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Teaching As Reflective Practice: Papers by Teacher Researchers

MERC Teacher Researchers
Virginia Commonwealth University

TEACHING AS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: PAPERS BY TEACHER RESEARCHERS

Submitted by:

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WHY DO THEY HIDE THEIR HANDS?

Question: Does a token economy work to motivate children both academically and bahaviorally? Why doesn't it work for all children?

Rebecca Miller, Teacher
Tracy Pausic, Teacher
Bailey Bridge Middle School
Chesterfield County Public Schools

WHY DO THEY HIDE THEIR HANDS?

QUESTION: DOES A TOKEN ECONOMY WORK TO MOTIVATE
CHILDREN BOTH ACADEMICALLY AND BEHAVIORALLY? WHY
DOESN'T IT WORK FOR ALL CHILDREN?

As teachers we are constantly trying to help students succeed in
school. We re-evaluate and reflect on our strategies and techniques almost
daily. This year we found, not unlike years in the past, that we were re-
evaluating and reflecting on a growing group of students that, no matter how
we tried to meet their individual needs, they were not successful. And, in
some cases, we felt that they were actually "choosing" not to be successful.

As we began to explore this question we came up with as many
questions as answers. In search of what motivates this illusive group of
children, we were first going to try and make a home/school connection.
But, this ultimately became only one component of a bigger question which
took us down a road we did not expect. We decided that the best way to
identify what motivates children is to go directly to the source and ask them
what motivates them. We accomplished this in two ways. First, we had
each student complete a survey about their home environment to attempt to
correlate their motivation at home to their motivation at school. Secondly,
we interviewed them in an informal setting to see if we could get further

feedback.

Areas in which we were trying to develop connections were: birth order, amount of time spent alone, persons with which the students desired to spend more quality time, family dynamics, and family activities. We even explored whether or not the students ate dinner as a family. The results of these surveys were far less startling than we hoped. It seemed that there was no discernible difference in the children who were motivated by our token economy program at school and those who were not. The one noticeable difference, however, did lie in those students who had a male role model in the home. Please make note of the fact that we did not say "father", because the role model did not necessarily have to be a father figure. At times they were step-fathers and even older brothers. Another factor in our study was the socioeconomic status of the child's family. The students whose parents struggled financially were also the ones for whom our token economy held no interest.

In William Glasser's The Quality School, Managing Students Without Coercion, Glasser redefines Maslow's hierarchy of needs and whittles them down to five specific needs: survival, love, power, fun, and freedom. He also states:

> "For all practical purposes, there are few significant differences
> among us in what we need.
> Where we differ significantly is in how successful we are in getting it.
> . . . Children from affluent homes. . . . get more help from their
> parents as they learn to satisfy their needs."

We, therefore have to draw the conclusion that we are not meeting their needs. Students who do not have a male role model in the home are often hesitant to "risk" committing their time and energies to something in which they may be let down, or the rules might change. This conclusion is supported by Dr. Glasser in the following passage:

> "Some students disrupt in school hoping that the parent they do not
> see enough of will get involved, because even negative attention from
> this parent is better than the small amount of attention they now
> receive. If there is no father or male in the home, as is often the case,
> then the school should encourage the mother to have a male relative or
> friend spend some time with the student."

As mentioned previously we have developed a token economy incentive program in the sixth grade at Bailey Bridge Middle School. This program was developed for two reasons. One was to provide a way in which to manage slight infractions in behavior, and also to provide positive and immediate feedback to the students for behaving in an acceptable manner. The other reason was to create a means by which we could reward the students with an activity whereby all the students on the entire grade level could come together for "fun". The main ingredient of our token economy is

the "credit card". When students begin the sixth grade they receive a credit card. This card is attached to their Daily Assignment Notebook (DAN) which is supposed to be carried with them at all times. The program is designed to be a positive reinforcement program with both short and long term goals. The students are able to obtain stamps for doing homework, attending school, helping other students, exhibiting good behavior, working cooperatively, getting good grades, bringing materials to class, wearing team/school colors, and being a good citizen. They spend stamps for restroom, water, and locker passes which is the student's option. It is possible for students to have stamps taken away on less frequent occasions such as misbehavior, talking in class, or not bringing materials to class. Every two weeks students are able to spend their stamps in our team store. They can buy homework passes, drink passes, candy, school supplies and prizes with a certain number of stamps. This is their immediate reward. The children are also charged with the job of earning 100 stamps, both used and unused, on their credit card by the end of the nine weeks in order to attend the Big Event.

For 95% of our students this is entirely effective. At one time or another, however, there are approximately 20% of our students that don't buy into this program each nine weeks. Even more interesting is that this

year there were six students, or aproximately 5%, who were never able to earn their way to the Big Event. We also noted that these same students were also struggling academically, and two out of the six were possible retentions. This caused us to wonder how we could change the credit card system to entice those children into buying in to the program. Two questions came to mind:

> *Is this purely an organizational problem of forgetting the Daily Assignment Notebook ,or is it simply not important enough to the students to make the effort?

> *Is it not "cool" to want to go to the Big Event?

We found through personal interviews that 10 out of 10 students wanted to go to the Big Event. Which disproved the theory that it is not acceptable to go the Big Event. We did, however, find that forgetting the DAN was a major problem with all of the children interviewed. Why was this such a problem? The students appear to have organizational problems that spill over into every aspect of their academic life, affecting grades, homework completion rates, and participation in the Big Event.

We decided to observe the children to attempt to note some possible similarities between them. One distinct similarity was that when given the chance to obtain stamps, the children rarely took it. And, on those rare

occasions when they were to be awarded stamps, those same children did not have their credit card! We wondered if we tattooed the credit card to the back of these students' hands would they be successful? And, through these observations, we decided that they would rather hide their hand.

We observed that this group was composed of 99% boys. When reviewing prior academic folders from previous school years, we found these students were often described as capable, bright, but not working to potential. They needed to concentrate on work and study habits, organization, and some classroom behaviors.

During our study we located two students with similar family dynamics, but with vastly different scenarios as far as school and life were concerned. Student 1 was a male student who is the youngest of six children. He lives in his home with only his mother; the father is neither present in the home, nor available to him. When investigating his academic background we found that he excels in school and sports. He has attended every Big Event this year. This student is a very popular boy among both the male and female students. He "hangs" with the cool crowd and has many friends. When asked which adult he most liked to talk to and most admired it was his mother. But, we noticed that he also mentioned his two older brothers. Leading us to believe that they are comparable role models

for this youngster.

Meanwhile, we interviewed our non-participator, Student 2. He does not excel in school, maintains behavior problems, and has not gone to a Big Event this year. He is fairly well-liked by his peers and says that the Big Event is important to him. But, when asked which adult he most liked to talk to and most admired, it was a displaced dad who is allowed only limited visitation with his son. Does he also have other role models? He mentioned his two brothers who are similar to his dad and both dropped out of school at an early age. Obviously, Student 2 feels the system has let him down and has not developed the compensatory skills of Student 1, even though his father is ever so slightly in the picture.

How did life, expectations, goals and success turn out so differently for these two young men? It seems to begin with stability or a sense of stability. These children, our group of hand hiders, if you will, will not take the risk. They seem to be afraid to trust as the system has failed them time and time again. Any kind of an attempt on their part gives them a false sense of hope and sets them up for self-defeat. They wait for the moment that the bottom drops from beneath them as it has so many time before.

In an article from the May 22 issue of the Richmond Times Dispatch, Bill

Lohmann addressed these issues with statistics from the Virginia Department of Health. He stated:

> "Father absence also has been linked to a lack of educational achievement as well as cognitive and social development among children. Children in single-parent homes were found to be almost twice as likely to drop out of high school as children from two-parent homes. They also have an increased risk of being involved in delinquency and violent crime."

> "All of which is not to say every child in a single-parent household is going to grow up to be a deadbeat. It is to say, however, that growing up in a single-parent household is another hurdle to clear."

How do we as teachers meet this need for stability and this yearning for the "love" of an adult that is not available? We believe mentoring programs and consistent parent contacts, good and bad, continue to move us, both the student and the teacher, down the road of success.

In conclusion, we found that for some students the Big Event may not be immediate enough reward for them. In the educational arena we have observed that these children are not goal-oriented as reflected by their academic records and progress. Which brings us to some interesting questions to ponder. Do these children know how to set goals for themselves? Where is this learned? Is it possible that one of the most important traits of a good male role model is his goal setting abilities? And, has the lack of a male role model in these children's lives led to their

inability to learn to set goals for themselves?

We feel a significant parallel can be drawn between these students' attendance at the Big Event, which is based on long term rewards, and setting lifetime goals. Is it possible that these will be the same students who will have problems with goal setting and meeting their goals in the future? They are so unfamiliar with goals that they may not realize when they have achieved a goal. These children are lacking in a self-awareness that is keeping them from self-actualization.

Since 99% of the hand hiders were boys, we also believe that boys have a more difficult time buying into the Credit Card system, because they do not have the need for that extrinsic reward. As Dr. Glasser also states:

> "It is not the reward, but the person's evaluation of how much he or she wants the reward that determines behavior."

Research shows that boys mature at a slower rate than girls at this age, and we have observed that the need to please is not as strong in the boys as the girls.

Finally, we have determined that male students with low socioeconomic status, single parent homes, prevalent family problems, and organizational weakness are not going to buy into the same system as 95% of our students. To end on a positive note, when we first conceptualized our

research we generated a list of approximately fifteen children whom we thought had not made it to a single Big Event, but the actual number of the children we found was six. This came as a pleasant surprise!

Considering all of our findings, we have already begun to brainstorm ways in which we can modify our system in an effort to meet these students' needs in upcoming years. We will be dividing the credit card into smaller blocks of stamps to provide a more attainable goal for these students. We will take up the credit card and record stamps after each increment is met. Students will then get a new credit card. In this way, they may be able to see results quicker. We will try to incorporate more goal setting instruction through mini-lessons to strengthen the students' goal setting skills. We will support and participate in adult and student mentoring programs. And, lastly, we will allow the children to have more input in the process, from prizes in the classroom "store" to the type of Big Event to promote ownership. In the future we, as evolving teachers, need to continue to search for other behavior modifications or answers to help prevent these children from hiding their hands forever.

After reflecting on our research, a well-known poem by a well-known poet came to mind:

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."
- Robert Frost

REFERENCES

Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken". Anthology.

Glasser, M.D., William. <u>Quality School, Managing Students Without Coercion.</u>
    New York: Harper and Row, 1990.

Lohmann, Bill. "Lack of father is hard hurdle to get over." Richmond Times Dispatch,
    Wednesday, May 22, 1996.

STUDENT SURVEY
Please note
This survey is being done in conjunction with Teachers as Researchers, a graduate class sponsored by VCU. It will in no way be used to determine the grade of the student taking the survey. This information will not be published nor will anyone outside of Mrs. Pausic and I read it. It is **confidential**.

1. List the people who live in your house. Tell how each one is related to you.

2. Do you have a room of your own? If not, with whom do you share it?

3. What time do you get home from school? Who is at home when you get there?

4. How long are you home before your parents get home?

5. When do you do your homework? Where do you do it?

6. Who helps you at home with your homework when you get stuck?

7. Do you have chores at home? When do you do them?

8. Do you receive an allowance for doing chores?

9. What happens when you don't do your chores? Are there consequences when you don't do them?

10. Do you have a bedtime?

11. How many activities outside of school do you participate in?

12. How many nights a week are there planned activities in your family?

13. What is your favorite thing to do with your parents?

14. Do you eat dinner as a family?

15. Who is someone that you look up to?

16. Who is your favorite adult to talk to?

17. If you had an opportunity, to which adult would you spend more time talking? (no celebrities please!)

SURVEY   RESPONSES

1.) Birth Order
<u>youngest</u>   <u>middle</u>   <u>oldest</u>   <u>only</u>
  9   3   6   2

2.) Shared Room
<u>yes</u>   <u>no</u>
 2   18

3.) Home from school
<u>alone</u>   <u>not alone</u>
  12   8

4.) When you do homework
<u>before dinner</u>   <u>after dinner</u>   <u>whenever</u>
    13   4   2

5.) Where do you do your homework?
<u>desk/room</u>   <u>in front of T.V.</u>   <u>on the phone</u>   <u>wherever</u>
   14   2   1   2

6.) Who helps you when you are stuck on your homework?
<u>Mom</u>   <u>Dad</u>   <u>Both</u>   <u>Other</u>   <u>Sibling</u>   <u>No one</u>
 7   1   5   1   2   4

7.) Do you have chores?
<u>yes</u>   <u>no</u>
 16   4

8.) Do you receive allowance?
<u>yes</u>   <u>no</u>   <u>sometimes</u>
 8   11   1

9.) Do you have consequences for not doing chores?
<u>yes</u>   <u>no</u>
15   5

10.) Do you have a bedtime?
<u>yes</u>   <u>no</u>   <u>sometimes</u>
 9   10   1

11.) Do you eat as a family?
<u>yes</u>   <u>no</u>   <u>sometimes</u>
 8   7   5

12.) Who do you look up to?
<u>Mom</u> <u>Dad</u> <u>Both</u> <u>Siblings</u> <u>Other</u>   <u>Mom & Sibs</u>   <u>No one</u>
 3   2   3   6   4   1   1

13.) Who is your favorite adult to talk to?
<u>Mom</u> <u>Dad</u> <u>Both</u>   <u>Other</u>   <u>No one</u>
 5   5   2   5   3

14.) What adult would you like to spend more time with?
<u>Mom</u> <u>Dad</u> <u>Both</u>   <u>Other</u>
 7   6   1   6

KOALA CREDIT CARD
KIDS ON A LEARNING ADVENTURE

NAME _____   DATE _____

RULES OF CONDUCT:
1. Be in your seat and quiet when class begins.
2. Have proper supplies and completed homework each day.
3. Sharpen pencils and dispose of trash before or after class.
4. Be courteous and respect the rights and belongings of others.
5. Raise your hand to be recognized and do not talk over others.

CREDIT CARDS
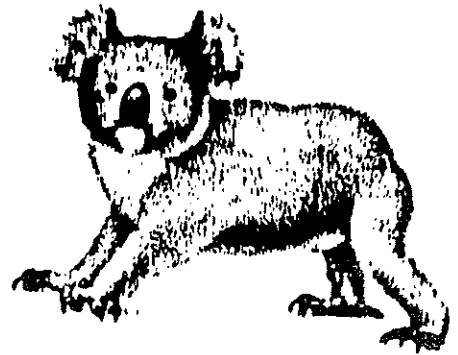
DEPOSITS

STUDENT OF THE WEEK.......................5

STUDENT OF THE MONTH...................10

BIRTHDAY.....................................3

PERFECT ATTENDANCE......................2

SILENT READING DAYS-
        MONDAYS..........................2
        FRIDAYS............................1

WITHDRAWALS

BATHROOM PASS............................5

WATER PASS..................................5

LOCKER PASS.................................5

TRESPASSING.................................5

SPACE INVADER..............................5

SPEEDING TICKET...........................5

CHEWING GUM...............................5

ADDITIONAL DEPOSITS AND WITHDRAWALS ARE LEFT TO
TEACHER DISCRETION

I am lonely and sad
I wonder if my family will be one again
I hear my cousins always saying be strong
I see happy familes, and say why not ours?
I want to be able to live with no troubles.
I am lonely and sad

I pretend there is nothing wrong
I feel like moving away.
I touch my little sisters hand and tell
them it's Alright.
I worry my sister is coming back
I cry in agony
I am lonely and sad

I understand my sister is gone
I say she will never come back
I dream she is in pain
I try not to belive
I hope one day she will be better
I am lonely and sad

The Fourth "C" of Motivation - Competition

Sharon P. Eshler
Resource Teacher
Cold Harbor Elementary School
Hanover County Public Schools

The Fourth "C" of Motivation - Competition

The idea for this study had its beginnings one cold winter day when I found myself exercising furiously on a stairstepper at the YMCA while snow piled up on the ground outside. Why was this scenario so remarkable? First, although I know it is good for me, I absolutely hate to exercise. Second, I have a deep seated primal fear of driving in snow. However, it was only by working out that I could earn points towards a waterbottle or T-shirt, and maybe become a healthier me in the process. Clearly, under the right conditions, I could become motivated.

The idea began to develop that if I could be enticed into a behavior that I knew to be good for me, but which was last on my list of choices, could we not entice children to practice reading behaviors which they would not choose on their own, but would be helpful - even critical - to their growth in skills? Could it be that even at-risk children would respond when there was the right motivation?

That summer I met Dr. Linda B. Gambrell from the National Reading Research Center, who spoke at a conference on research she had conducted concerning "What Motivates Elementary Students to Read and Write." From her two interview studies with third and fifth graders, Dr. Gambrell concluded that there are three important "C's" of motivation for young children - "...when the instructional context supports and encourages opportunities for challenge, choice, and collaboration." (Gambrell, 1995)

That fall I kept Gambrell's motivational study in mind as I began, as a Resource Teacher, a cooperative teaching experience with a second grade teacher. I would work on reading with ten

children - five of the children were reading at or above a second grade level (Group 2); five were reading at a beginning to middle first-grade level (Group 1). I introduced activities to my groups that were to be both helpful and motivational, all of which included some portions of Gambrell's requirements of challenge, choice, and collaboration. As the year wore on, I began to notice a new "C" had joined us, uninvited, but there nevertheless - competition.

Thus, this study on the *four* C's of motivation were born. With the help of my ten students, their parents and teacher, I investigated the following questions:

Which programs would motivate children, particularly the at-risk reader, to practice needed reading/writing skills? Is there a difference in programs that succeed with the child reading below grade level and the child reading on grade level?

What is the role of competition in increasing motivation ? Is competition against self motivating? Is competition within the group motivating? Is it positive?

Is there a gender difference between the boys and girls in their responses to competition?

RESEARCH /BACKGROUND

Motivation is an important issue because of the strong relationship between motivation and achievement. (Elley, 1992 and Gambrell & Morrow, in press, cited in Gambrell, 1995) It is important, therefore, to learn what influences motivation. Researchers such as M.E. Ford have found that people will attempt to reach a goal they value and think they can achieve. (Ford, 1992, cited in Gambrell, 1995). J. Eccles found that students who think they are capable readers generally outperform those who do not think they are capable, even though their skills may actually be weaker. (Eccles, 1983, cited in Gambrell, 1995).

Gambrell concluded from her interviews with young children that the three key ingredients in motivating the young elementary child are "challenge, choice, and collaboration." The task must represent a challenge, something one would perceive as "hard" in order to be highly valued. She

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suggests that "feelings of competence and accomplishment are important and that young children want to be perceived as competent literacy learners who can engage in challenging literacy activities." (Gambrell, 1995) The second "C" in Gambrell's study was the power of choice, for example, in choosing their own book to read or choosing their own topic to write about. The third "C" was the importance of collaboration. Children found it motivating to discuss their reading and writing with others.

On the basis of this research, the students' classroom teacher and I designed motivational programs which first created an environment where the children could succeed. The instructional activities would have to be helpful in the growth of reading/writing skills and appealing to children, particularly the at-risk reader. Using Gambrell's constructs, the motivating programs must offer a challenge, albeit a reachable one. Some programs would have choice as an element and some would offer opportunities for collaboration. What was unexpected was that in some programs and in some children, that fourth "C", competition, would not only emerge, but might become the #1 motivator of them all.

METHOD

The ten second-graders targeted for this study met with me four days a week throughout the year for small group instruction in reading and writing. The two groups of five children were clustered according to reading ability; each group met for 30-45 minutes. Group 1 consisted of five boys and Group 2 consisted of four girls and one boy. The at-risk population (Group 1) was tested at the beginning of the school year and in April using the Slosson Oral Reading Test for word recognition skill; Group 2 was given an informal reading inventory in October and a Slosson Oral Reading Test in April. Both groups were administered the oral reading /comprehension portion of an

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informal reading inventory in April. Each of the ten students participated in a 15-20 minute conversational interview (see appendix) in April on small group and class motivational activities. Every parent also completed a survey (see appendix) on the impact of the different reading activities in their child's performance in reading and motivation to read over the course of the year. Finally, I kept a journal to record observations of the children in the small reading groups.

CLASS READING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES

The entire class of 21 students was immersed in reading and writing experiences by the regular classroom teacher during the day. Content subjects were integrated with reading and writing. All of the students also participated daily in eight extra minutes in the computer lab for reading (known as the CCC lab). All took part in the "Accelerated Reader Program" for approximately six weeks. After reading a specific book, the child was tested on comprehension by the computer and points were awarded proportional to the number of questions answered correctly. Points translated into prizes and an extra credit "A" for the gradebook. Each student also participated in a "Book Buddy" reading program where students read to a three or four year old child from the Head Start class. The book was first approved by the classroom teacher and then taken home to be practiced. At times, books were also practiced with adult volunteers.

For homework, all students kept a "Home Reading Log" where they read for a minimum of 15 minutes each night, Monday - Thursday. They earned a sticker on a class chart for each completed log; after five stickers, students were awarded a book. Each student also had a nightly journal assignment Monday - Thursday.

Parents were actively involved in this class. There were two evening parent inservice classes, weekly communications with the teacher through the reading log, letters explaining the activities, and several opportunities for conferences. Parents were not only familiar with the programs, but were also

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very important in supporting the reading and writing homework.

In addition to the whole class activities, the two groups studied participated in several other motivational programs intended to improve reading and writing skills. An explanation of each additional program follows:

MOTIVATIONAL PROGRAMS USED IN THE TWO SMALL GROUPS

Spittin' Fast - Group 1 only

Using a name that was appealing from the start to five active boys, the purpose of "Spittin' Fast" was to help develop a sight vocabulary. Words were practiced in group and were also sent home to be practiced with the book so that they could be practiced in the context of the story. The original objective was to say the words "spittin' fast," and each time tested to be faster than the previous time. The only reward was a recording of each faster time. Soon it was apparent that the children were not practicing on their own, and so the next level of competition was developed.

Beat the Teacher - Group 1 only

This outgrowth of "Spittin' Fast" was created by the teacher to motivate the group to practice outside of group. The ultimate goal was to say the words so quickly that one could beat the teacher's ability to say them. This standard was set with the children recording the teacher's time with a stopwatch. Words were generally tested weekly with pairs of children practicing beforehand with word cards and a stopwatch. Practice was intended to take place primarily at home. Rewards included a certificate to carry home when one did "Beat the Teacher" and a sticker for the chart.

Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - Groups 1 and 2 (as well as the entire class)

All children set goals for themselves of how many words they would write in their daily homework journals. The number was put in a star on the page, and the children were to reach for

that number as they wrote the story - or go beyond the amount. Sometimes a minimum standard was required by the teacher. The next day the words written were counted and the stories read out loud to the group.

Journal Writing - First, Second, Third Place - Groups 1 and 2

This activity was suggested by the children and was an outgrowth of "Reach for the Stars." Each child competed against the others in the group for the highest number of words written in the nightly journal. After each child counted the words in his journal entry, stickers and written designations were placed in the journal for first place, second place, third place, and sometimes fourth or fifth place. Stories were read aloud beginning with the first place story, then second place, etc.

FINDINGS

1. Children's Ranking of the Motivational Programs

Student interview: *Question 8: (Of the activities listed below) which activity do you enjoy the most? Which is number 2? 3? 4?*

> *first choice* = *4 points*
> *second choice* = *3 points*
> *third choice* = *2 points*
> *fourth choice* = *1 point*

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                          TABLE 1                            │
│                                                             │
│   Group 1 (at-risk):      1. Beat the Teacher - 3.0        │
│                           2. Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - │
│  2.8                                                        │
│                           3. Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place - │
│  2.6                                                        │
│                      4. Accelerated Reader - 2.4           │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│   Group 2:                1. Accelerated Reader - 3.8      │
│                           2. Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - │
│  2.6                      3. Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place - │
│  2.4                                                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Student interview: Question 8 (continued): (Of the activities listed below) which activity teaches you the most? Which would be next? next? last?

first choice   = 4 points
second choice   = 3 points
third choice   = 2 points
fourth choice   =1 point

TABLE 2
Group 1 (at-risk):   *1. Beat the Teacher - 3.2*
2. Accelerated Reader - 2.8
3. Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars -
2.4
4. Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place - 1.6
Group 2:   *1. Accelerated Reader - 3.4*
2. Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars -
3.0   *3. Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place -*
2.8

Spittin' Fast/Beat the Teacher

Choice #1 for Group 1 as to the activity they enjoyed the most

Choice #1 for Group 1 as to the activity that taught them the most

The children in Group 2 did not participate in this activity because their word recognition skills were already strong. However, this contest was the first choice of the at-risk children in Group 1.

When asked why it was the favorite, most reflected first on its intrinsic value - "it helps us learn words."

"Learn how to read..."

"Get out of first grade words and get on to the second grade reader..."

"Gets us fast on words - Zip Zap Motor Mouth..."

They also found it to be fun - "it's exciting to do it, get to do the words faster and faster".

"It feels good. It is fun."

"I licke(like) the beet the teacher contest becos it's fun to wipe(whip) the teacher at wers(words) and to get a surtifik(certificate) for it."

Collaboration was a feature of the contest that came from within the children. When members of the group would struggle to learn the words, some of the stronger members would volunteer to

help them practice during group time or during the school day. This was motivating in itself; one child wanted to get faster in saying the words so he could help someone else.

In addition, it was very important to some that this contest did not pit children against one another, but against a standard that all could attain. "I like it because we all win. We all get a prize eventually. I don't like one person getting the thing and the rest of us left off."

In contrast to the very positive comments, one very competitive child chose this activity as his least preferred thing to do. His mother reported that at home he was really excited when he did beat the teacher; he wanted to be the best and would ask to practice the words at home. However, he explained in his interview that "sometimes I don't beat her. Makes me want to give up." and he wrote in his journal, "it's not fun. it is real heade (hard) work." He was so competitive that, in his mind, either he was a winner or a loser depending on how he did against the teacher.

Generally the thrill of beating the teacher was greatly valued and seemed the primary reward. As we discussed ways to improve the contest, the students' only suggestion was to increase the frequency of prizes. For example, the first time you "Beat the Teacher", you would get a paper certificate, the second time a star, the third time candy, the fourth time a gold slip (name announced over the PA and candy received).

In conclusion, "Beat the Teacher" may have been so popular because it has many of the C's of motivation - challenge, collaboration, and competition against a standard that was greatly valued and which all could reach with practice.

Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars

      Choice #2 for Group 1 and Group 2 as the activity they most enjoyed

      Choice #3 for Group 1 and Choice #2 for Group 2 as the activity that taught them the most

This activity was second choice for both groups as an activity they most enjoyed. The at-risk group liked it but could not articulate why we did this other than with generic comments such as, "We have to learn how to write and read...better." Group 2 saw the bigger picture of "sharing our ideas", and "getting attached to the idea (you give us to write about) so we write a lot."

Children in both groups spoke of the internal challenge - "see how high we can write stories."

"I can't believe I wrote 105. That's alot!" Many parents reported that the child got really excited going beyond the number he/she had set as a goal.

This was the contest in which competition against others soon galloped in. It began with my asking how many words each child wanted to write that night. Group time with both groups, but particularly with the at-risk group, began to sound like an auction. Often child 1 would start low, child 2 would up that number, child 3 would up their number, etc. until child 1 would want to go to round 2 and continue the cycle again. The competition of just aiming for more words than anyone else seemed important.

Competition galloped in again when we read the journal entries the next day. It started with simple comments such as, "I got more than anybody. I got 50 words..." Then some children targeted others to outdo - "I got to beat ___ and ___ and everybody in my group." Parents of children who were not doing well in "Beat the Teacher" reported that this contest was a huge motivator for their child - that he "strives to get the number of words..."

"Always wants to write more than the assigned number..."

"He's proud of the number of words he can come up with..."

With the most competitive children, this passion for having the highest number of words carried over into the classroom as well. My own journal entry of 11/8/95 states, "___ and ___ got into a competitive thing where they kept trying to outdo the other writing about 'Claude the Dog's First Halloween'. Last count they were up to three pages - pretty amazing when they couldn't even compose a sentence by themselves at the beginning of the year."

By March, the children were still looking at who had the most words, who was next, etc. In response to a journal question of "How can we improve 'Reach for the Stars?'", one child came up with the plan to write in the journals how they placed within the group. He later wrote in his journal, "I got that idea. So we can get more exciting. To try our best to get the highest score. I think that's what everybody thinks. Even ___. Sometimes he has the highest score, sometimes he doesn't." The other students wanted to try his idea of ranking their writing; I had observed that the length of stories written was beginning to decrease, and so "Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th Place" was born. Would competition against others be a motivator? Would it be healthy?

JOURNAL WRITING - 1st, 2nd, 3rd , 4th, 5th Place
Choice #3 for Group 1 and Group 2 as the activity they most enjoyed
Last choice for Groups 1 and 2 as to the activity they learned the most from

As a group, neither group 1 nor group 2 ranked this as an enjoyable activity or an activity that they learned the most from. However, Table 5 shows that competing against one another did produce an increase in words written regardless of whether this activity was perceived by the individual as positive or negative.

There was a great deal of difference in how individuals responded, however. The very competitive child who created this contest said, " I love 1st and 2nd because I get a prize. I don't want to be in 3rd, but I say OK. I get a small prize (sticker). I don't really care if I get in last place but I try to be the very top."

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Individuals from group 2 noted that it was "funner (than 'Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars')." Also "it makes you try harder and you can see who gets the most first places."

However, this activity drew the strongest criticism from individuals in both groups. One child who is often at the top of the at-risk group said, "NO! NO! NO! I don't like it. It's like one person we have to bow down and kiss his feet." Another child, this one in group 2, wrote, "It is okay. But I don't like it vary moch. Cod (could) hert pepples feelings." There were some other negatives. For the child who said it could hurt people's feelings, the contest was perceived so negatively that it produced the only decrease from the two groups in number of words written. And for a third child, it was so important to be at the top that he would appear to count each word in his story by 2's or 3's (or 5's) so that he was always in first place. After a group and private discussion about why we were doing this (to become a better writer) and honesty as a virtue, stickers had to also be given for about a week for simply counting words correctly (and even then had to be verified by the teacher).

In conclusion, both journal writing contests have many of the C's of motivation - choice of number of words to write, challenge to reach that goal, and the opportunity to collaborate by sharing the stories written.

For most of the children, the number of words written in the journal was greater when competing against others than when competing against self, even though they did not like the contest. For a few, it was such a positive motivator that they found success here that they found in no other contest.

ACCELERATED READER
Choice #1 for Group 2, Choice #4 for Group 1 as to the activity they most enjoyed
Choice #1 for Group 2, Choice #2 for Group 1 as to the activity that taught them the most

With the other contests, there was general agreement in both groups as to what was motivating. This was the only program in which there was an opposite opinion between children reading below grade level and those on grade level. The difference may be due to the higher reading ability of Group 2 which makes reading more enjoyable, and therefore more motivating.

Interestingly, children in both groups agreed that the "Accelerated Reader" taught them a great deal. Children in both groups also liked the fact that the testing was done by computer and that they could get prizes as they accumulated points. But with the exception of a few children, the groups seemed generally unmotivated by this program- the average point accumulation in six weeks of work was 2.2, representing only 4 short books read. Group 1 averaged 2.0 points (4 books read) per student, and Group 2, just slightly higher, averaged 2.4 points (about 5 books read).

Although the "Accelerated Reader" offers challenge, choice, and competition, there were other home reading programs in place. This program was not intended to be in conflict with other programs; the same book could have been used for every home reading program - the Book Buddy program, home reading log, and Accelerated Reader, but to do this, careful coordination by the child or parent was required.

2. Parent Rankings of the Motivational Activities

Parent survey: *Question 2: Do the activities listed below motivate your child at home?*

    1 - not at all
    2 - somewhat
    3 - highly motivating
    4 - I don't know (would not be scored)

TABLE 3	
Parents of Group 1	1 - Book Buddies - 3.0
	2 - Reading Logs - 2.6
	2 - Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - 2.6
	3 - Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd - 2.4
	4 - Accelerated Reader - 2.3
	5 - Accelerated Reader - 2.2
Parents of Group 2	1 - Reading Logs - 2.4
	2 - Book Buddies - 2.25
	3 - Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd - 2.2
	4 - Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - 2.0
	4 - Accelerated Reader - 1.8

Parent survey: *Question 3: Do you see the activities below impacting your child's growth in reading or writing?*

1 - not at all

2 - somewhat

3 - highly motivating

4 - I don't know (would not be scored)

TABLE 4	
Parents of Group 1	1 - Book Buddies - 3.0
	1 - Reading Logs - 3.0
	2 - Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - 2.8
	3 - Beat the Teacher - 2.6
	4 - Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd - 2.4
	5 - Accelerated Reader - 2.25
Parents of Group 2	1 - Reading Logs - 3.0
	2 - Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars - 2.6
	3 - Book Buddies - 2.4
	3 - Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd - 2.4
	4 - Accelerated Reader - 2.25

BOOK BUDDIES

Choice #1 for Parents of Group 1 as to the activity the most motivating and which teaches the most

Choice #2 for Parents of Group 2 as to the activity the most motivating and choice #3 for the activity which teaches the most

This activity was highly rated as motivating by both parents and children. Parents of the at-risk students responded that their child "liked this a lot. Initially very motivating. He would put great effort into choosing a book that his Book Buddy would like and make certain he could read it with expression."

"He likes to teach them what he knows."

"...Enjoys reading together and helping each other."

"He likes it. He's proud when he reads to others."

Parents of Group 2 added - "a real plus for his reading and his self-esteem" and "...developed some confidence here." In all the parent surveys, only one reported that their child disliked the program; the child said it was because his Book Buddy did not listen.

Again, this highly motivating activity contained three of the C's - choice of book, the challenge of mastering a book before reading it to the Book Buddy, and collaboration in sharing the book with someone who would look up to them.

HOME READING LOGS

Choice #2 for parents of Group 1 as to the activity most motivating and #1 for the activity which teaches the most

Choice #1 for parents of Group 2 as to the activity most motivating and #1 for the activity which teaches the most

This activity was highly ranked by parents for motivating their child at home and impacting the child's growth in reading. One parent of the at-risk responded that this was a "struggle at first but seems OK with it now" ; another said he "doesn't want to do it, but once he gets started he enjoys

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reading". Parents of Group 2 reported no avoidance behaviors.

ACCELERATED READER

This program was the last choice by parents. It appeared few of the children talk about the

"Accelerated Reader" at home, even though the choices of prizes were the most extensive.

CONCLUSIONS TO QUESTIONS

Question # 1: Which programs would motivate children, particularly the at-risk to practice needed reading/writing skills?

"Beat the Teacher"

The children in the at-risk group overwhelmingly endorsed this contest. Almost every day they

asked in group to be able to practice or officially try to "Beat the Teacher." Parents reported in their

survey that there was great jubilation at home and at school when one did "Beat the Teacher." They

stated "...loves this. It gives him more confidence in himself. He gets really excited."

"Likes this very much. Very proud of himself when he beats the teacher."

"Excited when he won, very proud of himself."

"He enjoys 'Beat the Teacher'."

"It's fun and he gets rewarded."

However, the parents did not report this same passion in their child to practice at home.

Perhaps this program would have been more effective if a log had been kept at home of practice

times, providing a concrete structure that they could see, and which we could reward.

"Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars"

Children and parents in both groups found this program to be very motivating, enjoyable, and

instructionally positive.

"Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place"

Although children and parents ranked this the lowest in motivation, somewhere between "not at all motivating" and "somewhat motivating", this program statistically showed that when competing against others, Group 1 increased the average length of their stories by 58% and Group 2 increased the average length of their stories by 29% (See Table 5). Within the groups, every child but one showed an increase in number of words written (See Table 6).

"Book Buddies"

Children and parents in both groups found this program which involved reading within an authentic context to be very motivating, enjoyable, and instructionally positive.

"Home Reading Logs"

This program which also placed reading within an authentic context was again ranked highly by both children and parents.

Is there a difference in motivational programs for the child reading on level and the child below level?

With most of the motivational programs, the rankings were very similar for the group reading on level and the child reading below level. The one exception was with the "Accelerated Reader" which was rated first by Group 2, and last by Group 1. The difference may be due to the higher reading ability of Group 2 which made reading more enjoyable, and therefore more motivating.

Although there were preferences by students and parents, it is worth noting that in the groups every program studied was ranked as at least somewhat motivating. Moreover, most programs fell between the higher categories of "somewhat motivating and highly motivating".

Question 2:

What is the role of competition in increasing motivation?

Competition was not originally intended to be a part of this study, but it surfaced early in both

groups. In Group 1's "Spittin' Fast", it was initially motivating to compete against oneself in saying

the words faster each time, but very quickly the growth plateaued. As a consequence, "Beat the

Teacher" was instituted, and interest in the competition and motivation to practice at school (and

sometimes at home) remains high even now. Beating the teacher in the ability to say words fast is

greatly valued by the at-risk.

Competition against the self was also evident in "Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars" as

children equaled or went beyond the number of words they had chosen to write in their nightly

journal.

Again, the children's number of words written began to decrease and at their request for

something more "exciting", some children in the at-risk group created "Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd

Place". With the exception of one child, competing against others was more motivating than

competing against the self. regardless of whether they perceived the contest positively or negatively

(see Table 5).

Table 5

COMPETITION AGAINST SELF VS. OTHERS
IN
NUMBER OF WORDS WRITTEN

	Reach for Stars (competition vs. self)	1st, 2nd, 3rd Place (competition vs. others)	Number of words added	Range of words added	% Increase
Group 1	26	41	+15	7 to 27	57%
Group 2	31	40	+9	-10 to 22	29%

However,

some students indicated there were negative effects of this contest, such as having their feelings hurt,

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or the issue of those in the lead wielding power, real or perceived. There was also a great deal of variability in how the students responded - some students were highly motivated when competing against others; some were hardly motivated. See Table 6.

Table 6

DIFFERENCE BY INDIVIDUAL CHILD IN GROUP 1
in
AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORDS WRITTEN IN THE JOURNAL

Group 1	Reach for Stars (competition vs. self)	1st, 2nd, 3rd Place (competition vs. others)	Number of words added	% Increase
Todd	35.5	56.2	20.7	58 %
John	29.3	41.7	12.4	42 %
Jason	18	26.5	8.5	47 %
Andrew	19	45.5	26.5	139 %
Will	27.7	34.6	6.9	25 %

DIFFERENCE BY INDIVIDUAL CHILD IN GROUP 2
in
AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORDS WRITTEN IN THE JOURNAL

Group 2	Reach for Stars (competition vs. self)	1st, 2nd, 3rd Place (competition vs. others)	Number of words added	% Increase
Anna	28.9	48.3	19.4	67 %
Matt	21.3	22.8	1.5	7 %
Ellie	17.2	30.1	12.9	75 %
Diane	38	27.7	-10.3	-27 %
Liz	50.6	72.1	9	32.8 %

Question 3: Is there a gender difference in competition?

As evidenced by their comments, the 5 boys of Group 1 seemed more overtly competitive than the four girls in Group 2, particularly in journal writing. As a rule, the boys of Group 1 would start the group by concerning themselves with how many words everyone else had written. They would re-count their words loudly or softly, depending on their best guess as to how they would place within the group. If I commented on how they ranked for the day, the boys

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generally would re-announce their position if they had placed first or second, and which selected individuals they had beaten. Third place seemed a neutral zone. With fourth place, they said very little, unless it was to comment on which child had been beaten. One boy wanted to win so badly, he would always end up with the highest number of words - but refused to let anyone (including the teacher) see the journal. The competition would continue when they were given their new journal assignment and each had to decide how many words he would aim for that night. It was at this point that the group sounded like the auction gearing up to go several rounds. One parent commented that this particular contest was " a good incentive" for her child - "He's not real proud when he gets 4th place."

Within the group of boys, however, there was a great deal of variation in the number of words written. The only boy in Group 2 increased his number of words written when competing against others by only 1.5 words. He also ranked this competition very low in enjoyability and how much he learned from it. In contrast, the other boys, all members of Group 1, increased the average number of words they wrote to 15. (See Table 6) It is possible that the one boy of group 2 was intimidated by all the girls in his group, or that he did not value competing against girls, or that he was not motivated by competition against others. It may also be that due to a handwriting difficulty, he found writing to be a struggle.

There were other gender differences beyond the number of words written. The girls in Group 2 did not continuously jockey for position like the boys did. They commented on how they placed, but not on whom they had "beaten". Some parents of the girls reported that there was pride in self when they did well: "...very proud of her writing journal - she likes to show me how many 1st and 2nd places she has."

"Sometimes she talks about having many words on her journal as if it was an accomplishment."

Table 8
GENDER DIFFERENCES
in
AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORDS WRITTEN

	Reach for Stars (vs. self)	1st, 2nd, 3rd Place (vs. others)	Number of words added	Range of words added	% Increase
Boys Average	25.1	37.9	12.8	1.5 to 26.5	51 %
Girls Average	33.6	44.6	11	-10.3 to 21.5	33 %

Although the girls' percentage of increase was not as large as the boys'(See Table 8), the girls did write more when competing against others than competing against self. The girls were certainly competitive against others, but more quietly so.

One could conclude on the basis of this data that both males and females responded to competition against each other more than competing against self. One could also conclude that competition manifested itself differently between the sexes. When looking at the numbers which indicated that the boys' percentage of increase was higher, one needs to consider that the boys were clustered in Group 1 and consequently started at a lower level than the cluster of girls in Group 2. Perhaps the boys simply had more room in which to improve.

CONCLUSION

This study was not intended to show what motivates every child to read and write, but to gain insights into what changes occurred in motivation and in skills with my ten students. The motivational programs began before this MERC study were even considered. But by the end of October when this study was a possibility, the children knew we were embarking on a project together, and they took my "homework" seriously. Perhaps too seriously; one child asked if he could have my journal - the

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one I recorded observations in - when I died!

Throughout the year we learned. We talked about and wrote about our thoughts and ideas for improving programs. We all looked at ourselves as vibrant learners. At times I was the teacher organizing, at times I was a facilitator, and at times they were clearly the ones rolling with a new idea to make reading and writing better... "funner" ...or more exciting.

They were also part of a very busy classroom, lovingly taught, challenged, and encouraged by their energetic and knowledgeable classroom teacher. Their parents were involved in their growth, communicating and collaborating with the teacher. With these supports in place, it is worth noting that nine of the ten children studied made dramatic progress (see Appendix) in their skills, and one made average progress. It would be difficult to say if an increase in skill was the impetus for the increase in motivation, or if the increase in motivation was the impetus for the increase in skill.

The data from this study indicated that with the reading motivational programs, the children of Group 1 loved "Beat the Teacher", highly valued for its challenge. Parents and children in both groups also rated highly "Book Buddies" and "Reading Logs", both of which put reading in authentic contexts - reading real literature for real reasons. These three programs also provided opportunities to collaborate, sometimes in a paired practice against the teacher, sometimes in a supportive reading environment with a parent, sometimes when reading to a younger student who looked up to you.

In writing, the group responded to competition against self in "Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars", and even more, to competition against each other in "Journal Writing - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place". They were competitive regardless of gender, although the competition manifested itself differently between the sexes. The boys were much more verbally competitive than the girls, and jockeyed for position within the group. It is worth noting that the students in both groups bonded together as an eager group of learners, even though they were competitive with one another. Especially in Group 1

where the competition was not only obvious but ever-present, the boys bonded together both in and out of group. The response to competition varied with the individual, but in some children competition was a strong positive influence.

The majority of children were motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, but there were two exceptions. One child's comments on the survey related only to extrinsic motivators. She was highly motivated by the stickers, prizes, and place within the group. Her reading behaviors could easily be molded through the offering of a prize, and she showed great improvement over the year in her reading development. The second child was motivated only by intrinsic factors and she did not respond to any motivational program. She was ranked toward the bottom of the groups regardless of whether it was 'Accelerated Reader' points, home reading logs returned, or placing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in journal writing. It would be interesting to discover why some people respond so readily to some kind of motivation, extrinsic or intrinsic, and others do not. Furthermore, what is the role of extrinsic/intrinsic motivation in getting children to read on their own. If the external motivators begin to plateau, then do internal ones take over? Will the children now read more without the motivational strategies?

It would also be interesting to see if there is a "shelf life" of motivational programs. Like the lottery, do they need to keep changing in order to keep our interest high? By the end, the first journal writing program did not motivate the children to write more; had it simply run its course? Or was the improvement in words written with the second journal writing program due to its competitive nature? Or could the improvement be attributed to the children's growth in skills?

These are questions to consider for further research. However, there have been many factors that have emerged from this study that may be of help to elementary teachers who have a similar population of at-risk readers:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Motivational programs are powerful tools for developing appropriate reading behaviors in children. However, there is a great deal of variability in how children respond. Be sensitive to the individual's response.

Change your motivational program when it appears that it is no longer producing the reading behavior you want.

Involve the children in developing the motivational program. They can help you develop the "rules" as well as the rewards.

Competition against self is a valuable motivator. Competition against the group is an even stronger motivator for many children, but needs to be used with caution. This is a negative motivator for some individuals, and may need to be coupled with team building experiences as well.

Both girls and boys are motivated by competition, although they may respond differently.

"Beat the Teacher" is a motivating program for its challenge, competition and opportunities to collaborate. To make it better, develop a structure for recording time spent in practice.

Other motivating programs are highly valued when they put reading and writing in authentic contexts. Examples include "Book Buddies" and "Home Reading Logs".

The prizes themselves seem less significant than the reward of reaching the goal and being recognized for the accomplishment.

Consider "challenge", "choice", "collaboration", and "competition" when creating motivational programs for reading and writing.

The motivation to improve in reading becomes another "C" - contagious.

