

9-2012

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The Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service Classes and Their Impact on the
Relationships, School Retention and Persistence of Marginalized Students at One Level
Four School

A Dissertation Presented

by

HEATHER A. BATCHELOR

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 2012

Education
Teacher Education and School Improvement

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Relationships, School Retention and Persistence of Marginalized Students at One Level
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Robert Maloy, for his many years of tireless, thoughtful, energetic support and guidance. Thanks are also due to Ruth-Ellen Verock-O'Loughlin, my unofficial advisor, whose encouragement, feedback and organizational support made this work possible. Together your friendship, belief in my work and selfless contribution to my professional development have been invaluable and will never be forgotten. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Leda Cooks, who convinced me of the importance of my work and whose feedback and collaboration was immensely helpful in developing these programs.

I would also like to thank the students who agreed to take the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses when they were still untested and new to our high school. Your enthusiasm, willingness to push yourselves out of your comfort zones, and your openness made this experience truly worthwhile. You impress me on a daily basis with how you deal with the challenges and obstacles that you face and you make every day feel meaningful and worthwhile. Your words and ideas will inspire others just as you have inspired me. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Jeff Kenney, who took a chance and let me create a new program at our school in the hopes that it could impact the lives of students. Your commitment to improving teaching and learning has been truly instrumental in my development as a teacher and scholar. You always taught me to put students first and foremost, and that was central to this work.

My friends and family also deserve thanks for their support during this enormous undertaking and for providing me with encouragement when this endeavor seemed

daunting. To Walter and Katherine, you have consistently provided sage words of advice and copious support and have taught me that it's never too late to reinvent yourself. To my mother, who is the most determined and compassionate person I have ever met, I learned at your hand the drive that pushed me to the end of this journey and the dedication to others that made this program possible. Finally, I must acknowledge my husband, Pete, whose tireless support and patience helped me stay focused, calm and positive even when it seemed like a lost cause. None of this would be possible without you. Thank you for having my back.

ABSTRACT

THE RISE UP AND LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY SERVICE CLASSES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE RELATIONSHIPS, SCHOOL RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE OF MARGINALIZED STUDENTS AT ONE LEVEL FOUR SCHOOL

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This dissertation studies the impact of two courses, “Rise Up” and “Leadership in Community Service,” at a Level 4 high school in Massachusetts. The school, which had a higher than average level of student dropout, implemented the two courses developed by the researcher to address student retention, academic performance, and connection to school. Students in grades 9-12 took one or both of the semester-long classes, which used community building activities, group discussions, democratic teaching principals, community service-learning, and goal setting to address the needs of marginalized students. Students who participated in the classes showed increased connections to peers, teachers and community members, an improvement in indicators for school retention including grades, behavior, and attendance, and also an increase in their perceptions about their ability to persist in challenging situations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“[Schools] are key mechanisms in determining what is socially valued as ‘legitimate knowledge’ ...they also participate in the process through which particular groups are granted status and which groups remain unrecognized or minimized.”

Michael Apple (2008)

Background

In a society where education is based almost entirely on individual performance and competition, it comes as no surprise that there are students who see themselves, or who are perceived by others, as losers in the educational game. These students often feel marginalized by and disconnected from the institution, their teachers and their peers, and see few connections between staying in school and increased educational opportunities in the future. Their failing grades, behavior and truancy often lead them to strained relationships with teachers and administrators and a detachment from the school community. The result is that many marginalized students remain in school but become detached and uninvested in their education and the school community, while others drop out of high school completely. In our democratic society, however, it is the obligation of public schools to serve all of its citizens in meaningful ways, not just the educationally gifted or well-behaved. In order for the promise of educational opportunity for all to be realized, schools must do more to retain and motivate marginalized students most at-risk for dropping out.

Typically, marginalized students¹ have a grade point average in the bottom 25% of their class cohort and have failed classes, creating a credit deficit that keeps them from promotion or graduation. Frequently, their attitude and conduct gets them in trouble with teachers and administrators in school, and their connections with peers who display anti-school attitudes and behaviors reinforces this pattern. They often lack relationships with teacher and with peers who are positive about school. Some of these students lack the basic skills necessary to be successful in school, social skills, and the familial support to persevere in a challenging school environment. These students are the real faces behind the dropout statistics touted on the evening news.

