

Culbreth Middle School

CIS Tutorial Class

Program Evaluation

for



Evaluators

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
BACKGROUND	4
Literature Review	8
METHODOLOGY	10
Evaluation Questions	12
Data Analysis	12
RESULTS	13
Grades	13
Behavior	20
Attendance	21
Collaboration	24
Satisfaction	24
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS	30
REFERENCES	35
APPENDICES	36
Appendix A: Summary of Teacher Survey Responses	
Appendix B: Teacher Survey Open-Ended Responses	
Appendix C: Summary of Parent Survey Responses	
Appendix D: Parent Survey Open-Ended Responses	
Appendix E: Parent Survey for CIS Evaluation	
Appendix F: Teacher Survey for CIS Evaluation	

Executive Summary

A team of graduate students from NC State University conducted a program evaluation of the Communities in Schools (CIS) elective class at Culbreth Middle School. This school-based program is geared toward improving grades, behavior, and attendance, with a long term goal of reducing school dropout. Steps of the evaluation included: (a) a literature review of best practices for educational and social interventions; (b) a review of extant student records for current and previous participants; (c) administering and analyzing parent and teacher surveys to measure perceptions about grades, disciplinary issues, attendance, collaboration, and overall program satisfaction; (d) interviews with the current CIS teacher and two previous teachers; and (e) an analysis of the data using Microsoft Excel and SPSS, a statistical software program.

The results of the program evaluation include quantitative data from the record review and surveys, as well as qualitative data from open-ended responses to surveys and interviews. Findings from the study are organized by five target evaluation areas. (a) **Academic Performance:** There appears to be some support for academic improvement in conjunction with the CIS elective class, particularly in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. (b) **Behavior:** Parent and teachers responses on surveys indicate that there is an improvement in behavior for students enrolled in the CIS elective class. The record review did not reveal behavior problems as a significant issue, due to the limited number of students on record who had in-school or out of school suspension. However, there was no pre-post data available for behavior. (c) **Attendance:** Attendance appears to improve for students while enrolled, based on parent reports and a record review of the average number of days absent per year by grade. (d) **Collaboration:** Teachers reported that they

were aware of instances where the CIS elective teacher worked with other professionals in the school environment to assist students. Parents' survey ratings indicated that the CIS elective teacher informs them of their student progress; however, some of the open-ended responses indicated that they would like more communication. There was no evidence indicating collaboration with community agencies outside of the school on the students' behalf. (f) **Satisfaction:** Overall, parents and teachers appear to be very satisfied with the CIS elective program. The majority felt that students were improving in the areas of grades, behavior, and attendance. Highlighted features of the class that were perceived as most valuable included: the additional time, support, and strategies provided to the students during the CIS elective class.

Based on the findings from the study, some of the program recommendations include a need for: (1) continued, systematic record keeping of student progress prior to, during, and after participation in the program; (2) additional resources to allow for smaller adult-student ratios (via more teachers and/or volunteers); (3) continued follow-up support when students transition to high school; (4) expansion of the wrap-around services to include community agencies outside of the school; and (5) a more in depth evaluation of effective components of the CIS elective class. These findings will provide the CIS program with information about the impact they are having on the students within the school. It also will provide the program with information to assess its current program's successes and areas for improvement. Lastly, Communities in Schools may be able to use the information to obtain additional resources to support the program, as well as, inform future decision making about program implementation.

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to acknowledge the sincere efforts on the part of Gretchen Buher for spending many hours compiling student data, in addition to her regular duties as a teacher. The team would also like to express great thanks to Chapel Hill/Carrboro City School's data analyst, John Wykoff, for obtaining past student records for data analysis. Lastly, we would like to extend our appreciation to Communities In Schools' executive director, Sheila Sholes-Ross, for her commitment to the evaluation; the Board of Directors, who supported the evaluation; Superintendent Neil Pederson; and Dr. John Mandeville, for his guidance and support during this program evaluation process.

Background

Communities in Schools of Orange County (CISOC) first implemented the Grey Culbreth Middle School Program in 1996. CISOC is a dropout prevention organization, whose mission is to provide students with resources to improve academic achievement. The Culbreth Program is modeled after the “Traditional Project Strategy,” which mainstreams at-risk students in one elective class during the regular school day. The program provides mentoring, encouragement, and reinforcement of academic skills.

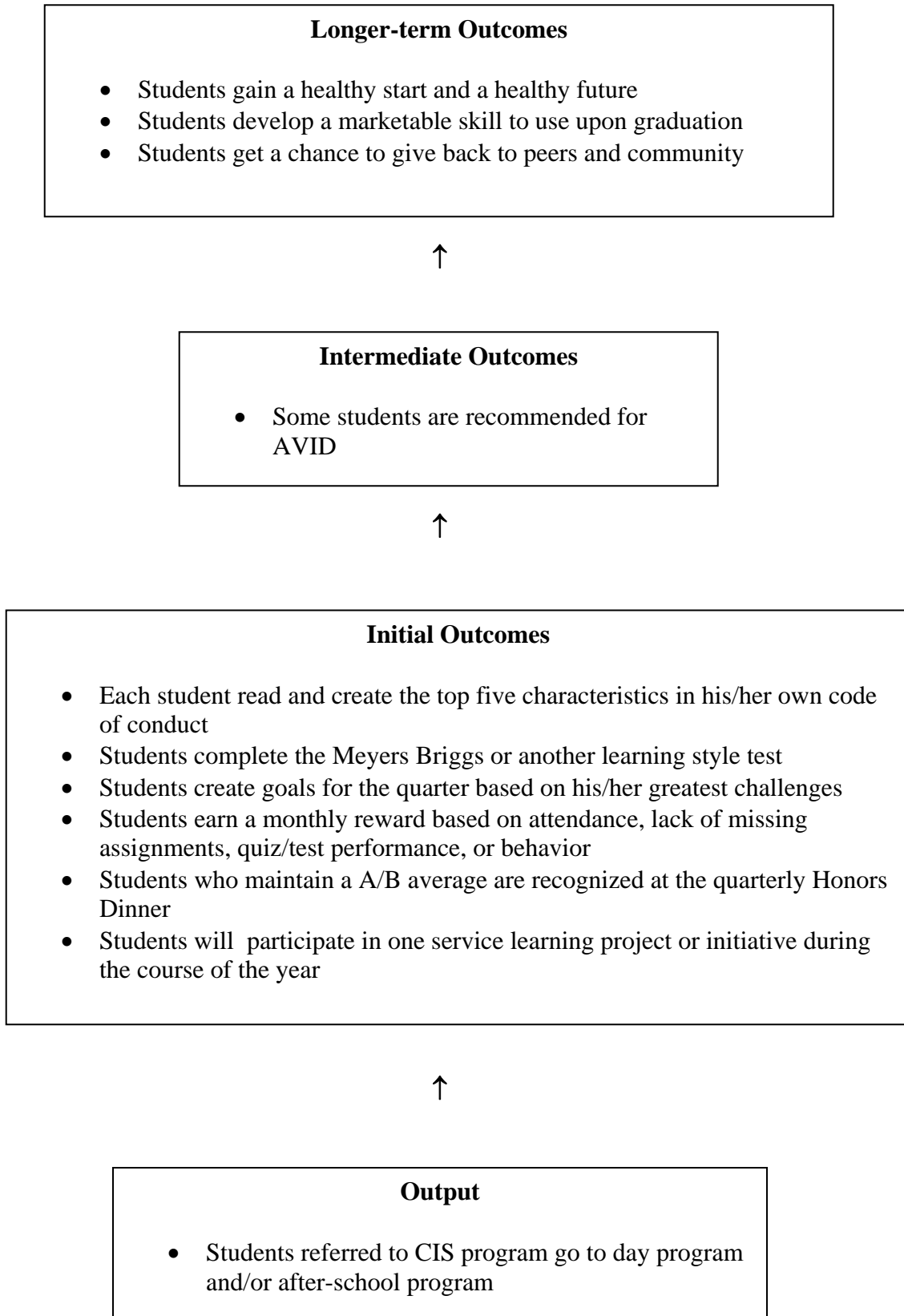
The program consists of three elective classes divided into sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Each class has approximately 10-12 students. A reposition teacher is put in place as the coordinator of the classes. Students who are referred to this program are students who are failing or almost failing, but do not have a learning disability. There is an attempt to tailor the daily curriculum to each grade level. For instance, the eighth grade students work with a high school counselor to identify jobs of interest and the college degrees that would satisfy those jobs. Despite such adjustments, there are many similarities across each class. A logic model was developed to display the flow of services provided by the CISOC program at Culbreth Middle School.

The students set goals at the beginning of each quarter that includes various academic achievements or behavioral improvements. These goals are evaluated at the end of the quarter to detect what is working for the students and what is not. If goals are not met, remedial action is taken. Additionally, students make a checklist of all homework assignments due for the day, get assistance with upcoming tests, makeup for missed work, and receive lessons on effective study techniques and test taking strategies.

Incentives such as field trips or parties, like serving breakfast for extra encouragement before taking exams is incorporated into the program when goals are met.

The Culbreth program was initially evaluated in 1997 during its first year of implementation. The evaluators found the program to have a strong beginning, with strong administrative support and improved reading scores. The purpose of the current evaluation is to assess whether academic performance, behavioral problems, and attendance rates among students in the program have continued to improve. In addition, this evaluation will determine how well the collaboration of other school programs and resources work together with the CIS program to provide its students with the most support. Lastly, the evaluation will attempt to measure the satisfaction of parents, teachers, and faculty with respect to the CIS program at Culbreth Middle School.

Figure 1. Logic Model for Community in Schools of Orange County





Activities

- Helps each student set goals
- Helps with homework
- Provides with test-taking strategies
- Goes over missed work
- Provides study strategies
- Evaluates progress reports
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses of goals set
- Each student assigned a mentor/tutor who will spend time with them on a weekly basis
- Inform teachers of goals and expectations of the students in CIS
- Business partners and organizations donate time and resources to CIS students

8th Graders:

- Make an Interest Inventory, listing 3-4 careers of interest
- Have students participate in job shadowing, search colleges with programs related to career interests, and create a resume
- Take students to high school where they go through a mock interview with the school counselor



Inputs

- Schools reposition teachers to head CIS classes
- Each school is allocated money to fund CIS program

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted on best practices for interventions that address academic achievement, behavior, chronic absenteeism, and school retention. When students make the transition to high school, declines in grades, failing courses, increased absences, and decreased involvement in school activities are evidence of potential dropouts (Schiller, 1999). MacIver and Epstein (1991) discuss strategies on responsive practices in the middle grades, for drop-out prevention and high school transition. They conducted a study with a sample of middle school principals, asking about effective strategies for dealing with at-risk behaviors among students. Principals in the study reported that heavy reliance on interdisciplinary teams of teachers and significant collaboration among service providers generates a stronger school program. In addition, principals reported that fewer students drop out before high school graduation when the school uses remediation programs, and the number of repeaters is reduced when extensive transition programs are implemented.

