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Non-Traditional Middle School Programs in the Rochester Area

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NON-TRADITIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN THE ROCHESTER AREA

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop the characteristics of the non-traditional middle school programs in the Rochester area. Three programs were investigated, then compared to the literature for similarities. The programs were also compared to each other for similarities and differences.

Student parent, teacher and administrator surveys were conducted at all three programs. A considerable amount of data was collected. Students were asked: why were they in the program, what and how did they learn, their favorite way of learning and what would they like to learn more about. Parents were asked: why is your child in the program; what skills should students learn in school and how are students graded. Teacher were asked: how they became involved in the program, how do they assess students and what did their curriculum consists of. Administrators were interviewed and gave the history and a overview of their program. All surveys asked each person's feelings about their school's program.

Two of the three schools fit both models and improvements called for in the literature. The third school is also making many of the improvements called for in the literature. All of the programs investigated have strengths, and are models of an improved traditional educational system.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Educational change is a hot topic today. A week does not go by without either a newspaper article, a special report on television or an article in popular news magazines concerning problems and improvements in the current educational system.

What's the driving force behind all this attention? Why is everyone so concerned with the educational system? Since the release of the report, *A Nation at Risk (1983)*, there have been many criticisms of the public educational system. This report stated that the United States was not in a leadership position in education internationally. Government leaders, educational leaders, teachers and parents have proposed reforms for our current educational system; some have suggested radical diversions from traditional education. As a method of reaching new academic goals for students, non-traditional programs have been initiated all over the United States.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine some of the non-traditional middle school programs in the Rochester area. The research will be focusing on the following middle school programs: 1) the First Class Program at Frederick Douglass Middle School in the Rochester City School District; 2) the 8th grade program at the Odyssey School in the Greece Central School District; 3) the 8th grade program at Eastridge Junior High; and 4) the seventh grade Orange Team at the Merton Williams Middle School in the Hilton Central School District. The investigation of these programs will be carried out by means of several surveys.

Questions that were be addressed by the surveys are:

1) Are the non-traditional programs making improvements over traditional programs?

2) How do students, parents and teachers feel about their program compared to traditional education?

3) Do the programs at the different schools have similarities (specific characteristics)?

In order to obtain the data for these questions, teachers, an administrator, parents and students will be surveyed at each school. The profile of each school will then be compared to the characteristics of non-traditional programs described in the literature.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is much written in the literature about the need for change and the driving forces for change. There is also a great deal of literature on non-traditional schools at the elementary and high schools. However, there is a limited amount of literature on non-traditional programs in the middle school years. The research of literature for this thesis will be presented in four categories: the history of educational change; organizations and leaders requesting change; models and characteristics of non-traditional programs; and, middle school non-traditional programs.

Background on Educational Change

Fullan (1991) states there are three ways in which changes in educational policy come about:

- Through natural disasters, earthquakes, floods, etc.
- Through external forces such as immigration, imported technology and values
- Through internal contradictions, such as when one or more groups in a society perceive a discrepancy between educational values and outcomes affecting themselves or others in whom they have an interest

Most of the literature discussing the need for change in education fit Fullan's second and third categories.

The first major push for educational reform came from the public perception that the educational system was not providing the desired outcomes (we were lacking in technological advantage internationally). The incident sparking this push for change was the Soviet's launching of Sputnik I in 1957, the first man-made satellite to orbit the earth. Trowbridge and Bybee (1990) state that reforms and curriculum development projects motivated by this event continued for the next 15 years. This time has been called the "Golden Age" of curricular development. Fullan (1991) states that these reforms were developed by university professors (with government sponsorship) and were aimed at producing better scientists and mathematicians. He also states that these changes advocated inquiry oriented and student-centered instruction. The new math, radical revisions in the sciences, open education, and individualized instruction had their start at this time. This was a time where innovation was the mark of progress: the more innovations the better.

Brief History of Educational Change

Fullan (1991) has classified the history of educational change into four phases. The first is the adoption phase (1960's), the post-Sputnik era. The second phase is the reform implementation failure phase 1970-1977. The third is the reform implementation success phase 1978-1982. The last phase of change is called the intensification versus restructuring phase, 1983 to the present. The time periods are not exact, but distinct themes identify the phases.

Fullan states that the theme of the post Sputnik phase was change. Those developing curricula felt any change was good. With this attitude, US education was headed for trouble. During the second phase (reform implementation failure) many books were written about failures of implementing these new reforms during the early 70's. Researchers were also reporting failures. Fullan states that the innovations were being adopted without proper forethought and follow-through. Both contributed to the failures experienced during that time period.

The third phase of Fullan's history of educational change was the implementation success phase during the years 1978-82. He states there were more examples of successful reforms at this time. The lessons of the first two phases had been learned and consequently more successes were being reported. These successes were documented from different independent sources such as research, practice, staff development, and educational leaders who "provided lists of key factors and processes associated with these accomplishments" (Fullan, 1991, p. 6).

The final phase of Fullan's history of educational change is the intensification versus reconstruction phase. The event that sparked the beginning of this phase was the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report, *A Nation at Risk (1983).* Goldberg and Harvey (1983) state that this report had a huge impact on educational reform and especially the public's interest in reform. "Not since the heady days following the launching of Sputnik I has US education been accorded so much attention.... nearly five months later (after release of the report) the tumultuous reception of the report by the press and the public has yet to subside" (Goldberg and Harvey, 1983, p. 15). Further, they state, "the commission may be the first national body to insist - as the essential first premise, not simply as an afterthought - that inattention to the schools puts the very well-

being of the Nation at risk" (Goldberg and Harvey, 1983, p. 15). They also reported the issues outlined in *A Nation at Risk* that needed to be addressed. They are: 1) US students rank poorly when compared to other industrialized nations on international assessments of student achievement, are declining in their SAT scores, and are not tackling difficult math and science courses (general lack of academic rigor); 2) 23 million adult Americans are functionally illiterate; 3) teacher career ladders and salaries need to be improved; 4) students need to become lifelong learners and each needs to strive for excellence; and, 5) parents/students need to become involved in their education.

Fullan (1991) has classified the solutions to the problems described in *A Nation at Risk.* He has broken them up into two categories:

1) intensification - increased definition of curriculum; mandated textbooks, standardized tests tightly aligned with curriculum; specification of teaching and administrative methods backed up by evaluation and monitoring all serve to intensify as exactly as possible the what and how of teaching.

2) restructuring - usually involves school-based management; enhanced roles for teachers in instruction and decision-making; integration of multiple innovations; restructured time tables supporting collaborative work cultures; radical reorganization of teacher education; new roles such as mentors coaches and other teacher leadership arrangements; and revamping and developing the shared mission and goals of the school among teachers, administrators the community and sometimes students (Fullan, 1991, p. 7).

Fullan reports that there have been numerous discussions at the national level between intensification advocates and restructuring advocates. There are three important aspects reported by Fullan that are part of this present phase of educational change. One is that the new reforms are comprehensive and changes are systematic. They go from top to bottom or vice versa. The second point is that intensification and restructuring are philosophically and politically different, but we will probably see combinations of both strategies integrated into educational programs. Third, he recommends that we need to

pay attention to the process of change. We have been involved in educational change for the last 30 years and there has been a steady accumulation of knowledge about it. We should be able to rely on the base of information about how and why educational reforms succeed or fail.

Organizations/Leaders Involved in Educational Change

In the early 1990's, another push for educational reform and change came from the federal government. In April 1991, President Bush introduced America 2000. According to Howe (1991), America 2000 had four broad strategies for improving schools. The first strategy was to improve teachers and teaching, (differential pay, grants to support alternative certification and seed money to create special academies in each state for teacher education). A second strategy was choice as a method for school improvement. A third strategy was to develop a new American school that throws out the old model and starts a new one from scratch. A fourth strategy was to improve schools in national curricular standards and testing.

Another big push for change came from teachers themselves. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) delegates met in convention in the summer of 1992 (AFT cited in Annual Editions: Education 94/95, 1994). At the meeting, five tasks were identified as the top priorities for improvement in education. The first was to create a "different kind of learning institution, to replace the traditional school" (AFT cited in Annual Edition: Education 94/95, 1994, p. 42). The second task was to improve traditional schools so that they could be competitive with the schools of other industrialized countries. The third task was that both the traditional and non-traditional schools should be shaped by a national curriculum with high standards. Fourth, US

citizens should be aware that other industrialized countries spend more money supporting their children through health care and education, which is part of the reason for their success.

Don Cameron, Executive Director of the National Education Association, (cited in Annual Editions: Education 94/95, 1994) also feels changes in education are required. He is encouraged about the bottom-up approach to reforms presently going on in schools all across the US. He feels these changes are not to be confused with the many quick-fix reforms enacted in the last decade. However, he notices problems with the intensification strategy used to solve problems in education and states that "legislated prescriptions for school change have called for more of the same, more graduation requirements, more regulations, more standardized tests and more time in school" (Cameron cited in Annual Editions: Education 94/95, 1994, p. 11). Cameron feels that this kind of reform does not deal with the urgent issues of equity and excellence. He states that state mandates only touch the edges of the nation's educational problems. What is really needed is a fundamental questioning of "all the traditional assumptions of schooling, from how schools are organized to how teachers teach and students learn" (Cameron cited in Annual Editions: Education 94/95, 1994, p. 11).

In summary, reforms for education are being required from many directions. The federal government, educational leaders and teachers are all asking for changes in our traditional schools. Many suggested reforms have similarities. They are: 1) more students should graduate from high school and take more courses while in high school, especially math and science courses; 2) new non-traditional schools need to be created; 3) a form of national curriculum needs to be developed; and, 4) support for teachers with career ladders, pay and education. Since we know a great deal about educational

change, (we have been making changes since the 1960's) and where we want to go with these reforms (the reforms of the 1980's and 1990's) we should be able at this time to form a non-traditional school that is successful.

A Model of an Alternative/Non-Traditional School

London (1992) and several other educators with experience and training in alternative/non-traditional education have developed a model for high school education. Dr. London reported this work at the 11th National Community College General Education Association Conference in 1992. Cooperatively, Dr. London and his colleagues planned to submit articles describing an alternative school model to appropriate publications and, with feedback, implement a model in the creation of one program/school.

London (1992) states that an alternative school/program needs to have the following goals: 1) students should be integrally involved in the community in which they live; 2) students should be exposed to many people, places and cultures; 3) it should help students to develop a connection with Nature; 4) it should help students learn how to handle conflict situations; 5) it should help students develop their interests; 6) students should study a curriculum that emphasizes problem-solving and coping skills; 7) students should explore affective issues important to them; 8) students should develop a sense of their purpose in life and how to pursue it; 9) students should use modern technology to pursue interests, solve problems, etc.; and 10) students should be empowered to become change agents. London states that if the school accomplishes these requirements, it will have succeeded in preparing a student with most of the basic knowledge and skills necessary to function in adult life (London, 1992, p. 3-4).

In order to accomplish the above goals, Dr. London has developed five elements that together make up a "sample" curriculum/program. The first element of the curriculum is projects. Projects would be the principal instrument of learning the curriculum. Each student should complete 4-7 projects. In completing these projects, the students should be involved in the community. The goals of these projects are to:

- Strengthen the student's connection with the local community
- Show students that their efforts can have a positive impact
- Improve the student's understanding of important concepts in major academic areas
- Improve the student's proficiency in problem-solving and coping areas
- Improve the student's understanding of the effective uses of technology
- Improve the student's ability to handle conflict in situations
- Enhance the student's connection with Nature

All of these projects must include:

- At least one major academic subject
- An aspect that improves the student's connection with Nature
- The use of computers and modern technology

The second element of the curriculum is an affective element. London states that the affective element should be integrated into the four curricular elements (projects, interests, trips and individual guidance) and be part of the school schedule. Time should be specifically set aside for discussions relating to feelings and issues the students are involved in. This element should have planned, specific objectives that will help students become consistent and have healthy and effective ways of dealing with affective issues. It should also allow for "an opportunity for the students to deal with issues arising spontaneously" (London, 1992, p. 5). London states, "this component recognizes that in today's society there is a pressing need for additional instruction and guidance in this area" (affective component of the curriculum) (London, 1992, p. 6). Some alternative/non-traditional schools have 3-5 time blocks per week for discussions, counseling or group meetings to discuss feelings, emotions and conflicts.

The third curricular element is interests. All the elements of the non-traditional curriculum would provide the students with an opportunity to pursue and focus on their unique interests. A counselor would facilitate the students in developing and refining their interests. London reports that one high school requires a senior masterwork for each student. This project requires that the student work with a faculty advisor and an expert from outside the school to complete the comprehensive project of interest.

The fourth element of the alternative/non-traditional program is trips. The purpose of these trips is to expose the students to people, places and cultures in the local community with which normally the student would not have contact. London suggests two types of trips, one to deepen the student's understanding of nature, and the other to expose students to peoples and cultures. He states many alternative programs allow 2-4 weeks per year for trips. However, London feels 8 weeks would be more appropriate for this curricular goal.

The fifth element for an alternative/non-traditional program is individual guidance. Every student would have one advisor whose job it is to oversee the student's program of study. The advisor must see that students reach the school's requirements (i.e. mastering basic skills, involvement with the community, exploring interests, learning about other cultures, etc.). London recommends the advisor meet at least once a week to discuss the student's progress.

He also mentions that for this model to be effective, the size of the school/program should be 30-50 students. He summarizes the paper by stating that this

is a model and it does not go into depth on specifics. Many details need to be addressed before the model can be implemented.

What are Alternative/Non-Traditional Programs Like?

Bryant (1993) reports that alternative/non-traditional programs and schools come in different forms and defining them is difficult. Some schools have many teachers, some have only one. Some are private, some are public. Some schools devote a large amount of time to experiential education such as camping and outdoor adventure. Others have a different organization to their daily schedule when compared to traditional schools. Students might arrive for the school day at different times, or the school day may start late in the morning and extend into early evening. The organizational roles taken on by the students, teachers and administrators are quite different from those assumed in a traditional school. Teachers, for example, seek to develop personal relationships with the students. They also have a great deal of professional independence in making decisions about their curriculum and academic program. Students are often a part of the decision-making process that deals with school rules.

Dan Duke (cited in Bryant, 1993, p. 4) has referred to alternative programs as "a school accessible by choice, not assignment." Many schools are called alternative even though students are assigned to these schools, i.e. at-risk students. For the purposes of this paper the alternative/non-traditional programs discussed will be programs of student choice and in public institutions.

Bryant gives some general characteristics of alternative programs/schools that distinguish them from traditional schools. One characteristic is the alternative programs are smaller and less bureaucratic. Teachers perform many roles. They may run activities for students after school, coach sports, take students on educational trips and help with shows and performances. This allows the time for students to know their teachers better as people and not just as teachers. Teachers also spend a lot of time on affective education, working on building a relationship with the student and nurturing the student's intellectual growth.

Another characteristic is that the values which are important to the alternative school come from the community. Educators in alternative schools have a strong idea of what "the educational experience for the children should be like and (are) much more focused on the vision of schooling that they want to prevail" (Bryant, 1993, p. 10). Many schools promote a method of learning, and go out of their way to communicate it to potential customers. Pictures of students and teachers engaged in learning, descriptive information about the program, etc. are methods in which non-traditional schools carry their values to an external audience.

A third characteristic reported by Bryant is that the student's work is holistic. He states: "In a regular school, student work means working on the curriculum. In many alternative schools, students are expected to work on themselves" (Bryant, 1993, p. 11). Students in non-traditional schools are expected to experience personal growth. An advantage of a holistic approach may be that behaviors that are considered poor for

traditional settings become developmental in an alternative program setting. Bryant states:

> "Discipline must be structured differently. Students are expected to make choices that contribute to their development and growth. For many this would be in contrast to the common school where students are expected to work on socially established goals. Thus these schools are characterized by programs where everything is curricular - activities, sports, events, government. Everything planned is intentional and expected to contribute to centrally held goals and ideas" (Bryant, 1993, p. 11-12).

A fourth characteristic of an alternative program is that alternative/non-traditional programs attract students who do not assimilate well in traditional mass education. They may be bright students who desire more self direction, students who have been unable to adjust to traditional schools, or have a history of discipline problems.

In support of alternative programs Bryant states:

> "In order for educators to grow and change and provide new ways of schooling children, many of the old ways of doing business need to be challenged. The difficulty here is that many of us are so used to the conventions that have governed American education for 140 years that we cannot conceive of doing things differently..... Trying to understand what works for students requires constant attention. No system works for too long without modification. This is because no group of students remains the same for very long. Alternative schools, because they must, are institutions well used to responding to student needs. As educators seek to de-bureaucratize schools, they should find many useful ideas in America's alternative schools" (Bryant, 1993 p. 17-18).

An early example of a type of school similar to today's alternative/non-traditional programs can be found in the "open" schools of the late 60's and 70's. Fantini (1974) compares the different teaching styles found in open versus traditional programs. (See Page 16 for a comparison of "open" and traditional schools.)

In summary, alternative/non-traditional programs can be described as having the following general characteristics. They are student centered and are concerned with developing the affective and cognitive domains of the child. Time blocks are activity oriented not subject or time oriented. Students are grouped in multi-age classes. The students have a great deal of choice in their instructional/curricular path. The community is central to the school, and its values are the school's values. Students are expected to utilize the community in their school work. Lastly, the schools are smaller and more humanistic than traditional schools.

OPEN SCHOOLS	TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS
Informal environment and human interaction	Formal environment and human interaction
Activity duration is child controlled	Activity time-scheduled by teacher
Teacher structures environment and process	Teacher structures curriculum
Teacher provides guidance, facilitates learning	Teacher provides the sources of learning
Furniture type and arrangement are based on the child's workshop pattern	Furniture type and arrangement follow a standard pattern
Individual or small group activity predominates	Whole-class oriented activity predominates
Children and visitors integrated	Children and visitors segregated
Teacher-pupil interaction individualistic	Teacher dominant, child subordinate
Curriculum is planned to meet children's interests	Curriculum is planned to cover teacher's lesson plan
Emphasis on abundance of concrete materials to manipulate	Dominance to textbook
No difference between work and play	Dichotomized work and play
Learning by discovery	Learning by being taught
Grouping for several ages	Grouping for single age
Teacher and children determine pattern for the day	Teacher decides who does what and when
Child's education is the child's responsibility	Child's education is the teacher's responsibility
Emphasis on affective emotional as well as cognitive intellectual skills	Emphasis on intellectual development only
Evaluation as diagnosis	Evaluation as classification

(Fantini, 1974, p.110-111)

Non-Traditional Middle School Settings

As described previously, many non-traditional programs have a humanistic approach to their programs. Clifford (cited in Matthews, 1991) reports that intrinsic motivation decreases when external constraints such as deadlines, grades, threats, bribes and rewards are emphasized. These constraints reduce interest, creativity, hinder performance and favor passivity (Kruglancki, et al, cited in Matthews, 1991). Other studies (Deci, et al, in Matthews, 1991) show autonomous behavior, that which is self-determined, chosen and individually controlled, results in high interest, creativity, cognitive flexibility, positive attitude and persistence (Deci, et al, cited in Matthews, 1991). Matthews (1991) proposed (and later confirmed) that the students in non-traditional schools (less structured, non-graded and self-selected where students have an input in decision making and a role in the functioning of the school) would have a higher intrinsic motivation for their core subjects and general orientation toward school, than the children in a traditional school (more structured, graded, assigned). Matthews (1991) carried out her research on 8th graders. She reports that due to this humanistic environment, some core subjects made further gains than others. Large gains in motivation were found in reading, social studies and science. Gains in math and general orientation to school were not significant. What was interesting was that Gottfried (cited in Matthews, 1991) found motivation for reading normally decreased for each succeeding year in the traditional environment, and in a non-traditional setting, the student's motivation increased. To summarize, Matthew's study shows that a structured traditional environment may inhibit motivation for learning at the middle school level. She suggests replacing the traditional restrictive environment with an autonomous, encouraging environment for middle school students.

Another characteristic usually found in non-traditional middle schools is a holistic or integrated curriculum. Beane (1991) states that educators at the middle school level ask students to assimilate facts and skills "that are disjointed, unconnected and fragmented" when taught in a traditional manner (Beane, 1991, p. 9). Beane states that traditional schools construct a curriculum that is not at all like real life experiences, and doing so is an obstacle to an education that has unity and meaning. He states "genuine learning involves interaction with the environment in such a way that what we experience becomes integrated into our system of meaning" (Beane, 1991, p. 9). Hopkins also backs up this philosophy with "Integration is something that we do ourselves, it is not done for us by others" (Hopkins in Beane, 1991, p. 9). Thus we see that integrating the curriculum will give it meaning and continuity.

Beane reports that curriculum integration has two crucial aspects. They are: integration implies unity and completeness (rather than separation and fragmentation); and when integration occurs, students encounter personally meaningful questions and engage in experiences relating to those questions. He further states that when integrating the curriculum, we need to develop questions and meanings that are important to students, ones that they create rather than deriving connections across traditional subject boundaries.

Beane has a vision of what the middle school curriculum would look like. Three critical concepts make up his vision. One is that middle school education should be general, with the curriculum focused on the concerns of early adolescence and the world rather than dividing the subjects into separate concerns. The second is that the middle school curriculum should have as its primary purpose to serve the early adolescents who

attend that particular school. The third concept is to change the social concept that early adolescents should be thought less of because of their developmental stage. Statements like "hormones with feet" are demeaning and do not view early adolescents as human beings with feelings and concerns of their own.

Beane summarizes his vision with different ways to apply this middle school curriculum:

> "We have many powerful opportunities to engage students' knowledge and skill in the search for self and social meaning. We can imagine early adolescents developing and applying skills related to communication, questioning, problem-solving, computation, researching, valuing, and social action. Furthermore, they can expand their critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills and become acquainted with a rich array of facts, principles, and concepts from a wide variety of sources. In planning and carrying out such thematic units with young people, we also have the opportunity to bring to life enduring, but elusive, ideas like democracy, human dignity, and cultural diversity" (Beane, 1990 cited in Beane 1991, p. 11).

In summary, Beane feels the middle school curriculum needs to be integrated and general in order to be meaningful to the young adolescent. He feels the curriculum should have meaning for the young adolescent who attends that particular school and those developing the curriculum should view young adolescents as young adults, giving them the opportunity to investigate their questions about themselves and the world.

Summary of Literature

Driving forces for educational change are coming from many different directions: educational leaders, political leaders, teachers and parents. The history of educational change is well-documented and studied. We are now at a good point in time to utilize this

knowledge to build new programs that will meet the demands set forth by those demanding change.

The literature also describes models and examples of non-traditional programs and schools. It describes their goals and compares them to non-traditional schools of an earlier time, (the open schools of the 1970/80's). A non-traditional middle school curriculum is examined and found to be closely related to the goals described for the model non-traditional program. Consequently, we have enough information about change in education, have a driving force for change, past experience and updated models for non-traditional schools. Now is the time to put the pieces together and form a new school that will meet new demands and benefit from past mistakes.

This study investigated several non-traditional middle school programs in the Rochester area to see if they are comparable to the programs described in the literature and to see how they are reacting to the various demands for educational change.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

There are several non-traditional programs at middle schools in the Rochester area. The purpose of the study is to examine these programs to see if they have characteristics similar to those found in the literature and if they have similarities among themselves. The method of research selected was a group of surveys. Students, teachers, parents and an administrator were surveyed at each school. The goal of the surveys was to collect information that would describe the general characteristics of each school.

The first step was to refine the survey questions so they focused on obtaining the desired information. The concern was to answer the following broad questions:

- How did the program start?
- Why are students in the program?
- What is the curriculum like?
- How is assessment carried out?
- How do teachers, students and parents feel about their program?

The guidelines and information contained in Complementary Methods For Research in Education (1988) were helpful when designing the surveys. After the surveys were written, they were reviewed by experts for clarity and directness in seeking the desired information. The student, parent and teacher surveys were piloted at two

different schools. The student survey was piloted twice to reduce any confusion with survey questions.

Four different programs where chosen as the sites for the surveys. The First Class program at the Frederick Douglass Middle School in the Rochester City School District; the 8th grade program at the Odyssey School in the Greece Central School District; the 7th grade Orange Team at the Merton Williams Middle School in the Hilton Central School District; and two 8th grade teams at Eastridge Junior High in the East Irondequoit School District. After contacting and discussing the surveys with the principal or vice principal at each school, all agreed to be a site for the survey except the Orange Team at Merton Williams. The teachers on the Orange Team felt that it would not be a good site for a survey.

A random sample of 50-60 students (in each non-traditional program) were asked to complete a written student survey. The students completed the survey at school, or at home, depending on the particular school's preference. All core subject teachers in the First Class program and at Eastridge Junior High were asked to complete a teacher survey. Thirty teachers at the Odyssey School were asked to complete the teacher survey. Interviews were conducted with administrators who are responsible for the non-traditional program.

If 25-30% of the initial number of surveys were not returned, a follow up survey was distributed. A cover letter preceded the parent and teacher surveys. It explained

the purpose of the research and that the information would be used for that purpose only. A copy of the thesis was offered to both parents and teachers.

In order to triangulate the research, the same survey questions were asked of different constituents. For example, the question on student assessment (i.e. how students are graded) was asked of both parents and teachers. Questions that arose from the research were then discussed with teachers and the administrator of the school where the surveys were conducted. The program at Frederick Douglass has an extensive "First Class View Book" which explains the philosophy, curriculum and assessment for the program. This source was also used to collect information on this program. The Odyssey School also has a descriptive flyer "Welcome to Odyssey School" which describes the school beliefs. This, too, was used as an information source. When working at or visiting all three schools, observations were made. The three-sided collection of data consisted of written survey responses with the answers to a single question coming from different sources, published program descriptions, interviews and observations of the three different programs.

A period of 2-3 days was set as a return time for the parent and teacher surveys. If the surveys were not returned within that time, the teachers handling the surveys requested that the students ask their parents again to complete the survey. A second survey was sent to the parents at Douglass Middle School because of a poor response. A second survey was also sent to the teachers at the Odyssey School for the same reason. The time limit for responses was one week after each final request. At that point, the collection of data was considered complete and the analysis of the data began. The data

was analyzed by classifying the individual responses to the survey questions. Since the surveys consisted of open-ended questions, the responses were categorized into similar themes for each question. Generalizations were then formed from the data.

A final letter was sent to the different schools' administrators and teachers thanking them for their time and input.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Results

The purpose of the research was to obtain the general characteristics of the three non-traditional middle school programs in the Rochester area. The results of the student, parent, teacher and administrator surveys from the three programs are presented in this section of the chapter. The results of the surveys are presented for each program individually. The history of each program, reasons for program selection, curriculum of each program, assessment methods and feelings about each program are the sub-topics discussed.

The data is presented in the form of tables and discussed in the text. The results are reported either as the number of or percentage of responses to a particular survey question. Occasionally the results are also reported as the *percentage of students* responding to a particular survey question.

Table 1 indicates the number of surveys collected in the First Class Program at Frederick Douglass, the 8th grade program at the Odyssey School, and the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High.

At Frederick Douglass, the First Class students were surveyed in their homebase classes. Forty-six students completed surveys. The First Class program is a multi-aged setting. Fourteen sixth graders, 21 seventh graders, and 11 eighth graders completed the survey. Thirty-six parent surveys were sent home and none were returned. Twenty-five

Table 1.
The Number of Surveys Collected at Area Schools

	Student	Parent	Teacher
First Class Frederick Douglass	46	10	5
8th grade Odyssey School	110	30	5
8th grade Eastridge Jr. High	34	17	2

parent surveys were sent home a second time and 10 were returned. Eight teachers were asked to fill out teacher surveys and five were completed.

At the Odyssey school a random sample of 55 student surveys was taken from the 110 that were completed. (All of the 8th grade students were surveyed; the sample was taken from this population). This procedure was recommended by the humanities teachers at Odyssey because they felt surveying one class would not be a heterogeneous representation of the 8th grade population. The students at Odyssey were surveyed in their humanities classes, which had a class size of 55 in both classes. The parent surveys were sent home with the students who were surveyed in school. Thirty of the 110 parent surveys were returned. Thirty teacher surveys were distributed by one of the humanities teachers at a faculty meeting. Five were returned.

At Eastridge Junior High half of the 8th grade students on two different teams, (aqua and green) were asked to complete student and parent surveys. The students in one of green team's humanities classes (enrollment 55) and two of the aqua team's

language arts classes (55 students total) and their parents were asked to complete the student and parent surveys at home. Thirty-four student and seventeen parent surveys were returned to school. Eight teachers were asked to complete surveys (the four core teachers on each of the green and aqua teams). Two of these teacher surveys were returned.

The five main topics covered by the four surveys were:

- Background information (history) of the programs and how they started.
- Why are the students in the program?
- What is the curriculum like?
- How is assessment carried out?
- How do teachers, students and parents feel about their program?

Not all of the surveys collected the same information. Some surveys addressed all of the above topics; others only some of the above topics. The first topic was covered on the administrator survey. The second was covered on student and parent surveys. The third topic was covered on the student, parent, teacher and administrator surveys. The fourth was covered on the parent and teacher surveys. The fifth was covered on all of the surveys.

The First Class Program at Frederick Douglass

Description/History of the First Class Program at Frederick Douglass

The first program to be examined is the First Class program. Donna Gattelaro-Andersen was interviewed for the administrator survey. She was the curriculum coordinator at Frederick Douglass, and had been a teacher in the First Class program for four years.

Ms. Gattelaro-Andersen gave a brief history of the First Class Program. The program is in its 6th year, housed in the Frederick Douglass middle school. The program was developed by two teachers, Nancy Sundberg and Steve Daniel. They proposed the program to the School Based Planning Committee in 1989. The proposal was rejected. At that time the Rochester City School District had superintendents designated for each of the four quadrants of the city. The Northeast Superintendent liked the program and supported its start at the middle school in her quadrant, Frederick Douglass. The program began in the Fall of 1990 in the "Red House". (Douglass middle school is divided into four "houses", each with teamed teachers and its own administrator.) The original teachers (except for one) chose to be part of the program and were already teaching at Douglass. The teacher who did not initially choose the program would have been displaced to another school, so she joined the team. This particular teacher reported on her teacher survey that she was happy with her decision to join First Class. She reported experiencing a great deal of personal and professional growth as a teacher in this program.

The subject of curriculum was also discussed with Ms. Gattelaro-Andersen. She mentioned that the personal development of the students is stressed in the curriculum and work habits of First Class. Students develop is a sense of community with their teachers, and other students. Often this is accomplished through the cooperative learning groups that take place in the First Class classes. In these groups, students work together, teach each other and learn from each other. During homebase and psychology classes students work on activities that help them "get to know each other well, provide encouragement for each other, and gain a closeness akin to that of families." This is accomplished "with activities that involve multiple intelligences, and peer mediation ...." (First Class View Book 1994-95, p. 23).

The First Class curriculum also stresses real life experiences, applicable learning and transfer of knowledge. This is accomplished through the three main subject areas, Psychology, Project Group, and Math-literacy. Project Group and Math-literacy are described on page 34.

When asked what types of assessments were being used in First Class Ms. Gattelaro-Andersen reported that authentic assessment as the most common method of assessment, She reported that the teachers of First Class feel authentic assessment helps the students build their skills to higher levels. Authentic assessment is used by all First Class teachers to evaluate students' work in the three subject areas.

Ms. Gattelaro-Andersen also mentioned that several teachers in the First Class program have become the first in New York state to become National Board Certified.