Dropout in America

Dropout and graduation data, while seemingly straightforward, is often contradictory and confusing. Dropout rates are generally calculated in one of three ways. The first method, which is referred to as the “event rate,” measures the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school. The second, the “status rate,” measures the proportion of students who have not completed high school and are not enrolled at one point in time, regardless of when they dropped out of high school. Lastly, the “cohort rate” measures the graduation rate of an entire cohort of students over a period of time, generally four years. The event rate generally yields the smallest dropout rate, while the cohort rate yields the highest,

¹ Wehlage (1983) defined marginalized students as students in the bottom 25% of their class who fail classes and whose attitude and conduct gets them in trouble in school. This definition was expanded on for this study.

and the status rate generally falls somewhere between these two. Further complicating the issue is there is no uniform standard for calculating dropout rates, and oftentimes there is a great deal of variation in the data used to calculate specific rates. For example, frequently dropout data will include only students in 10th-12th grades, while other measures will include students in grades 9-12. There are also variations in the length of time students miss school before they are considered to have dropped out. Further, some groups (like special education students) may be excluded from dropout rates all together (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio & Thompson, 2004; Heckman and LaFontaine, 2007).

To complicate matters further, dropout rates do not always correspond to graduation rates. Multiple methods and definitions of “graduation” can result in conflicting information. For example, often obtaining a Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) is considered “graduating” in terms of graduation rate. Additionally, the Cohort Graduation Rate (in which the 4-year graduation rate would be used) will often differ radically from the Event Graduation Rate (in which only students who have officially dropped out of school would be counted as non-graduates). (Lehr, et. al., 2004). With these factors in mind, it is not surprising that both graduation and dropout rates can sometimes vary by nearly twenty percentage points (Lehr, et. al., 2004). Despite the challenges posed by conflicting data, below is an attempt to create a picture of the number of students who drop out of high school by looking at overall trends in both dropout and graduation rates.

Throughout the course of the 20th Century, graduation rates in the United States have progressively improved. According to U.S. Census data, 4-year graduation rates began at a low of only 10% in 1900, but numbers continued to rise through the late 1960's where rates peaked at just over 77%. Commencement rates dipped into the low 70% range in the 1970's-1980's, and dropped further to just under 70% in the 1990's. By the turn of the century, however, graduation rates were back above 70% (U. S. National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011) (SEE FIGURE 1).

Despite the relative improvement of graduation rates over the past century, the fact that nearly 30% of American students don't graduate from high school is alarming. While many students who do not graduate high school go on to earn a Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED), one in ten American students still fail to acquire a diploma or GED (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). This figure translates into rather shocking numbers of non-completers; in fact, of all 16-24 year olds living in the U.S., 3.8 million of them are not in high school nor do they have a diploma or GED (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009).