Attendance is another factor associated with academic achievement and school involvement. Programs such as CISOC recognize the importance of regular attendance and its impact on school performance and involvement. Heck's (1936) article discusses how attendance impacts students' grades and involvement. He proposes wrap-around services as a viable solution to attendance problems. Heck (1936) describes how studies have shown that pupils with the greatest nonattendance tend to receive the lowest grades and vice versa. Another finding is that accelerated pupils tend to have better attendance (Heck, 1936). The literature indicates that the number one reason given for absence is illness, which is based on student and parent reports. Heck (1936) proposes having

accessible health, psychological, and counseling services in the schools as a partial remedy. The logic for offering these services on the school campus is that students could receive necessary services while at school and not have to be off campus for health/mental health reasons.

According to a recent study of 470 dropouts from Philadelphia & Delaware, 70% said that additional support, such as after-school tutoring, would have enhanced their chances of staying in school (Bridgeland, 2006). Seventy-one percent also said that better communication between parents and the school could have been a major factor in preventing their departure from school. The intervention described in this evaluation attempts to address such needs during middle school, in order to prevent future dropouts.

There is a lack of research regarding tutorial classes during the school day that are similar to the intervention being evaluated in this report. However, there is an example of a successful intervention for high-risk students in Baltimore, Maryland known as the FUTURES Program (Lever, 2004). High school students are placed into smaller classes that are taught by teachers specifically trained to handle high-risk students. The students receive a wide range of assistance, such as advocates who encourage good grades, behavior, and attendance. Not only has the dropout rate decreased, but long-term success is also evident. By the 1999-2000 school year, 85% of these high-risk students were either employed or attending secondary schooling. While the circumstances surrounding high-risk students from Baltimore differ from those of high-risk students in Orange County, North Carolina, the FUTURES Program demonstrates the effectiveness of such interventions.

Methodology

During the implementation of the evaluation, the evaluation team maintained ongoing and open communication between the following individuals: the CISOC site director at Culbreth Middle School; the executive director of CISOC; and the data analyst for Chapel Hill/Carrboro City Schools. These individuals assisted with collecting data necessary to conduct the evaluation.

The evaluation process began as a consultation with the executive director, who assisted in the development of the questions to be investigated during the evaluation. Next, a plan was developed to effectively and efficiently answer the evaluation questions. This was a major consideration due to the abundance of data, limited resources, and a three month time constraint.

The impact questions were the first questions to be addressed by the team. In order to measure the effectiveness of the program, the evaluation team examined grades, attendance, and out of school suspension. Due to the lack of student data, the evaluation had to consider two sets of students, current and past CIS participants. Current students were defined as those who are enrolled as 6th, 7th and 8th graders at Culbreth Middle School. Past students are those who are currently in high school in grades 9-12.

The current site director provided a spreadsheet with all of the student data consisting of: students' quarterly and year end grades, GPA's, EOG scores, records of absences and days tardy, and out of school suspensions. The team was also provided with additional data from the Chapel Hill/Carrboro City School's data analyst. Using a spreadsheet with past student names, he was able to provide the team with a file which consisted of attendance records and a transcript of final grades for 36 past students.

The sample of past students consisted of 15 ninth graders, 12 tenth graders, three eleventh graders, and six twelfth graders. The students ranged in age from 14 to 19, with the average age being 16 years old. Fifty-nine percent of the students were African American, 27 percent were Caucasian, 8.1 percent were Hispanic, and 5.4 percent were Multi-racial. Letter grades were reported on transcripts; therefore, letter grades were recoded into numbers on an ordinal scale ranging from 1-5 to allow averaging across students (A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, F=1). The data from the past and current students were entered into an excel document, which was later exported into SPSS (a statistical software package).

The last set of questions addressed program operation and service delivery and these questions assessed perception and satisfaction of teachers and parents, as well as the collaborative efforts of CIS. The team decided the best way to answer these questions was through a survey to parents and teachers. An online survey service, called Survey Monkey, was chosen for teachers because it could be sent to each teacher's email address and the results could be tracked through an online database. The parent surveys were sent by their student with letters requesting participation.

Surveys were disbursed to teachers through an email sent by the principal of Culbreth Middle School. The first survey administration yielded 13 out of 90 completed surveys. Once an announcement was made by a team member at a faculty meeting reminding teachers about the evaluation study, nine additional surveys were submitted for a total of 21 completed teacher surveys (i.e., a 23% response).

The parent surveys were produced for both English and Spanish speaking parents. The team decided to use a paper survey due to limited electronic access to online survey

administration. Students were asked to take the surveys home for their parents to complete. After 3 weeks, 16 out of 30 completed surveys were returned to the evaluation team (i.e., a 53% response rate). In addition to the surveys, three site directors (past and current) were interviewed to assess their views about the CIS elective class.

Evaluation Questions

Impact Questions

- 1) Is there an improvement in academic performance among students enrolled in the CIS school day elective classes at Culbreth Middle School?
- 2) Is there a decrease in behavior problems among students enrolled in the CIS school day elective classes at Culbreth Middle School?
- 3) Is there an improvement in school attendance among students enrolled in the CIS elective classes at Culbreth Middle School?

Program Operation and Service Delivery Questions:

- 4) How well is CIS collaborating with other school and community services to provide necessary resources for students?
- 5) Are the stakeholders satisfied with the services?

Data Analysis

The variables that were examined in this evaluation study were: academic performance (i.e., quarterly grades from time of enrollment until the end of the evaluation period and EOG scores), behavioral problems (i.e., archival records of in/out of school suspension and teacher/parent perceptions), attendance, CIS collaboration, and parent/teacher satisfaction. Descriptive analyses were run to obtain the averages for each subject area (i.e., language arts, math, science, and social studies) and grade level (i.e.,

6th, 7th, and 8th). Additionally, qualitative analyses were conducted on the open-ended questions of the parent/teacher surveys.

Results

In order to test the proposed evaluation questions, descriptive analyses were run using SPSS 14.0. Two databases were developed for two separate samples: the current middle school students in CIS and the former CIS students in high school. Once all of the data from the current middle school students were entered into the database, the averages for each subject area and grade level were obtained. The open-ended questions from the teacher (Appendix B) and parent surveys (Appendix D) were analyzed using qualitative methods. Specifically, the responses were coded (i.e., identifying the general ideas from each statement), and then all responses from each participant were compared to one another in order to formulate themes. The findings of this study are presented in the order of the proposed evaluation questions.

Grades

Is there an improvement in academic performance among students enrolled in the CIS school day tutorial classes at Culbreth Middle School?

Parent/Teacher Survey Results

Based on the results of the teacher surveys, 82 percent of the teachers felt the elective class helps students to have a positive attitude toward school. Additionally, 90 percent of the teachers indicated they felt the CIS elective class helps students to improve their grades. Seventy-five percent of the teachers felt the class helps their students have better study habits, while 13 percent did not (Appendix A).

The results of the parent surveys indicated that 93 percent of the parents believe the CIS elective class helps their child to improve his/her grades. In addition, 80 percent indicated the CIS elective class helps their child to have better study habits (Appendix C).

Academic Achievement for Current CIS Middle School Student Cohort

The current middle school students enrolled in CIS from grades 6th-8th showed incremental improvements in the areas of Language Arts and Math; however, there was some decline from 6th to 7th grade in the subject areas of Science and Social Studies. A summation of the mean percentages and standard deviations for each subject area by grade level is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Percentages of Grades for Subject Areas by Grade Level

Grade Level	Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies
6 th	68.68 (SD=9.41)	66.18 (SD=13.02)	78.50 (SD=5.76)	79.18 (SD=7.03)
7 th	72 (SD=11.50)	70 (SD=13.87)	71 (SD=9.83)	68.36 (SD=10.79)
*8 th	81.50 (SD=9.18)	75.91 (SD=9.77)	77.14 (SD=7.34)	73.04 (SD=11.52)

* = an average percentage was calculated for 8th grade based on two school quarters

The overall year end GPA's for each grade level were also examined. The findings show a decrease in the average percentage from 6th to 7th grade ($M=79.94$, $SD=5.67$) to 7th ($M=78$, $SD=2.31$), but an increase in GPA's from 7th to 8th grade ($M=81.75$, $SD=6.55$). A series of t-test analyses were conducted for 7th and 8th grade students to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between grades on average prior to enrollment in the CIS elective class and after enrollment in the CIS elective. The analyses assessed mean differences by core academic subjects and

overall (see Tables 2 and 3). The 7th grade students on average do not appear to be performing significantly better in any of the core subject areas after enrollment.

Although there is an increase in the average for Math after enrollment, the difference between scores is not statistically significant. For the eighth grade, however, there appears to be a significant increase in grades on average in the areas of Language Arts and Math. Though there is an increase in the average score in Science, the mean difference is not statistically significant. Results reveal a statistically significant increase in the Overall Academic score, which combines means for the four core subject areas for 8th graders after enrollment in the CIS elective class.

Table 2

7th Grade Averages Before and After Enrollment in the CIS Elective Class

Subject Area	N	Mean Before Enrollment	SD	Mean After Enrollment	SD	<i>t</i> -statistic, <i>p</i> -value	Statistical Significance (2-tailed)
Language Arts	9	71.22	7.59	68.94	9.40	<i>t</i> = .48, <i>p</i> = .64	Not Significant
Math	9	71.01	8.53	75.48	8.02	<i>t</i> = -1.31, <i>p</i> = .23	Not Significant
Science	9	81.26	5.01	79.29	4.34	<i>t</i> = .98, <i>p</i> = .35	Not significant
Social Studies	9	82.63	4.90	73.13	7.55	<i>t</i> = 4.64, <i>p</i> < .01	Significant
Overall Academics	36	76.53	8.45	74.21	8.17	<i>t</i> = 1.31, <i>p</i> = .20	Not Significant

Note. *N* indicates the number of students in the sample for analyses. *Mean* is the average score for students in the given area. The *t*-statistic and *p*-value indicate whether or not the difference between means is meaningful. *SD* indicates the standard deviation of scores around the mean.

Table 3

8th Grade Averages Before and After Enrollment in the CIS Elect Class

Subject Area	N	Mean Before Enrollment	SD	Mean After Enrollment	SD	<i>t</i> -statistic, <i>p</i> -value	Statistical Significance (2-tailed)
Language Arts	10	71.41	11.32	80.57	8.14	<i>t</i> = -2.46, <i>p</i> = .04	Significant
Math	10	64.74	14.49	74.79	7.28	<i>t</i> = -2.19, <i>p</i> = .06	Marginally Significant
Science	10	76.52	11.80	79.03	5.58	<i>t</i> = -.71, <i>p</i> = .50	Not significant
Social Studies	10	77.00	10.88	75.29	6.43	<i>t</i> = .42, <i>p</i> = .68	Not Significant
Overall Academics	40	72.42	12.75	77.42	7.10	<i>t</i> = -2.42, <i>p</i> = .02	Significant

Note. *N* indicates the number of students in the sample for analyses. *Mean* is the average score for students in the given area. The *t*-statistic and *p*-value indicate whether or not the difference between means is meaningful. *SD* indicates the standard deviation of scores around the mean.