Becoming certified by the National Board is a rigorous and demanding procedure, showing these teachers commitment to excellence.

When asked about the type of schedule First Class students have, Ms. Gattelaro-Andersen described a schedule that is very different from the traditional middle school. All subjects in First Class are taught in a "Block Schedule" format. The daily schedule is divided into four sections plus a 25 minute daily homebase period. Students have project group and math-literacy every day except fridays, when psychology is substituted for project group. (See appendix E for the First Class schedule). The weekly schedule consists of: 1) math-literacy which meets 5 times a week (two 43 minute periods three days a week and three 43 minute periods two days a week); 2) project group which meets 4 times a week (three 43 minute periods three times a week and two 43 minute periods once a week); 3) psychology which meets once a week (for three periods) and 4) one/two periods a day, five days a week for state requirements such as PE, health, art, music, computers, technology and home and careers. First Class students do not take a full year of a foreign language.

Each core subject math-literacy, project group, and psychology has two teachers. Each core class has 25-30 students. The students are 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. When a student leaves or graduates, a certain ratio of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students is maintained. Special education students are also included to maintain a heterogeneous grouping.

Enrollment/First Class

Student Survey Responses

The second topic covered by the surveys is how did the students become enrolled in the program, and how do new students get into the program. The student, parent and administrator surveys addressed this topic. The responses to the student survey were grouped into nine themes. See Table 2 for the categories of responses.

Three students cited parents as the ones making the decision to attend the program. Two of the three students specifically identified their mother as the parent making the decision.

Fifty-seven percent of the students in First Class did not know how they got into the program, the total of the first two responses "I don't know why I'm here", and no answer. The answer, "They put me here" is ambiguous, and could mean that these students do not know how they were placed in First Class. If this were the case, the number of students that do not know why they are in the First Class program is 64%.

Table 2.
Why students selected the First Class program/Student Survey

Response	Percentage of Total
I don't know why I'm here	37%
No answer/irrelevant answer	20%
They picked me	17%
I chose this program	11%
They put me here	6.5%
Parent chose for me	6.5%
Computer use	2%
To improve reading	2%
Use of individual work	2%

Administrator Survey Response

Ms. Gattelaro-Andersen was asked how students became enrolled in First Class. She responded that some students or parents request placement in First Class. Those who do get into the program, there is no waiting list. Others are placed in the program on the recommendation of their school counselor. First Class teachers does not recruit students into the program.

Parent Survey Responses

The parent survey also asked why their child was enrolled in First Class. Three responses cited that the elementary teacher had recommended the program. Two responses cited that the parents chose the program because it offered "many different learning styles" and it was a change from the traditional school. Another response stated her child's former teacher recommended the program because of the hands-on learning approach. Other responses were: a parent found out about the program; parents spoke with teachers and counselors to be sure child would get into the program; the parent felt the child got into the program because of "hard work and good grades"; and the parent felt the child was placed in First Class by the Board of Education. Two parents did not answer the question.

Curriculum/First Class

Student Survey Results

The third topic covered by the surveys was the curriculum. The student survey asked the students to give three examples of what they learned and how they learned it (see student surveys, appendix A). This question was analyzed in two parts. The responses to how students learned were grouped into ten different categories of learning. They were: visual, project group, verbal, guest speakers, student work, games, hands-on, math-literacy, field trips, and group work. See Table 3 for a breakdown of the specific responses.

The most frequent response for the visual learning category was "I learned from videos/movies" and with books. Students responded that they learned from videos (16 responses) and books (9 responses). Twenty-nine total responses were found in this grouping, 29% of the total number of responses for this survey question.

In the verbal category, the most frequent response was "I learned it from the teacher," with 17 out of a total of 19 responses. The verbal category received 14% of the total number of responses for this question.

Table 3.
Summary of how students learned/First Class

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses		Number of Specific Responses
Visual	29	from video/movies		16
		books-9*	maps-2*	11**
		watching teacher-1*	paintings-1*	2**
Project Group	22	project group		22
Verbal	19	from the teacher		17
		in class		2
Guest Speakers	17	guest speakers		17
Student Work	14	by reading		3
		by writing		2
		by doing projects		2
		out of a book		1
		repeating work		1
		making a book		1
		by doing work		1
		by writing an essay		1
		by studying every night		1
		by doing research		1
Games	11	games		11
Hands-On	9	teaching and learning fair		2
		using blocks		2
		from building a clock		1
		coloring-1 *	pawns-1 *	2 **
		Learned first hand-1 *	simulation-1 *	2 **
Math-literacy	5	Math-literacy		5
Field Trips	4	Field trips		4
Group Work	3	Group work		3

Note. There were 133 responses to this survey question. A total of 46 students completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

The student work category grouped together the type of work that students accomplish on their own. Reading, writing, and doing projects were the most frequent responses, with three, two and two responses respectively. The hands-on category contained 9 total responses with "I learned with blocks" and at the Teaching and Learning Fair as the most frequent responses. This category had 14 responses, 11% of the total number for this question.

The hands-on category contained 9 total responses (7% of the total) with "I learned with blocks" and at the Teaching and Learning Fair as the most frequent responses.

Project group, guest speakers, games, math-literacy, field trips, and group work were cited as ways of learning with no further breakdown from the students. See Table 3 for all other responses. Forty-six students completed this survey question. There were 133 total responses to this question.

Project group had the second largest number of responses to the "How you learned" question, (22 responses). Unfortunately the students did not describe *how* specifically they had learned from project group.

Project group contains traditional science and social studies content areas. The First Class View Book describes it as follows, "The content is taught in thematic units, where English reading, and math provide the tools for in depth study. The units are large topics, usually involving significant issues, that demand investigation across subjects and disciplines. The work in a project group is active and includes some combination of the following: research, group work, demonstrations, art and other hands on activities,

videotapes and slides, guest speakers, field trips, presentations for and by peers, interviewing, computer work, simulations, and independent projects," (First Class View Book, 1995, p 20).

Math-Literacy is a integrated course described in the First Class View Book as project-based experiences, with the math component consisting of work in "geometry and algebra, including work in the areas of patterns, measurement, computation, estimation, number systems, statistics, and probability. The literary component addresses speaking, listening, writing, and reading," (First Class View Book, 1995, p 17).

The second half to the survey question of how students learned was what they learned. What students learned was analyzed by grouping the responses into math-literacy, project group, guest speaker and miscellaneous areas. Forty-nine percent of the responses were Project Group related. Thirty percent of the responses were math-literacy related, 11% of the responses were guest speaker related and 9% of the responses fit a miscellaneous category (Table 4).

When students reported what they had learned, the project group category had the largest number of responses (62). The most frequent responses for project group were: expression through the arts (15 responses); the holocaust/W.W. II (11 responses) and slavery/underground railroad (9 responses).

The Math-literacy category had a total of 38 responses for what the students learned in class. The responses were: math games (16), math in general (10) and how to make and publish books (9).

Table 4.
Summary of what students learned/First Class

Subject Area	Specific Area	Number of responses	What students learned about	Number of Specific Responses
Project Group (62 total responses)	Expression through the Arts	15	Jacob Lawrence	5
			art	3
			different kinds of music	2
			finger weaving	2
			Shakespeare	2
			dancing	1
	World without end	11	Holocaust	7
			WW II	3
			war	1
	Underground railroad	9	slavery	7
			underground railroad	2
	National Parks	7	national parks	4
			Olympic National Pk	1
			animals	2
	Entrepreneurship	5	Starting/running/ about business	5
	Oceans	5	Sharks	3
			Capitol reef	1
			Oceans	1
	Rochistory	3	Rochester History	1
			history	1
			maps	1
	Indigenous Peoples	2	Native Americans/Indians	2
	Bug Club	2	bugs	1
			catching bugs	1
	Habitats and Ecosystems	1	habitats	1
	Rain Forests	1	Rain Forests	1
	Sister Cities	1	Sister Cities	1

Table 4 (continued):
Summary of what students learned/First Class

Math Literacy (38 total responses)	Math games	16	4-4's	8
			Product/Factor game	6
			Prime time	2
	Math (in general)	10	math	4
			equations	3
			factorization	1
			algebra	1
			hard problems	1
	Literature	10	How to make and publish books	9
			math literature	1
	Math activities	2	Four colored map	2
Guest Speakers	Guest Speakers	14	Aids	9
			Army/How to get into	2
			Police	1
			music	1
Miscellaneous Answers	Miscellaneous Answers	12	portfolios	1
			French	1
			disease	1
			erosion	1
			basketball	1
			1776 Revolution	1
			use a compass	1
			make rice krispies cookies	1
			how to make 3-D letters	1
			Chinese New Year	1
			invent a clock	1
			computer	1

Note. There was a total of 126 responses to this survey question. A total of 46 students completed this survey question.

Table 5.
Summary of what students would like to learn more about/First Class

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Geography/ Social Studies	9	slavery	2
		Chinese New Year	1
		wars	1
		World War II	1
		black history	1
		the Holocaust	1
		Martin Luther King Jr.	1
		the world/ fascinating places	1
Math	8	math	5
		4-4's	2
		harder math	1
Art	7	art	3
		music	2
		dance	1
		weaving	1
Literature	3	shakespeare	1
		writing	1
		publishing books	1
Science	3	animals	1
		sharks	1
		rain forests	1
Others	5	murderers	1
		businesses	1
		scuba diving	1
		technology	1
		personal history	1
Subtotal	36		
No/Nothing	10	no/nothing	10

Note. There was a total of 35 responses to this survey question. A total of 34 students completed this survey question.

The Guest Speaker category had a total of 14 responses for what the students learned in class. The responses in this category were: aids (9); the army (2) and the police (1). There were 126 responses from 46 students to this survey question.

When the students were asked (in the student survey) what they would like to learn more about, their responses fell into the following categories: history/social studies/geography related (26%), math related (23%), art related (20%), literature related (9%), science related (8%) and other (14%) (Table 5).

Twenty-four students wanted to learn more about something and gave 36 responses. Ten students stated they did not want to learn anything more, and 12 students did not answer the question. One student answered, "nothing, because they give you all the information you need." Two answers that cited Math stated that the students wanted to know more math so they will do well in math in high school. They stated, "they'll be doing things I don't even know," and "when I get to high school I want to know more about what they're talking about."

Students were asked what they would like to learn more about to see if they were interested in the material being presented to them, (i.e. to determine if they were developing their own interest in learning). Some students listed the same response for what they had learned and what they would like to learn more about. Thirteen of the 24 responses from students who did want to learn more fit this characteristic. Two students reported that they would like to learn more about two of the three topics they listed when asked what they had learned.

Table 6.
Summary of students' favorite way to learn/First Class

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Hands-on	11	Activities/hands-on	7
		fun way to learn	2
		exciting	1
		celebrations	1
Student Work	9	reading books/ reading	3
		hard things that make me think	1
		getting the wrong answer	1
		writing	1
		writing notes	1
		working at home	1
		doing projects	1
Computers	7	same	---
Teacher	5	from the teacher	4
		one on one with	1
Verbal	5	listening	1
		talking	1
Group work	5	same	---
Visual	3	videos	2
		watching	1
Games	2	same	---
Field Trips	1	same	---
Technology	1	same	---

Note. There was a total of 49 responses to this survey question. Forty-one students completed this survey question.

When the students were asked what was their favorite way to learn, they reported liking learning from: hands on activities (22%), student work (18%), the computer (14%), the teacher (10%), talking and listening

(10%), group work (10%), and other (15%) (Table 6). There were 49 responses to this question. Five students did not respond to the question.

This question was asked to determine if there was a correlation between how the students learned and their favorite way of learning. The researcher was also looking to see if there was a student preference in learning that was not being addressed by their current program. When the responses to "How you learned" were compared to the responses to "Your favorite way to learn" the percentage of responses in a specific category were similar in some cases (Table 7). When comparing the verbal

Table 7.
Comparison of students' favorite way to learn and how they learned/First Class

Category	Favorite way of learning Percentage of Responses	How you learned Percentage of Responses
Visual	6%	22%
Verbal	11%	14%
Teacher	11%	1%
Student Work	18%	11%
Field Trips	2%	3%
Hands On	22%	7%
Games	4%	8%
Group Work	10%	2%
Computer	14%	---
Technology	2%	---
Guest Speakers	---	13%
Project Group	---	16%
Math-literacy	---	4%

category for both questions, (your favorite way of learning and how you learned) the percentage of responses (11% and 14% respectively) were similar (Table 7). Student work, field trips, games and group work categories had similar percentages of responses to both questions (similar was defined as differences in percentages of 8% or less).

On the other hand, there were some large differences in the percentage of responses to the two questions in the visual, teacher, and hands-on categories. There was a large difference in the percentages in the visual category. Twenty-two percent of the responses to how students learned (29 responses) mentioned learning with visual methods. Six percent of the responses to students favorite way to learn (3 responses) mentioned learning with visual methods.

There was a large difference in the percentages in the teacher category. Eleven percent of the responses to students favorite way to learn mentioned teachers (5 responses), but only one percent mentioned teachers (1 responses) as the way they learned.

Students also responded liking to learn with hands-on methods with 11 responses (22% of responses), but 9 responses (7% of responses) cited hands-on as a way they learned. The difference in percentages for the hands-on category may or may not be significant.

Students preferred to learn with computers (7 responses, 14% of the total) and did not report learning with computers. A small percentage (2%) of students responded that they like to learn through technology but again there were no responses for learning with technology.

The reverse was true with guest speakers. There were no responses from students citing guest speakers as a favorite way to learn, yet it was a popular response when students reported how they learned (17 responses).

Project group and math-literacy were popular responses when students reported how they learned, but were not responses to their favorite way to learn.

Parent Survey Results

The curriculum in First Class was also addressed on the parent survey. The parents were asked what skills children should learn in school. The most common responses (83%) were in the traditional subject areas of math, reading, science, social studies, English, writing, gym, music, art, spelling, grammar, computer and basic skills. One parent stated that, "all (traditional subjects listed) should be offered so all can progress (in school)." Seventeen percent of the parent responses stated that children should learn to be responsible, be able to think, be respectful of themselves/others, like reading and math, be social, and be able to work on a team.

When asked which of these skills are students learning in First Class, 71% of the responses were math, reading, social studies, science, writing, French, spelling, art, health, industrial arts, and gym.

Twenty-nine percent of the responses indicated that *more* than the traditional curriculum was being covered. Parent statements included: my child is "learning to think"; "getting better at finding answers to his own questions .... that gets him more involved in the learning process" and "learning to be responsible". Parents also stated

their children are learning socialization, team work, about nature, about the world and content in math-literacy and project group.

Teacher Survey Results

The teacher survey asked teachers about their curriculum (see appendix C for teacher surveys). Teachers were asked what sources they used to develop the interdisciplinary curriculum. The most frequent responses were: from colleagues/team members (3), from a variety of media/TV/video (3), from trade books/articles/journals (3), teacher made materials/personal experiences/personal interests (3), libraries (2) and from community/field based resources such as the Rochester Museum and Science Center (2), Memorial Art Gallery (2), Eastman House, Historical Society and the Democrat and Chronicle (teacher editions). Other responses included: local universities, national agencies, guest speakers, artists in residence program, the internet and lessons that stress hands-on and real life lessons.

The teacher survey also asked if the curriculum was interdisciplinary. The teachers in First Class stated that they tried to integrate all subjects into what they are teaching, not just math with literacy (math-literacy) and science with social studies (project group). They stated that they integrate, "all subjects.... including art music, dance, etc.," and "I try to inject art into all areas that I teach, math, English, science and social studies." Another teacher stated that she combines, "Geography, science, social studies, language arts, math and reading" into her curriculum.

One subject that was not brought up in any of the surveys, but is part of the First Class curriculum is psychology. Psychology is described in the First Class View Book as

a class when students take time "to assess their own academic, social and personal progress so that they can make informed decisions about their own behavior and whether any changes need to be made. This is accomplished with activities that involve the analysis of learning styles, participation as peer mediators, and the development of student portfolios" (First Class View Book, 1995, p. 23). The class is made up of the same students who are in the homebase class.

Assessment/First Class

Teacher Survey Results

Assessment was addressed on both parent and teacher surveys. Teachers were asked, "What forms of assessment are you using?" All the teachers completing the surveys responded that portfolios and authentic assessment were the forms of assessment used. Tests, projects, written reports, interviews, writing samples and presentations are all part of the portfolio. One teacher stated, "(We) try to use assessment that is consistent with instruction.... as much as possible assessment is embedded in day to day instruction." The California Achievement Test, Pupil Evaluation Program, and the Pupil Competency Test as well as authentic assessment prompts from new standards are being used.

The report card for First Class is a continuum with one end designated as the "Danger Zone" and the other as "Honor Roll". Students are graded in three subject areas, project group, math-literacy, and psychology. Assessment in these three subjects is divided into four areas: Engagement (Class participation/involvement), Independence and

Self Direction, Collaboration/Working Relations/Cooperative Learning Groups, and Performance (Quality of Work).

Parent Survey Results

Parents were asked how assessment was carried out in First Class. One said that her child was graded on a continuum from danger zone to academic excellence with another parent explaining not yet, competent and excellent as ways of describing accomplishment in the different "zones". One parent stated the system, "is not set up with a lot of failures, i.e. A,B,C,D,F." Another parent stated "children are graded by the finished projects of each assignment." Of the 10 parent surveys returned, only one did not like the grading system. She stated that her daughter was doing well in project group, but poorly in math-literacy. The math-literacy teacher stated that she had made "tremendous growth" in that subject, but the parent felt the improvement was not reflected on the report card.

How do Students, Parents, and Teachers Feel About First Class?

Student Survey Results - What students like about First Class

Students were asked what they liked and disliked about their program in the student survey. There were 153 responses to what students liked about First Class. Thirty-nine students answered this survey question. (Table 8).

Sixty-five of responses to this question were related to classes and the methods of instruction. Activities, class work, project group, having fun and projects were the most popular responses to what these students like about First Class.

The other categories that students responded to in quantity were field trips with 20 responses, teachers with 20 responses and the way students learn with 19 responses. First Class students felt their teachers were nice, good, fun, helpful, and that they won't give up. The students also felt the teachers made learning fun, did special things others did not do, helped them learn more quickly and helped them learn in many different ways. These were the most numerous responses in this category.

Students also mentioned both the affective aspects and the structure of their program. They liked their "freedom and privileges", that they are listened to, that they are able to give their opinions, that they work together, and how we communicate with each other. Some students also liked having 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in the same class and that you could not flunk (a grade).

Parent Survey Results - What Parents like about First Class

Parents stated many reasons why they liked the First Class Program. The most frequent response was with regard to how the classes were taught and the curriculum. Responses such as the classes are more challenging, use different learning styles, are more interesting to their child, use a hands-on approach, and are longer than the classes in the rest of the school (Table 9).

Other things parents stated that they liked about the program were the teachers and the personal growth of their children. They stated that the teachers have "engaged him (student) in his education," and "take more time with my son". Students feel more comfortable as part of a group, are independent and responsible, love school and work very hard are responses citing personal growth. One parent summed up her positive

Table 8.
What students like about the First Class Program.

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses			Number of Specific Responses
Class/Instruction	65	Activities - 10*	Class Work - 8*	Project Group - 8*	26**
		Projects - 5*	math-literacy - 2*	Videos - 2*	9**
		have fun - 7*	parties - 4*	writing/publishing books - 2*	13**
		homebase - 2*	weird experiments - 1*		3**
		math club - 1*	math activities - 1*	math class - 1*	3**
		portfolios - 1*	homework - 1*	computer room- 1*	3**
		you can make work up - 1*	theater club - 1*	no tests - 1*	3**
		learning about Black history - 1*		less work - 1*	2**
		Psychology -1	classrooms - 1	games - 1	3**
Teachers	20	teachers are nice/good/fun/give help			17
		more than one teacher in a class			1
		won't give up			1
		help a lot			1
The way we learn/learning	19	learning is fun - 4*	learn more quickly - 2*	different ways of learning - 2*	8**
		do special things/more things/ things other don't do			3
		like the way teachers teach - 2*	interactive learning - 2*	learn more about things - 1*	5**
		don't learn from books - 1*	guest speakers - 1*	make things - 1*	3**
Field Trips	20	same			---
Friends	10	other students/ friends			10
Affective	8	people help me understand/working together			3
		we are listened to / able to give our opinion			2
		freedom and privileges			2
		some of the rules			1
		how we communicate			1
Structure related	4	Less/ combined classes			3
		6th, 7th, and 8th grades combined			1
Other	6	music - 1*	art - 1*	gym - 1*	3**
		A/B week - 1*	lunch - 1*	eat lunch in room -1*	3**

Note. There was a total of 153 responses to this question. A total of 39 students completed this survey question.
* indicates the number of responses for a specific response
** indicates a total for several different responses

feelings, "I personally feel it is much more enjoyable to the children, not to have to sit and just learn out of a textbook. The wonderful projects and field trips enhance and facilitate much learning in an untraditional way."

Teacher Survey Results - What teachers like about the program

The teachers were asked what were the strengths of the program. They responded teaching methods, team teaching and research based instruction. The most common response was teaching methods with five responses. Five teachers completed the teacher surveys with all stating this was a strength. They felt the strengths in their teaching methods were using: an interdisciplinary approach, child-centered education, teaching methods where students can make choices, different curricular areas in teaching, methods that meet the needs of diverse learning styles, and methods that utilize block scheduling. Two teachers mentioned the need for team teaching in the heterogeneous class and cited this as a strength. They stated having two teachers in the class helps the teachers meet the needs of the many students who need one-on-one attention. One teacher mentioned that the classes are inclusion classes with many needy students and that the skill levels of the special education students was very low.

Some other advantages that this program offers teachers are that they continually assess themselves and try to improve. They use current research work with the portfolio assessments and their teaching techniques are field studied and research based. When asked what research based teaching techniques the First Class teachers are using, they responded: hands-on activities, immersion, real life situations, portfolio development,

Table 9.
What parents like about the First Class Program

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses		Number of Specific Responses
Class/ Instruction	13	classes are more challenging to student		2
		integrated subjects - 1*	projects - 1*	2**
		computer class - 1*	project groups - 1*	2**
		more interesting classes -1*	better program - 1*	2**
		teachers use different styles of learning		1
		hands-on lessons - 1*	longer classes - 1*	2**
		students can work at their own speed		1
		after school programs		1
Teachers	5	available to work with students		1
		have engaged student in his education		1
		take more time with my son		1
		support the students		1
Affective	9	student likes school/ enjoys school more		5
		student loves school and works very hard		1
		student has experienced personal growth		1
		student feels more comfortable as part of a group		1
		student is more confident as part of a team		1
Field trips/ studies	3	same		---

Note. There was 30 responses to this survey question. A total of 10 parents completed the surveys.
* indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

integrated curriculum, teaching to different learning styles/multiple intelligences, authentic assessment, cooperative learning, technology, role of teacher as facilitator (rather than disseminator of information), and modelling a "teacher as a learner and practitioner" of their field of expertise.

Student Survey Results- What students do not like about First Class

Students, parents and teachers were asked for their input on what they did not like about First Class. All stated some draw-backs to the program.

The largest number of negative responses from the students were with respect to classes (length of time, and math in particular) and the amount of work they have to do (homework, hard work, so much work) (Table 10). Even though the question asked students for their dislikes about the program, some students (9) still gave positive responses. Several students (6) stated that there was not anything they did not like in the program. Two students responded that the program was fun. One stated that she liked field trips.

Parent Survey Results - What parents do not like about First Class

Parents had a few comments on draw-backs of the program. One responded that there was too much tolerance of what she considers unacceptable behavior, attitudes and language of other students. Others stated that there was more homework than traditional special education classes, that the three hour classes were too long, extra help was not offered, special education students were not getting enough help, there needs to be more emphasis on grammar, and there was a lack of teacher initiated contact. One parent also wanted to be more educated about First Class and another wanted a voice in deciding the content areas for the curriculum. All together there were nine negative responses from the and ten parents completing the survey.

Table 10.
What students don't like about the First Class Program

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Schedule	12	three periods too long	4
		long classes	4
		class/class time	3
		math-literacy too long	1
		clusters	1
Class work/homework	9	hard/so much work	6
		homework	2
		make up work at lunch	1
Field trips	3	don't like field trips	2
		don't like no field trips	1
Personalities	5	some teachers	3
		some students	2
		House administrator	2
Rules	4	bathroom rules	2
		no bathroom privileges/249	1
		rules	1
General	8	psychology on Friday not on Wednesday	1
		report cards	1
		no spanish	1
		lunch time	1
		work is messy	1
		too many fights	1
		everything	1
Positive comments	9	like everything	3
		can't think of anything/nothing	3
		like Field trips	1
		like to learn new things	1
		its fun	1

Note. There was 50 responses to this survey question. A total of 44 students answered this survey question.

Teacher Survey Results - What teachers do not like about First Class

Teachers cited the following as problems they see with the program. Two teachers cited problems with being housed in a larger school rather than the program having its own building. One said that other faculty and administrators seem to have a negative perception of them. Two teachers cited the large amount of work involved with this type of program. One specifically mentioned that the management of portfolio assessment was difficult. The difficulty of teaching mathematics in a multi-age grouping and addressing the needs of the many "needy" students who are outside of the special education component were also cited as negatives.

Student involvement in their school and program

When students were asked about what input they have into their program there were a few responses (4). They said: they have filled out papers "asking our opinion", they have "some say in project group", they "help teachers", and they help "solve problems." Outside of First Class, five students are involved in activities such as : Peer mediator, North Star Steppers, Positive Peer Power and Student Government.

Teachers cited that parents are involved in class for chaperoning field studies, special events such as teaching and learning fairs, attending celebrations, book unveiling and independent research project symposia.

When students were asked if they wanted to complete high school, 45 of 46 students responded "yes". When a asked if they wanted to go to college only 1 responded "no", while 45 said yes. When asked how many years of college they wanted to attend the responses were: 1 year (7%), 2 years (9%), 3-4 years (47%) and 5 years or more (36%).

The 8th grade program at the Odyssey School

Description/History of the 8th grade program

The second program to be investigated was the 8th grade program at the Odyssey School. Student, teacher, parent and administrator surveys were all carried out for this program. See Table 1 on page 26 for the number of responses from each survey.

The Vice Principal, Phil D'Angelo was interviewed for the administrator survey (see appendix D for sample administrator survey). The 8th grade program at Odyssey is different from the other two programs because it is housed in a totally non-traditional type school. It is the only middle/high school (grades 6-12) in the Rochester area where the entire school is of a non-traditional format.

When asked how the Odyssey school was started Mr. D'Angelo stated that the concept of the school was developed by several teachers and the vice principal (at that time Sue Roberts Meier). He stated that they were looking to start a school that was very different than the traditional middle/high school. The teachers and the vice principle liked the philosophies of the Central Park East School in New York City and used this school as a model.

One of the teachers described (on her survey) how she was involved with the start of the Odyssey school. She was a member of the Vision Committee, that carried through a request of the then superintendent John Yagielski to create a school based on current educational research. She reported that a second committee (Core Planning Committee) planned the structure of the school. She also mentioned that she was very interested in being part of this new school because of her own ideas about education and its delivery.

Mr. D'Angelo further mentioned that the teachers and administrators had planned on opening the new school in the Fall of 1994. However in 1993, the climate on the school board was positive towards the opening of a new non-traditional school. Rather than take the chance that the next school board might not approve the school, the proposal for the new school was completed in 1993 and accepted by the school board. The school opened in the Fall of 1993. The Hoover Drive school was chosen as the site for the new Odyssey school. Hoover Drive was previously a middle school.

Mr. D'Angelo reported that the faculty that started with the Odyssey school chose to do so and were already teachers at the Hoover Drive School. Five teachers responded to the teacher survey and four chose to be part of the Odyssey school. One of the humanities teachers for the 8th grade program, the teacher that described her involvement with the start of the school and two others, stated that they too chose to be part of the new school. One teacher reported choosing Odyssey because of the school's concepts and beliefs. Another chose Odyssey because of the new ways and strategies to educate students and to be part of the team approach. The humanities teacher stated that she chose Odyssey because she chose to work with a motivated group of risk takers. This teacher also stated that integrating her core subject was something she believed in strongly. The fifth teacher stated that how he became involved with Odyssey was not an applicable question for him to answer.

At present, when teaching vacancies arise positions are filled from central office selections (as must have been the case with the teacher that replied not applicable).

In 1993, the school started with sixth through ninth grades. In the 1995-96 school year, grades 6-11 were attending the Odyssey School. This year (1996-97) all middle and

high school grades levels (6-12) attend Odyssey. Of the approximately 110 students in every grade level, there are approximately ten special education students included in the 110 students in each grade.

Mr. D'Angelo reported that the Odyssey school stresses three areas of development for students at their school. One area of development is a sense of community among teachers, administrators and students. This is accomplished through home-base, lunch and connect time. Home-base meets every morning for 5 minutes. The same group meets together every day for lunch in the classroom with the home-base teacher. Connect time meets every Wednesday for approximately 40 minutes and is advisory time for students with teachers. The Connect time teacher is the primary point of contact for parents. The student to teacher ratio is approximately 15:1 during home base, lunch, and connect time.

The Odyssey School also stresses integrated learning as an area of development for students. This method of learning is important so that students are able to make connections among the traditional school subjects (math, science, English, social studies, etc.). The integrated learning takes place during the block schedule. All middle school students attend three instructional blocks a day, 1 1/2 hours each. The eighth grade students surveyed have one block of humanities (traditional social studies, English and art combined) everyday, and one block of either math or science every other day. The third block is either gym, language or home and careers, depending upon which day of the week it is. Language meets twice a week, gym and home and careers meet once a week. (See appendix F for a sample schedule for the 1996-97 school year). The

integrated block emphasizes interdisciplinary projects and making connections between traditional subjects of math, science, English, and social studies.

The third area of development for Odyssey students is the development of student interests in exploratory classes. The exploratory courses are of high interest to the students and are across the seven intelligences in their offerings. Students choose two exploratory classes for a 10 week period. One class meets on Mondays and Thursdays, the other on Tuesdays and Fridays. Exploratory time can be used for mentoring, instrumental and vocal lessons, apprenticeships, and off site experiences. Most exploratories are multi-aged, anyone in the school grades 6-11, can participate. Some examples are: concert band, chorus, community service, introduction to martial arts, sewing, chess challenge, math tricks and tips, drawing and painting, understanding the World Wide Web and magic with chemistry. (See appendix F for a list of the Fall 1995 first quarter exploratory classes).

For high school students, exploratory time can by used for enrichment or advanced classes. Advanced earth science (astronomy) and psychology are exploratories offered over a consecutive 10 week sessions. Senior study is an exploratory that is required for 11th and 12th graders. Students must pick a topic of interest, research the topic and write a paper under the supervision of a teacher/mentor. Exploratory classes meet at the end of the day (every day except Wednesday) for 40 minutes. Students have connect time on Wednesdays, opposite exploratory classes.

Enrollment/8th grade, Odyssey School

The second topic covered by the student, parent and administrator surveys was enrollment. How did the present students become enrolled in the Odyssey School 8th grade program, and how would new students get into the Odyssey School. Mr. D'Angelo responded that most of the 8th graders have been in the school for two years. They were 6th graders when the school started in 1993, but still had to apply to get in. If new students want to get into the school, they have to apply. Usually there are more applications than openings, so a lottery system chooses the students. Siblings (of students already in the school) are given first preference when they become of age to attend Odyssey.

Student Survey Results

The students were asked how they became enrolled in the 8th grade program on their survey. Their responses fell into six different categories. See Table 11.

