A FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF FRANKLIN SCHOOL
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A Formative Evaluation of Franklin School

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(Abstract)

This formative evaluation of Franklin School was shaped around the implicit and explicit goals of the school and those school practices that are recognized as being effective in schools for students at-risk of dropping out of school. The study served four purposes: (1) to determine how the teachers, parents, and students viewed the school and their experiences with it, (2) to determine what program improvements were needed, (3) to provide a baseline for future evaluations, and (4) to activate the collection of data needed for future evaluations.

The participants in the study included the six teachers, 52 students, and the parents or guardians of the students who attended Franklin School during the 1996-97 school year, the year which was the focus of the study. I collected data from the participants through surveys, interviews with teachers and a carefully drawn sample of students and parents, and meetings with teachers and students. Additionally, I analyzed student records pertaining to referrals, attendance, academic achievement, disciplinary infractions, and dropouts.

Data from the study indicated that some school goals were being met adequately, and some were not. Teachers, students, and parents agreed that goals related to self-esteem efforts, sense of community, and safe environment were being met. However, the findings from the study indicated that improvement was needed in the areas of career education, counseling, discipline, staff development, parent involvement, and use of instructional technology.

Also, the study yielded three important findings in addition to findings related to school goals that need to be addressed. First, there is a leadership problem at Franklin School that needs to be resolved. Second, limited data available on attendance and academic achievement suggested that over time
student performance declines at the school. Finally, the data on the referrals to Franklin School revealed an exceedingly high rejection rate with no written notices of admission decisions and no follow-up of students rejected.

The findings from the study strongly suggest the need for continued evaluation of the school and for putting mechanisms in place to collect the data needed for such evaluations.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I dedicate it to my parents, Lena and Paul Baker, both of whom are now deceased. Although my parents came of age during the Great Depression, they both managed to receive a high school education, and they transmitted to me a love of learning and a belief in the dignity of work. I am sorry that they are not here to celebrate this accomplishment with me because I know it would have meant a great deal to them.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my husband, Charles Rutherford, and to my two sons, Mark and Matthew Rutherford. Charlie, Mark, and Matt never once complained about having to fend for themselves while I took courses over the years for both a master’s degree, various certifications, and the doctoral degree. They have always encouraged and supported me as I have pursued my education and my profession.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background
When one realizes that over the years public schools have broadened the spectrum of students served to include all school-age children, including those with severe disabilities, it is really quite remarkable that the dropout rate has decreased significantly over the course of this century. Prior to World War II, more than half of the students enrolled in public schools did not graduate (Rumberger, 1983). By 1994 the National Center for Education Statistics reported a national dropout event rate of 5.3%. However, it must be remembered that over the course of a four-year period, the effect of an annual dropout event rate is cumulative which would result in approximately 25% of students in a ninth grade cohort not graduating with their class on time (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994).

Economic context
If the dropout rate has generally dropped over the years, why then is dropout such a significant political issue today? First, dropout is an important issue because it has an enormous economic impact. For example, the relationship between educational preparation and economic productivity in a high-tech world is well recognized. Unskilled jobs for under-educated adults are fast disappearing and high-tech industrial work force needs have heightened the importance of education (Orr, 1987).

In addition to dropouts being an economic liability in terms of employment, according to the Carnegie Council each year's dropout class costs this country about $260 billion in lost lifetime earnings and taxes. Male high school dropouts earn approximately $260,000 less than high school graduates and contribute $78,000 less in taxes. Female dropouts earn $200,000 less and contribute $60,000 less in taxes. Moreover, unemployment rates for dropouts are more than twice as high as those of high school graduates. Furthermore, dropping out of school increases the likelihood of dependency upon welfare. Each additional year of secondary schooling reduces the

Finally, the public is well aware of the tremendous costs of maintaining a penal system that is primarily populated by dropouts. Between 1980 and 1992 the number of incarcerated persons increased from 1.8 million to 5.2 million. During that same period, prison costs soared from 36 billion dollars in 1982 to 94 billion dollars in 1992. (Spectrum, 1996).

**Implications for democracy**

In addition to the economic costs associated with dropout, there are other costs as well. First, dropouts represent lost human potential. Students leave school without fully exploring talents and interests, learning information, and developing skills that might serve them well later in life. Second, high dropout rates result in a growing class of undereducated, economically disadvantaged people that is undesirable in any society, particularly a democratic society that is heavily reliant upon a viable, educated middle class for survival. As Gary Fenstermacher (1994) noted, people must be educated to be capable of the "awesome responsibility of governing themselves" (p.5). Fenstermacher also stated that part of the mission of public schools is helping students learn to live peacefully in an increasingly diverse society. In this respect, Fenstermacher noted that the mission of public schools no longer is to assimilate all people with different languages and cultures into one democratic nation. Rather, the challenge is that of preserving "both unity and diversity, democracy and difference, nationhood and neighborhood" (Fenstermacher, 1994, p.13).

**Impetus for school reform**

Concern over the nation's economic future and its dependence upon an educated workforce culminated in the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a work that has been credited with providing the primary impetus for recent efforts to reform public education in the United States. *A Nation at Risk* was followed in 1989 by an Education Summit in Charlottesville attended by the nation's governors. The Education Summit led to the development of six National Education Goals that were expanded to eight in number and were adopted by Congress as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act in
1994. The second of the National Education Goals states that by the year 2000 the high school graduation rate will be at least 90 percent. Other National Education Goals are designed to promote school readiness for preschoolers, academic rigor in public schools, lifelong learning, parental participation in children's education, and school safety (National Education Goals Panel, 1994).

The impact of *A Nation at Risk* and Goals 2000, with inherent themes of improving education, having a better-educated citizenry, and preventing dropout has filtered down from federal, to state, and ultimately to the local level. The pressure to reform public education has resulted in increased academic rigor, higher standards for graduation, and increased accountability for what is learned. Increasing academic rigor and standards, while striving to reduce the dropout rate, appear to be contradictory aims which present a challenge for public schools.

In Virginia, for example, new accreditation standards for the public schools that went into effect in August 1997 include standards that increase graduation requirements, implement barrier tests for graduation, make test scores the basis of accreditation of schools, and make schools accountable to the public by requiring the annual reporting of data such as school test scores compared with system-wide test scores. Sadly, the proposed standards do not strengthen support services for children. Rather, school counselors are relegated to spending 60% of their time in academic counseling (Virginia Department of Education, 1997). The fear is, of course, that without increased support, children will fall by the wayside initially as standards and expectations are raised.

To its credit, Virginia's General Assembly has passed legislation and appropriated funds in an attempt to address the needs of at-risk students. Since 1989, for example, the General Assembly has mandated family life education and elementary counseling and has established preschool programs for at-risk four-year-old children. However, in 1996 the General Assembly retracted the mandates for elementary counseling and family life education. Now it is up to the communities to determine whether these two programs will be offered in schools. Specific funds also have been established to create alternative schools to serve those students who are expelled and
long-term suspended. Funds also have been made available to school divisions to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio in schools with high numbers of at-risk students as determined by free and reduced-price lunch numbers. Moreover, grant funds have been made available to school divisions to implement programs to reduce the dropout rate, to reduce truancy, and to enhance school health services. Finally, additional appropriations for remedial education programs for at-risk children have been provided.

**Alternative education as school reform**

In addition to increased academic rigor and accountability, the demand for public school improvement has led to the examination of the K-12 traditional model of public schooling that many liken to the factory model or a "one size fits all" model of schooling. However, changing traditional secondary schools systemically to meet the diverse needs and interests of students, particularly students at-risk of failure and dropout, and getting staff to accept, much less welcome, systemic change is very difficult and time consuming. This explains why school divisions often have elected to develop alternative education programs to meet the needs of special populations, including students at-risk of dropping out. In fact, the development of schools-within-schools and pullout programs illustrates that it is easier to start something new than to change what already exists (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

Alternative education programs for at-risk students represent local school reform efforts and, as such, have implications for the school reform movement in general. First, because students are at-risk of dropping out partly due to family and personal issues, school systems are finding that collaboration and networking with other human service agencies and programs in the community are essential to address those issues. The view of schools working collaboratively, rather than independently, and being concerned with issues broader than education has been a struggle for educational traditionalists. Second, the reasons why students drop out of school provide some answers to what is needed in systemic school reform. There is, after all, a parallel between many of the current ideas for educational reform and those structures and practices of alternative education -- site-based decision making, service learning, and teacher empowerment, for example. Finally, alternative education program
development speaks to the need to move from "monolithic to alternative solutions" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). What is needed in public schooling is educational alternatives that are responsive to the varied needs and interests of students. Neumann (1994) stated that perhaps the time has come for "a system of diversified education," rather than "regular" and "alternative" education.

Alternative schools vary widely because they develop idiosyncratically in response to local needs, interests, and resources. However, there is a core of essential attributes that are common in successful alternative education programs. After reviewing the literature and research on alternative education, Young (1990) summarized the distinct features of successful programs. Those features included: (1) small school size which allowed for face-to-face relationships and the intimacy that many at-risk students need; (2) program autonomy with staff having control over such areas as admissions requirements and course offerings; (3) teacher empowerment which fostered ownership of the program; (4) teacher optimism about potential success with students; (5) a family-like atmosphere which fostered cooperation; (6) experiential curriculum which included community service, internships, or job placements; (7) varied roles for teachers who might serve as counselors and attendance officers as well as instructors; (8) programs tailored to meet the needs of the specific target population; and (9) concern for the needs of the whole child.

One alternative school in Southwest Virginia has a number of the above-mentioned attributes which make for successful alternative schools. Established in 1989 with a grant from the Virginia Department of Education, Franklin School (a pseudonym) was created to serve students who were at-risk of dropping out of school. A deliberate decision was made to target students in grades eight through twelve who are in danger of “falling through the cracks.” That is, they are in danger of dropping out but are not highly visible in the student population because they are not discipline problems. Students are not involuntarily assigned to Franklin School. Rather, they must go through an application and an interview process and must want to attend the school.

To be considered for admission, a student must meet one or more of the following criteria: (1) will benefit from a non-traditional school environment; (2) will benefit
from a community environment cooperatively developed by students and staff; (3) needs a closer personal interaction with school staff; (4) needs more individual support due to family, emotional, and/or social problems; (5) has health-related problems affecting attendance; (6) has suffered a trauma in life that is interfering with school success; (7) has attendance problems and needs a fresh start; (8) does not feel accepted by a peer group or is having problems with an existing peer group; or (9) has difficulty functioning in large groups.

The philosophical underpinnings of Franklin School have been drawn largely from the work of Dr. William Glasser and Dr. Sol Gordon, both of whom are eminent psychiatrists. A caring staff, a nurturing environment with a low pupil to teacher ratio, and the expectation of quality work are three cornerstones of the program. Also, students are provided opportunities to experience success. They are empowered in the decision-making process. For example, student opinion is solicited on matters such as academics, budgeting, daily routine, school rules, field trip and special events planning, class projects, and school improvement and community service projects. Whenever possible, students are involved in program development decisions as well. Cooperative learning and community-based learning experiences are stressed. Improvement of self concept is approached, not only cognitively, but behaviorally as well. That is, students are provided opportunities to experience self worth through service to others and through learning new things. Students have numerous service projects that are based on the interests of the student body. Staff members assist students with problems such as substance abuse and anger management and help students and their parents make connections with community services that they need to address a myriad of problems.

Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study

During its eight years of existence, the staffing of Franklin School increased from 2.5 to six full-time teachers which increased the student capacity from 20 to 60 students in grades eight through twelve. As with any school, the quality of school life has fluctuated at Franklin School. That is, the school has operated more smoothly and effectively for students in some years than in others. In some years there has been such a strong sense of trust and strong sense of community in the school that there were
virtually no discipline problems. However, over the course of the past three years (school year 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98), the school has struggled continuously to build community. During the 1996-97 school year the staff spent many hours designing strategies to enhance the sense of community at the school.

Additional indicators of the school's having difficulty include an inability to sustain an appropriate level of enrollment, an increase in discipline problems, and a higher than acceptable dropout rate. Also, some staff have the perception that referrals have fallen off and that over time students’ academic performance and attendance fall off. These factors and perceptions suggest that a formative program evaluation of Franklin School, which is the subject of this study, is needed.

**Purpose of the inquiry**

The purpose of the inquiry is to determine program effectiveness as perceived by the major stakeholders and beneficiaries of the program and as evidenced by data from documents and records. What is learned through the formative evaluation will be used to improve the program. For example, if the study reveals that important goals of the school are not being met, staff will work to determine why certain goals are not being met. Perhaps it will be found that renewed emphasis on the goals, allocation of staff time, or additional resources will be needed to meet goals.

The knowledge gained from the inquiry will also be useful to decision makers. If program improvements are found to be needed at Franklin School, decision makers will be forced to determine how those improvements can be made. It could be, for example, that additional resources will be needed in order for Franklin School to meet its goals. In that event, decision makers would be forced to look at the existing resources in the total alternative education program to determine whether resources should be reallocated among programs. Alternatively, decision makers could elect to support a budget initiative to gain additional resources for Franklin School. Additionally, findings from the study may suggest that Franklin School will need different or additional staff expertise to meet its goals.
Research Questions to be Addressed in the Program Evaluation

The basic research questions for the study are:

1. What are the goals of Franklin School?
   1.1 How are the goals evidenced in the program?
   1.2 Are the goals being met?
   1.3 Are the goals appropriate?

2. How do stakeholders describe Franklin School?

3. What noteworthy findings unrelated to specific goals emerged from the study?

4. What needs to be done to improve Franklin School?

The study of Franklin School will be shaped around the goals and the school practices that are known to be effective in programs for at-risk students. A review of the literature will disclose those practices associated with effective programming for at-risk students and will help shape the questions to be asked in the study.

Overview of the Dissertation

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 will contain a review of related research. The research reviewed will cover the context and significance of dropout as an issue, the risk factors correlated with dropout, and the school practices and structures that impact at-risk students. In Chapter 3 research methodology, including approaches to program evaluation, will be covered. An explanation of the population of the study, the way the samples were drawn, the development of the survey instruments and the steps taken to ensure their validity and reliability, the data collection procedures, and methods of analysis of the data will be explained in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will contain an explanation of research results while Chapter 5 will include a review of findings related to the research questions as well as a discussion of additional conclusions or implications that were drawn from the findings.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This inquiry will draw on a number of primary sources as well as the writings of various scholars. The literature review will cover the following areas: (1) context and significance of dropout as an issue; (2) risk factors correlated with dropout; and (3) school practices and structures that impact upon at-risk children.

On the issue of factors correlated with dropout, national longitudinal studies conducted by the government are primary sources of data. Rumberger (1983, 1995) stands out as a scholar who has written prolifically on the topic of dropout risk factors. Ollendick is recognized as an authority on at-risk children in Montgomery County Public Schools in Virginia (Ollendick, Greene, & Weist, 1990; Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992). Ollendick has conducted one longitudinal study on at-risk children and is currently working with Montgomery County Public Schools on a new study designed to develop a local profile predictive of dropout.

On the issue of school practice and structures that are supportive of at-risk children in schools, a number of scholars' works will provide background for this paper. For example, on the issue of relationship, caring, and community in schools Sergiovanni (1994), Noddings (1992), and Barth (1990) are recognized as authorities.

Six additional scholars who are recognized nationally for their contributions in the school reform movement will be noted also. Glasser (1969, 1990) is recognized as an early pioneer in the school reform movement. Sizer (1984, 1992) is nationally renowned for his Coalition for Essential Schools which seeks to improve secondary schools. Levin's (1989) Accelerated School Project is acclaimed for its intended purpose of accelerating pacing to get children on or above grade level by the end of sixth grade. Boyer's final work, The Basic School, which was written in 1995, brings together in one volume much that is known about best practice in elementary schools. Finally, Comer (1994) and Zigler (Zigler & Finn-Stevenson, 1994) of Yale are authorities on
restructuring schools to meet the needs of at-risk children, families, and neighborhoods by extending the mission of public schools.

Questions and Theoretical Bases of Questions in Research on Dropout

Dropout questions

In research related to dropout, there are several fundamental questions that are asked. The first question, one on which there has been a large amount of research, is: What are the at-risk factors that are correlated with dropout? The second frequently asked question is: What strategies can schools employ to prevent at-risk students from dropping out? This second question is complex in that dropout prevention must be viewed as a continuum. That is, a comprehensive dropout prevention effort must address the following levels of need: (1) prevention that protects children from becoming at risk educationally in the preschool or primary years, (2) early intervention that addresses the needs of children at the primary or elementary level when they first are identified as being at-risk, (3) intervention during the middle and high school years when students are identified with risk factors, and (4) retrieval that attempts to bring dropouts back either into the public school system or into another more appropriate setting to address their educational needs.

Closely related to the question of successful strategies is the question of what practices are prevalent in alternative education programs that are viewed as being successful. A fourth question is: What school practices are known to contribute to students dropping out of school? A fifth question is: What is the relationship between school funding and dropout? Finally, there is the question of whether or not schools alone can or should attempt to meet the complex needs of at-risk children. Many of the factors correlated with dropout are non-school related. Therefore, the question of the role of schools in relation to the role of other human service agencies and community-based programs is raised and is addressed in this literature review.

Theoretical and philosophical considerations

Questions concerning dropout, alternative education, and at-risk students are related to several theories as well as to educational philosophical considerations. For
example, in examining the needs of at-risk children, educators are reminded of Maslow's Motivation Theory, Glasser's Choice Theory, and Systems Theory.

Maslow's Theory describes human motivation and need in a hierarchical model (Maslow, 1970). In Maslow's hierarchical model, human needs are viewed as lower order needs and higher order needs. Examples of lower order needs include shelter, food, and safety while examples of higher order needs include self-esteem and self-actualization. Higher order needs, such as self-actualization, have preconditions and are reserved for human kind. If one accepts Maslow's Theory, schools will always find it difficult, if not impossible, to help children become well adjusted, self-actualized human beings if such basic needs as shelter, food, love, safety and belonging are not first met. With approximately 20% of the children in this country living below the poverty line and with the condition of children and families worsening, the basic needs of children and families loom larger everyday (Children's Defense Fund, 1997).

Like Maslow, Glasser (1990) classifies the basic human needs into categories. Glasser's five categories of human needs are: survival, love, power, freedom, and fun. The basic premise of Choice Theory, which was originally called Control Theory, is that if what people are asked to do satisfies one or more of these basic needs, they will choose to do it. Glasser applies Choice Theory to schooling to engage students in producing quality work. For example, cooperative learning is more need-satisfying than working alone because it fulfills students' needs for belonging, power, and possibly fun. Students' power needs can be met by involving them in decision-making and problem solving and by their experiencing the satisfaction derived from learning to think well and to produce quality work. Glasser's theory provides a framework for school improvement as well as for alternative education program development.

The philosophical underpinnings of Franklin School are based primarily upon Glasser's work. Therefore, the interviews and the surveys employed in this study will address issues such as student empowerment, the level of academic expectations, and the perception of whether the school has a caring, nurturing environment.

Finally, systems theory, as used in the fields of social work and counseling, also is related to the issue at hand. A child is, in fact, part of a family system and of a
community. Brofenbrenner (1988) views a child's development as being the product of interaction between the child and the total environment. Brofenbrenner sees the child's environment as being an ecological framework of multiple, overlapping, and interfacing systems that affect development. For example, the family system and school interface and impact a child's development. Viewing the child as part of numerous systems enhances understanding of child development and encourages schools to work with the family system in order for the child to be successful in school.

Franklin School has parental involvement as a goal. Therefore, in this formative evaluation study of the school, the quality and level of interaction between Franklin School and the parents will be examined.

Just as children are viewed as part of a system, so too are schools increasingly seen as one agency among many that comprise a complex human service delivery system. Because schools do not have the resources or trained personnel to meet all of the needs children present at schools, schools must work with other human service agencies to some degree. Human service agencies such as the Department of Social Services, the Public Health Department, and the Community Services Board, which provides public mental health services, are three of the agencies with which schools frequently interact.

The level of interaction of schools with other human service agencies can be represented on a continuum. At one end of the spectrum is a school merely providing information and making referrals to families in need of services. At the other extreme of the spectrum is a full-service school that attempts to provide or have others provide in-house a full range of services needed by the children, their families, and the neighborhood served by the school (Zigler & Finn-Stevenson, 1994). The full-service school model represents a philosophical departure from the traditional vision of the mission of public schools being solely K-12 instruction.

Franklin School has traditionally had as a goal the development of working relationships with other human service agencies and with the private sector as well. Therefore, in this study the amount and type of interaction with outside agencies and resources will be examined.
Major Research Findings and Their Significance

Research findings on factors correlated with dropout

A large body of empirical research exists that has identified at-risk factors correlated with dropout. The at-risk factors can be broadly classified into demographic, family-related, personal, and school-related categories. In regard to demographic factors, dropout rates are higher for members of racial and ethnic minorities, for males, and for persons of lower socioeconomic status. Family-related factors include low educational and occupational attainment of parents, low income, single-parent families, and absence of reading materials and learning opportunities in the home. School-related factors associated with dropout include poor academic achievement, grade retention, poor attendance, truancy, and discipline problems. School policies related to graduation requirements, grading, and attendance can also contribute to dropout. Finally, personal issues correlated with dropout are marriage, pregnancy and parenting, health problems, financial need to work, low self-esteem, and external locus of control (Rumberger, 1983, 1995). While it is important to understand the factors associated with dropout, Rumberger, like Finn (1989), views dropout as a process that usually begins early in the school experience and culminates in the middle and high school grade levels.

Primary data sources

The primary source of original data on dropout risk factors, including data supporting the findings reported by Rumberger, has been the data banks of four national longitudinal studies that followed school-age students through transitions into post-secondary education, the workplace, and adulthood. The first of the national longitudinal studies is the Youth in Transition Project begun in 1965 by Jerald Bachman and Robert Kahn under contract with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. This study examines the personal background, abilities, attitudes and behaviors that predispose students to dropping out of high school. The cohort studied consists of 2,000 adolescent boys entering tenth grade in 87 schools representing a nationwide sample of schools. Dropout indicators studied include eight
family background factors; ability factors including intelligence, vocabulary, and reading skills; school experiences including grades, retention, and behavior; and psychological factors such as self-esteem and locus of control (Bachman, Green, & Wirtman, 1971).

The three additional national longitudinal studies that have been conducted are the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS-72), High School and Beyond, and the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88). All three were implemented by the Center for Educational Statistics, later renamed the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These three studies instituted the National Education Longitudinal Studies Program of the U.S. Department of Education. This program of longitudinal studies has been undertaken by the national government for the purpose of studying the educational, vocational, and personal development of school-age children and the personal, familial, social, institutional, and cultural factors that influence their development (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

**Local longitudinal studies**

In addition to the national longitudinal studies that have produced data on dropout, there have been some longitudinal studies conducted in local school districts as well. For example, in 1993 Melissa Roderick published *The Path to Dropping Out: Evidence for Intervention*. In this work Roderick recounts her longitudinal study of the seventh grade class of 1980-81 in Falls River, Massachusetts. Students were followed from seventh grade through high school graduation, dropout, or transfer to another school. Roderick examined fourth grade data, looked at retention rates, and investigated transition experiences from fifth to sixth grade and from eighth to ninth grade. She drew on data from the High School and Beyond and Youth in Transition studies as well. Roderick's research question was: At what grade level is intervention to prevent dropout most needed? She concluded that intervention was needed across the grade levels. This finding reflects the wisdom of school systems having a K-12 dropout prevention effort that attempts to meet the needs of at-risk children across the grade levels.
Another recent positivist longitudinal study of dropout has been conducted in Montgomery County Public Schools by Tom Ollendick, Chair of the Clinical Training Program of the Psychology Department at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. The cohort for Ollendick's study was 296 fourth grade students who were followed through graduation, dropout, or transfer as well. A sociometric evaluation of the children resulted in their being categorized as popular, neglected, average, controversial, or rejected. At follow up five years later the children were evaluated on measures of academic performance, social behavior, and psychological adjustment.

At that time Ollendick collected: (1) peer nominations of aggression, withdrawal, and likability from a modified Pupil Evaluation Inventory; (2) self-reports of problem behavior from a survey that tapped problems of substance abuse, conduct disturbance, depression, and anxiety; (3) locus of control, which measures whether or not one feels helpless or in control of what happens in one's life, with the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control for Children; (4) teacher reports of behavior using the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist; (5) court records of juvenile offenses; and (6) school data for fourth through ninth grades, including grade point average, absenteeism, standardized test scores, grade failures, and dropouts (Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992).

