

An Assessment of
Small Schools versus Comprehensive High Schools

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Abstract

This action research project describes a teacher's efforts to increase understanding of the impacts of converting from a large comprehensive high school to a small schools format. Data was gathered from students and teachers from the researcher's small school and also from a variety of Oregon Public School System statistics. The research design of this study allowed information to be gathered directly from the participants in the conversion process through surveys. Participants included ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students, as well as all the teachers within the researcher's small school. There was also informal data gathering through conversations with parents of students in the small school. The data will be available to interested parties who can use the information at their discretion. Small schools appear to be good for students who need intense remediation and lots of extra attention, but they do not offer the same menu of advanced courses and electives, extracurricular activities and vocational courses that most students and parents associate with going to high school.

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Chapter One – Introduction

Imagine standing in the commons area of a large high school on an open house information night for incoming freshman and their parents. This school has recently converted from a comprehensive high school to five small schools within the larger school. The majority of parents do not understand what a Small School is let alone how to decide which school their student should choose. These schools have all adopted the Coalition of Essential schools model that offers no distinction between the schools, except that the new five schools are all named a different color. A parent is asking, “How do I choose which school?” Now try to imagine answering that question. That was the dilemma the researcher found herself in recently. When the researcher’s school site began this conversion process, the students, staff, parents and community were all told the change was made because it was “best for the students”. Many are questioning if this really is best for students so the goal of the researcher’s project is to gather data about the impacts of restructuring a large comprehensive high school to a small schools format.

The researcher’s school site is in a rural community that has grown from a population of 13,086 in 1990 to 21,675 as of July 1, 2007. It is not that far removed from the Portland area but there is a band of undeveloped green space that seems to provide a sense of separation from the larger metropolitan area. Thirty percent of the population over the age of 25 holds a college degree and the median household income is \$50,168 as compared to the state average of \$42,257. Those facts could be attributed to the presence of a private college in this relatively small town. The community has not traditionally been a “bedroom” community but many of the

new residents commute to jobs outside of the area. What was once known as a very tight knit and conservative community is changing with the influx of new people. The community has been predominantly white but with growth there are more minorities moving in.

The school district has a total of 5,205 students; one high school site with 1,558 students, two middle schools with a total of 1,134 students and six elementary schools with a total of 2,313 students. The remaining students are in alternative or special programs within the district. The Special Education student population is 12.8%, which is almost equivalent to the 14% Talented and Gifted students. Just over a third of all the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Most students are white (84%), with Hispanic students the largest minority group at 14%, only 1.8% are black but this population is growing.

The school district works very hard to make sure students are in school, which is reflected by an average attendance rate of 94.3%. The district appeals to parents and students as they continually meet or exceed state averages on standardized test scores in reading, mathematics, writing, and science. The average SAT scores of students who took the exam in 2006-07 was 1567 compared to the Oregon average of 1550 and national average of 1511. This fact would lead one to believe that our students are being well educated, but without knowing how many students took the exam this figure can be misleading. If only students who have taken Advanced Placement (AP) courses are taking the SAT at the researchers school site this would not be a valid comparison to students who are not receiving AP curriculum. As newcomers to the area are looking at statistical data to help decide where their children can get a good education this district looks good. The dropout rate for the same time period was 4.7% and this is a relatively low percentage. The district uses resources for outreach to make sure students are attending and graduating.

Of the 1,558 students in the high school, 84.2% are White, 11.6% are Hispanic, 1.9% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1.1% are Black which mirrors the composition of the district as a whole. There have been some race issues at the school, mainly between the Whites and Hispanics but it is a relatively safe campus. The high school has 26.3% of the student body identified as Economically Disadvantaged. This means almost a third of the students lack resources in school and outside of school. They try to stay in the shadows and not draw attention to themselves. High school is fraught with emotion and turmoil and this is only exacerbated for students who are poor.

There is an almost equal distribution of females to males, with males having a slight majority. One grade level does not predominantly outweigh the other grades. These students are then equitably distributed between five small schools within the larger high school. This was originally done as a random assignment with siblings being kept within one small school unless their parent or guardian requested a different small school for them. The schools are known as Green, Blue, Yellow, Red and Silver. Within these five small schools are 83 teachers, 56 support staff and 5 administrators.

The high school was originally constructed in 1963 and since then has had a number of upgrades, but the main structures have remained relatively the same. In November of 2002 the citizens of the community passed a bond measure to expand the existing high school rather than construct a second high school. The design was developed specifically for a comprehensive high school and the construction was completed in 2005. But starting in 2003 a teacher at the high school led a campaign to convert the school to a “small school” format. This teacher applied for and received grant funding for this purpose from the Gates Foundation. The funds were for a three-year time period starting in school year 2005-2006, but prior to this the school had been

experimenting with Smaller Learning Communities. The site had received grant funds for this purpose from the Department of Education starting in 2003.

The goal of the Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) program is to improve student academic achievement in large public schools with enrollments of 1,000 or more students. SLC's can be structured in a variety of ways but at the school site it started with freshman houses based on distinct themes. When the site received money from the Gates Foundation the Smaller Learning Communities concept was abandoned and five autonomous small schools were structured within the large school building. Where the school formerly had one principal and two assistant principals, there were now five principals, one for each small school. The staff was assigned a small school by the administrative team and the Coalition of Essential Schools model of Small Schools was adopted rather than build Career Academies or theme-based small schools. The school year of 2007-08 was the first year of this format and also the last year of the Gates Foundation funding.

This is the environment in which the researcher plans to conduct her action research. The research will focus on the impacts of restructuring a large comprehensive school to a small schools format. The researcher has worked at this school for over six and a half years and has been an active participant in the conversion process. The researcher is interested in this action research because change is a difficult process but it is made even more so when people do not clearly see or understand why changes are being made. The researcher is attached to one of the small schools but as the School to Work coordinator she serves students from all five small schools and has interactions with all five administrators as well. The researcher would like to gather and share information with all participants in this change process to increase clarity and

understanding of the impacts of restructuring from a comprehensive high school to a small schools format.

Action Research Proposal

Chapter Two – The Issue

In recent years many schools across the nation have participated in a small schools movement. The Gates Foundation has led the way, providing a great deal of funding and support for schools willing to take on this task. The researcher's school is one of these sites and the researcher hopes to gather data that shows clearly why the school started on this path. The researcher also wants to find data that will either identify and strongly support the benefits of moving forward, or make a case for not moving forward. The research question is: "What are the impacts of restructuring a large comprehensive high school into a number of small schools?"

It is only natural for people to resist change, but when the benefits of change outweigh the negatives most people would opt for change. Restructuring a large comprehensive high school into five completely autonomous small schools is a change of considerable magnitude. Before a school takes on a change like this it is important that everyone who will be affected understands why a change is needed and what the ramifications of this change will be. It appears to the researcher that this change was made without such explanation or understanding.

It is also not clear whether the benefits and changes inherent within the small schools movement were clearly articulated to all involved parties-the school board, community, parents, students and staff. For example current research explaining the benefits or staff impacts of restructuring large schools into small schools within a school was not shared prior to the implementation of the small schools structure. Neither were the reasons that prompted the change at the researcher's school site explained at the time. Further, the decision to restructure to small schools appears to be a decision that was already made.