The teaching methods used at Odyssey and on the recommendation of their parents were the most frequent responses from students when asked why they are in the 8th grade program. Some of the specific teaching methods mentioned were: exploratory classes, different teaching/learning methods, choices in the program, good school/better education, integrated learning, a non-traditional education, teachers that give extra help, the program is creative, the program is fun and computer access.

Twenty students reported that their parent(s) recommended that they attend the Odyssey school. Seven specifically cited their mother as the parent making the decision, none specifically stated the father.

Table 11.
Responses to why students are in the program/Student Survey/Odyssey

Response	Percentage of Total Responses
Teaching Methods	39 %
Parents chose for me	31 %
Friends go to school here	9 %
Smaller school/Same school (6-12)	9 %
I chose this program	6 %
Location	5 %

Parent Survey Results

When parents were asked why their child was in the Odyssey school, the following responses were reported. Some parents (15 of 30) stated that they chose the school for their child and 13 parents stated how their children were admitted to Odyssey (by first being on a waiting list, then being chosen in the lottery). Two parents stated that it took two years to be chosen in the lottery.

Ten of the thirty responses stated that the size of the school and the goals/ideas of Odyssey were the primary reasons for choosing this school. Some parents (5) responded that they had started with non-traditional education in elementary school (West Ridge and Montessori) and wanted to continue with the non-traditional format. Four parents reported that their child chose the school, one student chose the school after a field trip to Odyssey. See Table 12 for all responses.

Table 12.

Reasons for choosing Odyssey/Parent Survey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Choice	19	lottery/waiting list	13
		child chose	4
		parent chose	2
Goals/Ideas of School	10	goals and ideas	3
		objectives	1
		different school	1
		staff commitment	1
		blended classrooms	1
		child can use creative skills	1
		use different learning styles	1
		parent involved with planning of school	1
Previously attended a Non-traditional Elementary School	5	previously attended a non-traditional elementary school	5
Smaller/Community School	2	smaller/community school	2
District Boundaries	1	district boundaries	1

Note. There was a total of 37 responses to this survey question. A total of 30 parents completed this survey question.

Curriculum/ 8th grade, Odyssey School

Student Survey Results

The third topic to be investigated in each program was the curriculum. This topic was covered in the student, parent, and teacher surveys. The students were asked to state three examples of what they learned and how they learned it. The question was analyzed in two parts. The responses to how students learned were grouped into 11

different ways of learning. They are: verbal, visual, student work, group work, exploratory, guest speakers, games, hands-on, field trips, exhibits and humanities.

The verbal category had the most responses, sixty-six (28% of the total for this question). The most popular responses were I learned from the teacher, in class and class lecture. Some students (15) reported that they learned from their oral presentations (exhibits) in humanities class. Essays, maps, pictures/drawings/posters, and a oral presentation are all part of an exhibit.

The visual learning category received 26% of the total number of responses for how students learned. The most popular responses were: learning from videos, learning from reading the text, magazine articles, or books and learning from maps (exhibits).

Student work was the next most popular category of responses with 21% of the total number for this question. The essay part of the exhibit, the project part of the exhibit and the exhibits themselves were the most common responses in this category, with 12, 8 and 9 responses respectively. Projects were mentioned by five students but did not specifically say what class they were for.

The hands-on category received 8% of the responses. Hands-on in science, mass production role playing, hands-on in humanities and simulation role playing were the most frequent responses. See table 13 for other responses.

The second half to the student survey question of how students learned was what students learned. The responses for what students learned were categorized into the core subjects for 8th grade at Odyssey. They were math, science, humanities and language. Other electives such as technology, art, and home & careers are also

Table 13.

Summary of how students learned/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Verbal	66	class / lecture / teacher	43
		orals (exhibits)	15
		storytelling	5
		verbal	3
Visual	62	videos	35
		text / reading / magazine articles / books	11
		maps (exhibits)	10
		square / cut shapes from rectangle	2
		pictures	2
		picture taking (exhibits)	2
Student Work	50	essays / writing (exhibits)	12
		exhibits	9
		projects (exhibits)	8
		individual / independent work	6
		drawing	6
		projects	5
		sketch books	1
		do your own art review	1
		make your own art gallery	1
		made posters	1
Hands-On	19	science	7
		mass production / role playing	6
		humanities	2
		simulation / role playing	2
		cooking	2
Group Work	16	group work	16
Field Trips	9	field trips	9
Games	6	games	6
Exploratories	3	exploratories	3
Guest Speakers	2	guest speakers	2
Humanities Class	2	humanities class	2

Note. There was a total of 235 responses to this survey question. A total of 55 students completed this survey question.

mentioned and categorized under "other". There were two responses that cited affective learning also categorized under "other".

The humanities subject area received 70% of the total number of responses for this question. Science received 13%, math received 8% and other received 8%. The most frequent responses in humanities were: the Civil War, W.W.I, and industrialization.

In the science category the most frequent responses were: chemistry, problem solving and the scientific method. The most frequent responses for math were: algebra, math/science persons, math in general and polynomials. See Table 14 for all responses.

The student survey also asked what students would like to learn more about. Their responses fell into the following categories: history/social studies, literature, science, computers, and other. See Table 15 for specific responses. The humanities subject areas of history/social studies accounted for the majority of the responses for this survey question. Seventy-eight percent of the responses to what students would like to learn more about stated they wanted to learn more about something in humanities. History received 65% of the responses and literature 13%.

There were 40 responses to this survey question. Twenty-five students reported that they wanted to learn more about something they had already learned about. Sixteen students stated they did not want to learn something more, and 14 students did not answer the question.

This question was asked to find out what the students are interested in learning and if the material presented in class was something they would like to learn more about. Some students listed the same response for what they had learned and what they would

Table 14.

Summary of what students learned/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses		Number of Specific Responses
Humanities	159	civil war		59
		W.W. I		50
		industrialization		37
		world history -2*	homespun - 3*	5**
		government -1*	revolutionary war -2*	3**
		Iroquois indians -1*	Edgar Allen Poe -2*	3**
		demand/production of product		1
		Ann Frank		1
Science	30	chemistry -6*	atoms -3*	9**
		problem solving		5
		scientific method		4
		geology/paleontology		3
		periodic table -2*	cells/organisms -1*	3**
		molecules -2*	crystals - 1*	3**
		rain forest -1*	mechanics -1*	2**
		forces/motion		1
Math	18	algebra		4
		math/science persons		3
		math in general		3
		polynomials		3
		figure studies		1
		expanding		1
		equations		1
		scales		1
		geometry		1
Other	20	art/artists -3*	draw well -2*	5**
		Spain - food/clothing		4
		French - verbs/new French		3
		cooking -2*	wood equipment -1*	3**
		chess (exploratory) -1*	computers -1*	2**
		to respect yourself -1*	to be responsible -1*	2**
		exploratory-meets interests		1

Note. There was a total of 227 responses to this survey question. A total of 55 students completed this survey question.

*number indicates the number of responses for that specific response

**indicates a total for two separate responses

Table 15.

Summary of what students would like to learn more about/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
History / Social Studies	26	civil war	8
		W.W.I	6
		industrialization	3
		W.W.II	2
		US government	2
		slavery	1
		Gettysburg	1
		1960's	1
		wars	1
		our country	1
Literature	5	poets/Edgar Allen Poe & Walt Whitman	4
		writing poems and short stories	1
Science	3	chemistry	1
		space program	1
		earth science	1
Computers	2	computers	1
		internet	1
Other	4	math	1
		technology advancing	1
		art in the 1600's	1
		jobs and careers	1
Sub-total	40		
Nothing	16	nothing	16

Note There was a total of 56 responses to this survey question. A total of 41 students completed this survey question.

like to learn more about. Fifteen students listed at least one topic that they learned about that they would also like to learn more about. Five students reported that they would like to learn more about two of the three topics they listed when asked what they had learned.

Table 16.
Summary of student's favorite way of learning/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Visual	26	movie / video	13
		visual	7
		from pictures and drawings	4
		reading	1
		reading text	1
Group Work	14	group work	11
		peer help	3
Student Work	13	independent study	5
		designing posters	2
		research projects	2
		taking/writing notes	1
		art projects	1
		memorizing	1
		from making drawings	1
Hands-On	12	hands on	10
		making models	1
		activities	1
Kinesthetically	8	kinesthetically	5
		role playing	2
		make up a skit	1
Verbal	7	verbal	2
		listening to teachers	2
		listening to stories	1
		orals	1
		make up a song about what your learning	1
Field Trips	7	field trips	7
Computers	5	computers	5
Other	2	not reading from a book or listening to a teacher	1
		make up a symbol or abbreviation	1

Note. There was a total of 94 responses to this survey question. A total of 55 students completed this survey question.

When students were asked what their favorite way(s) to learn were, they reported liking: visual learning (28%), group work (15%), student work (14%), hands-on (13%), kinesthetically (9%), verbal (7%), field trips (7%), computers (5%) and other ways (2%) (Table 16). There were 94 responses to this question, and all students (55) answered the question (Table 16).

When the categories of the responses to the student's favorite way to learn (Table 16) are compared the categories of the responses to how they learned (Table 13), some similarities and dissimilarities were found (Table 17).

Many categories had similar percentages of responses to the survey questions covering the students favorite way to learn and how they learned. The visual (▲= 2%), student work (▲ =3%), field trip (▲ =3%), and computer categories (▲ =5%) had small differences in the percentage of responses to the two survey questions. Less than 8% difference in the percentage of responses between the students favorite way to learn and how you learned was considered small.

Students reported liking to do group work and learning from group work. There were 16 responses to learning in groups (7% of the total responses for this question) and 14 responses (15% of the total responses for this question) for group work. There may or may not be an actual difference in students learning in groups and liking to learn in groups.

When comparing the students favorite way to learn and how they learned, large differences were found in the percentage of responses in two categories. The verbal and kinesthetic/hands-on (combined) categories. Greater than a 15% difference in the percentage of responses between the two survey questions was considered large.

The verbal category for how students learned had the most responses with 28% of the total for that question (66 responses). Learning from the teacher or in class and learning from oral exhibits were the most popular responses in this category (58 responses). When asked their favorite way to learn few students reported liking to learn verbally, 7% of the total for that question (7 responses).

Table 17.
Comparison of a student's favorite way of learning and how they learned/Odyssey

Category	Favorite way of learning Percentages of Responses	How you learned Percentage of Responses
Visual	28 %	26 %
Verbal	7 %	28 %
Student Work	14 %	17 %
Field Trips	7 %	4 %
Hands-on	13 %	8 %
Kinesthetically	9 %	---
Games	---	3 %
Group Work	15 %	7 %
Computers	5 %	---
Guest Speaker	---	1 %
Humanities/ exhibits	---	5 %
Exploratory	---	1 %

The hands-on and kinesthetic categories for students' favorite way to learn were combined for valid comparison to the other programs. When combined, 22% of the total number of responses for this question mentioned hands-on as being a favorite way to

learn. When students were asked how they learned, 8% of the number of responses for that question mentioned learning with hands-on methods. However, there were 20 responses to hands-on as being a favorite way to learn and 19 responses to learning with hands-on methods. The differences in percentages may or may not be significant.

Computers are mentioned as a favorite way to learn, but not mentioned as a way students learned. The reverse was true for games, guest speakers, humanities/exhibits and exploratories. These were mentioned as ways students learned, but not as a favorite way for them to learn.

Parent Survey Results

The curriculum in the 8th grade program at Odyssey was also covered on the parent survey. Parents were asked what skills should children learn in school, and are your children learning these skills.

Most parents felt traditional subjects were important for students to learn in school. Subjects such as math, English, science, music, physical education and communication/speaking skills were some frequent responses from patents (see table 18 for others). Traditional skills made up 52% of all of the responses for this question.

Parents also felt non-traditional skills such as organization, time management, application/transfer of knowledge to every day life and technical skills were important for students to learn in school. These responses made up 16% of the responses to this question. Social skills, thinking skills and the ability to work in groups were also mentioned by parents as skills students should learn. These responses made up one third of the responses for this survey question. There was a total of 92 responses from 30 parents surveys for this question. See Table 18 for all responses.

Table 18.

Summary of what skills students should learn in school

Parent Survey/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses		Number of Specific Responses
Traditional Skills	48	traditional/basic academics math, English, science, etc.		18
		math -2*	how to study -*6	8**
		communication skills -5*	math logic/thinking-1*	6**
		athletic skills -2*	computer skills -2*	4**
		communication skills/written		3
		test taking -2*	public speaking -1*	3**
		note taking -1*	music -1*	2**
		foreign language -1*	home & careers -1*	2**
		math without a calculator		1
		be able to locate information		1
Non-traditional skills	15	organization -3*	time management -1*	4**
		apply and transfer knowledge to everyday life		3
		job skills -1*	goal setting -1*	2**
		technical skills -1*	work at own pace -1*	2**
		appreciate literature-1*	hands-on training -1*	2**
		self esteem in self and others		1
		work at other interests		1
Social Skills / Knowledge	13	social skills -3*	cultural arts -1*	4**
		respect -1*	respect -1*	2**
		socialization -1*	morals/ethics -1*	2**
		benefits of diversity		1
		patience, understanding, lover of fellow man		1
		prepare students for society		1
		prepare students for future		1
		prepare students to be on their own		1
		prepare students to be independent		1
Thinking skills	9	thinking skills -2*	higher level thinking-1*	3**
		critical thinking -2*	how to think -1*	3**
		independent thinking -1*	problem solving -2*	3**
Group Work	7	cooperative learning -2*	interpersonal -1*	3**
		team work -2*	team building -1*	3**
		work with others		

Note. There was a total of 92 responses to this survey question. A total of 30 parents completed this survey question.

*number indicates the number of responses for that specific response

**indicates a total for two separate responses

When the parents at Odyssey were asked if they felt the students were learning the topics they felt were important, 28 out of 30 responded *yes.* One responded mostly and one responded no. Two responded that they are learning *more* than what they felt was important. Two parents mentioned that exploratory classes provided additional skills for students. One stated the peer tutoring exploratory "has helped his (student's) self confidence in sharing with others." Others stated "humanities concept is very good and helps with speaking skills, research skills and artistic skills" and "my child is learning the different types of skills needed to do well in the future."

Teacher Survey Results

Teachers were also asked about curriculum for the 8th grade on the teacher survey. One core teacher (humanities) from the 8th grade program replied to the teacher survey. She noted the following sources for developing the curriculum for her classes: Gardner/Horace's school, Lazear/seven intelligences, and multiple readings on the design of rubrics and exhibitions (again mostly Gardner). She also stated that her curriculum is interdisciplinary, combining American history, language arts, art history and studio art together. When asked if there were any teaching styles or models that current research has shown as helpful for improving learning, she responded: cooperative learning, seven intelligences and exhibitions.

Surveys were also received from 3 language teachers (teaching French and Spanish). One teacher taught the 8th grade, one 7th grade and the other 9-11 grades. When asked what sources they use to develop the curriculum, 2 out of 3 mentioned the

NY State curriculum requirements. One stated that they were piloting a new text and another mentioned the use of authentic materials from the countries (France/Spain) and periodicals.

One of the language teachers mentioned that they too are using multiple intelligences and working to fulfill the communication approach of the Regents Action Plan. She also mentioned trying to integrate the second language actively with science, art and social studies.

When the language teachers were asked if they used any teaching styles that research has proven helpful, two of the three mentioned multiple intelligences and cooperative/group learning. One also mentioned remediation, and another the eclectic approach as teaching methods research has proven helpful.

One special education teacher responded to the survey. She mentioned graduate classes, research and her colleagues as sources for curriculum development. She uses the inclusive model as a method of teaching that improves learning.

Assessment/ 8th grade program, Odyssey School

Parent Survey Results

The question of how students are assessed was asked on the teacher and parent surveys. Parents were asked how their children were graded. There were four categories of responses. The parents reported their feelings about the grading system, how the

students were graded, their feelings about teacher assessments, and what students were graded on (Table 19).

Seventy-one percent of the parents mentioned liking the grading system for the 8th grade. Some said it was fair, OK, and easy to understand. Only a few parents (3) had anything negative to say about the assessment system for the 8th grade. Their comments were: sometimes there was a slow turn around on grading tests, some projects were due immediately after a school vacation, and some students lack the motivation and interest to do their best. Another problem mentioned by one parent had to do with the integrated courses. This parent was concerned that since the courses were integrated, a poor grade in one subject might bring down two grades instead of one.

Some parents described the form of the report card. The 8th grade program uses letter grades (A,B,C,D & F) and performance grades, (1,2,3,4) on its report card. The performance grade indicate the level of effort for the letter grade. One parent described what students are graded on in humanities and the other core subjects. Another mentioned liking rubrics because the students know what is expected from them from the requirements stated on the rubric.

Parents also mentioned how they appreciate the personal evaluation sheets some teachers include with the report card. They also mentioned having a good idea of how their student is doing in all areas of her work.

Parents described what their children were graded on. See Table 19 for their responses. Twenty-eight parents completed this survey question and produced 75 responses.

Table 19.

Summary of how students are graded/Parent Survey/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Feelings about grading system	24	like the system	20
		graded fairly	1
		same as traditional	1
		easy to understand	1
		system O.K.	1
How students are graded	22	Graded - A, B, C, D, and F	10
		graded on performance (1, 2, 3, 4,)	8
		like rubrics / kids know expectations	2
		Humanities grade / orals, essays, exhibition projects, sketch book	1
		other subjects / projects, homework, quizzes and exams	1
Feelings about teacher assessments	18	appreciate evaluation sheets / comments from every teacher	10
		know how student is doing in all areas / well rounded perspective of learning	4
		extra sheet / teacher breaks down grade	3
		positive reports of praise / incentive	1
Students are graded on	11	homework, tests, quizzes	3
		academic knowledge	3
		cooperation	1
		class conduct / participation	1
		understanding	1
		communication skills	1
		attitude	1

Note. There was a total of 75 responses to this survey question. A total of 28 parents completed this survey question.

Teacher Survey Results

Teachers were asked on their survey how they assess students. The humanities teacher responded that the 8th grade students (in humanities) are assessed by traditional exams, oral presentations, sketch books with transfer of information through writing and illustration and rubrics. Four other teachers, not part of the 8th grade program, also responded to the teacher survey.

Three language teachers, and one special education teacher gave input about how they assess their students. They mentioned the following: orals (speaking and listening), written work, readings, traditional testing, projects, rubrics, portfolios (limited basis), teacher observations, work sheets and games.

How do students and parents feel about the 8th grade program at Odyssey?

Student Survey Results - What students like about the 8th grade program

The students survey asked students what they liked and disliked about their program. When students were asked what they liked about the 8th grade their responses were grouped into seven categories. They were: class/instruction, teachers, teaching methods, program related, friends, physical school and affective (see Table 20).

The largest percentage of responses (35%) for what students like about the 8th grade (or Odyssey) were related to their program and school. Longer classes, less classes, class structure, Odyssey block, field trips and assemblies were the most popular responses in this category.

The class/instruction category also received a large percentage of responses to this survey question. Thirty percent of the responses mentioned specific classes as something the 8th graders liked about their program. Two thirds of the students specifically stated that they liked exploratory classes. This was the single most popular response to any of the survey questions, for all three programs. Having a longer gym class was also a popular response in this category.

Students also reported liking the different teaching methods the teachers use (9% of the responses) and the teachers themselves (9% of the responses). Thirty-five percent of all of the students cited the teaching methods used by their teachers as something they liked about 8th grade and Odyssey. Independent study, the interdisciplinary curriculum in humanities, movies/videos, group work, hands-on, and attention to individual learning were the popular responses of what students like about how their teachers teach.

Table 20.
Summary of what students like about the 8th grade at Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses		Number of Specific Responses
Program/School	67	Odyssey block -10*	field trips -8*	18**
		longer classes/less classes/class structure		13
		assemblies -5*	smaller school size -5*	10**
		sports -4*	shadows -3*	7**
		connect time -3*	study hall -1*	4**
		lunch/eat lunch in classroom		4
		not as much homework -2*	flexible schedule -1*	3**
		smaller classes -2*	difficult opportunities -1*	3**
		high school and middle school kids together		2
		more/different programs		2
		after school activities		1
Class/Instruction	58	exploratory classes -37*	longer gym class -10*	47**
		science -2*	accelerated math -2*	4**
		computers -1*	art projects -1*	2**
		home and careers -1*	no coed gym -1*	2**
		music, health, technology not required		2
		technology class/fun		1
Different teaching methods	18	independent study -4*	movies/videos -2*	6*
		group work -2*	hands-on learning -2*	4*
		interdisciplinary humanities class		3
		attention to individual learning		2
		curriculum -1*	easier work -1*	2**
		art with class work		1
Teachers	18	nice/good/caring -9*	extra help available -6*	15**
		good teacher/student relations		3
Friends	18	friends/other students -13*	kids/school are friendly -2*	15**
		kids that go to this school are nice		3
Affective	10	more freedom -3*	respect -1*	4**
		students have say/opinion in program		3
		kids willing to learn -1*	school spirit -1*	2**
		time to cope in school day		1
School (physical)	2	lockers in classroom -1*	work space -1*	2**

Note. There was a total of 191 responses to this survey question. A total of 55 students completed this survey question.
*number indicates the number of responses for that specific response
**indicates a total for two separate responses

Nine percent of the responses stated that students liked their teachers. They stated that their teachers were nice, good, caring, available for extra help, and that they felt they had *good relations* with them.

Nine percent of the responses also reported liking the other students in the 8th grade and at Odyssey. They like their friends that go to Odyssey and other students that are friendly and nice.

Five percent of the responses mentioned the affective aspects of the Odyssey school. Students feel that they have more freedom, have a say in the school, are respected, like the school spirit, like being around kids who are willing to learn, and feel they have time to cope during the day in school.

Parent Survey Results - What parents like about the 8th grade program

Parents were also asked what they liked about the Odyssey School and the 8th grade program. Some added their reasons for preferring this type or school over a traditional school. As things they like, the parent responses fit into 3 categories: characteristics of the Odyssey school\8th grade program, the teachers, and specific classes.

The largest percentage of parent responses to this question (35%) were related to the school and the 8th grade program. Seventy-three percent of the parents reported many positive aspects of the school and the effects the program has had on their children. See Table 21 for the many positive comments.

Almost half of the parents mentioned the teachers as something they liked about the 8th grade program. Responses mentioning teachers made up 35% of the total number of responses from parents for this survey question. Four parents mentioned that the teachers are always available to students before and after school, respond quickly to phone calls and make themselves available to parents.

Table 21.

Summary of what parents like about the 8th grade/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Teachers	17	always available to students before / after school	2
		respond quickly to phone calls / available for parents	2
		more communication with teachers than a traditional school	1
		teachers, principles, so caring and involved	1
		very supportive / bend over backwards	1
		motivated, creative, devoted	1
		do a great job	1
		I appreciate them	1
		long term relationships with students	1
		offer children learning in a style that suits them	1
		genuine concern about child's progress	1
		honest assessment of child's progress	1
		team of teachers is reason for students success	1
		encourage children to stretch imaginations and creative skills	1
		teachers get students to use their brains and come up with logical conclusions	1
School / Program	22	prefer Odyssey philosophy and methodology over traditional program	4
		students like school very much/much better than traditional/think program is great	3
		smaller classes	2
		vast improvement over traditional education	1
		academic grown in students	1
		program gives kids a chance to grow	1
		parent involvement in presentation / programs students put on	1
		award ceremonies - academic performance honored	1
		stay in one school for 6 years	1
		much better program, gives kids more choices	1
		always will choose a school of choice because educators choose to be there	1
		child is interested in school all of the time	1
		child has blossomed	1
		problem behaviors have disappeared	1
		more attention to students, they do not get lost in system like larger schools	1
		Copernican schedule	1
Classes	10	interdisciplinary / integrated / 90 minute classes	5
		exploratory classes - more this year	2
		90 minute humanities classes	2
		Odyssey block	1

Note. There was a total of 48 responses to this survey question. A total of 28 parents completed this survey question.

A few parents were very complimentary of the 8th grade teachers. Here are some quotes:

> "I wish to congratulate all the teachers on the 8th grade team who make school a pleasure for (my son) to attend. He seems to be enjoying Math/Science and feels challenged by its problems/experiments. And, his oral skills have undergone remarkable improvement with the number of presentations he's made to prepare and give. I only wish more children had the opportunity to learn in an environment with a smaller teacher/student ratio and the dedicated staff I see at Odyssey."
>
> "The 8th grade team/teachers are very supportive. I see the staff not only as teachers but as "cheerleaders" for my daughter and all of their students."
>
> "We are very happy with the program at Odyssey... but truly believe that the team of teachers are the reason he has been so successful. Nothing turns a student on more than a positive, supportive group of professional teachers and staff."

See Table 21 for other responses.

The 8th grade classes were also cited as something parents liked. Ten percent of the responses fell into this category. Interdisciplinary/integrated/90 minute and exploratory classes were the most frequent responses.

Student Survey Results - What students do not like about program

Students and parents were also asked what they did not like about 8th grade/Odyssey. The student responses fit into five categories: classes, teachers, lacking equipment, exploratory and other.

The largest number of responses were with regard to the 90 minute classes. Sixty-one percent of the responses to this question were related to the classes in the 8th grade. Thirty-eight percent of the students cited the length of classes as something they did not like. Sixteen percent of the students cited a short lunch as something they did not like. See Table 22 for other responses.

Some teachers and lacking materials were also mentioned by students as something they did not like. These two categories made up 15% of the responses for this survey question. Some teachers were boring, too many projects and the same teachers (for 2 years) were popular responses with respect to not liking teachers. Not enough/lacking computers, books and supplies are things that students reported needing.

In the other category, discipline, a small crowded school, no football, Odyssey block, and student senate representative's (SSR's) were single responses that students mentioned.

Parent Survey Results - What parents do not like about the 8th grade program

The parents reported a few drawbacks when asked about the things they did not like about the 8th grade program at Odyssey. There were only 9 responses to this question out of 30 parent surveys.

Two parents cited problems with respect to the community outside of the Odyssey school. One parent stated, "schools of choice should be supported better by the district". Another summed up the problem when one school in the school district is different than the rest.

Table 22.

Summary of what student's do not like about the 8th grade/Odyssey

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Classes	46	long classes	11
		short lunch	9
		90 minute class	7
		boring/classes/slow classes	5
		90 minute without break/when all lecture	3
		humanities / hard	3
		too many orals	2
		home and careers	2
		not enough hands-on	1
		8th grade shares gym with 7th	1
		too much writing, remembering	1
		class after lunch	1
Teachers	7	some boring	2
		too many projects	2
		same teachers	1
		don't take enough time to explain	1
		Mrs. Chapman	1
Lacking equipment	4	not enough computers/no good computers	2
		not enough books for everyone	1
		more $ for teachers and students for supplies	1
Exploratory	3	need new exploratory classes	1
		bad exploratory classes	1
		how exploratory classes are run	1
Other	12	kids get away with stuff / lack of discipline / disruptive	4
		small school / crowded	2
		kids tease / treat others poorly	2
		no football	1
		not enough school activities	1
		Odyssey block	1
		SSR	1

Note. There was a total of 75 responses to this survey question. A total of 49 students completed this survey question.

She states:

> "One drawback to sending your children to a non-traditional school is the opposition that sometimes comes from the rest of the community. The school board doesn't seem to really approve of the non-traditional schools. Other residents in the community sometimes think that people who have children in progressive schools, got them there through who they knew or by how affluent they are. Neither is true. Because of this, progressive schools face some biases, but I believe that as the (educational) results of this (type) way of education are seen (reported), people will become more accepting of them (non-traditional programs)."

One parent reported a lack of computers and another parent reported no technology for the whole year, as things they did not like about Odyssey. Other parents reported not liking (one response per parent): too much time in Odyssey Block and Exploratory; too few projects in math and science and too many in humanities; that Odyssey seems to be falling behind in its goals; the middle school students having classes with the high school students; and that traditional 8th graders seem to be learning more. Another parent had both a negative and positive comment in one statement:

> "The other school I have experienced is Apollo Middle School, and I never felt welcome, needed or involved there. As far as learning I saw more advanced teaching in 8th grade at Apollo. There was more attention to grammar, spelling and handwriting. My child did not however learn for life, but learned for testing."

Student Involvement with their school and program

There were a couple of other topics discussed on the student survey that concludes the information on the 8th grade program at the Odyssey School. Students

were asked how they are involved in their program, school or school government. There were 16 responses to this question (29% of the students in the sample).

Three students are "shadows". Shadows are students selected by the teachers (8th grade teachers only). They are teacher helpers, shadow teachers to meetings, have a voice in decisions, help write parent news letters, have a voice in discipline policy, and help with fund raisers. They meet with teachers two times a week.

Two students are on the exploratory committee. Two students are on the stake holders committee. The stake holders committee administers the exploratory classes.

Four students are class representatives for the student senate (SSR). These four students represent their connect time class. There are 7 SSR's representing the 8th grade. One of these seven attends the Improvement Team meetings.

The students are also very involved in sports, music and drama. There were forty-three responses to involvement with sports. One student might have mentioned more than one sport, even then, this is a lot of involvement in sports. There were sixteen responses that cited involvement in music, either chorus, concert band, orchestra, or jazz band. Two students cited that they were involved with drama and one involved with the yearbook. Of the 55 students given the survey, 40 answered this question and fifteen students did not.

When students were asked if they would like to complete high school, 89% said yes. Two students gave no response (4%) and 4 said no (7%). When asked how many years of college they wanted to attend, the responses were: 2 years (11%), 3-4 years (47%), 5 years or more (29%), for how many years their career choice required (4%),

and five students (9%) gave no answer. Fifty-five percent of the student sample were male and forty-five percent of the students were female.

When Mr. D'Angelo was asked what he felt were the advantages of this type of school, he had the following responses. There were less discipline problems with the block scheduling and smaller school. Being a community school, he felt students have more of a say in school and parents are able to interact more. Students seem to really like Exploratory classes.

When asked how the students do on the standardized tests, PCT, PET, PEP etc. Mr. D'Angelo stated since it was the second year that the school has been open it is hard to tell. Generally the results are the same. Some tests have better results, some have worse, but generally the same.

The 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High

Description/History of the 8th grade program

The third program to be investigated in this study was the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High. Student, parent, teacher, and administrator surveys were all carried out for this program. See Table 1 on page 26 for the number of responses from each survey.

The assistant principal, Ms. Stiteler, was interviewed for the administrator survey. She reported that the 8th grade program does not have a entirely non-traditional format. There are aspects of the program that are non-traditional and aspects that are traditional. All eighth graders in the East Irondequoit school district are in the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High. This is not a program of choice. For these reasons the surveys (student and parent) were modified to better fit this program.

When Ms. Stiteler was asked how the program started, she mentioned the various changes that had taken place at Eastridge Jr. High over the past few years. Approximately three years ago (1993), the traditional 8-9 period daily schedule was changed to a block type of schedule. This change was made because the teachers were interested in starting an interdisciplinary curriculum. The teachers needed extended time periods for teaching and a common period together for planning. The block schedule accommodated both of these needs. Ms. Stiteler reported that both the teachers and the students like the block schedule.

Ms. Stiteler explained how the block schedule is used at Eastridge Jr. High (see appendix G for a copy of 1995-96 eighth grade teacher schedule). The eighth grade

at Eastridge is divided into two groups, the green team and the aqua team. Each team has a different type of block schedule.