Ollendick et al. (1992) found that rejected and controversial children had similar problems and indicators of being at-risk for failure and dropout. These children were reported as being aggressive and less likable by peers, and teachers reported that they had more conduct problems, aggression, motor activity, and attentional problems than their peers. The rejected and controversial children reported external locus of control and greater incidence of misbehavior and substance abuse. Moreover, these children differed from average children in that they failed more grades, performed less well academically, dropped out of school more frequently, and committed more delinquent offenses. Neglected children, on the other hand, were not viewed as different from popular children by teacher report, but they were reported as having an external locus of control and being less liked and more withdrawn than popular classmates.

Clearly, Ollendick's study points to the importance of peer relations in the study of at-risk children and youth. The implication for social skills training as a method of
addressing social skills competence and success in school is indicated. Ollendick also determined through this study that the predictive validity of teacher nominations of at-risk children is quite high (Ollendick, Greene, & Weist, 1990).

In the study of Franklin School parents, teachers, and students will be asked questions concerning social interaction at the school.

Review of School Reform Literature in Relation to At-Risk Children

As stated previously, the dropout issue raises questions related to educational practices that prevent dropout. The literature on school leadership and school reform contains many recommendations for improving the quality of life and the quality of instruction in schools. While these recommendations would generally be helpful to all children, many of the recommendations are essential to at-risk children's potential success in school. Some recommendations for school reform are generic and applicable to all grade levels while others pertain more to particular grade levels.

Generic recommendations

Because at-risk children often lack effective adult support, the literature on at-risk programming for children often refers to the importance of relationship, caring, and affiliation. Small school size, caring staff, and strong sense of community in school are three essential ingredients in successful alternative programs for at-risk children (Neumann, 1995).

Franklin School is small, has a caring staff, and exhibits a strong sense of community when the program is working optimally. This study will examine participants’ beliefs about these features of the school.

Sergiovanni (1994) is one of the most eloquent writers on the issue of the importance of community in schools. He stresses that personal relationship based on love and caring provides the foundation for community in schools. The other essential building block of community, Sergiovanni suggests, is empowerment of faculty and students. Students and faculty must be involved in decision making and norm building to become truly affiliated and vested in school. Central Park East High School in New York City is highlighted as the school that Sergiovanni believes best exemplifies a caring community. Practices at Central Park East that foster community include small
school size; small classes; and long-term, multi-year relationships between students and a small number of caring faculty.

Like Sergiovanni, Barth (1990) believes that effective schools must have a strong sense of community. Barth focuses on community as a learning community in which there is a strong sense of collegiality among staff. In addition to collegiality and community, Barth's vision of a good school is one in which there are other approaches that are helpful to at-risk learners. Academic challenge with low anxiety, risk taking with a safety net, respect for individual differences, and having fun are some of those features that Barth believes protect at-risk learners.

In the study to be conducted of Franklin School, the survey instruments will contain questions related to sense of community, academic challenge, having fun, risk taking, and respect for individual differences.

Another scholar who has made a strong case for the importance of relationship and caring in schools is Nel Noddings (1992). Noddings has gone so far as to argue that a school "cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for students" (p. 14). Furthermore, Noddings writes that intellectual development should not be the first priority of schools. Rather, the first priority should be "to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people" (p. 10). To accomplish this task, Noddings recommends that children be taught to be both care givers and receivers of care and that caring be the thread that runs throughout the curriculum.

Berliner and Biddle (1995) also have made a number of recommendations for school reform that would address the needs of at-risk children. Chief among those recommendations is the strong call to address the equity issue. The problem of disparity in educational opportunity is fundamental and pervasive across the nation and must be addressed at state and possibly national levels. The authors also call for an abandonment of the current practice of placing students in grade levels based on age. Rather, schools should acknowledge that children's developmental levels vary and that children need different amounts of time to learn. Multi-age grouping and individualized pacing would address this issue. (At Franklin School students often work in multi-age groups for activities and family advisory groups.) Finally, the authors
recommend a strengthening of schools' relationships with families and with communities. The authors, in fact, are interested in community schools and full-service schools to work with at-risk populations.

Two leaders in the educational reform movement who are also interested in strong community ties with schools and with increased service delivery in schools are James Comer (1994) and Edward Zigler (1994) of Yale University. Through his "School Development Program," Comer seeks to create a positive climate with a focus on child development and close connection with families of at-risk children. Comer's structure that promotes change consists of: (1) a school management team that includes all stakeholders, including parents; (2) a parent group; and (3) a specialist team consisting of support personnel such as counselors, nurses and school psychologists. The school management team develops a comprehensive school plan that is continuously monitored and changed as needed with the focus always being what is best for children. Decision-making in a school using the Comer model is based on consensus, and none of the players, including the principal, are allowed to be blockers in problem solving for the school (Comer, 1994).

While Franklin School has not had parents on the management team, the school has always practiced site-based management with the teachers, students, and principal making decisions. The issues of site-based management and student involvement in decision-making will be examined in the study of Franklin School.

Comer's associate, Edward Zigler, carries Comer's philosophy of engaging parents in their children's schooling to the extreme end of the spectrum called the full-service school. Zigler advocates using school facilities from early morning, in the evenings, and year-round to house high quality child care and services for families. Called "The School of the 21st Century," Zigler's model includes child care for preschool and school-age children and support for families with children on a continuum from birth to age twelve (Zigler & Finn-Stevenson, 1994).

Interestingly, the School Development Program and the School of the 21st Century models are complimentary and are being used simultaneously in schools. Called CoZi schools, these schools have merged the structure of the Comer model with
Zigler's concept of full-service to families and children ages birth to twelve. The CoZi school model has tremendous potential for meeting the needs of at-risk children and their families.

A third school improvement model that seeks to address needs of at-risk learners is the "Accelerated Schools Project" founded by Henry Levin at Stanford University. The Accelerated Schools Project is devoted to speeding up, rather than remediating, the learning of at-risk children in order to have them perform on or above grade level by the end of the sixth grade (Levin, 1989).

Like Bruer (1994), Levin (1989) believes that at-risk children begin school without the skills needed to succeed. The longer they stay in school, the further these children get behind. To accelerate at-risk learners, accelerated schools (1) focus on bringing at-risk children into the educational mainstream; (2) are site-based with teachers empowered to make instructional decisions; (3) require parental involvement; (4) utilize the total community to assist in the school setting; and (5) have an extended day program with emphasis on language and problem solving.

**Elementary recommendations**

Recent works by Germinario, Cervalli, & Ogden (1992) and Boyer (1995) are rich in suggestions for elementary school practices that would impact favorably upon at-risk children. Germinario, Cervalli, & Ogden specifically address the needs of at-risk elementary-age children. Germinario et al. stress the importance of intimacy, individual attention to children, and a nurturing environment as being central to successful efforts with at-risk children. Caring, dedicated staff with strong interpersonal skills are needed to provide the nurturing environment. Furthermore, it is essential to engage parents of at-risk children and to view the children as part of their families and the families as part of the neighborhood. Finally, this work emphasizes the importance of the whole school functioning as a team to meet the needs of at-risk learners.

While Boyer (1995) did not specifically address the needs of at-risk children, he has synthesized the knowledge about necessary ingredients for successful elementary schools. Much of the emphasis in this work is related to the affective needs of learners.
In fact, Boyer’s work contains many affective descriptors such as "caring place, celebrative, communicative, collegial, respectful to all, and everyone special" to describe his view of a quality elementary school environment. Boyer’s work also promotes small school size and strong parental involvement as additional core ingredients for successful elementary schools. Also, there must be a strong sense of community and affiliation in a "Basic School."

Secondary recommendations

One of the pioneers of the secondary reform movement is William Glasser whose work Schools without Failure was written in 1969. Glasser faults traditional secondary schools as being impersonal, lonely places where children cannot make personal connections; for providing education that is not relevant to the lives of children; for focusing on facts and memorization rather than critical thinking; and for not enabling all students to be involved in the life of the school.

Many of Glasser's suggestions for school improvement are found in alternative education programs. For example, Glasser urges schools to eliminate homogeneous tracking, to stop labeling children as failures through grading, to find time for teachers to plan and work together, and to engage students in problem solving with teachers.

As noted previously, Franklin School has drawn upon Glasser's work. Consequently, the survey instruments will contain questions about student involvement in decision making and student empowerment.

Two other classics in the field of secondary school reform are Horace's School (1992) and Horace's Compromise (1984) written by Ted Sizer. Based on visits to high schools throughout the country, Sizer paints a bleak picture of educational disparity; docile, minimally-engaged learners; teachers who are tellers of information; and a depressing sameness about high schools.

To change the secondary education paradigm, Sizer advocates implementing the teacher-as-coach model of teaching, limiting the number of subjects taught and teaching more in depth, giving teachers no more than eighty students, awarding diplomas based on authentic assessment, creating a climate of "unanxious expectation," training teachers as generalists first and specialists second, and providing better salaries and increased
planning time for teachers. To promote such changes and to encourage dialogue on secondary school reform, Sizer has established the "Coalition of Essential Schools" based at Brown University.

Like Sizer, George Wood visited high schools across this country and wrote about his findings. Instead of focusing on what is wrong with public schools, Wood writes about best practice in public schools. For example, Wood (1992) cites Central Park East High School, a school based on Sizer's principles, as one of the outstanding secondary schools in the United States. Wood, like Sergiovanni, especially honors Central Park East High School for its sense of community.

Wood writes about two other exemplary high schools. Eliot Wigginton's school in Rabun Gap, Georgia, is noted for its real-life learning with authentic end products. Students in Rabun Gap produce the Foxfire publications. Winchester High School in Winchester, New Hampshire is showcased as a school that has restructured to gain more time for instruction and for students to make personal connections. Winchester High has created small advisory groups, has instituted team teaching, and has provided space for student activities and socializing in a barn behind the school. These strategies have resulted in students knowing each other and staff very well which has enhanced students’ sense of belonging. What all three schools have in common and what really makes them special, according to Wood, is their "compassion and connection" (Wood, 1992). Recommendations for both elementary and secondary at-risk students are listed in Table 1.

Information gained from the literature review will help shape the study of Franklin School. The literature related to best practice in alternative education and school structures that are supportive of at-risk children will be used, along with the school’s goals, to frame the questions for the surveys to be administered to teachers, parents, and students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTARY</th>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Attention</td>
<td>Compassion and Caring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurturing Environment</td>
<td>Heterogeneous Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>Quality Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Approach to Children’s Needs</td>
<td>Grading Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small School Size</td>
<td>Common Planning Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>Student Involvement in Problem Solving and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceleration vs Remediation</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
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<tr>
<td>On-Site Services for Children’s Needs</td>
<td>Motivate by Meeting</td>
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<td>Full-Service School</td>
<td>Need for Freedom, Fun, Power, Love</td>
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<td>Teacher as Coach</td>
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<td>Fewer Subjects in Depth</td>
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<td>Low Pupil/Teacher Ratios</td>
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<td>Authentic Products</td>
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<td>Teachers as Generalists</td>
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<td>Unanxious Expectation</td>
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CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Because the subject of at-risk learners and dropout is so broad, one finds both quantitative and qualitative research studies on this subject. To investigate at-risk factors predictive of school failure and dropout, massive quantitative research has been conducted. The prevalent research design for the primary quantitative studies on dropout risk factors has been the longitudinal study with stratified sampling from representative sites. Data from the longitudinal studies have been analyzed to find factors that correlate with dropout. Analysis of variance and multiple regression analysis are two of the statistical procedures frequently used in this research. Multiple regression analysis has been used to determine which, of the many variables studied, are most predictive of dropout.

However, qualitative research certainly has its place in research related to dropout, even research related to at-risk factors. For example, qualitative research such as the case study of a dropout written by Barone (1989) gives human dimension to the at-risk factor called alienation and speaks to the need for teachers to build on the interests and knowledge that all children, including at-risk children, possess. As illustrated by Pierce's study (1994) on the importance of classroom climate for at-risk children, qualitative research contributes to our understanding of best practice with at-risk children. The stories that unfold in qualitative research can be powerful as well as meaningful. Think, for example, of the emotional impact of Jonathan Kozol's ethnographic research on the school experiences of at-risk children in schools across this nation (Kozol, 1991).

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is one inquiry method that has potential for studying the effectiveness of programs for at-risk students. Program evaluation in education is defined as "a systematic inquiry designed to provide information to decision makers
and/or groups interested in a particular program, policy, or other intervention" (Gredler, 1996, p.15).

While both program evaluation and educational research are legitimate forms of inquiry, they are quite different. First, the purposes of educational research and program evaluation differ. Research seeks to test principles or theories and to produce new knowledge that may be generalizable. Program evaluation, on the other hand, seeks to judge the worth or utility of a program, and the results usually are not generalizable to other programs (Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Second, in educational research the researcher determines the nature of the problem to be researched. In evaluation, the evaluator is less independent because the evaluator is studying an established program for a particular client. Third, research is generally viewed as being more objective while values are an inherent component of evaluation because the evaluator is determining the worth of a particular program. Finally, the audiences for research and evaluation differ. In research, the audience is often other educational researchers while the audience for evaluation is the client (Gredler, 1996).

Clearly, the study of Franklin School was a program evaluation, rather than research in the classic sense. The results of the study are not generalizable, and the primary audience for the results are the participants in the study and certain school administrators, rather than a wider audience.

Program evaluation can be either formative or summative or a combination of the two (Worthen & White, 1973). Formative evaluation normally is conducted for the purpose of improving or refining a program while summative evaluation is conducted for the purpose of determining impact and, perhaps, whether or not a program is worth continuing. Formative evaluation may be conducted either by an internal or an external evaluator, but a summative evaluation is normally conducted by an external evaluator. In both summative and formative evaluation, both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be used.

In developing an evaluation framework, the evaluator can take an issue-oriented approach or an ethnographic approach or a combination of the two (Gredler, 1996). In the issue-oriented approach, the evaluator uses the program definition, goals, and
objectives as a basis for research questions. When using an ethnographic approach, the evaluator is seeking to understand the program culture and school environment as the participants experience it. Data collection methods such as participant observation, interviews, and surveys enable the evaluator to understand the program, the participants' perceptions of the program, and the factors that influence the direction of the program.

Program evaluation framework

With the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 came the requirement that each project funded through this act be evaluated (Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997). This evaluation requirement over time led to the development of numerous approaches to educational program evaluation as well as various classification systems of program evaluation.

For example, Worthen (1990) classified evaluation approaches into five categories: (1) the performance-objectives congruence approach, (2) the judgment-oriented approach, (3) the adversarial approach, (4) the decision-management approach, and (5) the pluralistic-intuitionist approach. The performance-objective congruence approach formulated by Ralph Tyler consists of determining the extent to which the objectives of a program are actually accomplished. The judgment-oriented approach, on the other hand, involves having an expert observe and judge the value of a program, often for the purpose of determining whether or not to continue funding for the program. In the adversarial approach, evaluators take either the position of program advocate or adversary to deliberately produce opposing views in evaluating a program. The decision-management model involves the evaluator identifying the decisions management must make and collecting data that documents the advantages and disadvantages of the decision alternatives. Finally, the evaluator in the pluralistic-intuitive paradigm portrays and weighs the values and judgments of all participants in a program in an effort to determine program value.

For the purpose of this study, I drew from more than one approach to program evaluation. For example, I drew from the performance-objectives congruence approach, as described by Malcolm Provus (1973) to examine the attainment of
objectives at Franklin School. Also, I utilized the views of Michael Scriven (1973) who first defined summative and formative evaluation. Scriven was also a proponent of goal-free evaluation and of making the evaluation of the goals themselves an integral part of the program evaluation. Additionally, I drew also on the pluralistic-intuitionist approach, which Lincoln and Guba (1983) refer to as naturalistic inquiry, as I sought to understand Franklin School from the viewpoint of the primary stakeholders.

**Formative program evaluation design**

Michael Scriven (1973) defined program evaluation as being either formative or summative. By conducting formative and summative evaluations, researchers can gain an understanding of the merit of programs. The formative and summative forms of evaluation are not mutually exclusive. However, these two forms of program evaluation generally differ in terms of timing and purpose. Formative program evaluation is defined as having as its primary aim the refinement and improvement of the design of an innovative program while it is still under development. Summative program evaluation, on the other hand, has as its main purpose the determination of final worth of a program. A summative evaluation might be conducted for the purpose of determining whether a program deserves to be continued.

In this instance, Franklin School is viewed as a program which is still evolving. The formative evaluation conducted, therefore, provided information that will be useful for program refinement and improvement in the future.

**Role of the program evaluator**

I have been a program participant since Franklin School’s inception, and I was the program evaluator in this study. I wrote the initial grant to begin the program; I implemented the program in 1989, and I have been the administrator of the program during its nine years of operation. Accordingly, as a program participant, I had certain advantages in conducting the evaluation. Michael Scriven, who is one of the leading scholars on program evaluation, believes that a formative evaluation should be conducted by a program participant (Scriven, 1973). Scriven would argue that only someone intimately involved in a program truly understands the program well enough to conduct the evaluation for program improvement purposes. In addition to knowing
the program well, I am known to the staff and to the students. Therefore, my presence at Franklin School was not intrusive as I conducted the study.

However, I understood that I had to be on guard in order for my viewpoint not to be prejudiced based on my beliefs and feelings about the program. Some of the strategies outlined in the section titled "Ensuring Credibility" helped me to counter potential bias I might have had from being a participant in the program.

Participants in the Study

The participants in the study included the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries of Franklin School during the 1996-97 school year. The primary stakeholders and beneficiaries included the six teachers, the 52 students, and the students' parents or guardians.

Teachers

The six teachers at Franklin School taught at the school voluntarily. They were not assigned to the school. Only one of the teachers had been at Franklin School since it opened in 1989. Two of the teachers were new in the year the study was conducted. The remaining three teachers had been at the school for varied lengths of time. One teacher had been at Franklin School for two years, one for three years, and one for four years prior to 1996-97, the year in which the study was conducted.

In addition to teaching, the teachers at Franklin School have always been very involved in site-based management of the program. Therefore, it was consistent with the philosophy and practice of the school for the staff to be involved in helping me determine what the goals are and what, in addition to program goals, needed to be evaluated through this study.

Students

Franklin School serves students in grades eight through twelve from throughout the county. The students are referred to Franklin School from the two middle schools, the two combined (6-12) schools, and the two high schools in the school division.

The 52 students who attended Franklin School in 1996-97 applied to attend the school, were accompanied by a parent to an interview conducted by the staff, and were chosen as being appropriate for the program based on the guidelines for admission that
were listed previously in Chapter I. Most of these students were from low socio-economic status families as evidenced by their eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch. At the end of the period of the study (the 1996-97 school year), the status of the students was as follows: 21 of the students reapplied and were accepted for 1997-98; 4 reapplied and were not accepted; 5 did not reapply and planned to return to their home schools; 11 dropped out of school; 2 left during the year to enter another alternative education program; 3 moved out of county; 4 returned to their home schools during the year; 1 was expelled, and 1 senior graduated from high school.

Parents

Seventy-two adults, including grandparents and stepparents, provided the parenting for the 52 students in attendance at Franklin School during the 1996-97 school year. Of the 52 students, only 18 lived with both natural parents; 28 (the majority) lived with their mothers who were single parents; 2 lived with their fathers who were single parents; 2 lived with grandmothers; and 2 lived with their natural mothers and stepfathers.

Procedures for Collecting Data

The procedures used in the study for data collection reflected the nature of the evaluation questions. A data collection matrix is shown in Table 2 on the next page. Initially, I identified the existing goals of the school with the assistance of the teachers. I then collected data by the following means: administered surveys to teachers, students, and parents to gather their opinions on matters pertaining primarily to program goals; conducted in-depth individual interviews with the six teachers of Franklin School; interviewed a purposively drawn sample of the students and parents; was an on-site participant observer; kept an evaluation journal; and analyzed pertinent student records and school documents. I was open to changes in the evaluation design that were needed as the study progressed.
Table 2
Data Collection Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Generated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Goals</td>
<td>Document Review, Interview of Staff in Meetings, Survey, Individual Interviews</td>
<td>Existing Goals, Emergent Goals, Activities that Support Goals, Opinions about Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders’ Descriptions of Franklin School</td>
<td>Survey, Individual Interviews</td>
<td>Perceptions of Stakeholders about Franklin School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected Outcomes</td>
<td>Survey, Interview of Staff in Meetings, Individual Interviews, Observations</td>
<td>Positive Unexpected Outcomes, Negative Unexpected Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Needs to be Done</td>
<td>Document Review, Survey, Individual Interviews, Observations, Meetings with Staff and Students</td>
<td>Plans for Program Improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, when the time frame for the study was delayed, I added a question in the interviews about changes the participants had seen between school year 1996-97 and 1997-98. When the standard survey administration methods were not producing adequate results from parents and students, I varied my approaches to increase the number of survey responses. Also, I attended meetings at the school in 1997-98 at which students and staff were reviewing what was working well and what needed improvement at the school. These meetings yielded valuable information that was compared to what had been learned through the other data collection methods. Then too I had to adjust to being able to access only three years of student demographic data on the Columbia System, which is the computerized student data base.
Review of documents and records

The review of documents is recognized as being an important method of data collection in qualitative as well as quantitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Consequently, I reviewed appropriate student records and school documents that pertained to the purposes of the inquiry. For example, I reviewed the state evaluation of Project YES, which is the source of grant funding for Franklin School. I reviewed Project YES grants and the Biennial School Plan for Franklin School to generate a list of existing goals and objectives. Also, I reviewed agendas and products from staff meetings held over the past year.

Additionally, I also analyzed appropriate student records, most of which were accessed through the Columbia System. For example, I analyzed records of referrals, applications, and reapplications to determine whether patterns of applications and referrals have changed. To analyze the referral information for school years 1995-96 and 1996-97, the only years for which I found complete referral records, I made a chart on which I listed the names of the schools, the number of students referred, the grade levels of the students referred, the number of students accepted, and the number of students rejected. I tallied the numbers and calculated the percentage of students accepted and rejected. The combined referral data for the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years are reported in Table 11 in Chapter 4. These referral records were particularly valuable in helping to answer some of the perceptions staff had that led to this program evaluation. Namely, are fewer students being referred from certain schools and are fewer students applying?

Also, I reviewed records concerning matters such as attendance, grades, disciplinary infractions, and dropout. In analyzing grades and attendance, I charted the actual number of days students were absent and grade point averages for the years in which students attended Franklin School. The data on attendance and grades can be found in Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 in Chapter 4. To analyze discipline information, I reviewed student discipline files and charted the disciplinary infractions of each student, the type of disciplinary action taken for each offense, the number of days of
disciplin ary action the student received for each infraction, and the name of the teacher who disciplined the student, if known. I then tallied the data. Finally, I calculated the dropout rates and compared Franklin School’s dropout rates to the division dropout rates for the same years. Again, these records were sources for determining whether staff’s perceptions about students’ performance and attendance over time and about our dropout rate were accurate.

**Group interviews with staff**

At a staff meeting in early September 1997, I discussed the proposed evaluation of the program with the teachers and asked for their active participation in the study. At that same meeting, I distributed copies of the Biennial School Plan and the current Project YES grant and asked that they review those documents prior to the next staff meeting. At two subsequent staff meetings, I enlisted the help of staff to (1) review the existing goals of Franklin School, which were found in the Biennial School Plan and the Project YES state grant application; (2) list those strategies and activities that support the existing goals; (3) identify existing records that explain or document the implementation of the goals and strategies; (3) identify goals they believed were real but unstated, and (4) identify any additional aspects of the program that they believed should be evaluated.

In meetings with teachers, I drew upon their knowledge to answer the questions outlined above. Because we were not problem solving or prioritizing the information, I conducted those meetings as normal staff meetings. I elected this routine process of conducting these information-gathering sessions because I believed that using special group processing techniques for this work would have been artificial and unnecessary and would, in fact, have inhibited normal staff participation in this effort.

To do the work, I divided the faculty into two groups of three, had the small groups answer the questions, and had the two groups report out to the whole group. Small group responses were listed on newsprint. The information was typed from the newsprint sheets and was reviewed later for accuracy with the staff. I then developed tables to depict the stated and unstated goals identified through this process, the evidence
that the goals were being met, and the documentation that existed for the goals. Tables 5 and 6, which can be found in Chapter 4, contain this information.