The researcher has worked at the school site since January of 2002. The school received Gates Foundation funding for three school years beginning in 2004. The grant writer was a teacher at the school site who championed the small schools change. The community, parents, students and staff were not involved in the decisions to accept the grant money or to move forward. Once the district agreed to accept the grant efforts were made to include all parties in information forums. It appears to the researcher that these forums were meant to convince people that the decision that had already been made to restructure to small schools was in the best interest of students.

The 2007-08 school year was the last year of the funding and the first year with five small schools each with its own administrator and support staff. It has not been openly or clearly defined as to how costly this is for the district. It does not appear to be sustainable but if it is, something is being negatively impacted by the resources it takes to have five administrators instead of the three that the comprehensive school had. There are so many unanswered questions and the researcher wants to find the answers to bring understanding and clarity so the school can move forward gracefully or bow out just as gracefully.

Literature Review

The researcher's school site is participating in the hottest trend in education reform – small schools, which are also known as small learning communities (SLCs). The site is in the fourth year of converting one large (just under 1,600 students) comprehensive high school into five small schools each with fewer than 400 students. The site is undergoing this transformation based upon a large grant received from the Gates Foundation, which has fueled this particular reform movement. The site – including students, parents, staff, school board and community

were all told the high school was moving to the small school format, as it was what was “best for students.” The researcher has collected literature from a variety of resources regarding the Small Schools reform movement.

The researcher will use the literature to explore and address six variables in Small School reform:

- What is the vision of the small school movement?
- What have been the academic gains and effective instructional techniques in small schools?
- How do small schools affect the climate of the school, including impacts to teachers?
- What community involvement is needed for successful reform?
- What staff development is necessary to achieve the goals of small schools?
- How sustainable are small schools in an era of decreased funding for schools?

What is the vision of the small school movement?

The original small school movement started in the 1980’s when committed educators and community activists in New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Oakland, Boston, and Cincinnati launched the movement. These people were desperate to find alternatives to the failures of big urban high school. According to Michelle Fine, (2005) “They fashioned a vibrant, gutsy social movement for creating democratic, warm, and intellectually provocative schools, particularly for poor and working-class youth of color” (para. 2). Ancess (2008) states, “This grassroots initiative, begun 30 years ago by teachers in New York City, had a clear purpose: to serve students who were alienated, disengaged, and failing in traditional secondary schools and to teach them to use their minds well” (para. 5).

The original activist educators didn't put an arbitrary number on what constituted small. They focused instead on creating schools that were small enough to sustain a healthy, democratic decision-making process around issues of teaching, learning, governance, and allocations of time and resources. The original small schools developed in urban areas where the community and teachers had very serious social justice concerns. According to Fine (2005, para.17):

Small schools were a strategy to reinvigorate public education with spaces of antiracist commitment that would inspire, spread, and support other schools—not islands seeking exit. At its best, the small schools movement was grounded in a set of radical educational and political principles that are currently under siege.

These principles are:

- Access, participation, and democracy.
- Commitments to equity.
- Sophisticated systems of assessment that support better teaching and learning.
- Schools for social justice and social responsibility.

In contrast the Gates Foundation defined small as roughly 400 students, or about 100 per grade level. (Gates Foundation, 2004) There is concern about the Gates Foundation efforts. Miner says, "...some worry that the Gates scope is limited and too focused on size as a necessary prerequisite for reform" (2005, para. 16). Once students have been divided into small schools there are two distinct models that small schools can follow. One is to define a thematic school and the other is to establish generic small schools, the latter of which is what the researcher's school site adopted. The school site split into five generic schools each known by a different color. When the Gates money was received in 2004 the site adopted the Ten Common Principles

of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) and also hired a CES consultant to assist in the change process.

According to the CES National website these principles “are based upon decades of research and practice, reflect the wisdom of thousands of educators successfully engaging students in creating personalized, equitable, and academically challenging schools for all young people.” The abbreviated version of the principles are:

- Learning to use one’s mind well
- Less is more, depth over coverage
- Goals apply to all students
- Personalization
- Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach
- Demonstration of mastery
- A tone of decency and trust
- Commitment to the entire school
- Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
- Democracy and equity.

These principles are meant to be the guideposts in the structure and definition of small schools at the researcher’s school site, but there has been little time or effort devoted to embodying these principles.

An evaluation of the Gates Foundation funding of the conversion process by Fouts and Assoc. (Fouts et al, 2006) states,

We found that the actual work in converting a large high school to SLCs was so taxing and time consuming that teachers often lost track of the reason they were making the

changes, i.e. increased personalization, increased rigor, and improved instruction. Given the effort required to change the structure, it is not easy to also focus attention on matters such as effective advisories, instructional techniques, and curriculum (p. 11).

So all the time and energy goes into the structure and not the CES principles in the case of the researcher's site.

With autonomous small schools comes the fact that all required classes have to be offered within each small school. This means that each school has a teacher who teaches both PE and Health classes and also that the math teachers have to teach multiple levels of math in any given day. This year the site is allowing students to take "crossover" electives but the goal for next year is to not allow this. The researcher's school site has seen the dwindling of Career and Technical classes at the site since 2002. The site had a vibrant woodshop that was abandoned and dismantled when that teacher retired a few years ago and the site will see many other programs cease to exist with autonomous small schools. Welding, art, music, theater, Advance Placement classes and others will all be in jeopardy. Gewertz (2001) stated, "Researchers disagree on what number constitutes "small," but some say that schools with fewer than 400 students might have difficulty providing a comprehensive enough curriculum, and that those with more than 900 might not produce the benefits of smallness" (para. 25). The Gates money stipulated that the small schools needed to be no larger than 400 students so it would appear that that fact precludes offering comprehensive enough curriculum.

What have been the academic gains and effective instructional techniques?

Ancess (2008) stated the following:

In transformative small schools, the common work is teaching and learning; teachers and students are unified by shared educational beliefs, ideas, goals, practices, rituals, routines, commitments, and norms. In such schools, all teachers are committed to implementing agreed upon instructional practices and strategies, and professional development focuses on supporting that implementation (para. 12).

But the researcher's school site has been so enmeshed in the structural changes that the focus on discussing and improving teaching and learning has not been there. The first of the CES principles is -learning to use one's mind well. "Getting students to use their minds well also means conveying to students that ideas are exciting by providing tasks that are worthy of their engagement" (para. 20). Using one's mind well is demonstrated by analyzing, reasoning, mounting a logical argument and defending it, solving problems, conducting research, negotiating conflicting perspectives, imagining possibilities, questioning assumptions and using the power of ideas to persuade others to change their opinions.

Research has actually shown very little correlation to academic gains as a result of the formation of small schools. In the Gates Foundation research presented by Fouts and Associates (2006) they state:

For example, researchers in Chicago and elsewhere found affective differences in the school environments but no clear impact on student learning. Researchers have also found that the process of converting a comprehensive high school to SLCs can be very disruptive to the school and that the efforts may or may not be successful (p. 1).

In another evaluation commissioned by the Gates Foundation the American Institutes for Research and SRI International (Evan et al, 2006) concluded:

It takes longer to redesign and change the culture of a high school than to start a new one, and the early record of student outcomes suggests that the effort to redesign schools may be of limited efficacy. In its first 2 years, redesign typically produces some improvement in terms of school climate. When the results of the smaller units created from redesign are averaged, however, we have found little or no impact on attendance or student achievement (p. 79).