As a comprehensive attempt to examine academic improvement, end-of-grade (EOG) scores were investigated as well. Based on North Carolina EOG testing, students ranged from Level 1 to 4 on their mastery of knowledge and skill in the subject areas of Reading Comprehension and Math (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2004). The frequencies of students scoring at each achievement level are provided in Table 4. There were three testing attempts shown for the 6th grade students in Reading and Math, however, only the first test of an improved score is reported (i.e., if the student increased in achievement level).

Table 4

Summary of EOG Scores for the 6th and 7th grades

Achievement Levels	6 th Grade Reading	6 th Grade Mathematics	7 th Grade Reading	7 th Grade Mathematics
Level 4	3	6	4	1
Level 3	17	13	4	3
Level 2	1	1	1	1
Level 1	1	0	1	0

Academic Achievement for High School Cohort

On average, students in this sample appear to be achieving at the D level for Language Arts in 9th through the 11th grade, and in the C range in 12th grade (see Table 5). In the area of Mathematics, students appear to be achieving at the C-D level in 9th and 10th grade; and there appears to be a decline in grades in the 11th and 12th grades, with grades falling to the D-F range (see Table 6). In Science, students appear to be achieving at the D level in the 9th-11th grades, with an increase to the C level in the 12th grade (see Table 7). As for Social Studies, students appear to be achieving at the D level in the 9th and 10th grades and at the C level in the 11th and 12th grades (see Table 8).

Table 5

Average Grades in Language Arts for High School Students who have Completed the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean of Grades	Std. Deviation
9 th Grade AVG LA	36	1.00	5.00	2.36	1.12
10 th Grade AVG LA	21	1.00	5.00	2.48	1.13
11 th Grade AVG LA	9	1.00	3.50	2.44	.95
12 th Grade AVG LA	6	2.00	4.00	3.33	1.03

Note: Scaling (5=A, 4=B, 3=C, 2=D, 1=F)

Table 6

Average Grades in Mathematics for High School Students who have Completed the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean of Grades	Std. Deviation
9 th Grade AVG MA	36	1.00	5.00	2.56	1.18
10 th Grade AVG MA	21	1.00	5.00	2.26	1.12
11 th Grade AVG MA	9	1.00	2.50	1.72	.56
12 th Grade AVG Ma	5	1.00	3.00	1.60	.89

Note: Scaling (5=A, 4=B, 3=C, 2=D, 1=F)

Table 7

Average Grades in Science for High School Students who have Completed the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean of Grades	Std. Deviation
9 th Grade AVG SC	35	1.00	4.50	1.88	.96
10 th Grade AVG SC	19	1.00	5.00	2.24	1.12
11 th Grade AVG SC	9	1.00	3.00	1.89	.60
12 th Grade AVG SC	5	2.00	3.00	2.80	.45

Note: Scaling (5=A, 4=B, 3=C, 2=D, 1=F)

Table 8

Average Grades in Science for High School Students who have Completed the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean of Grades	Std. Deviation
9 th Grade AVG SS	36	1.00	4.50	2.39	1.04
10 th Grade AVG SS	19	1.00	4.00	2.29	1.02
11 th Grade AVG SS	9	1.00	4.00	2.56	1.16
12 th Grade AVG SS	1	3.00	3.00	3.00	

Note: Scaling (5=A, 4=B, 3=C, 2=D, 1=F)

An analysis of the EOG scores for high school students indicate that 83 percent of the students (i.e., 31/36 students) passed the Reading EOG in the eighth grade. The average percentile for this cohort on the Reading EOG was 42.46, with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 86 (see Table 9 & 11). This finding indicates that these previous CIS students performed as well as or better than 42 percent of the students who took the Reading EOG in the eighth grade. Likewise, the vast majority (i.e., 97.2%) of the eighth grade students (35/36) passed the Math EOG in the eighth grade. The average percentile for this cohort on the Math EOG was 45.06, with a minimum of 22 and a maximum of 86 (see Table 10 & 11).

Table 9

Total Number of High School Students Previously Enrolled the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School who Passed the Reading EOG

	Frequency	Percent
Fail	4	11.1
Pass	31	86.1
Total	36	100.0

Table 10

Total Number of High School Students Previously Enrolled the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School who Passed the Math EOG

	Frequency	Percent
Pass	35	97.2
Total	36*	100.0

* Missing data for one student

Table 11

Average Percentile of High School Students Previously Enrolled the CIS Elective Class at Culbreth Middle School for the Reading and Math EOG

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
8 th Grade Reading EOG	35	42.46	22.56
8 th Grade Math EOG	35	45.06	14.21

Behavior

Is there a decrease in behavior problems among students enrolled in the CIS school day tutorial classes at Culbreth Middle School?

Parent/Teacher Survey Results

Fifty-six percent of parents indicated they felt their child’s behavior has improved since enrolling in the CIS elective class (Appendix C). For teachers, 75 percent suggested student behavior has improved since enrollment in the CIS elective class, while 25 percent indicated that behavior has not changed (Appendix A). The majority of teachers also reported the number of verbal reprimands has decreased for their students enrolled in the CIS elective class (i.e., 60%), while others indicated no change has occurred. Neither

parents nor teachers reported a decline in the behavior of their child or student since enrollment in the CIS elective class.

Suspension Rates for High School Cohort

School records were reviewed to determine the number of students who received in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension (OSS), as an indicator of behavior problems. The results of the record review revealed that 2 of the 36 high school students had received in-school suspension ranging from 8 to 15 days and only one of the students had received out-of-school suspension for 5 days.

Attendance

Is there an improvement in school attendance among students enrolled in the CIS elective program at Culbreth Middle School?

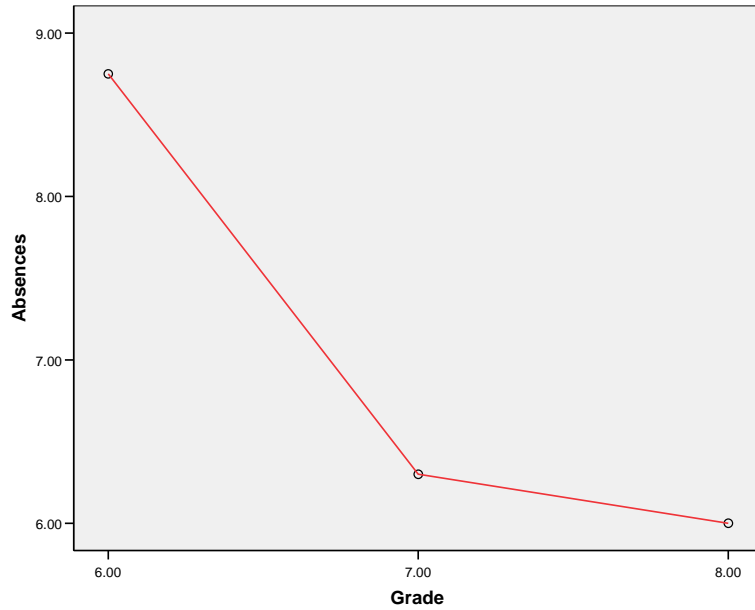
Parent/Teacher Survey Results

Thirty-two percent of teachers reported that their students' attendance has improved since being enrolled in the CIS elective; however, the majority of the teachers did not know if their students' attendance improved (Appendix A). For parents, 56 percent agreed that their child's attendance has improved since being enrolled in the CIS elective class, while 25 percent disagreed (Appendix C). Nine percent of the parents did not know if attendance improved.

Absenteeism for Current CIS Middle School Student Cohort

The results revealed that average days absent did decrease over time from 6th to 8th grade (6th: $M=8.75$; 7th: $M=6.3$; 8th: $M=6$). On the other hand, the average number of days tardy seemed to increase from 6th to 8th grade (6th: $M=4.4$; 7th: $M=5.9$; 8th: $M=5.2$) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Absenteeism rates for middle school students currently enrolled in CIS elective class.



Absenteeism for the High School Cohort

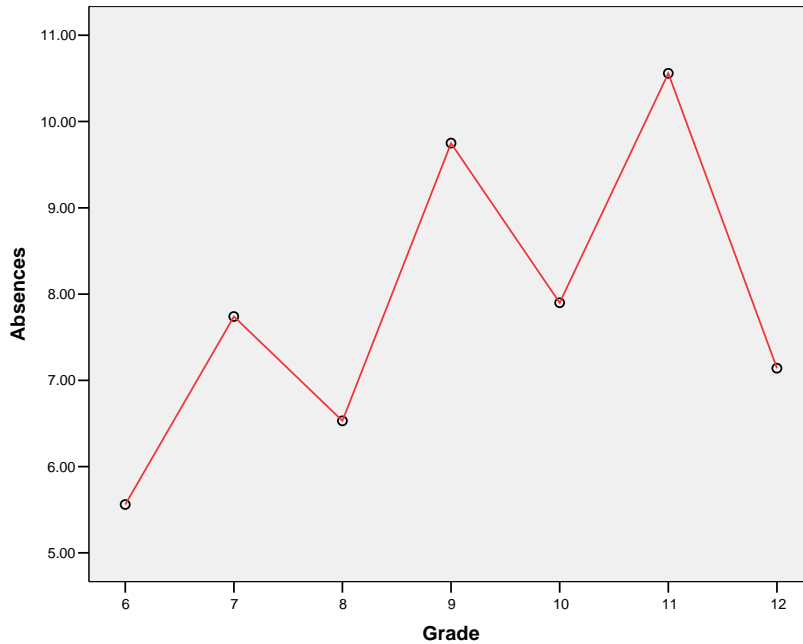
A record review indicates the number of absences decreased for this cohort of high school students from 7th to 8th grade. The rate of absences, however, appears to increase once students enter high school. This data indicates that student absences may decrease while enrolled in the CIS elective class, but may increase in high school once exiting the program (see Table 12 and Figure 3).

Table 12

Absenteeism rates for high school cohort of students previously enrolled in CIS elective class.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
6 th Grade Absences	36	5.67	4.064
7 th Grade Absences	35	7.74	5.141
8 th Grade Absences	35	6.53	5.577
9 th Grade Absences	36	9.75	10.038
10 th Grade Absences	21	7.90	6.580
11 th Grade Absences	9	10.56	15.282
12 th Grade Absences	7	7.14	2.268

Figure 3. Absenteeism rates for high school cohort of students previously enrolled in CIS elective class



Collaboration

How well is CIS collaborating with other school and community services to provide necessary resources for students?