Appendix

Group 1 Skill Growth

Slosson Oral Reading Test (word recognition)

	Todd	John	Jason	Andrew	Will
11-95	1.48	1.9	1.6	1.8	1.1
04-96	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.2	2.1
Gain in 5 months	1.82	1.0	1.1	0.4	1.0
Average gain 1.08					

Informal Reading Inventory (word recognition, oral reading, comprehension)

	Todd	John	Jason	Andrew	Will
September Word Recognition					
PP1	90 %	100 %	75%	75%	70 %
PP2	55 %	85%	45%	55%	30%
PP3					
Primer					
April Word Recognition					
Primer	95 %	100%	100 %	80 %	80 %
Level 1	100 %	100 %	100 %	85 %	45 %
Level 2-1	80 %	75 %	65 %	15 %	15 %
April Oral Reading					
Level 1	100 %	100 %	100 %	98 %	89 %
Level 2-1 /comprehen.	94/100 %	99/100 %	99/100 %	93/50 %	91/100 %
April Silent Reading Comprehen.					
Level 2-1	83 %	100 %	100 %	33 %	66 %

Group 1 Skill Growth
(continued)

Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) Lab Results

	Todd	John	Jason	Andrew	Will
CCC Grade Level in Initial Reading - September	1.48	2.09	1.64	1.98	1.59
CCC April	1.95	2.60	2.30	2.39	1.99
Net Gain	0.47	0.51	0.66	0.41	0.4
	satisfactory	satisfactory	satisfactory +	satisfactory -	satisfactory -

Accelerated Reader

	Todd	John	Jason	Andrew	Will
Points Received/ Points Possible	1.9/2.0	3.4/4.0	1.9/2.0	1.0/2.5	1.1/1.5
% Comprehen.	95 %	85 %	97 %	84 %	77 %

Home Reading Logs Returned

	Todd	John	Jason	Andrew	Will
% Home Reading Logs Returned	33 %	66%	90 %	81 %	66 %

How They Appear to be Motivated According to the Interview Responses

	Todd	John	Jason	Andrew	Will
	Extrinsically Intrinsically	Extrinsically Intrinsically	Extrinsically Intrinsically	Extrinsically Intrinsically	Extrinsically Intrinsically

Group 2 Skill Growth

Informal Reading Inventory (word recognition, oral reading, comprehension)

	Anna	Matt	Ellie	Diane	Liz
September Word Recognition					
PP3	80 %	100 %	100%	95%	100% (2/96)
Primer		100 %	85%	85%	100 %
Level 2-1		100 %			90 %
Level 2-2		100 %			50 %
April Word Recognition					
Level 2-1	90 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	95 %
Level 2-2	70 %	100 %	100 %	85 %	60 %
April Oral Reading					
Level 2-2/ comprehend.	99/100		99/100	96/100	97/100
Level 3-2/ comprehend.		99/75			
April Silent Reading Comprehend.					
Level 2-2	100 %		100 %	100 %	50 %
Level 3-2		100 %			

Slosson Oral Reading Test (word recognition)

	Anna	Matt	Ellie	Diane	Liz
4-96	3.2	4.6	4.1	3.6	3.3

Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) Lab Results

	Anna	Matt	Ellie	Diane	Liz
CCC Grade Level in Initial Reading - September	2.85 IR	2.55 IR	1.89 IR	2.0 IR	1.85 (February)
CCC April	3.47 RW*	3.42 RW*	2.80 IR	2.53 IR	1.97 IR
Net Gain	0.31*	0.54*	0.91	0.53	0.12
(combination of time on computer and growth)	satisfactory	outstanding	outstanding	satisfactory	satisfactory

*because the child graduated into a new program, gains were computed by determining the gains for each program separately

Group 2 Skill Growth
(continued)

Accelerated Reader

	Anna	Matt	Ellie	Diane	Liz
Points Received/ Points Possible	3.5/3.5	2.9/3.5	4.5/8.5	1.0/1.0	0.3/0.5
% Comprehen.	100%	90 %	71.4 %	100 %	60 %

Home Reading Logs Returned

	Anna	Matt	Ellie	Diane	Liz
% Home Reading Logs Returned	100 %	100 %	29 %	43 %	NA

How They Appear to be Motivated According to the Interview Responses

	Anna	Matt	Ellie	Diane	Liz
	Extrinsically Intrinsically	Extrinsically Intrinsically	Extrinsically	Intrinsically	Extrinsically Intrinsically

QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDENT
"WHAT MOTIVATES YOUNG READERS TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS"

NAME _____   DATE _____

BIRTHDAY_____   AGE _____

SLOSSON READING LEVEL AT BEGINNING _____

CCC LAB BEGINNING _____

SLOSSON CURRENT READING LEVEL _____

CCC LAB SCORE NOW _____

TIMES HAVE "BEAT THE TEACHER" _____

ACCELERATED READER POINTS _____

MINUTES READ EACH WEEK _____

1. What is your best subject? What makes it the best?

2. What is your worst subject? What makes it the worst?

3. What are some things that get you really excited about reading books?

4. Who gets you really interested and excited about reading books? Tell me about what they

   do.

5. How did you learn to read?

6. If you knew someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?

7. This next question is aimed at things we do in Group. Why do you think we do...

        Beat the teacher

        Accelerated Reader

        Journal Writing - Reach for the Stars

        Journal Writing - placing 1st, 2nd, 3rd

8. Which one do you most enjoy (rank). Why?

    Which one do you least enjoy?

    Which teaches you the most?

9. What do you like about

    Beat the Teacher

    Accelerated Reader

    Reach for the Stars Journal Writing

    Journal Writing placing 1st, 2nd, 3rd

    Book Buddies

    CCC Lab for Reading

    Reading at home for reading logs

    Having a tutor (if applicable)10. Is there anything you don't like about

10. Is there anything you don't like about

    Beat the Teacher

    Accelerated Reader

    Reach for the Stars Journal Writing

    Journal Writing placing 1st, 2nd, 3rd

    Book Buddies

    CCC lab for Reading

    Reading at home for reading logs

    Having a tutor (if applicable)

11. At home, how do you get the extra practice for

    Beat the Teacher

    Reading books for the Accelerated Reader

    Reading books for the Reading log

    Journal Writing

    Book buddies

12. Do you tell your parents how you do in

    Beat the Teacher

    Earning points for Accelerated Reader

    Journal Writing - placing 1st, 2nd, 3rd

13. How often do you read in your free time?

PARENT SURVEY
"WHAT MOTIVATES YOUNG READERS
TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS"
Please return to Mrs. Eshler by April 5

Name of child _____

Person completing survey _____

1. Without asking your child, what (if anything) have you heard your child say or have you   observed about the following class activities?

Beat the Teacher (word flash)

Accelerated Reader (using the computer to test comprehension and earn points after a
    specific book is read)

⇒ Journal Writing: Reach for the Stars (writing at least the number of words they
    aim for as   written in the star on their journal assignment)

⇒ Journal Writing: Placing 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th place in having the most number of
    words that day in their journal writing

Book Buddies

⇒ CCC Lab for Reading

Reading at Home for Reading Logs

2. Do the activities listed below motivate your child at home? Number them 1, 2, 3,
or 4.

       1 - not at all

       2 - somewhat

       3 - highly motivating

       4 - I don't know

_____ Practicing sight words for "Beat the Teacher"

_____ Earning points for Accelerated Reader

_____ Trying to equal or go beyond the words in the star for journal writing

(Reach   for the Star)

_____ Trying to be in first place in having the most number of words in their

journal   writing

_____ Practicing for Book Buddies

_____ Reading at home for the Reading Logs

3. Do you see the activities below impacting your child's growth in reading or
writing?

       1 - not at all

       2 - somewhat

       3 - highly positive

       4 - I don't know

_____ Practicing sight words for "Beat the Teacher"

_____ Earning points for Accelerated Reader

_____ Trying to equal or go beyond the words in the star for journal writing

      (Reach for the Star)

_____ Trying to be in first place in having the most number of words in their journal writing

_____ Practicing for Book Buddies

_____ Reading at home for the Reading Logs

4. In general, what is your child's attitude towards reading or writing homework at home?   Number them 1,2,3, or 4.

        1 - Uncooperative and requires a great deal of outside help or supervision

        2 - Uncooperative but will do it on his/her own

        3 - Cooperative but requires a great deal of outside help or supervision

        4 - Cooperative and can work independently

_____ Attitude towards homework that involves reading books (such as for the reading log)

_____ Attitude towards homework that involves completing reading sheets (such as skill pages from the reader, or questions based on their reading)

_____ Attitude towards practicing reading skills (phonics, sight words)

_____ Attitude towards homework that involves writing

5. What changes do you see in your child in these areas?

reading of words

⇒ reading comprehension

⇒ writing

⇒ spelling

⇒ self-direction, independence

⇒ desire to learn

6. Do you do anything now in your work with your child that you did not do in first grade?

7. Based on your observation, what would you say are the strengths of the reading/writing   program?

8. Based on your observation, what would you say are the weaknesses of the reading/writing program?

9. How (if at all) would you change the instruction to make it better?

10. How do you motivate your child at home in reading or writing?

11. How do you generally motivate your child at home in non-academic areas - to complete chores, follow directions, etc.

12. Comments...thoughts...

References

Gambrell, L. (1995). Abstract "What Motivates Elementary Students to Read and Write?   Insights from Interview Studies." College Park, MD: National Reading Research   Center.

Gambrell, L. & Palmer, B., Codling, R., Mazzoni, S. (1995) "Assessing Motivation to   Read". College Park, MD: National Reading Research Center, in a presentation   made at the 9th European Conference on Reading, July, 1995, Budapest, Hungary.

A STUDY OF:

The Implementation of a Math Buddy Program Between Kindergarten Students and Third Graders in an Attempt to Improve Communications Skills

Melinda Jenkins, Teacher
Anne Overman, Teacher
Lakeside Elementary School
Henrico County Public Schools

Introduction

The introduction of the new NCTM Standards in 1989 provided a framework to guide a reformation of the traditional mathematics curriculum. The new standards are centered around four overriding themes: mathematics as problem solving, mathematics as communication, mathematics as reasoning, and mathematical connections. Our study focuses on the first two standards.

Standard one, mathematics as problem solving, defines the central focus of the mathematics curriculum. The establishment of a problem solving environment provides the context in which students can become meaningfully engaged in developing and applying problem solving strategies. Appropriate activities will also provide an opportunity for students to share their thinking with other students and teachers.

Standard two, mathematics as communication, emphasizes the necessity for communication as a means for students to clarify their thinking and to construct their own knowledge. Students are expected to express mathematical ideas orally and in written form. Teachers encourage the development of these skills by presenting thought provoking questions and providing opportunities for students to respond in a variety of ways.

Developing the Research Question

How do teachers help students develop effective communication skills and encourage them to share their ideas and reflections? These are the questions that we faced as participants in a VCU course for teachers on appropriate mathematics assessment. We were expected to develop a strategy for fostering student communication as a means for assessing student understanding of and disposition towards mathematics. Kindergarten students have limited language skills and their lack of writing ability makes it difficult to record the ideas that they do have. Third graders, though they have more experience with writing, are still struggling with expressing their thoughts clearly.

We wanted to observe and evaluate the progress our students were making in learning to communicate mathematical ideas effectively. To what extent are the students able to express abstract thoughts? What obstacles do students encounter when attempting to communicate their thoughts? What strategies do they use to overcome obstacles? What kinds of questions promote reflective thought? What benefits would students receive from working together?

The Study Design

After considering various options, we decided to implement a "math buddy" program between our two classes, kindergarten and third grade. Our school, Lakeside Elementary, is located in suburban Henrico County, just north of Richmond, VA. Its population of 405 students is approximately 92% Caucasian, 7% black, and 1% other. The socioeconomic level of the area in which the school is located is classified as middle to lower-middle income with approximately 23% of the students enrolled in the free lunch program.

In the kindergarten classroom, all 12 students participated in the program: 5 boys and 7 girls. In the third grade classroom, 12 students were selected to participate, along with one alternate: 5 boys and 8 girls. Third grade students were chosen based on the teacher's perception of their ability to cooperate and get along with others. Academic ability was not a primary consideration.

The program was set up so that each kindergarten student would have a corresponding third grade buddy. The students were paired randomly and remained with the same partner throughout the duration of the program. The buddies met once a week beginning in January. The third graders came to the kindergarten classroom where they were presented with the day's activity and/or question. Once they understood the directions, the teams moved

around the room to find a place to work. The third graders' primary

responsibility was to record their kindergarten partner's thoughts, ideas, and

reflections. In order to accomplish this, they were expected to encourage the

kindergartner to participate and respond. The third graders were instructed to

prompt their partner without "putting words in their mouths." Emphasis was

placed on accepting and recording whatever response was given.

Data Collection

The primary data for this investigation was collected using three

different approaches. Initially, we had viewed the written transcripts from the

third graders' interviews with their kindergarten buddies as our main means of

gathering information about the students' abilities to communicate effectively.

Though these papers did provide some concrete examples of student responses,

we found that valuable information about related student behaviors was best

studied through the use of teacher/researcher observation. Pragmatic language

skills, such as maintaining eye contact, staying on topic, and providing

clarification, were noted through the use of anecdotal note-taking and by

viewing videotaped sessions. Finally, near the end of the research project, the

third grade students were individually interviewed in order to provide insight

into their perception of the value and/or limitations of the project.

Results

The initial purposes of the "math buddies" project were to provide a means for the kindergarten students to practice communicating about mathematics and to get a written transcript of the students' responses for evaluation and documentation purposes. Our resulting data can be classified into two categories.

The first category describes kindergarten students' abilities to respond to questions related to mathematics. In order to examine the kindergarten students' responses to questions, we began by identifying four basic types of questions that were presented to the students: description, disposition, behavior, and content.

The second category involves the impact of the "math buddies" program on the third grade students and their abilities to communicate effectively. As the project developed, we began to note unexpected benefits for the participating third grade students.

Description Questions

Description questions were defined as those that asked the students to describe a visual shape or pattern. Kindergarten students were most prolific with this type of question because of the nature of concrete items or visual

representations that could be described in familiar terms. The students were able to give a variety of responses to this kind of question depending on their individual level of understanding.

When asked to describe and compare two different geometric shapes, Thomas described specific geometric properties when he responded:

> "If you took and put one more on the triangle, they both would have the same amount of corners. One has a square and one is a triangle. One has three corners and the other one has four. One has three lines and the other has eight lines."

Amy used more general terms in her description:

> "They go down and up. The blue one is smaller than the green one."

Though many students were not able to use mathematical terms for describing shapes and patterns, they were all able to communicate some basic ideas about what they saw. The resulting descriptions provided some insight into the individual's level of understanding.

Disposition Questions

Disposition questions asked the student to choose a favorite math activity and explain why he liked the activity. While the students were all able to identify a favorite activity, they had difficulty defining why they liked the activity. Their comments usually reflected the students' interest in <u>doing</u>

something - pushing buttons, manipulating counters, playing a game. They consistently did not choose paper and pencil tasks. As with description questions, the students were more successful with communicating concrete ideas (choosing a task) than abstract ideas (defining areas of interest or ability).

Lavenia chose the calculator activity as her favorite of the week because:

> " I liked pushing the buttons. I liked it because you got to see
> the buttons you pushed. I liked it because it was blue and has
> numbers on the buttons."

Joshua chose a story problem activity that used miniature snowmen as manipulatives. When asked to explain why he liked the activity, his response was unrelated to the task:

> "I builded a snowman in my backyard."

When given a choice between being the person who describes how to build a figure in a game or being the person who listens and follows the directions to actually build the figure, the majority of the students preferred to follow directions, as indicated in Meagan's response:

> "At first you just listen, then you build it like they say."

This reflects the students' interest in engaging in tasks that involve doing something, but it may also reflect the students' tendency to be passive learners who need more practice to be confident in communicating their own ideas.

Behavior Questions

Questions that asked the student to reflect on working with a

partner were classified as behavior questions. The kindergarten students had

difficulty defining desirable traits for choosing a partner and working

cooperatively. They tended to make unrelated statements or list the physical

characteristics of their partner.

Many students talked about partners who were "nice" and/or a

good friend. When asked to elaborate on those ideas, they often resorted to

listing physical attributes. In describing why she chose a particular student for

her math partner, Amy explained:

> "Cause she does good stuff. She can color good. She is nice and
> puts good things on her superstar. I like her shoes because they
> are black. Because she is pretty. I like her hair and her shirt. I
> like her because she is in my class."

Often the responses indicated that the students are still struggling with

the idea of what it means to work cooperatively. When Lavenia described why

she chose her partner, she explained:

> "I like to work with him because he be quiet while I do my
> work and he won't disturb me..."

Content Questions

Content questions were defined as those that asked the student to describe what they had learned from a particular activity or what difficulties they had encountered in attempting a task. This type of question posed the greatest problem for most students. They had difficulty defining the mathematical content, at least partially, because of their limited vocabulary. Asking the students to reflect on their own metacognition processes proved to be beyond the very concrete thinking level of kindergarten students. When asked to identify difficulties that they had encountered, most students could not recognize any problems that may have occurred.

When asked to identify what he had learned from playing a math game, Joshua said:

"I learned it was hard."

Christopher's response was:

"To learn stuff that I didn't know."

The great majority of the students, when asked to identify any problems that they had encountered, simply stated:

"No problems."

Content questions received the shortest answers from the students and observation notes indicated that the kindergarten and third grade students had

many pragmatic problems including staying on topic. elaborating on their ideas and clarifying the question/answer.

Effects on Third Graders

The effects of the math buddy program on the third grade students were noted through teacher/researcher observations and through individual interviews with the third grades students. in their interviews, the third graders were able to identify several strategies that they had developed in order to facilitate communication with their kindergarten buddy. Two strategies cited included rewording the question for clarification and summarizing the kindergartner's responses to aid in dictation. When Tonya was asked what she does when her partner won't answer the question, Tonya responded:

> "I try to say the question over again in a different and more interesting way. If she still won't say anything I ask her again."

Not only does Tonya's response indicate her communication strategies, it also indicates her persistence, which is another goal of the new NCTM Standards. The third graders' communication strategies developed over time and were observed more and more as the students gained more experience working together. The third graders did not receive any instruction from the teachers on these strategies; they developed them on their own. The third graders also

developed tactics for gaining and maintaining their partner's attention. When asked what she does when her partner isn't paying attention, Samantha replied:

> "I tell her to look at me so I know that she is listening. If she still won't pay attention, I let her play for a few minutes and then tell her it is time to get back to work."

Finally, the third grade students were able to recognize and define traits of good communication skills. Many of them, when asked what advice they would give to someone who was just starting to be a third grade math buddy, answered that they would tell the person to listen to their buddy, be friendly, and to stick with it!

Conclusions

As a result of the math buddies program, the students and teachers in the participating classes became more aware of the importance of developing good communication skills in the classroom. The students were given regular opportunities to practice communicating their ideas with a partner. Given the developmental limitations of a young child, including limited vocabulary and language skills, the kindergarten students showed growth in their willingness to stay on topic and to attempt to elaborate on their ideas. Their responses generally increased in length and observations indicated that they began to

attend better to their partner's questions and prompts. The development of the third grade students' communication skills was noted in unrelated classroom activities where the students were able to apply what they had learned when working cooperatively with others. While the role of maturation cannot be discounted, the kindergarten and third grade students have progressed beyond normal expectations.

Implications

The ability to communicate effectively is a central component of an appropriate mathematics curriculum. Like many other important skills, good communication develops through emphasis in the classroom and corresponding practice. A math buddies program is one example of a means for developing students' communication abilities.

THE PHASES OF THE MOON
AND OTHER DISRUPTIVE PHENOMENA AS IT
RELATES TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Amos Johnson, Teacher
Ellan Smithwick, Teacher
Fairfield Middle School
Henrico County Public Schools

Tracey Smallwood, Teacher
Carter G. Woodson Middle School
Hopewell City Public Schools

The Phases of the Moon and Other Disruptive Phenomena as it Relates to Student Behavior

Introduction

Have you ever had a day when there was a morning assembly after a two hour delay due to early morning snowfall, five buses were late, four teachers needed substitutes and they could not be scheduled so teachers had to give up their planning period to "cover" the classes, and activity period was between sixth and seventh period? And you thought that was a bad day! The full moon is only a few days away!! The Full Moon? What difference does that make? A great deal according to our research. Although the above scenario seems insurmountable, there are times when many aberrations in the schedule may occur and behavior is not disrupted. So what causes the disruptive behavior and "lunacy"?

Purpose

Since all teachers must deal with disruptive behavior in their classrooms, we decided to try to isolate certain variables that might influence student behavior negatively. Many factors (pep rallies, ball games, assemblies, severe weather, activity period, special programs, early dismissals, pre-holiday, community or school tragedy and exams or testing schedule) were considered, and most of us agreed that these factors did exert an influence on students' behavior and performance. Eventually this research grew to include other weather related incidences (i.e. severe storms of wind , snow or rainfall). Although we realize that there are many factors that may contribute to disruptive student behavior, our research centered around the possibility of a correlation between disruptive student

behavior and moon phases.

Data Collection and Procedures

Our first step in creating a data gathering tool was to formulate a matrix (see Appendix A) on which we charted disruptive student behavior by class periods. On to this raw data we superimposed possible interruptions into a student's daily schedule. Additionally, the matrix allowed for a recording of the moon phases, number of referrals on a daily basis and a section for daily comments regarding overall behavior of the class using a predetermined code. In addition to this formal tool of evaluation and measurement, we also independently kept journal records of student behavior as it occurred each day in our separate classrooms. In order to further support our findings, we informally interviewed colleagues concerning classroom behavior and disruptions. Finally having a body of raw data from which to draw, we next turned to a literature search to investigate the existing evidence, if any, on this topic. None of the literature available dealt specifically with disruptive behavior in the classroom, but it did support the theory of disruptive behavior in other parts of society (admissions to the psychiatric ward rose on the full moon). The final component in our procedure involved gaining access to division-wide referrals and division-wide suspensions by date and incident We then compiled all of our data and began to look for patterns and draw conclusions from our data..

Analysis of Data

Perhaps the most helpful tool in remembering the behaviors exhibited came from the personal journals which were kept on a daily basis. Although many days had some

type of disruptive behavior, the frequency and severity rose and fell in correlation with the waxing and waning of the moon. Of particular interest to us was the gradual build up of disruptive behavior approaching the full moon. For approximately five to seven days prior to the appearance of the full moon, we recorded a rise in the number of disruptive incidents which frequently resulted in disciplinary referrals. Yet a decrease in disruptive behavior and the number of referrals seemed to decline at a more rapid pace after the full moon. The tapering effect usually ran between two or three days. We found that students with a history of behavior problems had a tendency to become overly excited, and students who had a tendency to be easily distracted exhibited an exaggeration of these characteristics during this lunar cycle. These same students were also easily affected by changes in the schedule, unusual or severe weather and pre-holiday anticipation. The information garnered from our journals was corroborated by informal discussions and causal conversation with colleagues, administrators and parents. An example to support our analysis was seen when an administrative aide in one of the schools volunteered at lunch one day how the number of referrals had risen dramatically over the last few days. Her exact statement was, "I don't know what's going on." Little did she know "there was a bad moon on the rise"

In addition to our subjective data, we also had statistical data provided from the school divisions. We received print outs of division-wide referrals and division-wide suspensions for the 1995-96 school year. When these two pieces of data were correlated a pattern began to emerge. The statistical data supported the informal data which was collected daily. There were some discrepancies in correlation of the data due to the fact that not all schools in the divisions had pep rallies, assemblies, or schedule disruptions

during the same time period.

In an attempt to minimize subjectivity in data collection and interpretation, the following precautions were taken:

1. we formulated a code for classifying types of behavior;

2. we entered the moon phases on the matrix after all data was collected; and

3. we decided to graph only one set of daily matrices.

The rationale for number three was to use only the teacher who had followed this practice from the onset of her career and who had begun documentation before enrolling in this class. We believe this aided us in the prevention of skewing the results toward a preconceived notion.

Monthly Conclusive Observations

Conclusive observations for each month were as follows:

SEPTEMBER: We found it difficult to assess the month of September due to the fact that school opened between the first quarter and the full moon. Any experienced educator knows that the first several weeks of school are a "honeymoon" period for students and their teachers. When comparing the graphs for the month of September with the following months, it was obvious that the occurrences of disruptive activity were at a lower level. As the month progressed the number of referrals escalated to a much higher level and thus a pattern was set.

OCTOBER: During the waxing phase of the moon there was no definite pattern of increases in any of three categories, however, the overall occurrences were higher than the preceding month. The immediate days following the full moon did show decreases in all

three categories. The dramatic drop in referrals on October 26th was attributed to the fact that the division being monitored participated in parent conference day. The end of the month and corresponding waxing period found a noticeable increase in all three categories.

NOVEMBER: The full moon for November occurred on the 7th. This day was Election Day with schools in one of the participating divisions being closed for polling and schools in the other division holding parent conferences. Although suspensions appeared to show an increase/decrease pattern in the waxing stage, the overall number of suspensions doubled during this same time period. There were other significant peaks in disruptive behaviors resulting in referrals during other portions of November, however, these were directly linked to events such as report card distribution, early dismissal, and the approaching Thanksgiving holiday.

DECEMBER: As the moon approached its full stage the number of recorded incidents in each of the three categories increased by monumental proportions. Conversely, there was immediate decline once the waning stage began. At no other time during the month did referrals or suspensions exceed the data which was recorded during the aforementioned time period. The only date with marked increase in classroom disruptions occurred on the 12th at which time interim reports were being circulated and documented throughout the school day.

JANUARY: On the dates of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th which coincided with the waxing of the moon, referrals more than doubled in number. However, on the actual date of the full moon the referrals declined to the point which preceded the waxing stage. Classroom

disruptions and suspensions also increased during this period and did not show a decline until after the full moon. The data collected for January was somewhat less than other months due to the major snow storm in our area causing schools to close from January 6th through the 17th. Again, the number of disruptions, referrals and suspensions did not mirror the numbers recorded during the waxing stage at any other point during the entire month.

FEBRUARY: Another major snow storm caused the closing of schools from February 2nd to the 8th. The full moon occurred on the 4th yet, there was still recorded evidence of three very distinct increasing patterns from the 30th of January until the point of schools closing for snow. These patterns paralleled with the waxing stage. It was difficult to document the rate of decline during the waning stage due to the snow.

MARCH: In March there were increases in classroom disruptions and suspensions between the 1st and the 4th which occurred just prior to the full moon. As in January, there was an actual decline in the same on the date of the full moon. The pattern for referrals showed a significant increase during this same time period with a decline of more than 50% during the immediate waning stage. Although there were several other peaks in referrals during the month, none surpassed the data previously mentioned. Likewise, the same was true with classroom disruptions.

APRIL: The spring vacation began on April 5th, thus disallowing any documentation for the waning stage of the moon. Data was available on the waxing stage which indicated an increase in referrals during this time period. Again, the pattern of decline on the actual date of the full moon was repeated as was the case in January and March. Although there were peaks and valleys in classroom disruptions and suspensions during the month, there

were no days where the number exceeded those recorded during the waxing stage

Interpretation and Application of Data

Since we have no control. over the waxing and waning of the moon, steps should be taken to minimize student movement during this time period. From our data we believe certain recommendations can be made concerning the scheduling of disruptive occurrences over which we do have control such as assemblies, pep rallies, activity periods and other disruptions to the school day. Administrators who are responsible for scheduling various student activities during the school year should take into consideration the implications of our findings. It is our feeling that as teachers begin to plan their school year, some consideration must be given to the scheduling of difficult concepts to be taught, test days and group activities so as not to schedule these in conjunction with a particularly disruptive time period such as the waxing and waning of the moon. We believe this will optimize the efficiency of student learning by coupling the learning experience with minimal disruptive behavior. Therefore, more quality time can be invested actively by both teacher and student in the learning process. Less instructional time would be wasted dealing with disciplinary occurrences in the classroom. An obvious correlation to our findings would be a decrease of disciplinary referrals, therefore, allowing administrators more time to concentrate on instructional matters and programs for our students.

Implications for Further Study

We are confident that our research was not in vain. We never expected to have proof positive without any flaws in our theory. We do feel that we are "on to something"

and further research alone these lines would be warranted. The data recorded in many of the months does indicate some validity to our original question of what is the possible relationship between disruptive behavior of students and the phases of the moon. We feel that if a more scientific study were conducted nationwide on the same premise as ours, similar patterns would emerge and conclusions drawn that could prove to have a positive impact for our schools. With our country connected by the information highway, we feel that data could be collected easily, impartially and without suspicion of judgmental bias. Statistics reflective of any documented disciplinary action could be accessed for any division during any given time period. Educators have always commiserated with their colleagues regarding abhorrent student behavior. We think it would be a real boost for their morale to have proof that they are not alone, nor are they responsible for this "lunacy" in the realm of education.
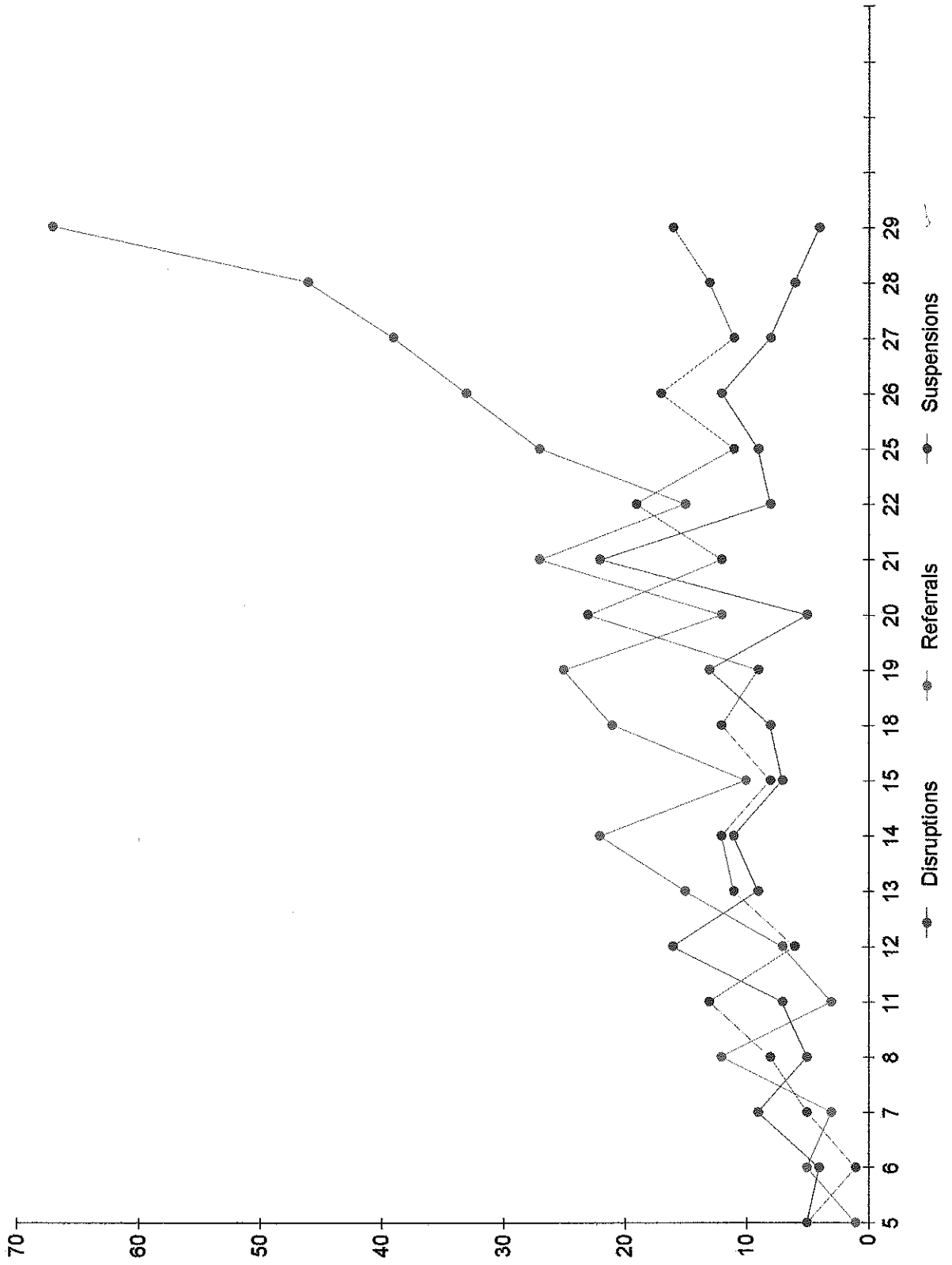
Appendices

Appendix A: Matrix of Classroom Disruptions

Appendix B: Chart of Moon Phases

Appendix C: Graphs of Classroom Disruptions, Referrals and Suspensions
for the months of September, 1995 - April, 1996

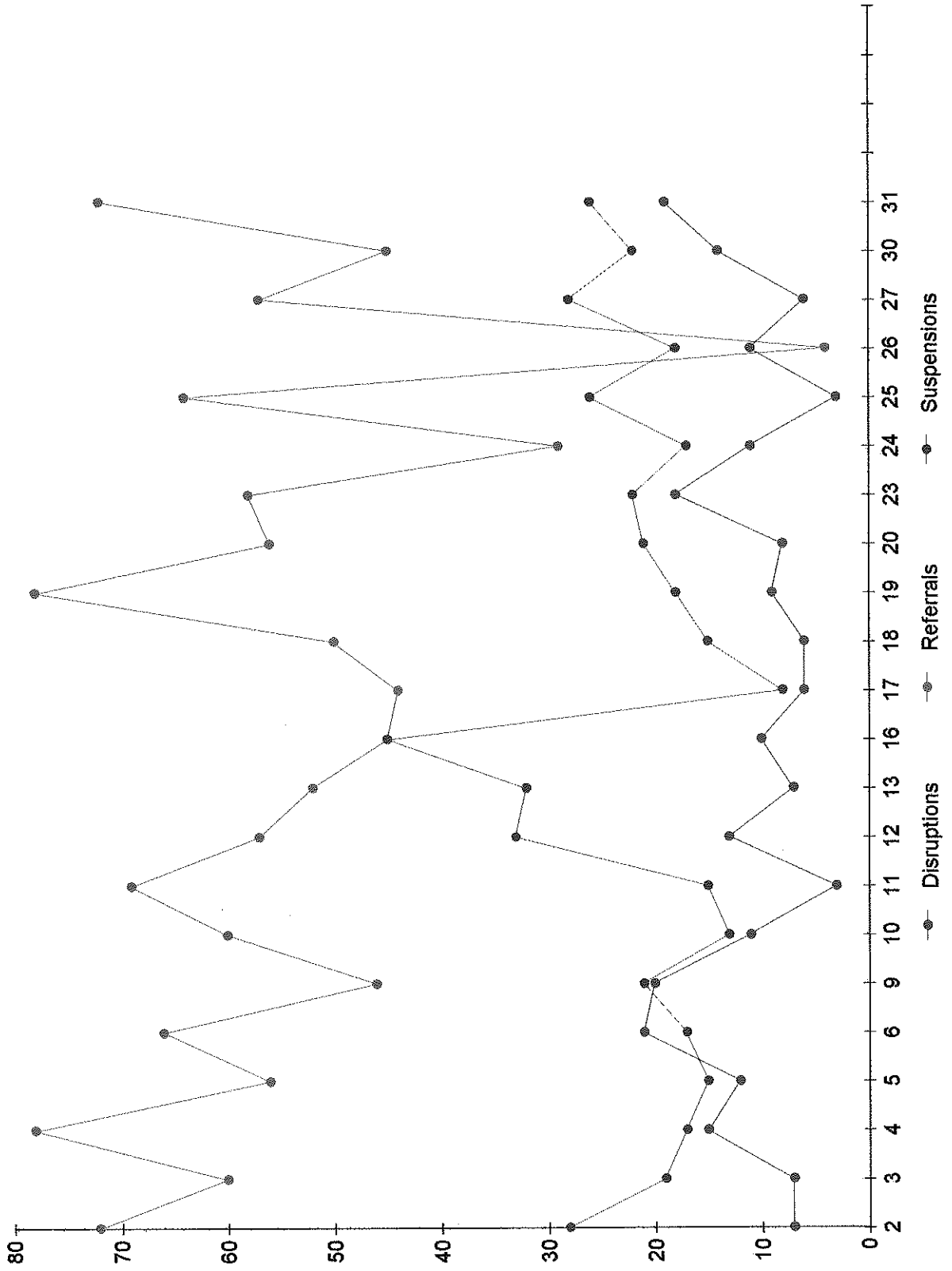# Talley of Disruptive Student Behavior

DATE	PERIOD								# Referrals	Moon	Comments
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		Stage	
MONDAY											
TUESDAY											
WEDNESDAY											
THURSDAY											
FRIDAY											
*											

CODES:

1. Pep Rally
2. Ball Game
3. Assembly
4. Storm (snow; severe weather)
5. Activity period
6. Special Programs
7. Daily Schedule change (half day; early dismissal)
8. Pre-holiday
9. Community or school tragedy
10. Exams/testing schedule (ITBS - LPT)

BEHAVIOR CODES:

A. Unusually good
B. Better than average
C. AVERAGE/TYPICAL FOR CLASS
D. Worst than average
E. Unusually bad

CHART OF MOON PHASES

	FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON	LAST QUARTER	NEW MOON
September	2	8	24	24
October	1 30	8	16	23
November	29	7	15	22
December	28	6	14	21
January	27	5	13	20
February	26	4	12	18
March	27	5	12	19
April	25	4	10	17
May		3		

APPENDIX C:

SEPTEMBER
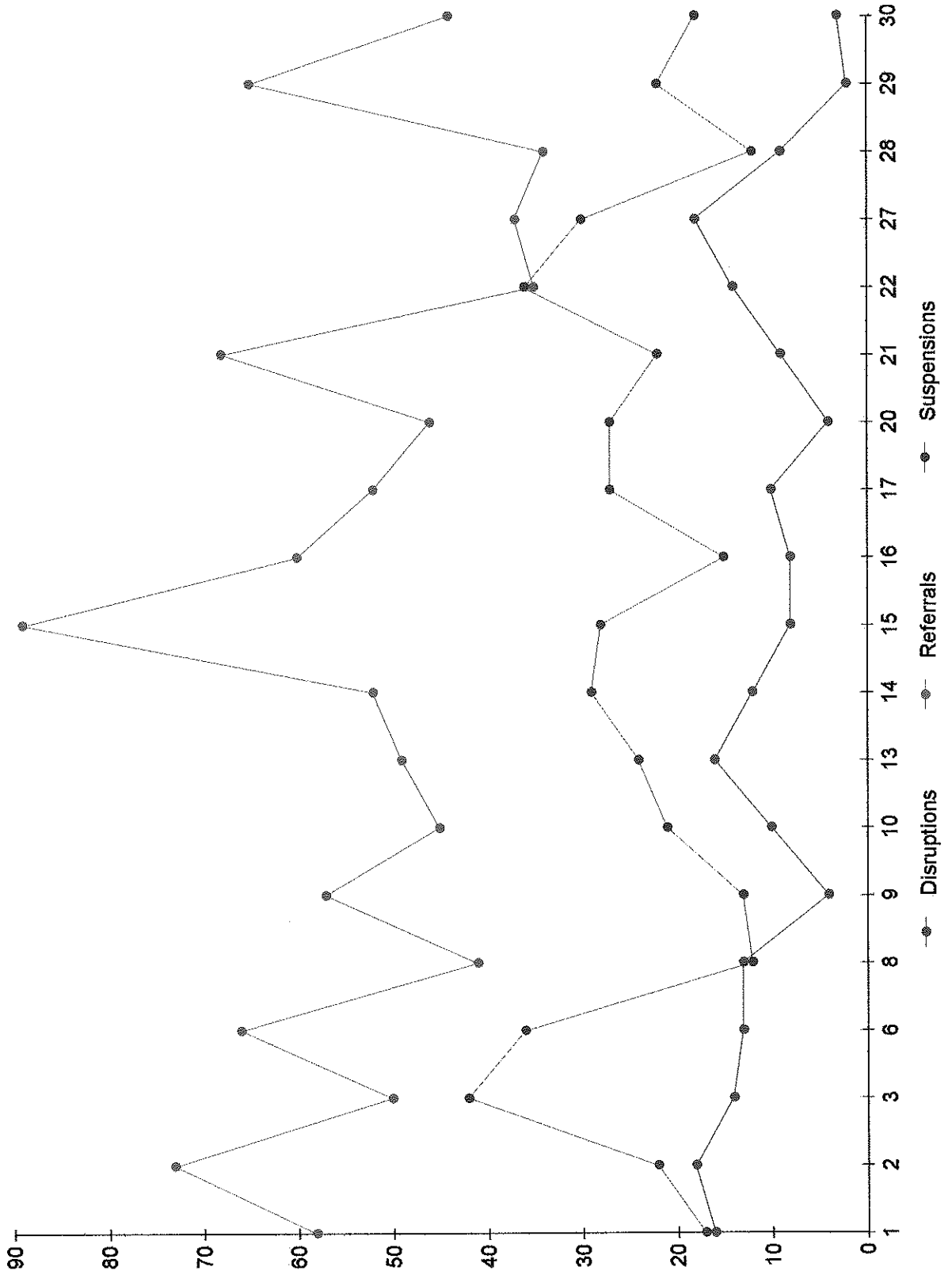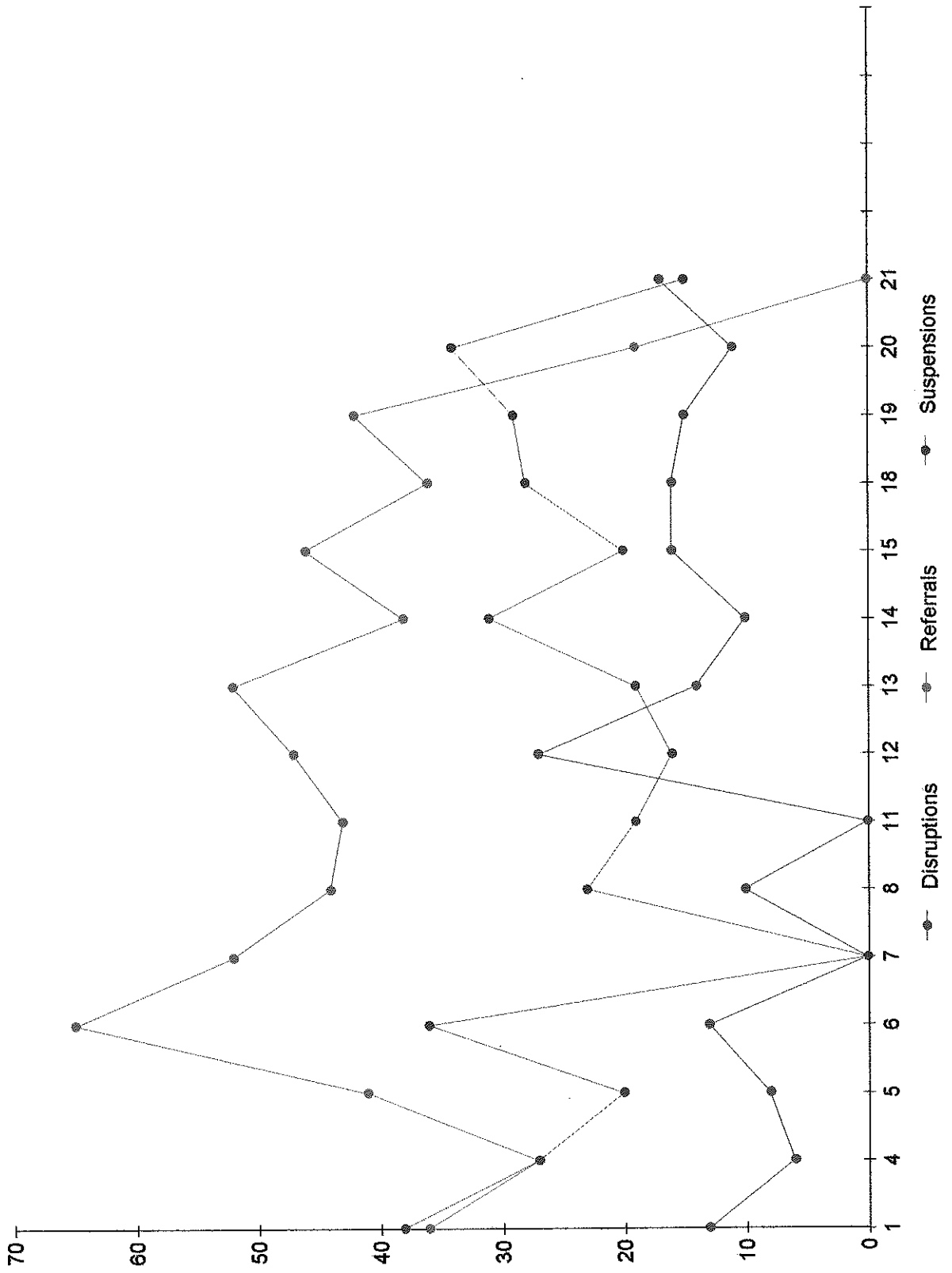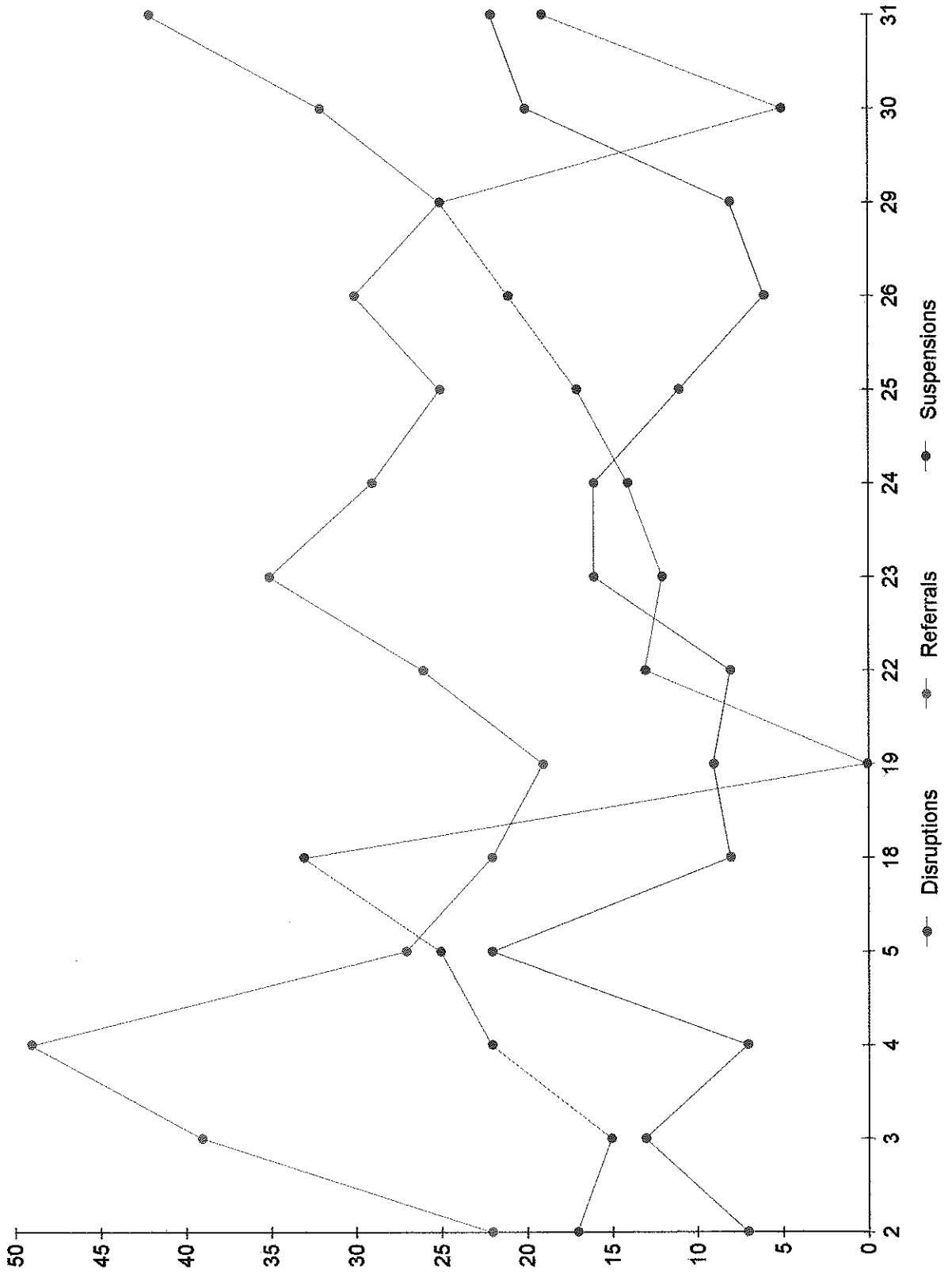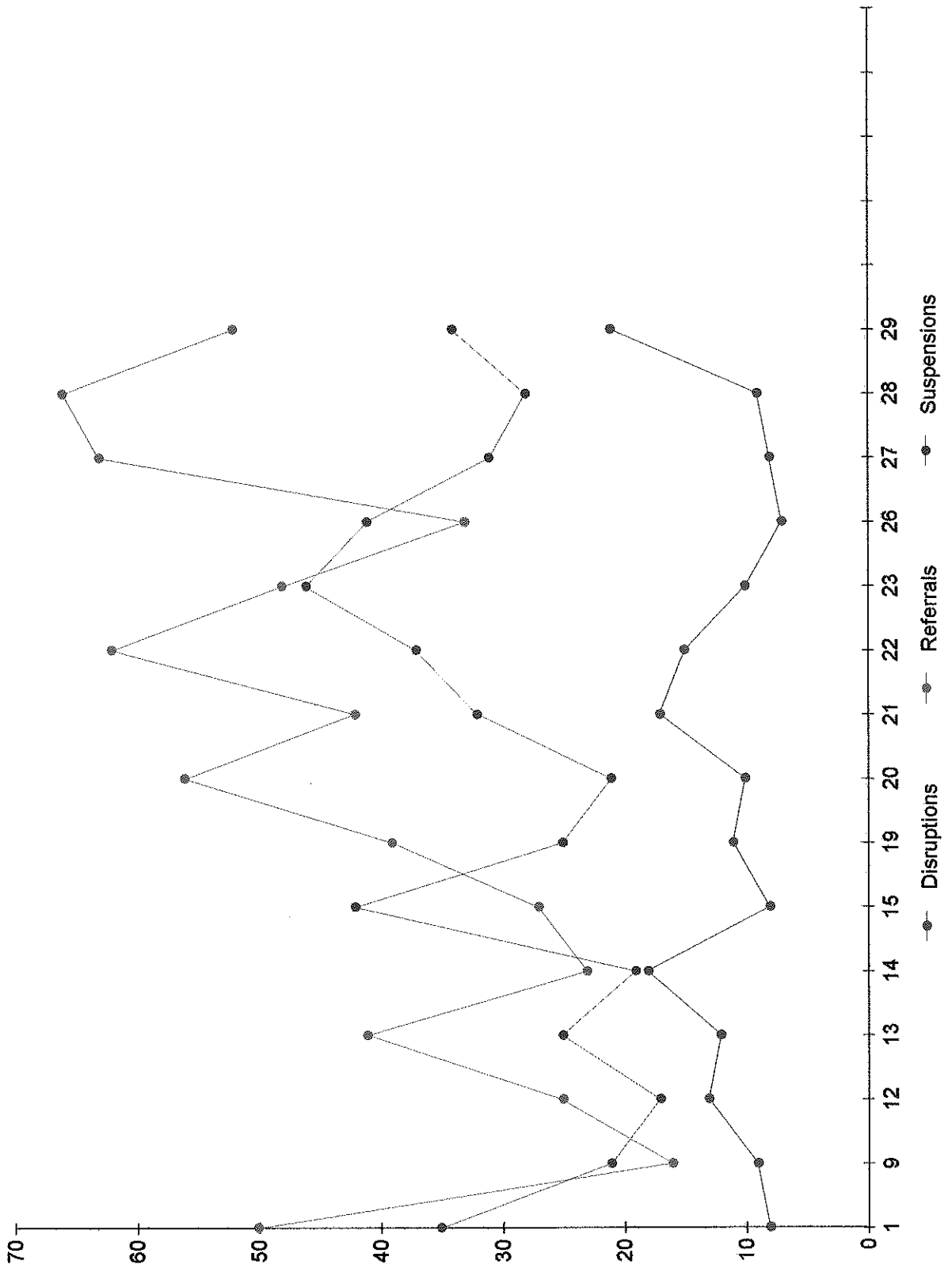
Disruptions   Referrals   Suspensions