Prior to receiving the Gates money the site's math department had made great strides in improving the success and achievement levels of students. The department, which had a strong Instructional Leader, worked well together and had a cohesive approach to all students and the teaching and learning of math. The site had set up a drop in math help center staffed by a classified employee and student math tutors. This year the site's math help center was abandoned and there are no longer Instructional Leaders at the site. These steps appear to be at odds with the CES principles.

At the same time that the state is increasing math requirements for all students the Gates grant has brought about "...the reduction or elimination of many elective and lower track courses, such as home economics and remedial math, and the addition of other courses, such as foreign language" (p. 5). It is not understood how all students can be successful at higher levels of math if the site drops remedial math. This does not seem to fit the site's goal of doing "what's best for students."

How do small schools affect the climate at the school?

Based upon the research the researcher has conducted this answer varies greatly depending on a number of factors. These include:

- If the school was a start up small school.
- If the conversion of a comprehensive high school was approached and embraced democratically.
- If the move to change was a top-down decision.

Most small schools, no matter how they began, just because of size, allow the teachers and students to know each other well which results in an improved climate at school. It is simple logic that in small school settings groups of teachers do know students much better than in a large high school setting. Smaller schools just by virtue of their size give students and parents a sense of belonging.

Craig Gordon, a teacher and union activist at Fremont High in Oakland, California writes of an announcement his principal made about receiving an “almost unbelievable offer.” The offer was a grant to break the comprehensive high school into several autonomous small schools given by the Gates Foundation. Gordon writes “Our principal revealed that the superintendent had already decided to break Fremont into small school...”(2005, para. 6) This approach contradicts the CES principles that successful small schools “should demonstrate practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school” and that “change efforts fail without the support of all key stakeholders from the start,” according to the CES website, www.essentialschools.org. This example strongly illustrates how leadership of the change process is linked to the climate of the school. According to Fink & Silverman, (2007) leaders need to have the knowledge and skills to move staff members to new levels of capability.

The researcher also explored the impact on teachers. Since the small school movement has been going on since the 1980's there is quite a bit of research into the effects on teaching staff. A national study by the Gates Foundation (Evan et al, 2006) looked at 50 schools, including both new schools and conversion schools. Researchers found more positive climates with more collegiality among teachers. This positive change was more evident in new small schools, but conversion schools were showing slow improvement.

The researcher's site began their school reform movement by establishing ninth-grade learning communities. Teachers spent most of their planning time working with other teachers in their freshman learning community to ensure they had a common focus with curriculum that overlapped in the core classes. Before the year was out, these teachers were asked to use their planning time to expand those communities to include tenth-graders. The next year after all their time and effort their work was abandoned and they were all randomly assigned to the newly established five small schools with no focus or common curriculum that had been the case in the learning communities. Linda Christensen (2005) states, "This theft of planning time combined with top-down standardization of curricula can steal the very substance of what transformative small school reform should be about" (para. 21).

What community involvement took place in the conversion process?

The original small schools "were produced by collectives of educators and community members who insisted that poor and working-class children, largely African American, Latino and/or immigrant deserve the sense of belonging, the trust, and the intellectual possibilities that the rich routinely enjoy." (Fine, 2005, para. 18) The researcher's site had no community collective that was making a case for small schools. Once the district received Gates Foundation

money it appeared more a matter of convincing stakeholders that converting to a small school format was best for students. Once the money was in hand and only then did the researcher's site begin an outreach process to teach the stakeholders about small schools and the benefits that were to be had.

The Editors of *Rethinking Schools* in Summer of 2005 said,

To date, the most successful small schools seem to be teacher and community driven efforts that take root in the cracks created by the failure of large urban systems. These bottom up small school efforts typically have histories and school cultures quite different from "the small learning communities" created by the top-down conversion or restructuring of large comprehensive high schools. (para. 11)

The researcher's school site has some award winning programs – such as FFA, DECA, music and drama, not to mention Advanced Placement courses. All of these things are in question if the researcher's site makes the final move to completely autonomous small schools with no crossovers. The site has been avoiding having these discussions because it is the parents of the children who typically are involved in these courses who are the most active in the schools. According to the Gates study by Fouts and Associates, (Fouts et al, 2006) "successful conversion requires an ongoing effort to ensure community awareness and support. Without these, the conversion process will be very difficult if not impossible"(p. 6)

What staff development or involvement is necessary to achieve the goals of small schools?

First we need to know what the goals of small schools are. The website of the researcher's school list the goals of small schools as:

- higher student achievement
- higher graduation rates
- higher college acceptance rates
- better support for students
- fewer behavior problems
- increased parent and community involvement

The statement is made on the website that research supported the attainment of all the goals above. It also states: Focus is on rigor, relevance and relationships.

These are exemplary goals but according to the research about conversion high schools (2006) there is so much effort placed in the structural aspects of small school change that not much effort is made to improve teaching practice. According to Deborah Meier (2005), “The school change we need cannot be undertaken by a faculty that is not convinced and involved” (para.1). She goes on to say:

The kinds of change required by today’s agenda can only be the work of thoughtful teachers. Either we acknowledge and create conditions based on this fact, conditions for teachers to work collectively and collaboratively and openly, or we create conditions that encourage resistance, secrecy, and sabotage. (para. 2)

In order for small schools to be successful extensive professional development is key to success. (Fouts et al, 2006) The researcher’s site did offer training for Critical Friends, as well as Professional Learning Communities, but there has been little follow through on the use of these valuable tools. The researcher’s site has done little to assist teachers in changing the ways in which they teach.

The site also added the responsibility to every teacher of being an advisor to a group of about 20 students. Through advisories every student is attached to one adult. They become responsible for monitoring the student's educational progress as well as taking on the roles that have traditionally been provided by guidance counselors. Professional development for teachers is needed on guidance techniques and how to integrate guidance strategies in teaching. There was no training about advisories and there is no planned curriculum for advisory times at the site. Advisory sessions take place 4 days a week for 30 minutes. Each teacher is expected to mentor and advise their students on how to be successful in high school and to plan for post secondary education. Teachers at the site do not receive any additional planning time for these advisory sessions nor do students receive any credit for attendance.

According to David (2008),

For small learning communities to influence learning, plans for improving what takes place in the classroom must be as explicit as plans for changing the schools structure. What's missing in current efforts is a substantial investment in teachers—for example, providing opportunities to learn what it means to teach in a rigorous manner and how to achieve relevance by changing the nature of curriculum and instruction. (para.15)

How sustainable are small schools in an era of decreased funding for schools?

Barbara Miner writes in "Who's Behind the Money" that various education reforms are often instituted not because the community demanded them, but because some foundation decided to fund the initiative (2005). She goes on to say that schools and districts sometimes look to see what will be funded and then go after that reform, rather

than deciding what reform works best for them and then convincing a foundation it is worth funding. This describes the situation at the researcher's site.

Social studies teacher Michael Charney from Success Tech Academy, a small school in Cleveland, Ohio wrote in an open letter to the Gates Foundation in 2005. In this letter he thanks them for start-up funding for his school, he describes attendance of 95% as compared to about 80% at most Cleveland high schools. He says few students have dropped out despite a less than 50% graduation rate in Cleveland schools. But he goes on to say that each day he walks by the state-of-art TV production studio, that sits vacant because that teacher was laid off and the program was cut. There have been numerous layoffs because of a lack of funding and the school district no longer is funding extracurricular activities.

