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Interview with Pam Stewart

Pam Stewart

Kate Hitchcock

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ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Accession Number: AE-KH-A101699
Researcher's Name: Kate Hitchcock
Event: Interview with Pam Stewart, AC Aid
Place: Alternative Center
Date: October 16, 1999

(Side A)

K: Interview of Pam Stewart on October 16, 1999, around 10:30. Just to start off with some basic _____ information how you became to be here, what your background is.

P: Um, I came to be here, well, I've lived in Knotts County all my life, I've lived in Centerbrook all my life. I was a teacher's aide, assistant, a one-on-one with a boy who was ADHD at the Centerbrook Elementary School, and at the time the English teacher Bell T _____ Center knew me because she had graduated from Centerbrook and knew they possibly needed somebody and she kind of brought it to my attention and that's where I started. That's probably six years ago as a part-time, cause as we fill up numbers they pull in more aids, more adults so that's where it started and that's just been I've done it every year since then. And I'm presently, last year and this year, I am the full-time aid.

K: So were you here when the first year it was?

P: I was, I was not here the first year. I was here the second year, the second year on, I think now.

K: Um, if you could describe to me the different interaction between probation officers, the teachers, the teacher's aids, and how about the system works. Like there's a hierarchy and.

P: Um, there's probably suppose to be one but right we're in a transition this year and that Mr. Marshall's the new director. The old director was the one who started the program has brought it to this point and Mr. Marshall's trying to look at it in some different terms and trying to uh kind of make some changes in the way the school's been run. Also along with Joe Traump. I think Joe Traump wanted to see some changes made. That was why they hired uh Derrick and I don't know his last name.

K: Fisher.

P: Fisher, yeah. Um, to be a full-time counselor here because they think _____ while these kids have baggage, they have family problems, personal problems, and a lot of baggage that goes with it but um, probation I mean that they're here basically because a lot of the kids that are on probation and they need to deal with them. A lot of times on a day-to-day basis because of whatever's going on with the kid. They also come in and they ask them to come down and do searches to check the kids to make sure they haven't

brought in, not so much weapons but more like cigarettes and these things, inappropriate things they have at school. They also some one day they a search and found nothing _____ but a bunch of notes, a zillion notes, and they took them all. I mean they just said this is not appropriate for school and so I mean they kind of take the hard line with it where the teachers are supposed to be the educators and that's where we're suppose to concentrate on is the education part of it and then of course we have Cynthia and Derrick who are trying to take care of the personal side of them. And and we're still kind of doing little _____ this year because I'm, I'm the only, I'm the oldest staff member and Mrs. Springer and Mr. Reynolds are the only ones who are repeating. Mr. Marshall's new and Jenny's new and Mr. Vanderpool's new and some would go on new personnel and so it's everybody's kind of finding their place at this point.

K: What do you see as the purpose of this _____?

P: I _____ that uh who are in trouble in a home school or who've gone beyond that and they got in trouble with the law itself and they're placed here. For many of the kids that are placed here (INTERRUPTION) per se the kids that are placed here from the county schools _____ the Mount Vernon School. If they're here for a week or two, their other option is out of school suspension which obviously means take zeros and all of that works. So this is, this is their opportunity to still stay in a school situation, stay off the streets, and being doing some type of work that you're still going to be able to get credit for and any other option for many of these schools as they will just sign them in and there are kids who do that who this is an option for them, but they refuse to come. I mean I have known a few a couple of kids who've said no, I'm not going up there and they opt to take the zeros instead of coming here and getting a little bit of some kind of credit.

K: I didn't know they had the choice.

P: Uh this I know, I know a couple of kids and one kid anyway, one student from Centerbrook and that was just last year and he just uh he just said no, I'm not going up there. I think I know a couple of others who and _____ they'll call over and say they're coming over this week and then we'll get word back no, they're not coming cause they just say no, they won't go or possibly the parents will say no on that angle of it. It doesn't make sense from my standpoint for them not to come here and still be doing some work but not all the parents see things like we see things.

K: Right, right. Um, what do you think that they're missing when they come here? What are they missing from that from school especially with a long term (COUGHING).

P: What are they missing? Why? Life itself, I mean this is a good option, a good alternative to what these students have but for the most part you get more and more intense education in your home school obviously. We're limited as to what we can offer and it's pretty, it's basic things you know. It's basic classes, basic subjects so they're missing a world of other opportunities and with this variety of students we can't do classroom teaching. It's very difficult to stand in there and work with them, have a lesson on English which is a really weak point for most of these kids. They come in here and they

can't tell you the difference between a mountain and a _____. I mean before they get here they don't know this. So, they miss that and _____ and they miss the social life. I mean there is some social life here but we try to limit. You know, technically in the classroom they're not supposed to be interacting, they go outside if the weather's decent enough and so they can interact there some. And when Derrick does groups and things with them they can make an interact then but it's certainly is not what you would give in your home school.