**Individual interviews**

I conducted individual in-depth interviews of program participants because I believed this to be the best data collection method for capturing the perspectives of program participants. As suggested by Patton (1990), I combined two interview approaches, the interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended interview approach. By using the standardized open-ended interview method, I was certain to cover all of the questions with each interviewee and had a somewhat standard flow to the interviews I conducted. From the interview guide approach, I adopted the strategy of using probes to obtain deeper responses and to encourage interviewees to elaborate upon and clarify their responses to questions. Interview protocols used with teachers, students, and parents can be found in Appendix A.

The interview sample was drawn in a purposeful manner. I interviewed all teachers and a purposively drawn sample of students and parents. To determine which students to interview and how many to interview, I developed a matrix of student characteristics such as gender, race, grade level, length of stay Franklin School, successful or unsuccessful completion of the year, and desire to return to the school. A matrix of student characteristics can be found in Table 3. I judged the most significant characteristics to be gender, race, grade level, length of stay at the school, and status at the end of the school year. I then selected an interview pool consisting of five students who reflected the significant characteristics of the student population. I selected two males and three females who represented four different home schools and three different grade levels. Their tenure at Franklin School ranged from one to four years. One of the students was African American (the only minority student in the school that year), and the other four were white. Four of the students completed the school year. One student, who was the only dropout who completed the study and had parental permission to be interviewed, declined to be interviewed. Of the four remaining students, two reapplied for admission for the 1997-98 school year and were accepted.
The other two applied for readmission and were denied. The four parents selected for interviews were the parents of the four students I interviewed.

Table 3

Student Characteristics Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Home School</th>
<th>Yrs. at Franklin</th>
<th>End-of-Year Status</th>
<th>Reapplied</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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<td>DHS</td>
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</table>

**Surveys**

Three separate surveys were developed for the purpose of collecting data from the three primary stakeholder groups, which included Franklin School teachers, parents, and students. The surveys, which contained both open- and closed-ended questions, were developed, formatted, and administered, in so far as practicable, as recommended by Dillman (1978). As explained later, I found that I had to vary my approaches for survey administration due to extreme low returns. Copies of the three surveys can be found in Appendix B.

Prior to using the survey instrument, I asked a number of people to scrutinize the instrument. For example, I asked a reading specialist to review the language of the instrument in an effort to ensure that it was readable by all parents and students. Then for each survey instrument I developed a separate matrix that contained the following: (1) each of the school’s goals to be evaluated, (2) the survey questions related to those
goals, (3) the target audience for the questions, and (4) four questions. The questions were: Are the survey questions related to the goals? Are the questions clear? Are the questions appropriate for the target audiences? Do you have suggested changes for the questions? My doctoral committee co-chairs and a third member of my doctoral committee reviewed the instruments for face and content validity using this matrix.

Additionally, once the surveys were in booklet form, the instruments as well as all letters and forms that accompanied the instruments were field tested prior to use to determine whether they were reliable for use (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). I invited two teachers at another alternative education program to field test the survey instrument, forms, and letters for teachers. I asked two former students of Franklin School to critique the student survey and the accompanying forms and letter, and I asked their parents to critique the parent survey instrument and enclosures. Additionally, two professional associates reviewed all three surveys and their accompanying letters and forms. Copies of the accompanying forms and letters sent to the individuals field testing the survey instrument can be found in Appendix C.

Piloting of the survey instruments yielded some helpful information that I incorporated into the final survey instruments. For example, I modified my cover letter to indicate that I was conducting the study of Franklin School to determine what was working well in addition to what needed to be improved. I eliminated a question that was repeated in one survey instrument and clarified wording in one question that appeared in all three surveys. I improved upon the instructions in each section of the three survey instruments, and I added “Thank you for your time!” at the end of each instrument.

The booklet-style surveys were mailed first to parents with a cover letter from me (Appendix C) that outlined the purposes and importance of the study and the benefits to be gained from the study. Along with the survey and letter, parents received an Informed Consent Form and Parental Permission Form. I had to receive parental permission before I mailed surveys to students which meant that I had to first concentrate on securing parental participation.
The surveys were coded with T, S, and P (teacher, student, parent) followed by a number in order to identify missing surveys for follow-up purposes. Follow-up was conducted at two-, three- and seven-week intervals after the initial mailing of the surveys to parents. Two weeks after the parent surveys were mailed I had received only four responses. This was, needless to say, bothersome. At that point I elected to phone the parents who had not participated.

Through attempting to reach the 46 parents who had not returned surveys by phone two weeks after the first survey was mailed, I learned that 12 of the families had moved since the end of the previous school year. I was able to speak by phone with 26 parents. Of that number, 10 reported that they had not received the survey and asked that another be mailed (None had been returned to me as undeliverable though the mail.); 8 said they had lost the survey and asked that another be mailed; 5 reported that they had the survey and would complete it and mail it; and 2 said their children had been at the school too short a time for them or their children to have formed opinions about the school. I checked the Columbia data base and spoke with teachers and students to obtain new addresses and phone numbers for the 12 families that had moved. Ultimately through this first follow-up I was able to determine that two families had moved and could not be located and two families felt that they had insufficient experience with the school to participate in the study. With the removal of four parents and four students from the available sample, I had 46 parents and 48 students who were available to participate in the study.

At the end of the third week after the first mailing, I mailed a second survey to those parents who had requested another be sent, to those I had not been able to reach by phone, and to those who had new mailing addresses. In that second mailing I announced that participants would be eligible for a drawing for a $30 gift certificate. Over the next month the surveys came in very slowly. I had only 17 in hand two months after the initial mailing.

Because the return rate was so very low, I decided to implement other strategies in an effort to improve the return rate. For example, I left a certain number of parent surveys at Franklin School and asked teachers to have parents coming for conferences
or to pick up their children to complete the instrument. I also spoke personally with students whose parents had not returned surveys and encouraged them to bring the completed surveys to school or to ask their parents to return the surveys by mail. Finally, I made one more phone contact with parents who could be reached by phone and made several home visits. Ultimately all of these efforts resulted in 23 parent surveys (50%) being completed. Because parental permission was required for students to participate in the study, the number of available student participants ultimately dropped from 48 to 23.

Because I had learned that the traditional survey strategies had not worked well with the parents, I varied my approach with students. Initially, I mailed surveys to students as their parental permission forms were received. I then followed up in person whenever possible once students had permission to participate in the study. For example, I met with 7 students who had returned to Franklin School for the 1997-98 school year and had them complete the surveys at the school. I arranged for three students who had returned to their home schools to complete the surveys at school and had two students who had transferred to another alternative education program complete their surveys at that program site. A home visit was made to collect one student survey. I collected 13 surveys through these personal contacts.

After personally contacting as many students with parental permission as I could, I mailed a second survey to those who had not completed the survey and made follow-up phone calls to them as well. Finally, I mailed surveys to students whose parents had not participated and enclosed parental permission forms with the surveys. Follow-up phone calls were made to these students also. In both of these final mailings students were notified that those who participated in the study would be eligible for a $25 gift certificate drawing. I also left some student surveys at Franklin School in case former students who had not sent their surveys in dropped by to visit with staff members. These varied efforts netted only 5 additional returns which brought the total to 18 (38% of the 48 students) student returns. Of course, if I consider that only 23 students were eligible to participate through having parental permission to do so, then 78% of the eligible students participated in the study.
Evaluator's journal

I maintained a journal in which a running account of information concerning the study was recorded. For example, the journal contained my reflections on the work, the questions and directions that emerged, a log of activities related to the study, observations, suggestions for the study made by committee members, especially suggestions of the committee co-chairs. The contents of the journal were an integral part of my data collection and analysis process.

I organized my journal along the lines suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). That is, I divided my journal into three sections: Daily Schedule and Logistics, Personal Reflections, and Methodological Log. The third section contained entries concerning methodological decisions and the rationale for those decisions.

Data Analysis

All data collected in this study was typed prior to analysis. This included data collected from Franklin School staff meetings, interviews, and my research journal. Data analysis matrices were utilized as appropriate (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, I found it helpful to develop matrices of survey goals and questions, student characteristics, and the comments written by participants on the surveys. The matrix on survey comments greatly facilitated my finding themes in the data. The student characteristics matrix clarified the factors that would yield a representative sample of students to interview. Finally, the matrix of goals and questions aided in establishing the face and content validity of the questions on the survey instruments.

As recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994), I explored the possibility of using computer software for analysis of this qualitative data but elected not to use it. Instead, information from the interviews was inductively analyzed using Glaser and Strauss' Constant Comparative Method as described in Maykut & Morehouse (1994). First I coded each page of each typed interview transcript in the upper right hand corner of the page. I then read through each transcript and identified units of meaning which I underlined. Next, in the left margin I wrote words or phrases that captured the essence of the unit. I wrote the code locator under each word or phrase before I cut the units of meaning apart and fixed them onto 5” x 8” index cards. I also highlighted
key words or phrases in each unit of meaning. To find themes and patterns I then made a list of each key word or phrase on the 5” x 8” index cards and read and re-read the lists until I began to see some common themes. My last step was to write the emerging themes on sheets of paper which I placed on the floor. The index cards were then placed on the theme-bearing sheets of paper. In this manner I found, for example, that meeting the social, emotional, and educational needs of students emerged as a theme.

In addition to qualitative analysis, the study involved simple quantitative analysis of the survey results and of student record data. To analyze the survey questions, I coded the answers to the survey questions as follows: teachers, students, and parents were coded as t, s, and p respectively and were assigned a number. Their responses to questions on the surveys were coded by section of the survey, question, and response. For example, question 1 on Section 1 was coded Q11. Responses to the questions were coded on a Likert Scale as follows: strongly agree = 4; agree = 3; disagree = 2; strongly disagree = 1. Therefore, on question 1, section 1, if a respondent strongly agreed, the response was coded Q14. The survey question data was analyzed with the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). Data from both the survey questions and from the documents were reported as simple tabulations of frequency and percentages of responses and cross tabulations as appropriate (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996).

Ensuring Credibility

Measures that I took to ensure credibility of the results were drawn from Lincoln and Guba (1985). First, I safeguarded the data and all products of data analysis. Data from all sources as well as all products of data analysis were maintained in a secure file. I took extreme care to check and recheck all data coding and sorting for accuracy. Second, I was mindful of my personal viewpoint and experience with the program and tried to be on guard for potential bias or myopia. To control for personal bias in interpretation, I relied on feedback from my committee co-chairs. Third, findings were triangulated to validate findings from one source to another. For example, findings from interviews sometimes were found to confirm findings from survey results.
Report of Outcomes

What is learned from this study will be reported in the form of a dissertation and in the form of reports for teachers, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and the Superintendent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Phase I: Planning | Form Dissertation Committee  
Secure Topic Approval by Committee  
Secure IRB Approval for the Study  
Discuss Evaluation with Staff  
Find and Organize School Documents  
(1) Biennial School Plan  
(2) Project YES Grants  
(3) Staff Meeting Products  
(4) Others as Needed  
Find and Organize Student Records  
(1) Attendance  
(2) Discipline  
(3) Grades  
(4) Referral Records  
(5) Others as Needed  
Develop Survey Instrument  
Determine Interview Sample  
Refine and Finalize Survey  
Obtain Parental Permission for Interviews  
Identify Parents for Interviews |
| Phase II: Identification of School Goals (Sept. - Oct. 1997) | Conduct Group Interviews with Staff to:  
(1) ID Existing and Unstated Goals  
(2) ID Activities Which Support Goals  
(3) ID Documentation of Goal Implementation  
(4) ID Aspects of School that Should be Evaluated |
Review and Analyze Student Records |
| Phase IV: Determining Stakeholders' Perceptions of the School through Surveys (Feb. - June 1998) | Administer Survey to Staff Members, Students, and Parents  
Analyze Survey Results (Useful for Finalizing) |
Phase V: Determining Stakeholders' Perceptions of the School through Interviews (June 1997- Nov. 1998)

Interview Questions:
Conduct In-Depth Interviews with All Staff Members and with a Sample of Students and Parents

Phase VI: Completion of Data Analysis (Ongoing throughout the Study) (Jan. - June 1999)

Complete Categorization and Find Recurring Themes

Phase VII: Generation of Products (Spring - Summer 1999)

Write First Draft of Results
Finalize Dissertation
Write Reports for Participants and Central Office
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Introduction
This study was undertaken to conduct a formative evaluation of Franklin School. Those who are responsible for Franklin School believed that it was time to evaluate the program and to test certain perceptions the staff had about how well students did in the program over time. Answers to the following questions were expected to emerge from the data:

1. What are the goals of Franklin School?
   1.1 How are the goals evidenced in the program?
   1.2 Are the goals being met?
   1.3 Are the goals appropriate?
2. How do stakeholders describe Franklin School?
3. What noteworthy findings unrelated to specific goals emerged from the study?
4. What needs to be done to improve Franklin School?

To answer these questions, I analyzed school documents related to grades, attendance, discipline, dropout rates, and referrals made to the program. I also administered surveys to teachers, parents, and students and conducted interviews with all teachers and with a carefully drawn sample of parents and students. Furthermore, I conducted meetings with teachers to identify school goals and school needs. Also, I attended meetings at which students were identifying program strengths and needs. What follows is a report of the findings from these efforts.

Identification of Goals for Franklin School

In preparation for identifying the school goals, teachers were given copies of the school’s Biennial School Plan and the Project YES grant proposal, both of which contained goals or objectives for the school. Then in two staff meetings, teachers identified both the explicit and implicit goals of the school and identified how the goals
were evidenced in the program. Additionally, the teachers confirmed that the identified goals were still appropriate for the program and therefore were the ones that should be used in this evaluation.

At that time the teachers identified eight goals that were clearly stated in the grant and in the Biennial School Plan. Those goals were:

1. To provide approximately 60 at-risk students with an appropriate academic program leading to a high school diploma.
2. To provide meaningful ways for parents to participate in their children’s education and to support the program at Franklin School.
3. To provide counseling and assistance in obtaining services needed by students and parents of students attending the school.
4. To make maximum use of available instructional technology, e.g., telecomputing, computerized instruction, and multimedia equipment.
5. To continue program components that enhance student self-esteem, e.g., “family” advisory groups, student involvement in program management, community service projects, and leisure interest development.
6. To strengthen the vocational/career education and exploration component of the program.
7. To continue to work toward team teaching and interdisciplinary instruction.
8. To enhance linkages with community agencies and with the private sector.

As can be seen in Table 5, teachers were able to identify strategies and activities supporting a conclusion that these goals were being addressed at the school to some degree.

In addition to the eight stated goals, teachers identified five important goals of the school that were not articulated as program goals. The five unstated goals, which are presented in Table 6 along with evidence of these being met and the supporting documentation, identified were:

1. To provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning.
2. To maintain a strong sense of community at Franklin School.
3. To assist students with communication and social skill development.
4. To have teachers work together as a team to develop strategies to ensure that students are successful at Franklin School.
5. To provide staff development opportunities for Franklin School teachers that address school-specific needs as well as instructional needs for the program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Evidence of Goal being Met</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>#1: 60 students with high school courses</strong></td>
<td>Enrollment numbers</td>
<td>Enrollment numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interview records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courses offered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#2: Parent involvement</strong></td>
<td>2 Open houses</td>
<td>Monthly calendars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly calendars</td>
<td>Conference schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent conferences</td>
<td>Interview records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td>Mid-term reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-term reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#3: Counseling and referral for services</strong></td>
<td>Referrals to agencies</td>
<td>No records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On-site counseling by outside agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers counseling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#4: Use of technology</strong></td>
<td>Videotaping yearbook</td>
<td>Yearbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Computer upgrading</td>
<td>Research projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network installed</td>
<td>Staff development schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remedial math</td>
<td>Homepage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research projects</td>
<td>Photography unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plato obtained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of multi-media for science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homepage underway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photography unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#5: Self-esteem work</strong></td>
<td>Families for advising</td>
<td>Monthly calendars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student involvement in decision making</td>
<td>Field trip forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community service projects, including clowning, school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>service, Christmas Store, Nellies Cave, Save our Streams,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Adopt a Spot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| #5: Self-esteem work continued | Student leadership opportunities  
ROPES course  
Enrichment including play in nearby city, caving, bowling, Activities at a college sports complex, school softball game, and garden development with college horticulture club |  |
|---|---|---|
| #6: Career education | Vocational classes at nearby high school  
Visit to weather station  
Visit by actress Career Day at college | Course schedules  
Monthly calendars  
Field trip forms |
| #7: Team teaching and interdisciplinary instruction | Save our Streams  
Eng/soc studies play  
Math/soc studies unit on Egypt  
Eng/soc studies unit on court processes  
Math/Teen Living unit on scale drawings  
Math/science unit on exponential growth and graphing  
Soc studies/science unit on topology  
Eng/art units on countries and flags and endangered species  
PE/science unit on anatomy  
Math/Life Management classes designed and built stereo speaker boxes | Interdisciplinary units |
| #8: Links with agencies and private sector | Master Gardeners  
Aamco  
Parks and Recreation | No records |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Evidence of Goal being Met</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| #1: Safe environment conducive to learning    | Lack of classroom disruption  
Lack of interpersonal conflict  
Attractive classrooms  
Adequate equipment and resources  
Clean, attractive building and grounds | Discipline records  
End-of-year violence reports  
Safety audit  
Work orders for building repair  
Teacher evaluations  
Purchase orders |
| #2: Sense of community                        | Participation in activities  
Service projects for the school, e.g., school quilts, garden development  
Lack of conflict  
Clean, attractive building and grounds | Discipline records  
Products of school service projects |
| #3: Communication and social skill development| Conflict resolution work  
Student training and involvement in decision making  
Student training and involvement in problem solving | Decision making and problem solving curriculum  
Products from decision making and problem solving meetings |
| #4: Teachers strategizing for student success | Meetings to staff difficult cases  
Conferences with parents  
Conferences with staff from students’ home schools | Calendars with records of meetings with parents and staff from other schools |
| #5: Staff development activities               | Conference attendance  
Consultants utilized  
On-site staff development  
System-wide staff development | School division records of staff development offered  
Conference forms |
After identifying the goals of Franklin School that would be used in the formative program evaluation I was to conduct, the teachers discussed what was needed to improve the school. Interestingly, the teachers first identified past practices that had been effective, had been discontinued, and needed to be reinstated to improve program effectiveness. Those past practices included job shadowing experiences for students, career field trips, career assessment, parent seminars on topics of interest to them, connection with an advisory body, and summer enrichment programs for students.

Additionally, the teachers identified three new program components that were needed. First, a student leadership development program was listed as a need. Teachers articulated a need to develop student leaders and to have time with student leaders in the summer to plan for the coming school year. Next, teachers determined that we needed to develop a transition program that would provide support to students who desire to return to their home schools. Finally, teachers identified the need for a peer mediation program to be implemented at the school.

School Documents

The student data base at Franklin School is incomplete for several reasons. First, the school operated without a secretary until 1993-94 and since that time has had only a part-time secretarial position that has seen a lot of turnover. Second, because the students at the school remain on home school registers for pupil accounting purposes, the official records were maintained by those schools. Third, it was not until the 1994-95 school year that Franklin School began using the Columbia System, the computerized system for pupil records, for recording grades and attendance. Therefore, I was able to access only two years of data on attendance and grades prior to the 1996-97 school year, the year in which this study was conducted. The discipline records have never been computerized. I found that I had complete discipline information only for 1996-97, which was the only year in which the staff maintained a formal paper tracking system for all discipline referrals that resulted in less than out-of-school suspension action. Finally, the teacher personnel responsible on site for overseeing discipline and

**Attendance**

I examined attendance data from the 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97 school years. I was able to determine that in those three years 28 students attended two complete school years, and 4 students attended all three years. For those students who attended two years, I looked to see if their attendance improved or worsened in the second year. For those who attended three years, I asked whether their attendance improved or worsened from year one to year two and from year two to year three. Data in Tables 7 and 8 report this information.

As can be seen from the data in Table 7, of the 28 students who attended two complete years, 7 improved their attendance in the second year while 21 students’ attendance declined in the second year. Further, the attendance of 13 students (about 47% of the students who attended two years) declined by more than 100% in the second year.

As reflected in Table 8, the attendance of two of the four students who attended three full years improved while the attendance of the other two declined between years 1 and 2. Between years 2 and 3, one student improved in attendance by less than 10% while the attendance of the other three students declined. Two of the students’ attendance declined more than 100% between years 2 and 3. All four students’ attendance was worse in the third year as compared with the first year they attended the school.

The attendance of most students who attended two years declined in the second year while attendance of the four students who attended three years reflected mixed results. The implication of this finding for future evaluations of Franklin School will be discussed in Chapter 5.
Table 7
Student Attendance over Two Years
N=28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Year 1 Number of Days Absent</th>
<th>Year 2 Number of Days Absent</th>
<th>+/- Change from Year 1 to Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>+22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>+14</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>+6</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>+14</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>+44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8
Student Attendance over Three Years

N = 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Year 1 Absences</th>
<th>Year 2 Absences</th>
<th>+/- Change Year 1 to Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3 Absences</th>
<th>+/- Change Year 2 to Year 3</th>
<th>+/- Change Year 1 to Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>+22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic performance records

I reviewed the academic records of those same 28 students who were at Franklin School for two complete years and the 4 who attended for three full years. Of the 28 students who attended for two years, one student’s grade point average remained exactly the same from year one to year two. Ten students showed slight improvement (between 0.1 to 0.6 on a four point grading scale) in grade point average the second year.

On the other hand, 18 students or 64% of the group had worse grades in the second year of attendance at the school. Of the 18 students, four dropped slightly, between 0.1 to 0.5 on the four point grading scale. Eight students’ grades dropped between 0.6 to 1.0 grade points. Five students’ grade point averages fell between 1.2 to 1.7 points.

Of the four students who attended three full years, two students’ grade point averages improved less than 1.0 in the second year while two students’ grade point averages worsened in the second year, one by as much as 2.4 grade points. In the third year all four students’ grade point averages declined, three by less than 1.0 grade points. The fourth student failed everything and dropped out.

Grade point average (GPA) information is reported in Tables 9 and 10. As these tables reflect, the majority of students attending two years had worse grades the second year. Half the students who attended three years had improved grades the second year; half had worse grades, but the grades of all those students were lower in year three. This finding is worth further discussion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>GPA Year 1</th>
<th>GPA Year 2</th>
<th>+/- Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<td>+0.4</td>
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<td>+0.2</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<td>+0.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>+0.4</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
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<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
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</table>
**Table 10**

**Student Achievement over Three Years**

N=4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>GPA Year 1</th>
<th>GPA Year 2</th>
<th>+/- Change</th>
<th>GPA Year 3</th>
<th>+/- Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dropout rate**

In the 1994-95 school year, 56 students attended Franklin School. Of that number 11 or 20% dropped out of school during the year. The following year, a total of 66 students attended the school. Fourteen students or 21% dropped out in 1995-96. In 1996-97, 11 of the 52 students who attended Franklin School dropped out which again translated into a 21% dropout rate.

Is one out of five students dropping out of school a high rate of dropout? To put the 20 - 21% dropout rate into perspective, it is important to look at the system-wide dropout rate during those same years. The system-wide dropout rates for 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97 were 4.2%, 3.2%, and 3.8% respectively.

The dropout rate for Franklin School, which was five to six times greater than that of the system as a whole, was relatively stable over the time period studied. This finding will be discussed further in the final chapter of this study.

**Referral and interview data**

Referrals to Franklin School were made from six feeder schools that serve students in grades 6 through 12. As mentioned previously, I found limited data on referrals and interview results for 1994-95. The only data available for 1994-95 consisted of a listing of the 21 students who applied, were interviewed, and were not accepted into the program. There is no record of the number of referrals that were made that year.

I found complete data on the referrals made for school years 1995-96 and 1996-97. The number of referrals made by each school and the disposition of the referrals
after the interview process was completed is depicted in Table 11. As can be seen from these data, during these two years, 43 students were referred to the program. Of that number, only 9 were accepted, and 34 were not accepted. The rejection rate was 79% overall. Two schools did not have any students referred accepted. The rejection rate for the other four schools ranged from 64% to 91%. Perhaps this explains why the principal of school number 6, the school with a 91% rejection rate, has been heard to remark that it is easier to get his students accepted at an Ivy League college than at Franklin School.