Mr. Charney advises Mr. Gates and the Gates Foundation to phase out grants in any state that refuses to provide the necessary funding to sustain the start-up efforts the foundation funds. He states "...your foundation grants merely contribute to educator's cynicism about the possibility of fundamental change" (Charney, 2005, para. 17).

In conclusion the Gates Foundation research (Evan et al, 2006) gave recommendations for the school reform initiative. One of those recommendations is to rethink the school redesign strategy. The report states,

Although there have been some isolated examples of apparently successful small schools emerging from the restructuring of a large high school, these have been the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, the data that we have for school redesign efforts are not encouraging. In many cases, the impetus for redesign has come from outside the school, and school staffs have been far from unanimous in their support for the effort. (p. 82)

Based upon the data from this report it would appear that the site is continuing to move forward without taking the most current research into consideration. The researcher's goal is to determine the impacts of restructuring from a comprehensive high school to a small schools format. Results will be available to the administration at the site so it can be determined if the site is ultimately doing what is best for students? If the site is not, then there should be a new plan for the future.

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Chapter Three – Outcomes and Evaluation

The goal of this action research project is to gather data about the impacts of restructuring a comprehensive high school to five autonomous small schools. The researcher would like to provide data to help determine which format is really what is best for students at the researcher's school site. Ultimately, the researcher wants to present the research to the administrative team, superintendent and the school board. The literature review clearly showed there are both positive and negative impacts that arise in converting a comprehensive high school to small schools. The researcher's goal will be to identify both positive and negative impacts in order to answer the question: "Is converting the researcher's school site from a comprehensive school to small schools really what is best for students?"

The researcher will be using a variety of techniques to collect data. The methods will consist of surveys, focus groups and interviews. The goal is to gather data from a wide variety of sources so that each of the five small schools are included in the final data collection.

The researcher will maintain a log of how many surveys are sent or distributed to each group. She will maintain a log of communication with all subjects involved in the surveys, focus groups or interviews. All meetings will be logged and recorded.

The researcher will make sure that her immediate supervisor is made aware of all materials that will be distributed and discussed in all of her data collection. The researcher will use her small school as the representative group for the site.

Student, teacher and parent surveys/focus groups will generate measurable results about the following:

- Advisories

- Student/teacher relationships.
- Academic support.
- Support or guidance for post-secondary options.
- Teaching methods or strategies.
- Involvement/sense of belonging in the school.

Teacher surveys will be distributed to all teachers within the researcher's small school.

All surveys will be anonymous.

After gathering data from students and teachers the researcher will compile the information by tallying the answers to the survey questions. The answers to the student survey are broken down by grade level, then totaled by each answer given. The highest total response will be highlighted. Each response is then calculated into a percentage. The researcher analyzed the data by looking at combined percentages of Strongly Agree and Agree and then Strongly Disagree and Disagree.

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Chapter Four – Action Steps

The issue to be examined in this action research project are what the impacts are of restructuring the researcher's school site from a comprehensive school to five small schools.

The issue is significant due to the impact on students, teachers, parents, administrators, support staff, community members and the district budget. The researcher's school site moved forward with a change to small schools even though there was not a clear understanding of why it was being changed. A teacher at the site wrote a grant application and once the school found out the site had been chosen to receive Gates Foundation funding it seemed that the award was the deciding factor in moving forward. The staff, students and parents were told that moving to Small Schools would be "best for students" but it was unclear on what factors would be used to determine if this was indeed what was best for students. The superintendent hired five administrators in the late spring of 07 and school year 07-08 was the first year of five small schools at the researcher's site. In this chapter the researcher will examine possible solutions for the school site's small schools dilemma.

Possible Solutions

The "Good Small Schools" website (www.goodsmallschools.org) outlines an action plan to create an ideal small school. The first step is size. The researcher's site followed the Gates Foundation guideline of no more than 400 students in each small school.

The second step is autonomy and the ability to control as much of the school's destiny as possible by not being restricted by rigid structures. This has not been the case as the researcher's

site. All five small schools are still operated around the structure and strictures of the comprehensive school they are trying to shift away from.

The third step is to have enough physical separation so that people within the school can have the opportunity to spend time one another. This has been done at the researcher's site but some of the school's enjoy more defined spaces than others.

The fourth step is to have a clear mission. The five small schools at the researcher's site were formed by assigning students and teachers to a non-themed school. Each school then formulated a mission statement but there was no particularly well-defined mission of the individual schools. One of the points the "Good Small Schools" website makes is that, "A school cannot be all things to all people, and small schools must work hard at being good at what they do". The schools at the researcher's site have not defined what makes each unique other than who the principal is, who the teacher's are in each school and a color designation.

The fifth step is determining a specific focus of study for each school. The Good Small School website states, "A school must define its program – be it in the arts, technology, program or delivery (internships, and projects) – so that it does what it does really well". The small schools at the researcher's site went to the school board to request more autonomy in the form of separate school identification numbers but they have yet to define what each small schools' focus will be.

The sixth step is time spent learning. According to the website,

'Seat time' is not a relevant measure of the time students spend learning. Too many students sit in their seats in schools tuned out to what is going on around them because it seems irrelevant and boring. Time spent learning can be inside the walls of the school, or

outside in the community, but it must be time in which students feel engaged in learning, and well-trained caring adults are available to support them.

The researcher's site has done some work to improve teaching and learning but the researcher believes that the focus at the researcher's site appears to be more on the physical and structural changes rather than a focus on teaching and learning.

The seventh step is to have partnerships by having each small school have a community liaison whose primary duty is to build connections with people and organizations outside the school. Good small schools have strong partnerships outside the school to support the teaching and learning the school is working to accomplish. This is difficult for the schools at the researcher's site because the schools lack an instructional focus. Some individual teachers have developed strong community partners but this is more likely to be the case with Career and Technical education classes like welding and culinary arts and not so much in core classes.

The eighth step is to involve parents. Each of the five schools at the researcher's site has made many efforts to reach out to parents; some have been more successful than other's. It appears that in their quest for distinction from each other they seem to be more in competition with each other than working to share best practices. The Good Small Schools website suggests that successful small schools have parents sign a written agreement of support for their student(s).

The ninth step is to attract, support and retain good teachers. Since the small schools at the researcher's site were formed by restructuring a comprehensive school the teacher's were already there. Each administrator has worked to bring in new teachers but there are no mentor teachers assigned to the new teachers and the workload is heavy because of the different levels of instruction each teacher must teach because of the small school structure.

The final step is to have mentors for each small school. This could mean bringing in community members, business people or college students. Having a strong mentor program can reduce the burden on teachers to help students who need more time and instruction on basic skills.

The researcher's site did follow some of these steps and if we had the ability to follow all of them perhaps moving forward with small schools at the site would be appropriate. Each of the five schools is constricted as to the schedule because the site allows "crossover" classes where students from one small school take classes with teachers from different schools. Also, when the site adopted the small school concept the understanding was that the schools would embody the Coalition of Essential Schools principles. One of the main pedagogical steps CES schools utilize is project-based learning and the researcher's site has done little to help teachers make this shift in pedagogy.