Parent/Teacher Survey Results

The majority of teachers (i.e., 75%) agree that the CIS elective class helps them to understand their students' academic needs in conjunction with their personal development (Appendix A). Parent ratings suggested that the CIS elective class encourages them to be involved with their child's education (i.e., 77%) and informs them about their child's progress and/or areas of need (i.e., 80%). Parents were also asked if the CIS teacher works with other service providers (i.e., guidance counselors or school psychologists). Sixty-one percent of the parents indicated they did not know whether the teacher was working with other service providers, while 38 percent indicated that the teacher was working with other service providers (Appendix C). Several of the open-ended responses for parents (Appendix D) and teachers (Appendix B) indicated that communication between the CIS teacher and other teachers/school personnel about student progress is a valuable part of the CIS elective class. For instance, one parent stated, "This class works closely with the teachers in assisting my child with assignments and projects in order for her to be successful."

Satisfaction

Are the stakeholders satisfied with the services?

Teacher Quantitative and Qualitative Survey Results

Eighty-four percent of the teachers reported satisfaction with the CIS elective class; of these, 62 percent suggested they were very satisfied with the CIS elective class

(Appendix A). In their open-ended responses, several teachers expressed that they recommend students to the CIS elective class more this year because they feel the current CIS elective class teacher is very effective, organized, and dedicated. Teachers indicated several aspects of the elective class they feel are effective, which include: (a) the opportunity for students to have additional time and help to complete assignments; (b) the assistance with study skills and organization; and (c) the CIS teacher's communication with other teachers and services. Ideas about improvement focused primarily on: (a) providing more assistance and resources for the CIS teacher; (b) possibly adding more CIS elective classes; and (c) developing stronger relations with the community (Appendix B). For parents, eighty-seven percent indicated that they were satisfied with the services the CIS elective class provides (Appendix C). Their open-ended responses indicated they appreciate the helpfulness of the teacher and concern for the students (Appendix D). They also indicated they see an improvement in their child's attitude and study habits.

Qualitative Data for Parents

Themes for the open-ended questions on the parent surveys were identified. Table 13 shows each question with common and unique responses, as well as the major themes obtained from the responses.

Table 13

Summation of Parent Responses to Open-Ended Questions (N=12)

Themes:

- 1) Academic Improvement
- 2) Concern for Students
- 3) Child's Interest in Academic Achievement
- 4) Improvement in Parent/Teacher Communication
- 5) Appreciate the program

Question 11: List other services your child is receiving through the school or community.

- After school program (common response)
- Math/Science Tutoring (unique response)

Question 12: Describe what you know about the CIS elective class.

- One-on-one Attention from teacher (unique response)
- Fun activities (unique response)

Question 13: What you like most about the CIS elective class.

- Improvement in child's attitude (unique response)
- Better Study Habits (unique response)
- Teachers (unique response)
- Wrap around model (unique response)

Question 14: What you'd like to see improved with the CIS elective class.

- Exposure to More Children (unique response)
 - More Homework Assistance (unique response)
-

Interviews with Former Site Directors

Since the beginning of the CIS program at Culbreth Middle School, there have been three different site coordinators. The evaluation team interviewed all three coordinators, due to the possibility of different implementation philosophies and inter-networking strategies among other teachers affecting student achievement. Each coordinator was interviewed separately and the responses were kept confidential.

The 2005-2006 school year was the first year for the current site coordinator. The teacher survey indicated that Culbreth's core teachers recommend their students for the CIS class more now than before. Additionally, there seems to be a higher rate of improvement in student grades this year than in previous years. The current site director uses a management by objectives method, in which students set quarterly academic and behavioral goals. Throughout the quarter, students receive feedback from the site coordinator and other core teachers as to how they are achieving their goals. Although each coordinator implemented similar strategies in terms of using class time to complete missing work or learn study skills, management by objectives involving other teachers was not used.

One of the site coordinators indicated that academic progress was not as observable as a change in students' attitudes toward school. In other words, improvement did not always translate into better grades and attitudes can be difficult to measure. However, attendance was reported to improve, as well as, the quality of student's work. The site coordinator reports a story of a student who was frequently in trouble at school but after coming to CIS, the student's attitude changed. Initially, there was little encouragement from others to push the student to be a better person; however, the student became more reliable, resulting in a higher standard set by teachers and parents.

The current site director benefits from the new implementation of the NC Wise system at Chapel Hill/Carrboro City Schools, which allows teachers to input their students' missing assignments. Due to the convenience of this system, the current site director is able to access student information from her computer, making it readily available and keeping the students more accountable. Before NC Wise, site coordinators

had to maintain constant contact with other core teachers in order to understand their students' academic status. During an interview with one of the site coordinators, it was reported that it was difficult to get core teachers to fill out missing assignment reports if the teachers did not support the program. With the implementation of NC Wise, receiving missing assignment reports is no longer a challenge that is dependent upon the support of other teachers.

Both former site directors reported they had positive relationships with the other teachers and indicated that advocacy was an essential part of the program. Generally, they reported that CIS students had an adult to "go to bat" for them at school and suggested those students could depend on the site directors to help them through difficult times. Specifically, one site director remembers communicating with social workers about serious problems students were having at home. The site director reported that most teachers did not want to go beyond school life with a student because it tended to be extra work for teachers who were already overwhelmed. On the other hand, the site directors reported that one of the most significant aspects of their role was working with a student's academic performance in conjunction with his/her home life. Therefore, one site director did report making home visits and the other reported making many phone calls.

When asked about the weaknesses of the program, there was disagreement between the previous site directors. Particularly, one site director reported that teachers were reluctant to recommend students to the program if they were "bad apples" or were perceived as not trying hard enough. This issue initiated a concern in which the site director quoted, "if not CIS then what." He worried that those students that weren't

recommended would fall between the cracks. Then again, the other site director reported that CIS was not a “drop off” place for all students. The site director further indicated that the program worked best for students with skills but needed extra support. However, both site directors commented upon a supportive administrative staff as being one of the strengths of the organization.

Both site directors were asked how they thought their former students were doing in high school. One site director reported that students were probably doing average work. The other site director indicated that although there may have been progress in middle school, progress might have been impeded after being “dropped off” in the 9th grade without further intervention.

Similar to the current site coordinator, the previous site coordinators were repositioned teachers who taught three CIS classes along with classes outside the program. Due to the heavy workload of the CIS coordinators, all three reported the need for more volunteers to assist with the management of the CIS program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the impact of the CIS elective class on middle school students at Culbreth Middle School in the areas of academics (i.e., grades), behavior, and attendance. Research indicates that each of these areas can be related to school dropout (Lever, 2004; MacIver & Epstein, 1991; Schiller, 1999). Therefore, the goals and model of the CIS elective program are congruent with evidence-based approaches to maximize school academic performance and minimize school dropout. In addition to evaluating the program impact in the three target areas, program operation/service delivery procedures such as collaboration and overall satisfaction were assessed.

Grades

Parents and teachers perceive that there is a benefit for students in the area of academics, including an overall improvement in grades. An analysis of school grades for current middle school students enrolled in the CIS elective class at Culbreth Middle School reveals that students' grades appear to increase in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics, but not in Science and Social Studies. In fact, 8th grade students' grades appear to improve significantly in the areas of Language Arts, Math, and Overall Academics after enrollment. Results did not reveal, however, statistically significant improvement in grades for 7th grade students after enrollment.

The overall GPA for current middle school students enrolled in the CIS elective class increased from 7th grade to 8th grade. The majority of the current students were also able to pass the reading and mathematics EOG's in the 6th and 7th grades. In addition, the vast majority of students currently enrolled in high school were able to pass the reading

and mathematics EOG's at the end of their eighth grade year. Thus, there appears to be some support for academic improvement in conjunction with the CIS elective class, particularly in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. Several teacher surveys suggested that the CIS elective class could benefit from additional assistance for the CIS teacher and possibly additional CIS elective classes, which would allow for a smaller class size. Reducing the teacher-student ratio may help improve academic gains.

The students in the high school cohort who previously participated in the CIS elective class at Culbreth are performing on average in the C-D range in most subject areas. Although these scores may not reflect optimal performance, it is possible that some positive effects of the CIS elective class may be difficult to measure, such as the fact that these students have not dropped out of school. The scores represented how students performed on average in the various subjects; however, there was a range of academic performance with several students earning A's and B's. It would be informative to investigate variables that are associated with students who demonstrate academic success and students who do not. There was no data available to assess student attitudes toward school as a result of the CIS program, nor a comparison sample to assess outcomes for students performing at a similar level at Culbreth who were not enrolled in the CIS elective class. Nonetheless, scores indicate that previous CIS elective students now enrolled in high school could benefit from additional follow-up and support.

Behavior

Teacher and parent reports on the surveys indicate that they perceive a reduction in behavior problems at the middle school level. Parents also indicated that they have seen an improvement in their child's behavior, though several parents indicated they did

not see a change in behavior. None of the reports indicated that behavior problems increased. The majority of teachers also reported fewer reprimands during school. Specifically, the results of the survey questions are favorable, indicating that teachers and parents perceive students' behavior to be improving since enrollment in the CIS elective class. Within the high school cohort, behavior problems also did not appear to be a significant issue due to the low number of suspensions. These results are in a favorable direction, yet no direct conclusion concerning behavior can be made because there were no analyses comparing behavior for students prior to enrollment in the CIS elective class.

Attendance

The majority of parents surveyed reported that their child's attendance has improved since enrollment in the CIS elective class, while the majority of teachers were not sure. Records indicate the number of absences have decreased for the current middle school students enrolled in the elective class. The review of records for students in the high school cohort revealed that there did appear to be a decline in the number of absences from 7th to 8th grade, though the rate appeared to increase during high school. Therefore, the CIS elective class appears to have a potential impact on attendance while students are enrolled.

Collaboration

Several teachers indicated they were aware of instances where the CIS elective teacher worked with other professionals in the school environment to assist students, as well as, communicated with them to assist in understanding their students' needs. Parents also indicated the CIS teacher informs them about their child's academic performance and helps them be involved with their child's education. The majority of

the parents, however, were unaware of the CIS teacher's collaboration with other services on behalf of their child. In addition, a few parents asked for more communication between the CIS elective teacher and the home about student concerns. There was also a recommendation for additional collaboration with community agencies on behalf of students. Thus, there appears to be strong efforts in the area of communication within the school setting, but perhaps there should be a goal to improve communication with community agencies and parents in order to strengthen wrap-around services.

Satisfaction

Parents and teachers appear to be very satisfied with the CIS elective program. Overall, they felt that the students were improving in the areas of grades, behavior, and attendance. Parents and teachers indicated that the additional time, support, and strategies that the CIS elective class provides for the students are valuable.

Recommendations

- There is a need for more record keeping in terms of student progress prior to, during, and after participation in the program.
- Based on teacher perceptions, a smaller teacher (or volunteer)/ student ratio may help students achieve higher levels of academic success; thus additional volunteers, teachers, and teacher assistants would be beneficial.
- The program can benefit from additional strategies and resources to enhance academic achievement.
- Follow-up academic support may be necessary for high school students formerly enrolled in the CIS elective class at the middle school level.