OCTOBER

Disruptions   Referrals   Suspensions

NOVEMBER

Disruptions · Referrals · Suspensions

DECEMBER

Legend: Disruptions · Referrals · Suspensions

JANUARY

Legend: — Disruptions · Referrals — Suspensions

FEBRUARY

Disruptions — Referrals — Suspensions

MARCH

Disruptions — Referrals — Suspensions

APRIL

—— Disruptions   —— Referrals   —— Suspensions
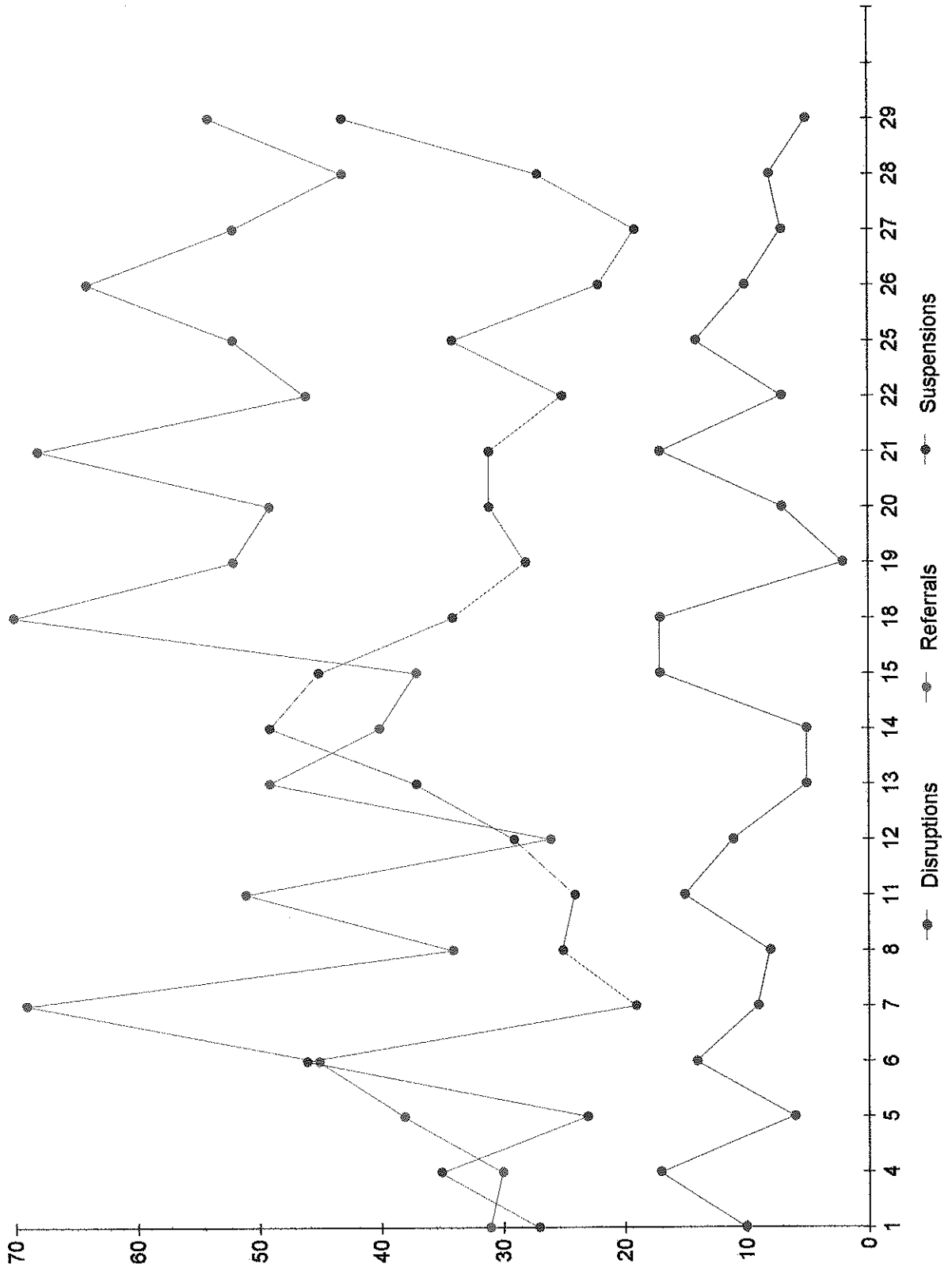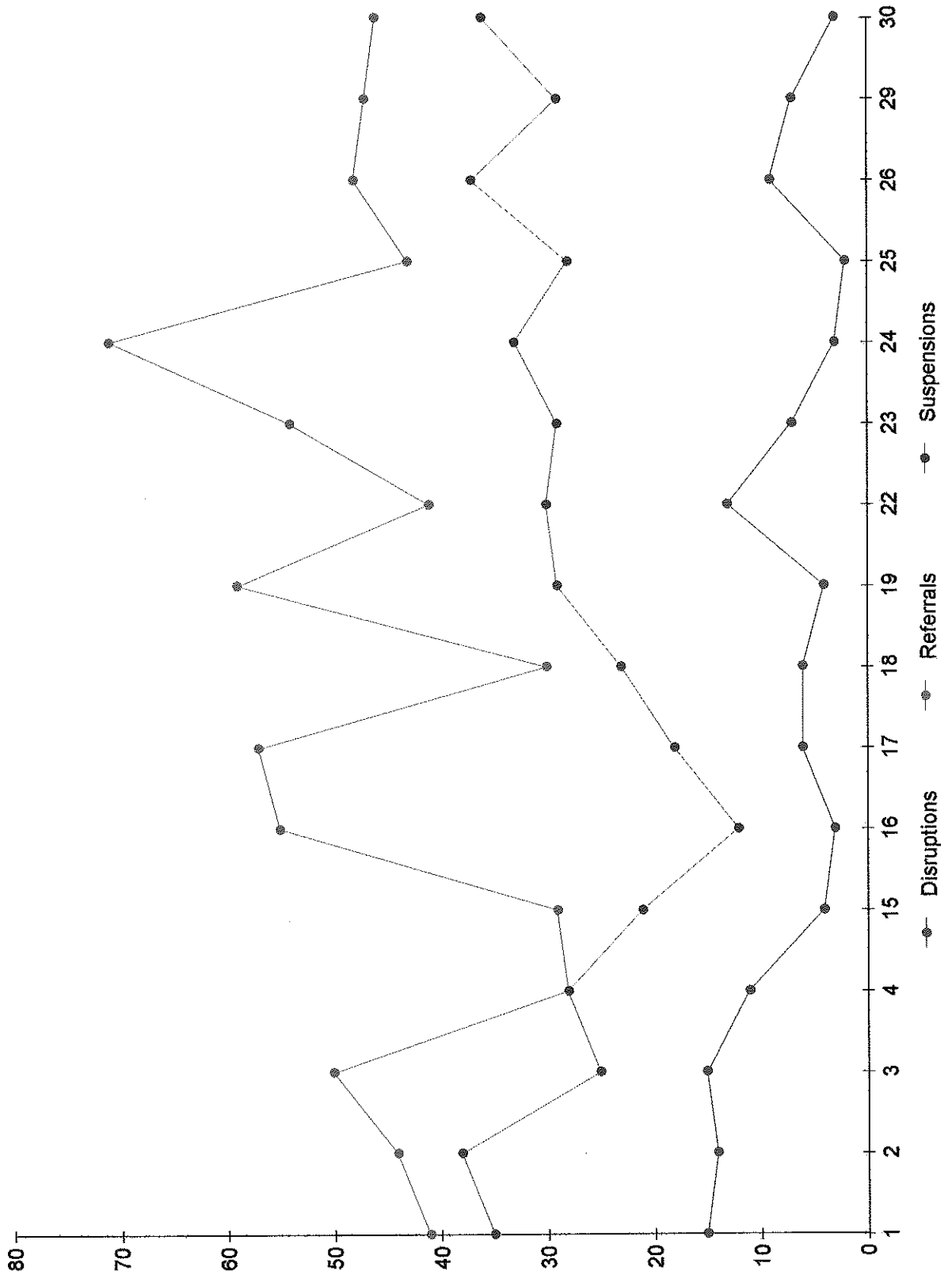
A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES, EXPECTATIONS, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENT ATHLETES

Henry Davis, Teacher
Jim Guthrie, Teacher
Highland Springs High School
Henrico County Public Schools

Introduction

The Highland Springs Community

With its roots going back to 1891, Highland Springs High School is located about nine miles east of downtown Richmond in the eastern side of Henrico County. This high school and in particular, its athletic program, has traditionally been a focal point in the community. The character of Highland Springs has been molded out of the agricultural traditions of the nineteenth century, which have now given way to the lifestyle of a modern, predominantly blue collar community.

Demographic changes in the school population have been significant. Whereas the school population in 1982-83 was 56% white and 43% black, the ratio in 1987-88 was nearly even with 49.4% black, 49.3% white and 1.3% Asian and Hispanic. The present figures are 65% black, 34% white, and 1% Asian and Hispanic. The school population reflects national trends with almost a third of the students living in single parent homes, and many living with other relatives or moving from one parent to another. Due to a slowdown in industrial growth, coupled with shifts in school zones and population centers, the school population is decreasing. From an enrollment of 1,951 and a staff of 175 in 1976, the student population decreased to 1,450 with a staff of 130 in 1987-88. At present the enrollment stands at 1,151 with a faculty of 92.

It is also true to say that although community involvement and interest in the school's athletic program is higher than in neighboring schools, these too have waned somewhat.

The Research Topic

As two teachers of Mathematics in a high school with a strong sporting tradition, both having more than a passing interest in sports (Jim is the soccer coach), we have from time to time discussed the academic performance of our

students. In particular we have been concerned with trying to find ways to optimize the performance of our student athletes.

In our discussions we raised and discussed several questions about student athletes in general. Some of these questions were as follows:

Do student athletes value athletic performance over academic performance?

Do student athletes expect special treatment in the classroom?

Do student athletes have special goals?

Do student athletes perform better academically in season, or out of season?

Are student athletes more pressured than other students?

Do student athletes have special needs?

These and many more questions needed to be answered. In order to obtain answers we would have to tap as many sources as practicable. We decide to gather information from student athletes, their parents, their teachers, coaches and administrators. In addition we would also analyze their academic records. Thus, we came up with the title for our project:

A Study of the Attitudes, Expectations, and
Academic Performance of Student Athletes
at Highland Springs High School.

The Instruments

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were developed and designed for student athletes, the parents of student athletes, and for teachers, including administrators and coaches .

The questionnaire for student athletes contained questions about study habits, academic performance, time spent on athletic activities, parental involvement, future goals, and demographic details.

The questionnaire for the parents of student athletes contained questions about their preferences, their attitudes towards their children's athletic and academic activities, and the aspirations they hold for their children in these areas.

The teacher survey asked for rankings on a Likert scale about the perceptions that teachers had concerning attitudes, needs, and expectations of student athletes, among other topics.

Structured Interviews

Interviews with predetermined questions were conducted with teachers , including coaches and administrators. Some of the questions sought responses about their perceptions of the attitudes, needs, academic performance, and goals of student athletes, and opinions on how the student athletes could be motivated in the classroom.

Interviews with groups of two to four student athletes were also carried out using the same set of questions.

The questionnaires and interview questions are included as an appendix.

Questionnaire Results

Student Athlete Questionnaire

About 250 questionnaires were distributed to student athletes, mainly through coaches, and 66 responses were received. Of the 66 respondents 32 represented the school in a single sport and all the others represented the school in 2 or more sports. The following table gives the relative percentage of respondents representing the school in each of the various sports.

Football	Track*	Soccer	Basketball	Baseball	Volleyball	Wrestling	Softball	Tennis	Gymnastics	Golf
23%	17%	14%	13%	10%	8%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%

* Track includes Cross Country.

These percentages are also presented as a circle graph in the appendix.

Of the 66 respondents 50 or 76% chose academic excellence as being more important than being an outstanding athlete, and 10 or 15% chose being an outstanding athlete as more important. Two (2) said both were equally important and 4 gave no answer.

The responses on the number of hours spent on their sports outside of the school day, on a daily basis were as follows:

No. of Hours	Under 1 hr	1 hr	1-2 hrs	2 hrs	2-3 hrs	3 hrs	3-4 hrs	4 hrs	4-5 hrs	5 hrs
No. of Students	2	3	4	8	11	12	6	7	7	3

Three (3) respondents did not indicate a time.

The responses on the number of hours spent on academic work outside of the school day, on a daily basis, were as follows:

No. of Hours	Under 1 hr	1 hr	1-2 hrs	2hrs	2-3 hrs	3 hrs	3-4 hrs	4 hrs	4-5 hrs
No. of Students	8	15	12	10	4	3	4	7	1

Two (2) respondents did not indicate a time.

For purposes of comparison, bar graphs of these two sets of hours are included here. It is interesting to note that the graph of the number of hours

spent on sports peaks at 3 hours while the graph of the number hours spent on academic work peaks at 1 hour.

Graph of hours spent on sports outside of school day
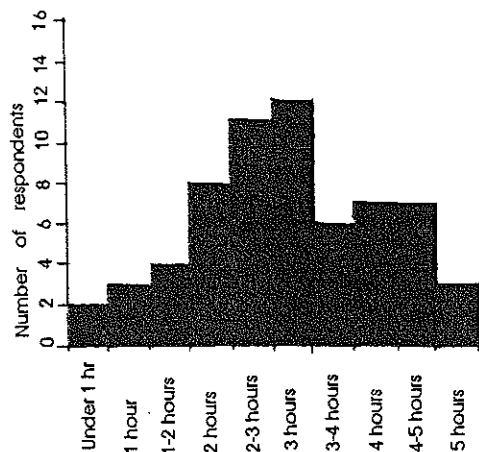
Graph of hours spent on study outside of school day
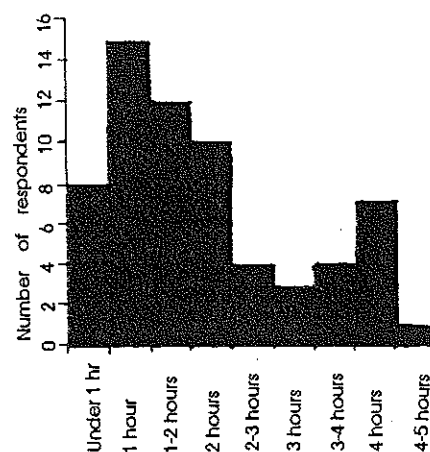
Of the 66 respondents, 52 or 79% answered that they intended to continue sports after high school, and 13 or just under 20 % said they would not. One (1) respondent gave no indication.

Sixty-two (62) of the respondents or 94% answered that they intended to continue academic studies after high school and 3 or about 4.5% said they would not. One (1) respondent gave no indication.

Of the 66 respondents, 25 or 38% answered that it was their goal to become a professional athlete, and 3 said maybe. Out of these, 15 of them or nearly 23% thought it was a realistic goal. Those indicating that it was not their goal to become a professional athlete numbered 37 or 56%. Of the 25 yes responses, 15 were of black ethnic origin, and 8 were white. The 3 maybe were black students. The gender makeup of the 25 positive responses was 21 male and 4 female. Broken down by sports, the 25 positive responses comprised 10 from football (plus 2 maybe), 7 from basketball (plus 1 maybe), 4 from baseball, 3 from soccer, 2 from track, and 1 from volleyball.

The 66 respondents rated their athletic talents and skills on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest as follows:

Rating	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	1	1.5%
2	3	4.5%
3	14	21.0%
4	36	54.5%
5	11	17.6%

One of the responses was spoilt and could not be deciphered.

On a similar scale, the 66 respondents rated the level of parental support for their sporting ambitions as follows:

Rating	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	3	1.5%
2	5	4.5%
3	16	24.2%
4	8	12.1%
5	34	51.5%

Of the 66 respondents, 57 or 86% indicated that their parents pushed them to perform better in academics as opposed to sports, 5 or 7.6% indicated both, 2 or 3% indicated neither, and 2 gave no responses.

Forty-one (41) or 62% of the respondents said their academic performance was better than their athletic performance, 17 or about 26% said their athletic performance was better, 4 thought both were equally good, and 4 gave no responses. Of the 17 who thought their athletic performance was better, 12 had indicated that it was their goal to become professional athletes. Further, 7 out of that 17 were from football, 5 from baseball, and 2 were from basketball.

On the question of whether they performed better academically in or out of their sporting season, 35 or 53% indicated out of season, 25 or just under 38% indicated in season, 5 indicated neither, and 1 gave no response..

Asked what was their overall academic grade, the responses were as follows:

Overall Grade	No. of Respondents	Percentage
A	5	7.6%
B	32	48.5%
C	20	30.3%
D	3	4.5%
F	4	6.1%

Two (2) of the respondents did not answer the question.

Asked for their opinion as to which area, sports or academics, gets more support from the school, 38 or almost 58% of the 66 respondents indicated sports and 25 or nearly 38% indicated academics. One (1) indicated equal support for both while 2 gave no response.

Asked for their opinion as to whether athletes should be required to perform well academically, 60 or 91% answered yes, 5 answered no and 1 gave no response. They were also asked to explain why, and 20 or one-third of those answering yes cited either eligibility requirements for participating in high school sports or requirements for entering college. Another 20 cited future security and 6 of those specifically mentioned "in case of injury".

Asked if the school should do more to promote their athletic talents, and to explain their answers, 40 or nearly 61% answered yes, and 20 or about 30% answered no. Amongst the yes answers, the reasons varied widely and no particular tendency was indicated. Those answering no, gave no reason.

Questionnaire for Parents of Student Athletes

Among the parents of student athletes there were 33 respondents.

All the parents indicated that they would prefer their son or daughter to perform better in academics rather than in sports.

From the 33 respondents 31 or 94% indicated that their son or daughter studied outside of school hours during their sporting season. One parent gave a negative response and one did not answer the question. The number of hours per day spent on study during the season, as reported by parents is as follows:

Number of Hours	1 hour	1-2 hrs	2 hrs	2-3 hrs	3 hrs	3-4 hrs	4 hrs
Number of Students	5	6	3	5	5	0	2
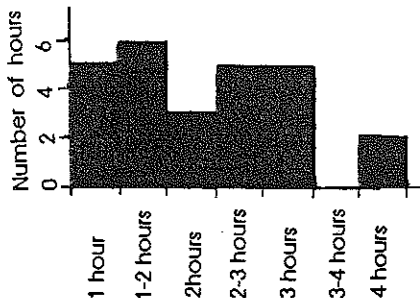
Of the 31 parents answering the question, 3 gave no indication of the number of hours, 1 said not enough, and 1 said less than out of season.

Of the 33 respondents, 29 or 88% indicated that they pushed their son or daughter to study during their sporting season (2 changed the word "push" to "encourage") and 4 responded negatively.

Of the 33 respondents, 20 or about 61% indicated that they pushed their son or daughter to attend practice during their sporting season, 11 or 33% indicated that they did not push their son or daughter to attend practice, and 2 gave no response.

In response to the question as to whether they wanted their son or daughter to become a professional athlete, 12 parents or just over 36% answered yes, 14 or 42% answered no, 3 answers could be interpreted as

maybe, 2 said they would support their children's choice, and 2 gave no response. Of the 14 positive responses, 5 cited football and 3 cited basketball.

Of the 33 respondents, 28 or 85% wanted their son or daughter to pursue a professional career not in sports. This means that many parents indicated that they wanted for their children both a professional sporting career and a professional career not in sports. A wide range of professions were cited and there was no dominant trend.

Asked for their opinion about which area, sports or academics, gets more support from the school, 25 of the 33 respondents or nearly 76% said academics, 5 or 15% said sports, and 3 gave no indication.

All of the 33 respondents expressed the opinion that athletes should be required to perform well academically, and 13 or 39% of them cited future security as a reason. Six (6) or 18% stressed the need to be well rounded, and only 3 or 9% mentioned that very few succeed to become professional athletes.

Of the 33 respondents, 17 or nearly 52% thought that the school should do more to promote athletic talents, 10 or 30% did not think the school should do more to promote athletic talents, and 6 did not express an opinion. The area in which people wanted the school to do more, was helping to expose the athletes talents and skills to college recruiters.

Teacher Survey

There were 52 respondents to the teacher survey, and these included 8 coaches. The survey required the respondents to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with 14 statements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree". The numerical responses were averaged and graphed as shown.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

1. Student athletes usually perform better academically in season.

2. Student athletes are more of a behavior problem in the classroom.

3. Student athletes do not do their homework.

4. Student athletes have big egos.

5. Student athletes expect preferential treatment from teachers.

6. Student athletes expect preferential treatment from their peers.

7. Student athletes have greater needs of the teacher than do other students.

8. Teachers should be prepared to give more attention to student athletes.....

9. Student athletes should be required to perform well academically.

10. The county should set more rigorous guidelines to monitor academics of S.A's.

11. Student athletes have an over-inflated opinion of their athletic abilities.

12. Student athletes value athletic performance over academic performance.

13. Student athletes generallybelieve they are good enough tobecome pros.

14. Generally, student athletes are academically prepared to enter a 4 year college.

Strongly disagree — 1 2 3 4 5 — Strongly agree
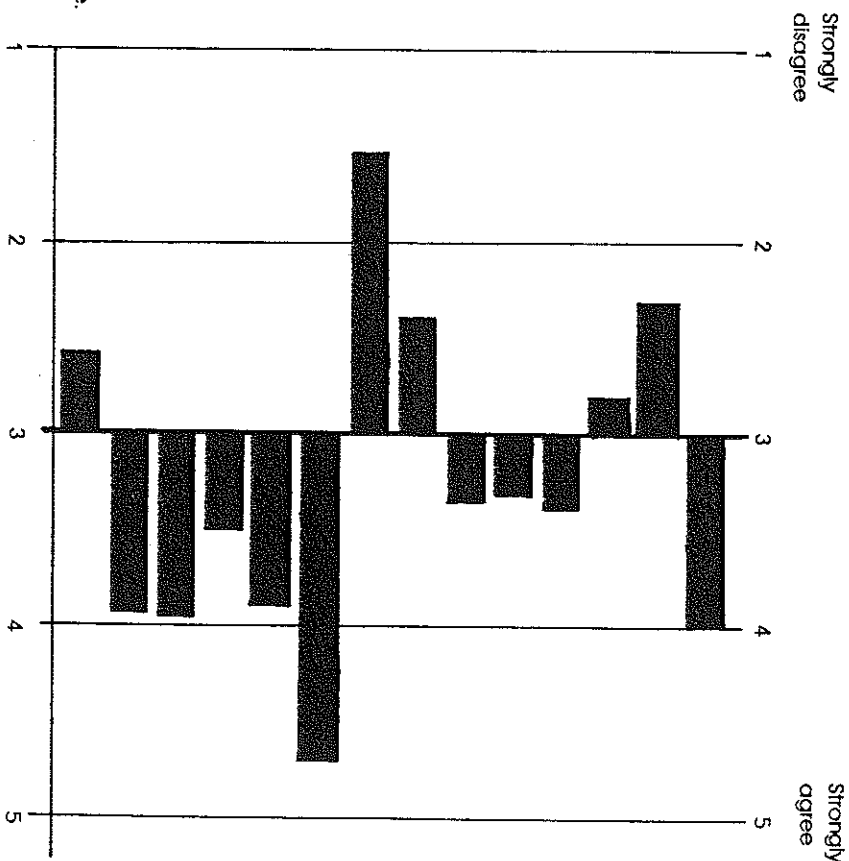
In response to a question asking what the county (i.e. the school district) could do to assist the teachers in their work with student athletes, 14 (including 3 coaches) or 27% mentioned instituting SAT prep/counseling/tutoring programs, by providing money for such programs. Thirteen (13) or 25% mentioned putting in place more rigorous standards and monitoring with respect to academic performance of student athletes.

From the coaches there were some strongly articulated individual opinions:

1. Hire qualified coaches who are nationally accredited.
2. Give some special consideration to allowing extra time for homework when away games are involved.
3. Teachers must be willing to work with coaches.

There were 18 respondents who did not answer this question.

The responses of the coaches to the question of what they did to monitor the academic performance of their student athletes, in general addressed checking up on grades and keeping in regular communication.

Interviews

Teacher Interviews

The general interpretation of the term "Student Athlete" among the teachers interviewed was a student who took on the additional activities of representing the school in a sport. Some teachers took the step of stressing that student athletes were students first, who were also athletes; particularly because there were academic criteria for eligibility.

While the teachers did not think that there was not significant noticeable physical difference between student athletes and other students, there was the

significant difference that student athletes were individuals who had made the choice to participate in sports as representatives of the school.

While teachers were very cautious about conceding that the school had any special responsibility to student athletes over and above its responsibility to other students, all teachers were sympathetic to the idea of being willing to make reasonable concessions with respect to deadlines when late practice sessions and away events were involved. The opinion was strongly expressed that student athletes should be made aware through some sort of support system, of the necessity to be academically prepared for life after sports.

Focusing on the classroom teacher, the teachers interviewed, while reaffirming the idea of no preferential treatment, recognized the need for the classroom teacher to work along with coaches in helping the student athlete to efficiently structure his school activities to achieve an equitable balance. The classroom teacher it was felt was strategically positioned to set and require the high expectations that will help them to succeed both in academics and athletics.

The interviewees did not believe that the needs of student athletes should be seen as different from the needs of other students. They did however, consider it necessary that teachers should be sensitive to the special situation of student athletes, since there were considerably more demands on their time, albeit by their own choice. The view was repeated that efforts should be made to impart to student athletes, early in their high school career, time management and study skills.

Without exception, the teachers interviewed thought that the great majority of student athletes, particularly the younger underclassmen, had an unrealistic view of their future after high school. They usually believe that they

are destined for fame and fortune in professional sports. Reality only sets in for some of them by the time they become seniors.

When asked how they thought teachers could motivate student athletes outside of their particular sporting season, there was both tacit and overt agreement that it was more difficult to motivate them after the sporting season was over. A number of suggestions were made, but the one most often repeated was for teachers to show interest in and support for the sporting activities. Also strongly emphasized was the need to establish and maintain communication and genuine relationships with the athletes year round. Another suggestion was to consistently maintain and remind the athletes of high expectations. Some of the teachers who had been at Highland Spring High School for many years, rued the continuing breakdown of relationships over the years. Relationships between students and parents and teachers and the community were becoming more and more fragmented as everyone was getting more busy with more and more paperwork to the detriment of the more basic needs. The school community needed to reestablish a network of mutual support for each other.

The consensus among those interviewed was that the school community expected our athletes to always win. This "win at all times" mentality was seen as less than desirable. It was felt that criticism and derision particularly from their peers when our teams did not win tended to be overly harsh. This coupled with dwindling attendance at sporting events put unwarranted and undesirable pressure on the student athlete, who were the ones making the extra effort for the benefit of the school.

The general view of the student athlete at Highland Springs High School, as expressed by those interviewed, was that they were students who had made a conscious choice to go the extra mile for the school, usually to fulfill some

individual purpose or need. These were students who needed to be guided along realistic paths. They needed to be made aware of the opportunities and challenges that awaited them on their chosen paths. They needed to be helped in budgeting their available time in order to achieve balanced success. They needed to be taught how to channel their competitive drive to become equally competitive in the classroom.

Student Athlete Interviews

Student Athletes were interviewed in groups of 2, 3, and 4, using the same set of questions used with the teachers.

For the most part they did not feel that they were noticeably different from other students, but the opinion was expressed that there was something almost intangible about them that their peers and other people their own age could recognize. The real difference about student athletes, they all asserted, was that they made the choice to participate. They did concede that some Student Athletes did think they deserved privileges, but on the whole they would prefer to be treated the same way as other students.

The Student Athletes did not believe that either the school as a whole or teachers in particular had any special responsibility towards them, over and above their responsibilities to other students. They emphasized that students should not get any special treatment simply because they were athletes. They all however, expressed the opinion that some consideration be given to some extended time for homework assignments, particularly for away events. They also felt that at times some special tutoring ought to be offered, or that special study halls could be set up for athletes, to compensate for classroom time missed through no fault of their own.

Some of the groups interviewed expressed the view that the school needed to keep all sports alive, not only the popular ones like football and basketball. Those athletes in the less popular sports felt that the school should provide better facilities for training, and more funding. Boosters, they said, should be for all sports, not just for football and basketball. They also said that trainers and coaches should be interested in developing the full potential of all participating athletes, and not just the best ones.

No significant suggestion was offered as to how teachers could motivate students outside of their sporting season. The suggestion was made however, that seasonal assemblies should be organized to speak to athletes about grades, and the importance of maintaining good grade in order to be eligible to represent the school.

The student athletes felt that what the school community expected from them was simply to win. If they did not win, they were ignored by the general public. If they did not win, they were derided, particularly by their classmates who generally showed little or no understanding for what they themselves might be feeling after a loss. When they did win, their peers would brag about them and soon forget.

When asked about pressure from the school community, the general response was that there was simply not enough support from the community to generate any significant pressure, except perhaps for football and basketball where the traditional supporters of the school demanded high expectations.

While a few of the students seriously expressed the goal of becoming professional athletes, most of them said it was not their goal , but that they would grasp the opportunity if such an opportunity arose. Most of them intended to continue to participate in sports after high school, either on the college level or just for recreation.

Academic Records

The academic records of all the student athletes participating in football, basketball, baseball, soccer, and softball were analyzed. Grade point averages for the first, second, and third grading periods for the 1995-96 school year were calculated for all those athletes, and for purposes of comparison, the grade point averages for random groups of similar sizes were also calculated. The means of the grade point averages for each group were then calculated and are tabulated on the next page. Also included in the table are the means of the grade point averages for all boys and all girls in the school.

Group by Sport	GPA for 1st 9 wks	GPA for 2nd 9 wks	GPA for 3rd 9 wks
Football	2.17	2.09	2.07
Random	1.91	1.66	1.75
Boys Basketball	2.05	2.10	1.99
Random	2.28	2.33	2.07
Baseball	2.35	2.32	2.32
Random	2.13	2.15	2.11
Boys Soccer	2.63	2.70	2.74
Random	1.59	1.78	1.60
Girls Basketball	2.85	2.26	2.15
Random	2.52	2.59	2.76
Girls Softball	2.86	2.43	2.67
Random	2.19	2.27	1.94
Girls Soccer	3.27	3.13	3.30
Random	2.40	2.06	2.03
All boys in HSHS	2.03	1.94	1.93
All girls in HSHS	2.40	2.27	2.33

The information from this table could be analyzed in many ways, but our focus was to see if student athletes performed better academically in season or out of season. In football, boys basketball, boys soccer, and girls soccer their GPA's were highest during the season. In baseball, girls basketball, and girls

soccer their GPA's were highest in the first grading period, and this was in keeping with the overall pattern schoolwide. In football and basketball we are able to see that the GPA's fell significantly after the season was over.

Recommendations

After carefully reviewing and discussing the information gathered, we came up with the following recommendations:

- We recommend that the school institute a pre-school session on time-management for all student athletes and their parents.

- We recommend that the school institute a pre-season assembly for all student athletes in each sport, using a motivational speaker focusing on time-management and study skills.

- We recommend that the school appoint a resource person to monitor each athletic season's student athletes for the entire school year, with particular responsibility for (a) monitoring grades and classroom performance, and (b) making students aware of NCAA requirements.

- We recommend that funding be provided to put in place special tutorials and study halls for student athletes during their sporting season.

- We recommend that a concerted effort be made to impart the above mentioned time-management and study skills to student athletes during their 9th grade year.

- We recommend that monitoring of student athletes' grade for eligibility be mandatory for every 9 week grading period, instead of only during the athletic season.

APPENDIX

STUDENT ATHLETE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In what sport(s) do you represent your school? _____
   _____
   _____

2. Which is more important to you?   Academic   Being an
               (Circle one)   Excellence   Outstanding
                                        Athlete

   Why? _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. How many hours outside the school day
   do you spend on your sports?   _____

4. How many hours outside the school day
   do you spend on academic work?   _____

5. Do you intend to continue sports after high school?   YES   NO
                                (Circle one

6. Do intend to continue academic study after high school? YES   NO

7. Is it your goal to become a professional athlete?   YES   NO
   If yes, do you think this is a realistic goal? _____
                     Name the sport _____

8. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest,
   rate your athletic talent and skills. (Circle one)   1   2   3   4   5

9. On a similar scale, rate the level of parental
   support in your sporting ambitions. (Circle one)   1   2   3   4   5

10. Do your parents push you to perform better
    in sports or in academics? (Circle one)   SPORTS   ACADEMICS

11. Which is better? (Circle one)   Your   Your
                   Academic   Athletic
                Performance   Performance

12. When do you perform
  better academically? (Circle one) In Season   Out of Season

13. What is your overall academic grade? (Circle one) A B C D F

14. In your opinion, which area gets more
  support from the school? (Circle one) SPORTS   ACADEMICS

15. In your opinion, should athletes be
  required to perform well academically? (Circle one) YES   NO
  Explain why _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

16. Should the school do more to promote
  your athletic talents? (Circle one)   YES   NO
  If so, what?_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

GENERAL INFORMATION

17. What is your age? _____

18. What is your grade level? (Circle one) 9 10 11 12

19. What is your gender? (Circle one) MALE   FEMALE

20. What is your ethnic origin? (Circle one) Black White   Other

Thank you for your cooperation!

Please complete and turn in this questionnaire this week.

CIRCLE GRAPH

showing percentages of

Student Athlete respondents

representing HSHS in the various sports

- Football - 23%
- Track - 17% (including Cross Country)
- Soccer - 14%
- Basketball - 13%
- Baseball - 10%
- Volleyball - 8%
- Wrestling - 5%
- Softball - 4%
- Tennis - 3%
- Gymnastics - 2%
- Golf - 1%
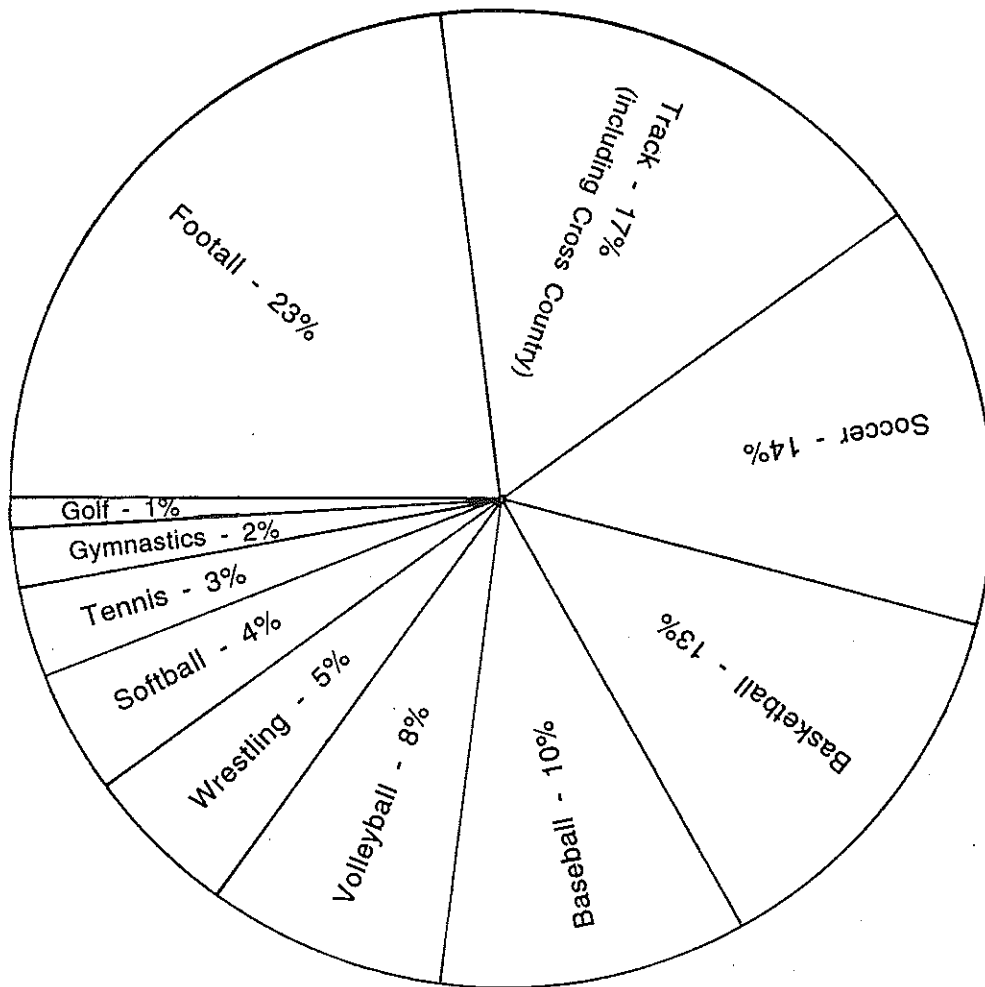
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS OF STUDENT ATHLETES

1. In which area would you prefer your
   son to perform better? (Circle one)   Sports   Academics

2. In which area would you prefer your
   daughter to perform better? (Circle one)   Sports   Academics

3. Does your son/daughter study outside of
   school hours during the sporting season? (circle one)   Yes   No
   If so, how many hours per day? _____

4. Do you push your son/daughter to study
   during his/her sporting season?   (Circle one)   Yes   No

5. Do you push your son/daughter to attend
   practice during his/her sporting season? (Circle one)   Yes   No

6. Do you want your son/daughter to
   become a professional athlete?   (Circle one)   Yes   No
   If so, in what sport? _____

7. Do you want your son/daughter to pursue a
   professional career, not in sports?   (Circle one)   Yes   No
   If so, in what field? _____

8. In your opinion, which area gets more
   support from the school?   (Circle one)   Sports   Academics

9. In your opinion, should athletes be
   required to perform well academically? (Circle one)   Yes   No
   Explain why _____
   _____

10. Should the school do more to promote
    athletic talents?   (Circle one)   Yes   No
    If so, what?_____
    _____

TEACHER SURVEY

Are you an Athletic Coach? (Circle one)   Yes   No

Please read the following statements carefully and indicate your level of agreement on the scale provided. if you have no opinion circle the X.

	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree		No opinion

1. Student athletes usually perform better
   academically in season.   1 2 3 4 5   X

2. Student athletes are more of a behavior
   problem in the classroom.   1 2 3 4 5   X

3. Student athletes do not do their
   homework.   1 2 3 4 5   X

4. Student athletes have big egos.   1 2 3 4 5   X

5. Student athletes expect preferential
   treatment from teachers.   1 2 3 4 5   X

6. Student athletes expect preferential
   treatment from their peers.   1 2 3 4 5   X

7. Student athletes have greater needs
   of the teacher than do other students.   1 2 3 4 5   X

8. Teachers should be prepared to give
   more attention to student athletes than
   to other students.   1 2 3 4 5   X

9. Student athletes should be required
   to perform well academically.   1 2 5 4 5   X

10. The county should set more rigorous
    guidelines to monitor the academic
    performance of student athletes.   1 2 3 4 5   X

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	No opinion
11. Student athletes have an over-inflated opinion of heir athletic abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	X
12. Student athletes value athletic performance over academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5	X
13. Student athletes generally believe they are good enough to become professional athletes.	1	2	3	4	5	X
14. Generally, student athletes are academically prepared to enter a four year college.	1	2	3	4	5	X

15. What could the county do to assist teachers in their work with student athletes?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

For Coaches only.

