through the motions of teaching. They are, they really care, and they're making, uh, you know, they're putting extra time into it, time that we sometimes complain we're not being compensated for, that, we know, in other school districts, or under other contracts, we would be compensated for.

R: Thank you so much for your time. This is great.
Appendix S

Transcript: School D/Focus Group
TRANSCRIPT SCHOOL D/FOCUS GROUP

QUESTION 1:

S4: I think here at our school, it's not as prevalent as in other places. Although there have been incidents, I won't say it's been one hundred percent, you know, clear of anything. But, um, it's all, administration takes care of everything. And, um, you know, the teacher, or whoever, you know, sees something that takes place does write up a disciplinary report.

S1: Personally, I've never been involved with any of those at this school. Prior, regular high schools, there's been big problems.

S2: Um, I think, since I've been here, um, seven years that I've been here, um, I saw one incident of, uh, physical violence and the student needed to be, uh, taken home. And I was the person who was elected to drive the student home but I didn't feel threatened at all in any way.

R: And now would you say that's pretty, I mean, across the board for drugs, alcohol, weapons, and physical disturbances; that it's all pretty low?

S3: I think it's low. I know that there's, probably, use.

S1: We had an alcohol thing with, uh, [student]. Was it [student]?

S4: There are issues but, with what you are asking for, it's low. It's low.

S2: Are you looking for numbers?

R: Whatever you want to tell me. If, like, you feel it's a problem in your school, not a problem in your school.

S2: I don't really feel that it's a problem. Um, but there have been a few incidents. Um, the one incident that, uh, [the other guidance counselor] and I were involved with, um, we had suspected that students were, um, getting high over by the fitness lab, and, um, we confronted administration, it wasn't the current administration, um, and, uh, it was untimely because it was the end of the day of course, and things had to happen quickly. So, um, the administrator was annoyed, you know, that we were bringing attention to this and it was the end of the day. But the students did have to stay and they weren't allowed to get on the bus, and their parents were contacted, and they had to, um, go and have, um, urine taken. And, um, they, because our district doesn't specify what type of testing needed to be done, um, they all came back negative. Even though we knew that they were using, you know, which made [other guidance counselor] and I feel like fools. You know, because all the kids came back and, you know, gave us lip over it. Um, and I think, after that, a lot of the teachers were, anytime that they're suspicious, you know, they might, um, mention it to us, as counselors, or
mention it to the nurse but are reluctant to take it any further because there is no real teeth to what we want done.

S4: Hmm, um.

R: Would you say, like, you're saying a couple of incidents...Now, is this over many years, several years, each year?

S4: I would say there's a couple each year that we know about. Yeah. But, again, we take it to administration, It's written up and so forth. But I wouldn't say there's, like, maybe, you know, a dozen or so incidents, there's a handful.

R: What do you think accounts for the low number of incidents?

S1: I think the parental involvement here. I think the kids have a lot of, maybe too much, guidance kind of looking over their shoulder and what they're doing. And I think they're very closely watched as opposed to somewhere else.

S3: I think you're right about that.

S2: There's a high percentage of, uh, students that are very sheltered. Um, but I also think that another contributing factor is the intellect.

S3: And their motivation.

S2: And very motivated. Um, and the ones that would consider using, um, are pretty slick so that they wouldn't get caught.

S3: Right. I think that's true. I think that they're very motivated and smart students and they're very good at hiding what they're doing as well. That same smartness of, there's not a lot of use though, I think, that, in general, there's not a lot of it.

S4: If they're using something too much, it's the computer.

R: Well, that's an interesting study in and of itself actually.

S3: Yes...Exactly.

S2: And we only had, I mean, I don't know if you're going to consider the incident of the sword, as a weapon. Um, because, otherwise, there's absolutely no incidents of a weapon. Um...

S4: It was a prop.

S2: It was a prop; a student made a very foolish decision to, um, come with a sword, um, hidden on the school bus, and presented it in English class because they were
doing dramatizations. And the teacher made the student go to the office with the sword, and, you know, the whole, was suspended, you know, through administration, and everything, but, he didn’t think that it was a weapon even though it really was a sword.

S3: That’s the dedication here. [Laughter]

R: There you go.

QUESTION 2:

S3: I think so. Absolutely.

S2: Definitely.

S4: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Well, to such a degree that you can leave your laptop out in the hallway and it won’t disappear.

S3: Right. And I do on my cart all the time.

S2: And I...

S4: And the other thing is we’re on a college campus where police presence is, I think, I mean, I realize other schools have cops in the town but here, it’s like, immediate because they’re right here on this campus, so.

R: So would you say that’s the main reason why it’s safe and secure here? Or, what do you think contributes to that?

S2: Well, we also have an open locker policy where the kids keep their lockers open and it’s a very trusting environment.

S3: Yes.

S2: And, um, the students feel comfortable confiding in each other, as well as the faculty, and it’s very respectful, a very respectful environment.

S3: I agree.
QUESTION 3:

R: This is a three prong question, or four prong, three, so I’ll break it up. In what type of co and extra curricular activities are students involved and is it a large percentage of the student body?

S1: Well, yeah, one group I have, I have one hundred and five students in my one after school activity, so.

R: Which is if you don’t mind me asking?

S1: Technology Student Association. And, uh, so, that’s…

S2: Out of two sixty five.

S1: Out of two sixty five. That’s, that’s a lot.

S3: Yes.

S1: So, I think, actually, they’re overcommitted. They’re into too many clubs.

S3: Right.

S1: They want to do this club and this club and, then, it conflicts with what they have to do, or after school, or, during this lunch period, it is, it’s craziness because they’re trying to fit everything in, so, they go into too many clubs, and they can’t really commit.

S3: Yeah.