The ninth step gives credence as to why it is difficult if not impossible to convert an existing comprehensive school to small schools. The district and the small schools are limited in what they can do with teachers because of the teachers' union contract. Starting a new small school would be better for everyone because presumably you would attract teachers who embody the vision of that small school. The site did have a person who was bringing mentors in to all of the schools but the grant funds for that position ran out and none of the small schools has yet to develop a strong mentor program. So the researcher rejects this solution because of the site's ability to have control over the recommended steps..

Another solution is posed in a report title "A Foot in Two Worlds: the Second Report on Comprehensive High School Conversions", (Wallach & Lear, 2005). This report was produced

by the Small Schools Project (SSP) that studies the progress of conversion high schools in Washington State. This report accurately describes the situation at the researcher's site.

At this point however, many of the small schools—most of them perhaps—are grounded in a set of beliefs and practices drawn largely from comprehensive high schools. At the same time, they have transitioned in some substantial ways to small schools. They have, metaphorically, a foot in two worlds—worlds that have quite different sets of assumptions and strategies at the core of their design.

This is the conundrum the researcher's school site finds itself in. Paula Evans also found herself in this place. She taught high school for 17 years, and then spent 15 years at Brown University, much of it directing professional development for the Coalition of Essential Schools and then the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. After crossing over to become a principal of a large high school that converted to five small schools, Evans (2003) found the following:

Dividing a large comprehensive high school into several small schools—each coexisting productively side-by-side—is particularly difficult. Here, as with so many facets of school reform, there is a great divide between the world of university-based theorists, thinkers, and advocates, and the real world of life itself. (p. 1)

The authors of the report outline the following five actions that schools might take to move the transition to small schools forward (Wallach & Lear, p. 22).

- Staff small schools so that each students can be graduated from their own small school.
- Insist that all professional development be focused on instruction that is planned and led by each small school and is specific to each school's focus.
- Determine how to reduce students load dramatically for teachers in each core subject area through design strategies such as looping or integrating curriculum or both.

- Design leadership structures, relationships, and incentives to support and nurture small schools.
- Provide each small school with at least as much authority and responsibility for decision making as the comprehensive high school currently possesses.

These steps are based on the assumption that each small school is embedded in a unique context shaped by its community and district, the conversion site it is a part of, its sister schools at the site, and most importantly, the hopes and dreams of the staff for their school (p. 22). The site had been unable to do professional development specific to the focus of each small school because the schools have not yet defined a focus. The site has not looked at looping or integrated curriculum so teacher class loads are heavier in many cases. To compound the issue many teachers are teaching multiple levels in their content area that they have never done before. The site also switched to a block schedule this year so that has been another burden on teachers who were used to teaching and had lessons plans for a shorter period of time. The researcher believes that teachers are not feeling supported or nurtured, they are feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. For these reasons the researcher rejects this solution.

The researcher recognizes increased personalization, teachers who know students well and more involvement by parents as being benefits of small schools. The researcher would like to see this accomplished by developing rigorous Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the school site. According to The American Youth Policy Forum (Brand, 2003, p. iii):

A CTE program of study is defined as a multi-year sequence of courses that integrate core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge leading to higher levels of skill attainment over time with a unifying career theme around which to

organize curriculum. A program of study by design provides students with a pathway to postsecondary education and a career by detailing academic and occupational competencies needed for advancement and providing a series of related courses.

Focusing on CTE programs would open the door for employers to work as partners in education. They can provide opportunities for internships and work-based learning experiences for students and teachers. They can serve as mentors and provide input and guidance on curriculum to ensure that the CTE program is meeting industry standards. Increased coordination with business and industry is a much stronger theme in the 2006 Perkins Act, Federal Legislation that provides funds and oversees CTE programs at the state level. High quality CTE programs can support and compliment the standards-based reform movement. According to Brand (2003, p. 7):

A CTE program of study would allow a high school to organize itself into smaller, more autonomous units that would also have the benefit of providing a more personalized learning experience for students and provide a sense of identity and connection to other students and adults, very much along the lines of the small schools movement.

If the researcher's site were to adopt CTE programs the lower grades (9 -10) would focus primarily on academic foundations using the context of careers to help make core curriculum more relevant and meaningful. Because the curriculum in these grades is based on standard core curriculum students could transfer to another CTE program based on their interests. Juniors and seniors would be able to choose a focused pathway. Community Colleges in Oregon have defined many CTE pathways and programs of study that articulate from high school to postsecondary education. The researcher's site would need to analyze and define current

employment and labor trends and offer pathways that are growing areas of employment within our local community and the global community.

The school could work with the community colleges to develop more dual credit offerings that are win/win for all parties. This is a great benefit for students and parents because it would allow students to earn college credit for a fraction of the cost over what it would be if the courses were taken at the community college itself. If the goal is to ensure that all students are college ready the researcher proposes this solution as one where all parties involved in the researcher's school site both inside and outside the school would benefit. It would allow the school to move forward embracing the benefits of small schools while allowing autonomy for self-directed choice. It builds a seamless transition from high school to post secondary career development whether that is a job, an apprenticeship, the military, a community college or a four-year university.

The key to success for students and CTE programs is that academic and CTE teachers collaborate to develop rigorous and pertinent academic coursework. This will successfully attract a range of students who learn better through an applied, contextualized curriculum or who have a strong interest in a particular career area. Brand (2003, p. 3) states,

Because CTE provides the opportunity for contextual and integrated learning and allows students to see how the material is applied in the real world, studies become more relevant to future plans, and students remain more engaged in their learning. Evaluations of CTE programs, including those with Tech Prep articulated programs, in schools and districts contribute to increased school attendance, reduced high school drop out rates, higher grades, and increased entry into post-secondary education.

Brand draws that conclusion based on other research by Krile, Donna J. & Penelope Parmer. *2002 Tech Prep: Pathways to Success? The Performance of Tech Prep and Non Tech-Prep Students At a Midwestern Community College*. Dayton, OH: Sinclair Community College and Hughes, Katherine, Katherine L., Thomas R. Bailey, & Melinda Mechur Karp. 2002. *School-to-Work: Making a Difference in Education*. Bloomington, IN : Phi Delta Kappan.

The researcher would like the site to truly embrace the diversity of the school and the world and help our students meet the challenges of life that face all of us.

Action Plan

This action research project will begin in January and continue through April. The following explains the timeline in detail:

- January—The researcher will gain consent from her administrator and the district office to follow through with this action research proposal. The researcher will create a schedule for focus groups, as well as create the student, parent, and teacher surveys.
- February—The researcher will identify a random sample of students, parents and teachers to distribute the survey to. Once that is done surveys will be distributed with a brief description of the project, instructions, a return by date and directions on how to return the completed surveys.
- March—Once the surveys are returned the researcher will identify a random sample of teachers, students and parents to attend focus groups or to do individual interviews. The researcher will develop a questionnaire based on the initial survey, so that all parties are being asked the same questions. The researcher will keep logs of all communications pertaining to this research project including circumstances of

meeting and timelines.

- April—The researcher will analyze and interpret all of the results of this action research project. The final project will be completed and turned in to the researcher's faculty advisor by the end of the summer.

The researcher is anxious to get started on this action research plan, as she believes her school site could use the information to help them make decisions that will affect the next school year.