16. What do you do to monitor the academic performance of your student athletes? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Teacher Interview Questions

1. What is your interpretation of the term "Student Athlete"?

2. In your opinion, how is the student athlete noticeably different from other students?

3. In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of the school to the student athlete?

4. In your opinion, What are the responsibilities of the teacher to the student athlete?

5. How do the needs of student athletes compare to the needs of other students in the classroom setting?

6. How do you think student athletes view their future after high school?

7. In what ways can teachers motivate student athletes outside of their particular sporting season?

8. What do you think the school community expect from student athletes?

9. In what ways does the school community put pressure on the student athlete ?

10. How can the teacher help the student athlete to excel in the classroom?

11. What is your general view of student athletes at H.S.H.S.?

HOW DOES TEACHER VOICE CADENCE, PITCH, MUSIC AND MOVEMENT AFFECT STUDENT ATTENTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Celeste Jones, Teacher
Summer Hill School
Richmond City Public Schools

ONE DAY

I don't know when it happened
but I found out one day;
That I was losing some children--
no work, just play!

My students had grown tired
of listening to me;
I had done too much talking,
stressing skill mastery.

My body language and
negative verbal tones;
Caused unwanted behaviors
in the students' listening zones.

As they tapped on the table,
rocked in the chair;
Played with velcro on their tennis shoes--
they didn't care!

I had to make a change,
that was plain to see;
It had to be done soon
before they got the best of me!

So I took their rhythmic responses
and turned them in reverse;
Now they listen so attentively,
I'm finished with this verse.

Celeste Jones

There has not been a year in my twenty-three years of teaching that I have not been concerned about the poor listening skills of children. How many times have I heard myself say:

"Let's all listen and tell if you can hear the birds sing."

"If you're feeling extra smart today, come to me."

"May I have your attention, please?"

"Who can be the quietest girl or boy?"

I would think to myself, "There's got to be a better way! Why couldn't I be like the high school teacher who entered into the noisy auditorium, walked up the four wooden steps that led to the platform form on stage, faced the audience, paused, and spoke with a voice that was heard from every corner and caused everyone to stop and listen. What was her secret? I began to "search for the blindness I was trying to cast light upon."

Twenty percent of my class was demonstrating poor listening skills. My first task was to try to find out why. I used a Multiple intelligence Assessment to observe their behavior and was able to see that they strongly fitted in the Musical-Rhythmic and Bodily-Kinesthetic categories. (Appendix A) Next, I needed to find a way to capture their attention. Their negative listening cues helped me to come up with the idea of using music, movement, poetry, inflections and intonations of my voice to enhance their attentive listening skills. Last, I wanted to know what impact these strategies have on the children's learning and hearing, which is coupled with reaction.

Singing a familiar tune to get the children to line up was sometimes effective; however, the transition often was not smooth. At first the children giggled or weren't sure if they were to respond or not. For example, I would sing the following verse to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb":

> Won't you come and go with me,
> Go with me, go with me;
> Won't you come and go with me
> And walk like this! (demonstrate)

Even singing the child's name with the command made very little difference in the response.

> Johnny come and go with me,
> Go with me, go with me;
> Johnny come and go with me
> And walk like this!

When I asked my students "How do you feel when I speak or sing your name with a rhythmic beat to a rhyme or sentence?", some responses were:

Child 1   "It's fun."

Child 2   "Magnificent!"

Child 3   "I feel happy because I like the way you say it."

Child 4   "It sounds so nice and I like hearing my name a lot."

When I speak or sing a child's name, I try to use intervals of thirds.   The children seem to really enjoy those sounds!

Chanting with voice inflections and intonations worked much better than singing a familiar tune. An example would be:

Can I find anyone standing
the right way?
Can I find anyone standing
the right way?
Can I find anyone standing
Find anyone standing
Find anyone standing
the right way?

Perhaps the chanting awakened that personal inner anchor in each child as I

used the rocking beat to guide my spoken words. I also used direct eye contact

as I looked very closely to see "who was standing the right way."

When I asked the children "What they liked about my voice" their responses

were:

Child 1   "It's soft and pretty."

Child 2   "I like your voice when you're happy."

Child 3   "It's low and pretty."

Child 4   "'It's beautiful and makes me so happy."

It's ironic that according to the student Voice Questionnaire, 90 percent

of the students preferred that I sing or use a sing-song voice to give directions

rather than to tell them how in my normal voice. (Appendix B)

On another occasion, our gifted and talented teacher asked me to gather

the children on the carpet in front of the room for a large group session. I simply

found the egg shaker, hid it in my hand, shook it to a catchy rhythmic beat, and the

children came rushing to the carpet. They sat down without one verbal direction

and waited quietly for what was to come. The instructor was impressed and her

response was "I don't know what that was, but I like it." The student's responses were:

Child 1   "I felt like getting up and shaking myself."

Child 2   "It made me want to dance."

Child 3   "I put my stuff away and came to the carpet.'

Child 4   "I was listening to the beat. I was listening closely
and I started putting my things away. Then I came
to the rug."

Often children become very excitable when there is a fire drill, which causes chaos. I decided to clap two beats, one strong, one weak, to practice lining up in an orderly manner. Some musicians call this a "steady beat," which is that personal inner rhythm. It proved to be a perfect strategy for calming the children's fears and easing them into the transition.

One day as we left the cafeteria, I walked through the open court to return to our classroom. I wanted the children to enter in a quiet, peaceful way, so I beckoned to the children and said:

Come in my friends
Come in, come in
Come in my friends
Come in. (repeat)

Sit down my friends
Sit down, sit down
Sit down my friends
Sit down.

Of course there is Tommy who doesn't come in with the others. He needs a special invitation!

Please come in
My friend, Tommy
Please come in and sit down. (repeat)

Thank you, thank you
My good friend
Thank you, thank you again.

Thank you, thank you
My good friend
I guess this is the end! (whispering)

Children love to hear their names spoken in a fun way. My task was successfully

accomplished. Spontaneous, made-up chants promote cooperativeness in

daily routines. The repetitive words reassures the child that someone cares.

Repetition is a child's security blanket!

Camille had been unsuccessful in reading, not because she couldn't, but

because she lacked self-confidence. It was question and answer day in Science

class. I would ask the question and the children would locate the sentence in their

science text that answered it. I called on Camille, she read the correct statement,

and we did this:

Camille can read! Camille can read!
We're so happy
Camille can read! (repeated over and over again)

We marched and chanted:

We'll celebrate like this (clap, clap)
Celebrate like this (clap, clap)
We'll celebrate, celebrate
Celebrate like this! (clap, clap)

We clapped, stomped, hopped, and marched. What a glorious time we had.

Camille's self-esteem was boosted that day. The marching rhythm

triggered enthusiasm and from that moment on Camille's reading improved. I

also believe she genuinely felt our warmth and support, which helped her to

relax and feel secure.

In the midst of confusion, sometimes you hear a definite rhythm that makes

you feel good. Dennis and Sherry are always at odds with each other. In the line

they said a few unkind words and then started hitting each other. In a sing-song

voice I said:

> Sherry is hitting.
> Oh, Dennis is unhappy!
> It's far better to show each other
> that you care.
>
> Dennis is hitting.
> Oh, Sherry in unhappy!
> It's far better to show each other
> that you care.
>
> It's not nice to hurt each other.
> It's not nice to hurt each other.
> It's far better to show each other
> that you care.

It makes us feel good to hear our names and the repetitive chant. The melody

calms the "savage beast."

During our Social Studies class I read the story FROM LITTLE WINTER TO

LONG NIGHT MOON by L. T. Downing to introduce our American Indian theme.

> "Great bird in flight
> Soars across the sun.
> His silent feathers spread
> Shadows on the water."

I asked them to define the word "soars." They couldn't. I wrote the definition on the

board and we read it in unison. I demonstrated in movement my interpretation

of the four lines and then asked them to give theirs. The end result was that they learned the meaning of "soaring" and became part of the experience. Tiffany stated, "That was so much fun!" We must hear and understand in order to make a connection.

I used the Student Voice Questionnaire to help determine if the children were aware of the dominant emotions of a mood as I used tone qualities, tempo, and dynamics in speaking. When you are happy or excited , your tone is usually bright and loud. Darker or quieter tones evokes sadness and seriousness. The tempo is faster for happy and exciting moods and slower for sad or fearful times. Dynamics are soft for sadness and love and loud for happiness, anger and excitement. (Appendix B)

The children were quite aware of the emotions of a mood. I randomly asked ten children "What kind of voice would make them stop what they were doing and listen?" Seventy percent responded to the tone category, thirty percent stated dynamics., and none of them verbalized tempo!

In music, rhythmic figures and phrases come from an arrangement of tones, organized according to their duration and stresses. In language, rhythm is the rise and fall of sounds according to syllables, vocal inflections, physical speech accents, and pauses.

In poetry, both types organize syllables into rhythmic patterns. Cummings says:

"Poems have lines
Lines have feet
Feet have stress
And stress gives beat."

One morning I played a Mozart tape to relax the children and to get them in the mood for creative writing. I moved back to observe its effect on the children's time on task. David, who almost never completed anything, appeared to have "visions of pleasure dancing in his head!" He smiled, rhythmically tapped the tempo of the music with his pencil, and rotated his head with zeal. With great determination, he began writing!!!! As I looked around the room, all the children were writing! I didn't hear one sound! Many wonderful poems were written that day. (Appendices C,D,E,F)

I continued to play the tape every morning for the rest of that week. However, by the end of the week it appeared the "newness had worn off" as they began to talk over the music.

Ayensu says, "Within an hour of birth babies flex their limbs and move their heads in approximate time to the rhythms of human speech they hear around them. If a different language is used the actual movements of the babies alter, but the rhythm of their movements changes to match the language that is being spoken."

Last October, in NEWSWEEK, researchers at the University of Konstanz, in Germany reported that exposure to music rewires neural circuits. At UC Irvine, Gordon Shaw suspected that all higher-order thinking is characterized by similar patterns of neuron firing. "Music, says the UC team, "excites the inherent brain patterns and enhances their use in complex reasoning tasks."

"I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be the tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized."

Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm. I will continue to speak in an animated voice, which will help me to feel younger and relate more effectively with the children. I will continue to listen to the children and respond to their cues to provide meaningful learning experiences especially in movement and music. I will do all that I can to help them understand why they must listen. They will soon come to know if they listened easy, if they listened hard, or if they just listened for fun! I will try new things. What I meant yesterday will not mean the same today. I will listen for today's beat! The beat goes on, and on, and on!

Ayensu, Edward S., and Whitfield, Philip. The Rhythms of Life. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1981.

Bigley, Sharon. "Your Child's Brain." Newsweek, February 1996, p. 57.

Cummins, Paul F. "On Teaching Verse Writing: Activities and a Bibliography for Teachers," California English Journal, Vol 9, No.2, April 1973.

Downing, L. F. From Little Winter to Long Night Moon. Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1994.

Ginott, Haim. Teacher and Child. New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1972.

Student Behavior Log

Student Name: _____

Age: _____ Date of Observation: _____

Indicate the degree to which you observe the stated behavior or characteristic in each student using the following scale: 0 = uncertain; 1 = does not fit at all; 2 = fits slightly; 3 = fits moderately; 4 = fits strongly

Verbal-Linguistic Behaviors

Loves talking, writing, and reading almost anything	0	1	2	3	4
Precisely expresses her- or himself both in writing and talking	0	1	2	3	4
Enjoys public speaking	0	1	2	3	4
Is sensitive to impact of words and language on others	0	1	2	3	4
Understands and enjoys plays on words and word games	0	1	2	3	4

Logical-Mathematical Behaviors

Is good at finding and understanding patterns	0	1	2	3	4
Is quick at solving a variety of problems	0	1	2	3	4
Can remember thinking formulas and strategies	0	1	2	3	4
Likes to identify, create, and sort things into categories	0	1	2	3	4
Is able to follow complex lines of reasoning and thought processes	0	1	2	3	4

Visual-Spatial Behaviors

Frequently doodles during class activities	0	1	2	3	4
Is helped by visuals and manipulatives	0	1	2	3	4
Likes painting, drawing, and working with clay	0	1	2	3	4
Has a good sense of direction and understanding of maps	0	1	2	3	4
Creates mental images easily; likes pretending	0	1	2	3	4

Bodily-Kinesthetic Behaviors

Has difficulty sitting still or staying in seat	0	1	2	3	4
Uses body gestures and physical movement to express him- or herself	0	1	2	3	4
Is good in sports; is well-coordinated physically	0	1	2	3	4
Likes to invent things, put things together and take them apart	0	1	2	3	4
Likes to demonstrate to others how to do something	0	1	2	3	4

Musical-Rhythmic Behaviors

Hums quietly to her- or himself while working or walking	0	1	2	3	4
Taps pencil, foot, or fingers while working	0	1	2	3	4
Can remember songs and rhymes easily	0	1	2	3	4
Likes to make up tunes and melodies	0	1	2	3	4
Senses musical elements in unusual or nonmusical situations	0	1	2	3	4

Interpersonal Behaviors

Has an irresistible urge to discuss almost everything with others	0	1	2	3	4
Is good at listening and communicating	0	1	2	3	4
Sensitive to the moods and feelings of others	0	1	2	3	4
Is a good, effective team player	0	1	2	3	4
Is able to figure out the motives and intentions of others	0	1	2	3	4

Intrapersonal Behaviors

Is highly intuitive and/or "flies by the seat of pants"	0	1	2	3	4
Is quiet, very self-reflective and aware	0	1	2	3	4
Asks questions relentlessly; has avid curiosity	0	1	2	3	4
Is able to express inner feelings in a variety of ways	0	1	2	3	4
Is individualistic and independent; is not concerned about others' opinions	0	1	2	3	4

Student Voice Questionnaire

1. Can you name a favorite story your mom or dad read to you when you were little? _____

2. Has your mom or dad ever spoken to you in a sing-song voice while pushing you on a swing or taking you for a walk? _____

   _____

3. What kind of voice does your mom or dad use when he/she is happy?

   _____

4. What kind of voice does your mom or dad use when he/she is angry?

   _____

5. What kind of voice would make you stop what you are doing and listen?

   _____

6. Do you like jumprope chants? _____

7. Would you like to listen to a story on a tape or to listen to someone read out loud to you? _____

   _____

8. Do you like it better when I sing directions to you or when I just tell you directions? _____

9. How do you feel when I speak or sing your name with a rhythmic beat to a rhyme or a sentence? _____

   _____

10. What do you like about my voice? _____

   _____

   What don't you like about my voice? _____

   _____

11. Do you think you are learning when I read poetry to you? _____

12. Do you like to listen to Mozart tapes while doing your work? _____

   _____

13. What do words make you do or how do you feel when words are spoken?

   _____

14. Do you like to say poems and have others keep the steady beat? _____

   _____

15. Do you like high sounds or low sounds? _____

16. What would you do if I said "If you're feeling really smart today, come to me."? _____
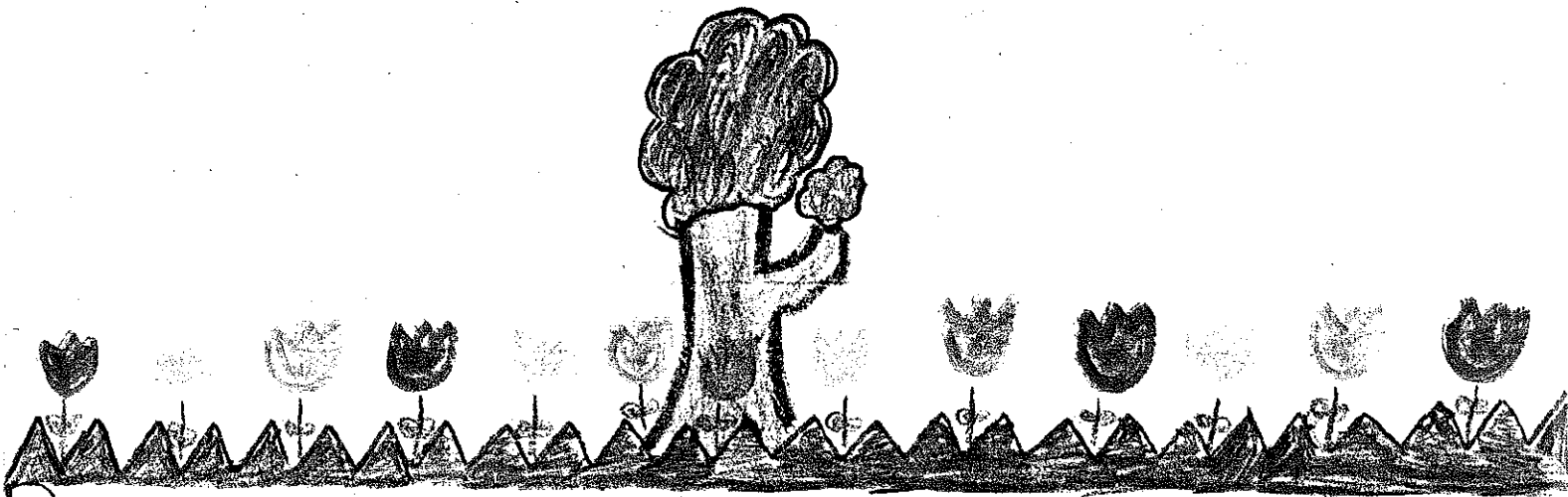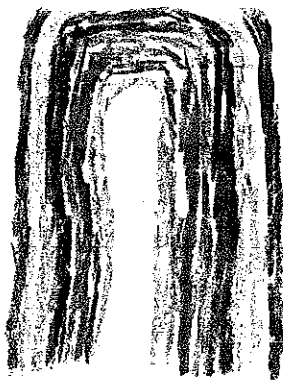
   _____
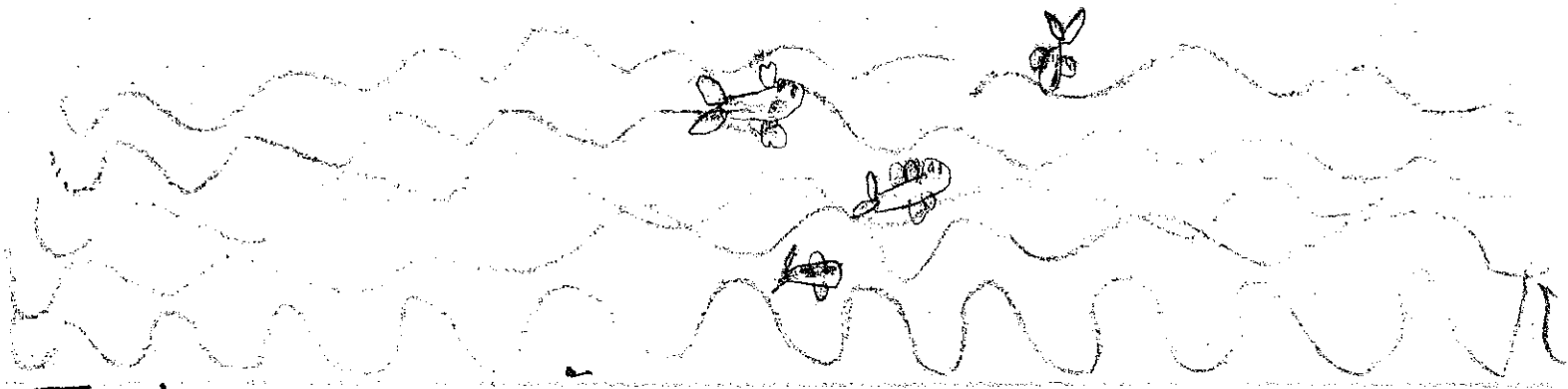
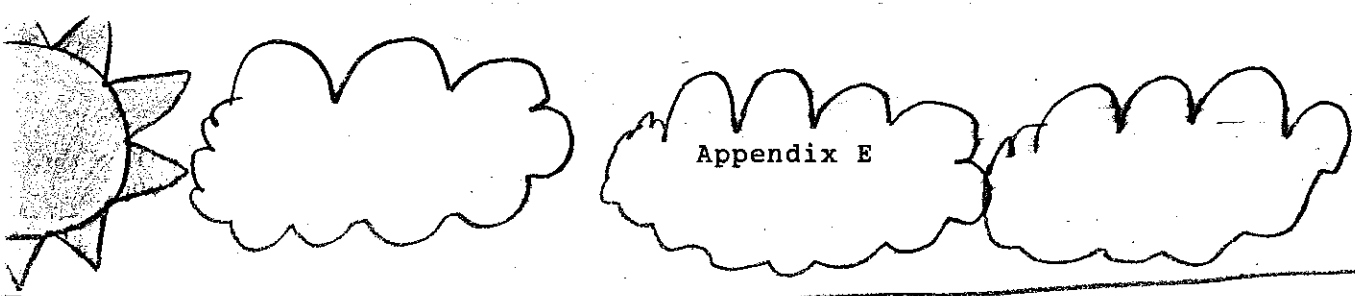Fish
Black, jelly
Swim and jump
Funny, good and cool
Goldfish.

Rainbows
Pretty, colorful
Set in the sky
Make me feel wonderful
Colors.
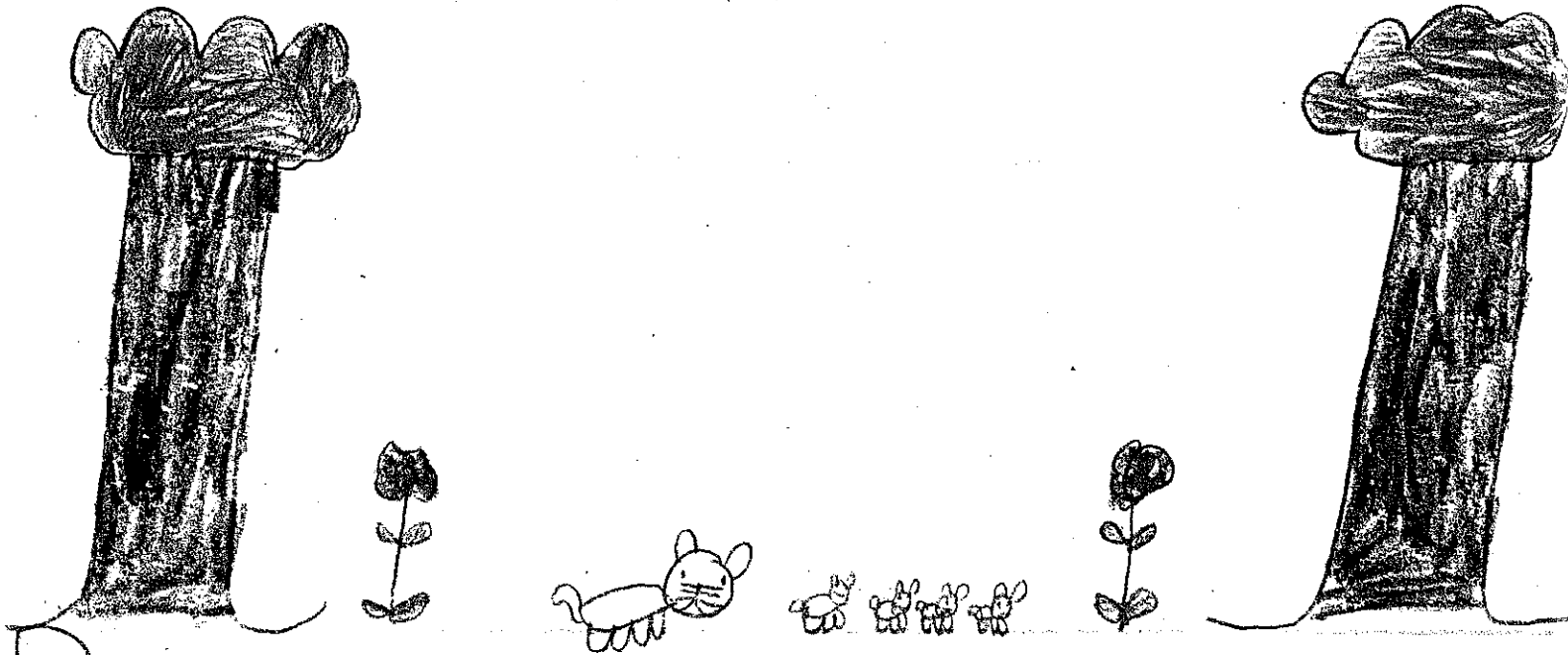
Dogs

White, pretty

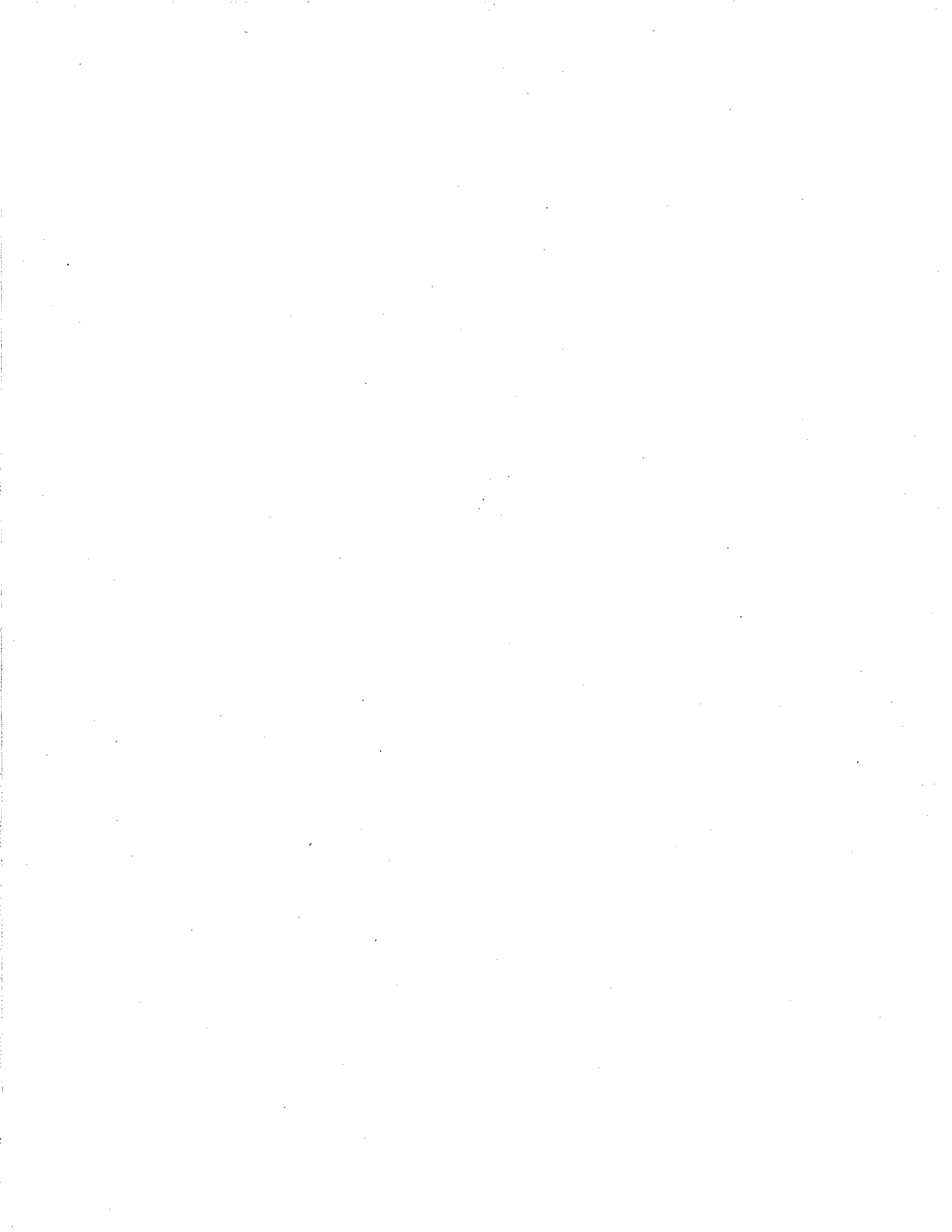Run, bark, jump

Good sweet and kind

Puppies.

Ice Cream
Good, vanilla
Melts, and drips
It tastes so good
Ice milk.

RETENTION: BENEFICIAL OR DETRIMENTAL

A study of the policy of retaining students at grade level for failure to perform to a specified standard

Paula H. Dennis
8th Grade Science Teacher
Carter G. Woodson Middle School
Hopewell City Public Schools

RETENTION: BENEFICIAL OR DETRIMENTAL?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

I am one of the growing number of "career switchers" in our present day society. I worked in the business world until I had "made it" into a middle-management position, but I did not find satisfaction nor a worthwhile challenge in any position held. When my company was sold I found I had the opportunity to change direction. I returned to school and became a teacher. It was the best decision of my life.

I open with this information in order to explain the mindset I had upon entering this profession. As a teacher I came into the classroom pre-programmed to think that students who could not (or would not) perform at the expected level should be retained in that level until performance was on level or above. This was how it was done when I had been a student and I did not see any reason that it should not still be an effective remediation policy. Also, I had seen it work within my own family. My sister repeated the second grade as a child yet is today a very self-assured 2nd Grade teacher.

I have also seen another side of this issue. As a manager who had to supervise the performance of a staff of 26 employees I had seen people come into the workforce with the credentials but without the skills those credentials supposedly represented. I had the unpleasant duty of dismissing individuals from jobs because of the lack of these skills. As a business person I blamed the schools.

Approximately 10 years ago I entered the classroom in the guise of a teacher. Each year since I have become less sure that my original opinion concerning the retention of students is right. I saw students who were retained go on to be honor roll winners the following year. I also saw just as many retained students who had an even more difficult time the following year – both academically and socially. I have become increasingly less sure yet more concerned about this issue each year that I teach.

Was I the only teacher who felt this way? Did teachers with more experience have a clearer vision of what was "the right way" to handle these children? What did my colleagues think? What did the administrators of my school division feel? What did "my kids" (the students I teach) believe to be the answer? What did research in this area prove and how reliable was this research?

It was from this point that my own search began. On the following pages are my discoveries.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As a science teacher I teach my students to solve problems using the scientific method. I have them use a 5-step approach:

1) Identify the problem to be solved.
2) Form a hypothesis based on research already done on the problem - an "educated guess" as to the answer.
3) Develop an experiment to test the validity of the hypothesis.
4) Analyze and record the results of the experiment.
5) Conclude if the results support the hypothesis.

I decided to use the same approach for this problem. After all, shouldn't I practice what I teach? (Pun intended.)

I. PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED:

Do the problems outweigh the benefits of retaining students?

II. HYPOTHESIS:

The problems outweigh the benefits of retaining students.

The research I studied would seem to indicate this hypothesis although there is also research that contradicts it. Most of the conflict seems to be determined by the audience intended for the publication in which the research findings were printed.

The research reported in publications directed towards educators and parents is strongly opposed to retention. Some researchers now say that students who repeat are 20 to 30 percent more likely to dropout and that students retained two or more times have only a 5 percent chance of reaching graduation. One study indicates that being retained terrifies kids and that the prospect of wetting their pants in class or being caught stealing were the only things more threatening to the six- to nine-year-olds studied. Almost all studies show that the children's self esteem is so damaged that subsequent learning becomes more difficult.

Publications geared toward business and industry tended to have a slightly different slant. These studies stress factors such as maturation of students and failure to achieve as the causes for low self-esteem and lack of motivation. They also criticize the time-frame of most anti-retention research, claiming most of it was done in the 1970s and did not apply to the students of today.

Having read through as many of these studies as I could and comparing them to my personal experiences in the classroom lead me to hypothesis stated above.

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III. EXPERIMENT:

1) Survey general opinions of students, teachers, administrators, and parents regarding the retention of students who fail to perform at grade level.

2) Survey current 8th grade students who are repeating this grade for the second year as to the causes for their retention and if they have benefitted from it.

3) Survey the 8th grade teachers from whose classes these students failed the previous year as to their opinions of why these particular students failed their classes.

4) Compare the report cards of these students for the school year 94/95 with that of the school year 95/96.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1) General opinion survey using current trends in educational thinking to form the questions asked.
2) List of current students repeating 8th grade this year.
3) Retained-students survey requesting factors other than ability that influenced their prior-year performance.
4) Retaining-teachers survey requesting factors the teachers felt lead to the students' inability to perform.
5) 94/95 report cards for repeating 8th grade students.
6) 95/96 report cards for these same students.

In respect for the privacy of these students and their teachers I have assigned letters and/or numbers to each to protect their identity. On the following pages are the actual surveys used to gather information. It might be useful to the reader to determine his/her own opinion in answer to the questions asked before viewing the results that follow. Knowing ones own point of view can help in being able to objectively evaluate the results.

GENERAL OPINION SURVEY USED:

PLEASE CHECK WHICHEVER APPLIES TO YOU:

_____ STUDENT   This is a survey being conducted
_____ TEACHER   as part of a research project on
_____ ADMINISTRATOR   the value of retaining students.
_____ PARENT   You need not identify yourself.

Please respond to the statements written below using the following
criteria:

        1 - agree strongly
        2 - tend to agree
        3 - unsure
        4 - tend to disagree
        5 - disagree strongly

1. All children should be enrolled in kindergarten by age 5.

     1   2   3   4   5

2. All students in grades K - 3 should be retained if they are
   unable to master ALL subject areas with a grade of 70% or
   higher.

     1   2   3   4   5

3. Students in grade 3 should pass a 3rd grade level literacy test
   before being allowed to enter grade 4.

     1   2   3   4   5

4. All students in grades 4 - 6 should be retained if they are
   unable to master ALL subject areas with a grade of 70% or
   higher.

     1   2   3   4   5

5. Students in grade 6 should pass a 6th grade level literacy test
   before being allowed to enter grade 7.

     1   2   3   4   5

6. All students in grades 7 - 9 should be retained if they are
   unable to master ALL subject areas with a grade of 70% or
   higher.

     1   2   3   4   5

PLEASE GO TO NEXT PAGE.

7. Students in grade 9 should pass a 9th grade level literacy test before being allowed to enter grade 10.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. Students in grades 10 - 12 must master EACH SUBJECT with a grade on 70% or higher and must retake ONLY those subjects not mastered.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. A 12th grade level literacy test (an exit exam) should be administered and a score of 75% or higher achieved for any student wishing to receive a diploma upon graduation.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. Students unable to pass a 12th grade level literacy test (exit exam) should be given a certificate of completion instead of a diploma.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please check those items listed below that apply to you:

Grade level completed:
_____ below grade 6
_____ below grade 9
_____ below grade 12
_____ completed high school
_____ some college/no degree
_____ associate degree
_____ bachelor degree
_____ masters degree and or doctorate

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS YOU WISH TO MAKE:

RETAINED-STUDENTS' SURVEY USED;

THE FOLLOWING SURVEY IS BEING CONDUCTED AS PART OF A RESEARCH
PROJECT ON THE VALUE OF RETAINING STUDENTS WHO DO NOT MASTER A
SUBJECT AREA WITH A 70% AVERAGE OR BETTER. YOU HAVE BEEN
IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE STUDENTS RETAINED IN GRADE 8 AND ARE
REPEATING THAT GRADE THIS YEAR. PLEASE CHECK ANY OF THE FACTORS
LISTED BELOW THAT YOU FEEL HELPED CAUSE YOUR INABILITY TO PERFORM
AND ADD ANY COMMENTS YOU THINK WOULD BE IMPORTANT. YOUR NAME AND
SCHOOL WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

STUDENT:_____
SCHOOL:_____

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FAILURE TO PASS 8TH GRADE:

____ Unable to read at grade level.

____ Poor study skills.

____ Failure to attend school regularly.

____ Failure to complete assignments given.

____ Emotional problems at school.

____ Emotional problems at home.

____ Parents didn't care.

____ Peer pressure.

____ Unable to concentrate.

____ Personality conflict with the teacher.

____ Drugs and/or alcohol.

____ Physical disability (eyesight, hearing, etc.)

____ Poor eating habits.

____ Physical illnesses.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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RETAINING TEACHERS' SURVEY USED:

THE FOLLOWING SURVEY IS BEING CONDUCTED AS PART OF A RESEARCH
PROJECT ON THE VALUE OF RETAINING STUDENTS WHO DO NOT MASTER A
SUBJECT AREA WITH A 70% AVERAGE OR BETTER. THE STUDENT LISTED BELOW
WAS RETAINED LAST YEAR. YOUR CLASS WAS ONE OF WHICH HE/SHE FAILED
TO ACHIEVE 70%. PLEASE CHECK ANY FACTORS LISTED BELOW THAT YOU FEEL
HELPED CAUSE HIS/HER INABILITY TO PERFORM AND ADD ANY COMMENTS YOU
THINK WOULD BE IMPORTANT. YOUR NAME, SUBJECT AREA, SCHOOL, AND THE
STUDENT'S NAME WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

TEACHER'S NAME:_____
STUDENT'S NAME:_____
SUBJECT AREA:_____
SCHOOL:_____

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FAILURE TO PASS 8TH GRADE:

____ Unable to read at grade level.

____ Poor study skills.

____ Failure to attend school regularly.

____ Failure to complete assignments given.

____ Emotional problems at school.

____ Emotional problems at home.

____ Parents didn't care.

____ Peer pressure.

____ Unable to concentrate.

____ Personality conflict with the teacher.

____ Drugs and/or alcohol.

____ Physical disability (eyesight, hearing, etc.)

____ Poor eating habits.

____ Physical illnesses.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

IV. RESULTS

   A. GENERAL OPINION SURVEY

      Response choices:
      1 - strongly agree
      2 - tend to agree
      3 - unsure
      4 - tend to disagree
      5 - strongly disagree

      Number responding:
        87 8th grade students
        61 teachers (mainly middle-school)
        14 administrators (all levels)
         0 parents (none of the surveys sent home were returned)

1. All children should be enrolled in kindergarten by age 5.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	69%	16%	06%	05%	06%
TEACHERS	49%	31%	05%	10%	08%
ADMIM.	57%	22%	0%	0%	21%

2. All students in grades K - 3 should be retained if they are
   unable to master ALL subject areas with a grade of 70% or
   higher.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	16%	22%	22%	16%	25%
TEACHERS	23%	46%	08%	16%	07%
ADMIN.	07%	15%	0%	15%	64%

3. Students in grade 3 should pass a 3rd grade level literacy test
   before being allowed to enter grade 4.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	16%	25%	15%	17%	26%
TEACHERS	31%	31%	18%	15%	03%
ADMIN.	07%	22%	07%	22%	43%

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4. All students in grades 4 - 6 should be retained if they are
   unable to master ALL subject areas with a grade of 70% or
   higher.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	22%	31%	16%	21%	15%
TEACHERS	25%	39%	10%	21%	05%
ADMIN.	0%	29%	0%	07%	64%

5. Students in grade 6 should pass a 6th grade level literacy test
   before being allowed to enter grade 7.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	30%	24%	08%	18%	06%
TEACHERS	20%	33%	15%	28%	05%
ADMIN.	0%	21%	15%	14%	50%

6. All students in grades 7 - 9 should be retained if they are
   unable to master ALL subject areas with a grade of 70% or
   higher.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	31%	21%	16%	09%	23%
TEACHERS	23%	31%	11%	30%	08%
ADMIN.	0%	22%	07%	0%	71%

7. Students in grade 9 should pass a 9th grade level literacy test
   before being allowed to enter grade 10.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	23%	24%	18%	13%	21%
TEACHERS	21%	30%	25%	20%	05%
ADMIN.	0%	29%	0%	14%	57%

8. Students in grades 10 – 12 must master EACH SUBJECT with a grade
   on 70% or higher and must retake ONLY those subjects not
   mastered.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	57%	16%	13%	07%	08%
TEACHERS	48%	30%	15%	05%	02%
ADMIN.	29%	57%	0%	0%	14%

9. A 12th grade level literacy test (an exit exam) should be
   administered and a score of 75% or higher achieved for any
   student wishing to receive a diploma upon graduation.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	22%	21%	22%	07%	28%
TEACHERS	31%	31%	25%	10%	03%
ADMIN.	14%	43%	0%	14%	29%

10. Students unable to pass a 12th grade level literacy test (exit
    exam) should be given a certificate of completion instead of
    a diploma.

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENTS	09%	09%	25%	13%	43%
TEACHERS	34%	38%	23%	02%	03%
ADMIN.	0%	71%	14%	0%	16%

(I found several of the resulting percentages very intriguing as
they were tallied. Students and teachers seem to be in agreement
in more areas than were teachers and administrators. While
administrators tended to disagree with literacy testing at lower
grade levels they tended to agree to the concept of exit exams for
graduating students. Students, teachers, and administrators all
tended to strongly agree that all children should be enrolled in
kindergarten by age 5, yet teachers and administrators seem to have
totally different views as to retaining students at the lower
grades.)

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MADE

From Students:

"I think a student who fails the exit exam should get a chance to take it again."

"All required subjects such as English or Math should be passed with a grade of 70% or better but if a student fails PE or an exploratory class the student should still be able to go to the next grade."

"Students who fail only one subjects should have to make up only the subject he failed no matter what grade he is in."

"Only the strong will make it out in the REAL world so I think the school should be strict enough to get a good education."

"Maybe if we had some better teachers and more good books and more supplies and classes were more fun and interesting more kids would pay more attention."

"I don't think students should be held back because they fail all subjects but should go to the next grade anyway."

"If a students fails only one class he should not fail the whole grade."

"If a person in the twelfth grade can't pass a literacy test they should just have to repeat that grade again."

"A literacy test should not tell if you should pass or not but should tell how good your teachers are. Some teachers might not teach you the things on the test."

"I want to get out of school without taking any tests."

"If you are already smart enough to start school when you are four years old you should be able to do it."

"There should be tougher rules for kids who are misbehaving and not doing their work because it would make them do their work more."

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MADE

From Teachers:

"There are times when retention is beneficial. Between grades K and 3, when a child is obviously immature and very behind, retention can offer a way to catch up. As the child gets older, retention tends to become more of a stigma. When reaching high school, children who are still have a difficult time need to be steered towards vocational training which will prepare them for a career."

"Retention varies from child to child - as to the best placement. Some children will not benefit from retention due to other learning problems or delays."

"I'm not sure retention is always the answer for many students. There needs to be some type of support system for the students who need more time and attention. If these kids cannot pass tests earlier on -- why would they want to stay in school to fail more?"

"I believe strongly in early intervention and preschool for at-risk families. I believe in retention but not for ALL students. There may be other factors involved and these need to be considered."

"We teach children --- not subjects or grades."

"Students need to be held accountable for their own learning."

"K to 3 should be readiness grades. 4th grade should show mastery of K to 4. 6th grade should show mastery of 5th and 6th. 8th grade should show mastery of 7th and 8th."

"I don't believe retaining beyond grade 6 helps the student succeed."

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MADE

From Administrators:

"Every child needs to be considered as a whole person. Some children need intensive assistance to do well in the traditional school subjects but have strengths in other areas which will be valued by society if they can attain minimal proficiency in math and communication skills."

"While I agree with all items listed on the survey I strongly disagree that any rule can or should be applied to ALL people. Decisions should be made on an individualized basis."

"An exit exam should be given at the end of the 11th grade with a retake opportunity given in grade 12."

"Grade level literacy tests should be given only if they are a true evaluation of the subject areas taught at each grade level."

B. Factors contributing to failure to pass 8th grade as
   ranked by the students who were retained.

   1. Failure to complete assignments.
   2. Failure to attend school regularly.
   3. Poor study skills.

THESE FACTORS WERE LISTED BY ALMOST ALL OF THE RETAINED
STUDENTS.   THE FOLLOWING FACTORS WERE LISTED BY TWO OR
MORE STUDENTS.

   4. Personality conflict with the teacher.
   5. Emotional problems at home.
   6. Physical illnesses.

(It was interesting to me as a teacher to see that these students
accepted the responsibility for their failure to master one or more
subject areas the previous year. It has often been my experience
that students having difficulty will place the "blame" anywhere but
on themselves.)

C. Factors contributing to failure to pass 8th grade as
   ranked by the retaining teachers.

   1. Poor study skills.
   2. Failure to complete assignments.
   3. Failure to attend school regularly.

THESE FACTORS WERE NOTED BY JUST ABOUT EVERY TEACHER FOR EVERY
STUDENT RETAINED.

   4. Failure to concentrate.
   5. Unconcerned parents.
   6. Inability to read at grade level.
   7. Emotional problems at home
   8. Peer pressure.
   9. Emotional problems at school.

(I also found it interesting that teachers and students had the
same three factors ranked at the top although not is the same
order.)