S4: There’s athletics at the home school which you’re probably aware of. I wouldn’t say there’s enormous amount of students that go, uh, for sports, but, there’s a good number. Um, I think the toughest thing for them is, like, if they score a touchdown or a goal, they’re not recognized here when they come back. I mean, there’s a few articles that may be put up on the board about the athletes. But, aside from every one in the school knowing, that doesn’t happen.

S3: I think they’re very focused on what has to appear on their resume when they, uh, apply to college. And that’s why they’re so involved in so many clubs, um, because I do the key club, and I have forty five kids in that club. Um, not that forty five come to every meeting which is interesting. Now we have, um, we have to follow them along, make sure that they attend, and that they actually do some of our programs and that they go out and get involved. So, now, I put into place certain guidelines to make sure that if they’re signing up for key club, they’re actually participating, so, yeah.

S2: Another activity that the students are very involved in is musical activities, pursuits, either at their home school, or, um, they take private lessons on their own, and,
then, perform for nursing homes or schools or what have you, and that seems to go
dand to hand with the mathematical ability and the intellectual ability.

R: Excellent. Now, would you say they’re participating more in clubs here, or, in
activities at their home schools?

S1: I would say here. It’s hard to get back to your home school. Some do plays,
as well, but it’s very difficult for them to make practices and everything, but, you know.

S3: I would say here.

S4: I would agree.

S2: Yes.

S3: Some of them do, but, it, is, definitely takes more of an effort for them to...

S1: And they have to leave early some days...

S3: Yes.

S1: For athletic events and which cuts into their, uh, class time, and, really, you
know, it’s just hard.

R: What percentage would you say is involved in activities?

S2: Activities here? Or?

R: Predominantly here.

S4: I would say seventy five percent, don’t you think?

S1: Oh, I mean, of the amount of students here? Oh, I would think ninety
percent were involved in something, don’t you think?

S4: You would say ninety? OK.

S3: I think so.

S1: At least something. Very rarely do you find someone not in one club or
another.

S2: Yeah, not, I think ninety would be better.

S4: OK. All right, then ten percent athletes.
S1: Well, even the athletes would be involved with a club here sometimes. I mean, like, TSA.

S4: Oh, OK.

S1: Yeah. So, I think, yeah, is that what you’re looking for?

R: Yeah, that’s fine. OK. And then the second part of that question, question number 3. Can staff regularly be seen at these activities?

S3: Yes.

S2: The club activities? There’s a staff advisor.

S4: Yeah; chess club, or, key club, or whatever.

S1: It’s required to be here.

S3: Yeah. It’s required.

S2: They have to be supervised at all times.

R: What about teachers who are not, necessarily, supervising the activity? Do you have a culture here where people, other teachers or other staff, just kind of show up and help out?

S3: Yeah, we do.

S4: Well, like, we had classical night, before the holidays. There was a great turn out.

S3: Coffee House…

S1: When we have dances, we have chaperones.

S3: Yeah, and it’s all on a voluntary basis, like, you know, like chaperoning. Usually, you help out your colleagues. You know, like, they…

S4: Graduation night, you know, we’re formally dressed.

R: OK, excellent. And what’s Coffee House if you don’t mind me asking?

S3: Coffee House is, actually, that’s sponsored by the PFA right?

S2: I think it is.

S3: But the PFA puts it together but the kids actually, um, perform and then they serve coffee and dessert that the parents bring.
S2: They can play music. They can read a poem.

S3: It’s a fundraiser. But then we have, as part of that, Teacher’s Pet. So, teachers play with students at, you know, like, trivia games, or, you know, “do you know your student as well as you say so”, it’s always fun to watch that. It’s kind of like a Hollywood Squares, right?

QUESTION 4:

S4: I can speak for [guidance counselor] and I. We’re both in guidance, and [the principal] is always there for us. I mean, we don’t have a vice principal, [the principal] is everything. So, he’s there, um. If I have a question about [the local community college campus on which school resides], and the [community college liaison], or, you know, whatever there is in guidance.

S3: I think [the principal] is very supportive. I’m not sure if the administration beyond [the principal] is quite as giving of praise.

S4: I agree.

S3: They, um, expect it, and, um, [the principal] makes up for that.

S2: He does.

S4: He’s full of praise.

S3: He’s fully aware of the fact that we go above and beyond.

S4: He’s very gracious.

S3: He’s very gracious about that.

S2: And that we have family responsibilities, and he’s very understanding and I think that lends, uh, people to want to do more. You know, because if you need a break on something, you know, he’s willing to work with you.

S3: Yes.

R: Right. Right. And, now, is the morale of the staff good and could you describe some of the planned activities to help keep the morale high?

S3: I think it varies.

S2: That’s a good way to put it. Um, it, like, in the beginning of the year, I would think that we’re all very motivated and upbeat, um, and then, as the year goes on, because the district in and of itself...
S3: Demands.

S2: expects us to be at a lot of after school events which we are not compensated for...

S4: Evening events, yeah.

S2: um, it kind of wears you down, you know.

S3: Yes.

S2: And, then, by the end of the year, it’s just like, oh, come on, is there, there’s another thing that I have to do, in addition to our regular job. Do you know what I mean? Um, so, come the end of the year, we’re pretty much dragging, and we do have three professional development days, at the end of the year, which is, like, the worst time to have them. You know, because we’re...

S3: Because you’re not productive.

S2: We’re all, we want to get out for the summer, you know.

S4: That’s painful.

S2: You know, and, and...

S3: We have staff development for, um, national holidays, like...

S1: The kids are off.

S3: Martin Luther King’s birthday...

S4: We have Columbus.

S3: Columbus Day, the kids are off, and our kids are off...

S2: Are off.

S3: at home, so, we have to come in for, uh, in-staff. But, you know, and I think that the administration, beyond this building, expects a tremendous amount from us because we’re a small school. We don’t have department heads, we don’t have, um, secretaries, so, the teachers do everything. We do inventory, we do book orders, we do, um, supply order, so, and we do tremendous, a lot of duties. And, that’s something, that, over the years, have increased. Every year, we are slotted for more and more time, so it’s exhausting. And, even though we have a lot of giving souls here, it gets to a point where you say, I can’t give any more. So, I think that the morale is good because we have good people who are willing to work hard.
S4: I agree.