The green team is an inclusion team with three core classes: humanities (language arts and social studies), science, and math. There are two large classes (approximately 55 students in each) and a smaller class (25 students) of humanities. Both classes meet everyday for a two period block. The green team's science and math classes meet everyday for one period each. The green team has one class each of advanced science (earth science) and advanced math (geometry). The green team uses the Chicago math program in which all eighth grade students take algebra. Advanced math students take algebra in the 7th grade and geometry in the 8th grade.

The aqua team has the traditional four core subjects math, science, language arts, and social studies. This group of teachers executes its interdisciplinary curriculum by combining any two core subject classes on any day for a two period block. For example on Monday, social studies and math might be combined (two periods, two classes) and on Tuesday, science and language arts may combine for a double period with a double class. The school's schedule is arranged so that all four core subjects meet the first four periods of the day so any core subject teacher can combine classes with another.

When the teachers were asked (two returned surveys) why they chose to be part of this program, one responded that he did not choose to be part of the program, the other stated that he chose to work collaboratively with a special education teacher to improve instruction in a heterogeneous setting. Both teachers that responded to the survey were from the green team, which is an inclusion team (heterogeneous classes of

regular and special education students). The teacher who did not choose the program mentioned advantages of the program. He mentioned the extended time periods and more critical thought by students as advantages.

Ms. Stiteler mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of the 8th grade program at Eastridge. One advantage was that teachers could use their strengths and be flexible with this type of schedule. Another was that teachers could more easily address the different learning styles of students. She also mentioned that teachers are managers in this type of program, not disseminators of information.

Curriculum/8th grade program at Eastridge

Student Survey Results

The curriculum was the next topic covered on the surveys. The students were asked to give three examples of what they have learned and how they learned it. This question was analyzed in two parts. The how you learned responses were grouped into eight different categories of learning (Table 23). They are: student work, teacher, guest speaker, hands-on, visual, field trips, class work/class, and group work.

The three most popular responses were student work (44 responses), teachers (19 responses), and guest speakers (17 responses). The percentage of the total (for this question) for these three categories were 40%, 17%, and 15% respectively.

The most popular responses in the student work category were I learned from: projects (9 responses), books/novels (7 responses), and from math/social studies or grammar books (4 responses). There were 18 responses that stated that students learned

from their teachers and one student stated that the "teachers explain everything." Seventeen students stated they learned from guest speakers in their classes. See Table 23 for other responses.

The second half of the survey question for what students learned was how they learned. Their responses were categorized in the core subject areas of social studies, language arts, math and science, and affective learning. Answers that were not related to these topics were put in the "other" category (see Table 24).

The largest number of responses for how students learned was in the social studies category, with 59% of the responses. Topics in the social studies category that had the most responses were: immigration and immigrants lives (14 responses), westward expansion (13 responses), and the civil war (6 responses).

The language arts category made up 15% of all of the responses. In the language arts category, how to write a bibliography (3 responses), how to write a business letter (2 responses), and how to do a presentation (2 responses) were the most responses.

The math and the affective categories both made up 5% of the total number of responses. See Table 24 for specific responses.

Table 23.
Summary of how students learned/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Response		Number of Specific Responses
Student work	45	project -9*	packet -3*	12**
		books/novels -7*	magazine articles-3*	10**
		books- social studies, math, grammar		4
		performance task-3*	oral presentation-1	4**
		exhibit/model-2*	exhibit/museum-1*	3**
		crested museum display-1*		1
		computer -1*	writing a essay -1*	2**
		made a board game-1*	quilt -1*	2**
		lab report - did one every 2 weeks		1
		written work-1*	report -1*	2**
		class		1
		wrote poem about heritage		1
		writing about different topics		1
Teachers	19	teachers		18
		teachers explain everything		1
Guest Speakers	17	guest speakers		17
Hands-on	10	hands-on-5*	writing business letters-1*	6**
		role playing -1*	debates -1*	2**
		by experience -1*	doing experiment-1*	2**
Visual	8	movies/videos -7*	books-text -1*	8**
Field Trip	6	field trip		6
Games	5	games		
Group Work	4	group work -3**	peers -1*	4**

Note. There was a total of 114 responses to this survey question. A total of 33 students completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

Table 24.

Summary of what students learned/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Response		Number of Specific Responses
Social Studies	56	immigration/ immigrant lives		14
		westward expansion		13
		Civil War -6*	women/ reforming -2*	8**
		family tree / how to make		4
		States		3
		women/important, bibliographies		3
		women/ successful/ respect		3
		women in history		2
		New Mexico/ performance task		2
		New York State -1*	Manifest Destiny -1*	2*
		family history - 1*	governing -1*	2*
English/ Language arts	14	bibliography/how to write -3*	business letters - how to write- 2*	5**
		writing /significance of -1*	presentation/how to do- 2*	3*
		essays/ how to write-1*	poems / writing-1*	2**
		research - how to do-1*	vocabulary -1*	2**
		three point, two point perspective		1
		library computer - how to use		1
Math	5	find height of tree form shadow		2
		how to do algebra-1*	like terms -1*	2**
		slope/ how to find		1
Affective	5	be your self/ respect others/ elders		3
		forgive, don't forget -1*	groups/how to work in-1*	2*
Science	2	air takes up space -1*	how to / lab reports -1*	2**
Other	13	museum/ curator/ how they work		7
		modeling exhibits -1*	games-how to make up -1*	2**
		pretzels / how to make-1*	clothing / how to say in spanish -1*	2**
		spread sheet -how to do-1*	about success -1*	2**

Note. There was a total of 95 responses to this survey question. A total of 33 students completed this survey question.

* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.

** indicates a total for two separate responses

When students were asked what they like to learn more about, their responses were categorized into the core subject areas, other, and "nothing" (those students who specifically stated they did not want to learn anything more) (Table 25).

Table 25.
Summary of what students would like to learn more about/Eastridge 8th grade

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Response	Number of Specific Responses
History/Social Studies	14	immigration	4
		Civil War	3
		women - American/in history	3
		WW I	1
		WW II	1
		Articles	1
		west-ward expansion	1
Math	1	same	---
Literature	1	poetry	1
Music	1	same	---
Other	5	Careers and Colleges	1
		drugs and alcohol	1
		group work	1
		home economic and family	1
		what is it like in 9th grade	1
Subtotal	22		
"Nothing"	10	nothing	10

Note. There was a total of 33 responses to this survey question. A total of 22 students completed this survey question.

The social studies subject area received 64% of the responses from students who did want to learn more. Math, literature, and music each had one response, (3 responses) making up 14% of the responses from students who did want to learn more. Ten

students (30% of the students) stated there was nothing more they wanted to learn and nine students (27% of the students) did not answer this survey question.

When students were asked what their favorite way to learn was, their responses fell into the following categories: group work (32% of the total), student work (24% of the total), hands-on (21% of the total), teacher (11% of the total), computers (8% of the total, and games (5% of the total). See Table 26 for specific responses.

Comparing the responses to the students' favorite way to learn with how they learned resulted in Table 27. There were many categories where the percentage of responses to students' favorite way to learn and how they learned were similar and some had differences. A large difference in percentages was found in the student work, group work and guest speaker categories. (A large difference was defined as 15% or more).

A category where a difference was found was the student work category. This category had the most responses, 39% of the total (45 responses). Doing projects, reading books and novels, using text books and performance tasks were the popular responses in this category. When asked their favorite way to learn, there were fewer responses from students stating that they liked doing work on their own (24% of the total for this question; 9 responses).

The group work category had the largest differences in percentage of responses between the students' favorite way to learn and how they learned. Thirty percent of the responses for students' favorite way to learn were related to group work (12 responses) and 4% of the responses (4 responses) to how they learned.

Table 26.
Student's favorite way to learn/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses	Number of Specific Responses
Group work	12	work together on projects	5
		work with partners	2
		work with peers	1
		groups -get more ideas from others	1
		more productive when others depend on me	1
		performance task w/partner	1
		work in groups where students don't know each other	1
Student work	9	doing projects better than tests	3
		performance task instead of tests - learn more	1
		by reading	1
		by doing research	1
		by teaching myself	1
		studying things that interest me	1
		taking notes and testing from notes	1
Hands-on	8	activities/ hands-on	4
		doing fun things/activities to learn	2
		by experience	2
Teacher	4	teacher explains, then I do myself	1
		teacher - one on one	1
		examples	1
		teachers have fun with what they're teaching	1
Computers	3	work on computers	3
Games	2	by playing games	2

Note. There was a total of 38 responses to this survey question. A total of 33 students completed this survey question.

Table 27.
Comparison of students favorite way of learning and how they learned/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Favorite way of learning Percentages of Responses	How you learned Percentage of Responses
Visual	---	7%
Teacher	11%	17%
Student Work	24%	39%
Field Trips	---	5%
Hands-on	22%	9%
Games	5%	4%
Group Work	30%	4%
Computers	8%	---
Guest Speaker	---	15%

Guest Speakers were mentioned as a way students learned (15% of the responses) and not mentioned as a favorite way for students to learn.

The hands-on category had a 13% difference in percentages between students favorite way to learn and how they learned. However, the number of responses for both questions was 8.

The visual (▲=7%), teacher (▲=6%), field trips (▲=5%), and games (▲=1%) categories had similar percentages of responses to the two survey questions. Less than a 8% difference in the percentage of responses between the student's favorite way to learn and how they learned was considered similar.

Parent Survey Results

The curriculum in the 8th grade at Eastridge was also addressed on the parent survey. Parents were asked what skills children should learn in school. Almost half of

the responses (47%) were related to non-traditional skills. Computer skills, communication/public speaking skills, the ability to do research and study skills were the most popular responses.

Forty-three percent of the responses from parents cited traditional skills as topics students should be proficient in. Math, English, science, social studies and physical education were the most popular responses.

Parents also mentioned everyday and life skills. Getting along with people, coping skills and social skills were mentioned. These responses made up 10% of the total for this survey question (Table 28).

When the parents at Eastridge Junior High were asked if the students were learning the skills they described as important, 16 out of 17 parents stated "yes." The parent who said "no" felt students should learn how to do their taxes, learn about stocks, savings and investments, and learn skills that can help in the real world.

Teacher Survey Results

The curriculum at Eastridge was also addressed on the teacher survey. The teacher survey asked teachers if their curriculum was interdisciplinary and what source did they use to develop it. Two teachers from the green team completed surveys.

The humanities teacher stated that his curriculum is interdisciplinary and that he combines language arts and social studies. The math (algebra) teacher stated that he uses the University of Chicago School Math Project, and this curriculum applies math to many real life situations.

Table 28.

Summary of what skills students should learn in school/Parent Survey/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific response		Number of Specific Responses
Non-traditional skills	37	computer skills/science		6
		communication skills/public speaking		4
		research - how to find information		3
		study skills -2*	taxes how to do -1*	3**
		accuracy -1*	creativeness -2*	3**
		technology/technical skills		2
		organizational skills/prioritizing tasks		2
		savings/investments/stocks		2
		thinking skills/logical thinking		2
		witting/book, effective letter		2
		auto-basic care of -1*	self-esteem -1*	2**
		discipline -1*	job training -1*	2**
		hands-on/ would be most interesting for 7th & 8th graders		1
		interests/opportunities for students to pursue interests		1
		Business/how run and operate your own		1
		sign language as a second language		1
Traditional skills	34	science -3*	reading -6*	9**
		english -3*	math -5*	8**
		writing -4*	writing essays -1*	5**
		history -2*	cooking -1*	3**
		Core subjects - (reading, math, english, social studies, science)		3
		sports/PE -1*	shop -1*	2**
		world events -1*		1
		career skills/guidance toward realistic goals for student		1
Life/every day skills	8	everyday/living skills		2
		get along with all kings of people		2
		manners -1*	participation -1*	2**
		information that can help in real world		1
		life skills/coping skills, social skills, health issues		1

Note. There was a total of 79 responses to this survey question. A total of 17 parents completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

Both teachers mentioned the sources they use for their curriculum. The humanities teacher uses references on the 4MAT (learning styles) and trade journals as resources. The math teacher reported using the activities, teaching aids and MacIntosh computer software that accompanies the University of Chicago Math Project as an information source for his curriculum development.

When the teachers were asked if they used any current research to develop teaching methods, the humanities teacher replied cooperative learning, 4MAT (learning styles), constructivism and performance assessment. The math teacher mentioned cooperative learning.

Assessment/8th grade program/Eastridge Jr. High

Parent Survey Results

The question of how students are assessed was asked on teacher and parent surveys. The parents who returned surveys were on the aqua team. (No surveys were returned from parents on the green team). Parents were asked how the students were graded. These responses are summarized on Table 29.

The majority of the responses from parents reflected how student grades are reported on the report card. The 8th grade students received numerical grades for their core courses, accompanied with a letter grade that describes the level of effort for their grade. Two parents liked the grading system and one did not know how the grading system worked.

Many responses also mentioned the use of rubrics. One parent reported not knowing much about rubrics, and two reported liking them. Three parents reported rubrics are used in social studies and language arts. One parent stated:

> "I like the idea that rather than just a numeric grade with little or no comments as to why the grade is what it is, the rubrics give explanation and the areas of improvement. Rubrics seem to grade in parts rather than the whole content; the way something is written, the research involved, student's opinion. The dislike is that if this is the only method used, it is difficult to track progress as far as report card grades go."

Another parent liked the report card format. She felt it gave a parent an all-around idea of the child's progress. Seventeen parents responded to this question, giving 32 responses. See Table 29 for all responses.

Teacher Survey Results

The teachers in the 8th grade were asked how they assess students. The humanities teacher stated that he uses performance tasks and student self-evaluation to assess students. The math teacher stated he uses tests, journals, and performance tasks (using spread sheets and statexplorer).

How do Students and Parents Feel about the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High

Student Survey Results - What students like about 8th grade

The students in the 8th grade were asked what they liked and disliked about their program. Their responses were grouped into 5 categories. They were:

Table 29.

Summary of how students are graded/Parent Survey/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific response			Number of Specific Responses
Grading system	16	numerical grades			4
		letters - describe level of effort			3
		average level -1*	citizenship level -1*	GPA -1*	3**
		letters - don't indicate all areas of needed improvement			1
		interim report cards are nice			1
		report cards - like system for grading			1
		don't know about grading system			1
		fair system			1
		traditional marking system			1
Rubrics	9	rubric system			4
		language arts and social studies use rubrics			1
		language arts - likes system very well			1
		rubrics - tells students what standard is and how to improve			1
		rubric system - give explanations and of areas that need improvement			1
		rubric system - don't know system			1
Graded On	7	Behavior -1*	homework -1*	participation -1*	3**
		performance tasks -1*	test grades -1*	preparation -1*	3**
		how well student applies self			1

Note. There was a total of 32 responses to this survey question. A total of 17 parents completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

classes/instruction, affective aspects, teachers, field trips and all other responses in "other." See Table 30.

The largest percentage of responses for what students like about the 8th grade at Eastridge was the "other" category, which made up 39% of the responses. Students reported liking their friends more than any other single response (9 responses). Study hall, gym class, lunch, wellness week and dances were other popular responses.

Table 30.

Summary of what students like about 8th grade at Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses for Category	Specific Response			Number of Specific Responses
Classes/ Instruction	35	activities -4*	activities period -1*		5**
		activities that are fun -2*	content -1*		3**
		group work/in LA & SS -1*	group work -2*		3**
		work is not too hard -2*	work/harder -1*		3**
		language arts -1*	social studies -2*		3**
		homework/less than last year/not too much			3
		schedule -1*	block schedule -1*		2**
		performance tasks/no tests -1*	math -1*		2**
		classes are 80 min -1*	classes/aqua -1*		2**
		classes not 1 hour -1*	classes/like -1*		2**
		projects are better			2
		more challenging work			1
		learning - more things to learn about			1
		math & science - study different stuff			1
		auditorium presentations			1
		guest speakers			1
Affective	23	more freedom -5*	choices -1*		6**
		oldest students in jr. high			4
		more independence -2*	more trust -1*		3**
		older/feeling & being			3
		older than 7th graders/more important			2
		more responsibility			2
		treated more like adults			2
		more privileges than 7th grade			1
Teachers	5	teachers			5
Field Trips	2	field trips			2
Other	42	friends -9*	talking -1*	nothing -1*	11**
		wellness week -3*	lunch -4*		7**
		getting closer to high school -3*		dances -3*	6**
		football -1*	spirit week -2*	sports -2*	5**
		study hall -4*	computer lab -1*		5**
		foreign language -1*	gym class -4*		5**
		french -1*	technology -1*	swimming -1*	3**

Note. There was a total of 107 responses to this survey question. A total of 32 students completed this survey question.

* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.

** indicates a total for two separate responses

A number of responses (33%) for what students like about the 8th grade had to do with their classes and the instruction methods used in them. Class activities (6 responses), less homework (3 responses), and group work (3 responses) were popular answers in this category.

Students also mentioned having more responsibility and feeling more mature this year as something they liked about 8th grade. Comments such as: we have more freedom, we are the oldest students in junior high, we have more independence and responsibility were common responses. This category made up 21% of the responses for this question.

Liking the teachers and field trips were mentioned by a small number of students. They made up 5% and 2% of the responses for this question. Thirty-two students answered this question with 107 responses (Table 30).

Parent Survey Results - What parents like about the 8th grade

When parents were asked what they liked about their child's program, the majority of responses were split between liking the program, liking the instruction methods and liking the teachers (Table 31). Two parents especially liked the program and stated:

> " I like our program. I feel this is such a changing time for kids, due to age, peer pressures. Its (sic) easy for a child in a traditional system to get lost in a crowd. In our program it seems the teachers are able to get to know the kids better, work with them more, and the way their classes are scheduled their (sic) not as rushed with material."

> "I like Eastridge's program. The Aqua Cluster gives the children the best learning opportunities. Lots of hands-on experiences. Lots of presentations to class - a good learning experience in public speaking."

The parents reported liking the hands-on, the oral presentations, and the fun, interesting and challenging work the students do in class. Thirty-six percent of the parents stated the teachers were good, helpful, and know the students well.

Two parents reported liking the schedule and three reported being more involved in their child's education this year. One parent was concerned that her involvement with large projects was hurting her child's ability to work independently. Fourteen parents replied to this survey question and gave 26 responses (Table 31).

Parents were also asked if their child likes school more. Fifty-three percent of the parents (9) responded yes, 29% responded no (5) and 18% responded yes to some aspects (dances, sports and music) and no to some aspects (harder work, school is boring and grades). See table 32 for all responses.

A humanities teacher and an algebra teacher from the 8th grade program, and the vice principal, Ms. Stiteler, mentioned advantages with the 8th grade program when compared to the traditional middle school. The vice principal mentioned that the schedule gives teachers the flexibility to use their strengths and adapt to the students many different learning styles. She also mentioned teachers become managers and not disseminators of information. One teacher mentioned that students are asked to think on much higher levels and they are asked to develop their own voice (opinion). Another

Table 31.
Summary of what parents like about 8th grade when compared to traditional middle school/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Response		Number of Specific Responses
Program	9	very good program -3*	like -2*	5**
		not familiar with other programs		3
		pleased with students progress		1
Instruction	6	lots of hands-on -1*	lots of presentations (oral) -1*	2**
		more fun and challenging		1
		more interesting for student/helps student get more out program		1
		teachers use different approaches - vary daily routines so school stays interesting for students		1
		offers flexibility and opportunity to explore areas of interest in depth		1
Teachers (same as last year)	5	teachers are great -1*	same teachers OK -1*	2**
		teachers know kids better		1
		teachers make biggest difference in any program		1
		readily accessible for extra help for students		1
Schedule	2	more time in class, better than traditional		1
		schedule allows time so teachers aren't so rushed with material		1
Parental Involvement	4	parents are more involved in child's education		3
		parent concerned that parental involvement with large projects is hurting students ability to work independently		1

Note. There was 26 responses to this survey question. A total of 14 parents completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

teacher mentioned that she has "more opportunity to explore more creative strategies for learning in a dynamic setting."

The students and parents at Eastridge Jr. High were asked what they do not like about the 8th grade program. The single most popular response to this question was that students did not like the language arts and social studies summative appraisal (7

Table 32.

Summary "Does your child like school more in 8th grade?"/Parent Survey/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per category	Specific Response		Number of Specific Responses
Yes (students like school because.....)	16	school is more challenging		2
		they like aqua cluster		2
		they like am block schedule		2
		likes music/sports -1*	likes school -1*	2**
		likes teachers -1*	likes classes -1*	2**
		routine, teachers, classmates		1
		they socialize with friends and teachers		1
		students work together more		1
		teachers know students well		1
		8th grade a little easier, student knows routine		1
		likes more independence		1
No (student doesn't like school as much because...)	12	Homework/too much		3
		block schedule/too long to sit		2
		disruptiveness in class -1*	student has to work harder -1*	2**
		hard to adjust -1*	doesn't like the way kids act -1*	2**
		subjectivity of grading -1*	school is boring -1*	2**
		student has to work harder - more thinking, research, generally more challenging		1

Note. There was 28 responses to this survey question. A total of 17 parents completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

esponses). Other students reported the hard/a lot of work (3 responses), homework (5 esponses), and projects (4 responses) as something they did not like about the 8th grade. The class work/homework category made up 42% of the responses for this question Table 33).

Eleven percent of the responses (18% of the students) reported not liking the schedule. Two students reported not liking teachers. Two students reported there was not anything they did not like about the 8th grade. Thirty-three students answered the survey question and gave 55 responses (Table 33).

Few parents (3) mentioned anything negative about the 8th grade program. One was mentioned in Table 31. She felt too much involvement was needed on large projects. One parent felt when students were working on assessment (tasks) the two teachers team teaching the class had slightly different requirements for the same task. She stated the teachers need to communicate better on requirements. One other parent mentioned the students had too much homework and too many tests on the same day.

The assistant principal, Ms. Stiteler, reported one negative aspect of the 8th grade program. Some teachers and students did not like the idea of extended class time. Now that they both have done it for a few years, Ms. Stiteler reports students and teachers like it. She mentioned when the block scheduling first started, some teachers and students were resistant to the change.

Table 33.

Summary of what students don't like about 8th grade/Eastridge Jr. High

Category	Responses per Category	Specific Responses		Number of Specific Responses
Class work/ Homework	23	Language arts and Social Studies summative appraisal		7
		curriculum is harder -1*	homework -4*	5**
		projects -2*	projects/large -1*	3**
		work/a lot of -1*	work/harder, more -1*	2**
		classes are harder -1*	tests-harder -1*	2**
		too much homework		1
		projects-sometimes two at a time		1
		presentations-not in front of your friends		1
		work-correct the first time		1
Classes	11	math -4*	social studies -1*	5**
		science		3
		not enough passing time		1
		have to walk in a line in hall		1
		same teachers as last year		1
Schedule	6	block schedule		3
		schedule		2
		schedule-not having 9 regular periods		1
Teachers	2	say high school is hard		1
		are strict		1
Other	11	responsibilities -1*	aqua group -1*	2**
		gym class -1*	assignment books -1*	2**
		lunch-only have 20 min		1
		lunch/too short -1*	PET -1*	2**
		lunch split (activity/lunch)		2
		nothing		2

Note. There was 55 responses to this survey question. A total of 33 students completed this survey question.
* number indicates the number of responses for that specific response.
** indicates a total for two separate responses

Interpretation of the Data

The purpose of the research is to examine the non-traditional middle schools in the Rochester area. Three different programs were investigated, First Class at Frederick Douglass, the 8th grade program at Odyssey and the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High. Student, parent, teacher and administrator surveys were carried out at these schools and supplied a considerable amount of data. From this data the general characteristics of each program were developed. The programs were then compared to the literature for similarities to the model/aspects of non-treditional schools and fulfillment of the improvements required of traditional schools. The three programs will then be compared to each other for similar characteristics.

Program Characteristics

Characteristics of the First Class Program

The First Class program is housed in part of a traditional middle school, has approximately 120 students, and is a multi-aged grouping of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. A small number of special education students are also included in this program. The program was conceived and designed by teachers. The First Class program was initially rejected by the school based planning committee at Frederick Douglass in 1989. However, with the support of the district superintendent, the program started at Frederick Douglass in the fall of 1989.

The core subjects in First Class are completely integrated. There are no traditional math, science, English or social studies classes. Math-literacy, project group and psychology are the three core subjects. The teachers responded that they integrate *all* traditional subjects (reading, math, science, language arts, history, art, geography) into math-literacy and project group. Psychology class requires students reflect on their academic and personal growth through class activities.

All core subjects are taught in 2 or 3 period blocks (each period is 43 minutes long). All blocked classes have two teachers per 25-30 students. Gym, technology, art, home and careers are taken with the rest of the school in a traditional manner (42 minute periods, one teacher). In other words part of the day is "block scheduled" and part has traditional periods.

First Class stresses a sense of community among its students, parents and faculty. This is accomplished mainly through homebase and psychology classes, but also in group work in the other core subjects. First Class also stresses real life experiences, applicable learning and transfer of knowledge. This is accomplished in project group and math-literacy.

First Class also stresses the goal that all students work continuously toward excellence no matter what their previous academic performance has been. This program uses World Class standards and authentic assessment as methods of evaluating students. Tests, projects, written reports, interviews, writing samples and presentations are all part of a student's portfolio. The First Class report card is very different from traditional letter grades. The three core subjects are graded in 4 areas: engagement, independence,

cooperative learning, and performance. Students are rated in these four areas on a continuum, at one end is the Danger Zone, the other the Honor Roll.

The students in First Class take the traditional standardized tests as do the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in the rest of the school (the California Achievement Test, Pupil Evaluation Program, and Pupil Competency Test).

Some of the students (and/or their parents) chose the program (17%), but the majority of the students did not know why they were in the program (more than 2/3 of the students).

The student and parent surveys asked what aspects about First Class did they like and dislike. When asked what they liked about First Class, students cited topics that were class/instruction related more than any other. Class work/activities, project group, projects, having fun and parties were some of the most common responses. The way students learn in class was also frequently cited by the students as something they liked. Learning is fun, I learn more quickly, I like the different ways we learn, I learn more about things, I like the way the teachers teach us, and I like that we do not learn from books are some others.

Teachers that are nice, fun, willing to give help, and won't give up, were responses citing teachers as an aspect of First Class that students liked. Half of the students reported liking the field trips. Students mentioned the affective part of their program as something they liked. They have more freedom and privileges, have an opinion and are listened to, like working together and like how students (and teachers) communicate with each other in their program. Some students (three responses, 2% of the total number of

responses) liked the longer/integrated classes and one student mentioned liking the multi-aged setting.

Most of the parents (7 of 10) had something positive to say about the classes/instruction in First Class. They liked that the classes were: more challenging, more interesting, were longer and integrated, used different learning styles for instruction, and used projects and project group for learning the curriculum. Some parents (6 of 10) also felt it was a better middle school program than the traditional programs. Two parents had positive comments to say about the First Class teachers. They felt these teachers spend more time with the students, are available to help students, have engaged their child in his education, and that teachers support their students. Five parents (50%) stated their child likes school more in First Class than in elementary or traditional middle school.

The teacher survey also asked teachers what they liked about First Class. Teachers reported team teaching, teaching methods and research based instruction techniques as reasons why they like teaching in this program. Teaching methods that they specifically mentioned were: different learning styles, student choice, interdisciplinary instruction, and using different curricula areas. Colleagues (as a resource) were cited as one of the ways teachers develop the curriculum. Team teaching allowed teachers to develop curriculum together. Another advantage of team teaching was that new teachers have the opportunity to team teach with experienced professional teachers.

In First Class students, parents and teachers have reported many positive characteristics of this program. Comments from parents stated that children were more interested, engaged and challenged in school. Students stated that they liked the way they learn and the way their classes are run. Both students and parents stated many positive characteristics of this program's teachers.

Characteristics of the 8th grade program at the Odyssey School

The 8th grade program at the Odyssey School is housed in an entirely non-traditional school. The school contained grades 6-11 in the 1995-96 school year, and this year, (1996-97 school year) it will contain grades 6-12. The Odyssey School was started by teachers and an administrator. They chose to start the school a year sooner than originally planned, due to school board support for the school. The school started in the fall of the 1993-94 school year.

The Odyssey School has a "block" type schedule. There are three instructional blocks everyday, 90 minute (2 period) each. Humanities meets everyday for one block period, math and science every other day for a one block period. The third block alternates (depending on the day) between language, home and careers, and gym. Also included in the school day are exploratory classes. These classes meet 4 times a week and are 40 minute periods. Exploratory classes enable students to investigate their individual interests. Exploratory classes are also used for advanced classes or enrichment (usually at the high school level). The remaining 40 minute block that meets once a week, is connect time. This is advisory time homebase teachers have with their students.

The Odyssey School stresses three areas of development for their students. Developing a sense of community within the school, developing connections in learning through an integrated curriculum, and developing interests in exploratory classes.

Odyssey develops a sense of community within their school by setting aside time for small groups to get to know each other. Students and their homebase teacher eat luncha nd have connect time together. This helps them build relationships with each other and builds the community atmosphere of the school. A community school atmosphere was also apparent at assemblies with the 8th grade class or the entire school. In their surveys, students reported liking these assemblies and the "school spirit" in their school.

The second area of development for Odyssey students is developing connections in learning with an integrated curriculum. The 8th grade program has one entirely integrated course, humanities, which is a combination of social studies, language arts and art. Math, science and language (French/Spanish) are taught as separate subjects. However, the school as a whole stresses integrated learning. For example, the students mentioned doing reports on math and science persons as a single response. Consequently this project was completed in either math or science class, but not in a combined class such as humanities. (I did not get survey responses from the math and science teachers, so I do not know how interdisciplinary their curriculum is.)

Humanities classes are twice the size of the math or science classes. Each humanities class had 55 students, one social studies teacher, one English teacher and one

The third area of development for students at Odyssey is the development of interests. Students investigate their interests during exploratory classes. They meet 4 days a week, for 40 minutes a day. Topics that are interesting to students are offered in exploratory classes. Topics such as computers (World Wide Web), math (tricks), chemistry (magic with), drawing and painting, music (band and chorus), and martial arts are some examples of these classes. (See appendix F for Fall '95 exploratory class offerings.)

The 8th grade program at Odyssey has a traditional style report card with letter grades. The letter grades are paired with numerical effort grades which reflect the amount of effort for the letter grade. The parents reported that most teachers include a comment page with the grades describing to parents how the grades were arrived at. Parents reported being well informed about their childrens progress and are pleased with the grading system.

Students and the parents both where asked why they chose the Odyssey School. Students reported the teaching methods and on the reccomendaions of their parents as reasons why they chose this school. Parents reported liking the goals and ideas of the school, liking that Odyssey was a smaller school, and that they had previous experience with non-traditional schools as reasons for choosing Odyssey for their child. The parents also described the procedure for enrolling in the school. All students had to apply to the school. A lottery system then selected the students. Many parents reported that the students had to wait 1 or 2 years before being chosen in the lottery.

Students reported liking many aspects of their school. Two-thirds of the students specifically mentioned the exploratory classes as one of the favorite components of their program. Exploratory classes were the single most popular response from the surveys from all three programs investigated in this study. These classes were truly liked by the Odyssey students. Students also cited liking specific things about their program: the longer classes, Odyssey Block, the field trips, being a smaller school, the assemblies, as well as their teachers and their teaching methods.

Eighteen percent of the students mentioned liking the affective climate in 8th grade. They liked having more freedom, liked having a say in the program, liked being with kids that want to learn, liked the school spirit and liked having time during the day to cope.

Thirty-three percent of the students in the 8th grade reported that they liked their teachers. They stated that their teachers were nice, caring, available and that they had good relationships with them.