K: Would you suggest a more rigorous curriculum or how do you suggest possibly?

P: I don't see they could do much else on what we do. I mean last year we did have an art class and we added phys. ed. classes for both boys and girls and we even had a welding class. But for a lot of these kids they don't this is what they'd be taking anyway, they'd be taking really basic stuff at their home school. It's quite often the kids are either low or _____ they, they hate school, they don't like school, they're very unmotivated so they're going take the low subjects any way. And so I mean that's basically what we have to concentrate on is those poor subjects that they need because that, that's probably what they would be taking.

K: In terms of it, I mean hear that there's a balance or an attempted balance between discipline and education. Which one do you think over rides?

P: In the past I would have said the discipline. This year's been a little bit different.

K: How has it changed?

P: Um, just with the change of personnel. Change of the personnel. Mr. Marshall's not quite as tight with the kids as Mr. Young was and the new English teach that I work with is definitely not as disciplined with the kids as what the two teachers that were here before that cause that's the classroom I've always been in and basically you know when we said it's 8:30 let's sit down and start work, they knew they weren't to talk but these girls continue to talk for another 10 minutes and he just gives them, he gives them that way like he just lets the room be a lot looser and sometimes that's okay you can do but from my past experience when we get more students in here he's going to regret that he's _____.

K: (INAUDIBLE)

P: Yeah, and it's the girls I mean they'll just hop up and say something and they'll just blurt something out and be inappropriate not in, not but it's the fact that it just disrupts the classroom. And you can have a student in one seat who is working concentrating on something and you've somebody who just pops up and says something then that breaks their concentration, they start all over again. And so if yeah um _____ I don't know I'm not sure where the balance lies at this point but I can say it's looser this year than it has been as far as the discipline goes. But there's still that fine line you really, you really have to have it I know we had a staff meeting a couple of weeks ago and that was one of

the things. Mr. Vanderpool, the new English teacher, wants to, he wants to allow them to talk at lunch which has never been a been a ruling of any kind and he wants to take them outside in the morning and he wants to do things with them and he's from a regular school so he hasn't adjusted to the mindset of the students that are here. These kids if you give 'em answer they're going to take him up on you and you may think they're on your side, two days later they're going to stab you in the back if they can. They're just that way you know, that's just me learning over time of how to deal with them and what to expect out of them. He has higher expectations for them. ____ is reasonable for some of the kids.

K: You talk about some of the similarities in kids like ____, motivation, things like that. What other similarities do you see?

P: A lot of them will get low learning students I mean there's a few kids that come in and I think that many times goes hand in hand with discipline. If a student's low, they don't, they don't understand what they're doing, they can't do the work. Then quite often then it will lead to a behavior problem or vice versa behavior problem will lead to being a low student if not ____. Those are interactive but I know there's a couple kids down there right now that we've been giving work to them and I'm going like I got something back from one of them, there's, there's no way he can do this. I said he's not capable of doing this. He cannot do it and one of the girls she's failed for the past two years but the school's promoted her on both years. So I mean the home school is a home school. They promoted her on two years in a row. And she's failing right now.

K: And she's high school level or?

P: She's in eighth grade level right now. She failed sixth grade, failed seventh grade and they presently have her in eighth grade and she is failing everything she's _____. She might be passing one subject but for the most part she is failing everything she's doing.

K: And what does the school, what does this school do with that?

P: Well I, her in particular we tried to talk back to the home school and say she's not, nothing's happening here, she's not gaining anything, she's not succeeding at anything and it's, it's a twofold thing A) she doesn't like school and she doesn't want to be here and she doesn't care about learning and she doesn't see why she needs to know any of this and B) and she's failing just because she hasn't succeeded the last two years. I mean, if you haven't understood the math for the past two years you're not going to suddenly understand eighth math what you're having now, same way with English. If you haven't understood English the past two years, you're not going to understand it now. And I mean we try and we have students from Bonaze ^{the name} who sometimes attempt to work with her but a lot of times she'll say, Oh, I don't help. You know although she does need the help.

K: Now is she SBH or is she ____?

P: No, no, she's the _____. But the home school, the home school says no, they don't want her back, absolutely. I mean they just bottom line drew the lines that they do not want her back.

K: So you guys are (INAUDIBLE)

P: So, it's, it's up to us to give the curriculum, give her the work, but bottom line she's just not succeeding at it.

K: What do you see as the main driving force where misbehavior or low life, do you think it comes, stems from the parents or just whether _____, do you think it's one way.