D. Report card comparison 94/95 with 95/96 school years of repeating 8th graders.

* INDICATES IMPROVED PERFORMANCE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

STUDENT I

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	B	F	D
Standard Math	C	F	F
Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	F	F	F

ABSENT 62 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	F	F	F
Standard Math	F	F	F
Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	F	F	F

ABSENT 67 DAYS

(Retained again)

STUDENT II

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	F	F	F
Standard Math	D	D	D
Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	F	F	F

ABSENT 21 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	C*	F	F
Standard Math	C*	F	F
Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	C*	F	F

ABSENT 71 DAYS

(Retained again)

STUDENT III

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	F	F	F
Standard Math	D	F	F
Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	F	F	F

ABSENT 23 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR --- moved to New York City

STUDENT IV

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	F	F	F
Standard Math	F	F	F
Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	F	F	F

ABSENT 99 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR --- Dropout (due to pregnancy)

*STUDENT V

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	F	C	D
Standard Math	D	F	F
Civics	F	C	F
Standard English	F	D	F

ABSENT 24 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	C*	C	C*
Standard Math	C*	C*	C*
Civics	D*	C	C*
Standard English	C*	C*	C*

ABSENT 8 DAYS

(Promoted to 9th grade)

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STUDENT VI

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ D	/ D	/ D /
Standard Math	/ D	/ C	/ D /
Advanced Civics	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard English	/ F	/ C	/ D /

ABSENT 3 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ A*	/ A*	/ A* /
Standard Math	/ B*	/ C	/ B* /
Standard Civics	/ D	/ F	/ F /
Standard English	/ C*	/ F	/ D /

ABSENT 4 DAYS

(Retained again)

STUDENT VII

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard Math	/ F	/ D	/ D /
Civics	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard English	/ D	/ C	/ C /

ABSENT 17 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard Math	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Civics	/ D*	/ D*	/ D /
Standard English	/ F	/ D	/ D /

ABSENT 14 DAYS

(Retained again)

STUDENT VIII

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard Math	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Civics	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard English	/ D	/ F	/ F /

ABSENT 24 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR - Socially Promoted to High School/Special Prog.

STUDENT IX

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ D	/ F	/ F /
Standard Math	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Civics	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard English	/ D	/ F	/ F /

ABSENT 19 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR - Transferred to the Alternative Education School
    because of behavioral problems.

STUDENT X

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	/ 1ST SEMESTER	/ 2ND SEMESTER/	YEAR END GRADE/
Physical Science	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Pre-Algebra	/ D	/ D	/ D /
Civics	/ F	/ F	/ F /
Standard English	/ D	/ F	/ F /

ABSENT 41 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR - Transferred to the Alternative Education School
    because of behavioral problems.

*STUDENT XI

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	C	B	C
Pre-Algebra	D	D	D
Civics	D	F	F
Advanced English	C	B	B

ABSENT 12 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	A*	A*	A*
Algebra I	B	C	B
Civics	B*	B*	B*
Advanced English	B*	B	B

ABSENT 5 DAYS
(Promoted to 9th grade on Honor Roll)

*STUDENT XII

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	C	F	D
Pre-Algebra	F	F	F
Advanced Civics	F	F	F
Advanced English	C	D	C

ABSENT 14 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	A*	A*	A*
Pre-Algebra	B*	D*	D*
Standard Civics	D	D	D
Standard English	C	F	D

ABSENT 6 DAYS
(Promoted to 9th grade)

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STUDENT XIII

94/95 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	C	F	F
Pre-Algebra	F	F	F
Advanced Civics	F	F	F
Standard English	F	F	F

ABSENT 24 DAYS

95/96 SCHOOL YEAR

CLASS	1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	YEAR END GRADE
Physical Science	C*	B*	B*
Pre-Algebra	F	F	F
Standard Civics	D*	F	F
Standard English	D*	F	F

ABSENT 12 DAYS

(Retained again)

V. CONCLUSION

The opinions of the teaching staff in my school division seem to be in line with what is reported nationwide -- more are in favor of retention than oppose it. The administrative staff of this division also seem to be in line with the opinions of administrators nationwide in opposing retention as a blanket policy.

Of the 13 students who were retained in 94/95 (from the 8th grade only) the results would support the hypothesis that retention did not benefit the largest percentage of these students. Only 3 of the 13 were actually promoted based on academic performance in 95/96. (One was socially promoted into a special program for over-aged students at the high school.) All of the others - with the exception of the one student who moved - seem to have followed the actions indicated in the research. One dropped out due to pregnancy, two were sent to an alternative education program due to their behavioral difficulties, and the rest failed 8th grade - again.

PERSONAL AFTERTHOUGHTS

This study has pulled me further into the camp believing that retention is NOT the answer to the problem of what to do with those students who do not perform.

My personal opinion now leans toward literacy testing at several stages during a students school-years experience. Technical programs need to be developed that teach our kids the skills to survive in this modern, hightech society into which we are sending them. Remediation programs with a high level of one-on-one tutoring needs to be incorporated into the regular schedules of these students.

Regardless of which opinion any of us hold one thing is very clear --- <u>something</u> has to be done <u>quickly</u> before too many of these kids are lost. I don't have the answers but I have no intention of ever stopping my search for them.

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LITERATURE CIRCLES

In Search of the Grand Conversation

Michael Kight, Teacher
Mary Southward, Library Media Specialist
G. H. Reid Elementary School
Richmond City Public Schools

It was the purpose of this study to determine how the literature circle strategy affects achievement in the study of literature and social studies.

The voices in corporate America tell educators that successful workers are independent thinkers who can function collaboratively in an environment characterized by a spirit of community, democracy and shared responsibility. In order for our students to be prepared for the work world, they must be at the center of the classroom world and have many opportunities to listen, read, write, think and discuss in a collaborative, not only cooperative, setting. Cooperation does not guarantee collaboration and collaboration is at the heart of literature circles.

Edward Deming said that "If we continue to do what we have always done, we will continue to get what we have always gotten." It is both scary and exciting to change the way we've always done it. This is the story of what happened when a classroom teacher, a media specialist and twenty four fourth graders decided to try something different. Twenty five supportive exhibits are displayed at the end of the paper.

WHAT IS A LITERATURE CIRCLE?

The ideal literature circle organization is described by Harvey Daniels in his 1994 book, <u>Literature Circles</u>:

> Literature circles are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article or book. While reading each group determined portion of the text (either in or outside of class), each member

prepares to take specific responsibilities in the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with the notes needed to help perform that job. The circles have regular meetings, with discussion roles rotating each session. When they finish a book, the circle members plan a way to share highlights of their reading with the wider community; then they trade members with other finishing groups, select more reading, and move into a new cycle. Once readers can successfully conduct their own wide-ranging, self-sustaining discussions, formal discussion roles may be dropped.

LITERATURE CIRCLES AND LEARNING THEORY

Foundations for modern learning theory include the importance of allowing students to play at that which is to be learned, to make choices, to take responsibility for their own learning and to be actively involved. Adult observers of literature circle classes comment on the playful, fun-filled atmosphere which pervades the activity. Three generations ago, John Dewey challenged educators to empower children rather than to control them. Challenging educators to become facilitators in the best sense, Carl Rogers, the father of humanistic education, fostered student ownership, involvement and choice. When students participate in literature circles in their ideal form or in the steps leading to the ideal, they are doing, creating, making choices, taking responsibility and are certainly empowered. Studies in 1991 and 1992, utilizing similar, though not an exact literature circle format support alternative activities for the study of literature. It is clear that if only the name of the literature activity is changed, leaving a teacher centered strategy, no advantage is gained.

WHY DID WE DECIDE TO TRY IT?

Now that you've read about the "Ideal Literature Circle" and what researchers have to say, we want to tell you the story of two educators and twenty four 4th graders at G. H. Reid Elementary School who came a little closer to that ideal grand conversation.

In September we observed that Michael's class, in an urban school of approximately 900 students, was a heterogeneous mix of ability levels and personalities. These twelve boys and twelve girls were anxious for attention, talkative, enthusiastic learners, who evidenced difficulty with listening skills, working cooperatively, reading independently and presenting what they knew. We wanted to capitalize on the strengths, bubbling personalities and the natural desire of these 4th graders to talk, bond and find themselves in literature.

WE BEGAN WITH COOPERATION.

We decided to teach the literature circles class in the media center one hour per week, on Wednesdays from 2:00-3:00. During the first few meetings, students reminded us that this was not an optimum learning time. We changed the class meeting time to 10:30-11:30 on Wednesday mornings.

In order to share a literature experience, students must be able to work cooperatively and collaboratively. Before we explained the literature circles format, we gave students time to practice cooperative group skills. They sat in groups of five or six at five numbered tables in the media center. During the first class meeting, their task was to decide who would perform each of the six cooperative group jobs **(Care Bear, Materials Person, Booster, Time Keeper, Writer-Recorder and Together Person)** for the group and to fill in a cooperative group sheet. We explained that stickers would be placed on the cooperative group sheet numerous times during the hour for organization, neat work space, kindness to each other, willingness of each member to perform his/her job, following class rules and quiet consideration to the other groups in the media center. There was immediate interest in the number of stickers that could be acquired, and a spirit of competition between the groups was evident.

UPS AND DOWNS

Often great intentions and enthusiasm for new ideas meet with frustration because we

move too fast, are impatient for results, or fear taking risks. We tell it, model it once, and assume "they've got it". When students don't demonstrate that they've "got it", we feel we've failed. We revert to what we've always done, and resting assured that"...we'll get what we've always gotten", we take comfort/discomfort in the familiar.

After a few sessions of introductions, explanations and what we thought was more than enough modeling of the literature circle process, we turned students lose to read and discuss. They shifted their attention from us to each other. The noise level was impressive. Feeling slightly nauseous, we sensed that we had released a herd of very energetic colts that would race off in all directions and never return to the fold. For some time, we circled the area sheep dog fashion, without stopping to listen to any specific group. We confided to each other later that we feared "nothing was happening". We anticipated hearing talk about lunch, TV shows or who said what to whom. Trying to be invisible, we sat with groups and were amazed to hear gallant attempts at group organization, self management, reading and literature talk, which is the beginning of discussion. We wondered if it was a fluke, if we were hearing what we wanted to hear and what would happen next. What happened next was always a surprise. We sometimes had headaches but we were never bored.

In November, after seven sessions with fiction picture books, we shortened our modeling time and gave students the option of moving to various nooks and crannies of the media center with group selected stories from the basal reading text. Something was wrong. The enthusiastic "colts" of September seemed bored and unresponsive. Was it the basal selections? Does the text carry a stigma? Was it the lack of modeling? Was it the separation from the larger group? We were confused and anxious. However, since the reaction to the basal reader versus independent fiction selections was one of out interests, we persevered. We were reminded of the stock market analogy and fought the tendency to abandon an investment when the returns are not 100% within the first quarter. The rapid advances and declines of the first few months, set the tone for the year.

HATS

After we explained and modeled the structure and function of a cooperative group, students concentrated on getting to know each other and on performing their cooperative group jobs. They enjoyed seeing the stickers added to their cooperative group sheet. Using picture books, we explained and modeled the purpose and function of a literature circle. Students created a list of rules to govern their own behavior. We demonstrated literature circle role sheets and students assigned the roles within their cooperative groups. The roles, as Harvey Daniels states in his book, <u>Literature Circles</u>, allow for "different takes" on the text, the purpose of them being to stimulate conversation and to make the role sheets obsolete. Students selected from the roles below:

The **Discussion Leader** asks questions and provides discussion prompts.

The **Passage Picker** selects special passages to discuss and tells why they were selected.

The **Word Wizard** selects new, interesting words, researches them in the dictionary, encyclopedia or other reference and brings them to the discussion.

The **Careful Connector** helps the group make a connection between their lives and the story.

The **Artful Artist** draws a character, scene or real life reminder of the story.

PROCESS

If there were more than five people in a group, two people shared a role. Each person had a cooperative group responsibility and a literature circle responsibility. We noted in the beginning that these students needed practice working cooperatively and in listening and presenting what they knew. In order to accommodate these needs, and to effect a smooth transition from a more teacher directed literature activity to a student directed ideal "Grand Conversation", we doled out responsibilities gradually. Initially we were responsible for selecting and presenting the story and the students were responsible for group management, demonstrating literature circle roles and dabbling in the art of discussion and presentation.

In order to utilize titles for which we had a single copy, such as <u>Too Many Tamales</u>, by Gary Soto, we created transparencies, read the story and modeled a literature circle. Students marked words, phrases and characters on a Call Chart as they heard them in the story. This "Call Chart", so named because students place a check mark by the words as they hear them "called out", requires active listening, which is a prerequisite for effective discussion and conversation. We observed that, without exception, students were anxious to prove that they heard and saw everything. We modeled a discussion and students guessed the literature circle roles. They took the next step by using text excerpts, Call Charts, role sheets and cooperative group sheets as guides for discussion and management. We circulated among the groups, distributing the much sought after Day-Glo orange stickers.

HOT TOPICS

For the first six or seven classes, depending upon cues from students, discussion time was between fifteen and twenty five minutes long. The three picture books used during this time stimulated lively discussion on topics ranging from the ingredients used to make tamales, differences between freight and passenger trains and the plight of African Americans during the Great Depression, which students sometimes referred to as the "big depression". At the end of each class students had the option of sharing with the whole class by any number of methods which could include telling what they did to fulfill their literature circle role, showing an original drawing via a transparency or dramatizing a segment.

THAT'S ME, I THINK.

Most students were anxious to begin reading and discussing, although some groups took from eight to ten minutes to focus on their task. Having asked our colleagues to serve as peer observers throughout the year, one noted in October, "At three of the five tables, the students were engaged in asking factual questions that their group members had to answer, supporting their responses from the text." During a discussion about <u>Too Many Tamales</u>, this same observer heard the **Word Wizard** at one table initiate interest in the word "plopped", so students talked about how the

sound of the word told its meaning and tried to make "pictures in our heads of things that plopped".

We noticed that the more we modeled the literature circle process, the more excited the students were, and the more stimulating and spontaneous were the discussions. They were able to recognize the literature circle roles when we modeled, but had difficulty demonstrating them. The **Artful Artists** were particularly dedicated to their roles. One young man, challenged by the reading process, exuberantly announced at the close of an October session that, "I just love being the **Artful Artist**. It makes me feel so special." An example of his interpretation of Too Many Tamales, along with other creative renderings of his peers, is included in the exhibits at the end of this paper. The **Word Wizards** took great pride in deciding what words were worthy of the group's attention. A particularly high level of interest in the Great Depression was sparked by Margeree King Mitchell's book, Uncle Jed's Barber Shop. The dictionaries and encyclopedias were in constant use and we wondered about the effect of this activity on the reference, work study and visual materials section of the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills). The **Passage Pickers** were most challenged by their task, and demonstrated that the term "passage" was not altogether clear. The **Careful Connectors** appeared to have the greatest effect on the group. Once they "connected" a character, event or scene to their own lives, everyone had something to contribute. One could almost see the idea lights click on as they said things like, "Oh, I remember..." or "Oh, that reminds me of my grandmother...". They were finding themselves in literature. The discussions took on a lively, spirited, almost theatrical tone. A peer observer noted that "The kids in all groups were all on task and afterwards I wondered if the kids were just performing because I was an unfamiliar adult sitting there with them. Today I talked with another peer observer who also had observed this class. She too was impressed with how on-task the groups were and had commented that the class was ready to go beyond modeling and into actual selection of pieces of literature. I'll be interested to see if 'the girls' choose literature based on interest in the piece or for 'social' reasons."

STYLE OF GOVERNMENT
Hens with Hats

The style of the **Discussion Leaders** ranged from very laid back, to consensus building, to a dictatorial, autocratic, speak only when spoken to approach. Some groups were dependent upon strict rules which they had set up for themselves, such as raising hands and speaking only when the **Discussion Leader** called on them. In one instance, a group composed of five females and one male was dominated by a female who has a history of behavior problems, consequently the spirit of the group vacillated between harmony and mutiny. We were concerned about some students being stifled because the pecking order was alive and well. Referring to the female dominated group, a peer observer stated that "There were other knowledgeable, but more quiet (submissive?) girls there, who could respond well. {This student}, good naturedly argumentative, did not have either the reading skills or spelling skills of the others at the table. The vivacious one made it a contest at which this child did not do well."

EQUITY

In a recent article about cooperative grouping, Karen Evans reminds us that we must beware of student group roles. She cautions further that even cooperative groups do not guarantee equity, so we must be vigilant and should not assume that peer led discussions are democratic. Positioning calls into question the assumption that such contexts are equitable places for students to assume ownership of their learning. Finally Evans directs educators to assure that students will not be silenced or marginalized by the very strategy we use to avoid such barriers to the learning process.

TOUGH LOVE

All groups had interpersonal difficulties at one time or another. We reminded them that they did not have to agree on story interpretation but they had to agree to be kind to

each other and to insuring that all group members had equal voice. We suggested strategies for working through the challenge, but we did not solve the problems for them. If we solved the problem, we got the stickers. In every instance, when the challenged group saw others collecting stickers for effective literature circle and cooperative group processes, they worked out their difficulties. Although resisting intervention was our greatest challenge, it reaped rewards.

10IN THE SPOTLIGHT

We were surprised to find that every group wanted to give a presentation at the end of each class. There was anger and on some occasions, real tears if a group was not given the opportunity to present. Although the class was scheduled for one hour, they did not like for us to blink the lights, signaling that it was clean up time. When we were willing, they sometimes stayed as much as thirty minutes over time so they could expand their discussions and still have time to present. They earned the opportunity to present by demonstrating an effective literature circle and by being an attentive audience. Students presented in front of the overhead projector screen at the front of the media center, using the projector light as a spotlight. Many seemed invigorated by this staging opportunity. A peer observer wrote that "Groups tried to outdo each other with class presentations in front of the overhead projector light, as if they were on a stage." The presentations evolving from the first three picture book selections were enthusiastic and creative, though characterized by weak delivery skills.

WHERE ARE THE PICTURES?

Since we were also interested to see whether or not this high level of enthusiasm would be maintained with selections other than picture books, in November we began using the reading text. We modeled with a selection and students had the option of selecting a story as a group or forming new smaller or larger groups according to the selection chosen. With the exception of four students, they all preferred to keep the group in tact even if it meant reading and discussing a story that they were not particularly interested in. There was bickering over whether or not the group would be broken up and over which story to select. The opportunity for choice was a new adventure and apparently unsettling. Groups who demonstrated the most effective

literature circles at their tables were given the option of continuing their discussion in a different area of the media center. This was also unsettling and some some did not choose to leave their tables. The group referred to earlier as having a domineering leader remained in tact, moved to a new spot and for a few classes functioned very effectively. Later we observed that the atmosphere of this particular group was almost lock-step oppressive and squelched the creativity of the members.

WHERE IS THE EXCITEMENT?

The quality of the discussions, the creativity of presentations and group management skills digressed when the reading text was being used, although students did not directly express their dissatisfaction with the selections. The **Discussion Leaders** used the questions at the end of the story and we seldom heard students connect the story to their own lives. Also, presentations consisted mainly of reading and answering the questions at the end of the story, thus we were all bored.

What caused the decline in interest and creativity? In mid January we agreed that it was time to leave the reading text, rotate groups and introduce short stories as we continued to strive towards that "Grand Conversation".

MAMA SAID THERE'D BE DAYS...

The first most difficult day of the year came at the end of January. We challenged the groups to rotate. We heard comments like, "I think I'm gonna die...", "I'm gonna miss my little family", "I'm not moving", "I'll have a group by myself", and "This is the saddest day of my life...". We performed manipulative acrobatics by persuading, back patting, stroking, cajoling and sweet talking. Those who grinned and bore the challenge received accolades. New family groups were formed, cooperative group jobs and literature circle roles were assigned and the class dynamics changed dramatically. For a long time we heard complaints like "...can't we have our old groups back?" and "When are we gonna switch again?" The previously female dominated group was the most dedicated to keeping their original group in tact. The only elements we imposed on the group structure were that no group would have more than five people and there

would be a heterogeneous mix. In retrospect, we concluded that the original groups were together too long.

DECISIONS AND JULIAN STORIES

We introduced a five story collection called <u>More Stories Julian Tells</u>, by Ann Cameron. Each group had a book mark which listed the stories in order so that each group had a different story and that all groups read each of the five stories. Students were not in complete control of literature choice and groups during this period, but Harvey Daniels states that, "...even the slightest degree of control is welcome and goes a long way toward motivation...", as we strive for the "Grand conversation". During each class session we read one of the stories, used transparencies, and modeled a literature circle. Students guessed the literature circle roles and discussed strategies for moving from facts to in-depth discussion. Since standardized tests were scheduled for March we were particularly interested when students suggested that "reading comprehension and main idea" were two important things to include in their literature circle discussion. The element of journal writing was added to the circle activity. We encouraged students to intertwine the activities of reading, thinking, writing and discussing during their circle time. Some students seemed to welcome the varied activities, although one student complained "How can I do all those things at one time?"

I KNOW.

In early March, interested in the impact on reading comprehension, we sought ways to measure the effect. We decided to give students the opportunity to show what facts they remembered, stressing that facts are only the foundation of discussion, but we can not discuss a story without the facts. Concerned about squelching creativity and spontaneity, we avoided the word "test" and let the students decide whether or not they would like to show what they know after the completion of each story. With two exceptions, everyone decided to "show what they know" after the first short story, by way of a five item multiple choice sheet, which also included a short writing opportunity. Some of the original enthusiasm had returned and students seemed to

be inspired by the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge on paper as well as during discussion and presentations. We wondered whether or not this had something to do with their desire to prove to us what they knew, since we could not hear all of their discussion. Lively discussions and exciting presentations resulted.

MOVING ALONG

By late March we observed that most groups were self starting, focused within the first three minutes of discussion time, solved any interpersonal problems quickly and independently, and enjoyed more spontaneous discussion, with less hand raising for recognition or evidence of group control by a single individual. The group comfort level was noticeable improved. In early April a peer observer stated that "Every student seemed to be comfortable in the group and was able to speak freely. The discussions were literal, fact based, expanded and connected to their own lives. The discussions were natural." Although the presentations were no more creative than they were during the picture book phase, they were noticeably superior to those offered during the reading text phase. These presentations included journal entries and some students seemed calmer and more aware of the elements of an effective presentation. All students demonstrated improved audience skills.

SERENDIPITY

On April 24th four peer observers spent the entire session with us and left a paper trail of rich observation behind them. On this day students had the option of creating an event frame or a web as a written response to their short story from the More Stories Julian Tells collection. Due to a number of off task instances, we concluded that students were becoming bored with these selections. We and the observers were curious about the vacillation between the social and the story task. Having observed one group, an observer noted, "The strangest thing was that they did get it together and 3/4 of them seemed to accomplish a lot". A second observer wrote that, "One group seemed to be less motivated with regard to their reading. Their leader accentuated verbal exchanges of a negative, though playful nature, totally off the subject ". A third observer documented a shift in focus. She said that "While I was

with table #1 they were socializing, not really working together, but all on something or some part of their task. I leave (do adults have to leave before the good stuff happens?)." Later this observer wrote, "... a shift has occurred and everyone is on task doing the event frames. So are all the other groups. I missed the magic moment when the groups transitioned from socializing to on task behavior. Is it a conscious decision? Does someone from the group pull the other members back on task? Or does it just happen serendipitously in the natural rhythm of learning?"

GAINS AND LOSSES

Students made it clear that although they liked the More Stories Julian Tells collection, it was time to move on to other selections. During the last two sessions with these stories, we heard complaints like "We're finished, we need another story". We were disappointed that we did not hear more in-depth conversation with these short stories but were pleased to hear their enthusiasm for more selections.

LITERATURE CIRCLES AND SOCIAL STUDIES
IN THE CLASSROOM

Due to under achievement in social studies, beginning in February and using the social studies text, Virginia, these students used the literature circle strategy in their classroom to discuss chapter and lesson content. "I hate social studies" and "social studies is boring" were typical comments prior to the utilization of the literature circle strategy. Student participation was unenthusiastic and many assignments were not completed. On some occasions, two thirds of the class did not carry the text home to prepare for a test.

SOMETHING NEW

In order to get the children comfortable with the new strategy, we modeled a literature circle discussion with lesson #1 of chapter #9 and discussed the differences between the "old way and the new way" of learning social studies. The students observed, "It's about real people and things they did." "There are a lot more words for the **Word Wizard** to look up. There are questions at the end of each lesson that the **Discussion Leader** can ask."

THE FIRST TIME

Students formed groups and began reading aloud. This presented problems since the classroom was much smaller than the media center and the acoustics were not good. What started as a dull rumble soon turned into a yelling match between two or three groups. Group #1 decided that group #2 was reading too loud so they began to read louder to drown them out. Groups #3 and #5 decided that they were too close together, so they stacked books between them. Group #1 claimed that group #3 was copying their discussion, so a short but loud argument broke out. By the time the groups calmed down, class time was almost over.

OBSERVATIONS

The **Careful Connectors** did a good job of relating history to events that have happened to them or others in the present. The **Discussion Leaders** had trouble keeping group members in the discussion. Each member worked on their role, but gave very little attention to the discussion of the lesson. The **Word Wizards** took advantage of the textbook layout by only looking up the words listed at the beginning

of the lesson and selected the most obvious topics for discussion and presentation. All five **Artful Artists** created very detailed drawings of Henry "Bos" Brown (the only illustration in the lesson). When we blinked the lights to signal for presentations, it was not surprising to hear five almost identical, lack luster presentations. Consequently, we were all bored.

WHAT'S WRONG?

Before we began the next lesson, we discussed the previous presentations. Students agreed that we needed to find new ways to approach social studies. We informed students that not all words listed at the beginning of the text had to be defined. We emphasized that all group members must perform their role and participate in the discussion. The noise level, the most disruptive element, was presented to the class for discussion. The students decided that they would keep their reading volume to a minimum. Some groups decided they would read silently to a predesignated point and then discuss what they read. With these new ideas in mind, the students began their discussions.

MORE GAINS AND LOSSES

The noise level was considerably lower and the students discussed the lesson more thoroughly, although we did not hear quality discussions as we sometimes heard in the media center. At the end of the period only two groups were ready to present. The presentations were short and to the point, and were not characterized by the usual enthusiasm, so we began lesson #3 with little excitement. There was a great deal of arguing within the groups and also between members of different groups. We heard remarks like, "I wish we could go back to the old way of doing social studies." "I liked it better when we only had to answer the questions and look up the vocabulary words at the end of the chapter." "We never have enough time to finish our jobs and show them to the class". By the time we blinked the lights, the students were showing signs of restlessness. They had not discussed the lesson, presentations were ill prepared and test results were very discouraging.

NEW ROLES

After viewing chapter #9 test results we decided to make changes. We noticed that the students missed certain relevant information in the chapter. In order to get them to look at different areas in each chapter we decided to change the group roles to better suit social studies content. The roles are as follows:

The **Picture Person** finds illustrations in the text or in another source, which illuminate the content (maps, pictures, tables, graphs). During the presentation, this person shows the illustration and explains the importance to lesson content.

The **Illustrator** selects one or more passages and illustrates them. They may not copy a picture from any text.

The **Word Wizard** finds words that help to explain the chapter/lesson title.

The **Spider** creates a web of all the main ideas or topics in the chapter/lesson.

The **Lawyer** creates questions from each person's role and then asks those questions to the entire class at the close of the presentation.

NEW PROCESS

We discussed chapter test results. We were all disappointed. Many students expressed the desire to return to the old strategies that they were used to. Even though they didn't like social studies before we tried the literature circle strategy, at least it was familiar. We told them that before we went back to the old way, we needed to discuss what may have gone wrong. We defined and discussed the social studies discussion roles. They seemed very excited about this new opportunity. They expressed feelings about what would help the cooperative groups perform more effectively. They all agreed that they needed more time for reading and discussing

before presentations were given, and they needed a review like the literature circle "I Know" sheet. It was decided that we would spend two days on each social studies lesson with the first day devoted to reading, discussing and group roles. The second day would be dedicated entirely to presentations. It was decided that students would take a short quizz for content review. With these new ideas in mind, we went into round two of our social studies discussions using literature circle strategies.

NEW HATS

The students began reading and discussing chapter #10, A Struggle for Rights", with renewed enthusiasm and did an excellent job. Two groups had trouble deciding group roles, but were quick to come to an agreement when we offered to decide for them. We heard many positive comments and noticed encouraging changes in work habits. The **Lawyers** inspired discussions by posing questions they might ask during the presentations and **Word Wizards** defined and discussed relevant words, not just the word lists at the beginning of the lesson. The **Picture Person** examined each text picture and lead a discussion of each. In order to fully understand a protest sign displayed in one of the illustrations, one student went to the media center and located a copy of the Declaration of Independence in the encyclopedia. The **Illustrators** still had a tough time, because most of them wanted to copy an illustration from the lesson instead of creating it themselves. One student explained it very well when he said, "I don't want to draw the picture myself because I have to show it to the class and I can't draw good." We explained that the importance was in what he said about the drawing, not the drawing itself. This seemed to relieve some of the anxiety. The most challenging role, based on students questions, was the **Spider**. Most of them could locate the main ideas, but they could not put them in a logical order. What does this say about the need for more sequencing activities? Many of the groups solved this problem by grouping ideas under the same heading as in the text. Students worked very well throughout the entire class period and when it was time to clean up many of them had already decided to complete their role at home. This was a starting revelation, as it was the first time that any of the students had assigned themselves homework!

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

Here we need to comment on roles tailored for a specific subject/activity. In her article "Creating Spaces for Equity: The Role of Positioning in Peer Led Literature Discussions", Karen Evans states that "...more promising are the roles that are specifically related to discussions..." of the subject at hand. This suggests and our experience shows that generic cooperative group roles and even subject specific roles may not transfer effectively between subject areas.

TOOLS, JOBS AND SMILES

On the following day, and for the next three lessons, students were enthusiastic participants, offered effective presentations and were attentive audience members. One student went to the Maggie Lena Walker museum and brought back a portfolio, after studying about her. All of the students were very excited as she explained the portfolio. The **Picture Person** always chose at least one map or graph and explained it to the class. The **Lawyer** took advantage of the opportunity to ask questions about the map or graph. This has promising implications for the visual materials section on standardized tests. If a student gave a wrong answer, the **Lawyer** quickly explained why he or she was wrong. This sounds like good practice for debate skills. Only once in a while did we have to correct the **Lawyer**. Following group presentations, students took a short multiple choice quiz. Most students performed well and the improved scores helped to boost confidence.

CHALLENGE

We finished the final lesson and prepared for the chapter test. We decided to provide a little extra incentive by telling them that we would return to the traditional strategy for social studies if they did not perform well. If this offer had been made immediately after the fist test, students would have been delighted to go back to the old way. Now they had a great deal of confidence in their ability to comprehend via discussion and presentation. One student set the mood for the entire class when she said," You guys

better take your book with you everywhere you go, because I would rather listen to you than Mr. M". There were no texts to be seen when we checked desks the night before the test. About half the class even took texts to lunch! Is this response motivated by competition with each other, with the teacher, just a reaction to something new or intrinsic motivation?

IF THE HAT FITS

We observed that even with study guides, students didn't do as well with traditional strategies as with the literature circle strategy. The **Picture Person** in one group created a fishing picture to represent an industry for NC and VA. Students questioned the validity of the fishing picture as representative of VA until it showed up on the test, and everyone remembered. The literature circle strategy gave students control of their learning. They did not ask, "Is it time to go outside?" They did ask, "When do we get our tests back"?

BACK TO THE MEDIA CENTER

During the first May session,With approximately five literature circle class days remaining, we offered students a choice of eight fiction books averaging sixty pages in length and six short stories. There were five or six copies of each title and students had the option of selecting a title based on a group vote or on individual choice. Some students moved to a different group and a sixth splinter group was created by four breakaway members who either did not like their former group or the book which had been selected. This effective group was on task the entire time, finished their book early and participated in surface discussion. It should be noted here that the book this group selected was the shortest and is filled with many illustrations. Three out of the six groups were effective. They selected a title, designated new role assignments, and read. Two groups were characterized by arguments about book selection and group management. During conversations with these students, all of whom are challenged

by the learning process and/or have a history of behavior problems, they told us that they did not like any of the available books because they were too long and had no pictures. They put their heads down and made no effort to participate. We determined that these book selections did not meet the needs of these students. We offered them special status as the "Review Group" and suggested they select from a short story collection and let us know what they thought of the stories. All of these students functioned well with the short stories and during the last few class sessions, the members of the "Review Group" chose to read some of the book selections as well. Choice and variety seemed to be the motivating component.

WHAT IS THE HURRY?

Although we stressed that students should not be concerned with finishing the book or story in one session, without exception, they competed with each other to do that. Is this the result of our educational and societal pressure to "finish" or "get it done quickly" with an eye to quantitative rather than qualitative results. Is is the impatience of youth or the natural motivation to finish a good read? During this first May session, due to the preoccupation with finishing the book, if discussions occurred at all, they were short, perfunctory and less than enthusiastic. One girl, described earlier as having a history of behavior problems, having lead her original group in an almost lock step, stifling fashion, abandoned her group to read alone because she was not selected as the **Discussion Leader.**

Upon first glance, this first session with books and short stories, was a loss. After analysis, we realized that this was another of those important transitional sessions. These students were finally allowed to make all the choices and it was an unsettling, intimidating task, much like any new found freedom. Their cooperative groups, or "little families", as some had described them, were fragmented, the pecking order was interrupted, with roles gained and lost and some now had elected the daunting task of reading an entire book. With few exceptions, these books were long when compared to the picture books and short stories which they had read previously, and with the exception of one, there were few if any pictures.

IMPROVEMENT

The four remaining sessions in May and June were characterized by a strong sense of cooperation from everyone. With only occasional momentary exceptions, everyone was on task during reading and discussion time, as was noted by a peer observer during the penultimate June session, " Students appeared to understand their roles and most remained on task in groups." They exhibited strong text analysis and questioning skills, with obvious implications for reading comprehension. Although they did not test on these titles, student discussion demonstrated marked improvement and indicated that they had transferred their social studies discussion roles to the literature discussions. On numerous occasions, with no prompting from us, they referred to the **Spider, Picture Person** and **Lawyer** during their literature discussion. This revelation caused us to wonder about the literature circle strategy for other subjects. Students continued to refer to the roles, and this reminded us of Harvey Daniels' reference to the planned obsolescence of discussion roles. Perhaps students keep the roles around as handy tools or just to please us.

THE WEAK LINK

Presentations are still the weakest element of the literature circle process for these students. They exhibit effective discussion but need more preparation time and direction for presentation. As a peer observer noted " Children should be taught presentation skills and they should be required to implement them: Language, be prepared, holding/displaying visuals organization/taking turns." Perhaps the social studies plan of reading and discussing during one class session and presenting during the next session would be effective for literature as well. The oral presentation opportunity is a very vital component of the literature circle strategy.

BOOKS AND FRIENDS

Concerning book choices and group dynamics, we were convinced that in some instances, either staying with a friend was more important than book choice or titles

were equally acceptable. Another all female group was created, but the original domineering leader appeared to be happy and was effective with a different two boy, two girl group. Most students moved in and out of groups comfortably according to the title selected. At this writing, there are at least three members in each group except two boys of the original "Review Group", who continue to read and discuss short stories together.

MANY VOICES

Between September 17th and June 12th, twenty four 4th grade students read, wrote, researched, illustrated, presented and discussed the elements of fiction and non fiction for twenty books, eleven short stories and three chapters in the social studies text. Using the facts as a spring board to the "Grand Conversation", students shared their lives with each other, met themselves in literature and history, responded to two attitudinal surveys, took tests to monitor their comprehension and were further validated by effective talk and active listening. Twenty three of these students responded on two different occasions to an attitudinal survey about the study of literature and social studies. Twenty one parents responded to an attitudinal survey, and between October and June, eight of our colleagues served as peer observers by visiting the class and providing valuable feedback.

We are most appreciative to our colleagues and to the parents of our students for their time, support and the wealth of information which supported this effort. Most of all, we are grateful to the twenty four young ladies and gentlemen who gave us their energy, their smiles, their unbridled enthusiasm and allowed us to journey with them on the road to the "Grand Conversation".

RESULTS

PARENT SURVEY

We did not tell parents that their students were involved in literature circles. In early April twenty one parents responded to our questions about their child's reading habits via a six question survey which included an invitation for parents to visit the literature circle class in April, May or June.

Survey results, which are displayed here, indicate that approximately 85% of the students read for pleasure at home,approximately 65% of the students demonstrated a change in reading habits during this school year and approximately 50% of the students told their parents about the literature circle experience. Some parents commented that their child "...reads more", "reads to her dolls", "...reads to her sister". Numerous parents described the literature circle process in detail.

*   **CHARTS   #1a   and #1 b**

TEST DATA

LANGUAGE ARTS

Using five item multiple choice tests, which included one summary writing opportunity, and comparing the grades with similar tests of comprehension utilizing traditional strategies, we discovered, as graphs and charts displayed here indicate there was a 120% increase in the number of A's and B's utilizing the literature circle strategy. The number of C's resulting from the use of the literature circle strategy was

Parent Survey Results

Chart #1a

Percent

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10

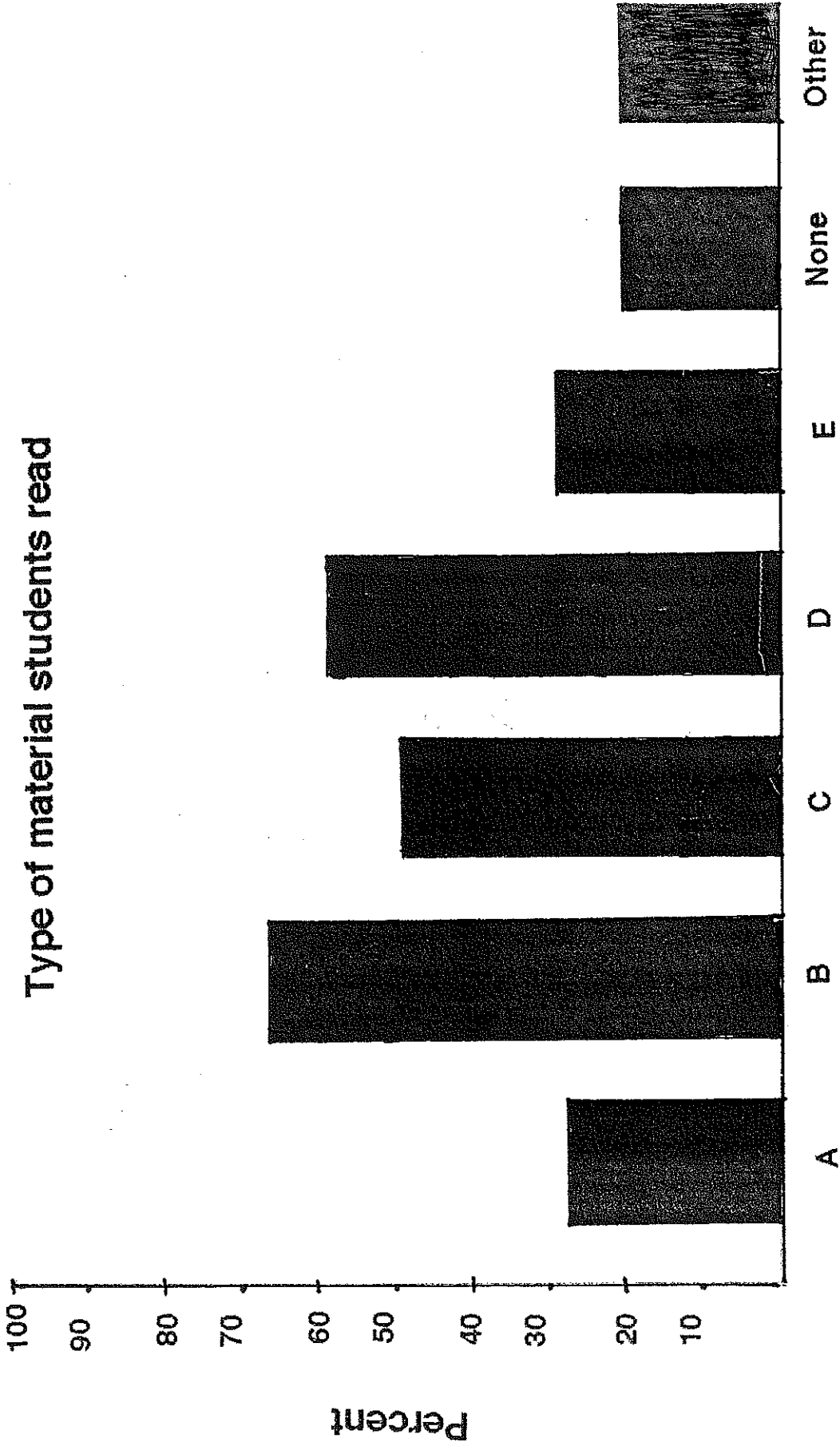yes No Yes No Yes No Yes No
1   3   4
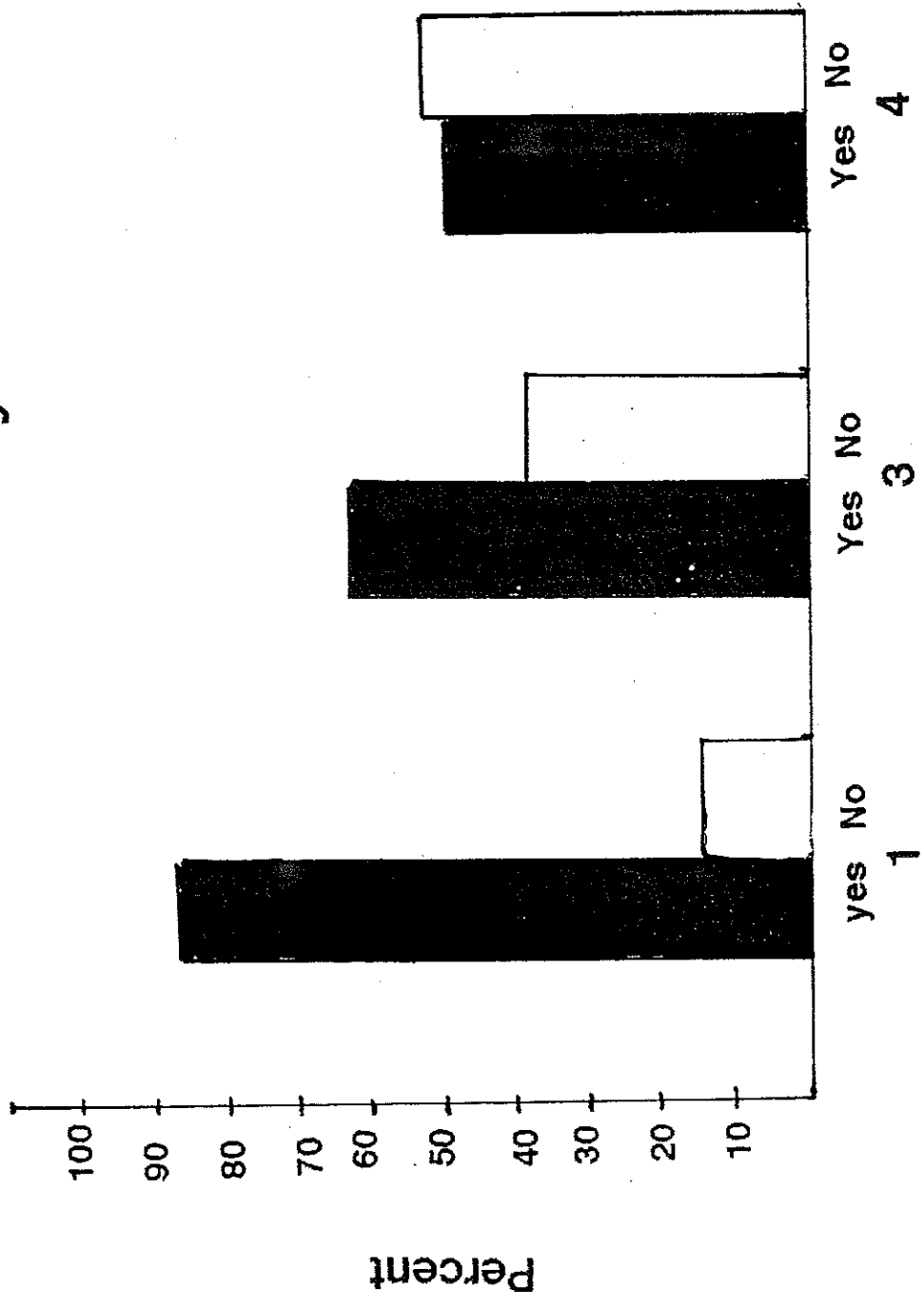
Question #1 Does your child read at home for pleasure?

Question #3 Have you noticed any changes in your child's reading habits since the beginning of school?

Question #4 Has your child told you about the Literature Circles class which he/she has participated in?

Chart #b

Parent Survey Results

Type of material students read

Percent

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10

A   B   C   D   E   None   Other

A. School text books
B. School library books
C. Public library books
D. Magazines and/or newspapers
E. Catalogs and/or advertisements
None
Other

23% less than the number of C's resulting from the use of traditional strategies. The number of D's resulting from the use of the literature circle strategy was 5% less than the number of D's resulting from the use of traditional strategies. The number of F's resulting from the use of the literature circle strategy was 1% greater than the number of F's resulting from the use of traditional strategies.

* **CHART #2.**

SOCIAL STUDIES

Using ten item multiple choice tests and comparing the grades resulting from the literature circle strategy and traditional strategies, we discovered, as graphs and charts here indicate, that there was a 28% increase in the number of A's and B's utilizing the literature circle strategy. The number of C's resulting from the use of the literature circle strategy was 19% less than the number of C's resulting from the use of traditional strategies. The number of D's resulting from the use of the literature circle strategy was 4% greater than the number of D's resulting from the use of traditional strategies. While 4% of students earned an F as a result of traditional strategies, there were no F's resulting from the use of the literature circle strategy.

* **CHART #3**
Additional charts demonstrating student achievement on teacher designed tests are displayed as #4 - #8.

STUDENT SURVEY

The two graphs presented here display the results of an eleven item attitudinal survey which eleven boys and twelve girls took on April 4th and May 3rd, respectively. The most noticeable changes in attitude occurred with respect to social studies. Between the first and second surveys, there was a 40% increase in the number of students who liked to read about social studies. Between the first and second surveys, there was a 15% increase in the number of students who liked to read and discuss social studies with their friends.