Finding that 79% of all applicants who applied were denied admission and that the rejection rate ranged from 64% to 100% for the schools making referrals was surprising. These findings have implications for the referral and the interview processes which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
### Table 11

**Student Referral and Interview Results**

**1995-96 and 1996-97 School Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>No. Referred</th>
<th>Number Accepted</th>
<th>Percent Accepted</th>
<th>Number Rejected</th>
<th>Percent Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>03</td>
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<td>00%</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>09%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discipline**

Prior to the 1995-96 school year discipline was not a primary concern at Franklin School. In fact, there were several years in which there was not even any smoking on campus which is remarkable because historically a high percentage of the students who attend this school use tobacco. Tobacco use by students is not only prohibited by school policy, in Virginia possession and use of tobacco products by minors is against the law. Nevertheless, student possession and use of tobacco products on school grounds remains one of the most common disciplinary infractions.

From 1989 through school year 1995-96, discipline at Franklin School was handled by a teacher who was very experienced in working with students who misbehave and have interpersonal problems with other students. This teacher had worked for several years with low achieving middle school students who frequently exhibited problem behaviors. In working with discipline at Franklin School, this teacher helped students process issues, made every effort to resolve problems at school, and tried to avoid use of out-of-school suspension. Rather than putting students out of school, students were helped to work through their difficulties, and in-house
disciplinary tools were developed. LOP (loss of privileges) days and silent lunch were implemented as in-house disciplinary tools in lieu of suspension from school.

The approach to discipline began to change in the 1995-96 school year. That year is referred to by staff as “The Very Bad Year” or “The Year of (name of a student who was a severe discipline problem).” As luck would have it, in the second semester of that school year a particular combination of students admitted into the program proved to be problematic. Discipline deteriorated that semester, and several staff members began to press for less processing of problems with the students in favor of more punishment for disciplinary infractions.

Although discipline information is incomplete for the 1995-96 school year, I did find that one student was suspended ten times for various infractions and was finally long-term suspended for the remainder of the school year. A second student was expelled for physically attacking a teacher. Two students were suspended for possession of drug paraphernalia. I also found records of three students who were suspended for fighting and instigating fights and three additional students who were suspended for smoking and disruptive behavior.

Teacher determination to tighten discipline carried over into the 1996-97 school year. In that year there were two new teachers, and the teacher responsible for handling discipline changed. Whereas in years past the teacher responsible for discipline kept informal records that are not accessible, in 1996-97 the teacher responsible for discipline gave the teachers forms to use in making discipline referrals. A discipline file, which contained the teacher discipline referral forms as well as discipline letters addressed to parents, was created for each student who was disciplined that year. Consequently, I found excellent discipline records for 1996-97.

In reviewing the discipline records for 1996-97, I discovered that 32 of the 52 students attending Franklin School, which is 62%, had disciplinary infractions serious enough to warrant disciplinary action. Twenty of the 32 students disciplined (63%) received at least one out-of-school suspension. In disciplining students, 44 instances of out-of-school suspension occurred; 38 individuals lost privileges, and 30 individuals were assigned days of silent lunch. These disciplinary actions translated into 57 days of
out-of-school suspension, 48 loss of privilege days, and 33 silent lunches. The most frequent infractions included 35 instances of students refusing to follow teacher directives, 24 instances of students being disruptive in class, 24 cases of students leaving class without permission, 17 smoking violations, and 10 citations for misbehavior. There were other infractions as well, and in most instances discipline infractions were accompanied by foul language. What was most interesting was the discovery that the two teachers who were new to the school that year accounted for 81% of all disciplinary infractions that were written up by teachers.

It was both surprising and concerning to find that the most frequent forms of misbehavior leading to disciplinary action were serious misbehaviors -- e.g., failing to follow teacher directives, leaving class without permission, and disrupting the learning of other students. It was also surprising to learn that new teachers accounted for 81% of all discipline referrals that year. These findings raise questions concerning the student population as well as school discipline practices which will be discussed along with other major findings in Chapter 5.

1996-97 Meetings with Teachers

Because 1995-96 had been a difficult year with significant discipline problems, the teachers of Franklin School and I decided to begin the 1996-97 school year with a series of meetings in which we examined our purposes, beliefs, and practices. We invited a consultant familiar with our school to facilitate our work sessions. I reviewed agendas and written products from these work sessions in order to recount what was accomplished through these efforts.

With the assistance of the consultant, we worked on the mission and vision statements for the school and examined our beliefs about students as well as our beliefs about teaching and learning. We also examined our beliefs about discipline and the goals discipline should have for students in the program. Next, we reflected on 1995-96 and brainstormed what went well and what went less than well in that difficult previous year. Finally, we made a list of what we needed to do to improve the situation for the 1996-97 school year. That list included the following items: (1) Establish a strong sense of community and a positive school climate for the year; (2) Have frequent
communication among staff, e.g., regular staff meetings and staff development; (3) Conduct routine staffing of students in order to develop strategies to ensure their success; (4) Establish a discipline framework with the assistance of students; (5) Create a protocol for assimilating new students; (6) Stress multipurpose activities that would accomplish several aims -- instructional improvement and community building, for example; (6) Develop a student handbook; (7) Recognize students for achievements such as good attitude and attendance; (8) Get staff on the same page regarding discipline philosophy and strategies; and (9) Develop a new school brochure and public relations materials.

During the 1996-97 school year the staff was successful in implementing several of these ideas. For example, everyone worked hard on building community, and the staff did implement the discipline practices described previously. Consequently, there was more consistency in discipline. Communication among teachers improved; in fact, teachers met almost daily to process how the day had gone, to discuss students having difficulty, and to strategize about how to help those students become successful. Work on the student handbook was begun but not completed. The recognition efforts and the development of a clear protocol for assimilating new students never fully materialized that year, and the school has yet to develop the public relations materials it needs.

Meetings with Students

One method I used to secure additional student surveys for this study was to have students complete the surveys at school. Thus, I took surveys to Franklin School to have students who had returned for the 1997-98 school year to complete. After students completed the surveys, I was told by one teacher that several students had been reluctant to meet with me and to complete the surveys even though they had parental permission to participate in the study.

In staff meeting after school that same day, which happened to be on a Friday, I discussed this student reluctance to participate in the study with teachers and discovered that several students had been heard to remark that I was looking for negative information and was planning such major changes in the school for the next year that they would not want to attend it. One student noted that I began the survey with
questions about parent involvement, which everyone knew was not strong. This student interpreted my beginning the survey with that particular section as an indication I was looking for the worst about the school. Another student remarked to a teacher that I was bribing students to participate (a reference to the drawing for the $25 gift certificate I had offered to increase participation) and that I didn’t care about the students or the program.

The teachers and I decided that I had to address these issues with students directly. Therefore, on the following Monday I attended a meeting with the whole school and explained the purpose of the study. I likened the study to self-studies that are conducted by all schools for the purpose of making continuous improvement. I assured the students that I had no preconceived ideas about what was needed to improve the school. I also reminded them that decision making at Franklin School is site-based and that substantive change does not occur without teachers and students being involved in determining that change is needed.

This discussion with the student body was timely in that on this particular day the school was dividing up into “families” (student advisory groups) to review work that had been done previously on how the year was going. Students had brainstormed two topics: (1) good things we have done this year that we want to continue, and (2) things that we want to improve or change. I met with the “family” of a teacher who was absent.

While I was meeting with this group, another teacher’s “family” asked to speak with me. What I found in meeting with this group of students was surprising and painful but was also heartening to me in a way. I was hurt by the implications of some of the questions, but I respected the fact that the students were comfortable in addressing their concerns directly with me. I also appreciated their giving me the opportunity to get to the bottom of those concerns.

In this meeting I was asked these questions: Do you like us? Do you like the program? Are you afraid of us? Do you think we are bad? Why are you never here? Do you care about the school? Why do you want to change things? Do you like a certain teacher? Are you asking questions in the study about a certain teacher? I
answered each question honestly and openly but did indicate that I could not talk about any personnel issues with anyone, staff or students.

What I came to understand was that a given staff member felt threatened by the study and had represented me and my intentions as reflected by the questions I was asked that day. What I am left to wonder is how this teacher’s actions impacted on the level of participation in the study and the quality of the responses given by certain students who did participate. If they thought I was looking for the negative side, did that tend to make them more positive in their responses? Did it make them less reluctant to answer open ended questions? I can only wonder what impact it did have.

Over the next week the student body completed the work on what had gone well and what was needed to improve the school. The following list reflects the students’ thinking on these issues. The things students wanted to change or improve are listed in rank order.
I. Student Self-Esteem

What went well:
1. The ropes course

What to change or improve:
1. Have students set goals and evaluate mid-year.
2. Improve self-esteem and caring at the school.
3. Don’t touch except at a student’s request.
4. Teach all students feedback skills learned by peer mediators.

II. School Climate

What went well:
1. Had improved school image.
2. Had removed some troublemakers.
3. Had decreased vandalism.

What to change or improve:
1. Need to have student respect for the program.
2. Have an active peer mediation program.
3. Need to improve student/teacher relationships.
4. Have a teacher/student conflict resolution process.
5. Involve parents in discipline.
6. Send students who don’t meet their goals back to their home schools.
7. Decrease amount of out-of-school suspension for discipline.
8. Make everyone more aware of daily student attendance.
9. Make LOP days (loss of privileges) more tough.
10. Weed the flower beds.
11. Maintain a cleaner lunch room.
12. Stop teachers from talking about other teachers.

III. Learning

What went well:

Nothing listed
What to change or improve:

1. Use computers more frequently in class.
2. Increase reading and have more reading materials and a comfortable reading place.
3. Improve teachers’ teaching methods and attitudes.
4. Have more good, working computers in classes.
5. Have students set academic goals.
6. Make classes more exciting and hands-on.
7. Establish a peer tutoring program.
8. Go back to block schedule.
9. Have better PE activities, especially in winter.

IV. Sense of Community

What went well:

1. Had an increase in volunteerism.
2. Had several good field trips, e.g., Save our Streams
3. Community services, e.g., Adopt a Spot, Nellies Cave
4. Had good teacher/student relationships.

What to change or improve:

1. Plan an end-of-year trip.
2. Be more selective during student interviews.
3. Have a field day.
4. Have regularly scheduled time for families to meet.
5. Have student leadership training early in the year.
6. Set community goals.
7. Have regularly scheduled time for committees to meet earlier in the school year.
8. Follow through on plans that are made.
9. Have some school-wide classes.
V. Counseling Services

What went well:
Nothing listed

What to change or improve:
1. Have a full time counselor.
2. Have counseling groups.
3. Leave problems at home.

From meeting with students I learned that one staff member was threatened by the study and that this teacher had influenced the thinking of some students, not only about the study, but about me as a person and as the school principal as well. I also found the students’ list of what was going well and what needed to be improved to be valuable information. This information could be compared to what those participating in the study thought needed to be done to improve the school. I will return to these findings when I discuss leadership issues, what needs to be done to improve the school, and what I learned about evaluation from conducting this study.

Survey Results

Three separate survey instruments were developed and administered to the teachers, students, and parents. All three instruments contained questions related to the goals concerning parent involvement, efforts to improve student self-esteem, school climate, sense of community, and learning. Additionally, student and teacher surveys included questions about counseling services at the school. Finally, the teacher survey instrument also contained questions about teacher empowerment and the school’s use of community resources.

In answering questions about these areas, respondents could choose one of four responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Additionally, respondents were given the opportunity to make comments at the end of each section of the survey and were invited at the end of the survey to share any additional thoughts and opinions they had about the school.
Group means of each survey section

The group means for each survey section for each participant group are listed in Table 12. The group means for teachers are listed in rank order while the group means for students and parents are listed for comparison purposes in the same order as the teachers’ responses.

Table 12

Group Means for Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Sense of Community</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-Esteem</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. School Climate</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learning</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher Empowerment</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use of Community Resources</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Counseling</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parent Involvement</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group means of 3.0 or above indicate that participants’ viewpoints on these areas were toward the positive end of the spectrum. That is, a 3.0 or above indicates that participants agreed or strongly agreed with a positive statement. For example, the teachers’, students’, and parents’ group means of 3.0 and higher on sense of community and self-esteem efforts reflect their belief that there was a sense of community at Franklin School and that activities to promote student self-esteem were effective.

As can be seen from Table 12, as a group the teachers generally thought the school was doing less well than did the students and parents. It is interesting that the rank order of the teachers’ opinions tracked the rank order of the opinions of the students and parents. The one exception is in the area of parent involvement with students not
viewing efforts in that area as being as much in need of improvement as did parents and teachers. As groups, both students and teachers saw need for improvement in the area of counseling services. I should note that the small size of the respondent groups, especially the size of the teacher group, has an impact upon the mean scores.

Teacher survey results

Six teachers, the total faculty for the 1996-97 school year, completed the teacher survey instrument. The means and standard deviation for each question on each section of the teacher survey results are listed in Appendix D. The survey questions are stated in abbreviated form.

As reflected in the means of teacher responses to questions, teachers viewed most positively those components of the program that are heavily dependent upon interpersonal relationships and that address the affective needs of students. For example, in an effort to build student self-esteem various strategies are employed in the program. Teachers agreed that students have leadership opportunities and are involved in decision making, planning activities, community service activities, and problem solving, all of which can enhance the self-esteem of students. Mean scores of 3.7, 3.7 and 3.5 on teacher interest in the total well being of students, students being respected as individuals, and students being accepted for who they are reflect even stronger teacher agreement on these program attributes.

Similarly, strong sense of community and positive school climate are heavily reliant upon positive interpersonal relationships between students, between teachers, and between students and teachers as well. The highest mean on any question on the teacher survey was 3.8 for teachers caring about students at the school. As a group teachers also agreed that Franklin School is a safe place, a friendly place, a place where people listen to one another, a place with a feeling of caring, a place where teachers feel that they belong and have close personal relationships with students, a place where teachers provide support for students trying new things, and a place where teachers can help students more than in regular schools.

As a group the six teachers’ responses reflected unanimity of opinion on very few items. They were in perfect agreement, with each teacher choosing 3 for agree, on the
following five statements which are in abbreviated form: (1) Students are taught to listen to others; (2) There is a feeling of caring at the school; (3) This school is a friendly place; (4) Teachers are involved in decision making; and (5) Teachers have a voice in which students are admitted.

While teachers as a group agreed that students trust the teachers, they did not agree that teachers trust the students. That finding was interesting and was one that led to an interview question asked of teachers and students. Additionally, the teacher survey results led me to explore why teachers felt that students’ emotional, social, and learning needs were not being met at the school. Finally, the most surprising finding from the teacher survey, for me, was that teachers as a group did not feel that they had as much control over what happens at the school as I expected. I also explored this finding in teacher interviews.

Teacher survey comments

One teacher expressed discomfort “with the researcher knowing and supervising the six subjects and the lack of anonymity” and wrote only one other substantive comment. The remaining five teachers made numerous comments, and two teachers wrote extensive comments.

The majority of the teachers made comments concerning the need for improving counseling services and parent involvement. The five teachers who made numerous or extensive comments all wrote about the need for more counseling services for students attending the school. Individual counseling, group counseling, and family counseling were all mentioned as being needed. Four of the five wrote comments about parental involvement at the school. Two of those teachers noted that the school had the responsibility to improve this program component by “working harder at this” and by developing “more opportunities for parent involvement.” The other teachers noted that improved parental involvement was necessary “for lasting change in students” and for “ensuring a better understanding of the school” by parents.

On the sections of the survey concerning school climate, community, and efforts to improve self-esteem of students, the teachers commented about staff development needs. Teachers noted the need for teacher training on the following issues: (1) interpersonal
communication, (2) conflict resolution, (3) how to improve students’ reading and writing skills, (3) how to develop cross-curricular academic units, and (4) how to support students as decision makers and problem solvers.

Finally, three teachers commented on the need to improve our career development efforts for students, and three expressed their feelings about teacher empowerment. In reference to teacher empowerment, one teacher expressed feeling “less involved in decision making than in past” while a second teacher stated that he/she felt “less empowered” than in previous years. The teacher who felt less empowered noted the loss of a veteran teacher leader, the addition of two new staff members, and the ambiguity of the role of lead teacher as possible reasons for his/her feeling less empowered. Finally, the third teacher expressed a feeling of powerlessness which he/she credited to the “enormity of the task of working with at-risk students and feeling spread too thin.”

Generally, teachers as a group were less positive about the school than were parents or students. In anecdotal comments teachers noted that program improvements were needed in the areas of parent involvement, career counseling and development, and counseling services. Teachers also expressed dissatisfaction about their level of empowerment and involvement in decision-making at the school. These opinions will be brought into the discussion of program needs and leadership issues in Chapter 5.

**Student survey results**

Eighteen students completed survey instruments. On the survey instruments students were asked questions about six areas: parent involvement, counseling, efforts to build self-esteem, school climate, sense of community, and learning. Responses from the student survey instrument can be found in Appendix D. Questions from the student survey instrument are stated in abbreviated form.

As can be seen from the standard deviations on student survey responses, the students’ opinions were diversified. The greatest differences of opinion arose on whether the school provides adequate preparation for college (0.96 SD), on whether it is an advantage to have the same teachers for several years (1.13 SD), and on whether there are adequate counseling services at the school (1.14 SD). The students were
closest in agreement (0.57 or less) on their beliefs about being expected to produce their best work, being more involved in activities at this school as compared to their previous schools, having close personal relationships with other students at this school, and having parents who understand the programs at Franklin School.

The students’ responses, like those of teachers, reflected well on those components of the program that are dependent upon interpersonal relationships and that address the affective needs of students. For example, on questions that rated student involvement in decision making, planning activities for the school, and community service projects the group means ranged between 3.2 and 3.4. Similarly, the range of means was the same for questions concerning teachers’ interest in the total well being of students and students’ feeling accepted and respected as individuals. Also, as a group the students reported that they felt safe, were taught how to listen to others, were taught how to communicate effectively, and were taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully. The means on those four questions were 3.2, 3.3, 3.1, and 3.3 respectively.

Students evidently felt connected to the program. On the survey section on sense of community, group means for all 15 questions were 3.0 or higher. As a group, the students felt more involved than they had in their previous schools, had fun in activities, trusted the teachers, believed that the teachers cared about them, and felt a strong sense of belonging. The group means for those questions were 3.6, 3.6, 3.4, 3.4, and 3.3 respectively. On the question concerning liking the smallness of the school, the group mean was 3.3.

While the general impression of the student survey responses was positive, the group responses on several questions reflected some room for improvement. Responses to questions in the area of career development had means of 2.7 on having had opportunities to explore career interests, 2.9 on having been helped to identify vocational abilities, 2.3 on having adequate career information on hand. Also, the students did not quite agree as a group that the school offered adequate preparation for college. Similarly, a mean of 2.7 on the question related to leisure interest development reflected the students’ belief that this was not a strong component of the program.
Group means of 2.7 on meeting social needs and 2.6 on classroom disruptions also suggest some dissatisfaction with Franklin School.

The student survey results suggested several lines of questioning for subsequent interviews. First, I was interested in the disparity between the students’ and teachers’ reported beliefs about parental involvement and mutual trust. Also, I was interested in exploring students’ views of counseling needs at the school as well as the belief that their social needs were not being met at the school. Further, I was surprised at the 2.9 group mean on the question concerning student leadership opportunities at the school and decided to ask questions about this. Finally, I decided to explore the area of career development in student interviews to try to determine how the school could have been more helpful to students in that regard.

Like teachers, students rated highly those aspects of the program that are dependent upon interpersonal relationships and that address the affective needs of students. Students also agreed with teachers that the career education component needs to be improved. I will return to this finding later in the discussion of program needs.

Student survey comments

Of the 18 students who completed surveys, 7 elected to make no written comments on the instruments, and 4 wrote only one or two comments. Of the 11 who wrote comments, 4 students wrote only negative comments while 2 made only positive statements. The remaining 5 students made statements about the school that were both positive and critical in nature.

One student who made all positive statements wrote: “Teachers and students really care.” “The best place and school I’ve ever been to.” The second student obviously had found his/her niche because this student wrote a great deal that was positive, for example: “The school makes me feel like there is a reason to get up in the morning.” “I have never been so involved ever in any other school before.” “The one-on-one attention I get here has helped my grades, and I actually pass here.” “.... the best school in the entire state.” “I get along well with others; I get help; I do my work; and I actually like my teachers and don’t have a negative attitude toward school any more.”
“I feel proud and honored to be a student here.” “....exactly what kids like me need so they can graduate and learn things that would not be taught anywhere else.”

Other students made favorable comments about the school helping students’ self concept, including students in decision-making, and giving students emotional help when needed. A former student who is currently working and attending community college made the two following statements. “Attending Franklin School helped me accomplish many goals, most importantly graduating from high school.” “This school allowed me to gain leadership skills and learn to speak my thoughts and opinions.”

Critical comments were made as well. For example, two students commented on disciplinary actions taken by staff as not fitting the infractions committed by students. One of these students also stated that there was far too much out-of-school suspension being given at the school.

Opinion on teacher and counselor accessibility and receptivity to students was mixed. For example, one student commented that counselors never identified themselves as being there to help and stated that “they acted like they had no time to help.” One student stated that sometimes teachers were too involved. Similarly, another stated that teachers “try to butt in a lot where they don’t belong.” On the other hand, another student suggested that there needed to be more communication between students and teachers and that teachers should not wait until a student has created a lot of disturbances to help that student. Finally, one student wrote that “teachers don’t listen to students.”

Student comments on the surveys reflected mixed views about the school and the teachers’ accessibility and receptivity as well. Two students expressed concerns about the way discipline was handled at the school. I will discuss these findings further in regard to program improvement needs.

Parent survey results

Twenty-three parents completed the survey instrument designed for parents. On the parent survey, parents were asked questions about five areas: parent involvement, efforts to improve students’ self-esteem, school climate, sense of community, and learning. Parent responses to the survey can be found in Appendix D. As with the
reports of student and teacher survey results, the questions on the parent survey instrument are stated in abbreviated form.

As a group, parents were generally more positive about the school than were the teachers or the students. The only area of the survey in which parents as a group identified several weaknesses was that of parental involvement. Moreover, the range of variance in the parental responses to survey questions was not as great as that of either the teachers or the students. The greatest range of variance (between .85 and .94) of parent responses dealt with questions concerning parent involvement, children’s involvement in community service projects, children’s feeling a strong sense of belonging at the school, and children’s social and emotional needs being met at the school.

In regard to parental involvement, parents generally felt involved with their children’s education, felt informed about the program, and responded that they understood the program. However, they did not agree that there were meetings of interest to them or that there was an active parent group. Nor did parents agree that they had opportunities to be involved in decision-making or to assist with programs at the school. The standard deviation on these four questions ranged between .91 and .94.

Like students and teachers, parents gave the school high marks on meeting affective needs. The highest means for parents’ responses were for teachers’ caring about their children (3.7), teachers showing interest in the total well being of their children (3.6), children being respected as individuals (3.4), there being a feeling of caring at the school (3.5), children having close personal relationships with teachers at the school (3.4), and children trusting teachers (3.4). The smallness of the school, parents agreed, appealed to their children.

As a group, parents agreed with students and teachers that the school did not meet the vocational needs of students. While parents believed that their children were expected to produce their best work and there were high expectations of their children, they did not agree that the school was adequately preparing students for post-secondary education. Nor did parents agree that their children had close personal relationships
with other students in the building. Unlike both students and teachers, however, parents believed that the school was meeting the social needs of their children.

While I did not find the parents’ survey results as surprising as those of either the teachers or the students, I did use the results in preparing interview questions for parents. I asked parents about parental involvement opportunities, how the school could have supported their children better in regard to vocational and career development, and what needs to be done to better prepare students for post-secondary education. I also asked parents why their view of the school’s meeting the social needs of their children differed from the opinions of students and teachers.

Parents were more positive in their opinions about Franklin School than were students or teachers. Like teachers and students, parents believed that those program components that address affective needs of children were strong and that the career development component needed improvement. Parents agreed with teachers that the parent involvement component needed strengthening. Parents agreed with their children that the school did not adequately prepare students for college. I will return to these findings when I discuss program improvement needs.

Parent survey comments

Thirteen of the twenty-three parents who completed surveys wrote comments on the survey instruments. The most voluminous comments were made by two parents who generally were not pleased with the school. Most of the parents’ comments centered on the issues of relationships between teachers and parents and between teachers and students. One parent, for example, commented that “my son and I enjoyed the school and the staff.”

In reference to teacher-parent relationships, parents made positive comments about teachers keeping them informed, being inviting and welcoming parental input, being “at one” with parents when students were having difficulties, and being kind and concerned when a child was out of control. Three parents commented that their children received more attention from teachers due to the low pupil-teacher ratios and small numbers of students at the school. However, one parent commented that conferences were held with parents “only when there were problems.”
In comments made about teacher-student relationships, three parents made favorable comments about all teachers at the school while two parents noted that their children felt especially close to certain teachers. One parent lauded the abilities of two particular teachers. Also, one parent commented that Franklin’s teachers try to help children see their potential, and one wrote that the teachers helped his/her daughter make a turn around and gave her skills to deal with her problems.