Seventy three percent of the parents cited topics relating to the philosophies of the Odyssey School as reasons for liking the program. Parents mentioned liking Odyssey's philosophies and methodologies, that their children like school more and the classes are smaller, as well as many singular comments citing growth and improvement of their children. The teachers also received many positive comments from the parents. Fifty-two percent of the parents praised the teachers for their availability, concern about the students, ability to get students to be creative/imaginative, and are motivated, dedicated (Table 21).

The vice principal also sees many advantages of the non-traditional school. Mr. D'Angelo reported he liked having less discipline problems at Odyssey. He feels two factors contributes to this, the block schedule and Odyssey being a smaller school. He also likes the way the students and parents are involved in and a part of the school community. Mr. D'Angelo shares the students' excitement with the exploratory classes.

Students and parents reported some negative aspects of their non-traditional program. Some students (38%) mentioned the length of the classes as an aspect of the Odyssey School that they did not like. Teachers that are boring (2 responses), the same teachers for 7th and 8th grade (1 response), some teachers that do not explain well enough (1 response) and not liking one specific teacher (1 response) were mentioned as aspects students did not like.

Thirteen percent of students mentioned lacking supplies and equipment as something about the 8th grade program that they did not like. Lack of discipline and disruptiveness was mentioned by 4 students. Parents mentioned opposition and a lack of support because their school is different from other schools in the district.

The students in the 8th grade program at Odyssey are very involved in their school and have input into their program. Twenty-nine percent of the students are involved with input into the 8th grade program. Three students are "shadows". Shadows are students selected by the teacher to: help the teacher, have a voice in decisions, help with parent newsletter and help with fund raisers. The students in the 8th grade are also involved in sports, music and drama.

Most of the students (89%) want to go to college. Forty-seven percent want to go for 3-4 years and twenty-nine percent for 5 years or more.

Characteristics of the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High

The 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High was also investigated in this study. The 8th grade is divided into two groups, the green teamand the aqua team. The students and teachers in the aqua team have been together for two years. (i.e. the 7th grade teachers have stayed with their students into the 8th grade.) The 8th grade has approximately 225 students.

This program was started by teachers who wanted to teach their subjects in an interdisciplinary manner. In order to do this, they needed a flexible time schedule so a block schedule was adopted. The interdisciplinary class work and block scheduling started approximately three years ago.

The two different clusters both have interdisciplinary subjects, but each accomplishes them in a different way. The green cluster has math, science, and humanities as their core course. Humanities is language arts and social studies combined. Students attend humanities for two periods (approximately 80 minutes) every day. There are approximately 55 students and two teahcers in this class. The other classes (science and math) are not block scheduled and have 25-30 students in a class and one teacher.

The aqua cluster has all traditional four core subjects, math, science, language arts and social students. However, the schedule is set up so any of the core classes can block

together (at the teachers' discretion) any day of the week (see Appendix G). The teachers on one day may combine science and social studies (two periods, 55 students) and on another day social studies and language arts. Students from this cluster reported never having a "normal" nine period schedule.

All 8th grade students at Eastridge have part of their day block scheduled and part traditional 40 minute periods. The 8th grade program does not have time during the day or week specifically set aside for work on affective issues. The aqua team does have a period at the end of the day (9th period) where any 8th grade student (aqua or green) can receive remediation. Students with homework questions or with needs in any academic area can get help at this time.

Most students in the aqua cluster were placed there as 7th graders. At the start of the 8th grade, the parents could have moved their child to the green cluster if they did not want to stay in aqua. However, if students wanted to take advanced math (geometry) or advanced science (earth science), students needed to move to the green cluster. Students who were not in aqua cluster or chose to leave it were placed in the green cluster.

The students in the aqua and green clusters have a traditional report card with numerical grades (85, 90, etc.). The numerical grades are accompanied by letters that describe the level of effort and areas that need improvement. Language arts, social studies, and humanities classes use rubrics to assess students' work. The students in the aqua team are graded on tests, participation, projects, homework, performance tasks, and preparation. The green team's humanities class is graded on performance assessments (tasks) and student self-evaluations.

When students were asked what they liked about their 8th grade program, they responded liking their class activities, projects, group work and the schedule. They also felt they were given more freedom, choices, trust, responsibility, and that they were generally treated more like adults. Five students reported their teachers as something about the 8th grade program they liked.

Parents responding to the survey liked the 8th grade program because of the teachers, their teaching methods, the school schedule and that they (parents) are more involved in their children's education. Sixty percent of these parents stated their children like school more in the 8th grade.

A humanities teacher, an algebra teacher and the vice principal, mentioned advantages with the 8th grade program when compared to the traditional middle school. The vice principal mentioned that the schedule gives teachers the flexibility to use their strengths and adapt to the students many different learning styles. She also mentioned teachers become managers and not disseminators of information. One teacher mentioned that students are asked to think on much higher levels and they are asked to develop their own voice (opinion). Another teacher mentioned that she has "more opportunity to explore more creative strategies for learning in a dynamic setting."

Students, parents, teachers, and the administrator also reported negative aspects of the program. Twenty-one percent of the students surveyed mentioned LASSA (language arts and social studies summative appraisal) as something they did not like. Eighteen percent of the students mentioned not liking the schedule. Some students (18%) mentioned specific classes and homework as something they did not like about

8th grade. Twelve percent mentioned not liking projects. Others (9%) mentioned that the work was hard, there was a lot of it, or it had to be right the first time.

Only a few parents had anything negative to say about the 8th grade at Eastridge. One parent mentioned too much homework and too many tests on the same day as a problem. Another parent preferred the traditional 40 minute classes. Another parent felt too much parental help was needed to complete large tasks and projects for this program and this was a problem because she wanted her daughter to be self-sufficient.

The assistant principal mentioned the resistance to change when block scheduling was decided on. Students and teachers did not think the block scheduling would be easy to do. Now that they have done it for a few years the teachers and students both like it.

Comparison to Literature

Comparison to Literature First Class Program

When the First Class program is compared to the different phases of educational change previously described, this particular program fits the present phase of change called "restructuring". (See Chapter 2 for Fullan's description of the restructuring phase.) Many characteristics of First Class fit Fullan's description. Teachers have enhanced roles in this program. They teach homebase class, psychology class, after school clubs, supervise field trips and develop the curriculum that they use. They also integrate many innovations into the program. They use community resources, educational research, and each other to develop curriculum. The time schedule for the students is modified to accommodate a collaborative work (block schedule). Together the teachers have developed shared goals of the program and thoroughly described them in the First Class

View Book. The First Class program fits 4 of the 5 descriptions that Fullan has described for a school in the "restructuring" phase of educational change.

The First Class program also has characteristics that match London's model of a non-traditional program/school. Much of the curriculum involves project work and presentations. London's model calls for projects to be the main vehicle of learning. London's model has an affective component, First Class addresses this need in psychology class, homebase and in the core classes. London's model calls for students to develop their interests. Project groups offer very diverse and relevant subjects to study. Students are able to choose which ones they would like to take. The surveys reported fifty-two percent of the students wanted to learn more about something they had learned in class. They have become interested in these topics. The last element of London's model is field trips. First Class takes many field trips. Every project group has at least two field trips and sometimes more. The Davis Mountain field trip is three days long and is part of the math-literacy class. When students were asked what they liked about First Class, 50% of the students stated that they specifically liked the field trips. A small percentage of the students reported field trips as how they learned (7%) and a favorite way of learning (2%).

Bryant outlined four typical characteristics of a non-traditional school/programs. These schools are smaller and less bureaucratic, publicize descriptive information about their program, have a curriculum that is holistic, integrating affective and academic work, and attract students that normally do not do well in traditional schools. First Class fits the first three of these characteristics. It is smaller than a typical school, it had 120

students. The entire middle school (Frederick Douglass) has approximately 1,100 students. The First Class View Book is a very detailed booklet describing all aspects of the program. The teachers of First Class stated that all students work is integrated, and students are expected to grow academically and socially. All three of these characteristics fit with Bryant's characteristics of a non-traditional program. However, since most students do not select this program (most are placed there), the fourth characteristic of Bryant's does not fit the First Class program.

First Class also has many characteristics of the "Open Schools" of the 70's. These are:

- teachers structure environment and process
- teachers provide guidance, facilitate learning
- individual or small group activity predominates
- curriculum is planned to meet children's interests
- emphasis on concrete materials
- grouping for several ages
- child's education is the child's responsibility
- emphasis on affective emotional as well as cognitive intellectual skills

First Class matches the models quite well, how does it compare with the rest of the literature? When compared to the literature describing needed changes in traditional schools First Class again stacks up quite well. The federal government, educational leaders and teachers have called for many changes. They are:

A) Students should:
   1) develop an interest in learning
   2) use higher level thinking skills
   3) transfer of knowledge to everyday life
   4) work well in groups

B) The curriculum should:
1) have a humanistic approach
2) have hands on instruction
3) be planned to meet student interests
4) be integrated/holistic with thematic units
5) have emphasis on affective skills

C) Teachers should:
1) be a facilitator in learning
2) allow students to create their own meaning of learning

The student surveys have shown that First Class students have developed an interest in learning (A,1) and are happy with a curriculum planned to meet their interests (B,3). When asked what they would like to learn more about, 52% expressed an interest in learning more about a topic that they had studied. Students cited geography/social studies, art, science, math and literature related topics as ones they would like to learn more about. (See Table 5 for specific responses.) One student stated they would like to learn more about "the world and fascinating places." When students were asked what they liked about First Class, the majority of the responses were related to their class work, how the teachers taught the students, and the teachers themselves (81%). This is evidence that the curriculum meets the interests of the students (Table 8).

Higher level thinking skills are involved with the authentic assessment used in this program (A,2). Authentic assessment also allows students to create their own meaning of their learning (C,2). The work that the students are graded on the portfolio pieces (tests, written pieces, published books, projects and interviews) entail higher level thinking skills and allow students to create their own meaning to their learning. An

example (for higher level thinking) was one student's response that his favorite way to learn was, "hard things that make me think."

Another example of higher level thinking and student created meaning were the presentations at the conclusion of the Bug Club (project group). The students gave a presentation to an elementary class describing what they had accomplished during their project group. They explained how the bugs were collected, how they were prepared for mounting, what research they had to carry out to fulfil the requirements for their "bug book" (a book where all different types of bugs were described and examples given, with illustrations of each different type), and some of the differences and facts about the bugs they collected. Another example of higher level thinking skills is the students' responses to what they do not like about First Class. Eight responses (16% of the students) stated that the work in First Class was hard and that there was so much of it. Creating meaning for your own learning and using higher level thinking skills are not as easy as simple memorization. It requires more effort and is more work as was reported by these students in the surveys. One parent stated on her survey that her son was "learning to think." All examples are evidence that higher level thinking skills and student created meaning are being accomplished in this program.

Transfer of knowledge to everyday life is also an area of improvement that First Class is accomplishing (A,3). One student mentioned that he would like to learn more about the Chinese New Year. For the Chinese New Year celebration students were required to cook several dishes of Chinese food for the celebration at the end of the project group. They had to take recipes for 8-10 people and convert them into recipes

for the entire class (approximately 30 students). They had to tell their teacher how many boxes of rice, cans of peas, pounds of chicken, bags of flour, and cartons of eggs were required for the recipes. This was a real life math application. When asked what students liked about First Class 50% of the students liked field trips. Field trips are a great example of transfer of knowledge, since it is a real life example of what the students are learning in the classroom. Project groups also relate learning to everyday life (A,3). Rochester history (Rochistory), Bug club, and entrepreneurship are topics that can be easily related to everyday life. For entrepreneurship, the students had to make a product (a Christmas card): design, print, fold, package, and sell it. The students were able to learn first hand about a small business. One student mentioned that she would like to learn more about businesses after completing this project group.

A humanistic approach to learning in First Class was reflected in the survey responses (B,1). When students were asked what they liked about First Class, the majority of responses were related to how the students learned, their classes and teachers that were nice and helpful. These responses made up 68% of the total responses for that question. If students reported that they liked learning in their classes they must have been in an environment that was considerate and respectful. The parents also mentioned their appreciation of how their children were being taught by the teachers.

The hands-on approach was mentioned in the surveys for First Class (B,2). Students responded that they learned using hands-on methods (nine responses, 7% of the total). They also mentioned hands-on as the favorite way to learn (11 responses, 22% of

the total). One parent cited hands-on instruction as a reason for choosing First Class for her child. This is evidence that the program uses these methods and students like them.

Many improvements recommended in the literature were mentioned by the teachers of First Class in their surveys. They described their teaching methods and techniques that they use. These directly correspond to many of the improvements listed on page 123. They use interdisciplinary approaches (B,4), child centered education (B,3 and C,2), teaching methods where students can make choices (B,3), real life situations (A,3), hands-on activities (B,2), cooperative learning (A,4) and the teacher as a facilitator of learning (C,1). These teachers are making a huge difference in the way the children in this program are learning.

The parents mentioned what skills their children were learning in this program. They mentioned both traditional and non-traditional learning. Several reported that their children are "getting better at finding answers to their own questions," learning to be responsible, learning socialization, and learning team work, about nature and about the world. When parents reported what they liked about First Class, 30% of the responses dealt with the affective strengths of the program (Table 9). Personal growth and being comfortable and confident as part of a team were some of the responses. This is evidence that they are accomplishing changes in areas (A,4) and (B,5).

The other areas of change reported by the literature, i.e. the curriculum should be integrated and have emphasis on affective skills was previously discussed in the comparison of First Class to the models and characteristics of a non-traditional schools.

students to publish their work in humanities class. Some students have received national recognition.

Schools that utilize restructured schedules to support collaborative work cultures fit Fullan's third element of a "restructuring" type of school. The entire Odyssey School has block scheduling enabling teachers and students to use group activities and different styles of teaching to accomplish learning.

The Odyssey School has brought together administration, teachers, parents and students that have similar goals, and have published them in their flyer, "Welcome to Odyssey School" (1995-96 version) (appendix F). Fullan calls this "developing the shared mission and goals of the school among teachers, administrators, the community and sometimes students" (Fullan, 1991, p. 7). This is the fourth element in a "restructuring" type of school.

Dr. London described a model of a non-traditional school/program for the National College General Education Association Conference, in 1992 (previously described in Chapter 2 of this paper). London's model of a non-traditional program had five elements:

1) projects - the main vehicle of learning

2) affective issues - an aspect to be integrated into all four other elements-projects, interests, field trips, and individual guidance

3) development of interests - allowing time for and the development of interests

4) field trips - students should learn about people, cultures, and nature

5) individual guidance - an advisor is needed to oversee the personal and academic development of the student.

Overall the First Class program has made progress in addressing the changes required for education cited in Chapter 2.

Comparison to Literature/8th grade program at Odyssey School

The 8th grade program at Odyssey fits both the characteristics and the model of a non-traditional school found in the literature. This program also fits Fullan's description of the "restructuring" phase of educational change.

The 8th grade program at Odyssey fits four of the five elements described by Fullan for schools in the "restructuring" phase of educational change. At Odyssey, teachers have enhanced roles in instruction and decision making, and new roles as mentors and coaches. They not only teach core classes, but also teach exploratory classes, connect time, supervise students at lunch time (homebase class), organize assemblies, are members of the exploratory committee, are members of the stakeholders committee, directly mentor students (shadows), and are involved with the improvement team. Of the three programs investigated in this report, the 8th grade teachers at Odyssey had the most extensive roles as teachers and mentors when compared to the other two programs.

The second element of Fullan's "restructuring" type of school is a school that uses new innovations in their classrooms. The humanities teachers in the 8th grade are using many innovations in their classroom. Their use and knowledge of the seven intelligences expands learning in their class to a new dimension. The teachers have encouraged

The many projects and presentations in the 8th grade program at Odyssey, fit London's model that calls for projects to be a main vehicle in learning. The exhibits in humanities class are major projects, that approach learning from many different means. The exhibit usually consists of: artwork that has a particular meaning, maps explaining the location of the events of the topic, the student verbalizing the importance and effects of the events, and an essay describing an aspect of the topic. The projects usually have an affective aspect to them also, students might have to take a side or explain a point of view.

The 11th and 12th grade students at Odyssey are required to complete a senior study project. Students are expected to investigate an area of interest, research it under the supervision of a teacher and prepare a final project for presentation. This project is very similar to the senior project described in London's model. In this model, seniors are expected to complete a senior masterwork that requires each student to work with a faculty advisor and an expert from outside the school to complete a comprehensive project of interest.

The 8th grade program allows time during the day and week to address affective issues, London's second element. Lunch is in small groups with the homebase class. This gives the students daily contact with a small group of students or their homebase teacher. Connect time meets once a week (on Wednesdays) for group or one-on-one discussions with the teacher. Both of these scheduled times gives students a chance to discuss their problems with each other, and teachers time for discussion with students.

This program allows time for an incorporation of affective issues into their schedule and their work.

The Odyssey School does a great job of allowing students to develop their interests. They allow four, 40 minute periods a week for exploratory classes. Students take two different classes over a 10 week period. This was the only non-traditional program in this study that offered students separate courses for the purpose of developing their interests. London's third element requires that the non-traditional program allow students to develop and focus their interests. The student surveys at Odyssey have shown how much students like having time to develop their interests.

Field trips are part of the Odyssey program and the fourth element of a non-traditional program described by London. They were mentioned when students were asked how they learned and their favorite way of learning. Fifteen percent of the students responded that field trips were a way that they had learned and 13% of the students mentioned field trips were a favorite way for them to learn.

The 8th grade program at Odyssey has all the elements of the non-traditional program model described by London. They use projects as a main vehicle in learning, address affective issues in their academic work, address affective issues in homebase and connect time, have wonderful opportunities to explore interests in exploratories, and take field trips to further expand their learning.

Bryant outlines several general characteristics of alternative programs/schools that distinguish them from traditional schools. One characteristic is that the programs are smaller and less bureaucratic. The Odyssey School is much smaller than the other

middle and high schools in the Greece School District. The class sizes at Odyssey (class being the number of students in a grade level) are approximately 1/3 the size of the classes at the other middle and high schools in the Greece school district. (Class size for each grade at Odyssey was 110 students.) Both students and parents mentioned the smaller school size as one of the reasons for choosing to attend Odyssey. One parent mentioned that the students at Odyssey get more individual attention and do not get lost in the system as they might in one of the larger Greece schools.

Another characteristic of Bryant's non-traditional program that fits the 8th grade Odyssey program is that the work is holistic in that students are expected to grow personally as well as academically. One parent specifically stated that this "program gives kids a chance to grow." Another reported she liked seeing the academic growth in her child. Students themselves reported liking having a say in their program (3 students) and having more freedom (3 students). Both comments show that some of the 8th graders at Odyssey are given freedom and responsibility and they like this opportunity for personal and academic growth.

The last characteristic of Bryant's that seems to fit the 8th grade Odyssey program is that non-traditional programs tend to attract students that do not assimilate well in traditional schools. There is some evidence of this at Odyssey. One parent stated that her child's "problem behaviors have disappeared," which indicates there were some poor behaviors before the student attended this school.

The humanities teachers mentioned some interesting characteristics of the two different classes they taught. These characteristics might indicate that there are some students that do not do well in traditional schools are attracted to Odyssey. One class

was a group of students that normally did well in the traditional style classes - notes, facts, multiple choice tests, etc. (i.e. typical good students), while the other class struggled with this traditional format. When the humanities teachers started requiring work that had written, oral and artwork aspects, the traditional (learning style) students had to work harder to complete their work and some did not like it as well as the traditional work they use to do. The other class that usually struggled with the traditional format preformed better and were happier with the new work requirements. Some of their feelings were reflected in the surveys. One student felt the work was easier and another liked the artwork work integrated in the class work. One parent stated:

> "One of my children is extremely smart and can pass most tests without trying; therefore, when this child was in the traditional system, (she passed) year after year in spite of behavior problems. Odyssey's system of integrated teaching and grading showed where this child needed help on social skills. Odyssey assists me on working to improve this child's socialization skills. This helps both the school and I in making decisions about this child's electives and future goals.... One of my other children is an average student, but her social skills are much better.... In a traditional school, the first child would have been considered incorrigible and the second would not have been encouraged to achieve much. At Odyssey (both) are encouraged to achieve their dreams."

These comments from both students and parents show how the students who might not do as well with the traditional format like the format in their 8th grade program. It is also evidence that the program may attract students that do not excel in traditional schools.

Some of the characteristics of the "Open Schools" of the 60's and 70's previously discussed in the literature, fit the characteristics of the Odyssey School. The Odyssey school has these characteristics:

- Teachers that structure environment and process
- Teachers that provides guidance, facilitates learning
- Teacher-pupil interaction that is individualistic
- The philosophy that the child's education is child's responsibility
- An emphasis on affective, emotional as well as cognitive intellectual skills
- Uses evaluation as diagnosis

The 8th grade program at Odyssey also needs to be compared to the improvements that teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government are calling for. These improvements are summarized on page 123.

Teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government reported in the literature that students should develop an interest in learning. When students in the 8th grade at Odyssey were asked what would they like to learn more about, 45% mentioned one or more topics. Over three quarters of these 25 students (78%) wanted to learn more about a topic in the humanities area. The rest of the students described topics in science and computers with only one student wanting to learn more about math. These are not overwhelming statistics, but almost half of the students did want to learn more about something they have learned about. This is evidence that the 8th grade program is helping students develop an interest in learning change A,1.

The literature has also reported a need for students to use higher level thinking skills. The literature from teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government stresses this area of improvement, change A,2. Evidence of the use of the higher level thinking skills was found in the 8th grade humanities classes at the Odyssey school. The exhibits and projects the students are required to do call for more than just knowing facts. They must be able to explain in their own words the effects or reasons for a

particular event. They also must explain the meaning behind their artwork, and their essay describing a point of view or a position so they are not just memorizing facts. These students discuss their learning at a higher level.

When the students were asked how they learned, many responded with answers that involve higher level thinking skills. These responses were: role playing/simulations, group work, and exhibits. Orals, drawing pictures, doing projects, and writing were responses describing some of the individual aspects of the exhibits. This is evidence that higher level thinking is being accomplished in this program (A,2).

Another change being required of schools is that students should work well in groups (A,4). When the 8th grade students at Odyssey were asked how they learned, 30% of the students reported learning in groups. When students were asked what their favorite way to learn was, 25% reported working in groups or with peers as their favorite way to learn. When parents were asked what children should learn in school, the ability to work with others or in a team was something 23% of the parents thought was important. This is evidence that the students in this program are being offered an opportunity to learn in groups. Some of the parents think this is an important skill to learn and support this aspect of the 8th grade program.

Some other aspects of the 8th grade program that are in alignment with the needed changes for schools reported by teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government in the literature are found in the humanistic way the Odyssey's 8th grade curriculum is taught (B,1). Since the curriculum must have a humanistic approach in its deliverance, the teachers received many complimentary comments when students and

parents reported what they liked about the 8th grade program, (33% of students and 53% of parents cited many positive comments for teachers on their surveys, see page 78, for specific parent comments.)

Students mentioned the affective part of their program also as something they liked about 8th grade (B,5). They mentioned they liked: assemblies, school spirit, connect time, Odyssey block, lunch time, more freedom, treatment with respect and having a say in their program. Forty-nine percent of the students reported these comments. So both the 8th grade curriculum and the Odyssey program satisfy the need for an affective and humanistic component, required changes B,1 and B,5.

Teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government also feel hands-on instruction and instruction that meets students' interests are important changes required in schools (B,2 and B,3).

The 8th grade program at Odyssey has both hands-on instruction and instruction that meets students' interests. Evidence of these aspects were found when students were asked what they learned and what they liked about their program. Thirty-five percent of the students reported learning from hands-on methods. Students also reported learning from videos, readings/magazine articles, role playing, storytelling, in groups, by playing games, on field trips, by drawing, from guest speakers and in exploratory classes. They reported these same methods again as their favorite way of learning (see Tables 13 & 16) showing that these methods of learning are ways that interest these 8th grade students. Both hands-on instruction and instruction designed to meet their interests keep these Odyssey students interested and involved in their learning.

The last category of change required in traditional schools as reported by teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government are changes that require teachers to allow students to create their own meaning of learning (C,2) and that teachers should be facilitators in learning (C,1). Both changes are apparent in the 8th grade program at Odyssey. The prime example of this is the way students learn through their exhibits. The exhibits allow students to "exhibit their knowledge in many different ways" (quote from one of the humanities teachers). These exhibits enable students to create their own meaning to their learning.

Five students reported on their surveys that there was too much work (writing, memorization, orals and projects) in their program and three commented that humanities was hard. These comments are an indication that the students are doing a substantial amount of work in the learning process and the teachers are the facilitators in this program.

Comparison to Literature/8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High

The 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High is using new innovations and a non-traditional schedule to improve their students' learning. The integration of new innovations and the restructuring of the school schedule to support collaborative work cultures are two of the five characteristics of Fullan's "restructuring" type of school.

The teachers reported using cooperative learning, 4 MAT (learning styles), constructivism, and performance assessment. These are innovations that improve student learning. Students reported liking these methods also.

The block scheduling allows teachers time to execute a flexible interdisciplinary curriculum. Humanities is the interdisciplinary course of the green cluster. The science and math in green cluster may also be interdisciplinary, but it was not reported on the surveys.

Aqua team has interdisciplinary classes that can vary daily. How the classes are combined is dependent on the teachers' plans. One day they may block math and science, another day math and language arts. The teachers decide on the schedule format for that week. Some students (6%) reported liking the block schedule and the group work that they are able to accomplish because of the extended time schedule. Some students (12%) reported group work as a way that they learned their curriculum and also as an aspect of the 8th grade program that they liked (9%). Both the block schedule and the use of innovations to improve learning indicate that the 8th grade program at Eastridge fits some of the characteristics of Fullan's "restructuring" type of school.

London's model of a non-traditional program has five elements: projects, an affective component, an interest component, field trips, and time set aside for individual guidance. The 8th grade program at Eastridge has two of these elements in their program. The use of projects and field trips were reported as ways learning is accomplished. Almost a third of the students (27% of those who responded) reported projects as a way they learned their curriculum. Almost a fifth of the students reported field trips as a way they have learned in 8th grade. Both are evidence that this program has two number of elements of London's non-traditional program.

Bryant's characteristics of a non-traditional program were previously outlined in Chapter II. He stated four general characteristics of a non-traditional program. These programs are smaller and less bureaucratic, have values that come from the community, work on personal as well as academic growth, and attract students that do not do well in a traditional program. The data from student and parent surveys found no evidence of any of these characteristics. However, the two teachers who responded to the survey both mentioned emphasizing personal and academic growth in their students.

The humanities teachers (green team) submitted a copy of a progress report used in their class (Appendix G). This report assesses the student's ability: to work independently, to solve problems, to handle frustration, to handle themselves in a group situation and to communicate (written, verbal, reflective thought, etc.). This report shows an interest of the teachers in developing personal growth and academic skills in their students.

One teacher's survey (green team) mentioned the effects of the regular class environment on the special education students in the class and the class's reaction to these students in the class. These comments indicated that students in this year's class are growing personally. He stated that the special education (coded) students were "exposed to different academic and social situations" and that "non-coded students have the opportunity to work with the coded students and become more sensitive to other's needs."

The data collected from the 8th grade program at Eastridge did not provide as much information about this program when compared to the other two programs

investigated. Based on the data that was collected, this program seems to have the following similarities with the "Open Schools" of the 70's.

- Teacher structures environment and process
- Teacher provides guidance, facilitates learning
- Child's education is child's responsibility

The 8th grade program at Eastridge has some of the characteristics of the non-traditional schools and models. How does it compare with the educational improvements that teachers, educational leaders and the federal government are calling for?

Teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government reported in the literature that students should develop an interest in learning (A,1) (see page 123). Some of the 8th grade students at Eastridge (42%) reported wanting to learn more about one or more topics. Sixty-four percent of these responses were related to social studies. Other students cited topics in literature, math, music, and home and careers (4.5% each topic). Since some students wanted to learn more, this is evidence that these students want to continue learning on their own (A,1). This data would have to be compared to a traditional program to see if these percentages are higher than a traditional program.

Teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government are also calling for students to use higher level thinking skills in their academic work (A,2). The 8th grade program at Eastridge requires students to complete projects, oral presentations, performance tasks, and exhibits. All four of these requirements entail higher level thinking skills. These same requirements also allow students to create their own meaning of learning (C,2).

For projects, presentations, tasks and exhibits, students must first learn the information then use it to create their project, presentation or exhibit. Comprehension

and application of the material are part of this process. Depending on the requirements for the particular project, further levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation may also be required.

One student mentioned liking performance assessments more than formal exams or tests. She states:

> "I like think it's a better advantage for people who do not do well on exams/quizzes and I think you also get more knowledge out of doing them."

This student has explained how higher level thinking skills help her learn more in her classes at Eastridge. The Eastridge students reported learning through other methods also. The students learned by writing about different topics, writing a poem about their heritage, playing games, role playing and having debates. All of these methods of learning require higher level thinking skills also.

The harder work involved with higher level thinking skills was also reflected in what the students at Eastridge did not like about their program. Several students mentioned that they did not like the projects (3 responses), that the work was harder (2 responses), the curriculum was harder (1 response), and that the classes are harder (1 response).

Having the students report that there was hard, challenging work in their program is also an indication that the teachers are the facilitators in this program. The students are working at learning the curriculum through methods that involve more complex thinking skills that they must do on their own with the guidance of the teacher.

parents. Since half of the teachers responded to the survey, the teacher surveys accurately describe the teachers' point of view.

The data from the student surveys provided a large quantity of information about their program. The question of program choice made it apparent that most students do not know why they are in the First Class program (64%). This program has distinct goals and values and if a large number of students do not choose to be in the program, the success of the program could be at stake. First Class students are not recruited, most are placed in First Class because they are placed in the "Red House."

Students were asked to give an example of what they learned and how they learned it. The question "What you learned" was asked so students had a point of reference to respond to how they learned. The data obtained from this particular question might vary depending on the time of year the data was collected. If students are enjoying a math unit at the time of the survey, there might be more responses in the math category. The problem with some of the responses for this question was that many students responded with a general answer, such as "project group" or math-literacy without further breaking down their thoughts. Twenty percent of the responses to this question fell into this pattern.

It would have been interesting to compare the percent of responses from the different categories (visual, hands-on, verbal, group work), with percentages of the general population with strengths in the different areas of the seven intelligences. It would seem that there are a lot of "visual" learners, but verbal responses may have been

In a positive note, when students were asked what they liked about their program, two students mentioned the more challenging work and liking performance tasks instead of tests. They like using the higher level skills.

Some evidence of transferring knowledge to everyday life was found in the Eastridge program (A,3). When the 8th grade students were asked what they had learned, some mentioned that they learned how to (each response is from a different student): do a presentation, work in groups, write a business letter, do research, use the library computer, and find the height of a tree from its shadow. Most of these topics are skills students will need to function well in everyday life.

Another interesting point was found when these skills were compared to the parents' responses to what they felt students should learn in school. Five of the six skills mentioned showing a transfer of knowledge were also mentioned by the parents. They also feel these topics are important to transfer to everyday life.

Working well in groups was mentioned by teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government as something traditional schools need to improve upon. When the 8th grade students at Eastridge were asked what their favorite way to learn was, the largest quantity of responses were with respect to learning in groups. The students at Eastridge liked to work together on projects, work with peers and partners, do performance tasks with partners, and work in groups where students do not know each other. The student survey shows that these 8th grade students are given an opportunity to work in groups and enjoy learning this way more than any other.