Chart #2

LANGUAGE ARTS
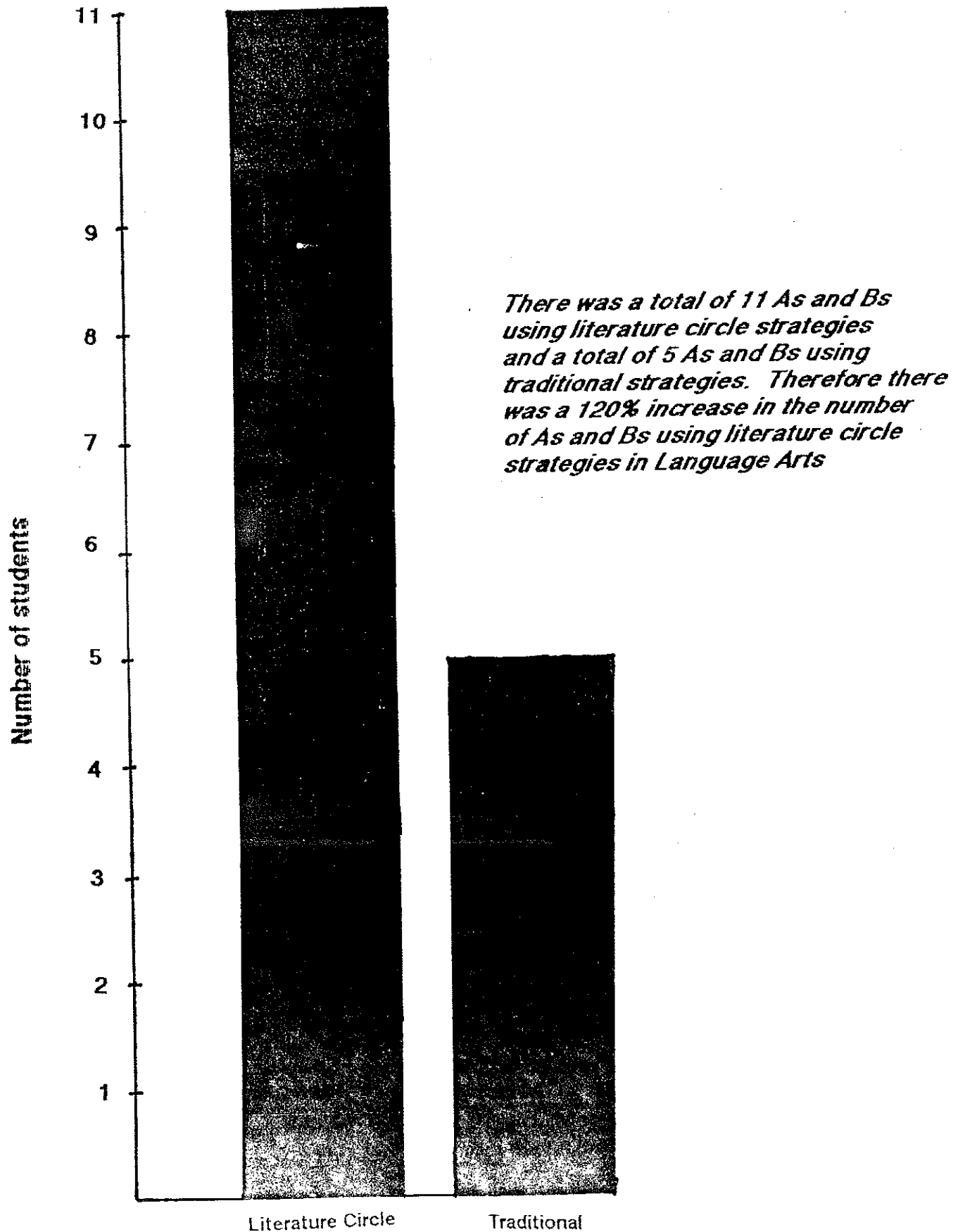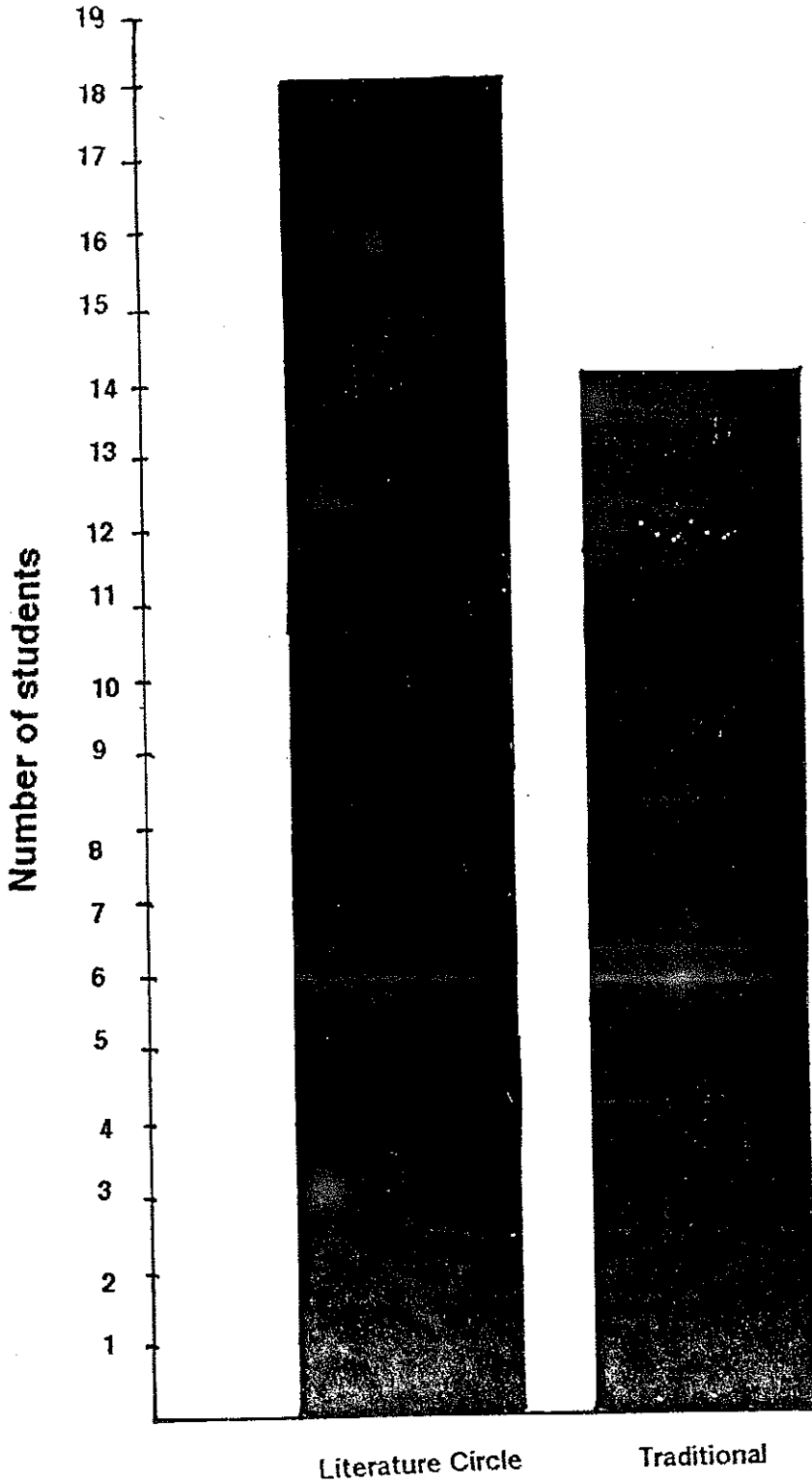## Comparison of A's and B's achieved using literature circle strategies and traditional strategies.

There was a total of 11 As and Bs using literature circle strategies and a total of 5 As and Bs using traditional strategies. Therefore there was a 120% increase in the number of As and Bs using literature circle strategies in Language Arts

Number of students

Literature Circle   Traditional

Chart#3

SOCIAL STUDIES
Comparison of A's and B's achieved using literature circle strategies and traditional strategies.

There was a total of 18 As and B using literature circle strategies and a total of 14 As and Bs usin traditional strategies. Therefor there was a 28% increase in the number of As and Bs using literature circle strategies in Social Studies

Chart #4

Percentage of students earning A B C D or F
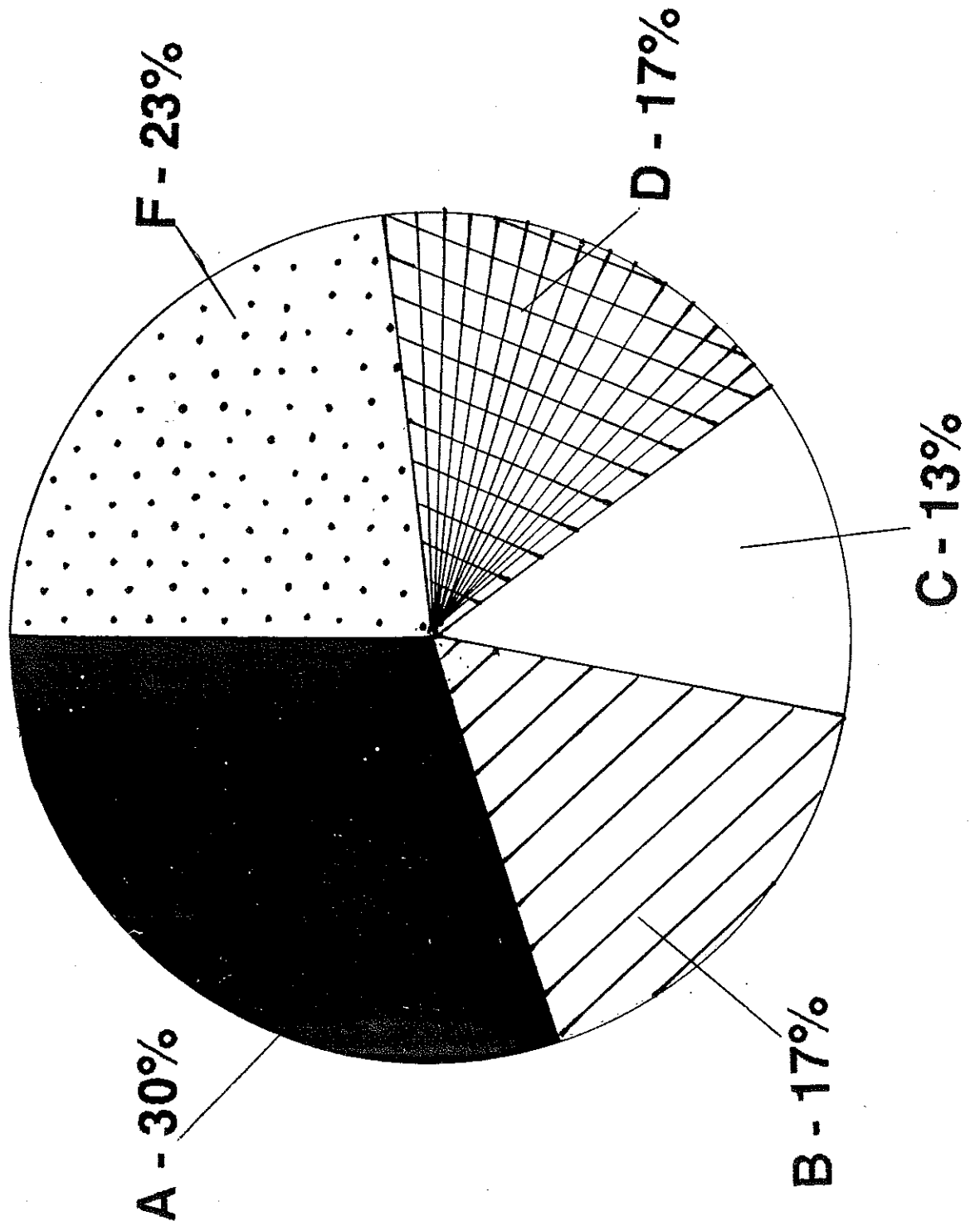in language arts utilizing Literature Circle strategies

A - 30%

F - 23%

D - 17%

C - 13%

B - 17%

Percentage of students earning B's, C's, D's or F's
in language arts utilizing traditional strategies
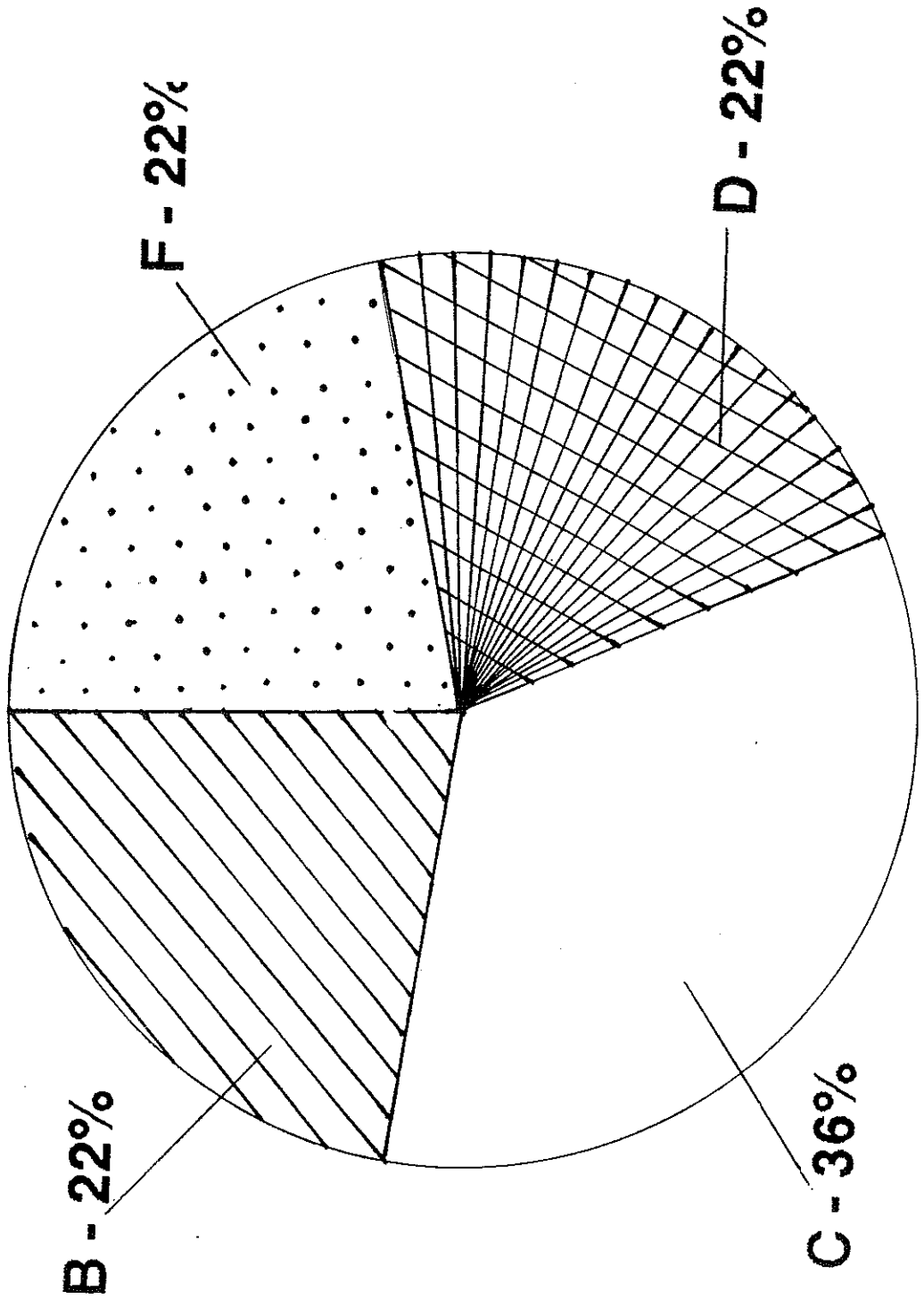
F - 22%

D - 22%

B - 22%

C - 36%

Chart #5

Chart #6

Percentage of students earning A's, B's, C's, or D's
in social studies utilizing literature circle strategies
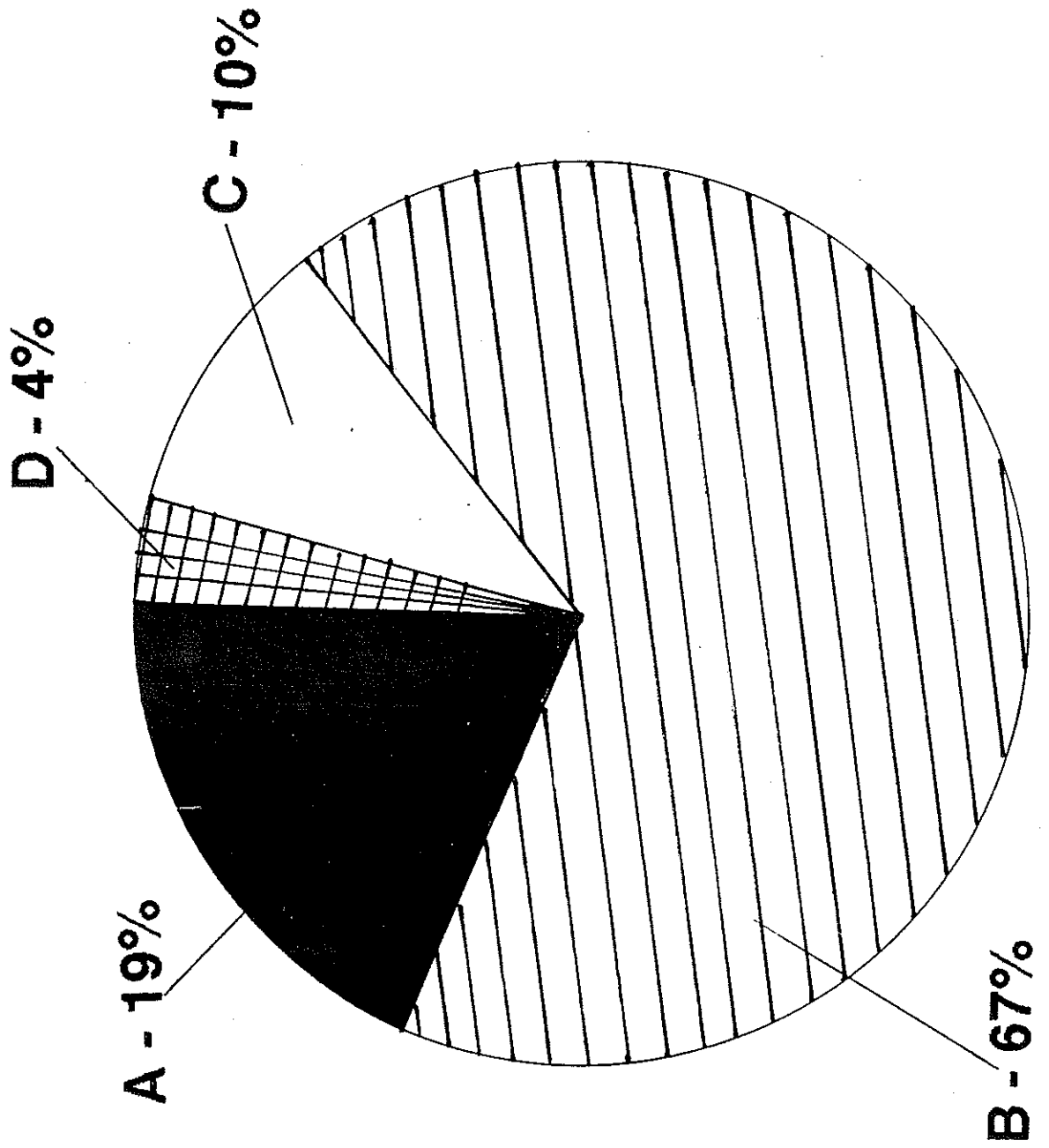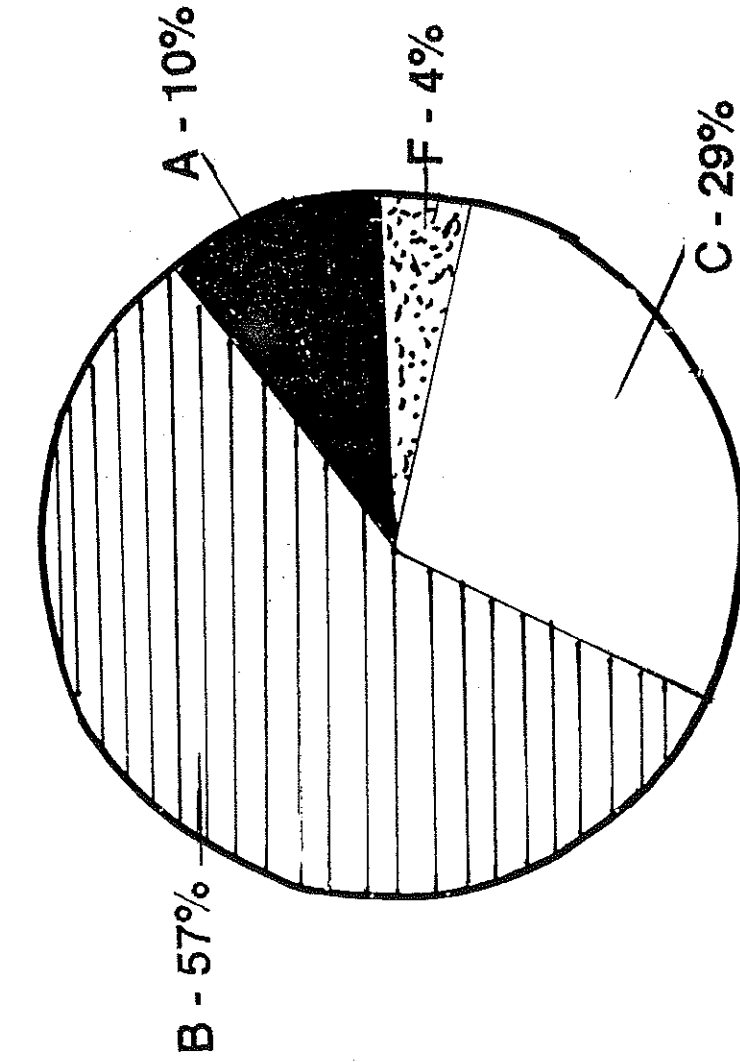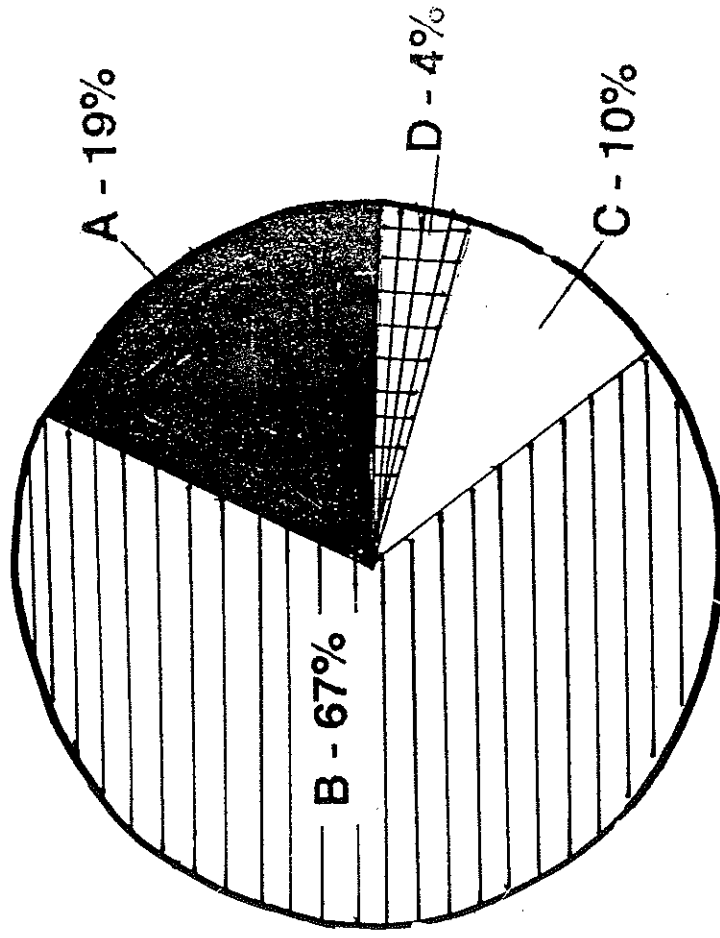

C - 10%

D - 4%

A - 19%

B - 67%

Chart #7

Comparison of grades in Social Studies
utilizing traditional and literature circle strategies

A - 19%
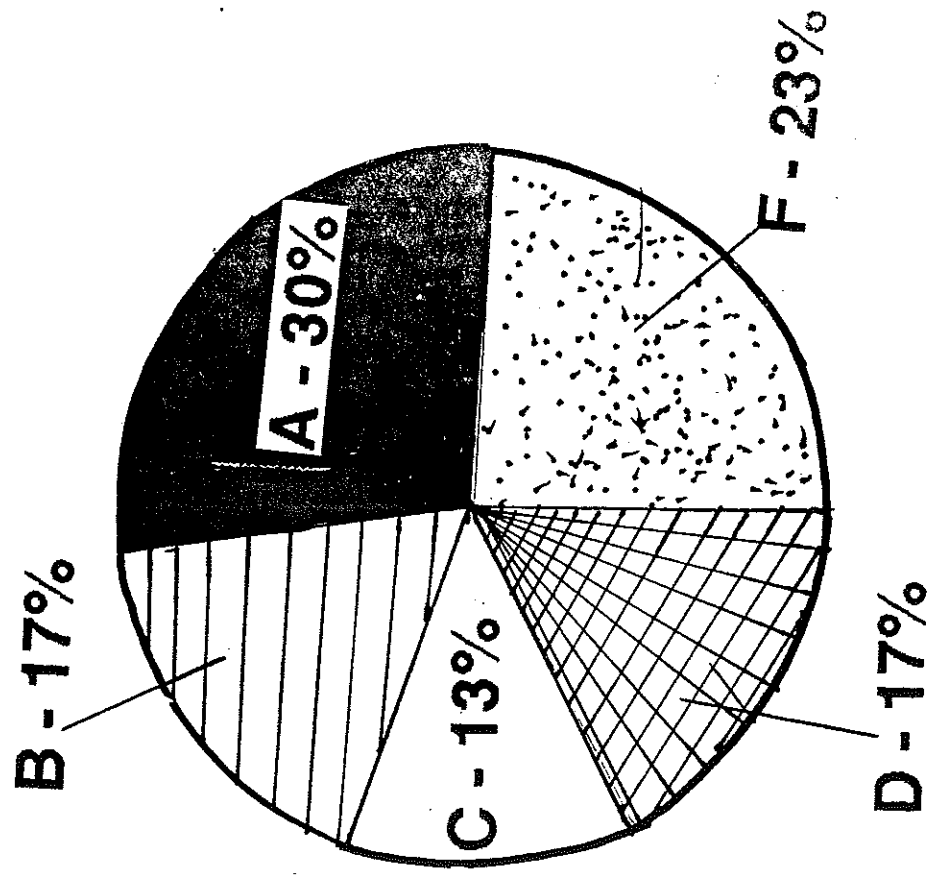
D - 4%

C - 10%

B - 67%

Literature Circle

A - 10%

F - 4%

C - 29%

B - 57%

Traditional

Chart #8

Comparison of grades in language arts utilizing traditional and literature circle stategies

A - 30%

F - 23%

B - 17%

C - 13%

D - 17%

Literature Circles

B - 22%

F - 22%

C - 36%

D - 22%
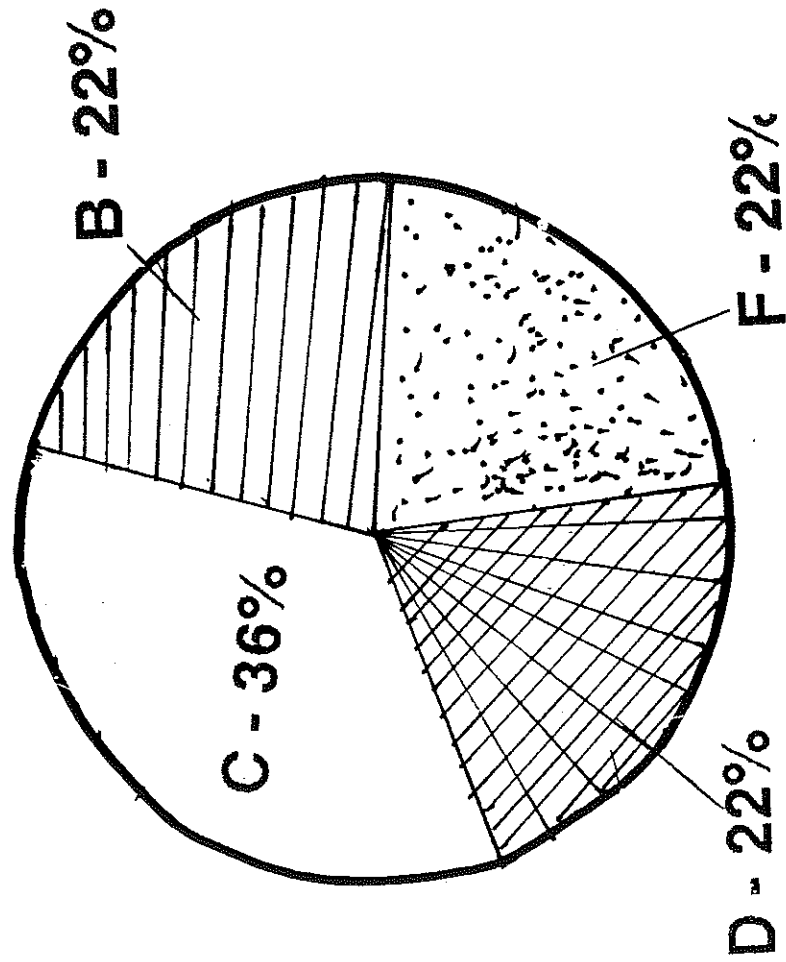
Traditional

With regard to literature, on both surveys, over 75% of these students indicated that they liked to read and enjoyed reading stories. Between the first and second surveys there was a 10% increase in both the number of students who reported that they like to read and who reported they like to read stories. Additionally, between the first and second surveys, there was a 20% increase in the number of students who like to read and discuss literature with their friends.

The responses to the four questions about memory showed little change between the first and second surveys, and 50% or more of the students said they remembered stories and the social studies content equally as well through a teacher lead or student lead discussion.

*Charts # 9 and #10

CONCERNING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON THE IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS

We analyzed scores in vocabulary, reading comprehension and reference skills on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for the twenty students who took the test as third graders in the spring of 1995 and as 4th graders in the spring of 1996. As data indicate, with regard to grade equivalency, the greatest gains were made in vocabulary, with the next largest gains occurring in reading comprehension and reference skills respectively.
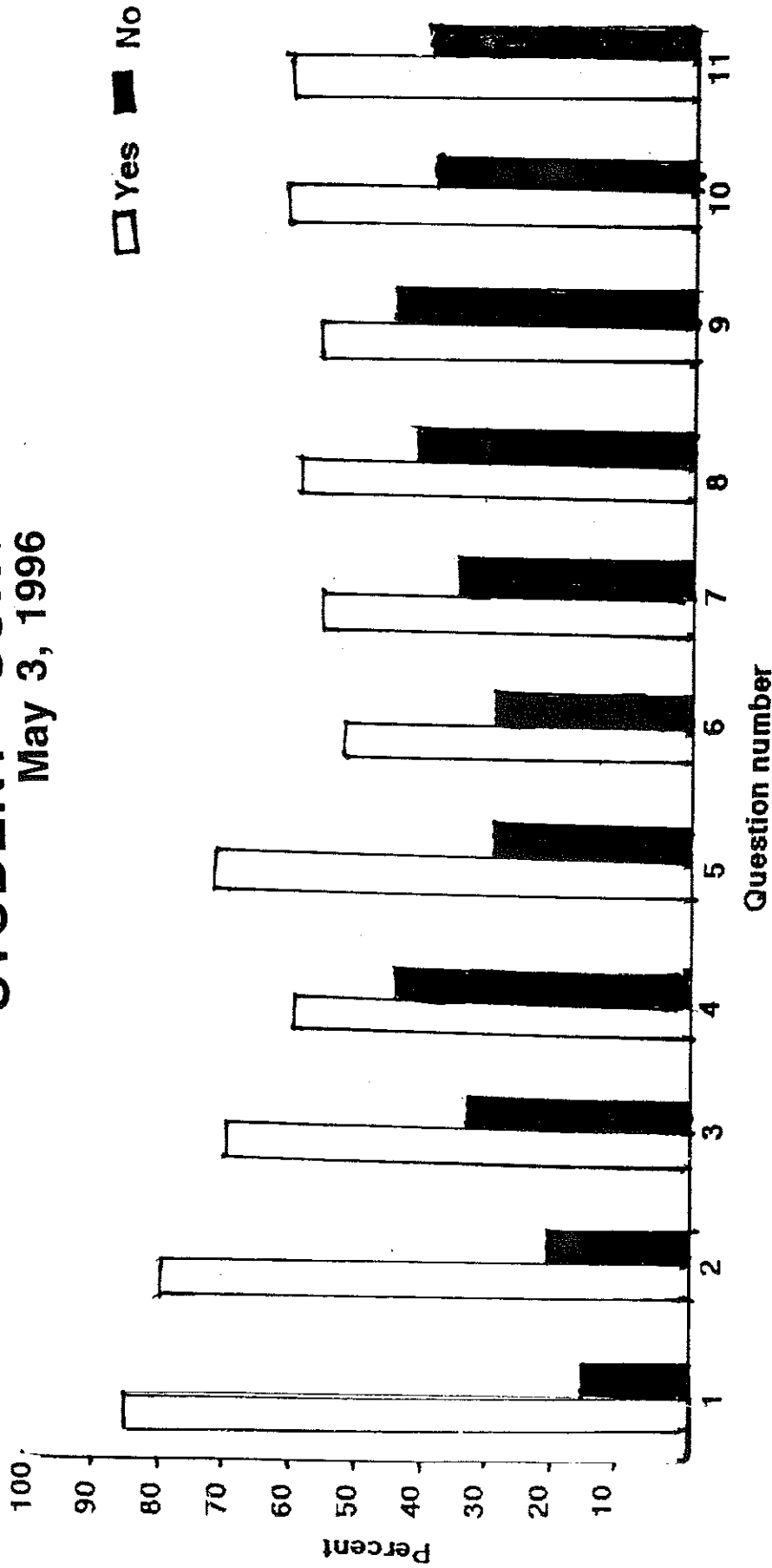
In vocabulary, between the spring of 1995 and spring or 1996, eleven students showed an increase of at least one grade level, five students showed an increase of two grade levels and one student showed academic growth of two years eleven months. Thirteen students demonstrated an increase of at least one grade level in reading comprehension, with one student achieving a gain of three years and two months. Seven students showed an increase of one grade level in reference skills.

Considering that the national norm grade equivalency is 4.7, 55% of the students ranked at or above the national norm in vocabulary, 40% ranked at or above the

Chart #9

STUDENT SURVEY #2
May 3, 1996

☐ Yes   ■ No

Percent: 100, 90, 80, 70, 60, 50, 40, 30, 20, 10

Question number: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Survey statements:

1. I like to read
2. I like to read stories
3. I like to read about social studies.
4. I like it when a teacher reads a story out loud to us and then tells us about it.
5. I like it when my friends and I read the story together and then talk about it ourselves.
6. I like it when a teacher reads the social studies chapter out loud and then tells us about it.
7. I like it when my friends and I read the social studies chapter out loud, then talk about it ourselves.
8. I remember more when a teacher leads the discussion about the story.
9. I remember more when a teacher leads the discussion about the social studies chapter
10. I remember more when my friends and I discuss the story ourselves.
11. I remember more when my friends and I discuss the social studies chapter ourselves.

Chart #10

STUDENT SURVEY #1
April 4, 1996

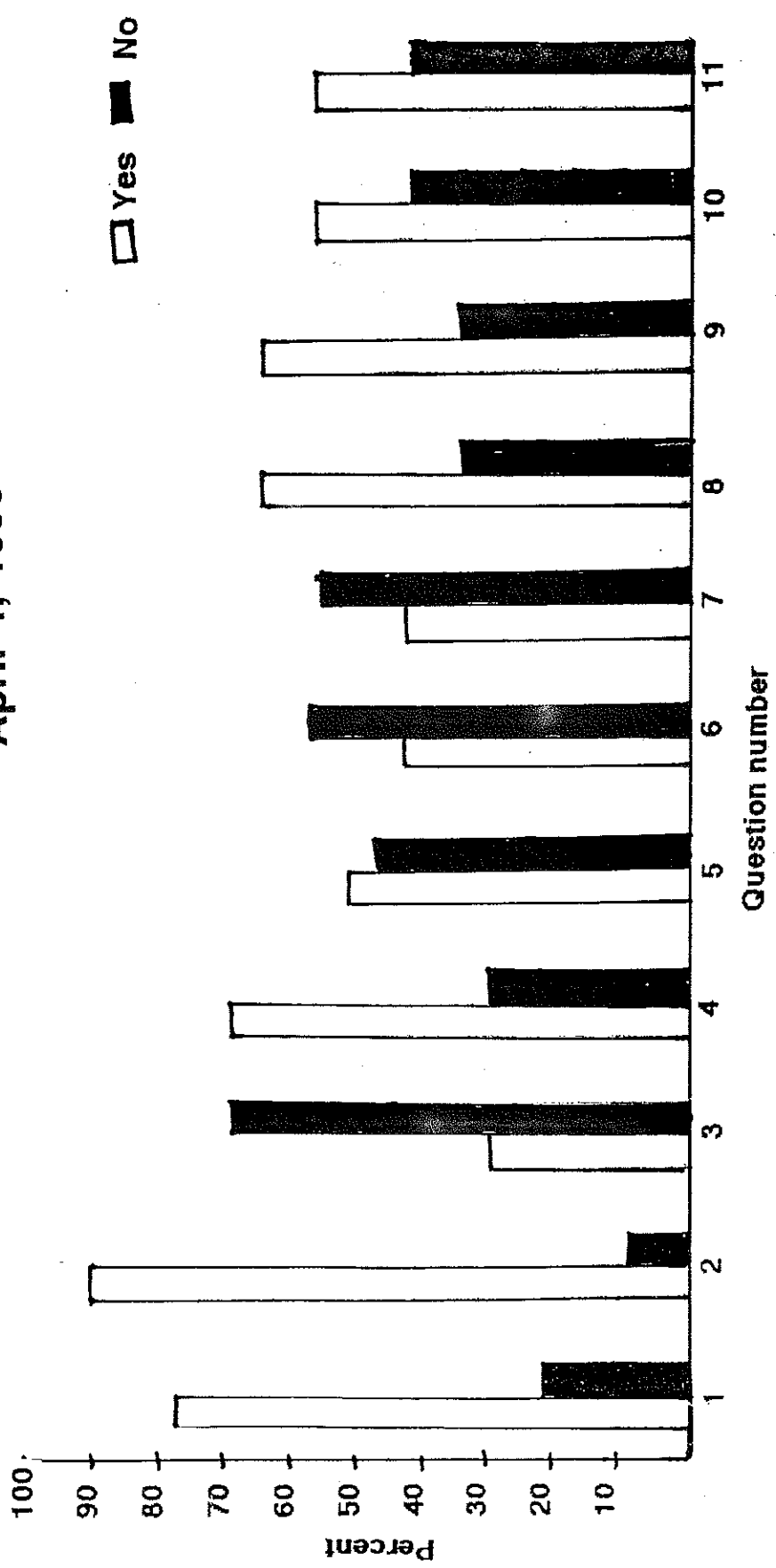Percent

Question number

Yes ☐ No ■

Survey statements:
1. I like to read
2. I like to read stories
3. I like to read about social studies.
4. I like it when a teacher reads a story out loud to us and then tells us about it.
5. I like it when my friends and I read the story together and then talk about it ourselves.
6. I like it when a teacher reads the social studies chapter out loud and then tells us about it.
7. I like it when my friends and I read the social studies chapter out loud, then talk about it ourselves.
8. I remember more when a teacher leads the discussion about the story.
9. I remember more when a teacher leads the discussion about the social studies chapter
10. I remember more when my friends and I discuss the story ourselves.
11. I remember more when my friends and I discuss the social studies chapter ourselves.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills
1995 and 1996
Individual Student Scores

Students	Vocabulary 1995 %ile	1995 G.E.	Vocabulary 1996 %ile	1996 G.E.	Comprehension 1995 %ile	1995 G.E.	Comprehension 1996 %ile	1996 G.E.	Reference Skills 1995 %ile	1995 G.E.	Reference Skills 1996 %ile	1996 G.E.
1	61	4.0	37	4.2	66	4.2	62	5.1	68	4.2	54	4.8
2			24	3.7			4	2.3			51	4.7
3	77	4.6	76	5.6	54	3.8	57	4.9	83	4.8	43	4.4
4	58	3.9	60	5.0	48	3.6	54	4.8	38	3.3	38	4.2
5	77	4.6	57	4.9	64	4.1	49	4.6	41	3.4	25	3.7
6	61	4.0	94	6.7	58	3.9	67	5.3	55	3.8	79	5.8
7	58	3.9	57	4.9	45	3.5	35	4.1	78	4.6	67	5.3
8			40	4.3			46	4.5			38	4.2
9	37	3.3	29	3.9	74	4.5	64	5.2	38	3.3	46	4.5
10	82	4.8	74	5.5	78	4.7	88	6.5	78	4.6	67	5.3
11	67	4.2	60	5.0	36	3.2	69	5.4	55	3.8	62	5.1
12	40	3.4	60	5.0	34	3.2	41	4.3	19	2.6	43	4.4
13	37	3.3	76	5.6	32	3.1	86	6.3	55	3.8	18	3.4
14	3	1.5	43	4.4	17	2.5	30	3.9	27	2.9	51	4.7
15	30	3.1	32	4.0	45	3.5	54	4.8	73	4.4	32	4.0
16	37	3.3	40	4.3	42	3.4	43	4.4	45	3.5	23	3.6
17	44	3.5	57	4.9	34	3.2	32	4.0	52	3.7	54	4.8
18	58	3.9	29	3.9	45	3.5	32	4.0	83	4.8	43	4.4
19	44	3.5	69	5.3	29	3.0	49	4.6	64	4.1	51	4.7
20	19	2.6	49	4.6	17	2.3	17	3.3	41	3.4	51	4.7

Mean Percentile Rank and Grade Equivalent Scores for 1995 and 1996

	Vocabulary %ile	G.E.	Comprehension %ile	G.E.	Reference Skills %ile	G.E.
1995	45	3.6	45	3.5	55	3.8
1996	50	4.8	49	4.6	46	4.5

national norm in reading comprehension and 50% ranked at or above the national norm in reference skills.

With regard to national percentiles on the vocabulary section of the test, seven of these students made significant gains of fifteen or more percentage points. Five of the seven made a gain of twenty or more percentage points, with two students achieving gains of forty percentage points. With the exception of one of these seven students, all scored below the national norm on the third grade test. Eight students demonstrated a loss, though not significant, in percentile rank between the third and fourth grade test and eleven students ranked above the fiftieth percentile on this section of the test. Six students scored in the first and second quartiles on the third grade test. Two of these students moved to the second quartile and four students moved to the third quartile on the vocabulary section. .

In reading comprehension, eleven students demonstrated gains between the third and fourth grade ITBS, with seven of these showing significant increases. One student equaled their score from the test of the previous year and nine students ranked above the fiftieth percentile on this section of the fourth grade test. As with the vocabulary section, students who demonstrated the greatest increase in reading comprehension scores had previously ranked noticeably below their peers on the third grade test.

In reference skills, seven students demonstrated gains between the third and fourth grade tests, with five of these being significant. Ten students showed significant loss in scores on the reference section and one student maintain their percentile rank from the third grade test. Ten students ranked at or above the fiftieth percentile in reference skills on the fourth grade test. As was the case with vocabulary and reading comprehension, students making the greatest gains between the third and fourth grade tests were those who had originally scored below their peers.