Not all parental comments about teacher-student relationships were positive, however. A few parental comments about teacher-student relationships contained mixed messages. For example, one parent wrote the following mixed message: “some teachers ....care about my child. Some of the teachers, he (his/her son) thought, didn’t like him.” Another parent commented that “some teachers seem to truly care; others don’t.” On the issue of having the same teachers for several years, one parent noted that students should only have the same teachers for several years “if the quality of the relationship is good” and if the teacher is a “quality” teacher. Finally, one parent stated that teachers for the most part “kept their high standards but a couple of new teachers just wrote him (his/her son) off.”

Additionally, parents wrote several negative comments about teacher-student relationships. One parent noted that his/her child had problems with certain teachers. Two parents wrote comments about inappropriate teacher behavior and modeling. One of those parents noted that “some teachers act as childish as the children do.” The second parent made comments about inappropriate behavior and poor modeling of social behaviors “by a few teachers.” Another comment was that “teachers should carefully watch teasing and sarcasm -- what may seem funny can often hurt down deep.”

Like students, parents voiced mixed opinions about the teachers and about teacher-student relationships at Franklin School. I will discuss this finding in relation to stakeholders’ descriptions of the school.

**Interviews**

I interviewed five of the six teachers and a carefully drawn sample of four students and four parents. As I analyzed the qualitative interview data, I found that the primary
underlying theme that appeared throughout all of the interviews was the importance of personal relationships. Interviewees talked about personal relationships in terms of small school size, small class size, small pupil-teacher ratios, more one-on-one help, the family-like atmosphere, student relationships with teachers, social interaction with peers, and sense of community.

Additional themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis included the following: (1) teachers’ perceptions about their experiences and needs as teachers at the school, (2) perceptions of students and parents about their experiences at the school, and (3) challenges the school faces. The challenges identified included meeting the educational, social, and emotional needs of students, increasing parent involvement, examining discipline practices and philosophy, and resolving leadership issues.

Participants’ comments re personal relationships

The theme of personal relationships came out in interviews with teachers, parents, and students when I asked them how they would describe the school and how the school benefited students. For example, when asked how she would describe the school to a friend, one student said she would say it is a “small school” and that it offers “more help for students.” The one best thing about it from her perspective was “having relationships with teachers.” The remaining three students said that the best thing about the school was “the smallness” and “smaller classes.” One student also stressed that Franklin School had a “family-like atmosphere; that is what separated it from the regular school.”

Two parents also spoke to the issue of school size and class size. One parent stated that the strengths of the school were “one-on-one assistance, the student/teacher ratio, smaller classes, and teachers having extra time to help with academics.” The second parent stated that for her child the best attributes of the school were the “small environment with small classes and small school numbers.”

While every student and parent liked the smallness of the school in terms of small class size and amount of help available to students, one student and two parents did see drawbacks to the size of the school. One student and her parent believed that the small size of the school contributed to the student being quickly labeled after she displayed
“an attitude.” Her mother stated that she was “labeled as a troublemaker” at the school. The second parent stated that the school was “too small, too confining with so few students.” This mother wanted her daughter “in a regular high school so she’d see she could make it there and be ready to try college.”

When describing the school and its benefits to students, the five teachers also expressed the strengths of the school as being primarily related to size, numbers, and personal relationships. For example, one teacher stated that the most important attribute of Franklin School was its sense of community. He further stated that students benefit from the lower student/teacher ratio. A second teacher stated that the main feature of the school is the “relationship students build with staff (which forms) the basis on which everything revolves, e.g., the learning environment and discipline.” She stated that everything “comes back to relationships - teacher to student, student to student, and teacher to teacher relationships.” Additionally, this teacher stressed that one unique advantage the school has is “that small classroom situation.” The third teacher said she talks to others about the school’s “idea of community, smallness of the school (which) creates an atmosphere where everyone is accounted for and needed....Students have the ability to make one-on-one connections with teachers in a way they haven’t before because of the smallness of the school. It is a very caring environment.” Teacher number four said that one of the real strengths of the school was “the close relationships we’re able to form with students because we have low numbers, the family-like atmosphere.....and the (sense of) community in the school.” Teacher number four also expressed the belief that at Franklin School students “get more academic help and get more teacher time than in the past.” The fifth teacher characterized the school as offering “one-on-one instruction and small class sizes in an academically rich environment.”

Mutual trust in relationships is inherently essential for a school to have a strong sense of community. On the returns I discovered that students believed that teachers trusted them, but the teacher returns indicated that was not the case. Therefore, I asked both teachers and students to explain the disparity in the survey findings. Both the teachers and students were quite clear in their explanations of this phenomenon. The
students stated that teacher trust of students was destroyed by students doing things that were wrong -- e.g., stealing from the school, stealing from the teachers, lying, not listening in class. The teachers agreed with that assessment. However, one teacher expressed the view that when the sense of “community is optimal, (we) don’t have to be as vigilant. She further stated her opinion that teachers, like parents, have a duty to be somewhat vigilant which can be viewed as a lack of trust.

As teachers talked about relationships and sense of community, they acknowledged that the sense of community has not been as strong in the last two to three years as it was previously. Several voiced opinions as to what was needed to enhance the sense of community. One teacher expressed the opinion that the school had not devoted enough time or as much time as previously to group processing as a community. This same teacher further expressed the opinion that in 1996-97 (the year pertaining to this study) teachers did not “connect” well with students. This teacher believed the teachers needed staff development concerning how to make meaningful connections with students and how to become self-reflective in their interactions with students. A second teacher thought strengthening family advisory groups would enhance sense of community. The third teacher who addressed this issue believed that the school needed more whole school activities such as community service projects for community building purposes. Students, this teacher believed, “should help identify what those activities should be.”

In describing Franklin School, teachers, students, and parents agreed that the strengths of the school were derived from its being small and having small class sizes which allowed for interpersonal relationships and more assistance for students. Students and teachers explained that student misbehavior accounted for the lack of trust of students that teachers reported on the survey instrument. Teachers made numerous suggestions for how to enhance the sense of community at the school. These findings will be discussed further in relation to stakeholders’ descriptions of the school and programmatic needs of the school.

**Teachers’ perceptions of their experiences**

As teachers talked about their experiences at Franklin School, it was clear that they found the work both “challenging and rewarding.” The teachers identified specific
challenges of working in this particular alternative education program. For example, one teacher stated that having middle school through high school grade levels and students with varying ability levels was difficult. Having students with reading difficulties and disabilities with no specialists on staff was also cited as presenting an educational challenge.

Three teachers talked extensively about the volatility of the program presenting a particular challenge. One teacher likened working at the school to being on a roller coaster “because there are incredible highs and plummeting lows and it is always changing.” Another teacher likened it to “an emergency room.....can go in the morning with a plan and idea of what the day is going to be but have no concept of what that day will bring.” One never knew, for example, from day to day what student might have problems, act out, and require attention.

The teacher who drew the emergency room analogy stated that the day-to-day changeability attracted her to the program but also stated that it could foster teacher burnout. This teacher, like two of her peers, was concerned about the potential of burnout in an alternative education program. These teachers recommended routinely cycling teachers in and out of the school to avoid teacher burnout.

The teacher who drew the emergency room analogy also recommended three additional strategies for preventing teacher burnout. She advocated having a consultant “come in from time to time and run us through a session to help us get back in touch with ourselves” and to help with staff team building. She further recommended that Franklin School teachers maintain contact with peers in their subject areas in other schools as a way, not only to avoid burnout, but to counter fellow teachers’ negative image of alternative education. This teacher had been stunned by a teacher from another school asking, “What did you do to deserve that?” when she said she’d been hired to teach at Franklin School.

Despite the day-to-day uncertainty, the teachers were unanimous in their belief that the work was rewarding though exhausting. One teacher remarked that “there are incredibly few days that I would say I don’t want to go to work today.” She found her joy in being able to “really get to know kids....and feeling you could really can make a
difference.” She went on to recognize that teachers in a small school like Franklin have
a much better opportunity to get close to students. It is not only that the pupil-teacher
ratio at a small school allows for intimacy. Teachers in regular education “don’t get to
see students outside of the classroom context. They don’t eat with them, don’t work on
committees with them....just don’t have chances to flesh out their pictures of one
another.”

Another teacher talked extensively about how much fun and freedom she had as a
teacher at Franklin School. This teacher, like two other teachers, also enjoyed the
degree of flexibility and autonomy the program had due to its being small and operating
on the principle of site-based decision-making. The teachers appreciated having “time
flexibility,” “program flexibility,” and “flexibility that can give some spontaneity to the
program.”

One teacher stated, “Students know they can count on teachers to help them. They
know the teachers are dedicated and compassionate.” Even so, the five teachers all
acknowledged that they did not have all of the expertise needed to completely meet the
needs of the students. One teacher said that reading and special education specialists
were needed. That same teacher also stated that the school needed “a full-time principal
who does not have to share hats with God only knows how many other programs and
who can see daily the challenges the teachers and students face.” All five teachers
agreed that a full-time counselor/social worker was needed for the school.

Interestingly, when I asked the four students about the counseling program, only
one student agreed that a counselor was needed for the school. The other three said that
a full-time counselor was not needed. One student stated that “students just ‘kinda’
bonded with a special teacher and went to that person. I don’t think you need a
counselor there.” The other two students’ statements revealed the same sentiment.
“That was not a problem; all teachers counseled the students.” “All teachers were
counseling and knew how to help students.”

Teachers universally described their experience at Franklin School as being
rewarding, challenging, and draining. They expressed appreciation for the flexibility
and autonomy they have as teachers at this school. They recommended measures to
prevent teacher burnout and the addition of teacher specialists, including a counselor. Interestingly, three of the students did not see a need for a counselor. I will return to these findings in the discussion of stakeholders’ views of the school and program needs.

Perceptions of students and parents

The four students, two males and two females, who were interviewed had one attribute in common. They were all alienated from the schools that they had attended prior to admission to Franklin School. I asked the students and their parents about the previous school experiences which led to the students’ applying to attend Franklin School.

One boy was victimized, and, according to his mother, “was beaten up,” and was in fear of attending school. The second student, also a male, “didn’t like the teachers and didn’t get along with peers.” His mother was called to come to his former school almost daily, mostly for trivial misbehavior, but also for a few fights. The third student, who was a female, was unhappy, was “in with the wrong crowd,” and felt that “people looked for the worst and expected that she would not do well and would get in trouble.” The fourth student, also a female, was angry, had been in some fights, and didn’t get along with a particular teacher. Two of these students had been expelled from school and had no choice but to re-enter public school through an alternative education placement.

In interviews with both parents and students, I asked about the students’ experiences at Franklin School. How would they describe the experience? What benefits did the students derive from attendance at the school? What impact did the experience have on the students?

The male student who had been victimized at his previous school expressed appreciation for the increased freedom he experienced at Franklin School. He specifically mentioned “being able to eat lunch anywhere, inside or outside the building.” Another benefit for him was being in a small school which made it easier for him to get to classes. He also stated that his grades improved, that he was “picked on less,” and that he enjoyed having more field trips at Franklin School.
This student’s mother related that her son was able to “redevelop a certain sense of safety” and that he had matured while attending Franklin School. She also made mention of his having formed relationships with certain teachers and his having learned “more about real life there, e.g., homeless students, students having babies.”

The second male student described his experience at Franklin School as being fun and stated that he liked the small class sizes and the field trips sponsored by the school. He felt comfortable in that “if you asked a question, people didn’t look at you like you were stupid.” His writing and his grades improved. He “learned that he could calm down” when he was angry.

For her part, this student’s mother stated that her son benefited from learning at Franklin School that he was not the only student who had difficulties. She agreed with her son that his academic performance improved also. She also said that her son participated more in school activities while attending Franklin School. For example, he helped build the Christmas float and participated in the Christmas parade, participated in the clown troop, and attended the school dinners. “He was there nights, weekends...loved it.”

For the female student who had been in with the wrong crowd and thought everyone was expecting the worst of her, attendance at Franklin School brought a lot of benefits. This student stated that she “benefited from having a new crowd” and “learned how to work in a community.” She appreciated having help when she needed it and stated that she “got a lot more help there because there were fewer students.” She valued the opportunity she had there to be a leader and stated that the school “made her want to do something with my life.” Teachers at Franklin School “were more motivating, pushed her, showed her other people out there aren’t like that ....other teachers had been judgmental and expected her to do bad.”

This student’s mother agreed with her daughter’s perception that she had become a leader and saw herself as a leader, and she valued the fact that “other students looked up to her (daughter).” Her mother also appreciated that her daughter’s academic performance improved, and she received help with her problems. She particularly pointed out that her daughter had learned how to “control her anger” while attending
Franklin School. She also valued the support that she felt her child received from staff at the school. This is the same parent, however, who expressed concern about the small size of the school being too confining.

The final student, the female with anger control issues, related that the best thing about attending Franklin School “was the one-on-one help” she received. She felt that her former school expected students to “get it on your own, mostly out of books.” She felt that Franklin also helped her with “leadership and speaking skills” and that it helped her also with “anger control and my attitude a little.”

For her part, this female student’s mother agreed that her child’s verbal expression improved as a result of her attendance at Franklin School. She felt that her daughter “expressed herself better” and that because of the small school size, her daughter was “listened to more” as well.

Both female students expressed that there were leadership opportunities for them at Franklin School. Because not all students had expressed that view on the student surveys, I asked each of the four students to help me understand the survey finding. All four were adamant that there were leadership opportunities for students at the school. One female student stated, “That was not a problem. If you want to be a leader, just step up.” The other female student said, “I don’t understand how students could think there weren’t opportunities for leadership. I had a lot of opportunities.” One of the male students talked about a number of specific leadership opportunities he remembered having personally.

All four students had been alienated from the schools they previously attended. The students and their parents expressed different personal benefits students derived from attending Franklin School. More than one student and parent stated that students benefited from more help with academics and help with personal problems and anger control. All students agreed that leadership opportunities were available for students at the school. I will discuss these stakeholders’ views in Chapter 5.

**Challenges facing the school**

When I went through the process of sorting and analyzing the interview data, I found that the information clustered around four challenges that the school faces. The
four challenges are: (1) meeting the educational, social, and emotional needs of students; (2) increasing parent involvement, (3) rethinking the approach to discipline, and (4) examining leadership for the school.

Meeting educational needs

Teacher views on the quality of the educational program were mixed. One teacher, for example, cited as a strength the “good academics, teachers with good solid backgrounds in what they teach.” Another teacher felt that instruction was not differentiated to meet the varied abilities of students. She said, “We don’t do a great job of meeting educational needs of really bright students....(they) aren’t challenged or students....that are so far behind.” A third teacher feared that the educational program was impacted negatively because there were “so many interventions (behavioral crises) each day, the educational process gets stopped quite a bit.” Another teacher stated the belief that the educational program would be better if the school made better use of community resources and if time was devoted to teaching students how to manage time and how to study in the various disciplines. Two teachers commented that the use of educational technology was a strength of the school. One said, “I’ve had (other) math teachers drooling over the things I have available to work with.”

Three of the four parents interviewed were satisfied that their children received a good education at the school. However, the fourth parent said her son lost ground academically in every area except math. This parent criticized the school for not integrating the subjects, for not using varied teaching methods, and for not “analyzing where kids are and meeting their needs creatively.” She basically believed that the school was not truly an alternative school. Rather, she described it as “a small public school with good kids with hard knocks.”

Parents and students, for the most part, were in agreement that career and vocational advising and exploration were non-existent. Only one parent thought her child had been helped in this area. Her daughter, however, did not agree. Two parents and students said students received no assistance in this area until they transferred to other schools in the county. One student said, “Students need time to explore, look at catalogs, help with contacting schools. Upward Bound might help; no one ever really
explained what Upward Bound was. It was just mentioned in a morning meeting.” Another student stated that “somebody - a counselor - needs to talk about financial aid....It’s a lot of work and you get (ruined) if you don’t have help with it.” One parent also made suggestions for what needs to be done to help students in this area. This mother recommended offering job shadowing experiences, using career resource speakers, having vocational field trips, and using the “running of the school as a vocational program -- children taking on all tasks of running the school, not just janitorial.”

Teachers and parents had mixed opinions about the academic quality of the educational program at Franklin School. Parents and students agreed that career education was sorely lacking at the school. These opinions will be addressed in the discussion of findings.

Meeting social needs

Opinions of students and parents about how well Franklin School met the social needs of its students were varied. One male student and his mother were totally satisfied that the school met his social needs. He liked the size of the school, made friends, and thought there were enough activities for students to participate in at the school.

Two parents, however, stated that their children did not form friendships at the school. Interestingly, their children said that they did have friends at the school. One of these two parents talked at length about the school needing more activities for students to participate in and a richer fine arts curriculum. She felt that her daughter had missed participating in the sports teams and other activities in her former school. The second parent criticized the modeling of poor social behaviors by some teachers and suggested that Franklin School “should be teaching basic manners, how to shake hands, make eye contact when talking, phone answering skills, how to meet people.” This second parent’s views were echoed by a teacher who talked at length about the need for teacher modeling of appropriate behaviors and for social skills training for students.
Three students made suggestions that they thought would improve social interaction at the school. One student asked that sports teams be organized at the school. Another suggested the formation of school clubs and having more school activities for students. The third student recommended that we change membership in families each semester to “give students a chance to interact with more people.” This same student also said that the “grade 8-12 spread sometimes worked, but sometimes you need to have separate activities (for the different grade levels).”

Opinions of parents and students on whether Franklin School met the social needs of students were varied. In two cases, students disagreed with their parents’ assessment of their friendships at the school. Students and parents had a number of suggestions designed to improve this aspect of the program that will be incorporated into the discussion of program needs.

Meeting emotional needs

In describing the school and its benefits for students who attend, all of the teachers reflected at length on the importance of students’ commitment to personal change. Those who benefit from attending have to be willing “to look inside” and work on their personal issues and goals that they set with the assistance of teachers. When students “don’t buy into what is offered and don’t make changes, they often end up abusing the program,” one teacher said.

Teachers talked about the specific components of the school’s program that, they believed, impacted positively on student’s self concept. Everyone spoke favorably about our “giving back to the community” through community service projects. The role students play in program planning, program development, and decision-making were cited by several teachers as being strengths. One teacher talked a lot about the importance of the students having “leadership opportunities these students would not have in a big school.” Another powerful practice of the school, this teacher stated, was the encouragement of students “to take personal responsibility for their actions and to work on developing skills needed to be better at that.”

As a group, teachers agreed that full-time counseling and social work services were needed to better meet, not only the emotional needs of students, but the academic
and social needs as well. One teacher commented, however, that “when outside people (counselors had) come in to work with students or groups there were staff members who complained about people being pulled from classes.” She thought this could be an issue if we had a full-time counselor on staff. This same staff member stated that the teachers needed to do a better job of “formally staffing individual students on a regular basis.”

Clearly, teachers believed that the school does meet the emotional needs of students. However, all teachers thought a full-time counselor would help the school to better meet the academic and social needs, as well as emotional needs of students. This suggestion will be discussed further in relation to program improvement.

Parent involvement

Because the parent and student survey results on parent involvement were quite different, I asked both the parents and the students whether or not parents were sufficiently involved at Franklin School. The replies were interesting. Only one student thought parents should be more involved and expressed interest in having his parents volunteer at the school. The other students did not see a need for parents to be more involved. They made comments like: “Teens don’t see a need for parents to be there all the time....not a weakness.” “It’s not cool to have your parents around -- an image thing.”

The parent of the student who said “it’s not cool to have your parents around” acknowledged that her son “tried to keep me away from activities....was keeping his little secrets about his business.” Two parents said that they felt involved in the school and did not think that parental involvement was lacking. The fourth parent, however, was bitter about her experience in trying to become involved as a parent. She said that the school was “missing opportunities to have volunteers and resources. We would offer to set up a library, help with a course and be met with ‘we’ll get back to you or no thanks’.” She said this response to her offers to assist was “real disappointing” and attributed it to teachers seeming “nervous and thinking I would challenge what was happening.”
For their part, the teachers all agreed that it was important to involve students’ parents. One teacher acknowledged that we need parents to “buy into” the program and that we “will not be as successful” without their participation. Another teacher acknowledged that while parental involvement had been very limited, the few activities that we had for parents were well received. A third teacher talked at length about teachers being afraid of involving parents. She believed the fear stemmed partly from not knowing “how a parent will react to” students’ bad language or misbehavior.

Teachers also agreed parent involvement is a program component that needs improvement. The teachers suggested several ways in which parents could be involved with the school. One suggestion was that teachers be paid to visit parents in their homes in the summer prior to the opening of school to determine how they would like to be involved during the coming school year. Another suggestion made was to have parents participate in field trips and school activities. Finally, one teacher recommended that we create volunteer opportunities for parents to assist at the school during the school day.

Opinions of students, parents, and teachers about parental involvement were varied and interesting. Students did not see a need for additional parental involvement while teachers and parents did. Two parents felt adequately involved, but one was bitter about her experience of trying to become involved at the school. Teachers suggested several ways to enhance the parent involvement component. These findings will be discussed further in relation to program improvement.

Discipline

In terms of the interviews, concerns about discipline at Franklin School surfaced only on the part of teachers. Teachers, for example, alluded to behavior problems interfering with learning and being one factor that made teachers wary of having parents involved.

Two teachers in particular talked extensively about their concerns about disciplinary practices at the school. The first made it clear that he believed that “we made a mistake when we began to keep disruptive students rather than sending them back to their home schools and....fell back into punitive punishments to control
discipline.” The second teacher voiced the opinion that teachers had not understood their boundaries regarding discipline. When should they have disciplined students? When should they have referred students to the lead teacher when there were discipline problems? That same teacher talked about the fact that many of the students at the school “struggle with issues of authority and control” and need to be helped to “use their voices in a healthy way” when they are experiencing difficulties with others. She also talked about the need to deal with discipline issues and not just resort to punishment.

Teachers voiced concern about discipline in relation to classroom disruption, misbehavior causing teachers to fear parental involvement, and discipline practices at the school. This issue will be explored further in the discussion section.

School leadership issues

One of the six teachers was designated as “lead teacher” to carry out the daily administrative duties of school management in my absence. This teacher, along with the other five, and I are involved in all substantive decision-making for the school. In fact, Franklin School probably has had the purest form of site-based decision-making in the school division. Therefore, I was surprised when I learned that the other teachers viewed the lead teacher as being in an ascendant role and not as a peer.

According to one of the teachers, the lead teacher “often gave the impression he was in charge and would make decisions for us.” Another teacher echoed this sentiment and stated that teachers found it frustrating to find that a decision had been made and they knew nothing about it. She said that staff sometimes said, “oh, okay. When was that decision made? Who said we would do that? Couldn’t we have discussed that?” Finally, a third teacher said “to me it feels like there is more directive coming down rather than all of us being a part of decision making.”

Another feeling expressed was that teachers felt that they had less direct access to me. One said that a “hierarchy has been established where I don’t feel we have direct access to you. Everything is filtered through (the lead teacher) from you to us and us to you.” Another teacher agreed with that assessment and said that “his being between
is the one uncomfortable place, because I’ve been made to feel I should come to him first. If I come to you, I would be going over his head.”

One of the veteran teachers stated that in earlier years teachers had been on equal footing, and power had been shared equally. She said that was no longer the case. Her belief was the over a two-year period the lead teacher had assumed more responsibility, some handed to him by teachers, and the culture of power had changed. She said that the lead teacher fostered the impression that he was privy to inside information and “gave off the illusion he’s empowered.” This teacher stated that this shift in power had just evolved and asked that roles and responsibilities be discussed and clarified. We should, she said, “examine processes that have been set along the way, not just fall into it.”

For his part, the lead teacher felt that “the staff has input into anything we do, far more so than they would in a traditional building.” He did admit, however, that “one or two feel they have lost some control that they had in previous years.”

Teachers felt less empowered over time, were confused about the role of the lead teacher, and felt less directly connected to me. Clearly, this finding is important and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Differences between 1996-97 and 1997-98 School Years

School year 1996-97 was the year on which this study was focused. Because my data collection continued through the 1997-98 school year, I asked parents, students, and teachers what the primary differences were at the school in those two years.