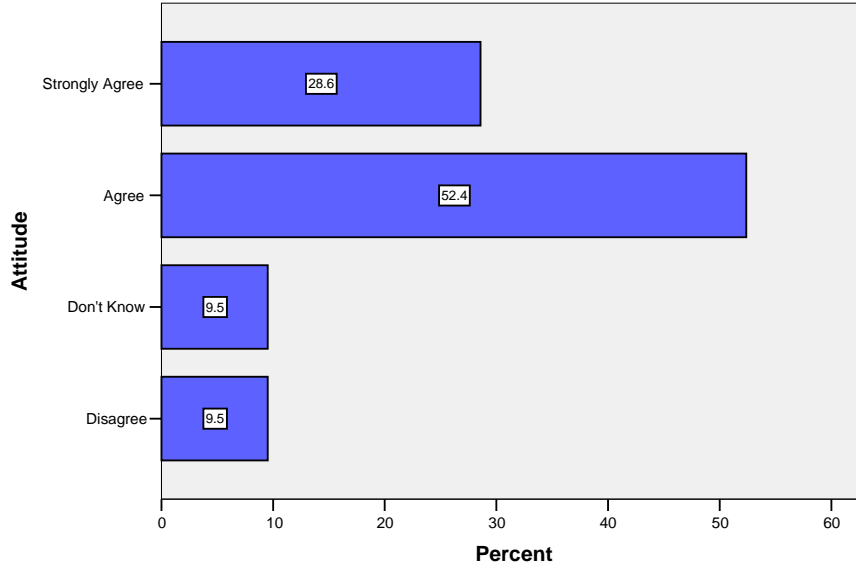
- It is recommended that the wrap-around model involving the parents, school, and community be strengthened in assisting students.
- Continued progress evaluations to assess program strengths and weaknesses are recommended. In addition, in depth evaluations can investigate variables that are associated with student success in the program.

References

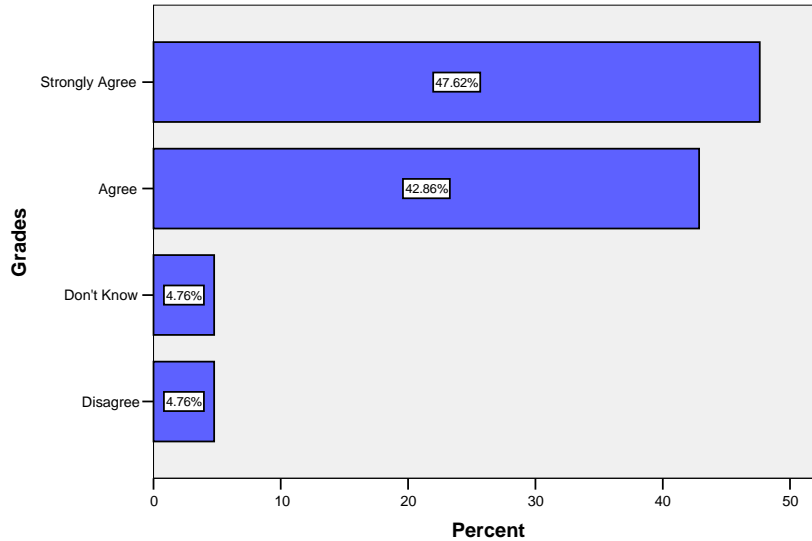
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Appendix A: Summary of Teacher Survey Responses

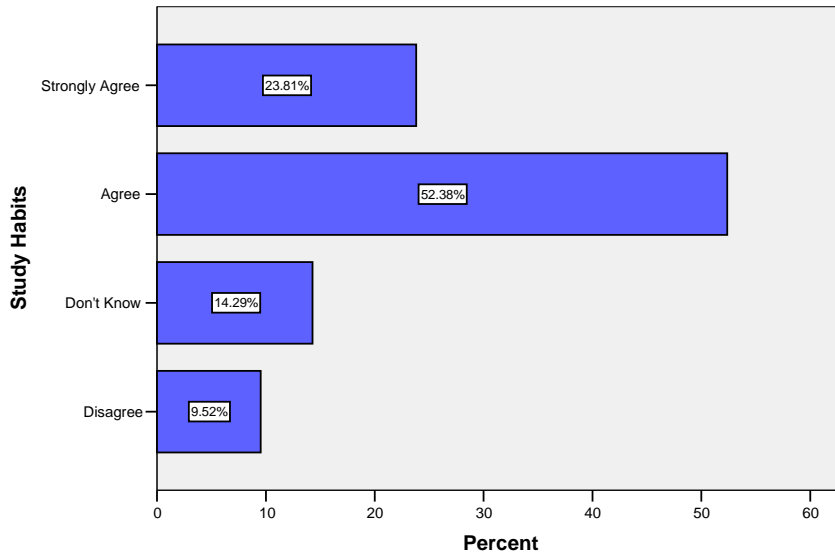
Q1. The CIS elective class helped my students to have a more positive attitude toward school.



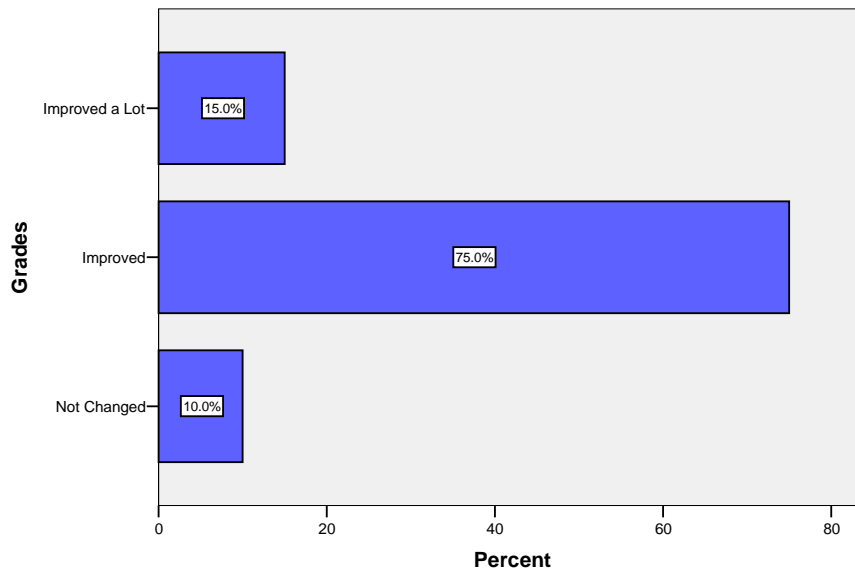
Q2. During this school year, the CIS elective class has helped my students to improve their grades.



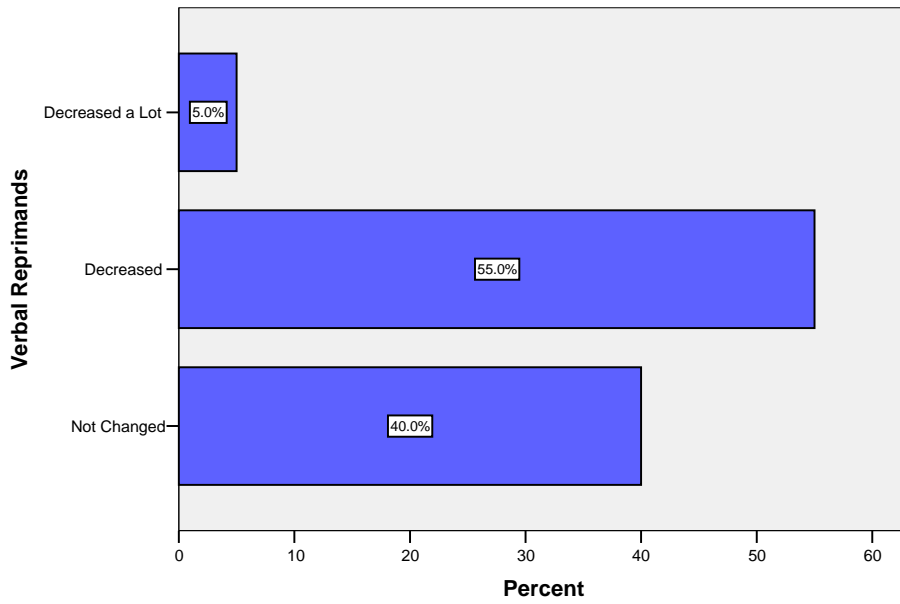
Q3. The CIS elective class has helped my students have better study habits.



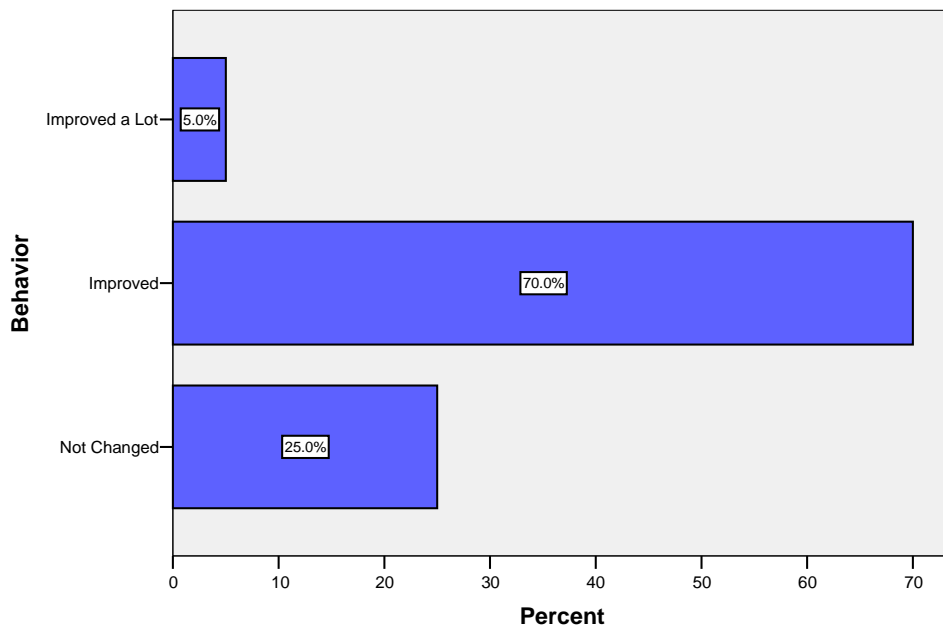
Q4. How much have grades improved since enrollment in the CIS elective class?