P: Yeah, I think it's one way. The bulk of these kids have parents who a lot of times they know what they're doing or they will support them if they don't want to come to school or they'll call and say oh well they're sick and I mean you hear every possible excuse in the book here you know that's uh, one of the aids in the SBH class has a book of excuses, a book of reasons I didn't come to school, I mean she's wrote down some of the better ones and has kept a running list of some of things. But yeah a lot of it goes stems back to parents and um there's a boy here, he's been here the last two, three years. Last year, at the beginning of the year, he wasn't even living with his mom, he was living with his sister. His sister, who was still in high school and had a baby. You know he ended up because he was _____ because he wasn't going to school. I mean if there's nobody there at home to see that you're going to do it, then it's not going to happen. Most of these kids are bounced from one parent to the other or we had a girl in she's I don't even know what became of her, she ran away every time we turned off. Last time I knew she was in detention and but I mean her, her mother didn't want her, her father was alcoholic and she was just bounced back and forth really did not have any stability of any kind.

K: Does child services come in in that case?

P: Um, she probably already had a caseworker, I would image she did. But you know just because of that she probably lived a loose lifestyle and she was always trouble, I mean she was always doing things that she shouldn't be doing but there was really nobody to oversee her. And we do get some kids here from the group home but again that's you know it's usually for some reason and for the most part most of the kids are kind of, at least this year, have been in and out, there's been in the past a couple of times a few kids from the group home that were here long term. But for the most part you know my opinion it's a lot of it is family.

K: In terms of the different reasons they would come here, what are the, like truancy?

P: Truancy's a big one. If a kid, if a student just doesn't show up, some kids Mount Vernon has a time out system and if you get too many points in time out, then they send you over, violence, hitting somebody, get in a fight, cause they got in a fight with somebody. I've had two girls in the last month I think that have been here because they got in a fight with somebody and fight with a guy. Just poor discipline in the classroom. I mean, you know,

I know at Centerbrook anyway we have Saturday school. We have in-school suspension. But once a kid, a student has so many infractions then their recourse is to send up here. There was a student here for the first quarter because he broke into the school and I don't know if he vandalized or whether he stole something, before school started he broke into the school so _____ did something so he was here for the first quarter. Stealing, I mean somebody was here because they were stealing. I mean, it's just a wide gambit of things.

K: In terms of the discipline within the school, can you explain some of the reason you would send somebody to _____?

P: ^{ing.} Sleepy. We've had some girls sent up because they just refuse to do work. They're just kind of sitting there, looking around the room, diddling, being a disruption and we sent them out. There was a girl, she's gone now cause she left to do her TV. I sent her up one day because she just, I had tolerated it, she would just blurt out inappropriate things and finally one day she just flatly says, "I think I need to fart." And I said you know, go, good-bye, you know, I mean it was just inappropriate, absolutely, and she had done kind of along the way and gotten away with it. Just misbehavior in the room you know not, not listening to instructions. If you told a student you know you need to sit down and turn around, do some work, and they continue to talk, they do that, kids have been sent out for throwing things.

K: In what case would you file a report against a kid to the probation officers?

P: Basically they see all the, anytime anybody's sent to Parkville we have to fill out a form and a copy of that form goes to Parkville which all the probation officers can you know that's to their excess and they most of them I think are aware when kids come up. And it's not so much an actual river port you might come in and say I sent them up because this is what they were doing and you know if it's, if it's something they'll step in and intercede with them but then other times they don't. Just depends if it's a minor infraction they don't.

K: In terms of a the information shared about a student, what type of information do you get when they come to this school?

P: Mr. Marshall does the intake because there are forms, they have to sign one that releases them for drug testing, and I think they have to sign one for the counseling, you know to meet with the counselors and stuff but he does have a sheet and just has basic home information as to the address, parent's name and guardian but then at the bottom there is a place to check if they're a special needs student and _____ there's a reason given for why they were sent from their home school, brief information _____ program. And I don't think there's much else on there I mean it's just the basic information and we're usually given the information as to why, you know, the reason they're being sent over.

K: You mentioned a girl that left to get her GED, if she's going to focus on her GED, they go to a different program?

P: That's a bad spot because no one's really resolved. What happens is most of the time the school will send them up here mostly Mount Vernon. I don't know if we've gotten kids in from other schools that's been here to do GED. But they'll send them over here and we know, you know, this girl in particular had she needed American History and Senior Government, she needed two math credits, she needed three English credits, and she is just shy of 18 but the principal of the high school said, no, I'm not going to release for her GED, she's smart enough she could do this if she can get her diploma. So they sent her over here and she started out that way and then she, she stole money from her dad and ran off and then once they tracked her down and got her back here then you know they looked at the hard reality _____ which we kind of knew that but the principal said no, she's going to do the work and I guess Mrs. Everett, that's her probation officer, and they had her take the pretest, she passed all of it but the math portion and then she went back to the principal and said you know she's passed all of it but this part and so she went they worked it out together she could go ahead and do the GED and she and her father withdrew from the high school at I think it was Monday of this week and she's done. So it's in her case it's up to her to go ahead and take it. Now whether she will or not I mean.