The most striking change in those years, according to four of the teachers, was due to new teachers. In 1996-97 the school added two new staff members, and in 1997-98 one new teacher was added to the staff. Only one male student was deeply affected by the loss of two teachers, both of whom were male, in 1996-97. This student’s mother agreed that these two men had been important in her son’s life and that their leaving the school was one reason her child was not interested in returning the following year.

Three of the teachers alluded to teachers feeling left out of the loop in 1996-97. They felt that the lead teacher and counselor sometimes appeared to know information about students that they did not share. Additionally, two of the teachers stated that in
1996-97 the teachers were divided into two factions. One teacher said that there were “two absolute camps; two new teachers with the outcast teacher; three other teachers (who were) the leaders.”

Three teachers commented that relationships among teachers improved during the 1997-98 school year. One stated that “staff worked better together this year than the year before.” Another said that “staff was extremely solid this year....the best year for staff of the four years I was there....the most cohesive.” The third teacher commented that “we became much better as a staff this year in working with students as a unit....much better at defining goals for each student and working together when having trouble with a student. She also thought that having all teachers working together with students on peer mediation and feedback skills contributed to staff cohesiveness.

The fifth teacher, who did not comment on staffing changes, noted two differences between the 1997-98 school year. First, she regretted that in 1997-98 the school had fewer school-wide activities. The sense of community, she felt, might have been stronger if there had been more. Second, she was the only teacher who talked about the negative impact of Standards of Learning testing that was implemented in the 1997-98 school year. She said, “We got caught up in the mania of testing. From February through the first of May much of what we were doing was driven by testing.

Three additional changes between these two school years were noted by individual parents and students. One parent regretted that the school changed from a block schedule to a traditional schedule; she believed her child had benefited from block scheduling. One student felt that there was less freedom the second year. For example, he was not allowed to eat anywhere both inside and outside the second year. Finally, one high school student noted that there were more middle school students at the school in 1997-98, which was not a positive change in her opinion.

In describing the differences between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years, teachers for the most part pointed to staffing changes. Teachers also noted that there were teacher factions and feelings of being “left out of the loop” during the 1996-97 school year. Teachers reported that staff cohesiveness improved in 1997-98. Only one male student and his parent reported that he was affected by staffing changes. The
differences noted between the two school years will be discussed further in relation to limitations of the study.

The information reported in this chapter reflects the findings from the evaluation of Franklin School. In Chapter 5, I will discuss and use these findings to formulate conclusions concerning the questions posed in this study and to make recommendations concerning what needs to be done to improve both Franklin School and future evaluations of the school.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the formative evaluation of Franklin School are discussed. The discussion will be organized around the questions posed for the study in the following order:

1. What are the goals of Franklin School?
   1.1 How are the goals evidenced in the program?
   1.2 Are the goals being met?
   1.3 Are the goals appropriate?
2. How do stakeholders describe Franklin School?
3. What noteworthy findings unrelated to specific goals emerged from the study?
4. What needs to be done to improve Franklin School?

The chapter concludes with a discussion of what I learned about conducting program evaluations with an emphasis on implications for future evaluations of Franklin School.

Goals of Franklin School

Data collection for this study began with the identification of the goals of Franklin School. With the assistance of the school’s teachers, eight explicit goals were identified through reviewing school grant applications and school improvement plans. Those eight goals primarily pertained to serving at-risk students, involving parents, providing counseling, using instructional technology, enhancing student self-esteem, providing vocational and career education, expanding team teaching and interdisciplinary instruction, and enhancing linkages to the community.

Teacher assistance with goal identification proved particularly invaluable in the identification of those school goals that were not explicitly stated. Through discussion, teachers identified five very important implicit school goals. Those implicit goals included providing a safe environment for learning, maintaining a strong sense of
community, teaching communication and social skills, working as a team to ensure student success, and providing staff development for school-specific needs.

I found the process of identifying goals with the assistance of teachers to be both enjoyable and beneficial. It was a meaningful activity because we had not reviewed concrete goals in several years and because we had never articulated the implicit goals. I then used the identified goals, along with the best practices identified through the literature, as the basis for developing the survey questions.

How are the goals evidenced in the program?

After the teachers and I had identified the stated and unstated goals of Franklin School, we developed a list of activities and products that served as evidence concerning the extent to which goals were being met. That list also included the documentation that existed concerning the efforts that had been made in support of the goals. This information is reported in Chapter 4 (see especially Tables 5 and 6).

The data collected reflect both varying levels of activity around the goals and varying amounts of documentation available for them as well. For example, considerable activity was reported for goals pertaining to student self-esteem, use of instructional technology, and interdisciplinary instruction. Conversely, little activity was reported for goals related to career education and linkages with other agencies and the private sector. The amount of documentation for activities related to goals varied from being sufficient to being non-existent as in the case of counseling services and linkages to the community.

Are the goals being met?

While the data do indicate that all goals were being addressed to some degree, survey data and interview data indicated that some goals were being met adequately and some were not. Teachers, students, and parents were in agreement about goals relating to self-esteem efforts, sense of community, safe environment conducive to learning, and career education. The three groups agreed that goals addressing a strong sense of community and efforts to enhance students’ self-esteem were being met. Further, they agreed that Franklin School was a safe place; however, they all acknowledged that
classroom disruption was a problem. The three groups also agreed that career education was not being addressed adequately at the school.

Opinions of teachers, students, and parents differed on whether parent involvement was sufficient and on whether communication and social skills were taught at the school. Teachers and parents both acknowledged that parent involvement was not adequate. Students, on the other hand, did not see this as a weakness of the program, probably because most students this age feel like the interviewee who said “it’s not cool to have your parents around.” Parents and students thought that students were taught to listen, to communicate appropriately, and to resolve conflicts peacefully. Teachers, on the other hand, thought that students were taught to listen but not to communicate appropriately or to resolve conflicts peacefully. I believe that the teachers’ responses on appropriate communication and conflict resolution reflected the belief that students had not learned those skills even though the skills had been taught.

Questions concerning counseling were asked of students and teachers, not parents. The group means for teachers and students on the survey section concerning counseling were 2.3 and 2.9 respectively. In interviews teachers identified having a full-time counselor/social worker as the primary need for the school. However, only one student interviewed thought a full-time counselor was needed. The other three made statements such as: “All teachers were counseling and knew how to help students.” “Students just kinda bonded with a special teacher and went to that person.” In the group meetings in which students identified school strengths and weaknesses, having a full-time counselor was listed as a need, but it received the lowest priority ranking of all needs identified by students.

Survey questions concerning team teaching and interdisciplinary instruction and use of community resources were asked of teachers only. Teachers felt that they helped students make connections between subjects and thought that learning was not compartmentalized by subject areas. However, they did not agree that they were team teaching frequently. Nor did teachers believe that the school was making sufficient use of community resources.
Because there was not time to study everything and because I needed to keep the length of the survey instruments manageable for respondents, I elected to focus on certain goals with the highest priority. Therefore, I did not ask questions about three of the school’s goals: (1) to make maximum use of available instructional technology; (2) to have teachers work together as a team to develop strategies to ensure that students are successful at Franklin School; and (3) to provide staff development opportunities for Franklin School teachers that address school-specific needs as well as instructional needs for the program. I also decided not to ask questions about those areas because at that time I believed we had ample evidence indicating that we were meeting those goals.

In regard to technology, I saw evidence that we were using instructional technology. For example, students at Franklin School have produced video yearbooks and multi-media presentations. I know that the technology available to teachers at Franklin School far exceeds what is available to teachers in schools from which the students have come. Remember that the math teacher said: “I’ve had other math teachers drooling over the things I have to work with.” However, in the group meeting students expressed a desire to use technology more frequently in the classrooms and to have more good, working computers as well. The implication was that perhaps not all of the teachers were making use of the available technology and that we needed to upgrade and repair some equipment.

In regard to teachers working together to ensure that students are successful, I believed that it was self-evident that this goal was being met routinely. The teachers met almost daily in a case consultation mode to discuss students who were having difficulty and to plan interventions to assist those students. Similarly, the teachers routinely met as a group with students and parents of students having difficulty to discuss measures that were needed to enable the students to be successful. In some instances contracts and written plans were developed in meetings with students and parents.

I also did not inquire about staff development directly because I was aware that the teachers at Franklin School had been involved in a number of staff development sessions both at the building and the district level. During the
1996-97 school year, for example, the teachers all participated in subject area staff development offered by the instructional supervisors of the school division. Also, the teachers and I worked with a consultant to examine our vision for the school and our beliefs about students, teaching, learning, and discipline. Even so, staff development came up as an issue in group meetings with teachers, in teacher interviews, and in written comments on teacher survey instruments. Teachers expressed interest in and a desire for training in numerous areas.

**Are the goals appropriate?**

During the meetings with teachers in which the implicit and explicit school goals were identified, we discussed the appropriateness of the goals. We agreed that the goals were appropriate at that time. Nothing in the data I obtained from surveys, interviews, or meetings with students suggested that any of the goals were inappropriate.

**How Stakeholders Describe Franklin School**

Stakeholder descriptions of Franklin School were obtained both from interviews and from anecdotal comments written on survey instruments by students and parents. In interviews I asked the participants how they would describe the school and their experiences as participants. Teachers, students, and parents agreed that the primary strength of the school was derived from its being small and having small class sizes. The small numbers allowed for close interpersonal relationships to develop and for students to receive more academic assistance from teachers.

**Teachers’ descriptions of Franklin School**

After describing the small size of the school as being critically important, teachers noted other features that made the school unique. For example, they spoke positively and at length about those school activities that promoted student self-esteem; namely, community service, the role of students in decision making, program planning and development, and student leadership opportunities.

Teachers’ views on the academic program were mixed. One teacher stated that the school had “good academics and teachers with good solid backgrounds in what they teach.” However, two teachers noted concerns about behavioral crises disrupting instruction and the lack of differentiation of instruction to meet the varied ability levels.
of students, especially bright students. Finally, a fourth teacher noted on the survey instrument that he/she did not believe that the school prepared students for work at the four-year college level.

Although teachers as a group thought the school was doing less well at meeting its goals than did parents or students, the five teachers interviewed described their experiences as teachers at the school as being positive. However, they used words such as “challenging,” and “draining” as well as “rewarding.” More than one teacher expressed concern about teacher burnout and thought that we need to take measures to prevent it. Finally, three of the teachers expressed appreciation for the flexibility and autonomy that they had as teachers at Franklin School.

Students’ descriptions of Franklin School

In interviews the four students described the small size of the school as being positive in terms of students’ receiving more help from teachers in classes and receiving better grades. Beyond liking the small size of the school, students’ descriptions of the school and what it meant to them varied. For example, two students expressed appreciation for having received help with their anger while attending Franklin School. Two liked the fact that the school had more field trips than did their former schools. Two appreciated leadership opportunities they had at the school. As individuals, the four students described being “picked on less,” getting help with personal direction, getting a fresh start, and learning “how to work in a community.”

For the most part, student comments on surveys reflected positive views of their experience at Franklin School. However, four students expressed concern about teachers’ receptivity, accessibility, helpfulness, and listening. Two expressed concerns about the amount of discipline and how discipline was administered.

Parents’ descriptions of Franklin School

When I asked parents how they would describe Franklin School to a friend, two parents stated that it was a small school with small classes in which students received more help from teachers. One of those parents also said it was a school that communicated with parents much better than the school her child had previously attended. Another parent said it was a school that took students from all over the
county and that it was not like the alternative school that had been housed in the same building years ago. Finally, one parent said that she would tell her friend that Franklin School was “a smaller version of public school with good kids with hard knocks.”

Perhaps because their children had come to Franklin School for different reasons, the four parents interviewed described the school’s impact on their children differently. The parent of the male student who was “picked on less” said her child regained a certain sense of safety and benefited from relationships with certain teachers and from learning about “real life” problems of other students. The parent of the other male student stated that her son found out he was not the only student who had difficulty, made better grades, and was more involved in school activities while attending Franklin. The parent of the female student who had been in with the wrong crowd related that her daughter became a leader, received better grades, and learned anger control while attending Franklin School. The fourth parent, whose daughter also had anger control issues, related that her daughter learned to express herself better verbally and had benefited from being listened to while in attendance at the school.

Parents talked about the impact of several other aspects of the school program on their children. For example, three of the four parents were satisfied with the academic preparation their children received at the school. Two parents stated that the school did not meet their children’s social needs in relation to forming friendships and having access to enough activities such as clubs and sports. One mother expressed concern about poor social modeling on the part of certain teachers. That concern was echoed by a few parents who made similar written comments on survey instruments.

In terms of their personal experiences as parents of students attending Franklin School, parental opinions varied. Two parents interviewed thought that they were adequately involved as parents at the school. Another parent acknowledged that her child did not want her involved in activities at the school, and she thought that was normal. The fourth parent was bitter about teachers’ unwillingness to accept her numerous offers to assist with various projects and needs of the school.
Findings Unrelated to School Goals

In analyzing data from the study, I thought three findings unrelated to the school’s goals emerged. Those unrelated findings that deserve attention here are related to student performance over time, the referral process, and leadership problems. As can be seen from the discussion of these three findings below, I have already begun to take measures to obtain needed information and to make improvements in these areas.

Performance over time

Staff at Franklin School had sensed that student participation and performance dropped off over time, but there had been no systematic inquiry to support that belief. Therefore, I reviewed documentation concerning student attendance, academic achievement, discipline, and the dropout rate for school years 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97. I believed that those data were indicators of how well the program was operating and whether student participation and performance improved or worsened over time.

What I found was that the majority of students who attended two years had worse grade point averages and worse attendance the second year. The attendance and grade point averages of students who attended three years reflected mixed results. The dropout rate for Franklin School was five to six times higher than that of the school division during those three years. The one complete year of discipline data I found for 1996-97 reflected a number of serious disciplinary infractions that resulted in 57 days of out-of-school suspension and other consequences as well.

This information is limited in that it reflects only three years of data and a small number of students (28 students who attended two years and 4 students who attended for three years). This information, however, does suggest that further evaluation of the school is needed, and it can serve as a baseline for future evaluations. If in future evaluations we continue to find that academic performance and attendance diminish over time, as these data suggest, then we will need to limit the number of years that students may attend Franklin School. In that event we will need to develop a transition program to establish support for students returning to their home schools. We need a
transition program in any case to assist those few students who now elect to return to their home schools.

In the future, I also would want to look at students’ attendance and academic performance prior to coming to Franklin School to determine if they had previous patterns of poor attendance and poor achievement. In regard to the dropout rate, I believe a discussion with staff is in order. What do we think an acceptable dropout rate is from a school in which all students are at-risk of dropping out? Also, dropout follow-up is needed to determine what happens to those who drop out of Franklin School. How many of them return to school or receive GED certificates, for example?

Referral process

I reviewed the data on referrals made to Franklin School during the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years, the only years for which I found complete referral records. What I found was that 79% of all students who applied were denied admission. Furthermore, the rejection rate for the schools making the referrals ranged from 64% to 100%.

I was totally surprised to find that we had rejected so many students referred for interviews. I believe that the high rejection rate may account for some of the negativity we encounter from time to time on the part of building principals and counselors who make the referrals to Franklin School, and I have already taken some steps to address this finding. For example, the teachers and I have reviewed our criteria for admission, have updated the referral form used by the schools, and have circulated new referral packets to the schools. Secondly, we have kept the criteria for admission in front of us as we have made decisions concerning admission.

At Franklin School students are interviewed throughout the first semester, and students are admitted on a rolling admissions basis. Unfortunately, we often interview immediately preceding the beginning of a new six weeks or new semester which necessitates phoning admission decisions to parents and to school officials. Therefore, we do not have written records of most admission decisions. This means also that we do not have records of why students were denied admission. Nor have we followed up to determine what happened to those students we turned away. Analysis of reasons for
denial of admission and of what happened to students denied admission would be important to include in future evaluations. Such analysis would help us understand why so many students are denied admission and whether the profile of the students being referred has changed. It would also help us understand the profile of students turned away and whether or not we need additional alternative education programs.

I have taken steps to ensure that in the future we send admissions letters that include the reason for denial when a student is refused. Also, the teachers and I have discussed the need to develop public relations materials for two target groups: prospective students and their parents and the faculties of feeder schools. We plan to develop a multi-media presentation and a brochure.

**Leadership issues**

The most striking finding unrelated to goals, for me, was the leadership problem that surfaced. Over time my job responsibilities and roles have grown and changed which has meant that I have spent less and less time at Franklin School. The time when I knew every student and every student knew me, when student delegations came to see me at my office, and when I was in the building daily is long past. Yet, I am technically the principal.

I was made to realize that there is a serious leadership problem at Franklin School through meeting with students about the evaluation and through interviewing teachers for this study. After talking with students, I realized that they did not know me and did not understand my role. From interviewing teachers I found that over time the teachers believed that they had become less empowered, that they were confused about the role of the lead teacher, and that they felt less directly connected to me.

I have given a lot of thought about how to address the leadership problem at Franklin School. I completely agree with one teacher who stated that much of the responsibility that has been assumed by the lead teacher has just inadvertently occurred. Therefore, I believe that we need to discuss and clarify the role of the lead teacher. Furthermore, I am currently exploring with the superintendent and assistant superintendent the possibility of redefining one supervisory vacancy in my program area in order to obtain daily supervisory support for Franklin School. I have faced the
fact that I cannot provide the daily support that is needed for two reasons. First, I
cannot be there as much as needed due to other job responsibilities. Second, I am the
superintendent’s designee on matters pertaining to discipline appeals, and a new state
law prohibits such designees from directly overseeing schools or programs from which
appeals arise.

What Needs to be Done to Improve Franklin School?

In the previous section I described certain measures, some of which are already
underway, that are needed to address the three unexpected findings from the study.
There are other measures related to school goals that are needed to improve the school.
Again, some of these measures have been addressed or are underway. The areas for
immediate focus of attention are those of counseling, career education, sense of
community, safe school climate as it relates to discipline, technology, parent
involvement, and staff development.

Counseling

Even though students did not necessarily believe that a full-time counselor was a
primary need, the teachers and I did. In fact, when a social studies vacancy appeared at
the school last year, the teachers and I decided to hire a full-time counselor instead of a
social studies teacher. The teachers wanted the counselor so badly that they were
willing to teach the social studies courses even though that meant they had to teach
outside their areas of endorsement and, in some cases, outside their comfort zones.

While many students probably felt that they had adults with whom to discuss
issues, the teachers and I knew that many students dealt with problems that were beyond
the scope of teachers, and even of school counselors, to help with effectively. Many
students at the school, for example, dealt with serious issues such as sexual and physical
abuse and substance abuse. We also realized that many of the problems students faced
centered in the home and family. Therefore, we saw a need for a counselor or social
worker who was adept at working with families.

We were fortunate to find a psychologist with experience in school counseling,
family therapy, counseling of sexual offenders, and residential treatment of youthful
offenders. This counselor immediately began to provide leadership in the areas of
career development, attendance work, and dropout prevention and in her first year made an impact in these areas. In regard to career development, she focused her efforts the first year on upperclassmen. With those older students, she administered interest inventories, worked with the Virginia VIEW career system, helped them with educational planning, secured job shadowing placements for them, took them to a Scholastic Aptitude Testing course, and took them to a career fair. With the leadership of the counselor, I am confident that in time we will have a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate career development program for both the middle and high school students who attend Franklin School.

Because the counselor did not have the time constraints imposed by teaching, she was able to find time to make home visits. She focused her home visits primarily upon students who had severe attendance problems and who were in danger of dropping out of school. Largely as a result of her efforts, several students returned to school, and the Franklin School dropout rate at the end of the year was 4%, compared to 21% in 1996-97, the last year for which I reported dropout data for the school.

**Discipline**

In this study discipline emerged as a problem that interfered with learning, that presented a barrier to parent involvement, and that was a problem area on which staff development was needed. Several measures are needed to address this issue. First, students and teachers agreed that we need an active peer mediation program. The students also wanted everyone, not just student peer mediators, to have the mediation skills. We had peer mediation training late in the 1997-98 school year, but the referral mechanisms to initiate mediation were never put in place. Consequently, we find ourselves beginning the process all over again with the leadership of the new counselor who will put the mechanisms in place. Peer mediation training will be conducted this summer for the mediators, and all students and teachers will receive similar training early this fall.

In addition to having an active peer mediation program, we have underway plans to review our school philosophy in light of approaches to discipline. Again, the school counselor has taken a leadership role in reviewing discipline models such as assertive
discipline and cooperative discipline for presentation to Franklin School teachers in a summer workshop. We plan to follow that session with skill building sessions for teachers on such issues as active listening, effective interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution, all of which teachers requested through the study. Finally, we will be examining discipline practices such as out-of-school suspension, silent lunch, and loss of privilege days to determine when, or if, they are appropriate responses to certain disciplinary infractions.

Staff development

In addition to staff development needs related to discipline, teachers made a number of other suggestions for staff development at Franklin School. For example, teachers recommended working on diverse topics such as team building, development of cross curricular units, and supporting students in decision making and problem solving. At the beginning of the coming school year, I will review all suggestions with teachers and solicit other suggestions as well. We will then prioritize the staff development needs which will be formalized into a staff development plan with timelines for the school.

Technology

Because the state is requiring that all teachers pass proficiency tests on computer knowledge, teachers at Franklin School also will be involved in computer training over the next two years. This training could increase the comfort level of all teachers which would result in increased computer usage in all classrooms at Franklin School.

In regard to instructional technology and its use at Franklin School, several steps have been taken to address the students’ concerns over the condition of the computers and the availability and use of computers in the classrooms. First, I asked the Director of Technology to assist me in this area. With his help, we assessed the condition of our equipment, upgraded some equipment, and formulated an alternative education component for the system-wide Technology Plan. Currently, we are exploring instructional software packages for use at Franklin School, again with the assistance of the Director of Technology.
Additionally, the amount of instructional technology at the school was increased dramatically last year. Through a $10,000 at-risk grant Franklin School received from the school division, the school purchased fifteen Dream Writers, which are powerful, durable, low-cost notebook computers that have advanced word processing abilities. We also purchased 27” televisions and multimedia carts for classrooms that did not have large-screen televisions, Avery Key 3 with cables that allow students to connect their computers to the television sets, five color printers, and several software publishing packages. Also, we bought a digital camera, a VCR, two Gateway computers with monitors, and two overhead projectors, one of which is used for the LCD panel for multi-media presentations.

I am confident that on a per capita basis Franklin School now has more instructional technology than any school in the division with the exception perhaps of one other alternative education program. We have a commitment to using instructional technology at this school because we know that many of our students have visual-kinesthetic learning styles, and we have seen these students respond favorably to technology-based instruction.

Parent involvement

Even though students were satisfied with the level of parent involvement at Franklin School, parental involvement is a school goal that parents, teachers, and I believe needs attention. The addition of the counselor has already begun to have a positive impact on this area. This staff member is more available to parents, and she has made approximately two home visits per week.

This coming year I will work with teachers and parents to determine what parent involvement should look like at Franklin School. We will ask parents what they have to offer and how they would like to be involved at Franklin School. I am open to having a parent volunteer program and a site-based committee with parent representation equal to that of staff. I believe that the staff has already acknowledged the need to re-establish the practice of having parent meetings that are based on topics of interest to them.
**Sense of community**

Although teachers, students, and parents gave high marks on those aspects of the program that promote a strong sense of community, teachers acknowledged that there has been an ongoing struggle in the past few years to build and sustain the sense of community at Franklin School. Therefore, I want to keep in mind those suggestions that participants made that would help with community building. For example, students asked that we follow through on whatever we start and that we have regularly scheduled times for families and committees to meet. While it may be hard to remember always to follow through, as we build next year’s schedule, we will build in specific times for family and committee meetings.

During the teacher work week prior to the students returning to school, the staff at Franklin School and I will design the opening week of school with a specific purpose in mind. That purpose is to incorporate many community-building activities into that first week’s schedule. Later, we will have to discuss how we will continue to incorporate new students into the community as they are accepted throughout the first semester.

I believe that the steps we have taken or will take to strengthen the counseling component, to address discipline concerns, and to better prepare teachers to work with the target population also will help to strengthen the sense of community at Franklin School.

**Program Evaluation**

This study yielded valuable information that is useful for improving Franklin School. While there were certain limitations to the study, the data from this study will provide a baseline for future evaluations of the school. Also, what I learned about evaluation through conducting this study will be applied to future evaluations which will lead to continuous improvement of Franklin School.