S3: But I think that it sometimes wears on us, and I, and I think that, um, I’m not sure if it’s our principal’s fault, I don’t know where it’s coming from, but we do have many, many obligations beyond the classroom. So much so, I have found myself saying, to [the principal], I think this is taking away from the quality of my teaching. When I can not sit down and review what I’m going to do in class, because I’m too busy…

S1: Hall duties.

S3: Hall duty, taking attendance, you know, taking orders for lunch. You know, I’m no longer a waitress. I put myself through school that way. You know, this is, I can do it, I can do it, you know…

S2: There are extra hats.

S3: Right. We wear many hats.

S1: That’s because we’re small.

S2: Definitely.

S4: And in guidance, [other guidance counselor] and I teach, you know, one day a week. And, not only that, we have [the community college] and so I’m either walking over there or…

S2: Registering the kids, handing out textbooks.

S4: you know, registering students or dropping students from [community college]. So, we’re really two schools. We do, people don’t realize how much we do over there. It’s almost a daily thing over there, constant.

R: So, would you say that, when morale ebbs, um, is it mostly because of those extra duties here or because of a disconnect with central administration?

S2: I think it’s, um, the attitude from central administration and a feeling of being overwhelmed. I mean, because [the principal] appreciates everything we do. But, there’s only so much. I mean, he’ll, if we have to come in and do something, he’ll provide bagels and coffee in the morning which is lovely. You know, and we appreciate that, and it’s a token appreciation, and he’ll thank us, and, “good job” and, you know, “that’s wonderful”, but, that only goes so far.

S4: His hands are tied.
S2: Yeah. And there are things that we do. Like, um, [the principal] has had barbecues at his house, or, after graduation, we'll have a graduation, you had a party at your house [to S3], margarita parties, which I was victim of.

S3: Drinks. I make good ones. {Laughter}

S2: And we did the Yankee game.

S4: There's another one this year.

S1: That helped at the end of the year.

S3: What about the Mets?

S2: [The principal] wanted the Mets.

S4: But, anyway, yeah, it's a, you know, you try to keep it going.

R: OK. Now, would you say, and this sort of ties into a lot of the follow up questions, that the morale is good enough that you would continue working here or is the morale bad that you would want to leave?

S1: No, I never thought about it.

S2: Because of the morale?

R: Yeah, or just is the morale so low that people are saying "I got to get out of here"?

S4: No.

S2: No, not at all, I don't think anybody would leave because of the morale.

S3: No. And, do you know why that is? Because we've got some great students and we can teach them.

S1: Yep.

S3: And you put up with a lot of stuff because you have great students. And those of us that have taught in other schools know that you may not have as many extras but you're not dealing with such high quality students. So you have a choice, and most of us are still here, and don't see us, you know, that's, that's the motivation.

S2: And the staff, I think, is very supportive of each other. And, um, is willing to help each other. You know, if somebody needs to leave early because they have to go to a dentist appointment or something and they need somebody to cover their class, you know, everybody really will help each other out.
S3: Yes.

S1: Oh, by the way... [Laughter]

QUESTION 5:

S4: How can you tell?

S3: You see them talking to each other all the time.

S4: Hmm, um.

S3: You see students talking to teachers, you see teachers talking to teachers and...

S4: And when there are issues, and they need to cry. They know, they know where to go. They’re here.

S3: And they do.

S4: They’re in the nurse’s office. It’s not like they call their parent, they have to go home. They are somewhere here.

S2: They feel comfortable enough to be open with their feelings, the students do. Um, and we, in our freshman guidance class, half way through the year, we give a freshman survey just to touch base with how they’re doing academically, emotionally, socially, um, what’s the best thing about, uh, coming to school here, what’s the worst thing, um, has it exceeded your expectations and why. And the survey results are, I would say, ninety percent, you know, always glowing. Um, the best thing about it is the atmosphere, the family, um, feeling that you get, the open lockers, um, the, uh, caliber of the teaching, the, uh, intellectual, you know, dynamic between the students. Um, some of the kids complain that there’s no art or there’s no music, that would be, like, the worst thing. Um, A couple of times you get homework is the worst thing. Um...

S3: But, they do get... Well, they do get art and music, a lot of it.

S2: Not the way that some of them want it.

S1: Yeah, they don’t want it...Like, we do it in ours, you do it in yours.

S3: Like, a separate class?

S2: Right, because we try to integrate it.

S3: Integrate it.
S1: They don’t see that.

S2: But, they don’t see it. They would like a class. You know, which is understandable. Um, but they really do appreciate, you know, the technology. They’ve commented about that.

Um, to be surrounded with students, and this is a big issue that comes up in our guidance classes a lot, with likeminded students, where, in the past, maybe they’ve been picked on or they have hated school. Now, they’re in an environment where they not only love school but they have friends. Um, they feel like they can relate to their peers. You know, it’s…

R: This isn’t necessarily on the list but it’s come up in other magnet schools as well. Why do you think it is that the kids tend to have a picked on background? Not all of them, but…

S4: I think it’s because they have a different air about them, whether it’s a geek…

S3: Geek Society.

S1: A lot of kids are threatened by them because they are excelling. Maybe, deep down, they’re thinking they can’t make it.

S3: Yes, but our society does not have a lot of respect for smart geeks. If you look at television, I think that it’s cool to be stupid at times. And, these kids are aware of that and, in regular schools, being a clown and being, uh, you know, acting stupid is cool.

S1: Yeah, right.

S2: Because you get attention that way.

S3: You get attention.

S2: But here, you get attention for being smart.

S1: Excelling.

S2: And achieving in activities, or, you know, um, presenting or doing research, things like that.