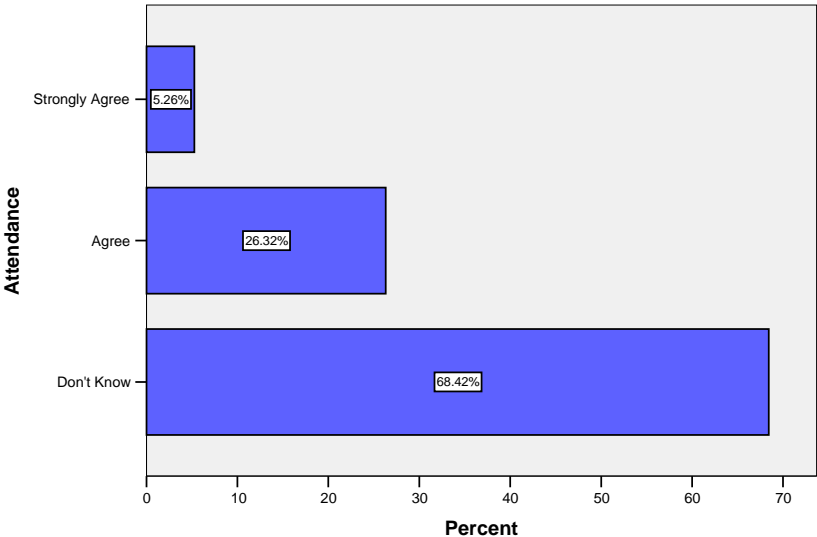
Q5. Since enrollment in the CIS elective class, overall the number of verbal reprimands for my students have:



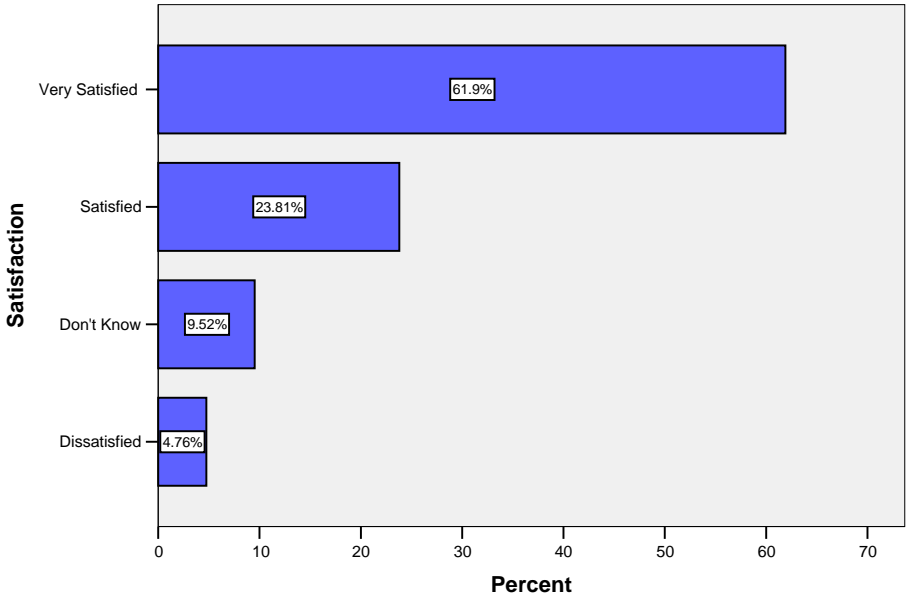
Q6. Overall, how much has students' behavior improved since enrollment in the CIS elective class?



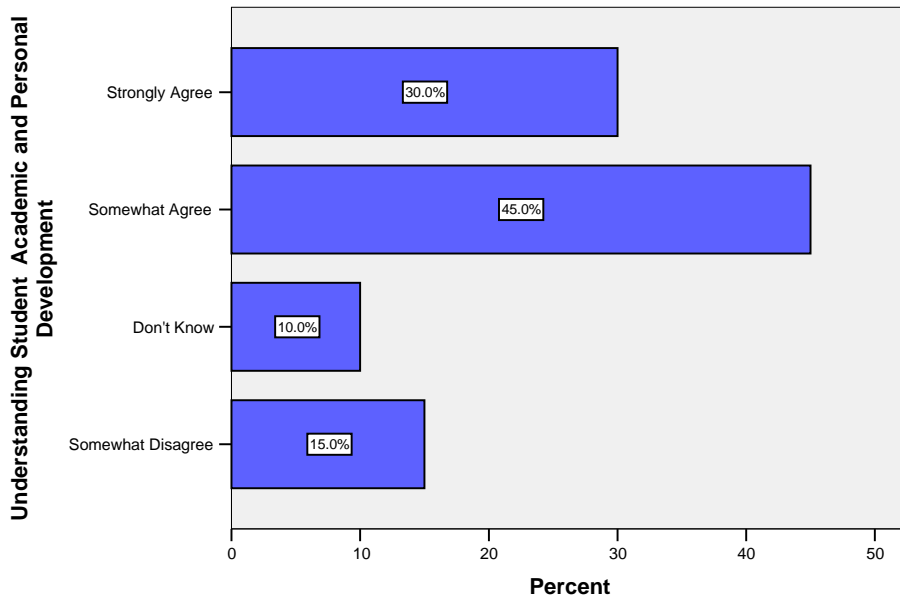
Q7. My students' attendance has improved since being enrolled in the CIS elective class.



Q8. How satisfied are you with the CIS elective class?



Q9. The CIS elective class has helped me understand my students' academic needs in conjunction with their personal development.



Appendix B: Teacher Survey Open-Ended Responses

Q10. Do you recommend your students to the CIS elective class?

Yes, I have more needy kids this year.

Yes, I feel the teacher is rigorous and structured which is what many of these students need.

Yes, Our school had a change in staff in the CIS class. I was very optimistic that this teacher would obtain better results. So far, this teacher has been very responsive and has worked hard with the students to see positive change.

No

Yes. The teacher used this year was more in tune with real classroom expectations and laid out clear expectations for the students working with them to prioritize their work and make a workplace plan. She also teaches them to advocate for themselves with their teachers.

Yes. The teacher this year is more focused on the students' academic success. She also encourages personal responsibility.

No. I have recommended students in the past as well.

Yes. The class is better organized and structured this year.

Yes. Teacher is very organized and academically challenging to students.

Yes. Class seems to have impact in terms of improving student's academic success. Students are being held accountable and there is a focus on measurable achievement.

No. I am new this year.

Yes. The class seems more effective this year.

I wasn't here last year.

Yes-better organized, more focused on academic/study skills.

The teacher in charge of our CIS program this year is very strong and she's doing a lot for the kids. I am not in the position to recommend students for the program.

Yes, only because I have a better understanding this year of the purpose and goals of CIS under Ms. Buher.

Yes, the teacher is more organized

Yes, Ms. Buher is doing a great job with the kids. She is very involved with them, she cares and is working with these kids!

Yes, because the teacher is very focused on their academic and social growth and successes.

I do not recommend them because I don't see the program working

Q11. Please describe what you know about the CIS elective class.

Strong study habits, organization skills, and working to potential.

This program links community resources to schools by providing materials, personnel, and money to support students who have academic difficulty and possibly finance needs.

I have worked with this program for 5 years. The behavior questions were hard to answer because I try not to send students whose issues are behavioral in reference to their academic performance. The students I recommend need a little more support, encouragement, organizational skills and study skills to perform better academically. This support may not be coming from home for whatever the reason.

It offers help with organization, good study habits, and academic/social growth.

Study skills and academic help, coordination and communication between home and school, encouragement of involvement in school and community activities.

I know the class is a combination of skill-based interventions, assistance with school work, and support with personal/emotional needs.

Help reinforce academic skills, develop study skills, promote positive attitude toward school, help students plan for future.

Not a thing

The class is there to help students be more motivated about school. It also helps with assignment completion.

The wonderful teacher helps these kids keep up with any missing work in my class. She also helps them re-do assignments to bring up their grades. In class they learn study and organizational skills. I think she may also work with them on character.

Help in basic skills, time management, self-esteem, positive peer support

Its has community volunteers come in to work on academics and build relationships with the kids. It has incentives for getting work turned in and doing well in school.

Students are recommended for this class based on their academic/personal needs.

In this class, they receive academic support from their teacher and volunteers from the community and have more people checking in on their progress regularly.

Helps students with organizational skills, time management, study skills

CIS serves as a tool to help students with organization and motivation. It is not just a study hall, though they may get help with work. Instead is a class to help give them skills that will follow them throughout school.

It seems to be a glorified study hall for some kids - a place for them to do missing

assignments.

Q12. How do you think CIS can better serve Culbreth Middle School?

See above. I think the students we recommend are learning valuable skills that will take them to college.

I think this program could be best served if there was an allocation for an assistant in these classes. The teacher not only works in the elective class, but also follows up with teams on a regular basis. The teams meet during the elective class time.

I feel this program has had a tremendous effect on our student's performance and self esteem. When they see their grades increase and become advocates for themselves, they feel they can accomplish any task they are asked to do.

I think its serving out needs well. Wish it were continued in our high schools.

Provide teacher one additional planning/collaborative period each day to follow-up with students and teachers.

Be available for more students.

I think CIS is doing everything it can.

More classes for more kids!

It would be nice if we had more than one teacher so the class sizes could be a bit smaller.

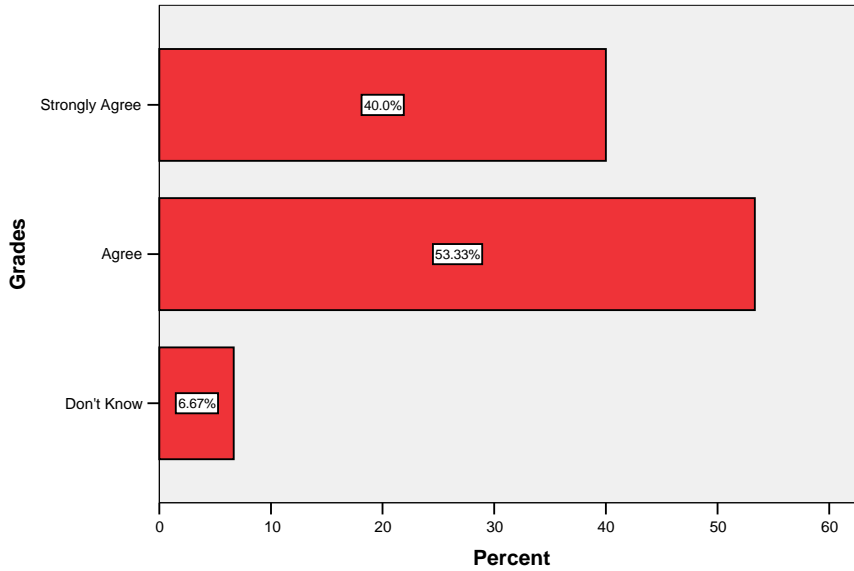
Possibly more communication between CIS teacher and core class teachers with elective teachers so that we are "in the loop."

In 6th grade students did not start until 2nd semester. I think they should get started after the 1st progress report or by the beginning of the first 9 weeks.