The researcher knows that she can present the information and then step back as others make the decisions about the school site.

Action Research Proposal

Chapter Five – Results and Next Steps

The goal of the researcher's project was to gather data about the impacts of restructuring a large comprehensive school to a small schools format, to help determine if this is really what is best for students. The researcher would like to provide the information from this report to the decision makers at her school to guide them in determining whether to stay on the path of small schools or revert back to a comprehensive school.

To gather information the researcher conducted a survey of ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students in her assigned small school, as well as a survey of the teachers within that same small school. There was also informal data gathering through conversations with parents of students in the small school.

The surveys for students were conducted in the month of May so that freshman students who participated had experienced teaching and learning in the small school format for almost a complete school year. This was the second school year in the small school format for all other students. Teachers were also surveyed in the month of May. The researcher also utilized data from the Oregon Department of Education - School Report Cards, as well as information from the researcher's School District website regarding the reasoning behind conversion to a small schools format (Appendix C) and various other resources.

The goals of the researcher's site, as stated on the School District's website, in moving to the small schools format were:

- Higher student achievement
- Higher graduation rates

- Higher college acceptance rates
- Better support for students
- Fewer behavior problems
- Increased parent and community involvement

The researcher will provide information from the student survey, the teacher survey, parental feedback and finally data from the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills data gathered from the 2005 school year to present.

Student Survey

The student survey had specific questions that addressed:

- Advisories
- Student/teacher relationships
- Academic support
- Support or guidance for post-secondary options
- Teaching methods and strategies
- Involvement/sense of belonging in school

Advisories

The site started an advisory program so that each student would be well known by at least one adult, but according to the majority of students who took the survey it is not their advisory teacher who knows them best. 64% of the students said it was another adult in the school who knew them best.

Student/Teacher relationships

Students indicated that the adult(s) who knew them best knew what they were interested in, who their friends were and what they wanted to do after high school. They also thought that the adults cared about how well they were doing in school. But the majority of students said the adults at school had no idea what was going on in the student's life at home.

Academic Support

The teachers in the researcher's small school are doing an excellent job supporting their students both inside and outside of class. When students were asked how many adults in their small school would be willing to provide extra help 33% of the respondents said at least 2-3, 28% said 4-6 and 24% said 6 or more adults in their small school would give them extra help. Surprisingly 56% of the students said that small schools had not helped them achieve better grades and that teachers had very little time to work with individual students.

Support or guidance for post-secondary options

Students did not feel that small schools have helped or prepared more students to attend college. The majority indicated that only one adult was helping them think about what they needed to do to prepare for college or a career but at least two to three adults were helping them make sure they met the requirements for graduation.

Teaching methods and strategies

The majority of students indicated that small schools had not allowed students and teachers to do interesting classroom activities. But students overwhelmingly agreed that the

teachers in their small school believed that all students can do well and that they had not given up on any of their students. There is a sense of caring about all students in the school and high expectations for all. Students feel that teachers work hard to make sure that all students are learning.

Involvement/Sense of belonging in school

A slightly higher percentage of students thought that small schools had helped them to be more involved with their school. But by almost a two to one margin they said it had not helped parents to be more involved. More than half of the students also indicated that they did not feel like they were a real part of the school and approximately the same number of students did not feel any safer in the small school setting.

Teacher Survey

The results of the teacher survey indicated that the majority of teachers felt that the small school had not established close partnerships with the outside community. Nor did they feel that the parents and community were aware of all or most of the changes that accompany small schools. Teachers also expressed they did not have enough time in their school day to prepare for their classes and advisory.

They did agree that they had received staff development directly related to the goals of small schools, such as project based learning and formative assessment. All the teachers surveyed agreed that they would like to see more Career Pathway programs developed at the school site. The majority felt that if economic conditions warranted it that small schools should not move forward at the site.

Parent and Community Involvement

Parent and community involvement is still limited at the school site but is growing. In 2007-08, there was more and regular contact with parents by the site. Each small school had a core of parents that served on planning teams or site councils, recruited parents for school events, and volunteered in the schools. Schools worked to broaden that core by holding back-to-school nights, celebratory events, and college nights. Some Principals met regularly with parents. Schools put out electronic newsletters and investigated other means of communication. There was general recognition of the need going forward to define and then increase parental involvement.

In terms of community involvement, the Superintendent played (and is playing) a key role. She has spoken about the Small Schools to service clubs and other groups, she has conducted listening sessions, and she has served as a public advocate for this work. This will also be more of a focus for the schools moving forward.

OAKS

Analysis of the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) results over the course of the last three years show positive and improving results for the school site and for Special Education, Economically Disadvantaged, and Talented and Gifted students. Limited English Proficient and Hispanic students do not show as positive results, except in mathematics. Illustrative findings from the OAKS are:

All Students at the Site

- Scores for all students were higher in 2007-08 than in all previous years (except for science in that year). *This may indicate impacts of new teaching and learning strategies adopted in the conversion work in 2007-08.*
- Scores across the state for all students were somewhat flat, with gains over time except for 2007-08 in science. The site followed the same overall trajectory as the state; but consistently scored higher than the state average on all tests with one insignificant exception (2004-05 Science).

White and Hispanic students compared to the state

- In every year and on every test (except for 2004-05 Science), a higher percentage of the site's white students than Oregon white students met or exceeded the standards. This was especially striking in Mathematics (20% difference in 2007-08), and also notable in Reading (11% in 2007-08).
- In Reading and Writing, in every year, a lower percentage of the site's Hispanic students than Oregon Hispanic students met or exceeded the standards. This was as high as a 12% difference in Reading in 2007-08.
- In Mathematics, in every year, a higher percentage of the site's Hispanic students than Oregon Hispanic students met or exceeded the standards. In 2007-08, the difference was 27%. This is a particularly notable trend.

LEP students compared to the state

- Few LEP students, across all years and areas tested, met or exceeded the tested standards. Nowhere did more than 40% of the LEP students meet or exceed standards; in most cases, less than 20% did.
- Compared to the state LEP population, a lower percentage of the site's LEP students met or exceeded the Reading and Literature and Writing tested standards (except for 2006-07 Reading). The difference has, however, decreased substantially since 2004-05
- In Mathematics, in every year, a higher percentage of the site's LEP students than Oregon LEP students met or exceeded the standards – by as much as 25% (2005-06). In 2007-08, the difference was 14.2%.

SPED Students

- Less than a third of SPED students, across all years and areas tested, met or exceeded the tested standards.
- But there is a consistent trend that more SPED students are meeting the tested standards over time. The highest percentage of SPED students meeting or exceeding standards was in 2007-08 in Reading/Literature, Writing, and Science.
- Compared to the state SPED population, an equal to higher percentage of NHS SPED students met or exceeded the Reading and Literature and Writing tested standards. The difference was most pronounced in 2007-08 (9.4% better in Reading and 3.2% better in Writing).
- The site's SPED students do substantially better in Mathematics than in other tested areas. In Mathematics, in every year, a higher percentage of NHS SPED students than

Oregon SPED students met or exceeded the standards; In 2007-08, the difference was 15.3%.

Conclusion

In the opinion of the researcher, this action research plan was very time consuming and challenging, somewhat like the conversion of a comprehensive school to small schools. The magnitude of the issues isn't felt until one has already started the process. Nevertheless the researcher was able to gain valuable information from those who were surveyed and provided other verbal feedback. If the researcher was to do this project over she would have narrowed her focus.