S4: I’d like to say there isn’t any bullying. You know, you get a little bit here and there, and you have your cliques, too.

S3: Oh, yeah.
S1: Yeah.

S4: You definitely have your cliques.

S2: But it’s funny, because, if you watch, you know, the typical movies with the nerd, you know, with a band aid on the glasses and stuff, we have kids walking out with a band aid on their glasses. But, with the big glasses, and the pants that don’t fit right, or, you know, there are kids walking around like that. You know.

S3: That you know would be beaten up in a regular school just looking at them.

S1: Right.

S2: There’s also a lot of social issues that, um, we deal with in our guidance class to help them learn how to communicate, make eye contact, um, we talk about personal hygiene…

S4: Shake hands.

S2: Shaking hands, we have kids coming into the guidance office, all the time, you know, either we’re on the phone, or we’re talking to another teacher or even talking to a student, and they just like barrel right in. Our doors are always open but still. You know, I have often said, “stop”, “go back out”, “knock”, “or say, excuse me”. And they like look at me like, “is she crazy”. But you have to demonstrate that to them.

S3: You have to teach them social graces.

S4: They don’t get it. Like today in our class, [the other guidance counselor] and I taught table setting so each group had a place setting, you know, with the silverware, we show a movie, because there was a group that went on to Nashville and they came back and the advisor was like, “you have to do something, you know, there were twelve students, and I can’t believe the way they eat.” And the different conferences that I have been to, I knew that this was starting up, so, it’s been great. I mean, they show us the chopsticks, we have chopsticks there too, and how to hold them, and things like that but you still.

S2: But, I mean, this was a follow up lesson to making a good impression and when is it important to make a good impression and then we have them write a resume and then, um, work up to a mock interview. And then, we emphasize that, a lot of times, your second interview, if the people are really interested in you, they will have a meal, and how do you handle yourself at a meal, you know, and we talked about all of that and then we even talked about have you ever been in a social situation with your family and you were thinking, gee, that was like a little rude what that person just did, you know, so we identified the top ten, um, dining mistakes. We did. And they were laughing at themselves, and it was very interesting.

S4: Are we holding you up? Are we talking too much?
R: No, no, this is good because it leads into other things. I just hope I’m not holding you up.

S3: No, I actually think that the social graces, um, of these students, a lot of them that just spend a lot of time on their own with video games...

S2: Alone.

S3: Um, or doing homework, um, don’t eat as a family, I mean, which is really amazing to me.

S4: Or the TV’s on and nobody talks.

S3: Right. They don’t really know, and I don’t know if that’s true more so here than anywhere else. I don’t believe that’s true. I believe it’s a problem with a lot of kids that have to, you know, learn how to behave.

S1: Right, how to grow up.

S3: Exactly.

QUESTION 6:

S1: You know, they’re always passing in the hall. You know, they’ll always greet each other and open to go see [the principal] too.

S2: I’ve actually had kids hold the door for me going into the office or, when we were coming back, you know, with the box of all the plates and silverware and everything, you know, “oh, let me open the door”, unfortunately, the door was locked but it was a very nice gesture that the student made, you know, to open the door. You know, they do, uh, not all of them, but there are a number of them...

S3: Yeah, I would say it depends on the student.

S2: That go out of their way to be respectful and polite. You know, with those students, at least for myself, I make a point of saying, “Oh, what a gentleman you are”, “I really appreciate that”. You know, and other kids will say, “Well, you’ve never said that to me”. And I said, “oh, well, think about that next time I’m going to write your recommendation letter.” You know, “What would make me say that about you?”

R: How bout the other way around. How bout teachers and administrators to students? Do they show respect to students.

S3: I say yes.

S1: Oh, absolutely.
S2: Yes.

S3: And I think that, that’s a good question, because I think because of the respect that teachers give to other teachers, and give to students, they reciprocate. They can feel that there’s respect and, therefore, they learn from that. Where, you know, that there are good models around here.

S2: There are, um, some students who are dealing with some pretty heavy duty issues, um, that not necessarily, uh, all of the teachers or all of the students are aware of. But [the other guidance counselor] and I may be aware of them, but [the principal] is certainly aware of them. So, whenever we see those students in the hall, we make a point of, “hi, how you doin’?”, “How’s this going?”, you know, “if you need to come down, don’t forget you can.” Um, and even to a certain point where some students have said they felt isolated, you know, um, from other students, if they see us reaching out to these students, I think it encourages the whole population to do the same.

S3: Yeah.

QUESTION 7:

S3: I would say yes to the first two parts of that question and, then, the last one, um, for the, you know, senioritis is, already, um, starting with the seniors. Sometimes, I feel that, because we’re so close and it’s such a community feeling here, that the children, the students, really do complain enough to, right? They have a tendency to voice their opinion, “oh, this is to...”, “Oh, we can’t do that”, “oh”, you know, like.

S2: “You’re going to give us a project? We have a project in another class”, and, sometimes, the teachers, I think, are even, you know, too sensitive to the complaining.

S3: Yes.

S2: You know, but, it’s because the students feel comfortable enough to complain. So, it’s good and bad.

R: Alright, so, whether or not they complain about it or not, are most of your kids able to handle the curriculum you’re throwing out to them?

S1: Yes, and go beyond.

S2: Yes, definitely.

S3: I would say the majority of students are able to handle it. They can handle it.

S1: Because a lot of our classes are college, you know, we get college credits for the classes we teach.
S3: Right.

S1: The [local college other than one on campus] stuff, is all college level, so they credit...

S2: AP classes.

S1: AP credit classes, so they’re all going beyond.

S2: Intense rigor.

S1: Oh, man.

S3: I think, sometimes, they are overwhelmed.

S4: Too much.

S3: Too much, they...

S4: I agree. There’s not that break. Yeah, there is phys ed which is about the only break I can think. And hands on, probably in your class, but you’re project oriented...

S1: Yeah, we do, we’re not as...