K: So there's no, she's just done.

P: She's just done, yeah, she's gone. In fact she got a job I think, a full-time job. She'll be working in a nursing home. There's another boy down here who came same thing, started out doing our work but now they tell me he's going to do GED instead.

K: Would he do it in school or?

P: Right now he's in school one-half a day. All year he's been here a half day at least in the afternoon to work but he has been he said doing classwork in the morning now, he's been looking at the GED book. There's another girl down here who she was pulled in because she wasn't going to school at the beginning of the year and she wanted to go to the job corp. And first of all she's on probation so first they said no she couldn't go but then at some point they spoke to people involved with the job corps and decided that probably would be a good thing for her to do but now the girl's not really wanting to do it now. She's gotten a job at well she had a job at McDonald's, didn't like it, quit it, she got another job at Taco Bell, so she said she's going to work there and get her GED. But whether she will really follow through on that or not I mean just like the job corps which for her would have been probably she's smart, she just doesn't isn't motivated to be here to learn. She was here two years ago and last year she was back at the high school and did a good job and then ended up back here again this year and so right now she is just kind of in limbo. I mean there's not much we can do with them if they're doing their GED. We did check the book out from the library for them to look at but in years past those students just they were just in limbo, totally in limbo. One girl her probation officer made her go buy the book and she brought the book in and did study it and I know she's working at like Foster's Pharmacy but whether she ever actually went and took the GED or not I don't know. It's, it's a point that somebody to me somebody needs to get some kind of a game plan for these kids that want to do the GED.

K: Whether it's training in school or go to?

P: Yeah, but it's you know it's hard when they're here because it's hard for us to keep them busy and keep them in line I mean invariably this is like the girl that was withdrawn yesterday she, she was just a disruption to the class because she really wasn't committed to even study in the GED book. She just couldn't see why she needed to study that and so she'd write and she'd doodle and she'd speak out and she'd ____ down.

K: Did she turn 18 is that how the father was able to withdraw her or how does?

P: No, she's not 18 until an early part of next year I'm not sure just when.

K: Did the father just chose the (INAUDIBLE).

P: They said that she's doing GED in this school letting withdraw her yeah.

K: When a student returns to their home school, do you have any perception of how they're treated or by the either teachers or the students whether they're treated differently or?

P: I think it depends on the students and the situation, the reason that we're here. I know there have been kids who have gone back and if it was one of the students that the administration had a grudge against or it was just fed up and had taken a lot from them then they probably didn't get real good treatment but then there's other kids who have been here and they go back and they pick up where they left off and they move on and I don't think they're treated any differently but I think it just depends on the student so.

K: What do you see as a success first to get in here?

P: To just to get some credits cause that doesn't always happen I mean I've had kids in here who've walked away with half a credit. The one boy I mentioned that lived with his sister and the baby. He was here I think he's been here three years. He was Mrs. Springer had him one of those years I think maybe like seventh grade and he was here eighth grade, he was here ninth grade and he was one of the kids that I just pestered to death because he was a good kid and I knew he was and I knew a lot of it was he just wasn't getting any encouragement at home and he wasn't motivated, dad wasn't really in the picture cause he had kind of shared that with me a couple of times. So any way he the first year that I had to deal with him, he got a half a credit. He did help for a half credit, that was all he accomplished in the whole year. And he ended up back here again the next year and I just prodded him and pushed him and said You know you got to stay out of trouble, you got to keep your nose clean. You know, I just tried to encourage him and I would push him about the work, I'd hound him to death you know about getting his work done, getting it in, when are you going to take this test? You told me you'd take a test. I mean I just hounded him and as I understand from Mrs. Everett that this year he's presently living in Kentucky with a friend of his grandmother's going to school there and doing very well. To me that's a success, I mean I'm thrilled for him. I mean at the beginning of the year I thought oh please don't let him come back this year I ____ pulled

it together at the high school and I finally asked Mrs. Everett one day, what had become of him and how, if he doing good in school and she had shared with me that he had gone down over the summer to help him I guess _____ bought an old farm and he was doing a lot of remodeling and they got him to go down and help them over the summer maybe it was painting I don't know, and he ended staying down there working and going to school. So I mean for me that's a success story. We had a girl last year who was, she's here the last two years she was here because she was pregnant one year and she got some credits and then last year she came back in, she had the baby, and here she was 18 trying to hold down a job, trying to hold together an apartment and take care of this baby and it was tough. She would come in for two hours a day, not even two hours a day, about an hour an a half because she needed senior English, she needed government, and I think she took a science course because she needed one other credit and she did it. It was tough, I mean she missed a lot of days and some days she just drug in here and looked like death warmed over but she got through it. She got her diploma. Not that her life I don't know if her life is a whole lot better today now or not in fact one of the male students is living with her presently. But I mean she did, she did get through it. I mean you occasionally see kids who come in and they're motivated and they do the work and they get through it.