When the 8th grade students at Eastridge were asked what was their favorite way to learn, twenty-one percent of their responses (8 responses) were with regard to hands-on activities. This category was the third in the quantity of responses when compared to group work with twelve responses and student work with nine responses. When these students were asked what they liked about 8th grade, seven percent of their responses (7 responses) mentioned hands-on activities. When the Eastridge parents were asked what they liked about the program when compared to traditional middle school, one parent mentioned "lots of hands-on". These are not large percentages, but they do indicate hands-on activities are being done in this program.

Teachers, educational leaders, and the federal government reported in the literature that they also want to see changes in the curriculum in traditional schools (see page 123). The literature reports that the curriculum should have: a humanities approach (B,1), meet student interests (B,3), integrated thematic units (B,4), and an emphasis on affective skills (B,5).

The evidence of a humanistic approach in the 8th grade's curriculum at Eastridge was not found in the data from the surveys. Students reported that they liked more freedom, more choices, more trust, more responsibility, and being treated more like adults when they were asked what they liked about their 8th grade program. This was evidence that they are treated with respect as young adults, but not direct evidence of a humanistic approach to their program.

The teachers, educational leaders, and federal government reported in the literature that other improvements in the curriculum are also needed. They reported that the new curriculum should have integrated thematic units (B,4) that also emphasize

affective skills (B,5). Both of these aspects of the Eastridge program were previously discussed when the 8th grade program was compared to the model and characteristics of a non-traditional school.

Discussion of Data/ Comparison to the other Rochester Programs

Discussion of Data/First Class Program

A large quantity of data was collected from the student, parent, teacher, and administrator surveys. Organizing and categorizing data required judgement and another researcher may not come up with the same organizational schemes. Since data was obtained from many points of view (parents, students, and teachers), definite characteristics have been found in each program and similarities between programs have been identified. In general, this thesis provides much information on students' learning styles and the teaching styles they prefer. This is valuable information for anyone planning to teach middle school students.

The First Class program provided a substantial number of student surveys, a small number of parent surveys and the most teacher surveys of any of the programs investigated. Five teachers responded to the surveys, this is half of this programs teachers.

Definite trends are seen in the results of the student data. Since a large number of student surveys were collected, the data should be a good representation of the feelings of the First Class student population. Even though most of the parent comments collected were positive, the data represents the input of only a small number of the

greater in quantity if the Guest Speaker category was broken down into the visual or verbal learning. However, this was not a focus of this research.

Project group had the largest number of responses to "What was learned" so it was not surprising that the number was also large for "How you learned." The large number of responses for project group also ties in with the literature, reporting this age group's interest in humanistic and interesting approaches to teaching and learning.

When asked what they would like to learn more about, 36% of the students responded with a answer in the geography/social studies category. Thirty-two percent of the students responded with an answer in math category. Twenty-eight percent of the students responded with an answer in the art category. It was interesting that so many students wanted to learn more about these traditional core subjects. The high number of art responses may reflect the fact that art is injected into all subject areas, project group and math-literacy (as reported by the teachers). The lower number of science and literature responses (12% of the students each) is hard to interpret since the First Class students are not aware of the distinct differences between the traditional four subjects areas.

Since science and social studies are mixed in project group and math and literature in math-literacy, it may be hard for these students to respond to this question accurately. Fifty-two percent of the responses to this question (what would you like to learn more about) were also a response to what you learned. It would be interesting to ask the same question to the traditional students at Douglass and compare the data.

When the different responses were compared, for the students' "favorite way to learn" versus "how you learned" (Table 7), differences between the two were seen in several categories. An inference that may be drawn from this data is that students want teachers to teach them a little about a topic, then let the students do most of the learning on their own with hands-on and student work. Throw in some group work with the hands-on and student work, then almost two-thirds (61%) of these students' favorite way of learning would be satisfied.

When students were asked how they learned, the results might have beeen skewed by the large number of responses for project group and math-literacy (20%). Because of this, a valid comparison between the two questions cannot be made. This also may explain why the students reported liking to learn with hands-on methods, but only 7% of the total responses reported learning that way. Hands on learning is done in both project group and math-literacy.

Another question that is raised by the comparison in Table 7 is are students are able to learn using the computer as much as they would like? Fourteen percent of the responses reported the favorite way to learn was with the computer and there were no responses as to learning with the computer.

When the students were asked what they liked about their program, 81% of the responses were related to how and what they learned, and their teachers, (the sum of the categories: class/instruction; teacher; the way we learn; and field trips). This represents a group of students that like their program. It would be interesting to compare First Class to the other non-traditional programs. A check against a traditional program (survey a

traditional program with the same surveys) might put these responses into a different perspective.

The parent surveys also had a large percentage of the positive responses related to liking the class instruction and teachers (60%). Again, this would be interesting to compare to a traditional school and the other non-traditional programs.

Parents and students mentioned some drawbacks to this program. Some students and one parent mentioned that some of the classes were too long. First Class was the only program investigated in this report with most of the classes two hours in length. First Class is also the only program at Douglass that has any kind of block schedule. The other students in the school change classes every 40 minutes, while the First Class students stay in one class. This may contribute to their opinion.

The teachers cited some drawbacks to this program also. Some were related to being a non-traditional program within a traditional middle school. Because First Class uses different teaching methods, has a different schedule, and is able to go on many field trips (when compared to the rest of the school), other students, teachers and administrators look upon First Class negatively. Teachers also mentioned the quantity of work involved in teaching this type of program.

Eighth grade program at Odyssey School
Discussion of data and Comparison to First Class

The data collected from the 8th grade program and the Odyssey School was substantial. The researcher was able to collect the desired number of student surveys

(110) and from these take a representative sample of fifty-five. The greatest number of parent surveys were collected at this school, a total of thirty. Five teacher surveys were collected. It would have been more desirable to collect several more surveys from the 8th grade teachers. It would have made the picture of this program more complete.

The large number of student surveys provided much information on why students chose this school, how they learned, what they would like to learn more about, their favorite way to learn, and what they like and dislike about their program.

When students were asked why they picked this school, 76% replied because of the teaching methods or because the students or parents chose the school. Some chose the school for its smaller size, location, or that students are able to stay at the same school for many years (6-12 grades). Parents and students with similar goals and ideas for education have chosen to attend this school. The parents and the vice principal stated that students must enter a lottery system and be selected to gain entry into the school.

When parents were asked why they chose the Odyssey school for their children, some described the process of being admitted to Odyssey rather than why they chose Odyssey. However, the students' responses to the same question on their surveys filled in the missing data. This question must not have been clear.

When the 8th grade students at Odyssey were asked how they learned in school, their responses were very specific. They mentioned verbal and visual methods, hands-on, group work, student work, games, field trips, guest speakers, exhibits and exploratories as ways they have learned. When the First Class students were asked the same question, their responses were more general with many citing their core subjects as ways they had learned. Odyssey students were more familiar with the terminology used on the survey.

When the student responses to the how you learned question from Odyssey and First Class are compared, the percentages of responses in the different categories are remarkably similar (Table 7 and Table 17). Six out of the eight categories percentages of responses from the two different schools were within 6% of each other. The visual (▲=4%), game (▲=5%), student work (▲=6%), hands-on (▲=1%), and field trip (▲=1%) categories were very similar. Only two categories, verbal (▲=14%) and guest speaker (▲=12%) had more substantial differences. The larger differences could be explained with two possibilities. The two groups of students (Odyssey and Douglass) have different learning preferences, or have been exposed to a different concentration of learning styles in their curricula. It would be interesting to survey students at a traditional middle school to see if the distribution of data is similar and if they too are being exposed to this wide variety of learning styles.

When the 8th grade students at Odyssey were asked what they would like to learn more about and what they had learned, the trend of their responses were similar. This was also true for First Class. When the Odyssey students' responses to what they learned are compared to what they would like to learn more about, the majority of their responses were: humanities 70% and 78% respectively, science 13% and 8% respectively, and math 8% and 3% respectively.

When the First Class students' responses to what they learned are compared to what they would like to learn more about, the majority of their responses were: project group 49% and 34% respectively, and math-literary 30% and 31% respectively. Art was also mentioned as something students would like to learn more about (20% of the responses), but art is part of both project group and math-literacy and also a separate class so it cannot be added onto these numbers, but might be part of either core subject.

In both schools the content area that the majority of students reported learning about was the same content area that they reported wanting to learn more about. This was especially true with humanities at Odyssey and math-literacy in First Class. This may have also been the case with project group in First Class. Since art is included in project group, the separate art category might have thrown off the number of responses for project group.

One large difference noted in the percentage of responses between Odyssey and First Class was in the art category. Twenty percent of the students in the First Class program wanted to learn more about art and music, where only 3% of the responses from Odyssey wanted to learn more about art (Odyssey had no music responses). Again, was the difference due to program differences or different student interests? Only further data and comparisons might shed light on this.

Approximately half the students in both schools did not want to learn more about anything they had already studied (55% in 8th grade/Odyssey and 46% in First Class/Douglass). To see if this data is representative of non-traditional schools or particular programs, it would have to be compared to further data from both traditional and non-traditional schools.

One aspect of what students would like to learn more about that was not found in the data from the 8th grade program at Odyssey was that students did not mention exploratory classes. There were a few responses that might have been related to exploratories (the internet/computers, jobs and careers, and technology advancing), but based on how much the students liked these classes, a larger number of responses would have been expected. There was a possibility that students did not consider exploratories

when they answered the question. They might have considered their core courses only. To find out, this question could be discussed with the 8th grade students for clarification.

When the students at Odyssey and First Class were asked what their favorite way of learning was, the responses from the Odyssey students were more sophisticated. This might have been due to the Odyssey students being more knowledgeable about the multiple intelligences and being able to express their responses in those terms.

When the responses to the students' favorite way to learn from both programs were compared, there were again similarities (Table 6 and Table 16). Half of the categories from both schools had similar percentages responses. They were: verbal (▲=4%), student work (▲=4%), group work (▲=5%), and field trip (▲=5%) categories. Larger differences were found in the hands-on (▲=9%), computers (▲=9%) and visual (▲=22%) categories. A possible explanation of the difference in the visual category between the two programs may be due to the First Class students' citing the teacher as a favorite way to learn rather than breaking down their responses into the visual or verbal aspects of teaching.

The number of responses in the hands-on category from First Class and Odyssey may indeed be similar when at first glance they do not seem to be. If the kinesthetic and hands-on categories from Odyssey are combined (8% and 13% respectively) that would add up to be almost the same as the percentage of hands-on responses for this category from First Class.

The differences in responses in visual and computer categories between the two programs may be due to program differences or students' interests. The First Class

program has its own computer lab. The Odyssey students have reported lack of computers as a problem at their school. This may explain the difference in this category.

The 8th grade program at Odyssey had the greatest number of parent responses to the survey of all of the three programs investigated in this report (Table 1). All the parents (30) responded to the question of what children should learn in school. Many parents gave several responses to this question (96 total responses). These parents expected a mix of traditional and non-traditional skills to be taught. Social skills, the ability to think, the ability to work with others, organizational skills and the ability to transfer knowledge to everyday life were skills expected to be taught at Odyssey. The traditional subjects (math, English, science and social studies) were expected to be taught also.

The parents of the First Class students reported that they wanted their children to learn similar skills. However, the proportion of traditional and non-traditional skills that they felt should be taught was different for the two programs. Eighty-three percent of the responses from First Class parents felt students should learn the traditional subject areas. Fifty-two percent of the responses from the Odyssey parents felt traditional subjects were important. Seventeen percent of the responses from the First Class parents were related to non-traditional topics compared to 48% of the responses from Odyssey parents. Even though the percentages of the total responses with respect to what skills students should learn were not the same between First Class and Odyssey, the responses themselves were similar (page 44 and Table 18). The percentage of responses between the two programs with respect to traditional and non-traditional skills might have been

different because: 1) the small number of First Class parents responding to the survey (perhaps these parents were not a representative sample), and 2) many of the parents of First Class students did not select this program for their child. Both may contribute to an emphasis of the importance of traditional skills in First Class over the non-traditional skills many of the Odyssey parents felt were important.

The teachers in all three programs were asked how they developed the curriculum. Unfortunately, only one of the 8th grade teachers at the Odyssey school responded to the survey. However, three of her responses were very similar to responses from the teachers from First Class. Both stated that they use cooperative learning, use interdisciplinary teaching and combine art with their subject areas.

The 8th grade teacher at Odyssey reported using ideas from Gardner, the seven intelligences and information on exhibitions to develop her curriculum. The other teachers at Odyssey (not part of the 8th grade program, but who completed surveys) mentioned the ways they develop curriculum. They mentioned that they use the state curriculum, their colleagues, authentic materials, and knowledge of the seven intelligences.

The First Class teachers use their colleagues, the media, trade journals, personal experience, guest speakers and community resources (museums, art galleries, etc.) to develop their curriculum.

Even though there was only one response from one 8th grade teacher, the student and parent surveys gave sufficient information to describe the Odyssey curriculum. When comparing the 8th grade Odyssey curriculum to the First Class curriculum, some

major differences are found. The humanities teachers use many different methods to teach the New York State 8th grade social studies and language arts curriculum. The students do not have a choice (in humanities) of what topics they will study. First Class on the other hand, develops its curriculum along New York State guidelines but these topics are not the only ones being taught (see appendix F for project group topics). The First Class students choose which project group they wanted to study. The humanities teachers take the standard state curriculum and teach it in an interesting and challenging way. The First Class program has a curriculum that is interesting to students, of practical value, and taught in a challenging way.

The 8th grade program at Odyssey uses traditional letter grades on their report cards. These letter grades are accompanied with comments that represent the level of effort for that letter grade. Most teachers also include a personal comment sheet for students. A few parents (4) mentioned that the assessment system gives them a well-rounded picture of how their children are doing in school. One parent stated, "I like this system (of grading) because it helps to make the child a more well-rounded individual and it shows problem areas that need to be worked on."

Some of the parents (and one of the humanities teachers), mentioned the use of rubrics in arriving at grades. A rubric is one way of scoring work, with specific requirements for several levels of performance. In humanities, rubrics are used to grade all work. One parent stated, "I like the way the children have rubrics so they know exactly what is expected of them." Another stated, "Handing out the rubric ahead of time gives the kids an idea of what is expected (of them)."

The First Class report card is non-traditional when compared to Odyssey's. The First Class report card (Appendix E) reports work in the following areas: engagement, independence and self direction, working with others, and performance-quality of work in the three core subjects math-literacy, project group, and psychology. But, when the two report cards are compared, the information that they convey is similar. Both give a well-rounded picture of how the student is progressing. Both could be used as models of a good assessment system.

When parents and students at Odyssey were asked what they liked about the 8th grade program/Odyssey, their responses had similar trends. The largest number of responses from students were related to classes (particularly exploratories) and the aspects of their school (longer/less classes, taking field trips, that it is a smaller school, having assemblies, the school spirit, more freedom/respect, and students have a say in school). One third of the students reported that their teachers are nice, are caring, have good relations with them, and are available for extra help.

Over half of the parents at Odyssey mentioned the same positive aspects about the teachers as the students. They were even more pleased with the effort and hard work these 8th grade teachers put into their teaching. They also felt the methodology of the school is helping their children grow personally and academically. Teaching methods, student choices, award ceremonies, community/smaller school atmosphere are aspects of the program/school that they especially liked.

When the students and parents of First Class were asked what they liked about their program, their answers were very similar to those of the Odyssey's parents and

students. Fifty percent of the students reported liking their teachers, how they learned, field trips, and the affective aspects of their program. Comparing Table 8 (First Class) to Table 20 (Odyssey), even the students' phrasing of their responses were similar. In the affective category, both schools' students mentioned: more freedom/freedom and privileges, that they are listened to, have a say, and they have good communication with teachers/good teacher-student relations. Students at both schools mentioned liking field trips, hands-on/interactive learning, group work/working together and doing special/different things more/different programs, and the different teaching methods.

The responses from the parents of the Odyssey program and the First Class program were also similar. Approximately 50% of the parents from both programs mentioned the dedicated, hard working teachers. Both groups of parents mentioned personal growth of students and that some students like school more in their present programs.

The two programs also have similarities in what they did not like about their program. Some students (38%) did not like the 90 minute classes at Odyssey, and twenty-three percent of the students in First Class did not like their 90-145 minute classes. Both groups had a few responses that mentioned their hard class work and the quantity of work. Several students at Odyssey mentioned that some students were disruptive or there was not enough discipline. One parent from First Class mentioned the unacceptable behavior, attitudes and language of other students. Perhaps both these types of non-traditional programs have some students excel with more freedom and privileges and have other students take advantage of the same freedoms or abuse them.

One problem that was mentioned at Odyssey and not in the First Class program was lack of equipment and materials. Students mentioned not having enough supplies for students and teachers, books, hands-on materials, and not having adequate computers for the number of students. Two students and one parent mentioned the building the Odyssey school is in. The students mentioned that the school was small and crowded. The parent mentioned if the district felt a school of choice was important, it would not be housed in an aged facility.

How others perceive both programs was also seen as a negative aspect of First Class and Odyssey. Two parents of Odyssey students felt that the Odyssey School did not have the support of the school board or the district. Another Odyssey parent felt other residents looked upon her negatively because she was able to get her child into a school of choice. The same parent felt that over time, schools like Odyssey will show improvements in educating students and become more accepted by the community.

Two teachers in the First Class program mentioned a similar problem with the acceptance of their program within the school in which they are housed. They mentioned that the other students, teachers, and administrators looked upon them negatively. First Class is able to take more field trips, has a flexible schedule, and accomplishes learning in a more interesting way. These differences seem to make other teachers and students look upon First Class negatively. Perhaps with time this program too will be able to show improvements over traditional education and be more accepted.

The students in the Odyssey program had many responses when asked if they were involved with student input into their program or school. Approximately 30% of the

students said that they were. They were involved as teacher helpers (shadows), several were on the exploratory and stake holders committees, and some were class representatives for the student senate. There were 43 responses for involvement with school sports and 16 responses relating to music reported from 40 surveys.

When compared to the First Class program, the 8th grade's program students are more involved in their school and have more of a voice in their program. They are also much more involved in sports and music. The students' involvement in their program is a reflection of a commitment of the program to allow students to have a say in the running of their school. The fact that these students are more involved in sports and music is a reflection of the economics of the students' families in a suburban school versus the economics of the students' families in an urban school.

The students in the 8th grade program at Odyssey were asked if they wanted to finish high school and surprisingly only 89% said yes! Ninety-eight percent of the First Class students stated they wanted to finish high school. When asked if they would like to go to college, and how long they planned on going to college, the results from the two schools were similar. (Odyssey is listed first, First Class second) 11% and 9% for two years, 47% and 47% for three to four years, 29% and 36% for five years or more, and 4% at Odyssey for whatever the career called for. The similar percentages are surprising considering the economic differences between an urban and a suburban school.

Comparison of the Data from the 8th grade program at Eastridge to the other programs

The data collected from the 8th grade program at Eastridge was adequate for analysis. Thirty-four student and 17 parent surveys were collected from the aqua team. Two teacher surveys were collected from the green team. It would have been more desirable to have had some student and parent surveys from the green team and some teacher surveys from the aqua team. This would have been a better representation of each team's methods. Still, a sufficient amount of data was collected and many characteristics of the 8th grade program at Eastridge were similar to the other two programs.

One question on the student and parent surveys asked students and parents why they chose the program. This question was eliminated from both surveys at Eastridge. This was done because all 8th grade students (in the East Irondequoit School District) must be on either the green or the aqua team. They did not have a choice of programs.

When the students in the 8th grade at Eastridge were asked how they learned, many of their responses were similar to the other two programs (comparing Tables 7, 17 and 27). The percentage of responses to this question from all three programs was similar in the following categories: field trip, hands-on, games and guest speaker (similar to First Class only).

Since the number of responses were similar between all three programs in these four categories, either one of two conclusions could be made. Perhaps all three

programs expose their students to a similar amount of field trips, hands-on activities, games and guest speakers, or these middle school students (from all three programs) learn by these particular teaching methods in a predicable way. Only further data will provide the answer.

At Eastridge, the percentage of responses to the question of how students learned was quite different from the other programs in the following categories: visual (▲=15-19%), teacher (▲=16-17%), and student work (▲=22-28%). The Eastridge program was compared first to the First Class program and then the Odyssey program. The differences in percentages are shown in this order.

When the 8th grade students at Eastridge were asked how they learned, they did not have any responses that fit into a verbal category. They did, however, have a quantity of responses in the teacher category. They could have learned verbally from the teacher; they just did not state their responses this way on the surveys.

The 8th grade students at Eastridge had numerous responses with respect to learning form the teacher (19). First Class also had many responses (17) with respect to learning from the teacher. Odyssey students were more specific in their responses. Many stated that they learned from the teacher lecture. The Odyssey students were more knowledgeable about the type of answer the researcher was looking for, thus they gave more accurate responses.

The Eastridge students had few responses to learning visually. First Class and Odyssey had many responses to having learned with visual methods (#1 in quantity of responses for First Class and #2 in quantity of responses at Odyssey). This could have

been due to the researcher's interpretation of the data or a difference in the two programs' concentration on visual learning.

When students were asked how they learned, the Eastridge students had the largest number of responses, 45 and percentage of responses (39%), of all three programs in the student work category. They reported learning from projects, books, novels, packets, performance tasks and text books. Either students at Eastridge prefer learning by doing their own work, or are more exposed to learning this way with their curriculum.

When the Eastridge students were asked what they had learned and what they would like to learn more about, their responses followed the same trends as the other two programs. When the percentage of responses for these two questions for Eastridge were compared the results were: social studies 59% and 64%, language arts 15% and 4.5%, and math 5% and 4.5% respectively.

It was interesting that in all three programs the social studies category received the majority of the responses when students were asked what they wanted to learn more about. Sixty-four percent of the responses (for this question) from Eastridge and 65% of the responses (for this question) from Odyssey were social studies topics. The greatest quantity of the responses for First Class were in the social studies content area also. Is social studies (or humanities or project group) more interesting because of the way it is taught (interdisciplinary in all three programs) or because its topics are more interesting to students?

Another interesting point is that none of the students at Eastridge mentioned wanting to learn more about a science topic and only one cited math (out of 22 responses). The same trend was found in the other three programs. The Odyssey students mentioned wanting to learn more about 3 science topics and 1 math topic (out of 41 responses). First Class had 3 responses for science topics and 8 for math (out of 35 responses).

The report *A Nation at Risk* (1983) specifically mentions that students are not taking difficult math and science courses. Why would students take difficult math and science courses in high school if they don't develop an interest in these subjects in middle school? Of the three programs investigated, the First Class students seem to be a little more interested in learning more about math.

The 8th grade program at Eastridge had the smallest number of students reporting that they would like to learn more about something they had already learned, 36%. They also had the least number of student surveys. This may have affected the results to this question. The First Class program had the most students wanting to learn more, 52%; the 8th grade program at Odyssey had 45%.

When the students at Eastridge were asked their favorite way to learn, their responses closely matched the responses of the students from Odyssey and First Class. Their favorite ways to learn were (#1 being the greatest number of responses): #1 group work, #2 student work, #3 hands-on activities and #4 the teacher teaching. At Odyssey group work, student work and hands-on activities were the 2nd, 3rd and 4th in the number of responses and in First Class they were 5th, 2nd and 1st in the number of

responses. The teacher teaching was also mentioned as 4th favorite way to learn for First Class students.

All three programs had very similar responses to their students' favorite way to learn. Is this a result of their program or student learning preferences?

When the parents of the 8th grade students at Eastridge were asked what students should learn in school, their responses were similar to the parents of the 8th grade students at Odyssey (even though there were 17 parent surveys from Eastridge and 30 parent surveys from Odyssey).

At Eastridge when parents were asked what skills children should learn in school, 43% percent of their responses were traditional skills and 57% percent of the responses were non-traditional skills. These responses were about half traditional and half non-traditional as was the case with the Odyssey school. The Odyssey parents expected 52% traditional skills and 48% non-traditional skills to be taught in school. Some of the responses describing non-traditional skills were also similar. Responses that were common to both schools were: communication skills, organizational skills, teaching information/transfer of knowledge to everyday life, social skills, hands-on training, self esteem, and job skills/training.

Even though the Eastridge program was not a school of choice and Odyssey was, the trend of the responses with respect to traditional and non-traditional skills was similar.

The 8th grade program at Eastridge uses an interdisciplinary curriculum similar to the Odyssey school. Half of the students (green team) have humanities class, math and

science as their core subjects. This is the same format as Odyssey's. The other half of the 8th graders (on the aqua team) have teachers that combine their math, science, language arts and social studies classes (two at a time) on a daily basis for interdisciplinary instruction. The First Class curriculum is much different due to their classes having a different interdisciplinary structure. They have project group, math literacy and psychology as their core classes.

Some of the social studies (project group/humanities) topics at all three programs were similar. Slavery, wars (Civil, W.W.I, W.W.II), and native/indigenous peoples were common to two out of three programs (not all at the same time). Algebra was also mentioned as something learned at all three schools.

Eastridge, Odyssey and First Class all have 90-minute time blocks for their classes. First Class has both 90-minute and 145-minute time blocks for their core classes every day.

Eastridge has a traditional report card with numerical grades. Odyssey also has a traditional style with letter grades. Both schools have effort grades that accompany the main grade. First Class had a totally different report card format.

Over half the parents from Eastridge reported the use of rubrics in grading students. Two parents from Odyssey also mentioned the use of rubrics. Two parents from both schools mentioned liking rubrics because students know what is expected from them in their work. The First Class program does not use rubrics in assessing student work.

When the 8th grade students at Eastridge were asked what they liked about their program, the most popular responses were those related to their classes and how they learn in them. The second most popular category of responses were the affective aspects of the school and program. They enjoyed being given more freedom and responsibility in the 8th grade and also different aspects of their school (wellness week, study hall, dances, etc.). They also mentioned their friends as something they liked about their program.

Students from all three programs reported liking their classes and the teaching methods teachers use. All three programs had the greatest quantity of responses in these categories when asked what they liked about their program.

A conclusion that can be drawn is that the teachers in all three programs are making learning interesting and fun for students with their teaching methods. Hands-on, projects, activities and group work were favorite ways to learn in all three programs.

The teachers from the 8th grade program at Eastridge were asked what sources they used for developing their curriculum and if they used any research-based teaching methods. The two teachers (from the green team) at Eastridge both use cooperative learning. The humanities teacher mentioned using 4MAT, constructivism and performance assessment.

The teachers in all three programs have used some of the same research based teaching methods. They were: cooperative learning/group work, multiple intelligences/different learning styles, and authentic/preformance assessments. The students in all three programs (in this study) reported liking their classes and how they

learn. These teaching methods were also mentioned as a favorite ways for these students to learn.

Both Eastridge and Odyssey students reported liking certain activities at their schools, #2 (in quantity of responses) at Odyssey, #3 (in quantity of responses) at Eastridge. Feeling mature and responsible were popular responses at Eastridge #2 (in quantity of responses) and in First Class #4 (in quantity of responses). Approximately 25% of the students in all three programs mentioned their friends and other students as something they liked about their program.

Students in all three programs mentioned liking activities at their school (dances, assemblies, special events) and the students that they go to school with. The popularity of these responses is probably a reflection of the age group of the students, not a particular program. A comparison to a traditional program would show if this were true.

Six percent of the Eastridge students mentioned liking field trips. Fifteen percent of the Odyssey students and 50% of the First Class students reported liking field trips when they were asked what they liked about their program. Field trips were liked by the students in First Class more than any other program. First Class must be doing field trips in a different way or has more of them since half of their students reported field trips as something they like about First Class.

When the students at Eastridge were asked what they liked about their program sixteen percent of the students at Eastridge reported liking their teachers. One-third of the Odyssey students and 50% of the First Class students reported liking their teachers.

One conclusion that could be drawn from this data is that the First Class program is developing a sense of community between the students and the teachers.

When parents from the 8th grade at Eastridge were asked what they liked about the 8th grade program, their responses were similar to the student's responses. Parents (43%) liked the program and the instruction methods, and one-third liked the teachers.

Fifty percent of First Class parents liked the program and 20% liked the teachers. Seventy-three percent of the Odyssey parents liked aspects of the school/program and 50% liked the teachers. The large number of Odyssey parents liking the school/program was to be expected since Odyssey is a school of choice, and this study found that the parents chose the school because of the teaching methods and philosophies of the program. The Eastridge program is not a program of choice, and few parents of First Class students chose that program for their children.

When the students at Eastridge were asked what they did not like about their program, (48%) mentioned class work, homework and projects. Approximately one-fifth of students at First Class (18%) and Odyssey (16%) mentioned the amount of work involved with their program as something they did not like. The Eastridge percentages were higher; many specifically mentioned the language arts and social studies summative appraisal (21% of students). This specific topic brought up the number of negative responses. This appraisal must be difficult for the students.

Eighteen percent of the students at Eastridge also mentioned the schedule as something about their program they did not like. The schedule was mentioned by students in the other programs also. Twenty-seven percent of students in First Class and

42% at Odyssey mentioned their long classes as something they did not like. The percentages at Eastridge were lower than the other two programs. They also had the least number of student surveys, this may have affected the responses to this question. Maybe they enjoy their classes more (time flies when you are having fun!).

It was surprising that First Class did not have the largest number of students not liking the long class periods. Their morning classes are 50 minutes longer than the other two programs classes. The difference must be in curricular content or teaching methods.

Few students responding from all three programs reported that they did not like the teacher. One at Eastridge, four at Odyssey and two in First Class. These are low numbers considering both Eastridge and Odyssey and some First Class students have had the same teacher for two years. A conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that the length of time a student had a teacher does not have a negative effect on how well the students like the teachers.

Another conclusion could be that non-traditional programs attract exceptional teachers. This point is supported by the data from students reporting that they like their classes, how they learn and their teachers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All three programs had many similar characteristics. In conclusion the similarities will be summarized and the strengths of each program will be highlighted.

Summary of Program Similarities

All three programs started in the past six years. Teachers and administrators were instrumental in the inception of programs. Two programs (First Class and the Odyssey school) started when the climate for program innovation was conducive to change.

In the City School District, the concept of the First Class program was developed by two teachers. The quadrant superintendent supported the program and it started in the Fall of 1990.

In the Greece school district, the superintendent wanted to start a new school that used educational research and teaching innovations as a basis for education. Teachers, administrators and parents developed the structure of the school. It was accepted by the school board in 1993, and the Odyssey School started in the Fall of 1993.

The teachers at Eastridge Junior High School wanted to use interdisciplinary methods in their curriculum. These methods needed extended time periods to execute. Approximately three years ago the block schedule was adopted to meet the needs of the interdisciplinary curriculum.

Two out of the three programs are programs of choice. The Odyssey School is a school of choice in the Greece Central School District. Students in the City School District can choose the First Class program at Frederick Douglass Middle School.

All eighth graders in the East Irondequoit School District are in the 8th grade program at Eastridge Junior High School. They do not have different programs to choose from. However, if students needed to take advanced math or science (offered on green team only) or wanted to change their team, they could have changed teams at the beginning of the year.

All three programs have extended time blocks for learning. The Odyssey and Eastridge programs have 90-minute blocks. First Class has 90- to 145-minute time blocks for instruction.