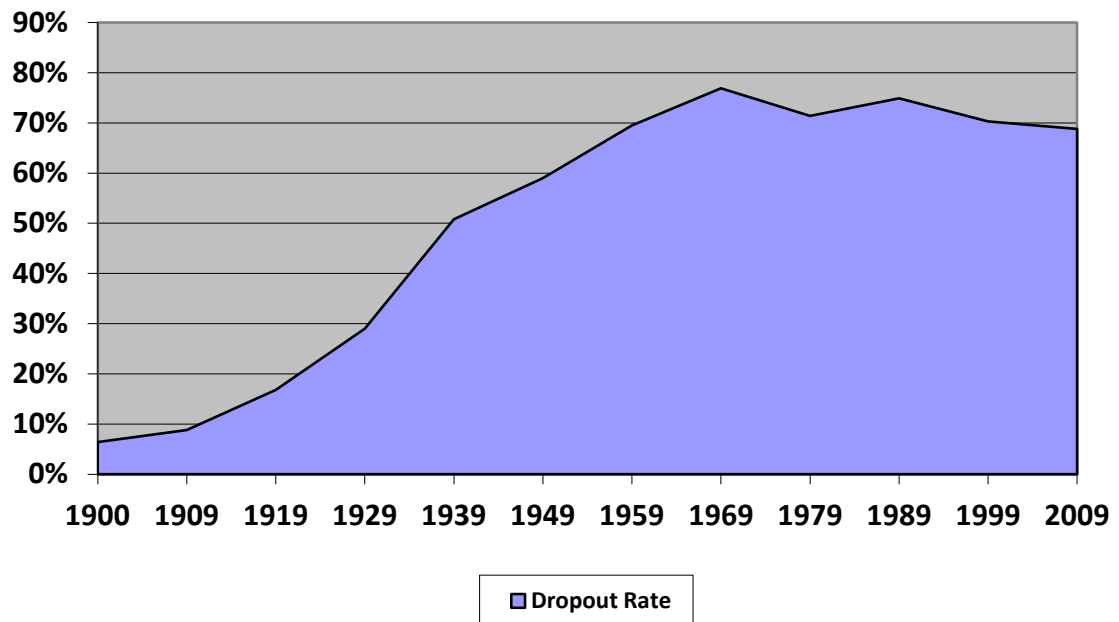


Figure 1: U.S. High School 4-Year Graduation Rates 1880-2009.²

The reality that ten percent of students fail to graduate or obtain an alternative credential each year in this country makes it evident that work still needs to be done to keep young people engaged in school. In addition, former Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, argues that this average does not accurately represent dropout rates in *all* school districts. She points out that students in urban school districts face far more dire odds, as these schools often fail to graduate 65-75% of their students on time (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

For students who don't graduate, there are significant personal, real-world costs and consequences. Students who drop out of high school will earn only 37 cents for

² Compiled from U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (2011).

every dollar made by their graduating counterparts, earning a total of \$322,000 less over their lifetimes compared to those with high school diplomas (Monrad, 2007), and about \$1 million dollars less over their lifetimes than college graduates (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). While these figures may be startling, current economic indicators point to even more dire outcomes for dropouts in the future.

Evidence suggests that the economic consequences facing students who fail to graduate will be more substantial than those faced by previous generations. Shifting labor markets that have moved well-paid manufacturing jobs overseas and a volatile national economy will require young people to have more skills, education and job training to be successful in the future, not less. Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, predicted that in the American job market “Ninety percent of the fastest growing jobs require education or training beyond high school,” (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The U.S. Department of Labor estimates the largest salary and wage growth between 2006-2016 will be in service sector jobs that require post-secondary education including positions in management, scientific research, technical consulting and nursing (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Consequently, those without a high school diploma or GED will find themselves with few opportunities for economic advancement.

In addition to the individual economic consequences that result from school dropout, there are high societal economic consequences as well. Non-graduates place a greater financial burden on society, with four of every 10 young adult dropouts (aged

16 -24) receiving government assistance. In addition, non-graduates are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than non-dropouts (Bridgeland, et.al., 2006; Monrad, 2007). Dropouts are also more likely to be unemployed than non-dropouts, and report being in worse health than their matriculated counterparts (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010; Pleis, Lucas and Ward, 2009). Over the course of their lifetime, each dropout costs the U.S. economy on average \$240,000 in lower tax contributions, higher reliance on welfare and public insurance programs, and higher rates of criminal activity (Levin and Belfield, 2007). In a study at Columbia University, The Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education estimated that cutting the dropout rate in half would raise \$45 billion in tax revenues or cost savings from social service programs and incarceration annually (Committee on Education and Labor, 2009). When schools raise their graduation rates, the financial security of both the individuals involved and the U.S. economy improves. Recent U.S. policy changes aimed at increasing these rates may prove successful in requiring schools to make greater efforts to keep students in school until graduation.

While schools with high dropout and low graduation rates are relatively easy to identify as needing improvement, recent changes in education policies have made it a requirement that all schools become more attentive to their dropouts. In the past, schools that had a high overall graduation rate have been able to look the other way if a sub-population of their students were dropping out in high numbers. However, the current educational climate is forcing schools to change the way they look at dropouts.