K: They find that this place is better to do it for them or?

P: Some kids feel it is. Some kids think they'd rather be here. Probably because they don't fit in main stream. Some of those kids they just don't fit in main stream. One male student now he's been here probably the last three years too. But he wanted to come back here. He did the same thing last year. He wanted to come back here. He's not and he's probably not an outgoing, he's not doesn't fit the main stream and he's happier being here than he is there. You do occasionally have those kids that are and some kids do it just cause they think it's easier here but for the most part it's just usually kids that don't fit in and they're happier here.

K: You seem to get a good feel for the students. Do you work one on one throughout the day, how does that work for you?

P: I haven't so much this year because Mr. Vanderpool just came the last week of October was his first week so I was virtually playing teacher for that classroom and it you know giving out English. That classroom does English 8 through 12. It does eighth grade history, senior government, eighth and ninth grade health and it has some electives, half credit.

K: Okay, so that's that room.

P: That's that room. So I was basically up to that point was playing teacher in that room because they couldn't find anybody for the job so I mean I was interacting some one on one but not as much as I have towards the end of the year it gets worse, I mean, now it may not this year because Mr. Marshall, that's one of his things is to try to keep students busy throughout the year and on task. The way it was done before is say a student comes in and they'd be given English and they needed to take this math course, this science

course, and this history course. They give the students the book and as far as the math, history, and science go, all they do is read the chapter, do what they need to to absorb it, and then take a test and that's all they get credit, you know, they get a grade on their test and that's all, that's only _____ they get for the whole chapter. And then the grade is just averaged on all those tests, that's their grade for the course and so kids would just come in and not do anything, weeks, months, you know, they wouldn't do anything and then you get to spring and they're cramming like crazy trying to get stuff in, trying to get it done so they can get the credit and get out the door. But he is working this year to keep them on task, giving them, weekly assignments you know, you got to get this done and trying to keep them a little more on task long term rather than that madness at the end of the year but as the numbers pick up I will probably work more one on one but I haven't so much this year but that's my main job is to work with kids if they need my help. Right now there's just not a lot of kids that are asking for help but if they do I'm there.

K: So it's when they ask or do you run a check on them?

P: Um, some of the kids all go and ask but for the most part I wait till they ask me because for most of these kids you can go and ask them and if they don't want your help it's going to annoy them that you asked them. We had an aid in the overflow room two years ago, two years ago, and that's the way she was. She would just constantly go around wanting to help them and it just aggravated them. I mean it just aggravated. If they don't want your help, they don't want your help and there's no point in pushing them cause you're not going to gain anything to do it, so for the most part, I will wait until they say they need help with something.

K: Now, what does the other class (INAUDIBLE)?

P: The other one, Mr. Marshall does all of the math, all the sciences, and he does three levels of history. Somehow the eighth grade history and the senior government are in the other room instead.

K: Do you find that the assignments are working better keeping the students more in _____ or are they still blowing it off?

P: For the most part I would say it probably is helping. The English we don't do it that way. It would really be tough because for like vocab and grammar they're given packets of work to do and I've still been issuing those to the kids since Mr. Vanderpool's come cause he just says you know what you've been doing, why don't you go ahead and do it. But I'll give them about a week and I have a sheet that I know what I've given and the date I gave it to them and if I haven't seen it in a week's time then I'll start hounding them saying you know what happened to that vocab pack. I haven't seen it, you've had it for a week now you need to finish it up and get it back in. In fact I've got a couple guys down there that need to be kind of pushed cause they haven't done anything for a week, two weeks now. And you know if it's up to me I've asked Mr. Marshall to hold a couple of kids in. I've helped the girls in a couple of times when they're behind, they're just not getting anything done. I'll just say well you're not getting this done, you need to stay

_____ or I had a girl one day she was just refusing to do the work and I said well that's fine then I refuse to let you go out, you can just stay in here and work on it.

K: Are these credits given from pass fail or is it they get the grade?