**Limitations of the study**

The primary limitations of the study arose from four factors: lack of documentation, influence of student opinion by a teacher, my role in the evaluation process, and protracted timelines. In regard to documentation, I found limited data on
attendance, achievement, discipline, referrals, dropouts, and activities related to school goals. To correct this problem and to ensure that I have data for future evaluations, prior to the end of school I began to work with the school counselor and the math teacher at Franklin School to develop a student data base. With the help of the Director of Technology, we selected the computer program called Filemaker Pro for this work. We are currently in the process of entering the fields for data collection into Filemaker Pro.

Influence of student opinion by a teacher and my role in the evaluation process are closely related. Apparently because one teacher felt threatened by the study, that individual poisoned the thinking of seven students (39% of the student participants) participating in the study. I discovered that this had occurred after the students had completed the survey instruments. I have no way of knowing what impact this teacher’s actions had on the students’ survey responses; however, I believe that having 39% of the sample influenced by the teacher makes the student survey results questionable.

If I had had the close day-to-day working relationship with the students that I had had formerly, I do not believe that this would have happened. I think this teacher was able to influence student opinion primarily because I am now viewed as a distant authority figure rather than a support person who is an integral part of the program. To avoid this problem in the future, I will have student surveys administered by teachers as a routine part of the program. Because students at Franklin School students are used to being asked their opinions, I believe that this type of data collection will be accepted well.

In regard to the limitation to the study caused by protracted timelines, I found that everything involved in the study took much longer than I anticipated. Obtaining university approval for the surveys to be administered and obtaining survey responses were the most time consuming efforts. School year 1996-97 was the year on which the study focused. Yet I found myself collecting data well into the 1998-99 school year.

I attempted to correct for the protracted timelines by adding one question to the interview protocols. I asked teachers, parents, and students to comment on the differences in Franklin School between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. What I
found was that the teachers felt that the primary difference between those two years was due to staffing changes and the nature of teacher relationships. Parents and students mentioned items such as a change in school schedule and a larger middle school population. No one mentioned any substantive changes between those years in any program component.

**Future evaluations**

As mentioned previously, I intend to conduct an evaluation of Franklin School annually. I now will have the student data base and appropriate documentation needed to conduct such evaluations in the future.

Future evaluations of Franklin School will differ from the current study in several respects. First, evaluations will not be as formal and will not require parental permission for student participation. I believe that the formality of the survey research, which involved Informed Consent Forms, various letters, permission forms, and several mailings, may have seemed formidable to some parents. Second, because classic survey research did not work well with this population, as evidenced by the low return rate of parent and student surveys, in the future I will gather parental opinions in person. I also will have teachers collect data from students in person as part of the annual school routine. Through these less formal means I will gather information on an ongoing basis in order to continue to improve the quality of the schooling experience for students attending Franklin School.
References


APPENDIX A
Interview Protocols
Interview Protocol for Parents

1. If you had a friend who asked you what Franklin School is like, what would you tell him/her?

2. Where did your child attend school before coming to Franklin School? What was it about his/her school experience that made you consider sending him/her to Franklin School?

3. How would you describe your child's experience at Franklin School? What was it like for him/her there?

What benefits did Franklin School have for your child?

What impact did attending Franklin School have on your child as a person and as a student?

Were there negatives/drawbacks about your child's attending Franklin School?

4. What would have made the program better for your child? What do you think we need to improve in order to make it a better experience for students?

5. I'd like your insights into several of the survey findings that I found interesting (or didn't understand).

Both the teachers and parents felt that the parent involvement component was weak. Yet, the students did not share that view. How would you explain that?

What are meaningful ways in which parents should be involved in the school?
Vocational/career education was not given the highest marks by parents, students, or teachers. What kind of assistance in this area would you have liked your child to have?

Students did not quite agree that Franklin School met their social needs, nor did teachers. Parents reported that it did. What would account for that difference?

Teachers, parents, and students did not quite feel that Franklin School adequately prepares students for post-secondary education. What do you believe we need to do to strengthen the academic preparation of students?

6. Was your child's experience at Franklin School noticeably different over the years? Between 1996-97 and 1997-98? How did the program change in the years that your child was there?

7. What was the very best thing Franklin School provided for your child?

8. Anything else you would like to share about your child's experience or your experience with the program?
1. If you were conducting a tour of Franklin School for a parent and child who are thinking of applying for admission, what would you tell them about the school?

   What benefits does the school have for students who attend?

   What other strengths do you think the program has for students?

   Are there any drawbacks/drawsides for students attending Franklin School?

2. Describe your experience as a teacher at Franklin School. What was it like for you to teach there?

3. What do you think we need to do to improve the program?

4. I'd like your insight about several survey findings that I found interesting.

   Teachers did not agree that we are meeting educational needs, social needs or emotional needs of students. Can you help me understand that finding? What does this suggest that we need to do?

   A mutual trust issue surfaced in the study. As you know, teachers believe that there is a high level of trust of teachers on the part of students, but that there is not a high level of trust of students on the part of teachers. How/why do you believe that could occur?
The weakest area on the survey, as you know, was the parent involvement component. What thoughts do you have about how we can involve parents in meaningful ways?

One finding that intrigued me was that teachers do not feel that they have as much control over what happens at the school as I would have anticipated. Can you help me understand how this could be?

4. Anything noticeably different at IS between this school year and the last?

5. Anything else you would like to share or that you think is important that we haven't talked about?
Interview Protocol for Students

1. Where attended school before applying to Franklin School? What was it about your experience in school that made you want to apply to Franklin School?

2. Describe your experience as a student at Franklin School. What was it like for you as a student there? What benefits did the Franklin School have for you?

   Could you explain how Franklin School impacted upon you as a person and as a student?

   Were there any drawbacks for you as a student attending Franklin School?

3. What would have made the program better for you? How would you have improved it in order to have a better experience there?

4. I'd like your insights into several of the survey findings that I found interesting (or didn't understand)

   The teachers did not believe that we were involving parents sufficiently in the program. The students did not have that opinion. What could explain that difference?

   From the student perspective the counseling services were the weakest aspect of the program. Why would that be? What kind of services would you think the program needs?
As you know, Franklin School tries to provide leadership opportunities for students. Yet, the students did not feel that they had leadership opportunities at the school. How could that be? Can you help me understand?

On the survey, students indicated that the school met their emotional and educational needs, but not their social needs. What is it about Franklin School that detracts from meeting the social needs of students?

Students indicated on the survey that career/vocational/educational needs were not met at the school. How could we have helped you with that aspect of schooling? What do you now understand would have been helpful to you?

Students felt that teachers had a higher level of trust of students than the teachers actually reported? What would explain that?

5. Anything noticeably different about your experience at Franklin School over the years? Between 1996-97 and 1997-98? How did the program change in your years there?

6. What was the very best thing about Franklin School for you?

7. Anything else to share/important to you?
APPENDIX B
Survey Instruments
Parent Survey

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this survey is to discover what teachers, parents, and students know and think about Franklin School as it operated during the 1996-97 school year. There are no right or wrong answers. Your beliefs based on your experience with Franklin School are important. The information will be used to help us improve the school.

DIRECTIONS

There are five sections to this survey. Read each statement carefully. Record your response by circling the number of only one response to each statement. If you wish to comment on any statement or qualify your answer, please write your comments in the spaces provided. Your comments are important.

Please respond to all statements if you can. However, you may choose not to respond to any statement that makes you uncomfortable.

The survey should take about 25 minutes to complete. Please return the survey along with the signed Consent Form in the enclosed envelope to Judith B. Rutherford, Montgomery County Public Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073 by Monday, April 20, 1998. If you have any questions about completing the survey, you may call Mrs. Rutherford at 381-6116.

Thanks for your help!

SECTION I - Statements in Section I relate to parent involvement at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel that I am involved in the education of my child at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I believe that I have an understanding of the program which my child is experiencing at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Franklin School has meetings for parents/guardians on topics of interest to us.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I receive enough information about what is happening at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. As a parent I have an opportunity to be involved in decision-making about the school programs at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
6. There is an active parent group in this school that involves parents. 1 2 3 4
7. I am aware of opportunities I have to assist with school programs at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4

Please share any thoughts you have about parent involvement at Franklin School.

SECTION II - The following statements concern Franklin School’s efforts to improve students’ self-esteem. Circle one response for each statement.

1. At Franklin School my child is involved in making decisions about the school programs. 1 2 3 4
2. My child is involved in planning school activities at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
3. My child is involved in community service projects sponsored by the school. 1 2 3 4
4. At this school my child has opportunities to pursue leisure interests in sports or hobbies. 1 2 3 4
5. In this school my child has an opportunity to be a leader. 1 2 3 4
6. At Franklin School my child is engaged in problem solving with the teachers. 1 2 3 4
7. At this school teachers show an interest in the total well being of my child. 1 2 3 4
8. At Franklin School my child is respected as an individual. 1 2 3 4
9. At this school my child feels accepted for who he/she is. 1 2 3 4
10. This school’s programs meet the social needs of my child. 1 2 3 4
11. This school’s programs meet the emotional needs of my child. 1 2 3 4
Please share any thoughts you have about the efforts designed to improve students’ self-esteem.

SECTION III - In this section statements address school climate issues. Circle one response for each statement.

1. I think Franklin School is a safe place for my child. 1 2 3 4
2. I believe there are few classroom disruptions caused by students at this school. 1 2 3 4
3. My child has been disciplined fairly at this school. 1 2 3 4
4. At Franklin School my child has been taught how to listen to others. 1 2 3 4
5. At this school my child has been taught how to communicate appropriately with others. 1 2 3 4
6. My child has been taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully at this school. 1 2 3 4

Please share any thoughts you have about school climate issues.

SECTION IV - The following statements address the sense of community at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

1. I believe there is a feeling of caring at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
2. This school is a place where people listen to each other. 1 2 3 4
3. This school is a friendly place. 1 2 3 4
4. I think teachers at Franklin School care about my child. 1 2 3 4
5. My child feels a strong sense of belonging to Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
6. My child has close personal relationships with students at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
7. My child has close personal relationships with teachers in this school. 1 2 3 4
8. I believe my child trusts the teachers at this school. 1 2 3 4
9. I believe the teachers at this school trust my child. 1 2 3 4
10. My child likes Franklin School partly because it is a small school.

11. My child has been more involved in school activities at Franklin School than in his/her former school.
12. My child has fun during activities at Franklin School.
13. There is a family-like atmosphere at Franklin School.
14. It is an advantage for my child to have the same teachers for several years.
15. Having the same teachers for several years enables my child to develop close personal relationships with teachers.

Please share any thoughts you have about the sense of community at Franklin School.

SECTION V - This section of the survey contains statements about learning at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

1. At Franklin School my child has had adequate opportunity to explore career interests.
2. My child has been helped to identify his/her vocational abilities at this school.
3. I believe Franklin School offers adequate preparation for those students who plan to continue their education beyond high school.
4. My child receives more help at Franklin School.
5. I think learning is emphasized at Franklin School.
6. Teachers in this school consistently hold high expectations for my child.
7. At this school my child is expected to produce his/her best work.
8. This school’s programs meet the educational needs of my child.

Please share any thought you have about learning at Franklin School.
Directions: Circle the numbers of ALL of the following words that describe you in relation to your student attending Franklin School.

Part A

1. MOTHER
1. FATHER
1. SINGLE PARENT
1. STEP-MOTHER
1. STEP-FATHER
1. LEGAL GUARDIAN
1. GRANDPARENT
1. HAVE A SON AT Franklin School
1. HAVE A DAUGHTER AT Franklin School
1. HAVE A GRANDSON AT Franklin School
1. HAVE A GRANDDAUGHTER AT Franklin School

Part B - Choose only one, please.

LAST YEAR (1996-97) WAS MY CHILD, STEP-CHILD OR GRANDCHILD’S FIRST YEAR AT Franklin School.

MY CHILD, STEP-CHILD OR GRANDCHILD HAS BEEN AT Franklin School FOR 2 YEARS.

MY CHILD, STEP-CHILD OR GRANDCHILD HAS BEEN AT Franklin School FOR 3 OR MORE YEARS.
Please share any additional thoughts and opinions you have about Franklin School on the next few pages. You may attach additional pages of comments if you wish.
**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this survey is to discover what teachers, parents, and students know and think about Franklin School as it operated during the 1996-97 school year. There are no right or wrong answers. Your beliefs based on your experience with Franklin School are important. The information will be used to help us improve the school.

**DIRECTIONS**

There are six sections to this survey. Read each statement carefully. Record your response by circling the number of only one response to each statement. If you wish to comment on any statement or qualify your answer, please write your comments in the spaces provided. Your comments are important.

Please respond to all statements if you can. However, you may choose not to respond to any statement that makes you uncomfortable.

The survey should take about 25 minutes to complete. Please return the survey along with the signed Consent Form in the enclosed envelope to Mrs. Judith B. Rutherford, Montgomery County Public Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073 by Wednesday, July 1, 1998. If you have any questions about completing the survey, you may call Mrs. Rutherford at 381-6116.

Thanks for your help!

**SECTION I - Statements in Section I relate to parent involvement at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My parents/guardians are involved in my education at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My parents/guardians understand the program I am experiencing at this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My parents/guardians have an opportunity to be involved in making decisions about the school programs at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. My parents/guardians have opportunities to assist with school programs at this school.

Please share any thoughts you have about parent involvement at Franklin School.

SECTION II - This section of the survey contains statements about counseling services at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

1. Adequate counseling services are available for me at Franklin School.
   1 2 3 4
2. Franklin School staff assists students in getting help from community agencies when it is needed.
   1 2 3 4
3. I have an opportunity to participate in counseling groups at this school.
   1 2 3 4

Please share any thoughts you have about counseling services at Franklin School

SECTION III - The following statements concern Franklin School’s efforts to improve students’ self-esteem. Circle one response for each statement.

1. At Franklin School I am involved in making decisions about the school programs.
   1 2 3 4
2. At Franklin School I am involved in planning school activities.
   1 2 3 4
3. I am involved in community service projects sponsored by the school.
   1 2 3 4
4. At Franklin School I have opportunities to pursue leisure interests in sports or hobbies.
   1 2 3 4
5. I have leadership opportunities at this school.
   1 2 3 4
6. At Franklin School I am engaged in problem solving with the teachers.
   1 2 3 4
7. At this school teachers show an interest in my total well being.
   1 2 3 4
8. At Franklin School I am respected as an individual. 
9. At this school I feel accepted for who I am. 
10. This school’s programs meet my social needs. 
11. This school’s programs meet my emotional needs.

Please share any thoughts you have about the program components designed to improve students’ self-esteem.

SECTION IV - In this section statements address school climate issues. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel safe at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There are few classroom disruptions caused by students in this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have been disciplined fairly at this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>At Franklin School I have been taught how to listen to others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>At this school I have been taught how to communicate appropriately with others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I have been taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully at this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share any thoughts you have about school climate issues.

SECTION V - The following statements address the sense of community at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I believe there is a feeling of caring at Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>People listen to me at this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This school is a friendly place.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Teachers at Franklin School care about me. 1 2 3 4
5. I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school. 1 2 3 4
6. I have close personal relationships with students at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
7. I have close personal relationships with teachers in this school. 1 2 3 4
8. I trust the teachers at this school. 1 2 3 4
9. I believe the teachers at this school trust me. 1 2 3 4
10. I like Franklin School partly because it is a small school. 1 2 3 4
11. I have been more involved in school activities at Franklin School than at my former school. 1 2 3 4
12. I have fun during activities at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
13. There is a family-like atmosphere at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
14. I think it is an advantage to have the same teachers for several years. 1 2 3 4
15. Having the same teachers for several years enables me to develop close personal relationships with them.

Please share any thoughts you have about the sense of community at Franklin School.

**SECTION VI - This section of the survey contains statements about learning at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.**

1. At Franklin School I have had adequate opportunities to explore my career interests. 1 2 3 4
2. I have been helped to identify my vocational abilities while at this school. 1 2 3 4
3. There is enough career information in this school. 1 2 3 4
4. I think this school offers adequate preparation for those students who plan to continue their education beyond high school.
5. I feel supported when I try to learn new things at this school.
6. I receive more help at Franklin School.
7. I think learning is emphasized at Franklin School.
8. Teachers in this school consistently hold high expectations for me.
9. At this school I am expected to produce my best work.
10. This school’s programs meet my educational needs.
11. Teachers at this school help me make connections between subjects.

Please share any thoughts you have about learning at Franklin School

Directions: Circle the number in each part that describes you.

Part A - Choose only one, please

1. MALE

1. FEMALE

Part B - Choose only one, please.

1. MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

1. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
Part C - Choose only one, please.

1. LAST YEAR (1996-97) WAS MY FIRST YEAR AT Franklin School.

1. I HAVE BEEN AT Franklin School FOR 2 YEARS.

1. I HAVE BEEN AT Franklin School FOR 3 OR MORE YEARS.

Please share any additional thoughts and opinions you have about Franklin School on the next few pages. You may attach additional pages of comments if you wish. Thank you for your time!
Teacher Survey

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this survey is to discover what teachers, parents, and students know and think about Franklin School as it operated during the 1996-97 school year. There are no right or wrong answers. Your beliefs based on your experience with Franklin School are important. The information will be used to help us improve the school.

There are eight sections to this survey. Read each statement carefully. Record your response by circling the number of only one response to each statement. If you wish to comment on any statement or qualify your answer, please write your comments in the spaces provided. Your comments are important.

DIRECTIONS

Please respond to all statements if you can. However, you may choose not to respond to any statement that makes you uncomfortable.

The survey should take about 25 minutes to complete. Please return the survey along with the signed Consent Form in the enclosed envelope to Mrs. Judith B. Rutherford, Montgomery County Public Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073 by Monday, March 9, 1998. If you have any questions about completing the survey, you may call Mrs. Rutherford at 381-6116.

Thanks for your help!

Section I - Statements in Section I relate to parent involvement at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

1. I think Parents/guardians are involved in the education of their children at Franklin School.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. I think parents/guardians have an understanding of the program which their children experience at Franklin School.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. Franklin School has meetings for parents/guardians on topics of interest to them.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. Parents/guardians receive enough information about what is happening at this school.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
5. Parents/guardians have an opportunity to be involved in making decisions about the school programs at Franklin School.

6. There is an active parent group in this school that involves parents.

7. Parents/guardians are made aware of opportunities they have to assist with school programs at Franklin School.

Please share any thoughts you have about parent involvement at Franklin School.

Section II - This section of the survey contains statements about counseling services at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Adequate counseling services are available at Franklin School.

2. Franklin School staff assists students in getting help from community agencies when it is needed.

3. Students have an opportunity to participate in counseling groups at this school.

Please share any thoughts you have about counseling services at Franklin School.

Section III - The following statements concern Franklin School’s efforts to improve students’ self-esteem. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. At Franklin School students are involved in making decisions about the school programs.

2. Students are involved in planning school activities.

3. Students in this school are involved in community service projects.

4. Students have opportunities to pursue leisure interests in sports or hobbies at this school.

5. In this school, students have leadership opportunities.

6. At Franklin School students are engaged in problem solving with the teachers.
7. Teachers are interested in the total well being of students at this school.
8. At Franklin School students are respected as individuals.
9. At this school students are accepted for who they are.
10. This school’s programs meet the social needs of the students.
11. This school’s programs meet the emotional needs of the students.

Please share any thoughts you have about the efforts to improve students’ self-esteem at Franklin School.

Section IV - In this section statements address school climate. Circle one response for each statement.

1. I think Franklin School is a safe place for students.
2. There are few classroom disruptions caused by students in this school.
3. Discipline is administered fairly at Franklin School.
4. Students at Franklin School are taught how to listen to others.
5. At this school, students are taught how to communicate appropriately with others.
6. Students in this school are taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Please share any thoughts you have about school climate issues.

Section V - The following statements address the sense of community at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

1. I believe there is a feeling of caring at Franklin School.
2. This school is a place where people listen to each other.
3. This school is a friendly place.
4. Teachers at Franklin School care about the students. 1 2 3 4
5. Teachers feel a strong sense of belonging to this school. 1 2 3 4
6. Teachers have close personal relationships with students at Franklin School.
7. I believe the students at this school trust the teachers. 1 2 3 4
8. Teachers at this school trust the students. 1 2 3 4
9. I think students are attracted to Franklin School partly because it is a small school.
10. At Franklin School students are involved in more activities than in their former schools.
11. I have fun at activities at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
12. There is a family-like atmosphere at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
13. I think it is an advantage for students to have the same teachers for several years.
14. Having the same students for several years enables teachers to develop close personal relationships with them.

Please share any thoughts you have about the sense of community at Franklin School.

Section VI - This section of the survey contains statements about learning at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. At Franklin School students have adequate opportunities to explore career interests. 1 2 3 4
2. At this school students are helped to identify their vocational abilities. 1 2 3 4
3. There is enough career information in this school. 1 2 3 4
4. This school offers adequate preparation for those students who plan to continue their education beyond high school. 1 2 3 4
5. I provide support for students when they try to learn new things. 1 2 3 4
6. I can give students more help at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
7. I think learning is emphasized at Franklin School. 1 2 3 4
8. Teachers in this school consistently hold high expectations for students. 1 2 3 4
9. In this school teachers expect students to produce their best work. 1 2 3 4
10. This school’s programs meet the educational needs of the students.

11. In this school I help students to make connections between subjects.

12. Learning is separated into the individual subjects at this school.

13. As a teacher I team-teach frequently in this school.

Please share any thoughts you have about learning at Franklin School.
Section VII - The following statements concern Franklin School’s use of community resources. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Franklin School students visit business and industry sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school uses the community for learning by taking field trips during the year.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This school makes sufficient use of community resources.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share any thoughts you have about Franklin School’s use of community resources.

Section VIII - Statements in this section relate to teacher empowerment at Franklin School. Circle one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers at Franklin School have much control over what happens at this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers are involved in decision-making at this school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers have a voice in which students are admitted to Franklin School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your thoughts about teacher empowerment at Franklin School.

Please share any additional thoughts and opinions you have about Franklin School on the next few pages. You may attach additional pages of comments if you wish. Thank you for your time!
APPENDIX C
Survey Forms and Letters
February 1998

Dear Teachers:

Franklin School has just completed its eighth year of operation, and we have agreed that this seems to be a good time to evaluate the school in order to learn what is going well and what we need to do to improve it. Therefore, we will be conducting an evaluation of Franklin School this year.

As you are aware, the evaluation of Franklin School will consist of two parts. The first part of the study will involve surveying parents, students, and teachers to gather their opinions and thoughts about the goals and practices of the school. The second part of the study will involve interviewing all teachers and a few students and parents about their experiences at the school.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. At this time I am inviting you to complete the enclosed survey if you are interested in participating. Also, an Informed Consent Form is enclosed for you to sign and return with the completed survey if you are willing to participate.

The collated, average results of this study will be shared with interested parents, students, and the staff of Franklin School as well as with the Superintendent. Also, some aspects of what is learned through this study will be included in a dissertation I will submit to Virginia Tech. However, no information that identifies an individual or an individual’s opinions will be included in any reports of the study, including the dissertation.

I ask for your help with this study. Your opinion is important. I know that with your help we will learn much that will be useful for the continued improvement of Franklin School.

A return envelope is enclosed for your use.

Please call me if you have any questions concerning this study.

Sincerely yours,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
February 1998

TO: Franklin School Teachers

FROM: Judith B. Rutherford, Director of Student Services

RE: Informed Consent for Participation in an Evaluation of Franklin School

As you know, we are conducting a study of Franklin School in an effort to see what is going well and what we might need to do to make this the best school it can be. The study is an evaluation of the school, not an experiment. I am inviting all teachers, students, and parents to participate. However, participation is completely voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw at any time.

I am inviting you to fill out the survey that accompanies this message. The survey contains questions on the school’s goals and practices and will take about 25 minutes to complete. Teachers and enrolled students who wish to participate will fill out the survey at the school. Students no longer attending the school will complete the survey in the schools they are now attending or by mail if they have dropped out.

Later I will interview a certain number of parents, students, and teachers who wish to be interviewed about their experience at Franklin School. To select students to interview, I will choose students who reflect the student body in terms of gender, age, length of stay at the school, and interest in returning to the school this year. To choose parents for interviews, I will first ask parents of students invited for interviews. I will conduct interviews with teachers and students enrolled in the school at the school site. I will interview parents and students no longer enrolled either at their homes or at the school, whichever they prefer.