The researcher provided feedback to her fellow teachers about the student survey at the end of the school year. It was a very bleak time as many layoffs had been announced and teachers were feeling quite dejected. The feedback from the student survey was a bright spot that let teachers be acknowledged for their efforts in helping students academically and personally.

The OAKS data does not include this school year's data which would be the first sophomore class tested that had their freshman year in the small school format. To me the data reflects the efforts that teachers at the site made while the site had the freshman and sophomore Small Learning communities and not the Small School format.

It should also be noted that in November of 2008 the Gates Foundation announced that the new small high schools had not fulfilled their promise. The foundation acknowledged that they had not seen dramatic improvements in the number of students who leave high school adequately prepared to enroll in and complete a two- or four-year postsecondary degree or credential.

Small schools appear to be good for students who need intense remediation and lots of extra attention, but they do not offer the same menu of advanced courses and electives, extracurricular activities and vocational courses that most students and parents associate with going to high school.

Suggestions for Further Study

If this study is replicated in another Small Schools conversion high school the researcher may want to focus on data gathering from only one of the small schools. Trying to gather data from each of the small schools can be difficult to coordinate within a limited time frame. It may also be prudent to focus on fewer variables.

The world of education is rife with opportunities of further study. Whether a school is small or large, the essential questions in education cannot be ignored: What should students learn? How should they be taught? Are classes too large, especially for struggling students? Are teachers well prepared in the subjects they teach? Do teachers have the resources they need? Do students arrive in school ready to learn? Until we answer these questions, the size of schools is not a relevant issue. Focusing on what happens in the classroom is where the Gates Foundation has chosen to now devote its attention and funding.

The issue of what's best for students is not a one size fits all approach. Schools work with a broad spectrum of teachers and learners. Focusing on what is good for a particular grouping of students would allow schools to "customize" education so that all students have the opportunity to reach for their full potential.

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Appendix A

Student Survey

My name is Patricia Horton and I am working on an Action Research Project to complete requirements for my Masters in Career and Technical Education. The focus of my research project is Small Schools and the effects that accompany the shift to a Small School format. Participating in the research is voluntary and all responses are anonymous. Do not write your name anywhere on this survey.

Survey of The Site’s High School Students: Spring 2009

1. Please indicate which Small School you are in and your grade level.

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Yellow | <input type="checkbox"/> | Freshman | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Blue | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sophomore | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Green | <input type="checkbox"/> | Junior | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Red | <input type="checkbox"/> | Senior | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Silver | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

2. Think about the TEACHERS in your school. How much do you agree with the following statements about them?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about small schools at our school site?

I think small schools have:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I Don't know
a. allowed time for teachers to work with individual students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. allowed students and teachers to do interesting classroom activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. helped students achieve better grades.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. helped parents to be more involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. helped students to be more involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. helped students to feel safer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. allowed teachers to spend more time with students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. encouraged better attendance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. helped more students to attend college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. prepared more students to attend college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. helped students feel like they are a real part of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. helped students adapt to life after high school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The teachers in my small school...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I Don't know
a. believe that all students in this school can do well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. have given up on some of their students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. care about only the smart students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. expect very little from the students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. work hard to make sure that all students are learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please indicate who you think knows you best

- a. your Advisory teacher or b. another adult/teacher in your school

4. How much does this person in your school know about...

	Nothing	A little	A lot
a. what you are interested in?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. how well you are doing in school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. who your friends are?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. what your life at home is like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. what you want to do after high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Now think about ALL the TEACHERS and ALL the OTHER ADULTS in your school, including the principal, counselors, secretaries, and other support people. How many of these adults have done or would be willing to do the following this year?

How many of the adults in your school...	0	1	2-3	4-5	6 or more
a. would be willing to give you extra help with your schoolwork if you needed it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. would be willing to help you with a personal problem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. really care about how well you are doing in school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. have helped you think about whether you are meeting the requirements for graduation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. have helped you think about what you need to do to prepare for college or for a career?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B

Student Survey Results

Think about the TEACHERS in your school. How much do you agree with the following statements about them?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about small schools at our school site?

I think small schools have:

a. allowed time for teachers to work with individual students.

SD	5, 17, 4, 4	30	17%	
D	11, 17, 9, 21	58	33%	SD+D=50%
A	20, 17, 19, 9	65	37%	
SA	3, 4, 2, 0	9	5%	SA+A=42%
DK	3, 6, 3, 3	15	8%	

b. allowed students and teachers to do interesting classroom activities

SD	4, 9, 5, 10	28	16%	
D	12, 29, 12, 17	70	40%	SD+D=56%
A	18, 14, 15, 7	54	31%	
SA	5, 2, 2, 0	9	5%	SA+A=36%
DK	3, 7, 3, 3	16	9%	

c. helped students achieve better grades.

SD	4, 13, 4, 7	28	16%	
D	9, 24, 11, 26	70	40%	SD+D=56%
A	16, 10, 13, 3	42	24%	
SA	7, 5, 4, 0	16	9%	SA+A=33%
DK	6, 8, 5, 1	20	11%	

d. helped parents to be more involved.

SD	10, 21, 9, 12	52	29%	
D	7, 19, 15, 12	53	30%	SD+D=59%
A	17, 10, 8, 7	42	23%	
SA	2, 0, 2, 2	6	3%	SA+A=26%
DK	7, 12, 3, 4	26	16%	

e. helped students to be more involved.

SD	3, 14, 6, 13	36	20%	
D	8, 17, 13, 14	52	29%	SD+D=49%
A	20, 22, 16, 9	67	38%	
SA	7, 3, 1, 0	11	6%	SA+A=44%
DK	4, 5, 1, 1	11	6%	

f. helped students to feel safer.

SD	7, 12, 8, 9	36	20%	
D	12, 19, 13, 21	65	37%	SD+D=57%
A	11, 17, 8, 4	40	23%	
SA	5, 2, 1, 0	8	4%	SA+A=27%
DK	7, 11, 7, 3	28	16%	

g. allowed teachers to spend more time with students.

SD	4, 14, 6, 6	30	17%	
D	7, 23, 8, 17	55	32%	SD+D=49%
A	18, 14, 17, 10	59	34%	
SA	4, 4, 3, 0	11	6%	SA+A=40%
DK	8, 6, 2, 3	19	11%	

h. encouraged better attendance.

SD	4, 21, 6, 15	46	26%	
D	13, 24, 18, 16	71	40%	SD+D=66%
A	12, 11, 7, 4	34	19%	
SA	4, 1, 1, 1	7	4%	SA+A=23%
DK	10, 5, 5, 1	21	12%	

i. helped more students to attend college.

SD	2, 13, 6, 8	29	16%	
D	10, 14, 8, 22	54	31%	SD+D=47%
A	7, 8, 13, 4	32	18%	
SA	8, 3, 3, 1	15	8%	SA+A=26%
DK	15, 23, 7, 2	47	27%	

j. prepared more students to attend college.

SD	4, 13, 3, 6	26	15%	
D	7, 18, 10, 20	55	31%	SD+D=46%
A	16, 14, 13, 6	49	18%	
SA	4, 4, 4, 0	12	8%	SA+A=26%
DK	11, 12, 7, 5	35	27%	

k. helped students feel like they are a real part of the school.