P: They get a grade. Only thing I think we did pass fail was possibly the art and the phys ed, we didn't give a grade on those but we did them pass fail. It worked the phys ed worked for the guys there was quite a few of them and a lot of them got the credit. I was one that did the took the girls to phys ed and the class fell apart actually. We started with a few and then you'd pick up another one and then another one would drop out and then you'd pick up another one and one of those that dropped out, they just wouldn't do it. I mean they would just after they come in so many days without clothes and they refuse to go or I'm sick, well I just don't want to go today, I don't feel like going. Then we'd finally say well then you're out of the class and it got to a point where we were down to two or three students and they just everyday they had an excuse or we'd go they were doing aerobics and they'd go, oh my stomach hurts and they just sit out and not really, I mean there was an older gentlemen in that aerobics class and he out-exercised those girls, young healthy girls, you know, and finally they just dropped the class for the girls but they weren't doing it.

K: Where did they take the classes ____ _?

P: At the Y. The guys go down to the Y. Basically their phys ed amounted to go on to playing basketball because I mean they had the option to go to the weight room but none of them wanted to so they gave that's what they wanted to do and then I guess later on after a period of time they were getting tired of the basketball.

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

P: ...they like to _____ and then the aerobics class was only an hour, phys ed was supposed to be two hours so they had the option of coming back and going to the fitness center at the Y using any of the machines but again that was a factor of motivation they just weren't motivated to do it. They didn't want sweat and they don't want to get their hair messed up and so it just fell apart none of them did it _____ credit.

K: Are they going to be doing it again this year?

P: Second semester basically because we get our numbers are usually up. They kind of from the beginning of the year to probably the mid year the numbers are up and down they fluctuate and you get kids trickling in and get them out. There was one year that we were full, I mean we even had our extra room open at the beginning of November and it was just a particularly bad year. Every once in a while you never know. I mean one year you fill up quick and then other years we had kind of a big influence earlier on and we thought we're going to be needing that extra room but then it kind of leveled off and we've maintained where we're at since then. In fact Mrs. Springer she was up to 11 and 12 kids at one point and now she's down to a half a dozen at most. Now the girls room we don't have that many in the girls. There was one a couple weeks that I had 11 and 12 in there too but it was just kids who've done something and they got sent over short term and it dropped back out. Mr. Marshall's has kind of leveled off, he's pretty much got a full room. But their problem is we don't have any place to go because they gave our room to the _____.

K: Are they going to be going or _____?

P: We don't believe they will I mean county's saying yeah they're going to find them another place but they haven't found any place now and they've been looking and asking and they couldn't find any place for them. And so that that hurts us because right now he is running close to 20 in his room, he has hardly any empty seats and he would there's there's been a couple of weeks he would have put kids in the other room had there been the room available. And Mr. Reynolds is the one _____ in the last two years so I mean he's here. I don't know whether he was going to stay up here or whether he would be coming downstairs to do that and they would get somebody else to do Parkville. I'm guessing he probably would have come down but without the room I don't know what they'll do. Cause usually by the end of the year we end up with you know most of these classrooms in fact the last couple of years we've had to open this little year across the hall that I think you can get ten students in there.

K: In terms of the changes you've talked _____ things that are shifting, do you think do you foresee any problems with this shift or do you see it moving toward _____?

P: The um giving the assignment sheets is probably a good thing. I mean it's crazy to let them sit there for months on end doing nothing. Some of them would read. You know, they'd read books, read novels, but a lot of them would do just nothing, they'd just

diddle, try to sleep, and from that standpoint I think that is good hopefully that's a good thing. And I think that is again something ____ wanted to see that we were being more productive. I guess we see think that um we don't always have the people thinking of us in the right way cause everyone's ____ staff member will hear somebody say well I heard about this alternative center, blah, blah, blah, it was negative stuff. I think there's a lot of negative opinion of the alternative center among the people which I'm not sure why and where that's come from so I mean if this is happening you know occasionally you will hear somebody say well, there's no point in sending them cause they don't learn anything there. And I had a girl, one of the girls said that to me the other day. Well, something about you can't, don't learn things there anyway and I quickly pointed out to her I said, well you know it takes some determination and motivation on your part too, the student's part, the student has to want to learn, to learn anything. I said no we can't teach anything if your mind is closed to that. So that part I think will be better I think that'll hopefully give us some more positive appearance and it's probably good to have a the show of hand because like I said the good portion of these kids do have baggage and somebody needs to help them resolve it and I don't think, I mean I don't, I don't want to do it I mean I'll encourage them to the best I can but it's not for me to resolve those and probation is the opposite, probation takes the hard line. They take the hard line of kids ____ so where the counselors are able to take the soft line and help them with that stuff. I think my only concern about all the changes is like I just think you know from experience I think you still have to keep that strong discipline because most of these kids are kids are here because they've gotten in trouble cause they couldn't stay out of trouble cause they can't follow the rules and they don't care if they get in your face and cuss you out. And I think you still have to keep the hard discipline, the hard line and I know with the room that I'm in is particularly is this frustrate for me being here as long as I've been and knowing how we've run the classroom in the past it's like I find it frustrating but I'm just the teacher's assistant so I have to sit back and kind of bite my tongue but I really want to stand up some days and just say sit down, be quiet, don't say anymore! And you know he won't do that and I certainly have done that in the past. The teacher I've worked with in the past has done that but he doesn't take that line so it's difficult for me to sit there and I know the reason for doing that I mean there are reasons for doing that because especially when your numbers get up. If you don't do it, they're going to eat you alive. Technically they're not suppose to go out of the room without out of the seat without raising their hand and asking first and he doesn't enforce that and that just causes disruption if they can just pop up you know whenever they want to, it disrupts the room. And right now you know again the numbers aren't bad so you can get by but when the numbers increase it makes it more difficult. If you don't have, if you don't have the strong control of the room. So that's my only thing with how things are flowing now so I'm just concerned that that strong discipline state's intact. I know probation feels that way but at this point that would be my only concern.