S4: but a stress reliever would really be phys ed and that’s...

S1: Or art.

S2: Or art or music.

S4: But we don’t have that.

S3: Well, I think also, when the students are watching other presentations, that takes the onus off of them. We do a lot of presentations...

S1: Yeah, we do.

S3: So, yeah, of course, the person that’s up there is...

S1: In the hot seat.

S3: Is in the hot seat, but, I think that we involve the peer editing...

S2: Peer review.

S3: And peer review, and, you know, it’s kind of fun for them to get involved in that, so.
R: Now, in terms of a quick follow up on that, you were mentioning AP, you were mentioning [local college]. Would you say that, first of all, do you have any remedial courses or are all your courses college prep and above...

S2: College prep and above.

R: OK, and, now, within that, do you have more AP, do you have more of these college courses? Can you explain that a little bit?

S2: More than what is the question.

S4: We’re limited.

S2: We don’t have as many AP classes as the home school would have.

S3: Because of the fact that we’re a smaller school...

S4: We’re pretty much Math and Science.

S3: Yes. The APs are in Math and Science.

S1: In our engineering curriculum, even the freshman class, they can, uh, take a third part of a final exam, and, if they pass that along with their coursework, they can apply for college credit from Rochester Institute of Technology which is applied around the country. So, the engineering courses are based on, on, all that.

S4: And, after freshman year, these students know they can go to [local community college]. One 2:15 comes, they can take a class over there. And students do.

S2: A lot of them do.

S4: And a lot in the summer, you know, whether it’s Chinese, or Philosophy, or Drawing.

S2: Or even Photography. We’ve had some students who wanted to apply to some California schools and the requirement is that you have, an art, um, class, and they obviously can’t get it here.

S3: Right.

S2: So, they would take it at [local community college].

R: Do they get credit for those local community college courses here on their transcript for high school?
S2: No.

S4: We have to separate it. Like, [local community college] is on the back; [high school] is on the back. We can’t combine it.

R: Oh, OK.

S3: And then they can get transcripts sent to, let’s say when they apply, they just request a transcript from the college.

S4: And the college decides whether they’ll take it.

S3: Right.

S2: The exception to that is there is a technology option for students to take [local community college] classes. OK. So, there’s two options. You can take either the, um, engineer, design, and development, or civil...

S1: Yeah. Well, they can take electronics...

S2: Digital electronics.

S1: or civil engineering, architecture, or go to the college.

S2: Right. Or, they can go to the college.

S1: Take CAD or programming.

S2: CAD or Programming.

S1: Yep.

S2: So, if they do take CAD or programming, at the college, then, those courses count as, um, part of their high school requirement. OK, and it is on the back of their transcript but it’s not counted in their GPA with us.

S4: Yeah, we can’t do that.

R: Now, that Photography course. Is that part of their high school requirement or no?

S2: No.

S4: No.

R: OK. And who pays for that?
S4: They have to pay for it if they’re doing anything in the summer, they have to pay for it.

S1: Or after school.

S4: Or after school. We pay for the CAD classes if they opt to take that or the computer science, we’ll pay for that, during the school day.

S3: But they also pay for the [local university] classes that I teach. They pay for, I mean, it’s not a lot. What is it; One hundred and twenty five dollars per semester now?

S4: Something like that.

S3: There was a time when the district paid for that. In the last couple of years, that has been student paid for it.

R: So, you’re all certified to teach a college level course?

S4: I’m not.

S3: I am. Well, I wouldn’t be able to teach the class if I didn’t have my masters in Spanish.

R: So, now, through the local college, can you explain that a little bit, just quickly, what that is?

S3: Well, they have a program called Course Ahead and they hire us as an adjunct. And we send to them, they give us, um, more or less, the syllabus of the course that’s taught there. And then we write a curriculum based on that using the same books. And they accept it or not. And then, once we’re teaching the class, we have a teacher that comes and observe us here and then they write up, uh, an observation. So, we’re evaluated like an adjunct.

R: And that course is for college credit or high school credit or both?

S3: College credit. But they do get, they get both. They get their credits here, right?

S2: Hmm, um.

S3: And they get college credit if they opt for it. Now, there could be students in the class that say, “I don’t really want the [local college] college credits”, so they don’t pay for that. But they have that option.

S1: It’s the same thing with our engineering curriculum: But they can opt to take, but we actually give them the RC, which is a college credit exam here, and if I report all the grades to RIT, and then they have the option of paying two hundred dollars
for the three credit course. It’s up to them. If they don’t like the grade they got, they only got a B and they really wanted an A, then they don’t have to do it, so.

S3: Well, they have to decide sooner for us. They won’t know what their grade is. They have to decide in time for registration because they actually register for the course.

QUESTION 8:

S4: Too much.

S2: Bend over backwards.

S3: Absolutely.

R: How so?

S4: We give APs here and, um, a lot of the students want to take APs outside of what we teach, like, say, AP History, for example, which we don’t have here. Um, we’ve had to tell the teachers, well, [the principal] has had to tell them, “please, no extra help”, because the kids will come to the teachers and the teachers will help, and they just, there’s so much, you know, help as far as academic support, or staying after, or if they’re absent, or…

S2: Or coming in early. Staying late.

S4: It’s big time.

R: And how do they take an AP course if you’re not teaching it? Where do they take that?

S4: They take it here. They pay for it. Otherwise, we pay for it. They pay the eighty four dollars if it’s not taught here.

S2: For the test.

S1: For the test. The course they don’t pay for.

S2: Right.

R: Oh, OK.

S3: If they prepare themselves for the test, I thought you couldn’t take the AP unless you were in a course?

S2: No. [The principal] interviews them and they have to demonstrate what they’re doing to prepare. Some of them take an outside course, some of them study on their own, somebody’s mother might be, you know, the language teacher or whatever it
might be, um, and, if [the principal] feels that they are prepared then he will permit
them to take that test.