SD	5, 20, 7, 16	48	27%	
D	8, 19, 18, 15	60	34%	SD+D=61%
A	20, 12, 3, 3	38	22%	
SA	4, 3, 4, 0	11	6%	SA+A=28%
DK	5, 7, 4, 3	19	11%	

l. helped students adapt to life after high school.

SD	8, 20, 7, 14	49	28%	
D	4, 17, 13, 15	49	28%	SD+D=56%
A	21, 13, 6, 3	43	24%	
SA	2, 2, 1, 0	5	3%	SA+A=27%
DK	7, 9, 8, 7	31	18%	

The teachers in my small school...

a. believe that all students in this school can do well

SD	3, 7, 1, 1	12	7%	
D	7, 10, 4, 7	28	16%	SD+D=23%
A	23, 23, 23, 17	86	49%	
SA	6, 9, 4, 1	20	11%	SA+A=60%
DK	3, 12, 3, 10	2	16%	

b. have given up on some of their students

SD	5, 7, 3, 0	15	8%	
D	10, 16, 16, 12	54	30%	SD+D=38%
A	15, 14, 10, 13	52	29%	
SA	3, 15, 4, 2	24	13%	SA+A=42%
DK	9, 10, 4, 10	33	19%	

c. care about only the smart students

SD	7, 12, 5, 2	26	15%	
D	13, 20, 22, 15	70	39%	SD+D=54%
A	10, 17, 4, 8	39	22%	
SA	4, 6, 2, 3	15	8%	SA+A=30%
DK	8, 7, 5, 9	29	16%	

d. expect very little from the students

SD	8, 15, 6, 2	31	17%	
D	17, 26, 27, 20	90	51%	SD+D=68%
A	5, 6, 2, 5	18	10%	
SA	1, 1, 1, 2	5	3%	SA+A=23%
DK	11, 13, 2, 8	34	19%	

e. work hard to make sure that all students are learning

SD	2, 7, 1, 3	13	7%	
D	9, 12, 12, 5	38	21%	SD+D=28%
A	20, 26, 22, 16	84	47%	
SA	6, 7, 2, 1	16	9%	SA+A=56%
DK	5, 9, 1, 12	27	15%	

3. Please indicate who you think knows you best

- a. your Advisory teacher
13, 28, 13, 6 total 60 36%
- b. another adult/teacher in your school
23, 32, 24, 30 total 109 64%

4. How much does this person in your school know about...

	Nothing		A little		A lot
a. what you are interested in?	5, 4, 1, 7 (17)	10%	22, 39, 26, 16 (103)	60%	14, 16, 10, 12 (52) 30%
b. how well you are doing in school?	1, 4, 1, 3 (9)	5%	20, 25, 16, 25 (86)	50%	22, 29, 20, 6 (77) 45%
c. who your friends are?	6, 8, 0, 9 (23)	14%	19, 26, 18, 18 (81)	47%	17, 23, 19, 8 (67) 39%
d. what your life at home is like?	13, 32, 14, 21 (80)	47%	23, 18, 15, 10 (66)	38%	6, 8, 8, 4 (26) 15%
e. what you want to do after high school?	9, 14, 5, 8 (36)	21%	25, 26, 16, 18 (85)	49%	8, 19, 16, 9 (52) 30%

5. Now think about ALL the TEACHERS and ALL the OTHER ADULTS in your school, including the principal, counselors, secretaries, and other support people. How many of these adults have done or would be willing to do the following this year?

How many of the adults in your school...

a. would be willing to give you extra help with your schoolwork if you needed it?

0	2, 3, 0, 3	8	5%
1	0, 6, 5, 4	15	9%
2-3	16, 13, 12, 14	55	33%
4-5	14, 15, 12, 6	47	28%
6 or more	9, 16, 6, 9	40	24%

b. would be willing to help you with a personal problem?

0	3, 9, 2, 6	20	12%
1	6, 6, 7, 5	24	15%
2-3	19, 20, 17, 12	68	42%
4-5	10, 8, 6, 10	34	21%
6 or more	2, 10, 2, 3	17	10%

c. really care about how well you are doing in school?

0	2, 6, 0, 4	12	7%
1	5, 4, 7, 6	22	14%
2-3	11, 22, 11, 17	61	38%
4-5	11, 12, 11, 5	39	24%
6 or more	11, 8, 5, 4	28	17%

d. have helped you think about whether you are meeting the requirements for graduation?

0	1, 6, 3, 7	17	10%
1	10, 14, 10, 14	48	29%
2-3	15, 19, 14, 9	57	35%
4-5	10, 11, 5, 4	30	18%
6 or more	5, 3, 2, 2	12	7%

e. have helped you think about what you need to do to prepare for college or for a career?

0	2, 7, 3, 7	19	12%
1	10, 16, 10, 13	49	30%
2-3	13, 13, 13, 7	46	28%
4-5	10, 10, 5, 6	31	19%
6 or more	6, 7, 3, 2	18	11%

Teacher Survey Results

My name is Patricia Horton and I am working on an Action Research Project to complete requirements for my Masters in Career and Technical Education. The focus of my research project is Small Schools and the effects that accompany the shift to a Small School format. Participating in the research is voluntary and all responses are anonymous. Do not write your name anywhere on this survey.

1. Please circle which small school you are currently assigned to:

Silver	Blue	Red	Yellow	Green
10				

2. Please circle the number of years you have been at the site's campus

0-3	4-8	9-13	13+
6 (60%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)

Please circle the appropriate choice indicating how you feel about the following statements in relation to your small school.

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

1. You are able to provide personalized instruction to address individual need and interests.

SA	A	D	SD
1 (10%)	8 (80%)	0	1 (10%)

2. Teachers and students in my small school know each other well.

SA	A	D	SD
1 (10%)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)

3. My small school has an atmosphere of high expectations.

SA	A	D	SD
1 (10%)	6 (60%)	3 (30%)	0

4. You use multiple assessments based on performance of authentic tasks.

SA	A	D	SD
0	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0

5. My small school demonstrates equitable school policies and practices.

SA	A	D	SD
0	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)

6. My small school has established close partnerships with the outside community.

SA	A	D	SD
1 (10%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)

7. I have utilized new instructional techniques this year.

SA	A	D	SD
4 (40%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	0

8. I feel an increased sense of collegiality with the teachers in my small school.

SA	A	D	SD
2 (20%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)

9. The parents and community are aware of all or most of the changes that accompany small schools (for example: loss of elective choices and/ or Advanced Placement classes.)

SA	A	D	SD
0	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	1 (10%)

10. I have received staff development directly related to the goals of small schools at the site. (for example: project based learning, formative assessment, etc.)

SA	A	D	SD
3 (30%)	7 (70%)	0	0

11. I have enough time in the school day to prepare for my classes and advisory time.

SA	A	D	SD
1 (10%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)

12. I understand the importance and relevancy of Career Pathway programs at the high school level.

SA	A	D	SD
3 (30%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	0

13. I would like to see more Career Pathway programs developed on the site's campus.

SA	A	D	SD
4 (40%)	6 (60%)	0	0

14. It is important to retain Small Schools at the site no matter what the economic conditions are.

SA	A	D	SD
1 (10%)	2 (10%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)