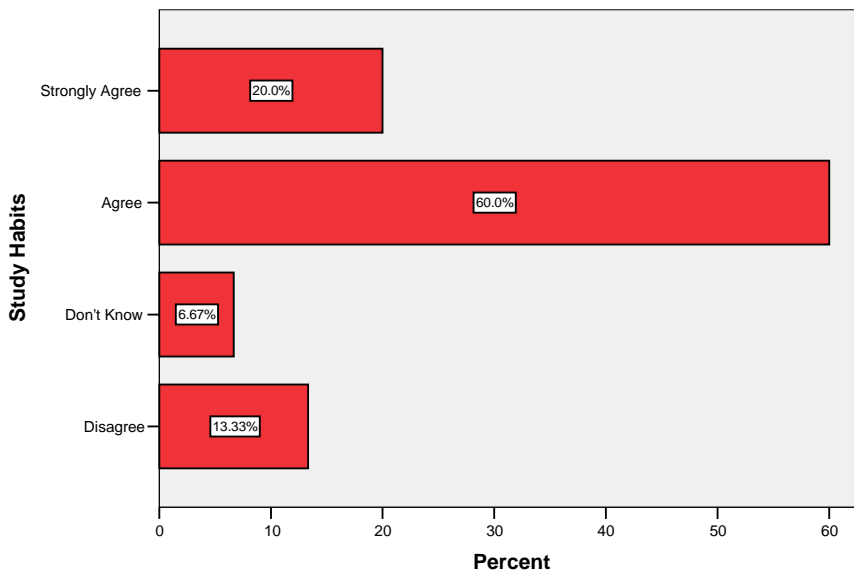
I don't know.

Appendix C: Summary of Parent Survey Responses

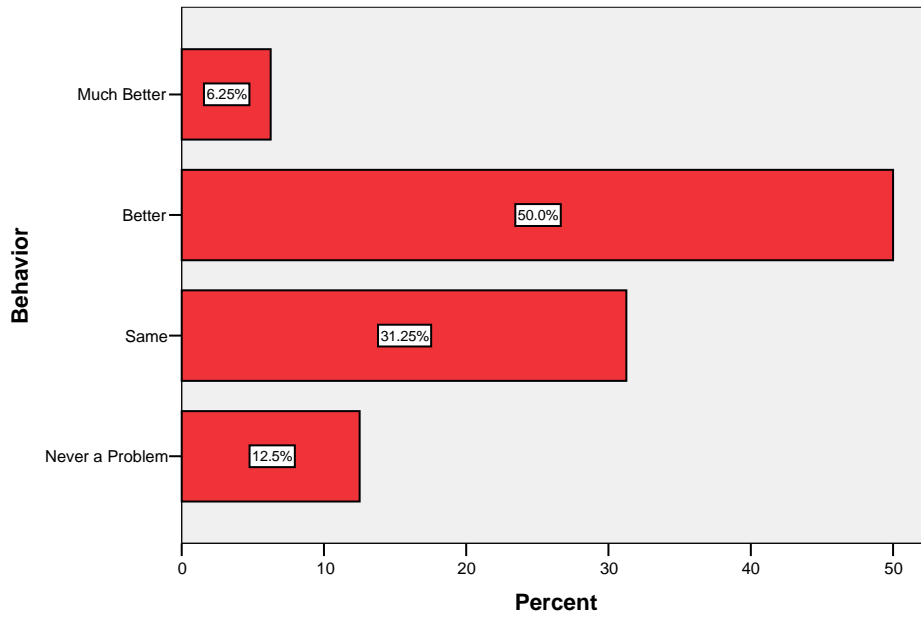
Q1. During this school year, CIS elective class has helped my child to improve his/her grades.



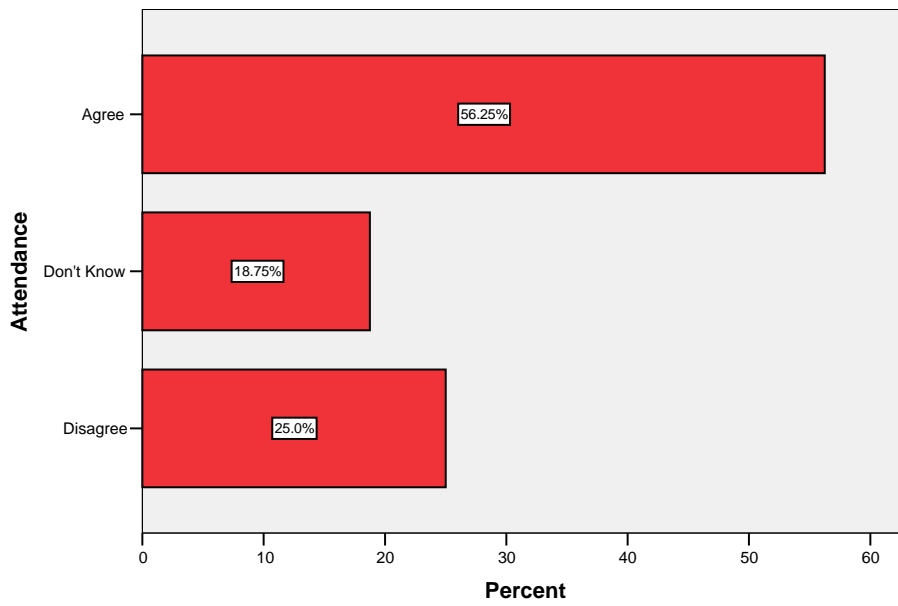
Q2. CIS elective class has helped my child have better study habits.



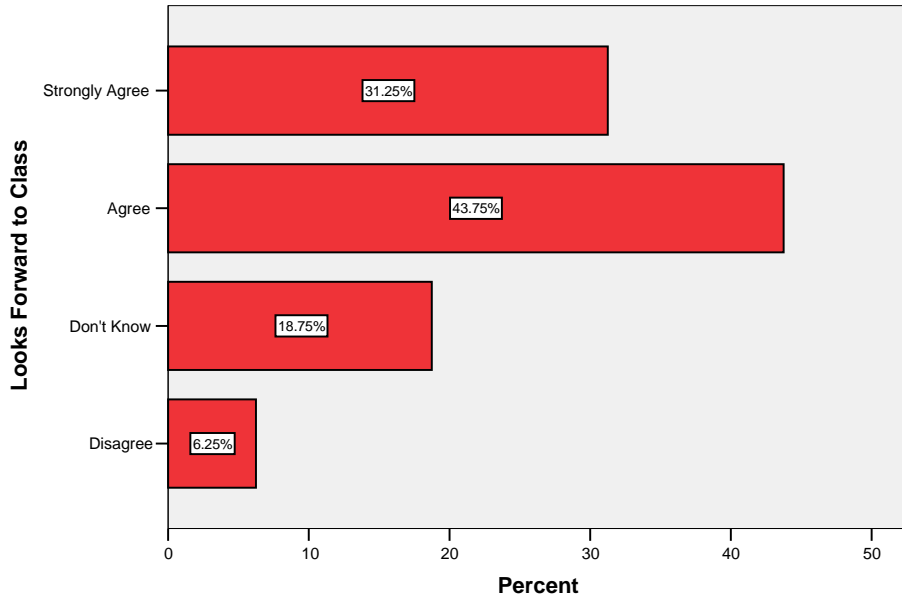
Q3. Since enrolling in the CIS elective class, my child's behavior is:



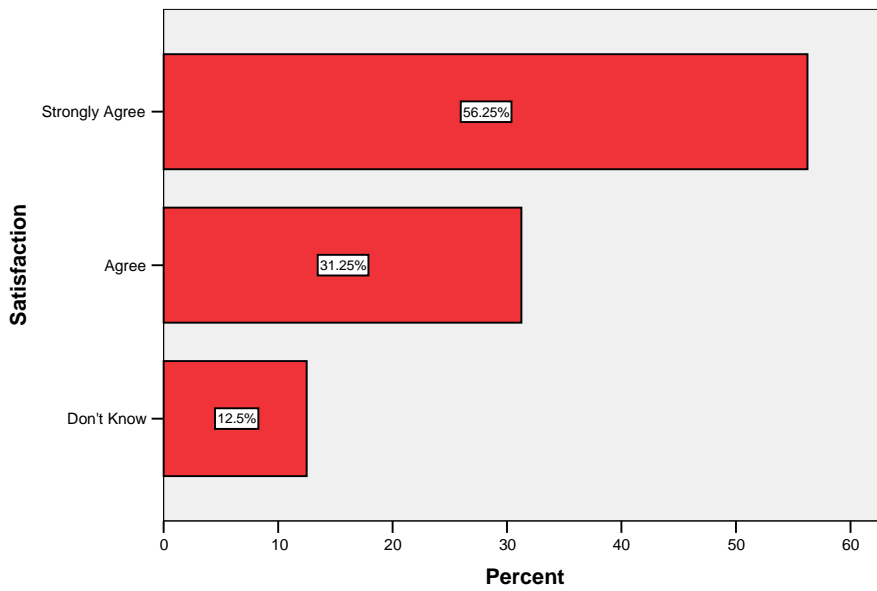
Q4. My child's attendance has improved since being enrolled in the CIS elective class.



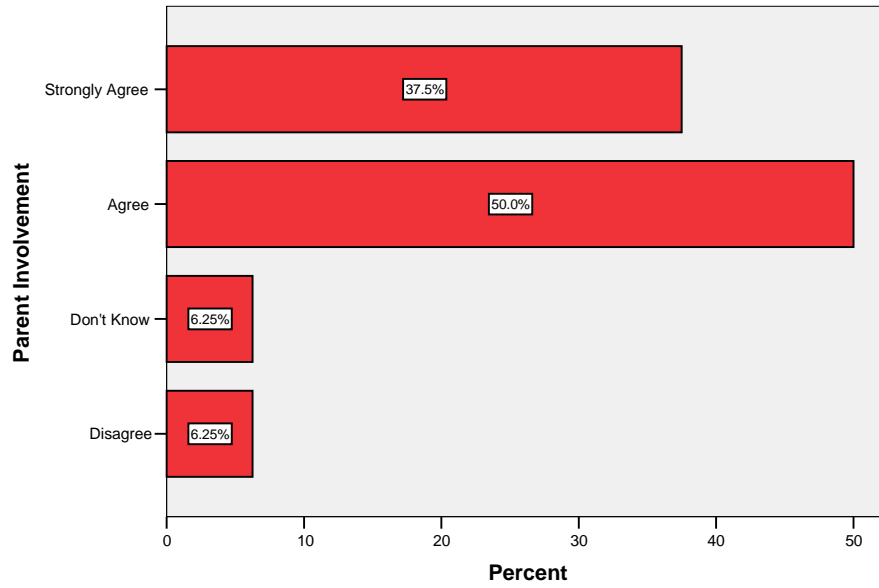
Q5. My child looks forward to attending the CIS elective class.