CHARTS # 11 - #21

Chart #11
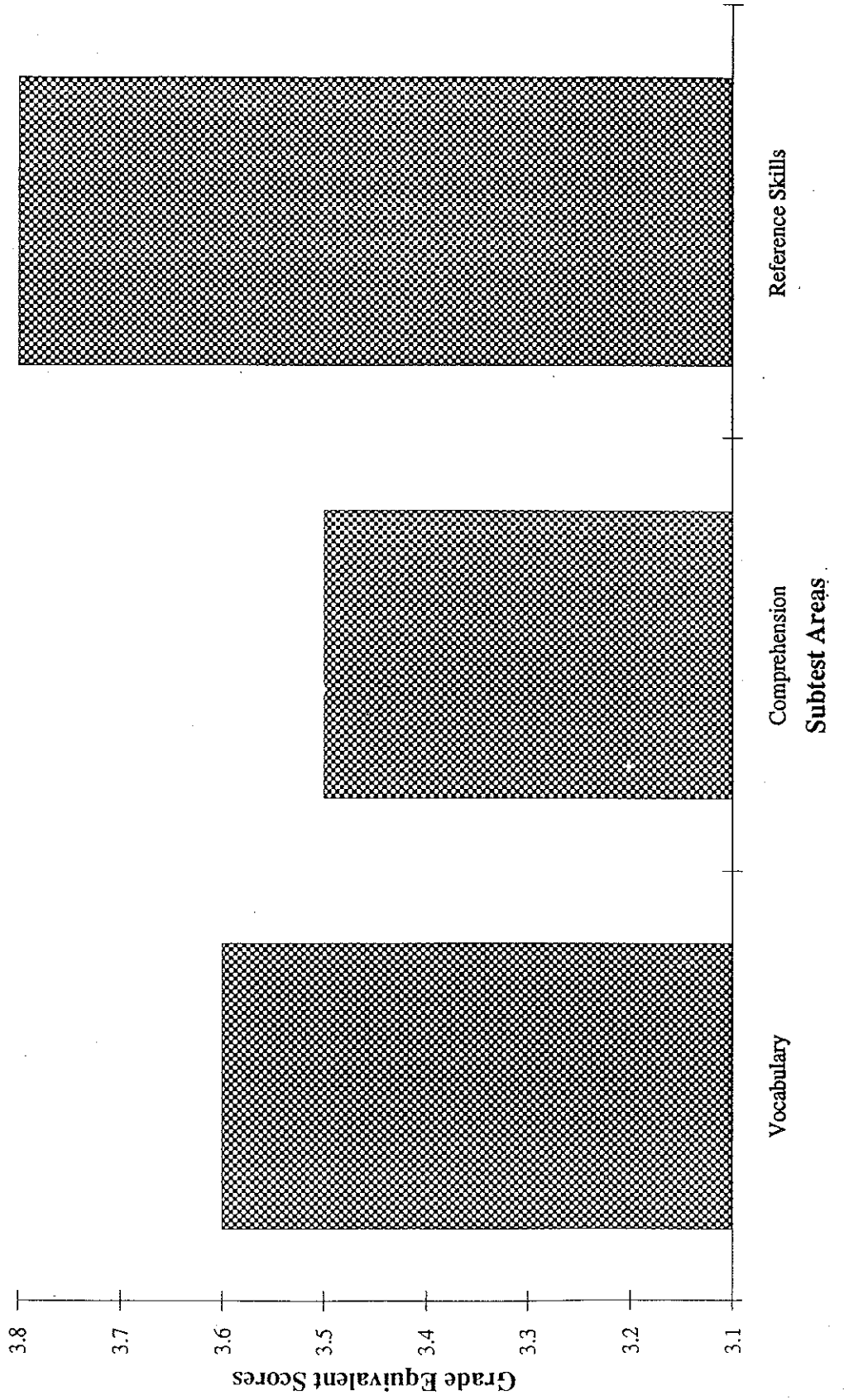

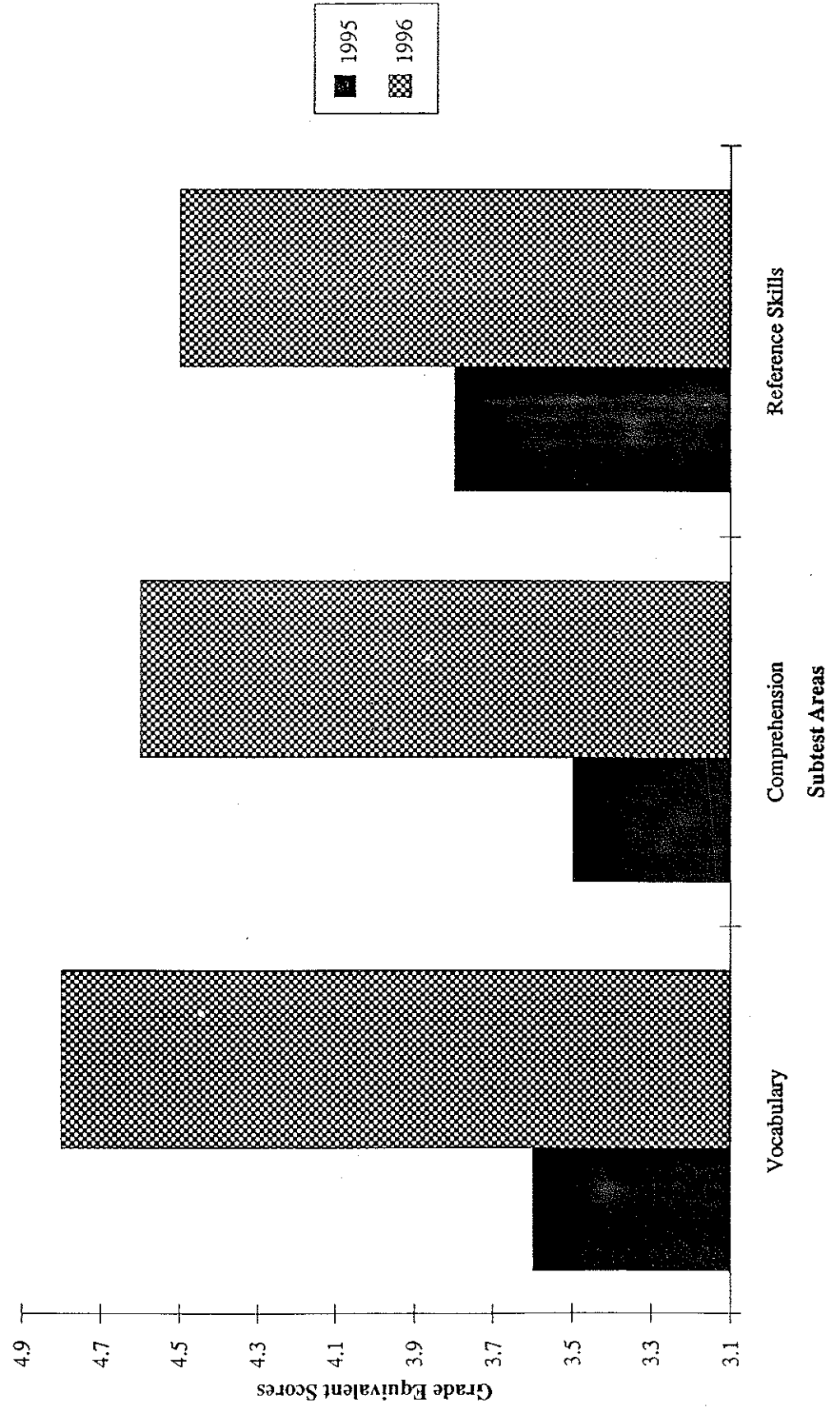Mike & Mary's Class: Average 3rd Grade ITBS Scores

Chart #12

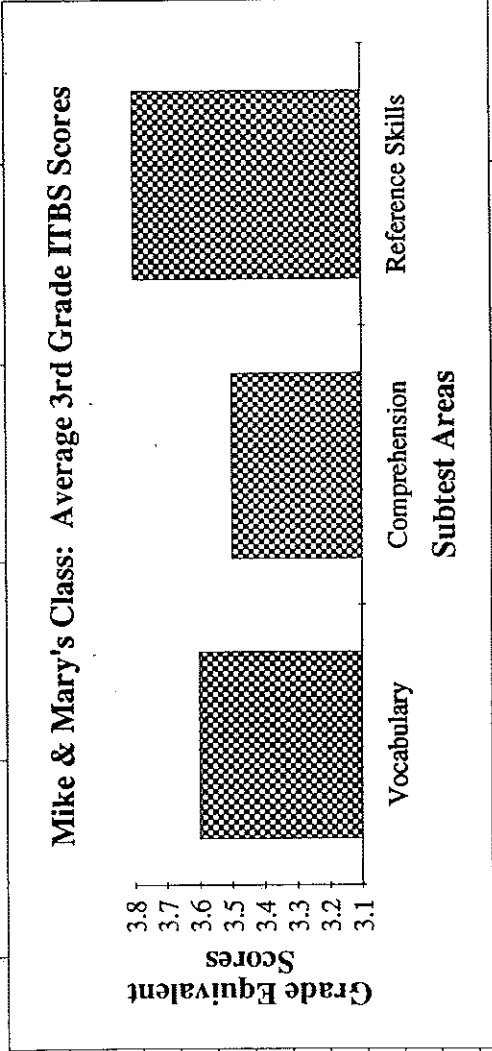**Mike & Mary's Class: Average 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade ITBS Scores**

Legend:
- 1995
- 1996

X-axis (Subtest Areas): Vocabulary, Comprehension, Reference Skills

Y-axis (Grade Equivalent Scores): 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, 4.9

Chart # 13

Mike & Mary's Kids: 3rd Grade ITBS Scores

Vocabulary
Comprehension
Reference Skills

Grade Equivalent Scores

5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0

1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19

The Kids

Mike & Mary's Class: Average 3rd Grade ITBS Scores

Grade Equivalent Scores

3.8
3.7
3.6
3.5
3.4
3.3
3.2
3.1

Vocabulary   Comprehension   Reference Skills

Subtest Areas

Chart #14

TARDATA

Mike & Mary's Kids: 4th Grade ITBS Scores

Vocabulary
Comprehension
Reference Skills

Grade Equivalent Scores

7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

The Kids

Mike & Mary's Class: Average 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade
ITBS Scores

1995
1996

Grade Equivalent
Scores

4.9
4.7
4.5
4.3
4.1
3.9
3.7
3.5
3.3
3.1

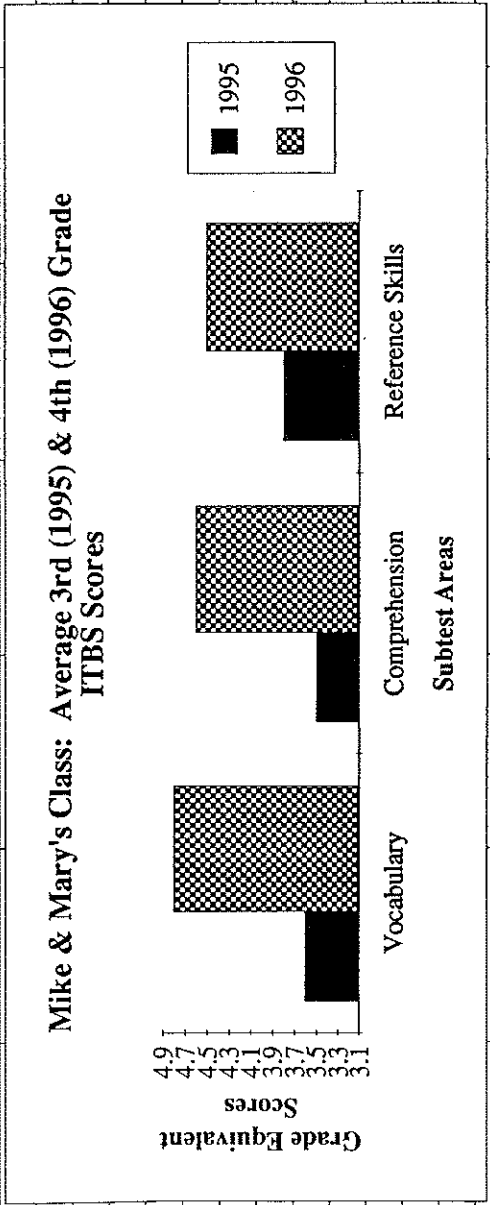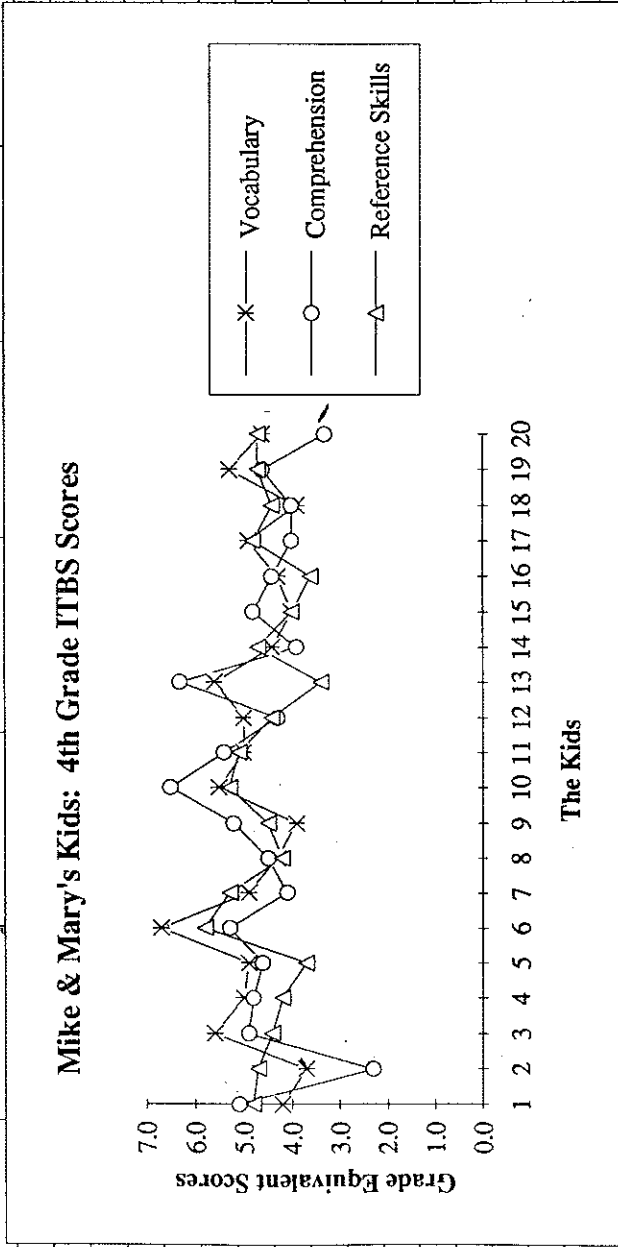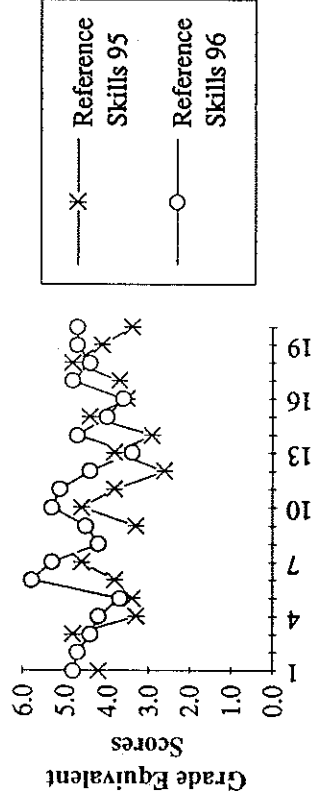Vocabulary   Comprehension   Reference Skills

Subtest Areas

Chart #15

Mike & Mary's Class: 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade
ITBS Reference Skills Scores

Chart #16

Mike & Mary's Class: 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996)
Grade ITBS Vocabulary Scores

Mike & Mary's Class: 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade
ITBS Reading Comprehension Scores

Chart #17

Mike & Mary's Kids: 3rd Grade ITBS Scores
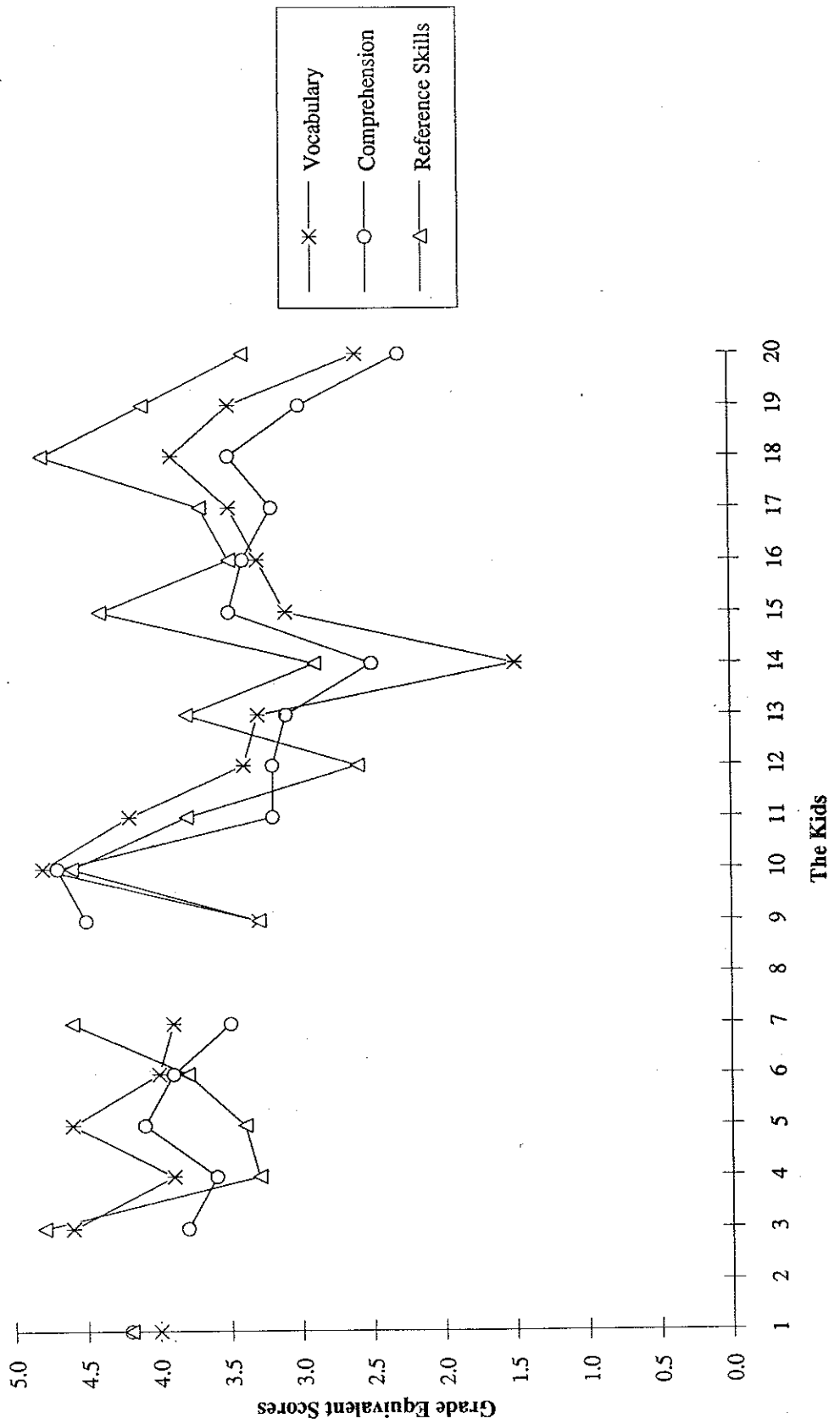

Legend:
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Reference Skills

Grade Equivalent Scores

The Kids

Chart #18

Mike & Mary's Kids: 4th Grade ITBS Scores

Legend:
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Reference Skills

Grade Equivalent Scores: 7.0, 6.0, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0, 0.0

The Kids: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
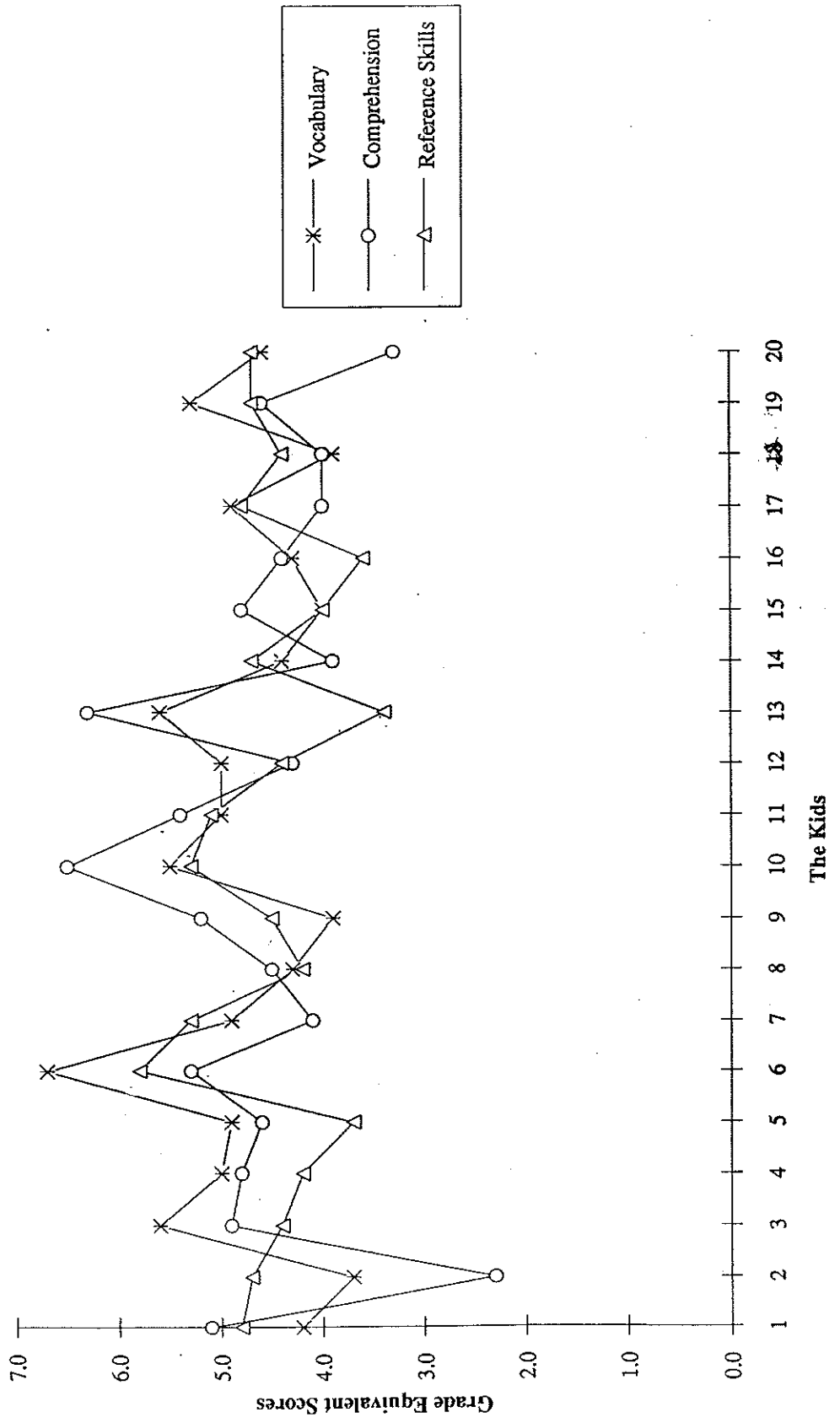
Chart #19

Mike & Mary's Class: 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade ITBS Vocabulary Scores

Vocabulary 95
Vocabulary 96

Grade Equivalent Scores

The Kids
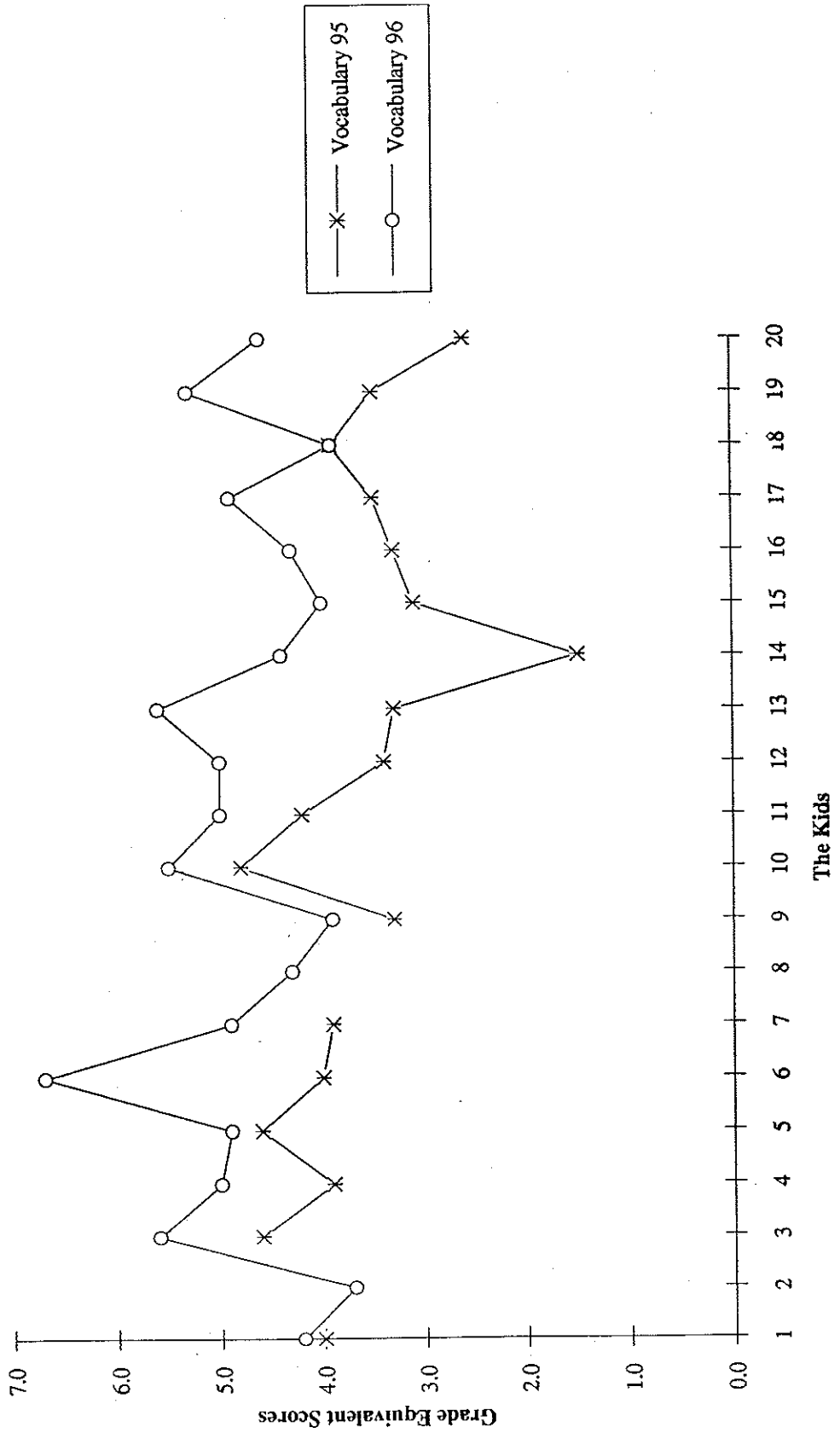
Chart #20

Mike & Mary's Class: 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade ITBS Reading Comprehension Scores

The Kids

Grade Equivalent Scores

Comprehension 95
Comprehension 96
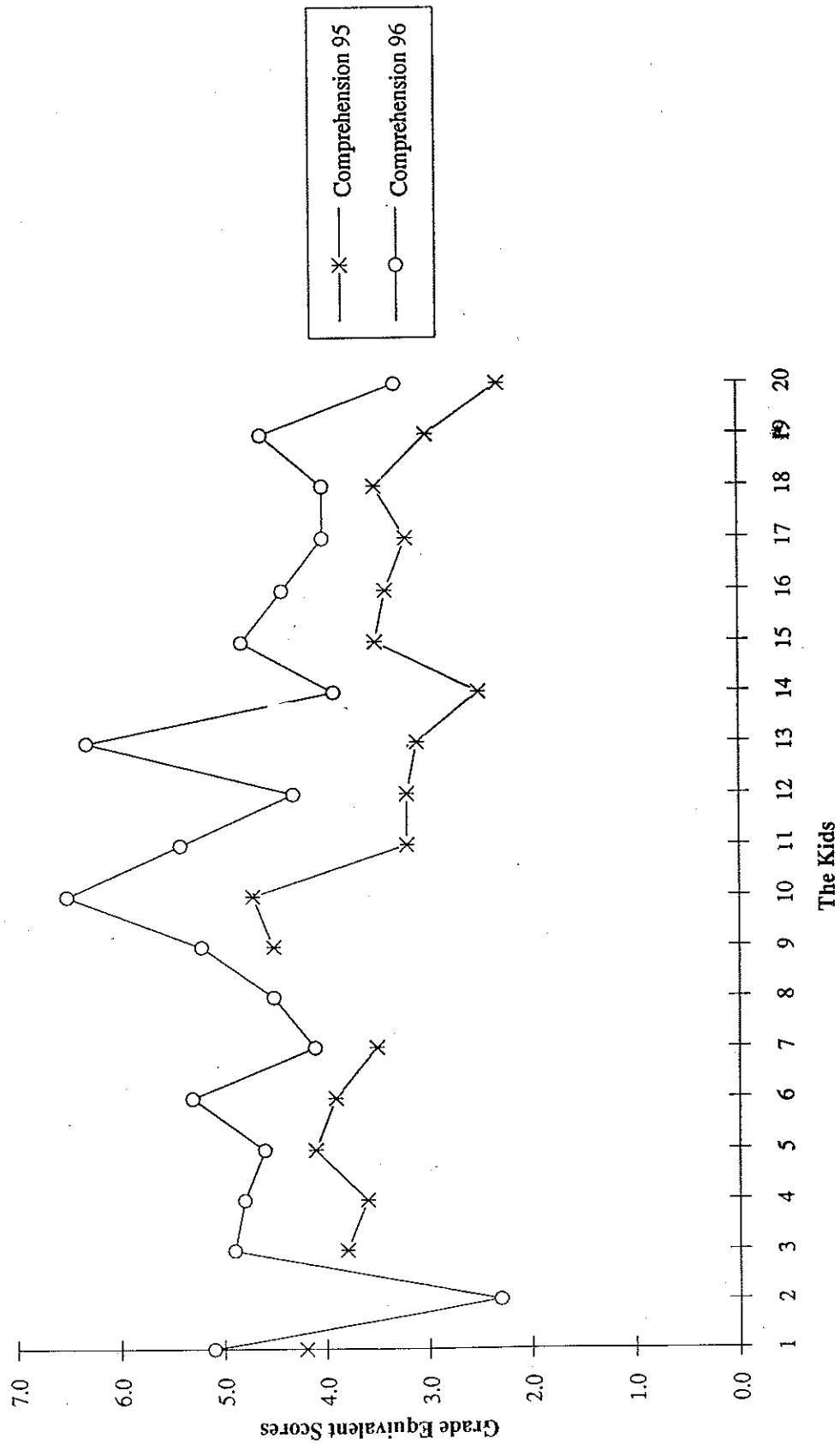
Chart #21

Mike & Mary's Class: 3rd (1995) & 4th (1996) Grade ITBS Reference Skills Scores

Legend:
— ✱ — Reference Skills 95
— ◦ — Reference Skills 96

X-axis: The Kids (1–20)
Y-axis: Grade Equivalent Scores (0.0–6.0)
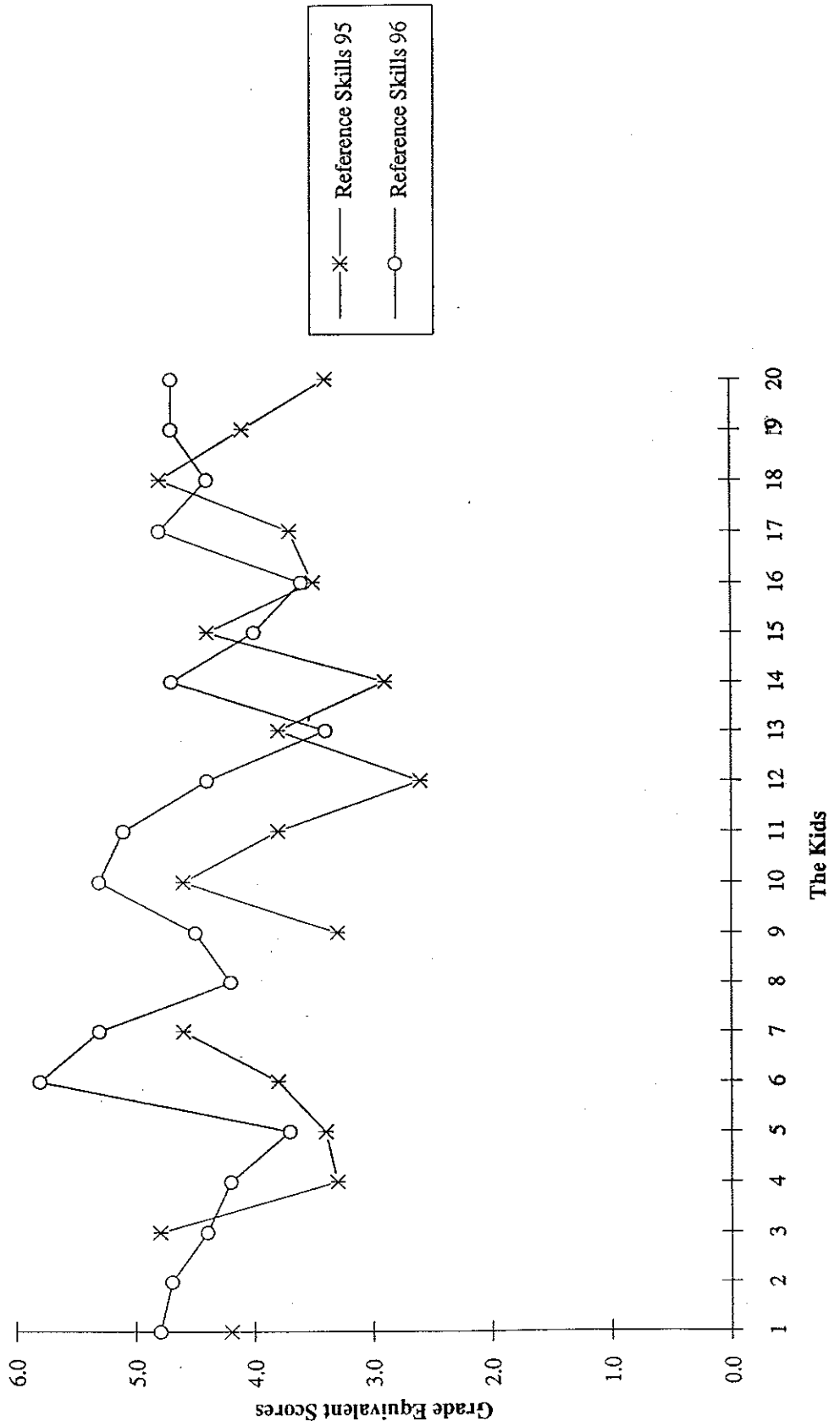
CONCLUSIONS

Data indicate that a greater percentage of students prefer a student lead discussion of literature as well as social studies, and that this positive attitude affects student achievement in both subject areas. Students who are average to above average achievers with traditional strategies perform as well or slightly better utilizing the literature circle strategy in both reading comprehension of literature and social studies. Most students whose achievement on teacher designed tests was below the class average with traditional strategies also performed below the average with the literature circle strategy.

In both literature and social studies student participation and enthusiasm seemed to increase with increased opportunity for choice of literature, roles and cooperative group membership. Competition between cooperative groups seemed to provide motivation toward achievement. With specific consideration to the utilization of the literature circle strategy for social studies, roles are most effective when they are tailored to suit the subject, but students seemed to be comfortable transferring roles between social studies and literature.

The effectiveness of the literature circle strategy seems to increase when it is utilized within the cooperative group structure. As one peer observer wrote, "Overall, this has a great deal of possibility for alternative forms of learning and it also allows those students who never dream of working together in class a chance to expand their social field."

Quality of student discussion and achievement in reading comprehension increased when students liked the reading selection and deemed it relevant to their own lives. They indicated that they liked the literature circle strategy for both literature and social studies, but were particularly vocal about continuing the strategy for social studies. Since approximately 50% of these students told their parents about the experience, we concluded that it was important to them.

The significant gains of some students on the three targeted sections of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, suggest that the literature circle strategy can have a positive effect, particularly for those who had originally scored below their peers. Perhaps the boost in achievement was precipitated by the sense of competence which they gained from "being in charge".

QUESTIONS

We are left with more questions than answers. Is reading an opportunity to dialogue with the writer? If so, does it qualify as a social event? Is conversation a critical component of the learning process? Are the significant gains on the ITBS test by students who previously scored very low a result of the more level playing field which is afforded by the literature circle strategy? Is there, should there be, a separation between the social off text discussion and the on text discussion, or does the personal, social interaction about off text interests enhance the textual discussion? Is there a constant flowing in and out, on and off text? What considerations impact the flow between on and off text discussion? How does the presence of instructors affect this flow? Concerning the approximately 50% who did not tell their parents about the literature circle experience, did they discuss any school experience with their parents?

The most intriguing of all the questions, and one we hope will be pursued is that of how the literature circle strategy can impact standardized test scores. Many of these students demonstrated significant growth. How much of that growth can be credited to the literature circle experience?

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the literature circle experience be introduced in the early grades and be continued consistently as an integral part of instruction across the curriculum. Students can best be served by the literature circle experience when they are given

easy access to a a rich variety of literature for selection in both reading and social studies. As with all effective instructional strategies, modeling is a key to student achievement, so when possible, team teach in order to model the literature circle process. Focus on the ideal, incorporating many opportunities for students to choose their reading selection, reading partners, literature circle role, type of presentation and group management style. Don't give up on the strategy just because there is not a 100% return all the time. The older students are when first introduced to the literature circle strategy, the longer it will take to see positive results. Literature circles are noisy, fun and driven by a spirit of inquiry. Give students many opportunities to test their comprehension, vocabulary and reference skills achievement.

Having enjoyed the stimulation of a shared journey into exciting literature, students deserve the opportunity to present highlights of their discussion time. Presentation is important for closure. If we believe that teaching it is learning it twice, then presentation, although not always formal, is an integral part of the process.

Finally , as Hill, Johnson and Noe stated in Literature Circles and Response, "The heart of curriculum is not books but inquiry." We have found that an inquiry based environment is the ideal ground for literature circles to grow and for the "Grand Conversation" to blossom. Whether students were learning about the ingredients in Tamales, the fishing industry in Virginia or the economic impact of the Great Depression, they became teachers and learners simultaneously, took charge of the learning process and moved a little closer to that "Grand Conversation".

EXHIBITS

1. Literature Circles are Fun!
2. Cooperative Group Sheet
3. Our Literature Circle Rules
4. Literature Circle Roles

5. Artful Artist Responses
6. Word Wizard Responses
7. Careful Connector Responses
8. Discussion Leader Questions

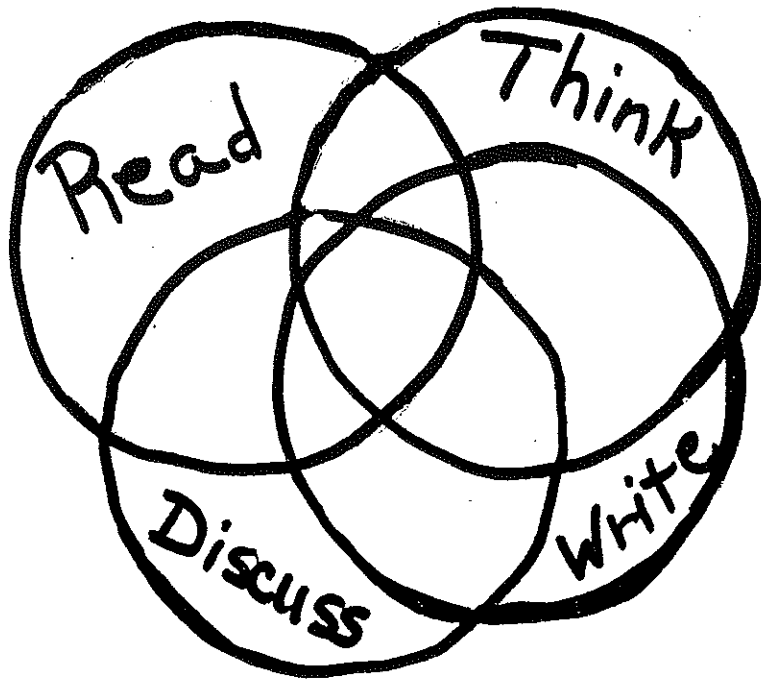9. Passage Picker Responses
10. Literature Circle Roles for Social Studies
11. Parent Letter
12. I Know Sheet

13. Parent Survey
14. Story Summary
15. Journal Ideas
16. Journal Entry Model

17. Student Survey
18. Social Studies Quiz
19. Peer Observation Form
20. Literature Circle Expansion Activities

21. Bibliography

LITERATURE CIRCLES ARE FUN!

WE READ, THINK, DISCUSS AND WRITE TOGETHER.

CO-OPERATIVE GROUP

WE WORK TOGETHER.
WE NEED EACH OTHER.

Table #_____

1. CARE BEAR_____

    (Reminds us that we are a Community
    of Caring)

2. BOOSTER _____

    (Keeps us working)

3. QUIET KEEPER_____

    (Reminds us to whisper)

4. MATERIALS PERSON_____

    (Gets and returns materials)

5. TOGETHER PERSON_____

    (Reminds us that we must stay
    together)

6. WRITER/REPORTER_____

    (We all do the work together but this
    person leads us in reporting)

OUR LITERATURE CIRCLE RULES

Table #_____Our Group Name_____

I will follow the LITERATURE CIRCLE rules every week on Wednesday from 2:00-3:00 in the media center. If I forget or chose not to follow the rules, I will be in "time out" until my group says I can return. I have signed my name here.

RULES

1.   I will bring supplies (pencil, paper, book or book sheets).

2.   I will be in place, quiet and ready on time.

3.   I will do my job(s) and will let everyone else do their job.

4.   I will not fuss, argue or complain.

5.   I will use my inside voice or whisper so I will not disturb the other groups.

6.   I will not leave my group unless there is an emergency.

GROUP NAMES

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____

4

LITERATURE CIRCLES

ROLES

TABLE #_____

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH PERSON IN YOUR GROUP BY ONE OF THESE ROLES.

1. PASSAGE PICKER_____

2. WORD WIZARD_____

3. DISCUSSION LEADER_____

4. ARTFUL ARTIST_____

5. CAREFUL CONNECTOR_____

ARTFUL ARTIST'S RESPONSE FOR
Too Many Tamales

Dolores, Teresa, and Danny groaning
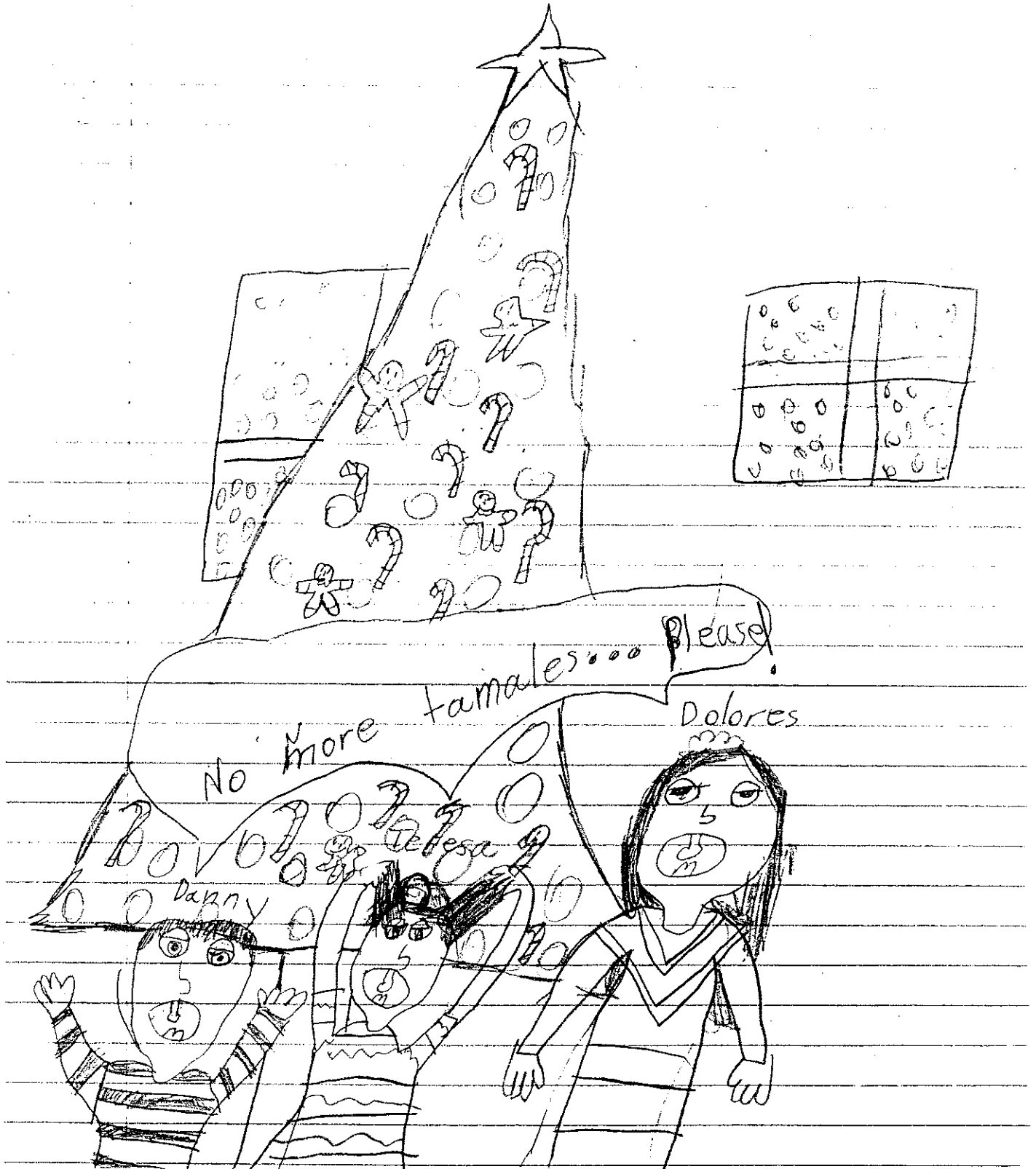
No more tamales... Please!