Risk to participants in this study will be minimal. Instead, I think participants will have a positive experience because their input will help us to make Franklin School a better school. I will make every effort to protect the identity of participants in the study. I will not use the real names of the school or the participants. Only I will have actual names of participants, and I will type the transcripts of interviews. I will keep all data in a locked file cabinet and will destroy it when the study is completed. Only collated, collective information will be shared with others and included in a dissertation I will submit to Virginia Tech. Individuals’ identities and opinions will not be shared in any reports of the study.

I cannot offer payment to anyone to participate in this study.

My research project has been approved by Virginia Tech and by the school system. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 381-6116. You may also call any of the following:

Dr. James L. Sellers, Assistant Superintendent, Montgomery County Schools 382-5100
Dr. Larry A. Harris, Virginia Tech Faculty Co-Chair 231-8342
Dr. David J. Parks, Virginia Tech Faculty Co-Chair 231-9709
Dr. H. T. Hurd, Chair, Virginia Tech IRB Research Division 231-5281

I hope you will participate. Your opinions are valued. If you wish to participate, please return the signed Informed Consent Form along with the completed survey. Thanks!
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read and understand the conditions of the evaluation study of Franklin School. I have had all of my questions answered.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that my only responsibility is to participate as I think appropriate. I understand that if I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

__________________________________ _______________
(Signature) (Date)

Please return this form, along with the completed survey, in the enclosed envelope to Judith B. Rutherford, Montgomery County Public Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073.

Thank you.
February 1998

Dear Parents:

Periodically schools conduct self-evaluations in an effort to learn what is going well and what needs to be improved. Franklin School has just completed its eighth year of operation, and this seems to us to be a good time to evaluate the school in order to learn what we need to do to improve it. Therefore, we will be conducting an evaluation of Franklin School this year.

The evaluation of Franklin School will consist of two parts. The first part of the study will involve surveying parents, students, and teachers to gather their opinions and thoughts about the goals and practices of the school. The second part of the study will involve interviewing all teachers and a few students and parents about their experiences at the school. I will contact a few parents about interviews at a later date.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. At this time I am inviting you to complete the enclosed survey if you are interested in participating. Also, an Informed Consent Form is enclosed for you to sign and return with the completed survey if you are willing to participate.

The collated, average results of this study will be shared with interested parents, students, and staff of Franklin School as well as with the Superintendent. Also, some aspects of what is learned through this study will be included in a report I will submit to Virginia Tech. However, no information that identifies an individual or an individual’s opinions will be included in any reports of the study.

I ask for your help with this study. Your opinion is important. I know that with your help we will learn much that will be useful for the continued improvement of Franklin School. I also ask that you give your child permission to participate in the study. To do so, you need to sign and return the enclosed permission form. A return envelope is enclosed for your use.

Please call me (381-6116) if you have any questions concerning this study.

Sincerely yours,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services
March 1998

Dear Parents:

Periodically schools conduct self-evaluations in an effort to learn what is going well and what needs to be improved. Franklin School has just completed its eighth year of operation, and this seems to us to be a good time to evaluate the school in order to learn what we need to do to improve it. Therefore, we will be conducting an evaluation of Franklin School this year.

The evaluation of Franklin School will consist of two parts. The first part of the study will involve surveying parents, students, and teachers to gather their opinions and thoughts about the goals and practices of the school. The second part of the study will involve interviewing all teachers and a few students and parents about their experiences at the school. I will contact a few parents about interviews at a later date.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. At this time I am inviting you to complete the enclosed survey if you are interested in participating. Also, an Informed Consent Form is enclosed for you to sign and return with the completed survey if you are willing to participate.

The collated, average results of this study will be shared with interested parents, students, and staff of Franklin School as well as with the Superintendent. Also, some aspects of what is learned through this study will be included in a report I will submit to Virginia Tech. However, no information that identifies an individual or an individual’s opinions will be included in any reports of the study.

I ask for your help with this study. Your opinion is important. I know that with your help we will learn much that will be useful for the continued improvement of Franklin School. I also ask that you give your child permission to participate in the study. To do so, you need to sign and return the enclosed permission form. A return envelope is enclosed for your use.

As a means of thanking parents who participate in the study, I will hold a drawing for a $30.00 gift certificate from Wal-Mart on May 1. The numbers will be torn off the back of the survey forms and will be used in the drawing. To participate in the drawing, parents must return the completed survey along with the Informed Consent Form and permission for their child to participate in the study.

Please call me (381-6116) if you have any questions concerning this study.

Sincerely yours,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
April 13, 1998

Inside Address

Dear Mrs ______:

It was good to talk with you on the telephone. I appreciate your being willing to complete the enclosed parent survey for the evaluation study of Franklin School. Please return the completed survey along with the signed Informed Consent Form.

As we also discussed on the phone, I am asking that you give your child permission to complete a similar survey form about Franklin School. To do so, you need to sign and return the enclosed permission form when you return your survey.

To thank parents who complete the survey form, I will hold a drawing for a $30.00 gift certificate from Wal-Mart. The numbers will be torn off the back of the survey forms for use in the drawing. To participate in the drawing, parents must return the completed survey along with the Informed Consent Form and the permission for their child to participate in the study by Wednesday, April 22, 1998. Students who participate in the study will be eligible for a drawing at a later date for a $25.00 gift certificate from a music store.

Thank you again for being willing to help with this study. With your help and the help of your child we will learn how to make Franklin School the very best place it can be for students.

Sincerely yours,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
February 1998

TO: Parents of Franklin School Students

FROM: Judith B. Rutherford, Director of Student Services

RE: Informed Consent for Participation in an Evaluation of Franklin School

As you know, we are conducting a study of Franklin School in an effort to see what is going well and what we might need to do to make this the best school it can be. The study is an evaluation of the school, not an experiment. I am inviting all teachers, students, and parents to participate. However, participation is completely voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw at any time.

I am inviting you to fill out the survey that accompanies this message. The survey contains questions on the school’s goals and practices and will take about 25 minutes to complete. Teachers and enrolled students who wish to participate will fill out the survey at the school. Students no longer attending the school will complete the survey in the schools they are now attending or by mail if they have dropped out.

Later I will interview a certain number of parents, students, and teachers who wish to be interviewed about their experience at Franklin School. To select students to interview, I will choose students who reflect the student body in terms of gender, age, length of stay at the school, and interest in returning to the school this year. To choose parents for interviews, I will first ask parents of students invited for interviews. I will conduct interviews with teachers and students enrolled in the school at the school site. I will interview parents and students no longer enrolled either at their homes or at the school, whichever they prefer.

Risk to participants in this study will be minimal. Instead, I think participants will have a positive experience because their input will help us to make Franklin School a better school. I will make every effort to protect the identity of participants in the study. I will not use the real names of the school or the participants. Only I will have actual names of participants, and I will type the transcripts of interviews. I will keep all data in a locked file cabinet and will destroy it when the study is completed. Only collated, collective information will be shared with others and included in a dissertation I will submit to Virginia Tech. Individuals’ identities and opinions will not be shared in any reports of the study.

I cannot offer payment to anyone to participate in this study.

My research project has been approved by Virginia Tech and by the school system. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 381-6116. You may also call any of the following:

Dr. James L. Sellers, Assistant Superintendent, Montgomery County Schools 382-5100
Dr. Larry A. Harris, Virginia Tech Faculty Co-Chair 231-8342
Dr. David J. Parks, Virginia Tech Faculty Co-Chair 231-9709
Dr. H. T. Hurd, Chair, Virginia Tech IRB Research Division 231-5281

I hope you will participate. Your opinions are valued. **If you wish to participate, please return the signed Informed Consent Form along with the completed survey.** Thanks!
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read and understand the conditions of the evaluation study of Franklin School. I have had all of my questions answered.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that my only responsibility is to participate as I think appropriate. I understand that if I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

__________________________________ _______________
(Signature) (Date)

Please return this form, along with the completed survey, in the enclosed envelope to Judith B. Rutherford, Montgomery County Public Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073.

Thank you.
PERMISSION FORM

I give permission for my child, ______________________________, to
(Name of Child)
participate in the evaluation study of Franklin School. I understand that
my child will complete a survey about Franklin School at the school he or
she is currently attending or by mail if he or she no longer attends school
in Montgomery County.

________________________________________
(Parent Signature)

________________________________________
(Date)

Please return this form to Mrs. Judith B. Rutherford, Director of Student
Services, Montgomery County Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg,
VA 24073 in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you!
March 1998

Dear Students:
Franklin School has just completed its eighth year of operation, and the teachers and I have agreed that this seems to be a good time to evaluate the school in order to learn what we need to do to improve it. Therefore, we will be conducting an evaluation of Franklin School this year.

The evaluation of Franklin School will consist of two parts. The first part of the study will involve surveying parents, students, and teachers to gather their opinions and thoughts about the goals and practices of the school. The second part of the study will involve interviewing teachers and a few students and parents about their experiences at the school. I will contact a few students about interviews at a later date.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. At this time I am inviting you to complete the survey if you are interested in participating. Also, an Informed Consent Form is enclosed for you to sign and turn in with the completed survey if you are willing to participate.

The combined results of this study will be shared with interested parents, students, and the staff of Franklin School as well as with the Superintendent. Also, some aspects of what is learned through this study will be reported in a report I will submit to Virginia Tech. However, no information that identifies an individual or an individual’s opinions will be included in any reports of the study.

I ask for your help with this study. Your opinion is important. I know that with your help we will learn much that will be useful for the continued improvement of Franklin School.

Please call me (381-6116) if you have any questions concerning this study.

Sincerely yours,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
June 1998

Inside Address

Dear ________:

As you know, last month I mailed a survey concerning Franklin School to you. As I explained at that time, we are conducting a study of Franklin School to determine what we are doing well and what we might need to do to continue to improve the school for students.

I would very much like for you to participate in the study. To do so, I need for you to complete the survey and return it, along with the signed Informed Consent Form, by July 1. A stamped return envelope is enclosed for your use.

All students who participate in the study will be eligible for a $25 gift certificate drawing. I hope you will participate. Your opinions are important.

If you have any questions about the study, please call. I hope that all is well with you.

Sincerely,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
June 1998

Inside Address

Dear ___________:  

As you may be aware, we are conducting a study of Franklin School which involves collecting opinions from teachers, parents, and students. The purpose of the study is to determine what we are doing well and what we might need to do to continue to improve the school for students.

I would very much like for you to participate in the study. To do so, I need you to complete the survey and return it, along with the signed Parental Permission Form and the Informed Consent Form by July 1, 1998. A stamped return envelope is enclosed for your use.

All students who participate in the study will be eligible for a $25 gift certificate drawing. I hope you will participate. Your opinions are important.

If you have any questions about the study, please call. I hope that all is well with you.

Sincerely,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
February 1998

TO: Franklin School Students

FROM: Judith B. Rutherford, Director of Student Services

RE: Informed Consent for Participation in an Evaluation of Franklin School

As you know, we are conducting a study of Franklin School in an effort to see what is going well and what we might need to do to make this the best school it can be. The study is an evaluation of the school, not an experiment. I am inviting all teachers, students, and parents to participate. However, participation is completely voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw at any time.

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Dr. Larry A. Harris, Virginia Tech Faculty Co-Chair 231-8342
Dr. David J. Parks, Virginia Tech Faculty Co-Chair 231-9709
Dr. H. T. Hurd, Chair, Virginia Tech IRB Research Division 231-5281

I hope you will participate. Your opinions are valued. If you wish to participate, please return the signed Informed Consent Form along with the completed survey. Thanks!
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read and understand the conditions of the evaluation study of Franklin School. I have had all of my questions answered.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that my only responsibility is to participate as I think appropriate. I understand that if I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

______________________________  __________________________
(Signature)                    (Date)

Please return this form, along with the completed survey, in the enclosed envelope to Judith B. Rutherford, Montgomery County Public Schools, 200 Junkin Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073.

Thank you!
March 1998

Dear __________:

Thanks so much for offering to help me by reviewing the letters, forms, and survey instruments that I want to use in the evaluation of Franklin School later this month. Before I use the forms and survey instruments, I need parents and students to review the materials to be sure they make sense.

As you review the materials, think about such things as: (1) Is it clear what you would need to do with the materials? (2) Are the directions on the forms clear? (3) Are the directions on the survey clear? (4) Are the survey questions clear?

I need the feedback on these materials by the end of this week. Would you please call me if I need to come by and pick them up.

I appreciate your help so much!

Sincerely,

Judith B. Rutherford
Director of Student Services

Enclosures
February 1998

My Dear Friend _________:

Thanks so much for offering to review my three survey instruments and the accompanying cover letters and forms. As you can see, I will be surveying parents, students, and teachers at Franklin School. The materials for each group are enclosed as they would appear upon presentation to the person being surveyed. In reviewing these materials, I would ask that you do the following:

1. **Presentation of the Materials:** Are the materials in logical order? Are the materials printed clearly? Are the materials attractive in their presentation, etc.?

2. **Cover letter and Consent Form:** Are the instructions in the cover letter and Consent Form clear? Is it clear what needs to be done and what needs to be returned to me?

3. **Survey Instrument:** Are the directions in the survey instrument clear? Are the questions clearly written? Does any language need to be simplified? Are the questions appropriate for the target audience?

4. **Other thoughts or Suggestions:**

Please make your notations and suggestions right on the forms, cover letters, and survey instruments.

I would appreciate any feedback you can give me. I would be most appreciative if you could return the surveys and your feedback on the total package by Friday, February 20th!

Thanks!

Sincerely,

Judy
APPENDIX D
Survey Data
## Mean and Standard Deviation Results on Teacher Survey Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I - Parent Involvement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Parents are involved in their children’s education.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Parents understand the program.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: The school has meetings of interest to parents.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Parents receive enough information.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Parents are involved in decision making.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: There is an active parent group.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Parents are aware of opportunities to assist with school programs.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section II: Counseling Services</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Adequate counseling services are available.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Staff assists students with getting needed community services.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Students have opportunities for group counseling.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section III: Efforts to Improve Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Students are involved in decision making.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Students are involved in planning activities.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Students are involved in community service.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Students have opportunities to pursue leisure interests.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Students have leadership opportunities.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Students are engaged in problem solving.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Teachers are interested in students’ total well being.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q8: Students are respected as individuals. 3.7 0.52
Q9: Students are accepted for who they are. 3.5 0.84
Q10: The school meets students’ social needs. 2.2 0.75
Q11: The school meets students’ emotional needs. 2.2 0.75

Section IV: School Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: The school is a safe place for students.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: There are few classroom disruptions caused by students</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Discipline is administered fairly.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Students are taught how to listen to others.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Students are taught how to communicate appropriately.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Students are taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section V: Sense of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: There is a feeling of caring at the school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: People listen to each other at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: This school is a friendly place.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Teachers care about the students.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Teachers feel a strong sense of belonging to the school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Teachers have close personal relationships with the students of the school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Students trust the teachers.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: Teachers trust the students.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: Students are attracted to the school because</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it is a small school.

Q10: Students are involved in more activities than at their home schools. 3.3 0.52

Q11: I have fun at school activities. 3.3 0.52

Q12: There is a family-like atmosphere at the school. 2.8 0.41

Q13: It is an advantage for students to have the same teachers for several years. 2.8 0.75

Q14: Having the same students several years enables teachers to develop close personal relationships with those students. 3.0 0.63

Section VI: Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Students have adequate opportunities to explore career interests.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Students are helped to identify vocational abilities.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: There is enough career information here.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: There is adequate preparation for post-secondary education at this school.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: I provide support for students learning new things.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: I can give students more help at this school.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Learning is emphasized at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: Teachers hold high expectations for students.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: Teachers expect student to produce their best.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: This school meets students’ educational needs.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11: I help students make connections between subjects at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: Learning is separated into individual subjects</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
at this school.

Q13: I team-teach frequently in this school.  

Section VII - Use of Community Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Students of this school visit business and industry sites.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: The school uses the community for learning by taking field trips.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: The school makes sufficient use of community resources.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section VIII: Teacher Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Teachers have much control over what happens.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Teachers are involved in decision making.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Teachers have a voice into which students are admitted.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Mean and Standard Deviation Results on Teacher Survey Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I: Parent Involvement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Parents are involved in their children’s education.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Parents understand the program.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: The school has meetings of interest to parents.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Parents receive enough information.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Parents are involved in decision making.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: There is an active parent group.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Parents are aware of opportunities to assist with school programs.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section II: Counseling Services</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Adequate counseling services are available.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Staff assists students with getting needed community services.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Students have opportunities for group counseling.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section III: Efforts to Improve Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Students are involved in decision making.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Students are involved in planning activities.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Students are involved in community service.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Students have opportunities to pursue leisure interests.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Students have leadership opportunities.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Students are engaged in problem solving.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Teachers are interested in students’ total well being.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: Students are respected as individuals.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q9: Students are accepted for who they are.  
Mean: 3.5  SD: 0.84  
Q10: The school meets students’ social needs.  
Mean: 2.2  SD: 0.75  
Q11: The school meets students’ emotional needs.  
Mean: 2.2  SD: 0.75  

Section IV: School Climate  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: The school is a safe place for students.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: There are few classroom disruptions caused by students.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Discipline is administered fairly.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Students are taught how to listen to others.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Students are taught how to communicate appropriately.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Students are taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section V: Sense of Community  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: There is a feeling of caring at the school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: People listen to each other at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: This school is a friendly place.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Teachers care about the students.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Teachers feel a strong sense of belonging to the school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Teachers have close personal relationships with the students of the school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Students trust the teachers.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: Teachers trust the students.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: Students are attracted to the school because it is a small school.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q10: Students are involved in more activities than at their home schools. 3.3 0.52

Q11: I have fun at school activities. 3.3 0.52

Q12: There is a family-like atmosphere at the school. 2.8 0.41

Q13: It is an advantage for students to have the same teachers for several years. 2.8 0.75

Q14: Having the same students several years enables teachers to develop close personal relationships with those students. 3.0 0.63

Section VI: Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Students have adequate opportunities to explore career interests.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Students are helped to identify vocational abilities.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: There is enough career information here.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: There is adequate preparation for post-secondary education at this school.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: I provide support for students learning new things.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: I can give students more help at this school.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Learning is emphasized at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: Teachers hold high expectations for students.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: Teachers expect student to produce their best.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: This school meets students’ educational needs.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11: I help students make connections between subjects at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: Learning is separated into individual subjects at this school.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q13: I team-teach frequently in this school.  

2.0  0.63

Section VII - Use of Community Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1:</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students of this school visit business and industry sites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2:</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The school uses the community for learning by taking field trips.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3:</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The school makes sufficient use of community resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section VIII: Teacher Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1:</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers have much control over what happens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2:</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers are involved in decision making.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3:</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers have a voice into which students are admitted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Mean and Standard Deviation Results on Student Survey Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I - Parent Involvement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: My parents are involved in my education.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: My parents understand the school program.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: My parents have an opportunity to be involved in decision making for the school.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: My parents have an opportunity to assist with programs at this school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section II - Counseling</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Adequate counseling services are available to me at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Staff helps students get help from community agencies when needed.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: I have an opportunity to participate in counseling groups at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section III - Efforts to Improve Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: I am involved in decision making about the school programs.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: I am involved in planning school activities</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: I am involved in community service projects.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: I have opportunities to pursue leisure interests at this school.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: I have leadership opportunities at this school.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: I am engaged in problem solving with teachers.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Teachers show an interest in my total well being.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: I am respected as an individual at this school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: I feel accepted for who I am at this school.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q10: This school’s programs meet my social needs. 2.7 0.83
Q11: This school’s programs meet my emotional needs. 3.1 0.83

**Section IV - School Climate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: I feel safe at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: There are few classroom disruptions caused by students at this school.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: I have been disciplined fairly at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: At this school I have been taught how to listen to others.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: I have been taught how to communicate appropriately with others.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: I have been taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully at this school.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section V - Sense of Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: I believe there is a feeling of caring at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: People listen to me at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: This school is a friendly place.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Teachers at this school care about me.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: I have close personal relationships with students at this school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: I have close personal relationships with teachers at this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: I trust the teachers at this school.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q9: I believe the teachers trust me. 3.1 0.90  
Q10: I like this school partly because it is small. 3.3 0.84  
Q11: I have been more involved in activities here than in my former school. 3.6 0.51  
Q12: I have fun during activities at this school. 3.6 0.62  
Q13: There is a family-like atmosphere at this school. 3.2 0.81  
Q14: I think it is an advantage to have the same teachers for several years. 3.5 0.86  
Q15: Having the same teachers several years enables me to develop close personal relationships with them. 3.1 1.13  

Section VI - Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>I have had adequate opportunities to explore career interests at this school.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>I have been helped to identify vocational abilities at this school.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>There is enough career information here.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>This school offers adequate preparation for college.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>I feel supported when I try to learn new things at this school.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>I receive more help at this school.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>I think learning is emphasized here.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>Teachers in this school hold high expectations for me.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>I am expected to produce my best work.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q10: This school meets my educational needs. 3.1 0.78

Q11: Teachers here help me make connections between subjects. 3.3 0.69
### Mean and Standard Deviation Results on Parent Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I: Parent Involvement</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1.1:</td>
<td>I feel involved in my child’s education.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1.2:</td>
<td>I understand the program at Franklin.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1.3:</td>
<td>This school has meetings on topics of interest to parents.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1.4:</td>
<td>I receive enough information about</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1.5:</td>
<td>I have an opportunity to be involved in decision-making for the school.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1.6</td>
<td>There is an active parent group.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1.7:</td>
<td>I am aware of opportunities to assist with programs at the school.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section II: Efforts to Improve Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2.1:</td>
<td>My child is involved in decision-making for the school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.2:</td>
<td>My child is involved in planning activities for the school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.3:</td>
<td>My child is involved in community service.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.4:</td>
<td>My child has opportunities to pursue leisure interests at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.5:</td>
<td>My child has an opportunity to be a leader.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.6:</td>
<td>My child is engaged in problem solving with teachers of the school.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.7:</td>
<td>Teachers show interest in my child’s total well being.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.8:</td>
<td>My child is respected as an individual here.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.9:</td>
<td>My child feels accepted for who he/she is.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2.10:</td>
<td>This school meets social needs of my child.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q2.11: This school meets emotional needs of my child.  

Section III: School Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3.1: This school is a safe place for my child.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3.2: There are few classroom disruptions here.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3.3: My child has been disciplined fairly here.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3.4: My child has been taught how to listen to others at this school.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3.5: My child has been taught how to communicate appropriately with others.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3.6: My child has been taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully at this school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section IV: Sense of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4.1: There is a feeling of caring at this school.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.2: This is a school where people listen to one another.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.3: This school is a friendly place.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.4: Teachers at this school care about my child.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.5: My child feels a strong sense of belonging to this school.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.6: My child has close personal relationships with students at this school.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.7: My child has close personal relationships with teachers at this school.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.8: My child trusts teachers at this school.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.9: Teachers at this school trust my child.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4.10: My child likes this school partly because</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it is small.

Q4.11: My child is more involved in activities at this school. 3.4 .72
Q4.12: My child has fun at activities at this school. 3.4 .66
Q4.13: There is a family-like atmosphere at this school. 3.3 .70
Q4.14: It is an advantage for my child to have the same teachers for several years. 3.3 .66
Q4.15: Having the same teachers several years helps my child develop close relationships with them. 3.3 .63

Section V: Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q5.1: My child has had an adequate opportunity to explore career interests at this school.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.2: My child has been helped to identify vocational abilities at this school.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.3: This school offers adequate preparation for college.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.4: My child receives more help at this school.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.5: Learning is emphasized at this school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.6: Teachers at this school consistently hold high expectations for my child.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.7: My child is expected to produce his/her best work at this school.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5.8: This school meets the educational needs of my child.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA
Judith Anne Baker Rutherford
607 High Meadow Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Professional Experience

1986 – Present  Director of Student Services
                Montgomery County Public Schools
                200 Junkin Street
                Christiansburg, VA 24073

1984 – 1986  Research Associate
              Virginia VIEW
              College of Education
              Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
              Blacksburg, VA 24061

1976 – 1984  Executive Director
              Voluntary Action Center of Montgomery County
              Blacksburg, VA 24060

1970 – 1971  Teacher of seventh grade social studies
              Chenery Middle School
              Belmont, MA

1964 – 1967  Teacher of history and government
              Coral Gables High School

1963 – 1964  Historical Research Assistant
              University of Miami
              Coral Gables, FL

1961 – 1962  Teacher of English and history
              Harrisburg High School
              Harrisburg, IL

Education

M.A. in counseling, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, June 1986.
M.A. in Early American History, College of William and Mary, June 1964.