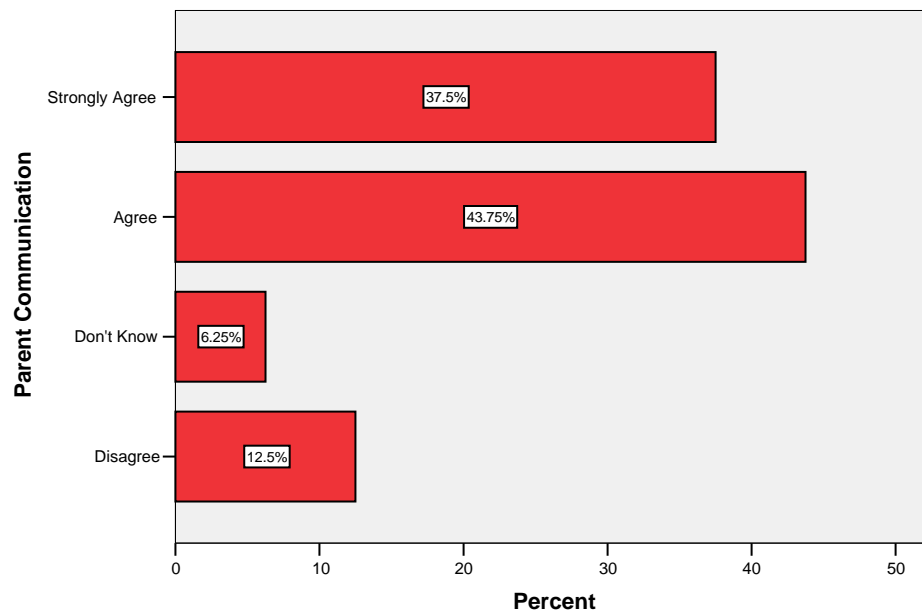
Q6. I am satisfied with the CIS elective class.



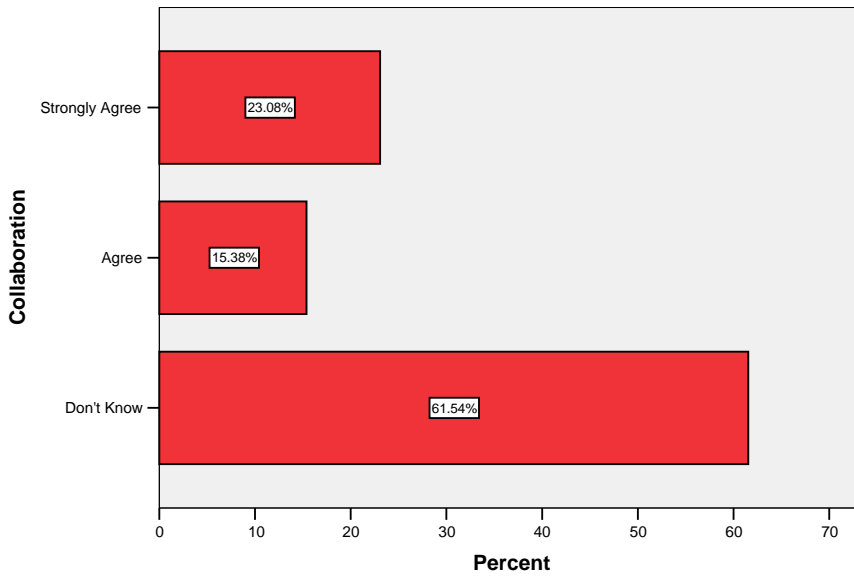
Q7. The CIS elective class encourages me to be involved with my child's education.



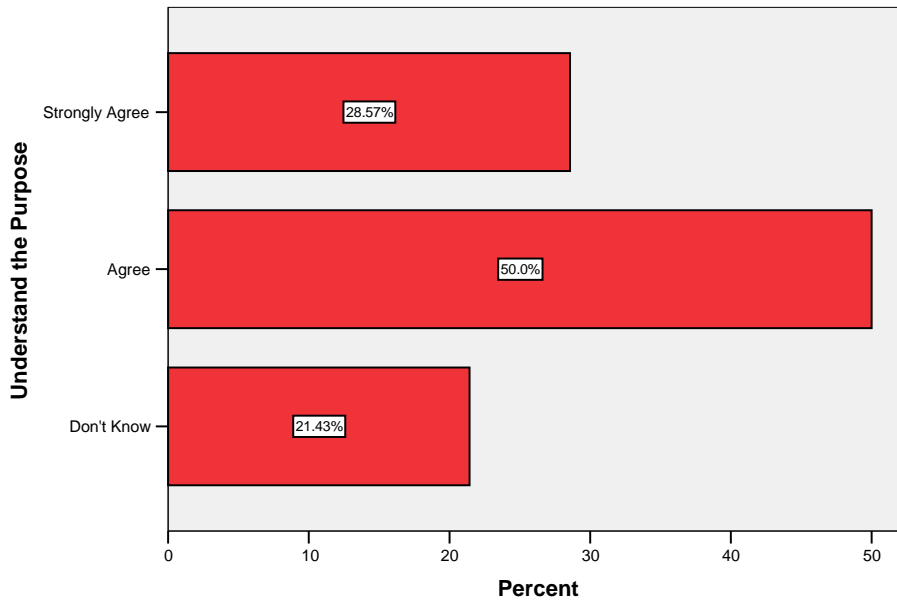
Q8. The CIS elective class informs me about my child's progress and/or areas of need.



Q9. My child's CIS teacher works w/ other service providers (guidance counselors, school psychologists, etc.) w/in the school to help my child.



Q10. I understand the purpose of the CIS elective class more this year than last school year.



Appendix D: Parent Survey Open-Ended Responses

Q11. Please list other services your child is receiving through the school or community.

She do not have other services

After school program at Culbreth Middle School

Extra help in math and science

The after 3 program, which is also a great resource!

Q12. Please describe what you know about the CIS elective class.

This class works closely with the teachers in assisting my child with assignments and projects in order for her to be successful. There are also fun activities that my child enjoys while she is still learning.

Not much, this is new to me

That they help my child with homework, organization, study for tests or quizzes

He likes it---it's good for him

They work to make sure work assignments are done in a timely fashion

I know that it is a class of determination and effort.

I know it's helping my child improve very much

Helpful, learn and do great in homework

A class where children get help with school work.

Q13. What do you like most about the CIS elective class?

The wonderful teachers! Ms. Gretchen Buher---she's great! Also my child really likes Ms. Smith who helps out.

Willingness to continue to work with students that have decided the school work is unimportant.

They try to work well with students

Can't really say

The encouragement to do better; positive attitude gained from it

My child puts more effort on his homework.

Better study habits

Interaction between students, parent, teachers

I love that my child has the opportunity to do any missing or assigned work in class.

I like that the teacher goes around to the child's other teachers for assignments.

What I like about communities in school is she is starting to do her homework more

The children get help and guidance with school work

Q14. What would you like to see improved with the CIS elective class?

To open it up for more children to participate. I believe there are more children who would benefit from this program.

More communication with parents, not waiting til the last minute to call.

No comment

More help with catching up late work

To supervise kid's projects

I don't know

Nothing really

Anything, nothings wrong

Q15. Do you have any additional suggestions or comments about the CIS elective class?

Keep up the good work! Thanks for allowing my child to participate.

I feel the CIS Program goes above and beyond for my child.

What is this exactly?

Need to communicate more to parents as to child's progress, etc., as I've received only one phone update and only 1 or 2 index card updates (I think those were my child's, not necessarily for me)

I would like a report on kid's progress

Keep up the good work

Sounds like a really good program

Appendix E: Parent Survey for CIS Evaluation

	ACADEMICS
1	<p>During this school year, Communities in Schools elective class has helped my child to improve his/her grades.</p> <p>Strongly agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
2	<p>Communities in Schools elective class has helped my child have better study habits.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
	BEHAVIOR
3	<p>Since enrolling in the Communities in Schools elective class, my child's behavior is:</p> <p>Much Better Better The Same Worse Much Worse</p>
	ATTENDANCE
4	<p>My child's attendance has improved since being enrolled in the Communities in Schools elective class.</p> <p>Strongly Disagree Disagree Don't Know Agree Strongly Agree</p>
	IMPLEMENTATION/SATISFACTION
5	<p>My child looks forward to attending the Communities in Schools elective class each day.</p> <p>Strongly agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
6	<p>I am satisfied with the Communities in Schools elective class.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
7	<p>The Communities in Schools elective class encourages me to be involved with my child's education.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
8	<p>The Communities in Schools elective class informs me about my child's progress and/or areas of need.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
9	<p>My child's Communities in Schools teacher works with other service providers (guidance counselors,</p>

	<p>school psychologists, etc.) within in the school to help my child.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
10	<p>I understand the purpose of the Communities in Schools elective class more this year than last school year.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
11	<p>Please list other services your child is receiving through the school or community.</p>
12	<p>Please describe what you know about the Communities in Schools elective class.</p>
13	<p>What do you like most about the Communities in Schools elective class?</p>
14	<p>What would you like to see improved with the Communities in Schools elective class?</p>
15	<p>Do you have any additional suggestions or comments about the Communities in Schools elective class?</p>

Appendix F: Teacher Survey for CIS Evaluation

	ACADEMICS
1	<p>During this school year, the Communities in Schools elective class has helped my students to improve their grades.</p> <p>Strongly agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
2	<p>The Communities in Schools elective class has helped my students to have a more positive attitude toward school.</p> <p>Strongly agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
3	<p>The Communities in Schools elective class has helped my students have better study habits.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
4	<p>How much have grades improved since enrollment in the Communities in Schools elective class?</p> <p>Improved a lot Improved Not Changed Declined Declined a lot</p>
	BEHAVIOR
5	<p>Since enrollment in the Communities in Schools elective class, overall the number of verbal reprimands for my students have:</p> <p>Decreased a lot Decreased Not Changed Increased Increased a lot</p>
6	<p>Overall, how much has behavior improved since enrollment in the Communities in Schools elective class?</p> <p>Improved a lot Improved Not Changed Declined Declined a lot</p>
	ATTENDANCE
7	<p>My students' attendance has improved since being enrolled in the Communities in Schools elective class.</p> <p>Strongly Disagree Disagree Don't Know Agree Strongly Agree</p>
	IMPLEMENTATION/SATISFACTION
8	<p>Please describe what you know about the Communities in Schools elective class.</p>
9	<p>How satisfied are you with the Communities in Schools elective class?</p> <p>Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Don't Know Satisfied Very Satisfied</p>
10	<p>How do you think Communities In Schools can better service Culbreth Middle School?</p>

11	<p>The Communities in Schools elective class has helped me understand my student's academic needs in conjunction with their personal development.</p> <p>Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>
12	<p>Do you recommend your students to the Communities In Schools elective class more this school year than last?</p> <p>Yes or No</p> <p>Please explain why.</p>
13	<p>In your opinion, what are the most effective aspects of the Communities in Schools elective class?</p>
14	<p>What would you like to see improved with the Communities in Schools elective class?</p>
15	<p>Provide any additional suggestions or comments about the Communities in Schools elective class.</p>