In 2001, George W. Bush proposed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was signed into law in 2002. This legislation sought to improve school and student performance by increasing standards of accountability. It required states to administer skills-based testing to students throughout their school careers and for schools to implement standards-based reforms (Library of Congress, 2008). In addition, NCLB forces schools to confront their dropout rates rather than ignore them. For many years, schools have been required by NCLB to maintain “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP), which was initially tied only to raising test scores from year to year. However, in 2007, dropout rates and school attendance became another of the criteria for meeting AYP. Schools and districts that did not meet AYP requirements were sanctioned, generally in the form of reduced federal funding and occasionally by state take over (Library of Congress, 2008). In addition, NCLB changed the definition of what a dropout was. For the first time, alternative credentials, like GED’s and certificates of attendance, were to be excluded from state and local graduation calculations (Library of Congress, 2008). This has undoubtedly forced some schools to reexamine their reaction to student dropout. The rules were further tightened in 2008 to require schools to meet graduation targets by subgroups, including minorities and students with disabilities (Associated Press, 2008). Now even schools with high overall graduation rates must give attention to marginalized students who are not experiencing success and who are potentially at-risk of dropout.

Consequently, schools now face the challenge of how to keep marginalized students in school, as well as how to keep them motivated while there. While *some* schools may have addressed the issue of how to identify potential dropouts and intervene to help them succeed, NCLB now requires *all* schools to retain and motivate students struggling to stay connected to school.

Dropout at Canal Town High School³

The researcher is a teacher at Canal Town High School (CTHS), which is a small, regional school located in the town of Waterton in rural western Massachusetts. The high school is part of the Barstow-Waterton Regional School District (BWRSD), which serves not only the town of Waterton, but also the town of Barstow, a small farming community to its north, and students from Stockton, a small district that school-choices students in. The high school has an unusually high dropout rate, particularly for a rural school district in Massachusetts, which was the impetus for this study.

Waterton is a former mill town made up of five villages that enjoyed prosperity in the early 1900's due to an industrial boom, but has struggled economically over the past sixty years due to diminishing national dependence on water power and the national trend of exporting industrial jobs overseas (Town of Waterton, 2008). While residents of Barstow and Stockton fall above state averages for income, education and

³ The names of the school, towns, county, school district and school officials involved in this study were changed to protect the anonymity of the students involved, both in the text and in citations.

employment, residents of Watertown fall far below on all of these measures of economic prosperity (city-data.com, 2008).

Barstow-Watertown Regional School District was declared as an underperforming district in 2006 and deemed a “Level 4” school by the state of Massachusetts. Only four other schools in the state have received such a designation. One has since been removed from the list as a result of positive changes in that district and one has been moved to Level 5 designation and has been taken over by the state. A Level 4 designation results in additional state monitoring and oversight aimed at improving student performance. As of September, 2010, BWRSD was deemed by the state as having still not made adequate progress in closing gaps between student performance and state averages, and the Level 4 designation has remained in place (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011b; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2010).

During the 2010-2011 school year, student enrollment at CTHS hovered at 280 students. Enrollment rates have been on the decline for several years, dropping steadily from 374 students during the 2005-06 school year to current rates (CTHS Guidance Department, personal communication, January, 15 2012). This decline was attributed to a high number of school choice departures and a decline in the school age population of the district by the high school principal.

The school population is racially homogenous, with the majority of students attending identifying as white (88.4%), with very small Hispanic (5.5%), African

American (1.8%) and Asian (1.2%) populations in the school (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2011b). CTHS also has a large low income population, with 52% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, which is nearly 20% higher than the state average (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2011b).

As mentioned above, the 4-year graduation rate at CTHS is significantly lower than the state of Massachusetts' average. In the school years from 2005 to 2011, an average of 34% of students failed to graduate with their academic cohort at CTHS, while the state average hovered at slightly less than 20% for those five years (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012) (SEE FIGURE 2). While some students who were retained eventually graduated, and others who left school went on to obtain GED's, the statistics for CTHS are far from promising. In a report compiled by the district, BWRSD points out that they have a far higher than average GED completion rate amongst its non-completers. However, even when adjusted for these factors, Canal Town High School still exceeds state averages for students officially considered "dropouts" for the school years from 2005-2011 (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012c) (SEE FIGURE 3).