K: Is there anything you would like to add?

P: To the program? For the most part I think, I think we do what we can considering what we're dealt you know, you have such a wide range of kids that are here. You have kids who are low and unmotivated, you have kids who are AD, ADHD, you have other kids

who are just and especially with the range of problems that you get in here, it's hard to deal with them, you just almost have to look at them on a one-to-one basis and then you have to take each one and you have to understand there's a fine line between how much you can give and how much you can expect, the fine line is the disappointed and how relaxed you could be and how much to expect out of them and all, you can't have there are kids who come in here who are bright, and who are capable of doing work but if they've never done it up to this point, you're fooling yourself if you're going to go in there and think that they're going to come out with A's and they're going to head off to college cause it's not going to happen. And that's what Mr. Vanderpool's slowly learning is you know that you can't always think that I mean he said that of one of the girls one night, she's bright, she should be going college. I'm thinking, well, in a different life in a different situation maybe she would have but it'll never happen because that's not the life she lives with grandmother. Her brother's here, he lives with dad you know. Families broken and they're not motivated to do the school work and for most of these kids they don't know anything different. You could say to them there's such a big world out there, things you are missing out on but to do that you need to learn and you need to know and they don't understand that because they don't know any other life than what they've lived and for the most part that's mom and dad who may be on welfare and sit at home and smoke and drink all day. They don't know anything different. There was a student here, she was from _____, she was doing the biology classwork, a leaf project, they go out and gather leaves so they can learn about the trees. It all makes sense to me and there was one of the girls here she was only here for the week but she's been here long term before and she says, well that is about the stupidest thing I've ever heard, what do you want know? The trees live and then they die and what else do you need to know about a tree? And that's the attitude of most of those kids. Why do I need to know what a noun is, why do I need to know what a verb is? Why do I have to know how to do fractions? They don't see a reason for a need to know this information. And you know again I think the school's important because it sure beats letting them be on the street and it sure beats them getting no kind of credit anywhere hopefully here they're going to at least we going to be able to get some kind of credit and move them along but for the most part long term for most of these kids I don't know how much help we've made to them because they, that's their life, they don't know anything different and they don't expect anything and they're ones who think they're on top of the world, they think they're on top of the world and they have got a great life going and they don't have a clue because they don't know what is out there, they don't know anything different than what they've lived. _____ student from last year, she was just the sweetest little thing but her mom was just a flake. She had fallen out of school with the notion and flitter off to another state for a few days or she'd flitter off to another town and live with guy for two or three weeks and then they'd be back and she got no credits, she didn't pass on, she presently _____ pregnant, she's been exposed to HIV _____ this mom, she doesn't know any different, she loves her mother to death. She loves her mother to death. Her mother is the worse thing I mean she is a terrible mother but she doesn't know anything different, she loves her mother to death. That holds true for so many of them and they don't know, they just don't know any different so you just have to you know that's why I said, that's why I say the people go oh, you must hate it there; no, I don't hate it here because I, I know what to expect and what not to expect. Some people can't handle coming in here because they either have

too high expectations and they think they're going to be able to come in here and they're going to be real studious and motivated and they're not going to be so you know that _____ about expectations and other people just can't handle the other extreme of it but I feel comfortable here because I know what to expect out of the kids and I know that there's baggage and I can work with them but we've got people come and go that you just know they would make it here you know and people who've come in and thought that you know they couldn't do it. The one aid thought she was going to help them all and save them all and they didn't ask her to come back because she was more of a hindrance than she was a help because she quite often had the kids stirred up. They just have to have the right mind set to deal with them and it has to be wide open cause you just get any variety of things. You know one all it takes is one new person in the room to change the whole attitude of the room. One one person can change the whole attitude of the room. So you have to be flexible, you have to be open.