All three programs have interdisciplinary core courses. The Odyssey program has humanities, math and science courses. The green team at Eastridge has the same core courses. The aqua team at Eastridge has traditional math, science, language arts and social studies courses taught in a interdisciplinary manner. The aqua team schedules any two courses together on any day (at teachers' discretion). First Class has project group (social studies and science) math-literacy (math and language arts) and psychology as its core subjects.

The First Class and the Odyssey programs both fit London's model and Bryant's characteristics of a non-traditional program discussed in the literature. Both programs fit four of the five aspects of a school in the restructuring phase of education.

The Eastridge program fits two characteristics of London's model and two characteristics of Bryant's profile of a non-traditional program. This was expected since

this program had few non-traditional aspects. The surveys were modified to reflect this aspect.

The literature described changes in traditional schools that need to be made to improve learning. The First Class program addresses all of the changes listed on page 123. The Odyssey program also addresses all (except transfer to everyday life) of the required changes. The Eastridge program addresses approximately half of the changes required of traditional schools.

First Class and Odyssey both accomplish the interest component (one of the changes required of traditional schools). Each school accomplishes it in a different way. The First Class accomplishes the interest component by offering a non-traditional curriculum. The Odyssey program incorporates the interest component by offering separate classes (exploratories) in which students can explore interests, and study the traditional curriculum also.

When students were asked their favorite way to learn, those at Eastridge and Odyssey reported group work, student work and hands-on as three of the four most popular categories of responses. The same was true for First Class except group work was fifth in the quantity of responses. (Hands-on was first).

The literature specifically mentions group work and hands-on instruction as aspects that improve learning. This is evidence that all three programs are using these three methods to improve learning.

Another change required of traditional schools that was evident in all three programs was the students' use of higher-level thinking skills in their work. All three programs had students and parents who mentioned something about thinking skills in the

surveys. Some students preferred doing projects, performance tasks, exhibits, research (all require higher-level thinking skills) and some reported that they liked harder, more challenging work (students at Eastridge and First Class). A large number responses from students from all three programs reported that they learned from doing projects, research, exhibits and performance tasks. All three programs are doing a good job of incorporating the higher-level thinking skills. All three programs are focused on making improvements in their programs that were also mentioned as improvement required of traditional programs.

OTHER PROGRAM SIMILARITIES

1. All three programs have included classes.

2. Students in all three programs have had the same teachers for at least the past two years; (some students in First Class have had the same teachers for the last 3 years).

3. Students in all three programs wanted to learn more about topics in the social studies content area. They wanted to learn about social studies topics more than any other content area.

4. Very few students in all three programs wanted to learn more about topics in math and science.

5. The First Class program and the Odyssey school had negative perceptions of their programs from persons outside of the program and school.

6. Students in all three programs reported not liking the long class periods (#1 in quantity of responses at both Odyssey and First Class, #3 in quantity of responses at Eastridge), when students reported what they did not like about their program.

7. Students in all three programs reported not liking the difficult work they accomplished in their classes. (#1 in quantity of responses at Eastridge, #2 in quantity of responses at Odyssey and First Class.)

8. Students in all three programs reported liking the way that they learn in their classes (#1 in quantity of responses at First Class and Eastridge, #3 at Odyssey).

9. Two of the three programs combine social studies and language arts for humanities classes (Odyssey and Eastridge).

10. Of the students in all three programs, approximately half the students wanted to learn more about something they had already learned. (52% in First Class, 45% at Odyssey, 36% at Eastridge).

11. The parents of the students in all three programs expect a mix of traditional and non-traditional skills to be taught in school.

12. The report cards in all three program reported more than grades. They gave an overall picture of how the student is progressing in school and in personal development.

Program Highlights

The 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High

The Eastridge program had the greatest quantity of responses from students reporting that they learned from their own work (the student work category of responses). This program must require students accomplish a fair amount of work on their own, i.e. performance tasks, presentations and readings from books, novels, and text books.

When the Eastridge students were asked their favorite way to learn, they also reported liking to learn by doing their own work. Student work was the second most popular category of responses for this survey question.

The First Class Program at Frederick Douglass Middle School

The First Class program is very different from a traditional middle school program. The core classes are completely different and the block periods are 90-145 minutes (longer than the other two programs). The First Class Program is located in a part of a traditional middle school.

The students in First Class reported liking their classes/instruction and the way they learn more than any other program, (65 responses). These students like what they learned and how they learned. Four students said learning was fun. First Class students reported learning more from guest speakers than from any of the other programs.

Fifty percent of the students liked the field trips and teachers in First Class. These students reported liking their teachers and field trips more than the other two

When students were asked what they liked about their program, specific aspects of the school and program were mentioned more than any other category of responses. This was not a surprise since these students chose to be part of this school because of its beliefs and goals.

The most popular singular response to what the 8th grade students at Odyssey liked about their program was their exploratory classes. This was the single most popular response of all three programs for any of the survey questions.

Suggestions For Further Research

1. Survey students in a traditional program and compare the data from this study, for:
    a) What students learn
    b) How students learn
    c) What they would like to learn more about
    d) What students favorite way to learn is
    e) Likes/dislikes about classes

2. A follow-up study to examine why students in any of these three programs are not interested learning more about math and science topics.

3. A study of the literature to see if middle school students typically are not interested in math and science topics.

4. A follow-up study to see what in particular students from these three programs learned in their programs that was helpful to them in everyday life, high school or college.

5. Survey other non-traditional elementary or high school programs, with a similar set of surveys and compare to this study for similarities and differences.

6. Obtain a profile of the seven intelligences for the general population and compare it to the results of students' preferred learning styles found in this study.

programs. When asked what they did not like about First Class, nine students said there was not anything they did not like.

The large number of students that reported liking their teachers was a reflection of the community atmosphere of this program between the teachers and the students.

The First Class students have more access to computers than the other two programs. When students were asked their favorite way to learn, the third largest quantity of responses was the learning with the computer. None of the other students in the other programs mentioned liking to learn with computers.

First Class had an extensive brochure, "First Class View Book," which thoroughly explained all aspects of the program. This was the most extensive program explanation of the three programs.

The 8th grade program at the Odyssey School

The eighth grade program at Odyssey was also very different from the traditional middle school. The 8th grade program is located in a non-traditional school that is both a middle school and a high school (grades 6-12). The Odyssey School is a school of choice; students enter through a lottery system for admission. The 8th grade program exemplifies the community atmosphere between students, parents and teachers.

Most students reported choosing Odyssey because of the teaching methods or their parents chose the school for them. Most parents chose Odyssey because of the goals and ideas of the school. This was the only program of the three investigated where all the students (or their parents) chose the program.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to develop the characteristics of the non-traditional middle school programs in the Rochester area. Three programs were investigated, then compared to the literature for similarities. The programs were also compared to each other for similarities and differences.

Two of the three schools fit both models and improvements called for in the literature. The third school is also making many of the improvements called for in the literature.

The three programs had many similarities. Some of them were: block scheduling, interdisciplinary courses, the use of higher-level thinking skills in class work, included classes, students had the same teachers for at least 2 years, students that liked how they learned in class and students wanted to learn more about social studies topics.

Each program had its own strengths. The First Class students liked what and how they learned. The 8th grade students at Eastridge learned the most by doing work on their own. The parents of the 8th grade students at Odyssey are very involved in their children's education and complimentary of their children's teachers. Students, parents and teachers at Odyssey worked together to develop the best educational program for their students. The 8th grade program at Odyssey is a model of a community school program.

Students in all three programs like their classes and how they are taught. All three programs were using hands-on, student work, group work, field trips, guest

speakers and games as methods that involve students in their learning. Students reported these methods as favorite ways for them to learn.

All of these programs are using current educational research to improve their education programs. All of the programs investigated have strengths, and are models of an improved educational system.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Student surveys

1. First Class
2. 8th grade program at Odyssey
3. 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High

STUDENT SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Frederick Douglass Middle School

NAME OF PROGRAM: First Class (Optional) NAME: _____

STUDENT AGE:_____ STUDENT GRADE:_____

MALE____ FEMALE____ YEARS IN THIS PROGRAM:_____

I. Program Choice/Assignment

A. Why are you in First Class ?

II. Curriculum

A. Describe three (3) things that you have learned while in First Class and how you learned it.

Examples of different ways of learning: Projects, Field trips, Guest speakers, computer, newspaper/magazine articles, movie/video, teacher lecture, group work, games, hands on experience, portfolio pieces, exhibits (oral, written, drawing), role playing, publishing, reenacting, storytelling, modeling or any others used at your school.

EXAMPLE: a) The anatomy of horses - from a guest speaker

	WHAT YOU LEARNED	HOW YOU LEARNED
1)		
2)		
3)		

B. Are there any topics that you learned about in 8th grade that you would like to learn *more* about? Please list them.

C. What is your favorite way of learning? Please describe in detail.
For example, if you like working on the computer please describe how you learn from the computer.

III. Community Interaction

A. If the students helped develop classroom rules, what rules did you come up with?

B. How are you involved with student input into your program? (Improvements in First Class)?

IV. General Questions

A. What do you like about First Class ? (Please list 4 things)

1)

2)

3)

4)

B. What don't you like about First Class?

C. Would you like to finish High School? Yes No

If you want to go to college, how many years would you go for?
(Please circle answer)
1 yr 2 yrs 3 yrs 4 yrs 5 yrs or more

C. What is your favorite way of learning? Please describe in detail.
For example, if you like working on the computer please describe how you learn from the computer.

III. Community Interaction

A. If the students helped develop classroom rules, what rules did you come up with?

B. Are you involved with student input into your program, school activities, or school government?

IV. General Questions

A. What do you like about the Odyssey school or the 8th grade program?
(Please list 4 things)

1)

2)

3)

4)

B. What don't you like about the Odyssey School or the 8th grade program?

C. Would you like to finish High School? Yes No

If you want to go to college, how many years would you go for?
(Please circle answer)
1 yr 2 yrs 3 yrs 4 yrs 5 yrs or more

STUDENT SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Odyssey School - Greece Central School District

NAME OF PROGRAM: 8th grade (Optional) NAME: _____

STUDENT AGE:_____ STUDENT GRADE:_____

MALE___ FEMALE___ YEARS IN THIS SCHOOL:_____

I. Program Choice/Assignment

A. Why are you at the Odyssey School?

II. Curriculum

A. Describe three (3) things that you have learned while in 8th grade and how you learned it.

Examples of different ways of learning: Projects, Field trips, Guest speakers, computer, newspaper/magazine articles, movie/video, teacher lecture, group work, games, hands on experience, portfolio pieces, exhibits (oral, written, drawing), role playing, publishing, reenacting, storytelling, modeling or any others used at your school.

EXAMPLE: a) The anatomy of horses - from a guest speaker

	WHAT YOU LEARNED	HOW YOU LEARNED
1)		
2)		
3)		

B. Are there any topics that you learned about in 8th grade that you would like to learn *more* about? Please list them.

STUDENT SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Eastridge Jr. Hi - East Irondequoit School District

NAME OF PROGRAM: _____ Team

STUDENT AGE:_____ STUDENT GRADE:_____

MALE___ FEMALE___ YEARS IN THIS SCHOOL:_____

I. Curriculum

A. Describe three (3) things that you have learned while on the 8th grade and how you learned it.

Examples of different ways of learning: Projects, Field trips, Guest speakers, computer, newspaper/magazine articles, movie/video, teacher lecture, group work, games, hands on experience, portfolio pieces, exhibits (oral, written, drawing), role playing, publishing, reenacting, storytelling, modeling or any others used at your school.

	WHAT YOU LEARNED		HOW YOU LEARNED
EXAMPLE:	The anatomy of horses	-	from a guest speaker
1)			
2)			
3)			

B. Are there any topics that you learned about in 8th grade that you would like to learn *more* about? Please list them.

C. What is your favorite way of learning? Please describe in detail.
For example, if you like working on the computer please describe how you learn from computer.

II. Community Interaction

A. If the students helped develop classroom rules, what rules did you feel were important?

B. If you are involved with student input into your program, or school government please state what it is you do.

III. General Questions

A. What do you like about 8th grade? (Please list 4 things)

1)

2)

3)

4)

B. What don't you like about 8th grade?

C. Would you like to finish High School? Yes No

If you want to go to college, how many years would you go for?
(Please circle answer)
1 yr 2 yrs 3 yrs 4 yrs 5 yrs or more

APPENDIX B

Parent surveys and cover letters

1. Parent letter - Eastridge Jr. High
2. Parent survey - Eastridge Jr. High
3. Parent survey - Odyssey
4. Parent survey - First Class

March 29, 1996

Dear Parents\Guardians:

I am a graduate student at the State University at Brockport, finishing my Masters degree in Secondary Education. The topic for my thesis is Non-Traditional Middle School programs in the Rochester area. I am basing the research for my thesis on surveys from students, parents, teachers and administrators at several schools, including the one your child is currently attending.

Attached are two surveys. One for a parent/guardian to compete, the other for the student. I am asking that both be returned within the next two days. Both surveys should take approximately 20 minutes each to complete. The summation of the information I receive from you (and your child) will be contained in my thesis, which will be kept on file at the University of Brockport's Library. The survey is anonymous, however I need parental permission to survey minors. Please sign at the bottom of this letter to give your permission to survey your child. This is a voluntary survey, if you so not wish to participate do not fill out survey. You can withdraw from the survey at any time. However, I can only analyze the surveys that have been returned, therefor my report will only reflect this information. Your input is important, the teachers and administrators at your child's school are interested in your responses to the survey.

Please take a minute at this time to fill out the survey and give it to your child to return to 4/2/96. Thank-you in advance for your time and input. Your feedback will benefit the educational program your child is presently in, as well as programs being developed for the future.

Sincerely,

Julie Bolton
Brockport Graduate Student

I _____ having read the above explanation give my permission for my child

_____ to participate in the survey conducted by Julie Bolton for her thesis project.

_____ _____

PARENT SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Eastridge Jr. Hi School - East Irondequoit School District

NAME OF PROGRAM: Aqua Team (Optional) NAME:_____

FATHER____ MOTHER____ GRADE OF STUDENT:_____

Please answer the following questions. I am using this information to conduct my graduate research on the characteristics of different programs in the Middle School. The information I collect from the survey will be used for that purpose only and will not be distributed to other sources.

1. What skills should children learn in school?

   a. What of these skills is your child learning in the 8th grade?

2. How are your children graded in 8th grade? What do you like about this system? Dislike?

3. Does your child seem to like school more in 8th grade? What specifically does he/she like? Dislike?

4. How do you feel about the 8th grade when compared to a totally traditional middle school program?

Any additional comments or questions:

NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAM
PARENT SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Odyssey School - Greece Central School District

NAME OF PROGRAM: 8th grade program (Optional) Name:_____

FATHER_____ MOTHER_____ GRADE OF STUDENT:_____

1. How did your child become enrolled at the Odyssey School?

2. What skills should children learn in school?

   a. Do you feel your child is learning these skills at Odyssey?

3. How are your children graded on the 8th grade team?

4. Does your child seem to like school more as a member of the 8th grade team at Odysssey? What specifically does he/she like? What does he/she dislike?

5. How do you feel about the 8th grade program when compared to the traditional middle school program?

Any additional comments or questions:

NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAM
PARENT SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Feddrick Douglass Middle School

NAME OF PROGRAM: First Class (Optional) NAME: _____

MALE_____ FEMALE_____ GRADE OF STUDENT:_____

1. How did your child become enrolled in First Class?

2. What skills should children learn in school?

   a. Do you feel your child is learning these skills in First Class?

3. How are your children graded in First Class? What do you like or dislike about this system?

4. Does your child seem to like school more as a member of First Class? What specifically does he/she like? What does he/she dislike?

5. How do you feel about First Class when compared to the traditional middle school program?

Any additional comments or questions:

APPENDIX C

Teacher surveys and cover letters

1. Teacher letter - First Class
2. Teacher survey - First Class
3. Teacher survey - Odyssey
4. Teacher survey - Eastridge Jr. High

February 27, 1996

Dear Teachers:

I am a graduate student at the State University at Brockport, finishing my Master's degree in Secondary Education. The topic for my thesis is Non-Traditional Middle School programs in the Rochester area. I am basing the research for my thesis on surveys from students, parents, teachers and administrators at several schools, including Odyssey.

The purpose of my work is to get a general idea of what each program is like. I'm trying to find out what teaching methods are being used, what are your sources for curriculum development, why you choose to teach in a non-traditional environment etc. (see surveys). The summation of the information I receive from you, the students, parents and administrators will be contained in my thesis. If you would like a copy of the survey results for your school (or my thesis), please leave your name and address on this letter and return the entire packet.

I am asking all the teachers in First Class to fill out the attached survey and return it to sometime this week. Please take a minute at this time to fill out the survey. Thank-you in advance for your time and input. Your feedback will benefit the educational program you are currently involved in, as well as programs being developed for the future.

Sincerely,

Julie Bolton
Brockport Graduate Student

NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAM TEACHER SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Frederick Douglass

NAME OF PROGRAM: First Class

SUBJECT AREA:_____

GRADE OF STUDENTS: _____

YEARS IN THIS PROGRAM: _____

YEARS IN TEACHING: _____

1. How did you become involved with First Class?
   a. If you chose to be in this program, why did you select it?
   b. If you were chosen for the program, what advantages do you see in this setting?

2. Curriculum
   a. What sources did you use to develop the curriculum for your subject area?

   b. Is the curriculum interdisciplinary? What subjects are taught in conjunction with yours?

3. General Questions

a. Do you follow any particular teaching styles or models that current research has shown as successful in improving learning? If so, please note particular models.

b. What forms of assessment are you currently using?

c. Are parents involved with class activities? How are they involved?

d. What do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of this program?

NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAM TEACHER SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Odyssey School NAME OF PROGRAM: _____

SUBJECT AREA:_____ GRADE OF STUDENTS: _____

YEARS IN THIS PROGRAM: _____ YEARS IN TEACHING: _____

1. How did you become involved with the Odyssey School?
   a. If you chose to be in this program, why did you select it?
   b. If you were chosen for the program, what advantages do you see in this setting?

2. Curriculum
   a. What sources did you use to develop the curriculum for your subject area?

   b. Is the curriculum interdisciplinary? What subjects are taught in conjunction with yours?

3. General Questions

a. Do you follow any particular teaching styles or models that current research has shown as successful in improving learning? If so, please note particular models.

b. What forms of assessment are you currently using?

c. Are parents involved with class activities? How are they involved?

d. What do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of this program?

NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAM TEACHER SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: Eastridge Jr. Hi - East Irondequoit School District

NAME OF PROGRAM: _____Team

SUBJECT AREA:_____ GRADE OF STUDENTS: _____
(what you are teaching)
YEARS IN THIS PROGRAM: _____ YEARS IN TEACHING: _____

1. How did you become involved with the _____ Team?
   a. If you chose to be in this program, why did you select it?
   b. If you were chosen for the program, what advantages do you see in this setting?

2. Curriculum
   a. What sources did you use to develop the curriculum for your subject area?

   b. Is the curriculum interdisciplinary? What subjects are taught in conjunction with yours?

3. General Questions

a. Do you follow any particular teaching styles or models that current research has shown as successful in improving learning? If so, please note particular models.

Examples: Cooperative learning, using the seven intelligences to develop lesson plans, role playing, exhibits etc.

b. What forms of assessment are you currently using?

c. Are parents involved with class activities? How are they involved?

d. What do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of this program?

APPENDIX D

Administrator survey and letters

1. Administrator survey
2. Letter of appreciation - Odyssey School
3. Letter of appreciation - Eastridge Jr. High

NON-TRADITIONAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL: NAME OF PROGRAM:

GRADE LEVELS: TYPE OF SCHOOL:

I. THE SCHOOL

A. How did the program/school get started?

B. What major skills(for students) does the program highlight as important?

C. How are students selected for the program?

D. What is the present enrollment demand? (Waiting list/ more spots than students/etc)

E. How are teachers selected for the program?

F. Two major things that make the Non-traditional program/school better than a traditional program?

II. DAILY SCHEDULE

A. What is daily schedule like for the non-traditional program? (How long are the core classes, block scheduling, semester programs, schedule etc)

III. Curriculum

A. Are core subjects interdisciplinary? Are math and science or science and social studies taught together?

B. Do teachers team teach or to what extent do they collaborate?

IV. General

A. How do you feel about the _____ program? What are some advantages/disadvantages?

B. Do the _____ students show any significant difference in standardized test scores when compared to their peers in this school or else where in the district? OR Is there any other significant differences when compared to students form a traditional background?

June 18, 1996

Phil D'Angelo, Vice Pricipal
Odyssey School
Greece Central School District
Rochester, NY 14615

Dear Mr. D'Angelo:

I want to thank-you for your help in gathering data for my thesis. Thanks for your time, effort and patience with my questions. Because of the 8th grade teachers and your efforts I have collected a large quantity of data. The analysis of the data shows many positive aspects of the 8th grade program at Odyssey.

Unfortunately, at this time my thesis is not complete. I hope to complete it this Fall. I will forward those who requested a copy at that time. Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely,

Julie Bolton

June 18, 1996

Dr. George Batterson, Principal
Eastridge Junior High School
2350 East Ridge Road
Rochester, NY 14622

Dear Dr. Batterson:

I want to thank-you for your help in gathering data for my thesis. Thanks for your time and effort in writing the cover letter for my surveys. Because of your efforts and the efforts of Mr. Spring, Ms. Morelle, and Ms. Stiteler, I have collected a large quantity of data. The analysis of the data shows many positive aspects of the 8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High.

Unfortunately, at this time my thesis is not complete. I hope to complete it this Fall. I will forward those who requested a copy at that time. Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely,

Julie Bolton

APPENDIX E

First Class documents

1. First Class schedule - 1995-96 School Year
2. Project Group offerings
3. First Class report card and explanation
4. Project Group description
5. Math-Literacy description
6. Portfolios description
7. PACE Project - First Class involvement

6/7/8D RED STUDENT SCHEDULE

		Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Wed time	Per.
	7:50-8:00	ARRIVAL/LOCKER PRIVILEGES				7:50-8:00	
	8:00-8:25	HOMEBASE				8:00-8:20	
1	8:25	PROJECT GROUP	PROJECT GROUP	MATH LITERACY	MATH LITERACY	PSYCHOLOGY	8:20	1
2								2
3	10:50						10:25	3
4	10:55 – 11:25	**Lunch 10:55 - 11:25 Wed - 10:30 - 11:00**					10:30 – 11:00	4
5	11:30	WEEK A	6D Y123 PE 7D X1 PE		8D Y45 ART 7D X2 HLTH		11:05	5
	12:10	WEEK B	6D Y123 ART 7D X1 HLTH		8D Y45 PE 7D X2 PE		11:40	
6	12:15	DRAW 142	DRAW 142	DRAW 142		DRAW 142	11:42	6
	12:55						12:20	
7		MATH LITERACY	MATH LITERACY	PROJECT GROUP	PROJECT GROUP	MATH LITERACY		7
8	2:25						1:40	8
	2:25	Bus Riders - Dismissal					1:40	
	2:30	Walkers - Dismissal					1:45	

Project Group Cycle
for
1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97

Of the fifteen project groups offered, students who attend FIRST CLASS for all three years of middle school will be able to participate in nine of them, three in each category:

Local Connections: Rochester and New York State
September until December

Bug Club (Pina Buonomo and Steven Daniel)
Habitats and Ecosystems (Nancy Sundberg)
International Sister Cities of Rochester (Bonnie Dorschel and Geoffrey Miller)
Rochistory (Stephen Dudley and Alice Lombardo)
Underground Railroad (Claire Bigg and Donna Groff / Patrick Lowery)

National Connections: From Sea to Shining Sea, the U.S. A.
December until March

Entrepreneurship (Patrick Lowery and Geoffrey Miller)
Expression through the Arts (Stephen Dudley and Alice Lombardo)
Oceans and Seashore Communities (Pina Buonomo and Kevin Fager)
Treasures of this Land: Our National Parks (Steven Daniel and Nancy Sundberg)
World Without End (Claire Bigg)

Global Connections: Our Only World
March until June

Adventures in Time (Stephen Dudley and Nancy Sundberg)
Exploration (Pina Buonomo and Patrick Lowery)
Indigenous People (Alice Lombardo and Geoffrey Miller)
French Language and Culture (Bonnie Dorschel)
Rainforests and The Voyage of the Mimi (Claire Bigg and Steven Daniel)

1995-96 FIRST CLASS Report Card

Student _____

Home Base Teacher(s) _____

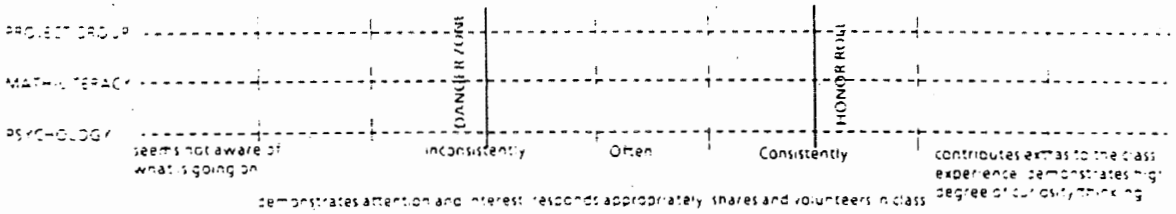
_____

Phone 482-2000 extension _____

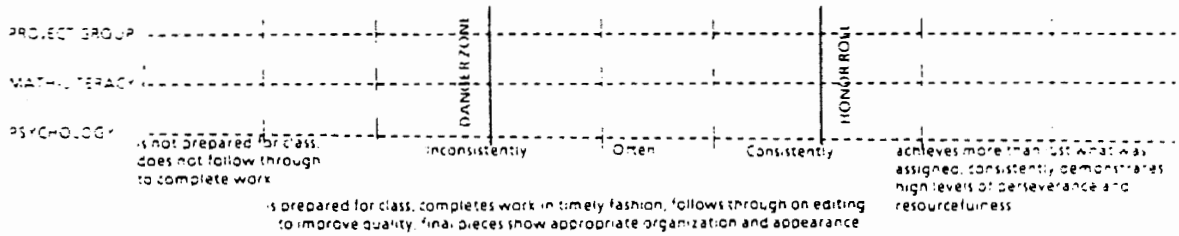
Attendance	Home Base		
	1	2	3
Days Possible			
Days Absent			
Times Tardy			
Honor Roll			
Renaissance Student			

Red Flag	1	2	3
Math-Literacy			
Project Group			
Psychology			

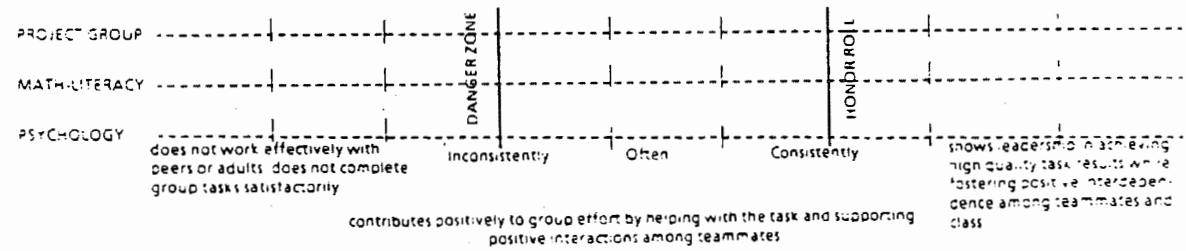
Engagement: Class Participation and Involvement



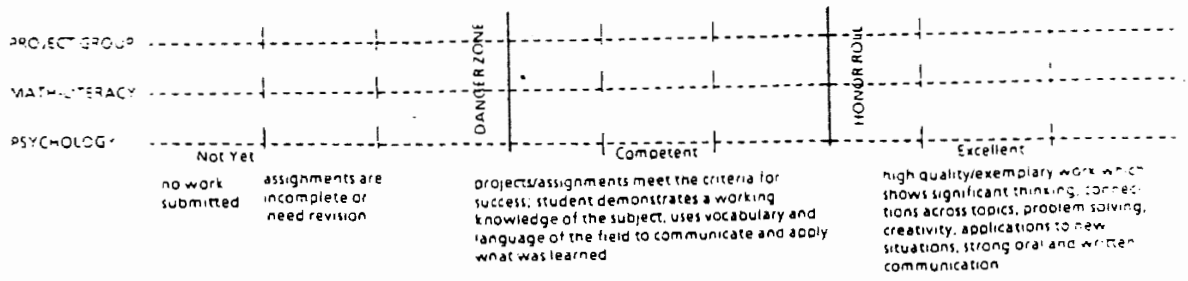
Independence and Self-Direction



Collaboration, Cooperative Learning Groups, and Working Relationships with Others



Performance: Quality of Work



Reading the Report Card

The First Class report card was designed especially for our students; and we hope that once you are familiar with it you will find it both informative and useful. We believe the following features help make it so:

a) The overarching standard for success in First Class is a best effort from the student.

b) Therefore, our report card is designed to provide information about both the level of effort we observe and a rating of the outcome or result of that effort.

c) The four categories of marks - *Engagement, Collaboration, Independence,* and *Performance* - are key areas needed for success in high school, college, on the job, and generally in life.

d) Research has found that students are in fact putting forth their best effort when there is a high level of involvement (*"Engagement"*) in the class process, and that this effort becomes most productive when the student has strong group skills (*"Collaboration"*) and can also be self reliant (*"Independence"*). The first three categories of marks on the report card reflect these areas.

e) The fourth category, *"Performance"*, is intended to give students and families a sense of the quality and level of the work the student has produced.

f) All of the marks are recorded on a continuum which provide a visual record of progress and growth over the course of the year.

g) The descriptions under each continuum show specific things the student can do to move his/her marks further along toward more success in school.

Look back at the copy of the report card on the previous page. Notice that there are four sets of three lines each. In each set the first line shows the marks for project group, the second line the marks for math-literacy, and the third line the marks for home base/psychology. The marks for the first marking period will be indicated with the number one (1). The next time you receive a report card, the marks will be shown with the number two (2), and with a three (3) on the last one; each number indicating the marking period for which the mark was given.

In June, on the final report card, there will be three numbers on each line which we hope will give you and the student a very clear sense of the progress and growth achieved over the course of the year. Each line is a continuum from no effort on the left edge to extraordinary achievement on the right edge.

In the first three categories - *"Engagement"*, *"Collaboration"*, and *"Independence"* - there are descriptions of what was observed and approximately how often. Again, a mark near the left edge of the continuum indicates that the student is putting forth little or no effort, while a mark near the right edge shows extraordinary achievement. In the middle of the continuum is the area showing that the student is working in a manner generally expected of middle school students. *"Inconsistently"* indicates that the student is working well some of the time but not yet on a regular basis; how frequently this occurs will determine whether or not the mark is placed in the "*Danger Zone*". *"Often"* means that the student is working well most of the time. "*Consistently*" is just that, whenever expected; how closely this effort comes to "almost always" is what determines whether or not the mark is in the "*Honor Roll*" area.

The fourth category, *"Performance"*, indicates the quality of the student's work within three ratings: A *"Not Yet"* on this continuum means there is work still to be done, the level of achievement is not yet competent; a *"Competent"* indicates that the work completed has met the criteria for success, and an *"Excellent"* reflects work that is of exceptionally high quality, possibly at a high school or college level.

Under the guide words are descriptions of the behavior or work teachers are observing. We have worked hard to make these descriptions very specific so that students receive clear information about what they need to do more frequently or more carefully in order to move later marks further to the right along the continuum. For example, if students want to improve their marks in *"Engagement"*, it is clear that they will have to demonstrate attention and interest, respond appropriately, share, and volunteer in class more frequently.