Dolores

Teresa

Danny

ARTFUL ARTIST'S RESPONSE FOR
Uncle Jed's Barber Shop

WOOO!

PS
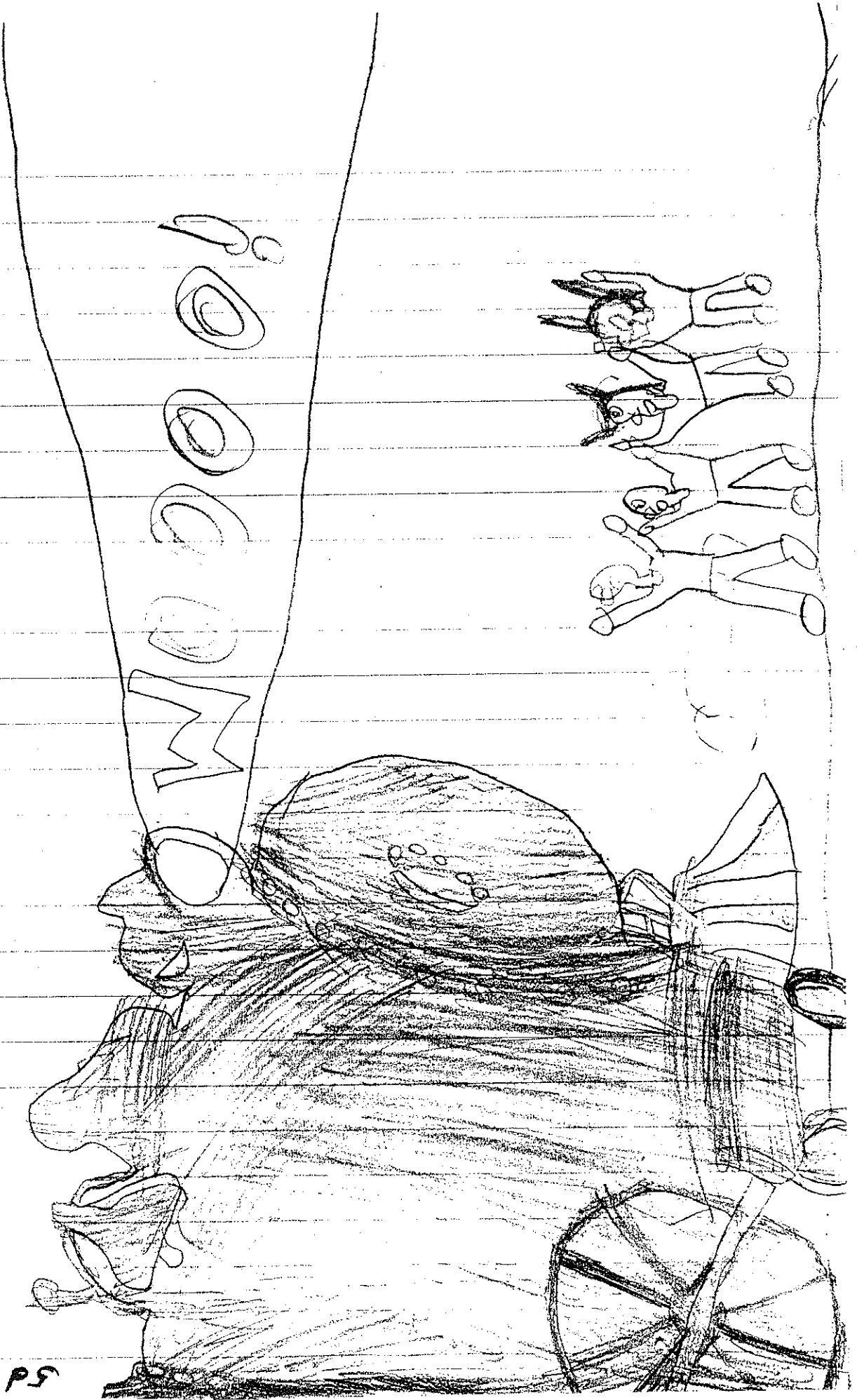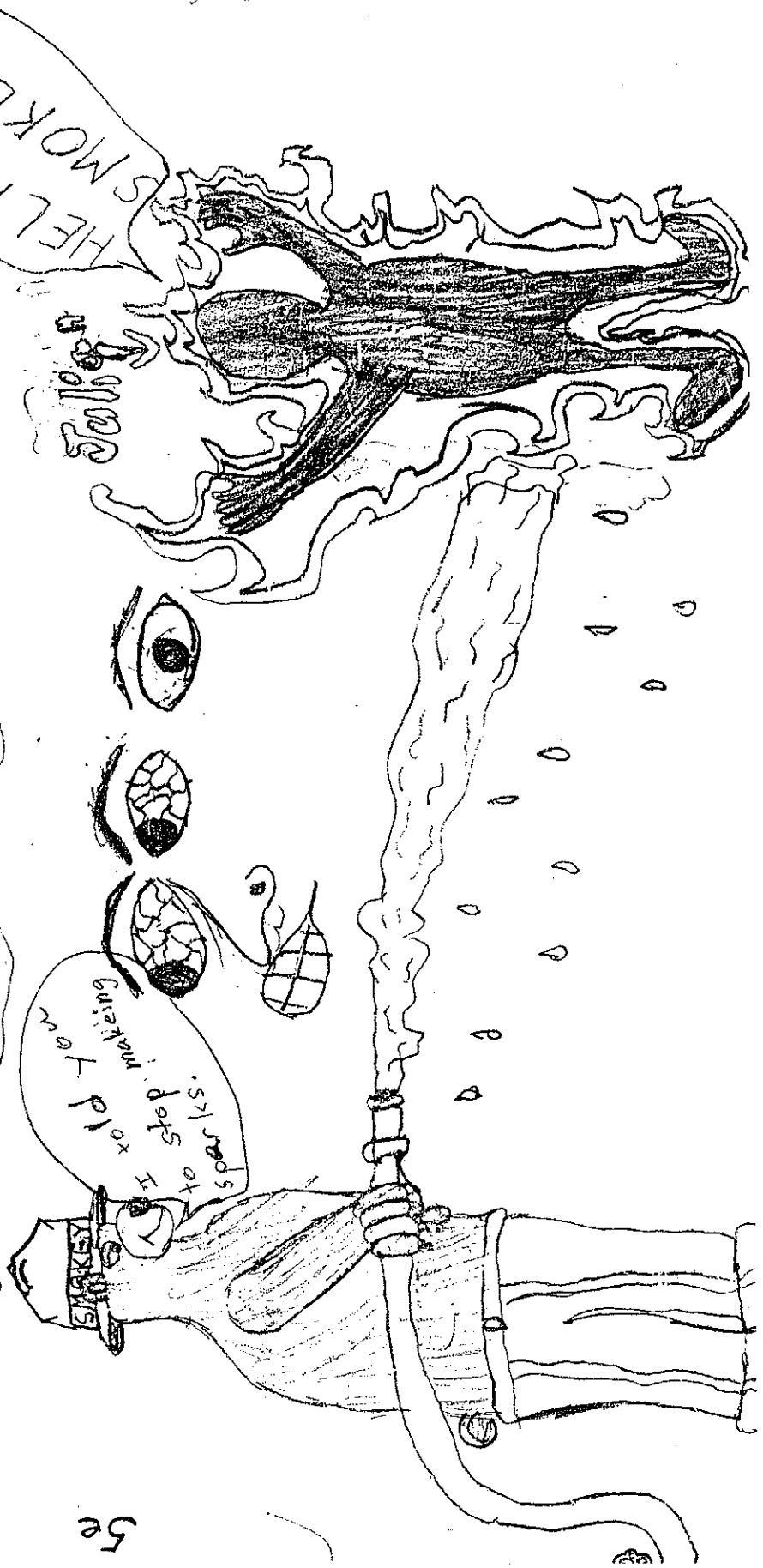
WORD WIZARD'S RESPONSE FOR
<u>Uncle Jed's Barber Shop</u>

shaved— 1. to remove hair from with a razor: The barber shin him carefully 2. to cut (hair) down close to the skin with razor he shaved his beard off. 3 to cut down the surface of by removing thin shaving or parings: The carpenter

The end!

Con: Newton   The bet

I like the part where Gloria bets! that she can move the sun in to Julian rooms. I thing that was unalance part because it is in posince to more the sun onto julian room. Il like the part when julian see that he can jump furather them glorder. Glorda Saw the bet he can't - That is why it is fun to bet. One time my cousin and I made of bet she said if I codel make the touch down in football. She would gave me three hunderd Dollar shoes but if I can't make the touch down she would let the dog chase me umtil I got teed and guess what I my the touch down so She gave me there hundred dollar→

1. What did Pinky Reaux Amanda Dark? a dinosaur

2. What room did Amanda C want to go tofin it? dinosa

3. Why was Amanda mad?

4. Why was he over the sum animals?

5. How many animals did Pinky have?

6. How many dinosaurs did Rex have?

Cari Newton   The Bet

I like the part where Gloria bet! that she can move the swingum to Julian rooma I thing that was unstance part because it is im posince to move the swingum onto julian room. I like the part when julian see that he can jump yeuther them garden. Gloria said the bet he can't. That is corey it is fun to bet one time my cousin and I made of bet she said if I codel make the touch down wth featball she would gave me three hundred Dollar shoes but if I can't make the touch down she would let the dog chase me until I get tied and guess what I may the touch down so she gave me three hundred dollar.

LITERATURE CIRCLES
for Social Studies

ROLES

TABLE #_____

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH PERSON IN YOUR GROUP BY ONE OF THESE
ROLES.

1. SPIDER_____ _____

2. ILLUSTRATOR_____

3. PICTURE PERSON_____

4. WORD WIZARD_____

5. LAWYER_____

April 2, 1996

Dear_____,

In order to give our 4th graders every academic advantage, we offer varied learning opportunities throughout the school year. Your child has participated in a reading class called Literature Circles, which is taught cooperatively by the classroom teacher and the library media specialist. The class meets each Wednesday from 10:30-11:30 in the library media center. Students gather in small groups to read and discuss literature.

To help us measure the effect of this additional learning opportunity on your child's progress, please help us with two things:

1. Fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to Michael Kight in room #210 by _____*Thursday, April 4, 1996*_____.

2. Visit your child's literature circles class on one of the following **Wednesdays from 10:30-11:30.**
    4/17, 4/24, 5/1, 5/8, 5/15

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the questionnaire and to visit the class. Most of all, thank you for letting us work with your child.

Sincerely,

Michael Kight, Classroom Teacher

Mary Southward, Library Media Specialist

cc   Robert Johnson, Principal

/2

JULIAN STORIES
THE BOX

Name_____ _____Table_____

Date_____

CIRCLE THE CORRECT ANSWER.
1.   What did Julian call Huey?

   A   Bean Sprout
   B.   Shrimp
   C.   Scaredy Cat

2.   What was Huey's special lazer ring supposed to do?

   A.   Make the enemy disappear
   B.   Make Huey happy
   C.   Fry the enemy to a crisp

3.   What was in the box?

   A   Puppies and kittens
   B.   Snakes and alligators
   C.   Rabbits

4.   What did Huey and Julian name the animals in the box?

   A   Jake and Bean Sprout
   B.   Shrimp and scaredy cat
   C.   Scaredy cat and Jake

5.   Write a short summary of the story.

   **ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE, WRITE A SHORT
   SUMMARY OF THE STORY.**

I READ! I THINK!
I DISCUSS! I KNOW!

The stickers show that I read and discussed these stories with my
literature circles group and then answered questions.

MY NAME_____ _____ ____TABLE #__ _____

STORY   **DATE**   **STICKER**

HUEY MAKES THE LEAP

THE BOX

I WISH FOR SMOKEY THE BEAR

A CURVE IN THE RIVER

A DAY WHEN FROGS WEAR SHOES

SUPERBOY

THE BET

THE BEST WAY TO RIPTON

THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHILD AND READING

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ANSWER THAT APPLIES TO YOUR CHILD.

1. Does your child read at home for pleasure?

    Yes

    No

    If you answered "YES" to #1, please answer question #2.

2. What does your child read the most at home?

    A. School text books
    B. School library books
    C. Public library books
    D. Magazines and/or newspapers
    E. Catalogs and/or advertisements

3. Have you noticed any changes in your child's reading habits since the beginning of this school year?

    Yes

    No

    If you answered "YES" to #3, please list the changes in reading habits.

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. Has your child told you about the Literature Circles class which he/she has participated in?

    Yes
    No

    PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE BACK.

Story Summary 14

I like the story. My favorite part was when Julian called Huey a Bean Spourt. Because I call my sister names. The favorite part or nice part was when the dad had the box. And they were asking him. Question because the story said he had like a tiger face. And they ask him are you going to make us wash stuff. So first he put the box down. He told then he said I have a present for you. And it was rabbits.

JOURNAL IDEAS

TRY TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

MAIN IDEA OR MAIN IDEAS

SAD

HAPPY

SCARY

FUNNY

THINK OF TOPIC SENTENCES FOR A PARAGRAPH THAT YOU WOULD WRITE ABOUT THE STORY

WRITE AN EVENT FRAME ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE EVENT IN THE STORY.

WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR PREDICTIONS DURING THE STORY?

WHAT DID YOU PREDICT FOR THE END OF THE STORY?

WHAT PARTS OF THE STORY COULD YOU PICTURE IN YOUR MIND? DESCRIBE 1 OF THESE. LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD.

/7 # STUDENT SURVEY

TELL US WHAT YOU LIKE.
WE WANT TO KNOW.

Your   name_____Date_____

Here are 11   sentences which begin with "I like".

**Read each sentence and circle the face (happy or sad)   that
<u>best</u> shows how you feel about   the   sentence.**
Thanks, Mr. Kight and Mrs. Southward

1.   I like to read.

2.   I like to read stories.

3.   I like to read about social studies.

4.   I like it when a teacher reads a story out loud to us and then tells us about
         the story.

LOOK ON THE BACK.

18 SOCIAL STUDIES QUIZ

Fill in the circle before the correct answer.

1. Virginia's Constitution of 1902 made it difficult for African-Americans to vote because it required everyone to _____ .
    - (a) own a house
    - (b) pay a poll tax
    - (c) travel long distances
    - (d) have a job

2. One way that African-Americans fought the Jim Crow laws was by _____ .
    - (a) running their own streetcars
    - (b) refusing to vote in elections
    - (c) refusing to pay taxes
    - (d) writing their own constitution

3. Who opened the first bank for African-Americans?
    - (a) Maggie Lena Walker
    - (b) Woodrow Wilson
    - (c) Harry Byrd
    - (d) Ellen Glasgow

4. Which form of transportation contributed most to the growth of cities in Virginia during the early 1900s?
    - (a) ships
    - (b) automobiles
    - (c) trains
    - (d) stagecoaches

5. Virginia contributed to both world wars by supplying a steady source of _____ .
    - (a) gold
    - (b) iron
    - (c) steel
    - (d) coal

6. Thousands of businesses failed, people lost their jobs, and many people lost all their savings as a result of the _____ .
    - (a) New Deal
    - (b) Reconstruction
    - (c) Big Lick
    - (d) Great Depression

7. The United States entered World War II after Japan _____ .
    - (a) bombed Pearl Harbor
    - (b) surrounded U.S. forts
    - (c) captured U.S. submarines
    - (d) invaded Germany

8. During World War I, Virginia became a major center for _____ .
    - (a) protesting against discrimination
    - (b) making weapons
    - (c) transporting soldiers and supplies
    - (d) growing tobacco

9. One of the major leaders of the civil rights movement was _____ .
    - (a) Harry Byrd
    - (b) Franklin D. Roosevelt
    - (c) Martin Luther King, Jr.
    - (d) L. Douglas Wilder

10. The Civil Rights Act made it illegal for businesses to _____ .
    - (a) sell products in stores on Sundays
    - (b) treat people unfairly
    - (c) tax African-Americans
    - (d) raise their prices

Virginia, **Chapter 10: Content**

Observation form for Literature Circle Class 1995-1996

OBSERVER_____

DATE_____

Thank you for observing the literature circles class. Since September of 1995, these students have participated in the class from 10:30-11:30 each Wednesday.

GOAL: To enhance attitude towards literature and achievement in Reading Comprehension, through the use of literature circles in a cooperative group structure.

Please divide your time between the 5 groups. It is most desirable that they read and discuss as if no adult were present. Considering the items listed below, please write 1 or 2 sentences about what was most noticeable during your visit with each group. No need to respond to all of these.

Thank you, Michael Kight and Mary Southward

THINGS TO LISTEN FOR:

Each student has one of the following roles. Do you hear any/all/none of these considerations coming through in the conversation?

1. **Discussion Leader** - asks questions and stimulates discussion

2. **Word Wizard** - Points out interesting/difficult vocabulary to discuss/research

3. **Passage Picker** - Points out funny/sad/unusual passages

4. **Careful Connector** - Leads the group in relating the story to their own lives

5. **Artful Artist** - Describes/draws pictures of characters/scenes or something the story reminds them of

Each student needs to be comfortable in the group.

1. Is everyone comfortable and involved most of the time or is there control by 1 or 2 students? Can a participant speak freely without risking ridicule?

2. Is the discussion literal and fact based, characterized by yes/no/one word answers or is it expanded and connected to their own lives?

3. Does the discussion sound natural or do you feel they are performing for you?

4. If applicable, did you observe conflict resolution? Describe in brief.

LITERATURE CIRCLES
Expansion Activities

Tell the class about part or all of your book or story. You may use any of the

following activities during your presentation.

1. Webs

2. Event Frames

3. Journals

4. Dramatic Skits

5. Poetry writing

6. Poster

8. Drawing

9. Research

2/

BIBLIOGRAPHY

About Literature Circles

1.   Literature Circle and Response by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Nancy J.
        Johnson and Katherine L. Schlick Noe, 1995.

2.   Invitations by Regie Routman, 1991.

3.   Literature Circles by Harvey Daniels, 1994.

**Books and short stories used for the 4th grade Literature Circles
Class**

1.   Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto

2.   Uncle Jed's Barber Shop by Margeree King Mitchell

3.   Shortcut by Donald Crews

4.   A Million Fish, More or Less by Patricia McKissack

5.   More Stories Julian Tells, a collection by Ann Cameron

6.   Keep the Light Burning, Abbie by Peter and Connie Roop

7.   The Gold Cadillac and The Friendship by Mildred D. Taylor

8.   Strega Nona by Tomie de Paola

9.   Pinky and Rex by James Howe

10. The Bathwater Gang by Jerry Spinelli

11. The Cricket in Times Square by George Selden

12. Song of the Trees by Mildred D. Taylor

13. The Trading Game by Alfred Slote

"What Early Predictors Exist for Academic Problems in Fourth Grade?"

Sharon Byman, Teacher
Karen Hudson, Teacher
Blackwell Model School
Richmond City Public Schools

In the field of education we know all of the pat phrases. We say "All children can learn", "Children learn at different rates", "Children develop at different rates", and "Retention does not work". They are not only pat phrases but we know these truths to be self-evident. And yet seven out of twenty-two children coming to fourth grade cannot read above the first grade level. We have a high drop out rate. We have children "turned off" at the elementary level. We are constantly playing the "catch-up" game with children by using remediation. We have Title I, Chapter I, Lunch Buddies, tutorial programs, extended day programs, etc. But we have children reaching fourth grade who can barely read, who hate school, and feel like failures. We are told that the scores tell all and are all important. We use all the correct materials- Test Alert, Scoring High, etc.- all written at a fourth grade level. These books are designed to prepare students to take any and all of the standardized tests and score well. But 7/22 can't score well because they can't read these helpful tools. As a result we have serious discipline problems in our elementary schools. But we "know" all the answers.

Children come to us at prekindergarten screening with stars in their eyes because they have been told they were going to learn to read. Children want to read. Has anyone ever heard a child say, "I want to be a failure"?

Let's just take the case of M.B. He was a serious discipline problem from kindergarten through third grade, had all D's and F's in reading and the content areas, could do math, but he couldn't read. Yes, he comes from a less than stable environment and we could probably find twenty excuses for his "failure" to learn to read. But it wasn't his failure. It was and is ours. He was passed to or placed in the next grade because "Retention doesn't work". He was suspended when he acted out. In third grade he was referred to the Child Study Team for testing but their just wasn't time to test him that year. He was referred for testing in the beginning of October in the fourth grade but even though the Federal law states that testing must be completed within sixty days his final hearing was held in April. He had spent another year struggling and frustrated. You see M.B. has a serious learning disability and a substantial language deficit. Why is he so angry? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out.

All the remediation that had been tried with this child had failed. All the tutors were frustrated. His classroom was disrupted and he interfered with the education of twenty-one others. His classroom teachers, who had tried and used all the accepted strategies had been stymied. It is our contention that remediation was not the answer. Intervention might have been the key.

You might say that this case was terribly unusual and surely we don't let cases like this slip by often. Let's take another child, T.W. , definitely a street-wise child with a bad temper. He slept through first grade and when he wasn't sleeping he was disruptive. So he was retained. His scores through fourth grade were acceptable but not great. He could read but he was bored and he was a problem. Then in fifth grade he "happened" to be placed with a teacher who had taught a gifted class, wasn't afraid of his bravado or size, and recognized his amazing potential. In that one year he won contest after contest, caused few problems, and loved school. His parents were thrilled and the administration was also for his test scores soared above the ninetieth percentile. But you see his social patterns had been set and when he went to middle school he went back to his old patterns- C's, D's and disruptions. Whose failure was this? Ours! Another example where early intervention might have been the key.

Twenty-five kindergarten teachers were interviewed. When asked what their biggest frustration stemmed from they answered overwhelmingly trying to meet the varying needs of twenty- five children when you don't always know what their needs are. They felt they were short-changing their very bright students and their average students because they had to aim their lessons to a lower level to help those students who were not developmentally ready for kindergarten. These students tended to be the most disruptive so their needs were immediate. In reality they wondered if they were meeting anyone's needs.

Wilma H. Miller is an avid proponent of reading readiness. She feels that the majority of reading problems are caused by " inadequate readiness before beginning

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reading instruction"[1].   In her book "Reading Teacher's Complete Diagnosis & Correction Manual", Ms. Miller states that children who are not developmentally ready for reading "should probably not have entered kindergarten at the time that they did or they should have been retained in kindergarten".[2]   She also states "I believe that inadequate reading readiness before a formal reading program is a very important cause of later reading problems".[3]

Another cause of reading problems is called "inappropriate reading instruction which is instruction that is not compatible with a child's unique needs or weaknesses".[4]   For instance, a child that is weak in auditory discrimination skills, when taught with a program heavy in phonics that does not emphasize comprehension, tends to become a word caller. Reading instruction and reading skills for the most part are presented in a developmental manner. Children who are lacking readiness skills tend to fall further behind as new skills are introduced.   As such children begin to fail in reading they develop a dislike for it and a negative self-concept, which makes it even more difficult for them to succeed in reading.

Ms. Miller goes on to say "A number of elementary schools have been unwilling to allow children to progress in reading at their own rate and to read at their own level. Instead they...."[5]   have accepted the grade level at which children in that grade should read no matter what their actual reading levels might be. "This often held back above-average readers and may have caused them to become bright under-achievers because they were not challenged enough and thus lost interest in reading and even in

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[1]Irma Miller, Reading Teacher's Complete Diagnosis & Correction Manual, p.11.

[2]Ibid., p. 11.

[3]Ibid., p. 12.

[4]Ibid, p.13.

[5]Ibid, p.13.

3

school."[6] This practice also caused readers in the below average group to read consistently at their frustration reading levels.

Slow learners (70-90 IQ's) , according to Miller, should not receive formal reading instruction until at least first grade. Their program should emphasize a language experience program and readiness with the use of the repetitive approach.

In all the research we checked out it was consistently stressed that a child's learning style must be recognized and that the readiness level must be determined in order to include them in an appropriate learning method and that an approximate understanding of why a child may not be ready to read must be reached . In this way a child's individual needs can be met in kindergarten. Of course this prescription must be tentative and flexible as the child progresses and achieves.

It is not only research that points out the need for prescriptive analysis of the prekindergarten and kindergarten child. When given our questionnaire (see Appendix A) asking that teachers list in order of importance the information they felt was necessary for a thorough prescription of a child's needs, kindergarten and first grade teachers listed a standardized reading readiness score first.

We began to research the possible causes for the vast number of children who were not succeeding in elementary school. Their has to be a reason why some children can't read. It would be easy to say "oh, those primary teachers are not doing their part" but that was not a reasonable explanation. The first area we delved into was the Child Study Teams of seven schools districts. As they all operate under the same set of guidelines which are federally mandated we felt this made all things equal. (see Appendix B) They all consisted of similar personnel including an administrator, a counselor, a social worker, a psychologist, the nurse, the parent, and the referring teacher. Occasionally the speech teacher is included if deemed appropriate to the child's problem. Most references begin with the classroom teacher and occasionally a parent (this was more prevalent outside of the inner city). The initial meeting focuses on what, if any,

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[6]Ibid, P.13.

preliminary testing is needed or suggestions for alternate strategies are given that a teacher may try to reach the child. The entire process is lengthy and burdensome for the classroom teacher in 5 of the 7 districts. Ninety-five percent of the teachers interviewed stated that the reason for the lengthiness was the backlog of referrals and lack of personnel. Only one local and one out-of-state team seemed to be quick and efficient. The process and testing for the other five ranged from slow to almost impossible. All of the teachers admitted that disruptive children tended to get tested faster. Those districts where parental involvement was heavy were the most efficient. Teachers in six of the seven districts were discouraged to refer any child for testing in the lower grades because these children were probably "developmentally lacking" and we should just wait and see how they develop. Several of the teachers interviewed felt that their schools were hesitant to reach certain conclusions due to potential lawsuits. Once testing is complete 5 of the 7 schools said placement in appropriate programs was frequently delayed due to the unavailability of space. Again placement was much quicker in the districts where parents were involved and knew their rights. A frequently expressed complaint was that it was senseless to refer a child when it takes forever and then nothing is done to help the teacher or the child. The most interesting part of this section was that the two districts who had teams that were expedient had higher test scores.

We were somewhat discouraged with our findings so we decided to delve back even further to try to find a logical cause for children slipping through the cracks. In all cases standardized test scores were terribly important. More stress was placed on raising scores than on meeting the individual needs of the students. As monies (federal and state) and the publicity surrounding state ranking are tied to scores we weren't very surprised. The lower the scores the more focus on remediation is present. Children are placed in formal reading programs early to get the districts scores up.

We know all the ways remediation is being used and though some innovative programs are popping up the basic component is that the child is already behind and struggling.

We checked out the gifted programs for these same districts as so many children that appeared to be gifted to teachers did not get assigned to the Space program due to inadequate test scores. While each district does offer a program for the gifted most of them are minimal until tracking begins in the middle school leaving lots of time for the gifted child to become disenchanted with education. One of our districts has a program where a teacher does special activities with the identified students 45 minutes a week. Another buses their students once a week to a common site for activities. In one of the studied districts homogeneous grouping of gifted children occurs in the kindergarten program. These classes are geared to allow these children to move through the curriculum at a very rapid pace that is enriched with meaningful activities. Most of the schools admitted that reaching and stimulating the gifted is the responsibility of the classroom teacher who is also responsible for reaching every other level.

However, we could not put the blame on the Child Study teams without looking at all the other factors affecting success with reading. The next area of exploration was the various kindergarten programs. Classes in 6 of the 7 districts have totally heterogeneously grouped. While many of the programs are language-based, reading and writing were introduced early to the entire group. Attempts are made to focus on the individual needs. The attempt was fleeting at best in the minds of the teachers surveyed and (see Appendix C) when so many varying needs are present. They feel that first they need more information before they receive the child and think homogeneous grouping would alleviate many of their teaching problems. When asked if they believed a prekindergarten enrichment program should be offered to children who are not developmentally ready for kindergarten (even though they meet the age requirement) parents (see Appendix D) and teachers overwhelmingly (39/40) said they would agree to place their child in such a program to avoid the necessity of later retention or frustration. Teachers expressed the only reservation which would include close monitoring of the testing and their child's progress.

Now we felt we were heading in the right direction. We had an idea of what those in the trenches felt was important. Now how could these things be achieved?

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We chose to analyze the prekindergarten screening programs of three of the districts. The first district's screening is strictly a time for information gathering. This information includes some family history and medical information. Minimal knowledge is gained concerning learning style or reading readiness. This placement in an appropriate learning program or grouping is impossible until kindergarten begins which involves analysis while the teachers are concerned with class management. Heterogeneous grouping, remember, is the rule of thumb in most districts.

The second system we looked at is a bit more in depth. There is the normal background information gathered at screening time but in this case some readiness testing is done. The Brigance test was administered to each incoming student. This gives a fairly accurate look at a child's readiness to begin formal reading instruction. The child's knowledge in basic personal sense of being, eye-hand coordination, gross motor coordination, numbers, and the alphabet, etc. are tested resulting in a composite score to determine readiness. Taken apart, the test gives the kindergarten teacher an idea of areas of strength to build a learning program. Heterogeneous grouping, however, is again used in setting up the classes thus continuing the problem of meeting a variety of learning styles and levels of readiness.

It was obvious our next step had to be to find a paradigm of the previous two systems. We searched for a system with an extensive prekindergarten screening. Their screening began with an letter that includes a three month calendar with suggestions for things parents can work on to prepare their child for the screening. Two weeks before the screening parents are given an in depth look at what their child will be expected to do. Each parent is given a video, entitled Ready, Set, Go! To Kindergarten (New York State Education Department) that reiterates this information and includes the suggestions for preparation.

The screening is done by a team consisting of the kindergarten teachers, the nurse, the social worker, the psychologist, the speech therapist, the reading specialist, the guidance counselor and a secretary. Each member is assigned a specific test to administer to the child falling within their own area of expertise. It is expected that when the child

arrives for their appointment all preliminary forms (see Appendix E) will be complete including a medical history, a record of shots, and a family and a social history which had been previously mailed to the homes.

As one can see from the included form (see Appendix F), it seems that all developmental areas are included from distractibility to basic academic knowledge. A composite score is attained by adding the results of each section thus determining a level of reading readiness. Many things impress us about this screening including the section for recommending a child for more intensive testing if they show signs of serious weakness in any area. This testing is done over the summer. The most impressive part ,however, is what is done with the scores (see Appendix G). Kindergarten classes are set up homogeneously according to the scores. Those children scoring extremely high are placed in a highly accelerated reading program immediately with plenty of enrichment. "Average" scores, indicating reading readiness are placed in a formal reading program to move at a normal pace. The last level is reserved for those children who are not developmentally ready for reading and need an intensive language experience program that also incorporates social interaction skills. Parents are kept totally informed as to all decisions and the school in some cases will recommend an extra year before entering school to avoid later learning problems.

The kindergarten teachers know what the learning style and readiness level of their classes well before September and the appropriate materials are supplied for those particular needs. They felt this eliminated much of the discipline problems because instruction is paced at a comfortable yet exciting level for the child. Teachers feel they have more time to devote to planning stimulating lessons aimed at one level rather than four or five.

Placement is necessarily flexible due to the possibility that a child just doesn't shine on screening day A parent may also request retesting if they feel a serious discrepancy occurs. But in overall parents accept the findings. Naturally there are children that will have to be tested at a later date such as transfers but these children are also given the entire battery of tests to determine placement.

We feel now that we have what we have been looking for but is it the answer to all of our needs? Let's look at them one by one. Our first concern is the Child Study teams being overburdened and lengthy. This is alleviated because the majority of students with special needs are diagnosed early. The second concern is the frustration of our kindergarten teachers in reaching all of the levels of readiness in their classes. This would not be a problem with heterogeneously grouped classes. Scores are our next concern. The scores of the last school were comparable to our top schools even though their district is populated by low socioeconomic levels.

But more importantly what about the children? The gifted and talented children are reading at least a second grade level by the end of kindergarten and continue to soar throughout elementary school. The "average" children are usually finished with the three pre-primers by the end of kindergarten. The children in the enrichment class are getting all the skills needed to prepare them to begin reading in first grade.

How would a program like this help M.B. and T.W. M.B. would have been be identified as a special needs child and would have been receiving the extra help he needed to overcome his learning disability thus eliminating his frustration. Instead of saying "I am a failure" he could say "I can learn".

T.W. would have been identified as a gifted young man and placed in a highly stimulating learning environment with other children at his level. Instead of C's, D's and disruptions we might have seen a motivated child who couldn't wait to learn more with no time to be a discipline problem.

All children have a right to expect that when they are placed in our hands they will receive a fulfillment of their educational needs and dreams so they can go on to become contributing members of our society. It's not a sin if you are not ready to read at five years old. It is a sin, however, to allow a child to believe that he is a failure if he can't read when he's "supposed to".

Bibliography

Miller, Wilma H., <u>Reading Teacher's Complete Diagnosis & Correction Manual</u>,

West Nyack, New York, The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1988.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Questionnaire

This is a survey being conducted as part of a research project on the value of prekindergarten screening. You need not identify yourself.

Please respond below by using the following criteria:

       1 - very important
       2 - somewhat important
       3 - not important

Should the following tests be included in a prekindergarten screening?

I.Q. Tests	1	2	3
Reading Readiness Score	1	2	3
Background Social History	1	2	3
Eye Sight	1	2	3
Hearing	1	2	3
Visual Discrimination	1	2	3
Auditory Discrimination	1	2	3
Tactile Discrimination	1	2	3

       *Please list the above in order of importance for a thorough prescription of a child's needs:

       _____

       _____

       _____

       _____

APPENDIX B

Department of Exceptional Education
and Pupil Personnel Services

Referral Processing: Building Level & Central Office Responsibilities

Action	Time	Location	Responsibility
Child Study Committee receives referrals for consideration through principal.	10 Days	School	Principal/CSC Coordinator
Child Study meeting convened and decision as to course of action is reached. When the decision is made to refer for assessment, the committee, with parental input, develops the assessment plan.		School	CSC Coordinator
Completes Prior Notice, Referral/Consent Forms Designates Referral Case Manager.	5 Days	School	Principal/CSC Coordinator
Obtains Parental Consent		School	Principal/Team Designee
Duplicates Referral/Consent Form for distribution - Copies to Assessment Team		School	Principal/CSC Coordinator
Forwards Original Referral, including Child Study Minutes, Prior Notice and other relevant documents to Exceptional Education	65 Days	School	Principal/CSC Coordinator
Referral and Related Documents logged on the Central Office Monitoring System		Central Office	Referral Monitor Exceptional Ed.
Conduct Relevant Assessments		School	Assessment Team Members

Teacher Survey

Please respond to the statements written below using the following criteria:

1 - agree
2 - unsure
3 - disagree

1. If after an extensive prekindergarten screening, it was determined that a child was lacking some of the skills necessary to be successful in kindergarten, would you agree the child should be placed in a prekindergarten enrichment program?

    1   2   3

2. Should a child have the option to move into kindergarten at any time during their prekindergarten year is deemed ready?

    1   2   3

3. Should this option be available at every grade level (i.e., skipping grades)?

    1   2   3

4. Does your school provide adequate opportunities for the gifted or over-achiever?

    1   2   3

5. If a child had all the skills needed to begin reading, should he/she begin reading in kindergarten?

    1   2   3

6. How long does your school take to determine if a child has a learning problem?

7. Would you rather have a child in the prekindergarten enrichment program or if he is unsuccessful in kindergarten have him retained? (please circle one)

    Enrichment program   Retained

8. In order of importance list those skills necessary for reading readiness?

9. Should a parent have the option to have their child tested for kindergarten if the birth date is up to three months past the cut off date?

APPENDIX D
Parent Survey

Please respond to the statements written below using the following criteria:

1 - agree
2 - unsure
3 - disagree

1. If after an extensive prekindergarten screening, it was determined that your child was lacking some of the skills necessary to be successful in kindergarten, would you agree to place your child in a prekindergarten enrichment program?

    1   2   3

2. Should a child have the option to move into kindergarten at any time during their prekindergarten year if deemed ready?

    1   2   3

3. Should this option be available at every grade level (i.e., skipping grades)?

    1   2   3

4. Does your child's school provide adequate opportunities for the gifted or over-achiever?

    1   2   3

5. If your child had all the skills needed to begin reading, would you want him/her to begin reading in kindergarten?

    1   2   3

6. How long does your child's school take to determine if a child has a learning problem?

7. Would you rather have your child in the prekindergarten enrichment program or if he is unsuccessful in kindergarten have him retained? (Please circle one)

    Enrichment Program   Retained

8. In order of importance list those skills necessary for reading readiness?

9. Should a parent have the option to have their child tested for prekindergarten if the birth date is up to three months past the cut off date?

APPENDIX E

KINDERGARTEN SCREENING
AND
REGISTRATION

Each year in May the district conducts a Kindergarten Registration, Letters are mailed to all families with students eligible for kindergarten (must be five years old by December 1st). An example of this letter is included in this section. An appointment is arranged for each family. The following forms are included in the letter and parents are requested to complete them before registration: Family and Social History, Medical History, and a Physical Examination Form. In addition to these parents must have the following items with them: -proof of age (official birth certificate)

> -proof of immunization (3 DPT, 3 Polio, 2 MMR)
> -proof of guardianship (where necessary)
> -social security number

All parents are invited to an informational meeting. Here they have an opportunity to meet the staff who will be working with their children. This meeting also gives them an opportunity to ask questions about the screening process and any concerns they may have.

School Personnel Responsible for Screening

Kindergarten Teachers
Reading Specialist
School Nurse
Speech and Language Teacher
ESL Teacher
School Psychologist
Secretary

At each station a student meets with different school personnel and engages in various activities designed to determine any special services the future student may need. In addition to screening speech and language, intelligence, readiness skills, vision, and hearing, the student spends time exploring a kindergarten classroom.

All forms used during Kindergarten screening are included in this section.

FAMILY HISTORY

1. Name of pupil _____
       (Last)   (First)

2. Name of legal guardian _____
    Relationship of guardian _____

3. Is a language other than English spoken in the home?
    Yes _____ No _____ If yes, which language? _____

4. In how many homes has the child lived? Include moves within the same area.

                                                          Age of Child
    From   To   At Move

    a) _____

    b) _____

    c) _____

5. Have the parents been separated during child's life?   Yes ____ No ____
    Age of child at time _____

6. Now separated?   Yes ____ No ____

7. Divorced?   Yes ____ No ____
    With whom does the child live? _____
    Are parents remarried?   Father Yes ___ No ___
                                  Mother Yes ___ No ___

8. Foster child?   Yes ____ No ____

9. Adopted child?   Yes ____ No ____

10. Do you receive ADC assistance?   Yes ____ No ____

11. Age child began walking _____.
    Age child began talking _____

12. Name(s) and age(s) of sibling(s):   _____
                                         _____
                                         _____
                                         _____

SOCIAL HISTORY

1. Has the child attended:

   Nursery school?   Yes _____ No _____

   Head Start?   Yes _____ No _____

2. If mother works, who cares for the child?

   _____

3. Does your child frequently play with children of his/her own age?

                                      Yes _____ No _____

   If no, why not _____

   _____

   _____

4. Have there been any circumstances in your child's life that you think would help us
   understand him/her (death, divorce, major more, fire, serious accident, hospitalization)?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. List any other information which would be important for your child's teacher to know
   concerning hobbies and interests.

   _____

   _____

   _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN HOME LANGUAGE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY*

District: _____   School: _____   Class: _____

Relationship of Person Completing Survey: Mother _____   Father _____   Guardian _____

Student Identification Number: _____

Directions: Circle the correct response for each of the following questions concerning your child.

1. What language did the child learn when s/he first began to talk?   English   Spanish   _____ **
2. What language does the family speak in the home most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **
3. What language does the mother speak to her child most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **
4. What language does the father speak to his child most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **
5. What language does the child speak to his/her mother most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **
6. What language does the child speak to his/her father most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **
7. What language does your child speak to his/her brothers and sisters most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **
8. What language does your child speak to his/her friends most of the time?   English   Spanish   _____ **

_____
(Signature of Person Completing Survey)

_____
Date

MEDICAL HISTORY

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PRE-NATAL

Did mother have German Measles or other viral infection
during first three months of pregnancy?   Yes ____ No ____

CHILD'S HISTORY

Has you child ever had convulsions?   Yes ____ No ____

Is the child frequently troubled by any of the following?

Asthma	Yes ____	No ____
Colds	Yes ____	No ____
Sore Throat	Yes ____	No ____
Ear Ache	Yes ____	No ____
Allergies	Yes ____	No ____

_____

Have you ever noticed a visual difficulty in the child?   Yes ____ No ____
If so, please give date _____
Have you ever noticed a hearing difficulty in the child?   Yes ____ No ____
If so, please give date _____
Does your child wear glasses?   Yes ____ No ____
If so, what type _____
        Date _____
Please list any accidents or conditions the child has had requiring hospitalization.

_____

Is the child presently receiving medication other than
for colds or sore throat (for example, convulsions, hyperactivity,
allergy, etc.)   Yes ____ No ____
If so, please explain _____

_____

Has the child been seen by a specialist?

If so, check: Pediatrician   ____   Psychologist   ____
               Neurologist   ____   Psychiatrist   ____
               Ophthalmologist   ____   Speech Therapist   ____
               Optometrist   ____   Other _____
               Dentist   ____

APPENDIX F

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Name _____ Date of Screening _____

Birthdate _____

SUMMARY:

Language:

LA ____

CA ____

_____

	Referral:
EPT	_____
CSE	_____
Speech	_____
ESL	_____
Medical:	
Hearing	_____
Vision	_____
Immun	_____
Other	_____

BRIGANCE:

Personal Data	(10) _____
Colors	(10) _____
Picture Vocabulary	(10) _____
Vis. Discrimination	(10) _____
Vis. Motor	(10) _____
Gross Motor	(10) _____
Counting	(5) _____
Body Parts	(5) _____
Verbal Directions	(5) _____
Numerals	(10) _____
Name	(5) _____
Syntax/Fluency	(10) _____
TOTAL	(100) _____

CHECK APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTICS

_____ Exhibits self control

_____ Independent

_____ Confident

_____ Attentive
(adequate attention span)

_____ Follows directions

_____ Cooperative

_____ Responsive

_____ Distractible

_____ Hyperactive

_____ Dependent

_____ Fearful

_____ Inattentive
(short attention span)

_____ Unable to follow directions

_____ Unresponsive

Strengths: _____

_____

_____

Weaknesses: _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX G

A.

Student's Name _____

Parents/Guardian _____

Address _____

Date of

Screening _____ School/Program _____

Birth date _____ Teacher _____

Age _____ Assessor _____

B. Basic Screening Assessments

Age	Assessment Number	Skill (Circle the skill for each correct response and make notes as appropriate.)	C. Scoring Number of Correct Responses	Point Value	Student's Score
3	1A	**Personal Data Response:** Verbally gives: 1. first name 2. full name 3. age 4. address (street and mailing) 5. birth date (month and day)	x	2 Points each	/10
4&5	2A	**Color Recognition:** 1. red 2. blue 3. green 4. yellow 5. orange 6. purple 7. brown 8. black 9. pink 10. gray	x	1 Point each	/10
6	3A	**Picture Vocabulary:** Recognizes and names pictures of: 1. dog 2. cat 3. key 4. girl 5. boy 6. airplane 7. apple 8. leaf 9. cup 10. car	x	1 Point each	/10
7	4A	**Visual Discrimination-Forms and Uppercase Letters:** Visually discriminates which one of four symbols is different: 1.O 2.◻ 3.O 4.◇ 5.) 6.o 7.1 8.P 9.V 10. X	x	1 Point each	/10
8	5A	**Visual-Motor Skills:** Copies 1. ___ 2. O 3. + 4. ◻ 5. ▲	x	2 Pt. Ea,	/10
9 & 10	6A	**Gross-Motor Skills:** 1. Hops two Hops on one foot. 2. Hops two Hops on the other foot 3. Stands on one foot momentarily. 4. Stands on the other foot momentarily. 5. Stands on one foot for five seconds. 6. Stands on the other foot for five seconds. 7. Walks forward heel-to-toe four steps. 8. Walks backward toe-to-heel four steps. 9. Stands on one foot momentarily with eyes closed. 10. Stands on the other foot momentarily with eyes closed.	x	1 Pt. Ea.	/10
11	7A	**Role Counting:** Counts by rote to: (Circle all letters prior to the first error.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	x	.5 Points each	/5
12	8A	**Identifies Body Parts:** Identifies by pointing to our touching: 1. chin 2. fingernails 3. heels 4. ankles 5. jaw 6. shoulders 7. elbows 8. hips 9. wrists 10. waist	x	.5 Points each	/5
13&14	9A	**Follows Verbal Directions:** Listens to, remembers, and follows: 1. one-step direction 2. two-step direction	x	2.5 Points each	/5
15	10A	**Numeral Comprehension:** Matches quantity with numerals: 2 1 4 3 5	x	2 Pts. Ea.	/10
16	11A	**Prints Personal Data:** Prints first name Reversals: Yes _____ No _____	x	5 Pts. ea.	/5
17	12A	**Syntax and Fluency:** 1. Speech is understandable 2. Speaks in complete sentences.	x	.5 Pts. ea.	/10
		Total Score:			/100

D. Observations:

1. Handedness: Right _____ Left _____ Uncertain _____
2. Grasps pencil with: Fist _____ Fingers _____
3. Hearing appeared to be normal: Yes _____ No _____ Uncertain _____
4. Vision appeared to be normal: Yes _____ No _____ Uncertain _____
5. Record other observations below:

E. Recommendations:

	Low	Average	High
Place in: Preschool _____	Kindergarten _____	Kindergarten _____	Kindergarten _____

Other: (indicate) _____

Refer for: (indicate if needed.) _____