K: What do you see as a personal success or do you set a personal goal?

P: For myself?

K: Yes.

P: No, I just come in and day to day because you never know what it's going to be in here. I mean you can come in and it's a peaceful, it's a quiet day and you can come in one day and it is just a _____, you know, it's people are in a bad mood, you're sending every other person to Parkville, you have people who are flaring out, you don't know. You can't put too high goal but I just come in and do my job the best I can, help the kids the best I can. And I kind of caught in the middle. I see, I see probation aside especially now that I've been here as long as I have been. I see their side, you got to take the hard line but you know I can see things from the kids' point of view too you know I understand why they're doing this or why they got this attitude because this is what's happening at home or this is what they're doing _____, so they're kind they're on the fence I think that's taking more of a probation side over time just because I've seen a lot and dealt with a lot and you get a little harder as you go along but I still see the kids side at the _____. But now as for me it's just coming in and doing the best I can helping the kids you know in whatever way I can. To me a personal success is those kids that like the boy that's in Kentucky now it's for me that's personal success I'm just thrilled to death that he's in school and he's doing good. I'm thrilled. I wish I could have done this _____ she was more of the others I worked with a lot and it just crushes me that she's pregnant and she could have AIDS and her mom just is you know it bothers me but you just have to go with it.

K: What have you learned from this school?

P: I've learned my kids are great kids. No, really, you come in here and see how _____ attitudes these kids have and so when my kids do something wrong I still look at them like they did pretty good you know. I've learn the _____ of the world because although I knew there was kids like that I never dealt with them until you deal with them one-on-

one. I've _____ in the mind for my kids have always been on _____ students you know so I've kind of always dealt with the other spectrum of the kids so you know you see the other side of the world _____ the lower kids, you know, those kids with misbehaviors so you know it's eye opening to deal with them you know to see how other people live I mean you do see that through the kids.

K: Anything else, any questions you have for me or?

P: I don't think I do.

K: Anybody you suggest I talk to? I've talked to several people in this school already?

P: As far as staff?

K: Um hum.

P: Would you suggest I talk to Mr. Vanderpool, maybe?

P: You could probably talk to him he would certainly give you I mean he doesn't have a long term he doesn't he is still warming. You know, I've said that a couple of times in the last week or so, well he is learning something today cause I mean the girls will get in here and they'll just uh I mean he's really still trying to find his place. The first week he came in and played kind of took a hard line with the girls and they didn't like it at all and I think he had nearly every girl mad at him in the class I mean the first week off they hated him right off the bat and I don't know how many he sent to Parkville then he kind of backed off and took a softer line but then he found out that that didn't particularly work either because they still got mad at him and stuff so he is certainly trying to find his way but as he sees situations you know he is learning he has that soft line. He thinks he's going to come in here and turn them around and correct all the problems in their life and get them motivated on school and learning and they'll venture off to college and for most of these kids I mean that's not true. They even if you could get them to want to do the work, to do the work, to succeed in getting the credits in graduating, odds are that there's going to be very few if any of them that go on to college, that's just not the group of kids that come in here and so he's you know I mean you could talk to him just to get his perspective on going from working with the main stream classroom, the main stream of kids to at-risk kids, cause that's basically these kids are all at-risk from one thing or another. And he's slowly learning and that's where we miss cause I know what to expect and he doesn't and he wants to take that soft line let them talk and I want them to be quiet and sit down because I know the long _____ that's what needs to happen but so you could give him a try and see just what his opinion is of the _____ he's been here three, four weeks now so he hasn't got too much experience and like I say he is learning but I don't know who all you've talked to just to get a if we're talking about the kids state you know I think you were going to talk to Joe?

K: I've talked to Joe _____, Carol Everett, Glen Marshall, Melanie Springer, Jim Bacinius, Derrick.

P: Okay. I was going to say you've gotten both sides on them. You've got the hard line, you got the people in the middle, the educators, as we're dealing with them in the classroom, you've got probation who takes the hard line, and the counselors who try to solve the problems for them. So you kind of hit both ranges but I mean you could check with Mr. Vanderpool to see if he's got any input on it cause I'm sure he's, I'm sure he has some thoughts he hasn't shared with me but I'm sure you know and I'm not even sure what it was he was teaching before he came back from Oregon cause he was teaching in Oregon for about 20 years. I was thinking that Mr. Marshall said he was doing phys ed at _____, so which is different to the classroom. You're in classroom there where you could be a little more flexible and looser on being quiet and sitting still and stuff so which is different than here so. It sounds like you've gotten a good range of people.

K: Oh, thank you.

P: Oh sure.

End Of Interview