S3: And with Spanish, I do not teach an AP class but the students who are in that
higher level course are pretty well prepared for the AP, so it's up to them if they want to
take the AP. And I will supply them with practice tests. I'll meet them during lunch and
practice the listening, speaking sections. It depends on how many students opt for it.
Sometimes, I'll do work in the class, but, um, usually, it's their, um, responsibility to fill
in the gaps.

QUESTION 9:

S3: None at all.

R: None at all?

S3: We don't have absenteeism do we?

S4: We do have certain students that go over the limit, and they get a letter sent
home after ten days and then another after fifteen. But, it's handful.

S1: The drop out rate is basically, after the first freshman or sophomore year, if
they can't cut it, they go back to their home schools.

S4: Right.

S3: And then we don't know if they drop out in the end.

S2: We have one hundred percent college admission.

R: How often do kids actually decide, I guess, to go back to their home schools?

S4: It just depends from year to year. Some years, we have, like, six freshmen. I
remember last year...

S2: Was it last year?

S4: I don't know. But, it just depends on the year.

S3: It depends on the year. The senior year, this year, had no drop outs which...

S4: Last year, we had one.

S3: We had one last year. This year, we had some freshmen leaving. And often it
is because their parents convince them to come here and then they realize this is too
much for me.
S4: They miss their peers.

S3: And not only that, this is very focused on pre-engineering, and they say, "This is not for me."

S4: Right.

S3: So, they decide that, it is, it's, there's definitely a focus here.

QUESTION 10:

S4: The secretary will call, for the day, and then she'll send the ten day letter. And there's an attendance committee that sends a fifteen day letter asking for doctors' notes.

QUESTION 11:

S3: We email them.

S2: Constantly.

S1: A lot. The phone is hard.

S3: I sometimes call, because I do have one student whose parents don't ever look at their emails. I don't even know if they even listen to the many messages I've left on the phone, because, sometimes, I don't get responses. But, we're pretty much in charge of doing that for ourselves.

S2: We have a phone log in the office and all teachers, every time they contact a parent, whether it's, um, well, in that case, by phone, they have to document that they've made a phone call home. Um, and they're encouraged...

S3: I document my emails there too.

S2: Oh, that's good. I was going to say you should. Um, and if they don't document their emails, then they're encouraged to keep them.

S3: Yeah, I keep them for one student because he gets a lot.

S2: So that you have the documentation to back up whatever it is that you're talking about. And then, um, in terms of students that aren't succeeding, uh, sometimes [the guidance counselors] would get involved if the kid is having difficulty, um, for a number of reasons, if it's behavioral, or social, or academic, um, and we may end up having to have a conference with the parent here. Um, but before that would occur, um, we've done what's called a round table where we have a meeting with all of the student's teachers to discuss what the issues are and what, uh, have been helping in one
classroom, and kind of strategize, you know, what to do with the student. And then, we would bring the parent in after that.

R: Now, how often would you say you have to do that? How often is that part of your daily routine? Calling parents or emailing parents, documenting?

S3: Depends on the year.

S1: I don’t think it’s a daily thing.

S3: No.

S2: I email parents almost daily.

S4: Yeah.

S3: Yeah, because you’re guidance counselors.

S2: Right.

S3: Right? I think that’s more of a...I have, this year, I have a couple of students that, you know, maybe every two weeks, I have to get in touch with the parent.

S1: The parents are requesting, like, an update. They do that a lot.

S3: Yes.

S4: I think the hard part here too is we have students at [the local community college], when they’re seniors, they take what’s called [mumbled], phys ed, they take a short story class, and I’ll get the grades at the end. Or the professor will call me, that professor, because of the privacy act, does not have to call me until the end of the year. Then I found out, I should say the semester, then I find out, and that upsets the parent, but we can’t do anything and the parents can’t do anything, so that ruffles some feathers.

R: And how bout on the other end of it when kids are doing really, really well? Who contacts home when that’s occurring? Or do you contact home?

S3: I only contact home when it has to do with a student that has had problems, and then if there’s a success, I make sure they know, because you don’t want to demoralize the parents.

S1: And every marking period, on our grades, there’s an opportunity to put some comments or numbers saying “improving”, you know, “improvement noted”, you know, then you can write little things. I tend to use that.

S3: We have progress reports.
S1: Progress reports, yeah.

S3: Which are after, uh, five weeks? Half way through the ten weeks, yeah?

S1: So there’s where, kind of our forced opportunity to say what’s going on, what’s good, what’s bad.

S3: Yes, right.

S2: And then, anytime, students, um, receive some sort of accolade, whether it was for research or a competition, or whatever, it’s usually put on the [loudspeaker], in the news, we run it on the, uh, flat screen TV, um, you know, so that the community is aware of it, the parents are aware of it, the teachers are aware of it, um.

S1: Pep rallies, yeah, academic pep rallies.

QUESTION 12:

S3: Are we involved? Well, we do our own...

S1: Ordering, the budget we don’t...

S3: Oh, yeah. We have to get three quotes for every thing that we’re requesting to purchase.

S1: That’s not on the approved bid list.

S3: That’s not on the approved, like, that one catalogue. But, if we do a field trip, it’s a tremendous amount of work. We have to get, we have to fax out like fifteen sheets for quotes, and, hopefully, you get three back so you can get the best quote. Um, what else? I mean, the budget? We don’t really know what the budget is.

S2: No, we’re never told that you have this amount of money, but I’ve never been told that I couldn’t order something except for the copy machine. I’ve been trying to get a copy machine for years.

S1: That makes a lot of sense.

S3: It does make a lot of sense.

S2: Um, instead of walking down the hall to make all the copies, but, um, they don’t say, “Oh, guidance, you have this much to spend.”

S3: No.
S2: And they usually emphasize, you know, “Take a look at what you ordered last year, if you don’t need exactly what you ordered, you know, try to be economical, yada, yada.” Um, but I think that most teachers would say if you need it, for educational purposes, you get it. Wouldn’t you say that? I mean, I know in science they do. They get everything.