Notice also the vertical lines marked *Danger Zone* and *Honor Roll*. Students achieve Honor Roll if ALL of their marks are to the right of that line. Therefore, students who are seeking a place on the Honor Roll but did not achieve it should be able to tell very clearly what they are doing that is successfully making them eligible for it and what they need to do more of.

A mark in the *Danger Zone* indicates that the student is having serious difficulty. Two marks in the *Danger Zone* cause a *RED FLAG* to be placed on the report card. Two *RED FLAGS* in one class over the course of the eighth grade year means that the student will require additional time in First Class before moving on to high school.

The boxes at the top of the report card have been added this year so that both *RED FLAGS* and Honor Roll achievement are clearly and unmistakably indicated.

Project Groups

Science and social studies content is taught in thematic units, where English, reading, and math provide the tools for in depth study. The units are large topics, usually involving significant issues, that demand investigation across subjects and disciplines. They touch on areas of vital concern in our lives and throughout the world today - community life, the environment, war and peace, systems in and out of balance, progress, personal and world security, technology, diversity, human rights and human relations, growing up. As the topics are explored, students are introduced to many fields of knowledge including geography, ecology, economics, politics, sociology, earth science, biology, government, resource management, conflicts of interest, and negotiation. They grow in their understanding of complexity and begin to recognize the fundamental interconnectedness of all things. They learn to question, investigate, explore. In a basic way they learn to think more deeply and carefully, critically and creatively about the way things are - and the way they might be.

The work in a project group is active and generally includes some combination of the following: research, group work, demonstrations, art and other hands on activities, videotapes and slides, guest speakers, field trips, presentations for and by peers, interviewing, computer work, simulations, and independent projects. Because such work takes significant time, project groups meet for up to two hours and ten minutes four days a week.

Math-Literacy

We are in the midst of a national effort to transform instruction in mathematics and language arts, so that students will be able to gain a much broader, integrated understanding of their richness and depth. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics have published standards which define what it means to be educated in mathematics. The National Council of Teachers of English, the Association for Language Arts, and the International Reading Association are now working together to do the same for language arts. These standards are statements about what is valued in today's world. They establish a broad curriculum and can be used to evaluate students' working knowledge in each field.

Math-literacy classes in First Class provide integrated, project-based experiences based upon these standards. Our mathematics component focuses on geometry and algebra, and includes work in the areas of patterns, measurement, computations, estimation, number systems, statistics, and probability. Much of our instruction is built upon the *Connected Math Program*, which was developed at Michigan State University. In addition some classes are also investigating extended topics such as Number Systems, Volume, Math Club, The 4 - 4's Challenge, and Data Collection and Interpretation. Our literacy component addresses speaking, listening, writing, and reading through activities related to book publishing, drama, poetry, shared novels, and Shakespeare.

Taken together, these two seemingly autonomous components - mathematics and literacy - serve to help us support students in developing their skills in communication, problem solving, reasoning, perspective taking, invention, constructing meaning, and making connections. Often classes are structured in long term units that challenge students to be problem solvers and reflective learners. Journals are a common feature in all of the classes and serve multiple purposes. They provide a means for helping students process and articulate what they're experiencing and learning, share reactions and feelings, ask questions or make suggestions, reflect on their growth over time, and maintain an ongoing and more personalized dialogue with their teachers.

Portfolios

Artists and architects have a long tradition of using portfolios to capture the essence of the work they do. Typically in their portfolios they have samples of their work: sometimes the pieces themselves, other times sketches, photographs, or blueprints. They may choose to include reviews or critiques that show what other people have said about something they have done. Sometimes they attach notes from their own journals to help explain what they were thinking and feeling at the time they were working on a particular piece. They often include things that show the variety of their work, changes over time, growth, and increasing skill. Almost always there are pieces they love and cherish and a sense that a personality and style are being revealed.

Every First Class student is developing his/her own portfolio. All of the portfolios have certain things in common: work samples, for example, from all of their classes along with sketches or photographs or tapes and some kind of commentary that explains how choices and decisions are being made. Yet each one is also unique because it reflects the talents, effort, achievements, satisfactions, frustrations, growth and personality of the individual creating it.

In 1991-1992 students and staff began exploring the possibilities of portfolios with collection files, learning journals, and scrapbooks. The following year students placed significant samples of work from each of their classes in their portfolios, and eighth graders presented them to a graduation committee.

Then in 1993-1994 all students needed to ensure that the work samples they selected represented significant work with evidence of revision or multiple drafts, thinking, mathematical processes, group work, and creativity. Last year the requirements for significant work were further increased to include a working knowledge of the subject, in depth understanding, research, reflections, assessments, and presentation readiness in terms of organization and appearance; and presentation of the portfolio to a graduation committee became a rquirement for graduation.

Parents are invited often to participate in reading, assessing, and advising students on the work and commentaries in their portfolios.

Performance Assessment Collaboratives for Education

This project, based at Harvard University, is a five-year study of school based assessment reform, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. At the heart of this effort is a group of ten middle schools from across the nation, including First Class, where teachers and students are using portfolios as a way of setting high and evolving standards for students and as a way of making public how good work is achieved.

Portfolios were chosen as the focal point for this effort because they are an ongoing collection of work which can:

- allow students to demonstrate eventual competence;
- make the thought and working processes of students visible and open to discussion;
- permit teachers, students and families to acknowledge growth as well as achievement; and
- encourage the discussion of evolving standards of good work.

First Class participation in this project includes: a) interviews of students, parents and teachers by researchers and evaluators, b) review of student portfolios in the context of portfolios developed in the other nine schools, c) development of exemplary units of instruction with educators across the nation, d) publication in professional journals, and e) support in developing an integrated system of instruction and assessment.

APPENDIX F

8th grade program at Odyssey documents

1. Welcome to Odyssey brochure
2. Exploratory schedule - First Quarter 1995-96
3. Proposed schedule for 1996-97 School Year

#	teacher	course title	room	gr	cred*	stdts
1.	Bruce	Concert Band***	aud	6, 7**	yes	30
2.	Davidson	Chorus A***	103	8-11**	yes	45
3.	Kleman-Belanger	Ceramics	122	8-11**	yes	22
4.	Gates	Graphic Communications	124	9-11**	yes	22
5.	Williams	Kids Pairs	117	*50% 6-8, 50% 9-11*		30
6.	Menges/Butler	Basketball League	gym	6-8boys + *PR*		24+
7.	Eckert	Ody. Literary Magazine	102	6-11	ex	24
8.	Wolcott	Pep Club	308	6-11	no	24
9.	Sine	Service with a Smile	108	6-11	yes	24
10.	Serotsky	Improvisation & Theater Games	305	6-11	no	24
11.	Avery	Adv. Science Topics***	121	9-11**	yes	24
12.	Morchower	Go the Distance	219	6-11	no	24
13.	SL 7	Study Hall	215	6-11	no	24
14.	Ramsey	You Are the Jury I	212	6-8**	ex	24
15.	LaMonica	This is Geometry?	217	6-8**	ex	24
16.	McDonald	Bugs, bugs, bugs!	211	6-8**	ex	24
17.	Harrington	Mindstretch	209	6-7**	no	24
18.	Callard-Szulgit	Fractured Fairy Tales	304	6-11	ex	24
19.	Benson	Math Tricks and Tips	306	6**	ex	24
20.	Marcello	Assignment: the World	213	6-8	ex	24
21.	Laurini, Quitaldi, Buckert	Adventures in Dance	cafe	6-11	no	24
22.	DePeters	Community Service	302	6-11	yes	24
23.	Nigro	Intro to Martial Arts	111	6-11	no	24
24.	Kornfeld & Stauber	OTCOM	fac cafe	*pre-registration only*		6?
25.	Galusha	Caligraphy	307	6-11	no	10
26.	Mangialino	Basic Metals & Jewelry Making	128	6-11	no	10
27.	Reger	Library Helpers	lib	10-11**	no	6
28.	Scott, Kodak:	Understanding World Wide Web	126	8-11	no	6
29.	Tennity	Sewing	228a	6-11	no	10
30.	Barnett	Young Women in Harmony	119	6-11	no	30
31.	Manella	Tool Machining Observations	226	*pre-registration only*		2
32.	Lafler	Science Fiction	303	6-7(8)	no	5

Tuesday - Friday Classes

#	teacher	course title	room	gr	cred*	stdts
1.	Bruce	Select Band***	aud	8-11**	yes	35
2.	Davidson	Chorus B***	103	6-7**	yes	45
3.	Kleman-Belanger	Drawing & Painting	122	8-11**	yes	22
4.	Gates	Materials $ Manufacturing	124	9-11**	yes	22
5.	SE 11	Study Hall	207	6-11	no	24
6.	Weber	CEIP (Career Exploration Internship Program)***		11	yes	24
7.	Busacco	The Stock Market Game	208	6-11	ex	24
8.	Ferris-McCarthy	Magic with Chemistry	224	6-11	ex	24
9.	Bagley-Menges	Announcements Crew	101	8-11**	no	24
10.	Harvey	Psychology***	212	9-11	yes	24
11.	Cross	Short Stories	108	6-8**	no	24
12.	Zima	Announcement Crew	223	6-11	no	24
13.	Chapman	Investigating and Reporting	228	8-10**	ex	24
14.	Izzo	Issues in Society: the Shadow of Hate	228a	8-11**	ex	24
15.	LoPresto	The Calculator & You	222	7-9**	ex	24
16.	Wehner	Finish the Fitness Trail!	220	8-9	ex	24
17.	Zarnstorff	Games in Spanish	115	6-11	ex	24
18.	Bennett	Culture of the Germans	113	8-11**	ex	24
19.	Witt	Contemporary Issues***	117	9-11	yes	24
20.	Marolf	Advanced Earth Science: Astronomy***	123	9-11	yes	24
21.	Schneider	Chess Challenge	120	6-11	no	24
22.	Singleton	Middle School Girls Intramurals	gym	6-8girls	no	24
23.	new VP, Galusha	Boxing Conditioning	cafe/out	11boys	no	24
24.	Robertson	Rochester Resources	lib	9-11	ex	24
25.	Forrest	French Conversation	305	9-11	ex	6
		pre-requisite for #25 = level II completed				
26.	Salah	Punchline	307	8-11**	no	12
27.	Camiolo	Kiwanis Key Club	209	9-11**	no	16
28.	Matuikas, Bielak	Horses	113a	6-8	no	8
29.	Goodger	Stock Market Challenge	226	9-11**	no	10

***credit:** courses are technically only credit bearing for high school students. However, if the column reads "yes," it means that there is a report card grade for all who take this course and credit for the high school students taking this course.

******denotes that there will be some **exceptions** to this grade restriction. If no ** then the grade restriction will be firm.

*******represents courses which go **MORE THAN ONE QUARTER.** Read the booklet carefully. Signing up for this course is a commitment *beyond* one quarter.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE CHANGE FOR ODYSSEY BLOCK/LUNCH

Second Proposal

Time	Middle School (Grades 6-8)	Time	High School (Grades 9-11)
8:00-8:05	Connectime Homeroom	8:00-8:05	Connectime Homeroom
8:08-9:35	A Block	8:08-9:35	A Block
9:38-11:05	B Block	9:38-11:05	B Block
11:08-11:45	Odyssey Block	11:08-11:30	Lunch
11:48-12:10	Lunch	11:33-12:10	Odyssey Block
12:13-1:40	C Block	12:13-1:40	C Block
1:43-2:20	Exploratory Block	1:43-2:20	Exploratory Block

Notes:

1) All students would each lunch between 11:08 and 12:10.
2) All three integrated blocks would meet at the same time.
3) 8th Grade students in High School music performance groups would follow high school time schedule on the day their groups meet and eat in the cafeteria.
4) This schedule would allow Thesis to autoschedule our master schedule without any manipulations to the three integrated blocks.
5) There could still be Middle/High School student cross-overs for contact during Odyssey Blocks (i.e. Peer Tutoring) by having both students eat at the same lunch time.

APPENDIX G

8th grade program at Eastridge Jr. High documents

1. Green Team - Humanities Class Progress Report
2. 8th Grade Teacher Schedule - green and aqua teams
3. Eastridge Jr. High - Grades 7, 8, & 9 Writing Rubric
4. Slavery Debate Outline - Humanities Class
5. Sample Performance Task and Rubric - Humanities Class
6. Writing Rubric - 8th Grade Language Arts

Eastridge Junior High School Progress Report

2350 Ridge Rd. East, Rochester NY 14622 (716) 336-7100
Mr. Spring, Mr. Miller-Redding, Mr. Whitaker (716)336-7093

udent _____ Advisor _____ Class Period _____

gnatures: Student _____ Advisor _____ Parent _____

Conferences:

[redacted]

Time Management Progress: High Performance - Growing - Beginning - None
Effort: High Performance - Growing - Beginning - None

Absences Tardies	
Uses Class time for class work	
Makes effective use of commitment sheets and calandars	
Meets appointments	
Meets deadlines	

Movement Towards Independence Progress: High Performance - Growing - Beginning - None
Effort: High Performance - Growing - Beginning - None

Works satisfactorily within classroom	
Responds productively in small groups	
Meets short term assignments satisfactorily	
Mets long-term assignments satisfactorily	
Brings "outside" ideas/materials to classroom	
Identifies own issues of interest	
Responds positively to personal critiques	

COPING WITH FRUSTRATION Progress: High Performance - Growing - Beginning - None
Effort: High Performance - Growing - Beginning - None

Identifies ares of difficulty	
Identifies that choices are availiable to people	
Evaluates possible approaches and solutions	
Considers possible outcomes	
Exhibits appropriate self-discipline	
Turns frustrating circumstances into new beginning	

- provide a shadowing experience
- welcome a field trip
- mentor an interested student
- offer a tour
- donate equipment
- share your facilities

--- as an individual ---

- lecture or demonstrate
- tutor
- teach an Exploratory course
- advise a school activity
- train staff
- serve on a committee

drop in any time: we have an open door policy

How to Learn More about Us:

- Contact Partnerships Coordinator Doug DeVey at 865-4880
- Contact administrators Ron Nigro, Paul Menges, or Donna Schalge at 865-4880
- Contact PTSA presidents Bob and Beverly Schantz at 865-4880
- Write for more information through Doug DeVey
- Come visit!

Vice-Principals
Paul Menges
Donna Schalge

Partnerships Coordinator
Douglas DeVey

Sports Coordinator
Michael Butler

Superintendent of Schools
Raymond Page

Board Clerk.....Ruth Ranzenbach

Board of Education

President.....Joseph Doran

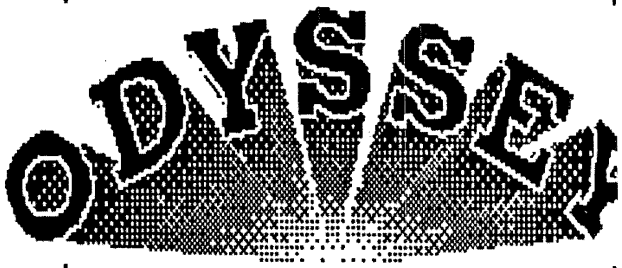
Vice-President.....Karen A. Hoffman

Robert F. Guardino
Fred. R. Koeng
Robert L. Mueller
Mark L. Quadrini
Daniel E.Richardson
Patricia M. Tillou
Paul M. Wawrzyniak

Greece Central School District

9/4/96

Welcome to



School

a 6-12 public secondary school in Greece, New York

133 Hoover Drive
Rochester, New York 14615
(716) 865-4880

GILLAN (AQUA)	106	SOC STUD 108	SOC STUD 108	SOC STUD 108	SOC STUD 108	LUNCH	DUTY SH 108 / SH 108	PREP	109 Cluster	GUIDED STUDY 108 SS
SULLIVAN		SCIENCE 110	SCIENCE 110	SCIENCE 110	EARTH SCI. 110	PREP / EARTH LAB 110	LUNCH	CURRICULUM LEADER	109 CLUSTER / PREP	GUIDED STUDY 110 SCI
INFANTINO	113	MATH 113	MATH 113	MATH 113	MATH 113	LUNCH	DUTY SH 113 / CAF D	PREP	109 CLUSTER	GUIDED STUDY 115 / GUIDED STUDY 109
MORELLE	106	LANG ARTS 106	LANG ARTS 106	LANG ARTS 106	LANG ARTS 106	LUNCH	DUTY SH 108 / CAF A	PREP	109 CLUSTER	GUIDED STUDY 106 LANG ARTS

TEACHER	H.R.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SPRING (GREEN)		SOC STUD E13	SOC STUD E13	CURR LEADER	SOC STUD E13	SOC STUD E13	LUNCH	SOC STUD E13	PREP	109 cluster green
WHITAKER		LANG ARTS E15	LANG ARTS E15	CURR LEADER	LANG ARTS E15	LANG ARTS E15	LUNCH	PREP	LANG ARTS E15	109 cluster green
JONES		SCIENCE 229	SCIENCE 229	EARTH SCIENCE 229	EAR SCI LAB 229	SCIENCE 229	LUNCH	PREP	SCIENCE 229	109 cluster green
SICKE		PREP	MATH S19	MATH S19	S-5 MATH	MATH GEOMETRY S19	LUNCH	MATH S19	MATH S19	109 cluster green

Eastridge Jr Hi 227.

East Irondequoit Central School District
Grade 7, 8, & 9 Writing Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Audience and Purpose	You demonstrated a thorough understanding of your audience and purpose (e.g., formal/informal).	You demonstrated a good understanding of your audience or purpose.	You demonstrated an understanding of your audience and purpose.	You demonstrated partial understanding of your audience and purpose.
Planning and Organization	You developed a logical plan. Your writing was well organized. You used coherent, creative ideas. You wrote a strong introduction, used paragraphing relative to the topic, and wrote a definite ending.	You developed the topic. You used logical organization and paragraphing.	You developed the topic. You showed evidence of organization and paragraphing.	You minimally addressed the topic. Your writing lacked a plan of organization.
Idea Development and Support	You developed your ideas fully. You used support material that was complete. You used examples, reasons, details, or explanations that were relevant and appropriate.	You developed your ideas and enhanced them through the use of relevant support material.	You developed your ideas. You used support material.	You showed a weakness in your development of ideas. Your support material was minimal.
Sentence Structure	You showed skillful use of transitions and sentence variety.	You used sentence variety and transitional words and phrases.	You wrote complete sentences. You used transitional words and phrases.	Your ideas were not always expressed in complete sentences. You need to used transitional words and phrases.
Vocabulary	You used specific, vivid language appropriate to the task. You consistently used precise vocabulary.	You used specific, vivid language appropriate to the task.	You used correct language appropriate to the task.	You occasionally used inappropriate or incorrect language.
Mechanics	You made no mechanical errors; therefore, your overall communication was enhanced.	You made a few mechanical errors. These errors did not interfere with communication.	You made mechanical errors. These errors did not interfere with communication.	You made mechanical errors. These errors interfered with communication.

August 1992

<u>Zero Paper:</u>
blank,
otally unrelated to the topic,
ncoherent,
or
an illegible paper

Slavery Debate/Preparation Outline
Humanitits Class
Eastridge Jr. High

Getting ready for your debate will requiure that you are familiar with some of the issues presant in the early 1800's. In order to fully prepare for the debate you will research three issues that affected our debate.

You will be in one of three groups:

A) Kansas - Nebraska act

B) Missouri Compromise

C) Lincoln - Douglas debates

All groups must answer the following questions:

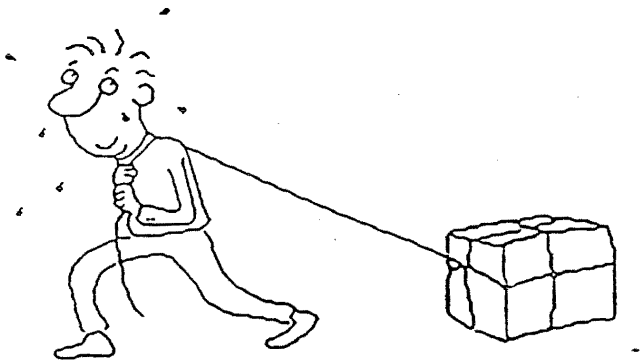
- What is slavery?
  - What effects did slavery have on the economy of the South?
  - How did the issue of slavery affect different groups in the U.S.?
  - What affects did slavery have on politics in the U.S.?
- How is my issue affected by slavery?
- How did people react to my issue?
- Why is slavery vital to my issue?
- Why would people in other parts of the country care about this issue?

Sample Preformance Task
(With Rubric)
Humanities Class/Eastridge Jr. High

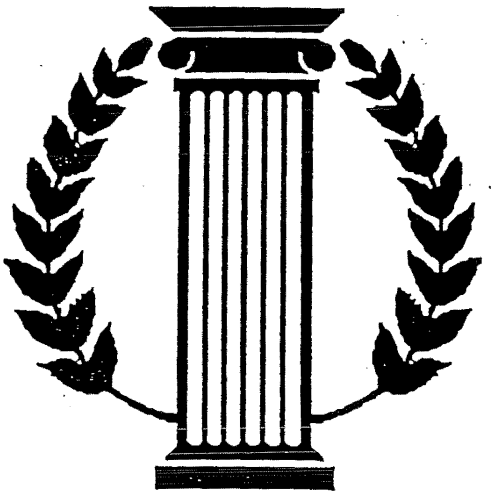
Capitalism and Labor Negotiations: Growth at Work!

Your Task:

It is sometime in the 20th century. You are either a company worker or a company owner. And your T-Shirt company has stopped producing T-Shirts! The workers and the owners are both upset because they feel they are not getting what they need from the company. You all have agreed, thank God, to at least sit down, discuss your issues and negotiate a contract so everyone can get back to work. Your task is to debate over what each side needs, and come to a consensus on what both laborers and owners will get to get the factory back in operation.



The Process:



I. Attend a Convention

It just so happens that today is the National Union Workers Association Convention. All workers will have to attend this convention to discuss and examine what it is for which they need to negotiate. Bring your pencil and paper, because you will get tips on how to negotiate and what you should or should not settle for.

It also just happnes that today is the meeting of the National T-Shirt Consortium Convention, as well. All owners will have to attend this convention to discuss where their bottom line lies. Bring your pencil and paper, because you will get tips on how to negotiate and what your bottom line is.

II. Develop a Proposal

Using your notes from your conventions, each individual company will now develop their proposal for the negotiations in two days. The workers will develop theirs on their own, and the owners will develop theirs. Your proposal should:

1)include an introductory paragraph stating what you are trrying to accomplish and why you are writing this.

2)a list of what items you will settle for. Remember to include such items as wages, working conditions,

safety, health insurance, disability, costs, etc... Make sure you are as specific as possible.

3)a conclusion that reminds the other side why your proposal is a rational one.

Make sure that your proposal is ready for publishable copy in two days.

III. Negotiate a Contract

You have four days to present your proposals and begin your negotiations. During the negotiations process, you should be using all the information and details you learned in your Conventions. Workers are encouraged to use actions that workers in the Industrial era used to gain an equitable contract. Owners are encouraged to stop them (legally that is!). Whenever there is a question of legality during a negotiation, Judge Spring, Judge Miller-Redding or Judge Whitaker will preside the case. In each group there should be:

1) a minutes taker for EACH side. If you do not keep careful minutes and you call Judge Spring over to settle a dispute, he may judge in favor of the other side! Keep careful notes of what people are saying and agreeing to.

2) a time keeper. Make sure that your negotiations are going along. If the clock is moving along and your negotiations are not, you need to remind the group of your time constraints. The Timekeeper will switch roles with the facillitator each day!

3) a facillitator. When negotiations get out of hand or slow to a stand still, it is the facillitator's responsibility to keep the talks contained and going. If the facillitator thinks that the group needs help, only the facillitator may come and get a teacher. The Timekeeper will switch roles with the facillitator each day!

IV. Write Up and Sign a Contract

Your company will live or die by your contract. If the owners promise more than they have, the contract could

Writing Up a Proposal

Task

You are a member of either a labor or owner negotiating team. It is your job to write up a proposal that will convince the other side that your terms are good for BOTH laborers and owners.

Process

A. In your two person teams, brainstorm:

1) Your terms - Remember, your goal, if you are an owner, is to make more money; if you are a laborer, your goal is to improve your working conditions(You should have at least 3 terms).

2) Reasons - For each of the above terms, you want to come up with reasons why your terms are good for BOTH sides of the bargain. You need to be creative and persuasive here. Put yourself in the other side's shoes (You should have at least 2 reasons for each term).

B. Rough draft your proposal:

1) Introduction - Generally explain why you are writing this proposal and the reasons for it. State your purpose. Introduce your terms.

2) Body - For each term write one paragraph. Each paragraph should state and explain the term and give at least both the reasons for it. There should be at least three paragraphs in your body.

3) Conclusion - Generally restate your terms here and conclude by stating what you hope to gain from this proposal.

C. Revise and Edit your proposal

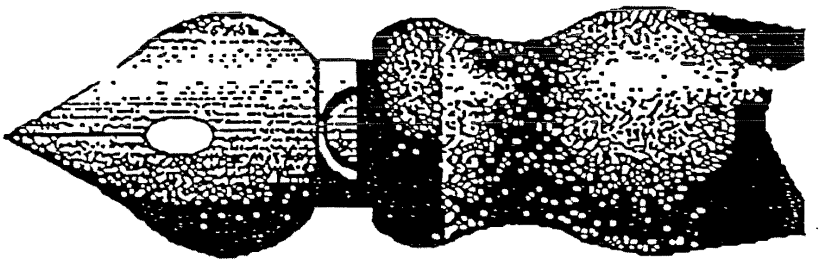
1) Share it with other workers. Check to make sure your ideas are logical. Check for mechanical errors like spelling and grammar.

D. Publish your proposal

1)Publish your neat proposal by handing it over to the owners/laborers. Do not do this, however, without first checking with your teacher.

send the company into bankruptcy. If the workers get too little pay, the contract could cause them to strike. The grade you recieve on your contract will depend on the following items:

1) Will it enable the company to GROW?
2) Is it Comprehensive? Does it cover all the bases? Are all elements of the company's growth covered on both the worker's and owner's sides?
3) Is it professional? Is it typed? Is it signed by all parties? Is it well organized and worded? Is it easy to read?
4) Is it creative? Did both sides use unique ways to try and compromise to help the company grow?



	4	3	2	1
Agreement	Your team has attained all of your goals- significant aspects of proposal are still in tact	Contract reflects multiple sacrifices by your team, but none of your top five most important goals	Contract was reached, but one or more persons is unwilling to sign it - more then five sacrifices of demands - including at least one major	Your team was unable to draw up a contract - may have come up with two completely separate contracts that were *totally* unacceptable
Proposal	Addresses specific needs clearly, number of hours to be worked, pay rate etc.. Clearly provides a justification for demands Demands are in a hierarchy	specific needs are addressed clearly, a hierarchy is present, but the justification may not be clear or specific	Demands may not be in a hierarchy, and specificity may be lacking on some points. The rationale for demands is unclear	Unclear what is wanted by your side, there are few specific goals, no hierarchy present, and there is little to no justification of demands
Compromise	All actions taken facilitate a compromise, were willing to give up or ***change*** demands in order to meet demands of the other side	Demonstrated an unwillingness to bend or compromise on 2-4 demands - this means unwilling to even consider a modification to the demand	Unwilling to bend or change on many of the demands (more than 70%) - regardless of their place of importance	Demonstrated unwillingness to compromise at all on any points regardless of how trivial
Negotiating	Maintained your perspective - did not sacrifice the most important goals. Techniques were cooperative and productive to towards the end of a contract	resorting to a strike or calling in SCABS, or some other violence prone action no more then once	Your team resorted to striking or calling in SCABS (or some other violence prone action) 2-4 times	Your team resorted to the most extreme measures with little to no provocation

Writing Rubric
Humanitits Class
Eastridge Jr. High

	Pre-Emergent	Emergent	Beginner	Transitional
Audience & Purpose	You write for yourself	You write in order to share with others	You begin to write to the audience of the task	You write to the audience of the task
Planning & Organization	You use writing tools to make marks on paper	You put letters together to make words	You begin to put words together in order	You begin to group sentences on one topic in a logical order. You write according to task using a beginning, middle, and end
Idea development and Support	You understand the meaning of your marks (a word, sentence, writing, drawing, picture, letter). Will verbalize with or without prompting	You combine writing and drawing	You write on your own. You begin to create stories	You can produce a written piece without pictures (when appropriate) • Understands task
Sentence Structure	You 'string' words and letters together		You begin to have sentences	You write in complete sentences
Vocabulary	You copy "words" around you.	You write your name. You write words you know	You begin to use a more varied vocabulary. • Sentences convey messages	You begin to use descriptive words • use of adjectives and adverbs • conveys feelings, judgment or direct experience
Mechanics	You write upper and lower case letters and randomly place punctuation	You begin to capital letters. You begin to use punctuation. • Capital letters at sentence beginning • Periods	You begin to use upper and lower case letters and punctuation correctly	You use conventional spelling and punctuation • standard written English • . , ! ? " "

Engaged	Extending	Capable
You begin to write on a variety of topics with audience and purpose in mind. • content is related to topic • topic addressed	You have a stronger understanding of your audience and purpose. • topic is addressed and developed	You understand audience and purpose • topic is addressed, developed & connected to the reader
You write several sentences in a logical order in a paragraph • sentences are congruent with the purpose and audience	You develop an organizational plan for your composition, essay, task • contains a main idea and supporting data	You develop a logical plan for the composition/essay/task • main idea & supporting data connects to the reader
You begin to develop introductions, bodies and conclusions. You begin to support your writing using examples, reasons, details or explanations	You develop your writing using support details in your composition, essay, task. • examples, reasons, details & explanations	You enhance your content through the use of relevant support material • there is a connection between your idea and the choice of support material
You begin to use a variety of sentence structure • statements, questions, commands, explanations	You show sentence variety and begin to use transitions	You use sentence variety and transitions
You use vocabulary that reflects the purpose	You use vocabulary which reflects an understanding of audience and purpose	You use appropriate vocabulary • considers the purpose, situation and audience • words can be replaced and/or modified
You independently correct your spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and other mechanical errors • will edit own work	You begin to write using correct mechanics and spelling • standard English, punctuation, capitals, grammar, indenting	You use correct mechanics and spelling • standard English, punctuation, capitals, grammar, indenting, and format

Competent	Exceptional
You understand your audience and purpose and adapt to the demands of academic writing	You demonstrate a thorough understanding of your audience and purpose • topic is address, develop and connects with the reader • substance, structure, and focus reveals awareness of genre • writer is able to select genre suitable to audience and purpose
You develop a logical and organized plan for your composition/essay/task • main idea & supporting detail connect to the reader and address the purpose	You develop a logical unified plan for your composition/essay/task • fluency of related ideas addresses the purpose and connects to the audience
You use support material such as examples, reasons, details, and/or explanations, adapting to the demand of the task	You extend your content fully using support materials such as examples, reasons, details and explanations to reinforce and clarify your idea
You use figurative language, sentence variety, and transitions • metaphors, simile, irony, symbolism	You write with ease beyond conventions of standard written English with skillful and complex use of sentence variety, transitions and figurative language that reveals personal style
You use precise vocabulary • distinct, correct, definitive, exact, to-a-point • supports the purpose	You consistently use specific, vivid, appropriate and precise language/ vocabulary
You consistently use correct mechanics and spelling. • attention to mechanics and spelling occur on an automatic level	You effectively communicate using correct mechanics, usage/ grammar • meets needs of audience and purpose • writer's style is evident