S1: Yeah, we get what we need.

S2: And tech does too. And, any, if they need it for the curriculum, it doesn’t matter, they’re getting it.

R: If I can ask a quick side question about that because this came up before. And it’s not necessarily written here. Since this is a pre-engineering themed school, but not every teacher is a pre-engineering teacher, how do the teachers feel about their subject if their subject is not pre-engineering? Is everything fitting in?

S2: You’ve got the right person over here.

S1: I’m going to hear it now.

S3: No. Well, first of all, um, we don’t anything from the, uh, administration if we do a field trip. Whereas the pre-engineering, um, science, and math are funded, OK, which means that we have to, uh, fill out a ton of paperwork now, and ask the PFA to help us out. And then we have to ask the kids to pay a lot of money. Um, I’m sitting on my hands, I don’t know why. I think that we, um, there have been many times where world languages have gotten the shaft, on a lot of things, because, um, and I can’t even think of all of the times, but I’ve often received the response, “well, the focus of the school is pre-engineering, math, and science”, and, then, therefore, you just shut up, because that’s it, right? Um, we were recognized for being a model school in world languages, um, which was not truly, there were no accolades there, like...

S2: Well, we recognized it in the building.

S3: In the building, yeah, but the administration...

S2: Outside administration acted like it was just another day.

S3: Well, that’s because, our superintendent is the person that spearheaded the, um, and the standards, at the top, to remove world languages as a requirement in high school. So, therefore, um, it’s very clear, you can take it from there.

R: OK. And now back to that question. We’ve talked about teacher influence in budget. How bout teacher influence in curriculum and discipline?

S1: Curriculum, I think we all are, we’re kind of responsible for our own, right? Updating, and changing...
S2: Yes, there’s curriculum committees and we work on that as part of staff development and we work in, you know, our own disciplines. As far as being involved with discipline, uh, that, we really don’t. The teachers are encouraged to handle situations in their own classroom. Um, and they can give a detention, a lunch detention, um, and they are encouraged to come to guidance and notify us about that.

Um, there have been other decisions that were made, with, um, administration, beyond the building, about, uh, discipline and calling things tier one and tier two discipline, so that, um, you didn’t have to report on a college application that a student was suspended because you would ruin their educational career. You know, and, um, it got to a point where there were heated emotions about an incident that had occurred, um, and the students had a lunch detention, um, for something that was very serious. If it had occurred in a college, they would have been kicked out.

S4: Right, yeah.

S3: I think that, sometimes, um, there’s a feeling in administration that these sorts of things don’t happen here. You know, um, so, “you didn’t see it, did you?”

S4: Because you’re number seven in the nation. All that glitters is not gold.

S2: Yeah, we always say that the rug is getting bigger. You know, just keep sweeping it under the rug and there’s this big bump in the middle that nobody, nobody acknowledges that there’s a bump in the rug.

S1: So that’s what that is.

R: But you wouldn’t say that bump in the rug is equivalent to, say, a school with two thousand kids, or would you? Like your issues that you’re dealing with, or would you?

S3: I think the issues themselves are important.

S2: The issues are the same.

S4: The mental health issues are unbelievable. [The guidance counselors] deal, you can’t even imagine, it’s big and there’s a lot of baggage.

S3: Part of the reason that…there’s a lot of pressure on these kids, and so that comes to the surface very easily here. We’re asking a tremendous amount from them.

S1: Day in, day out.

S3: Day in, and day out, so, yeah, you, that’s why I think a lot of teachers, uh, fold when the kids are complaining, because you say, gosh, you know, like, if my daughter was putting up with this, would I want to see this, you know, you’re a human being.
S4: And we don’t have the services like the big schools. We don’t have a SAC, a substance abuse counselor, we don’t have a child study team, you know, and, so, and we don’t have a VP, so, you only have a limited amount of people. And we’re not complaining, it’s just that there are issues here that an outside agency needs to deal with. So, we do have those agencies, and the students are sent to the agencies, you know, with parental contact, but, um, yeah, I think, sometimes, the big boys don’t see that.

S3: And they are all boys too. I had to say that.

QUESTION 13:

S2: Um, I feel that there’s, um, adequate opportunities for staff development.

S3: If you seek it out.

S2: Right, if you seek it out, number one. And then, sometimes, they will allow you to go if it is out of the district, um, at least for guidance as well. You have to get it approved, and you have to claim why it would help you professionally, and how is it going to benefit the students. Um, they, the model that we’re following is, because we have these, um, five built into, you know, the calendar, um, in-service days, that we should be able to service ourselves.

S3: Yes... If I can say one thing... It is not staff development, truly, because we, it’s not as if, I mean, sometimes, we have a keynote speaker the first day, but there’s not staff development. We service them on our in-service. We write curriculum then. That’s when we write the curriculum now. We don’t have curriculum writing in the summer like we used to, so.

S1: We used to get paid.

S3: And we used to get paid, we don’t anymore. So, those in-service days that are built-in are in the service, I truly do not view those as professional development. And I think that, that, is something that lacks in this school district. I really do.

S4: Good point.

S2: I agree. I think it used to be much better. Um, we had a lot more, um, in-service programs, and you could actually sign-up for in-service programs. I remember signing up for them, and you could get paid part time hourly wage, uh, for attending them.

S3: Yes.

S2: And that fell by the wayside as well. Now, if you are permitted to go out of district for training, you are expected to come back and turn key it and teach the other people, which is not a bad idea, in and of itself, um, but...
S3: But you don’t get paid for that either.

S2: No.

S4: No. And you don’t get the same, uh, experience. Like, if [the other guidance counselor] and I are really interested in something, we can’t go together. You know, or, if I see one school, [the other guidance counselor] can’t go there. You know, so, and it’s, you can’t see it on the computer the way you would if you went there.

R: Why do you think the change?

S3: Money.

S4: Yeah.

S3: It’s always money. But I can say that this is something that was even recognized by an outsider. Um, when they came in to view, when we had gotten the, uh, model world language program, we had a, uh, the world language and state department of education came and she said that she thought that there was a big, um, lack of involvement in our, um, district, in going out, taking, you know, going to conferences, or even, even, uh, offering to teach. Like, I don’t have the time. I mean, I could very well go out and, you know, share my ideas on teaching world languages but I don’t have time. And I think that, um, and I think that’s a downfall. I do. I think that I’ve gotten a lot more professional development in other districts, a lot more.

R: Now, in terms of professional development that the district is giving you, what there is, how does that, does that service your needs here in this building?

S4: I would say no. We have to find our own.

S3: No.

S4: Like, the last professional development, [the other guidance counselor] and I were expected, there’s ten counselors, we were expected to, like, get a speaker, and put things together, and...

S2: And plan for a day. Outside administration called, uh,[the principal] to say, “well, what are the counselors doing and who’s organizing it?”", instead of the staff development person, you know, or the director of guidance, you know, saying “well, this is what I want to do for our counselors”.

You know, and it’s funny, because, and this ticked me off, this just happened yesterday, I received an email from the, uh, county counselors association about a workshop in May. OK, and it has all of the issues that we have been previously talking about, OK, Asperger’s Syndrome, uh, multi-depression, um, multicultural education, mutilation, all these issues that we’ve been talking about and it’s a workshop with all these topics being issued. And I sent the director an email. And I said, “Why can’t you approach the principals and say I want all of our academic counselors to attend this.
You know, we have talked about this, in the past, and nothing ever happens with it, and I am asking you, would you please do this?"

S4: And it's free.

S1: Oh, wow.

S2: And he sends me back the email that said, "If anybody wants to go to this, they need to approach their principal on their own and say that they want to go on a professional development. And then, if you haven't been out too many days in the year, or you haven't already gone on a professional development thing, then maybe you can go, and one of you can come back and teach the others.

S3: Yeah.

QUESTION 14:

S3: I think everyone's pretty proud of this, right?

S4: Hmm, um.

S1: Oh, yeah, and it's always a good thing to mention.

S3: How is it demonstrated?

S4: Well, we gave Dan a plaque. We demonstrated how proud we are of him. Before the holidays, we got a cake that said "Number 7".

S2: Well, PFA did that, right?

S4: Well, PFA, and, you know, they took our pictures and everything, [the principal] held up the cake and so forth. But what he didn't know was that, um, the PFA and we have, like, a sunshine fund, we put in and had a plaque made for him for his leadership and our appreciation of him.

R: And the PFA is?

S4: Parents Faculty Association, PFA.

S2: And at that presentation, we had, um, a member of the PFA stand up and say something about [the principal] and why they appreciated him, a member of the student body stand up and say something, and then I got up and read a little thing about how the faculty felt about him and we had called and had his wife and his children here.

S3: It was very nice.

S2: So, it was very nice.
S1: And his first girlfriend showed up. [Laughter]

S2: I don’t think [his wife] knew about that.

S3: We had her hiding.

R: And, now, um, number seven in what?

S3: The nation. Number seven in [national magazine].

R: And that was this year?

S2: Hmm, um.

S2: And number one in the state.

R: For which criteria?

S2: math, science, and technology high school.

S4: SATs, we’ve been number one for the last three years; number one in the state.

R: Congratulations.

S3: Yeah, I had nothing to do with it. [Laughter]

R: Yes, you do. Yes, you do.

S3: Only kidding.

R: Alright, does anyone else want to add anything about how they, why they’re proud, or how they’re proud, or?

S3: I think it’s, I think it feels…

S1: It’s a great place to work.

S3: Right, it’s the satisfaction that you have from teaching these students. I mean, often, I’m amazed at how they can figure things out and how you can give them a little and they can just make it into that much more. Just, it’s endless, and, um. I think, sometimes, when teachers come in, they’re almost threatened by the caliber of the students. And when you can just say, “you figure it out”, or, “I don’t know. What do you think?”, and you know that they’re thinking, that is such a great thing. I mean, I…
S4: Can I interrupt one second before I lose this thought? For years, it's called, um, CAD 211, for years, it was just CAD 211. Well, the professor was finished by the end of October. And he still has two months to go. So those students, now, instead of getting four credits, they get another three because it's 211, slash, 214, because he had to incorporate the two together. And then, the computer science, instead of just doing, like, it wasn't even an intro, it was, um, like, something right before C++, and then they have C++, well, they eliminated that first class, put in C++, and now they have JAVA, so, it's, you know, and we ask for more homework, because, when they have their labs, they're done in twenty minutes. They just, so it's hard to bring in community students to the college which used to happen.

S2: When our students are there, our students have to be in a class of their own.
S4: Right.

S3: And I can add to that. When [local college], um, sent a professor over to, um, observe my class, afterwards she said, "I can't believe what these kids are doing in here. Even my kids in college are not capable of what those kids are capable of." And it's true, they are quite amazing.

S4: They're always flying somewhere. This week, we have a student, three students were picked to fly to MIT for the week, he got money, he got a laptop, he gets to go to classes all week, they're flying him home Saturday. You know, in the meantime, he sends us emails on what's going on.

S3: Yeah, pages long. Half way through that, I said, oh, I don't think I have time for this. Blow by blow of "oh, and then we went here and had a piece of pizza." [Laughter]

S4: So, there's a lot of opportunities for them to go all over.

S3: And I can say that, um, we take these kids on trips, and we have, for the last two summers, done trips abroad and these kids are excellent. I mean, they don't get into trouble, they're always there when you say to be there, and it's such a pleasure. You know.

S1: Win a lot of competitions on the national level.

S3: Yeah.

R: Thank you so much.