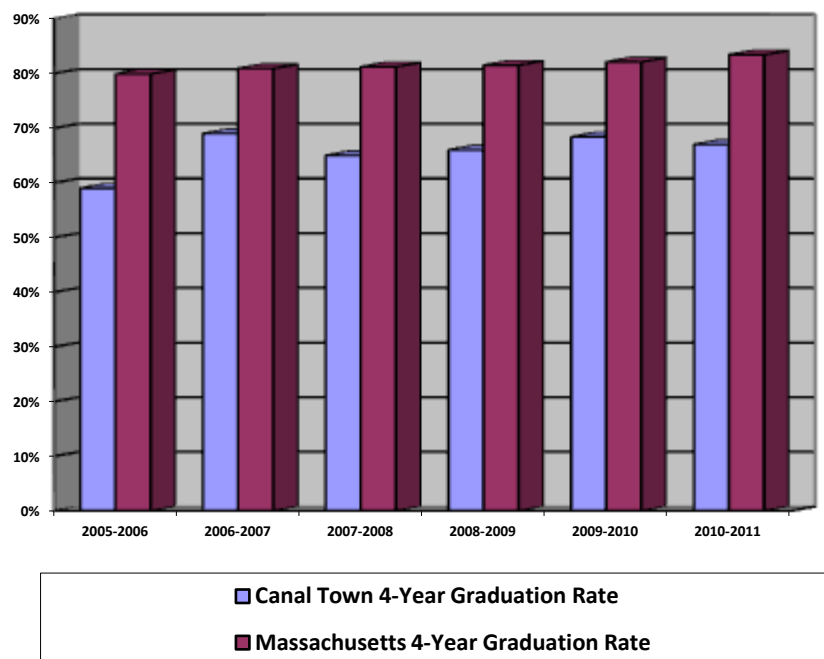


Figure 2: 4-Year Graduation Rates at Canal Town High School Versus Massachusetts' Graduation Rates⁴

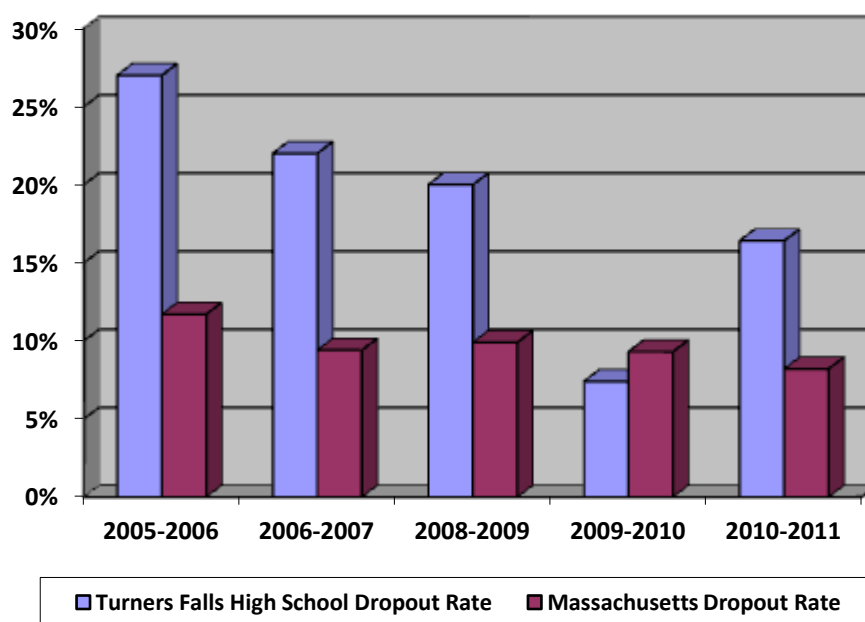


Figure 3: Canal Town High School's Dropout Rate Versus State of Massachusetts' Dropout Rate⁵

⁴ Compiled from data collected from Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012b

As Massachusetts' Department of Education data indicates, Canal Town High School has a clear history of producing fewer 4-year graduates than most schools in the state. Even when factors such as GED completion and 5-year graduation rates are factored in, CTHS has historically produced more dropouts than nearly every high school in the state. In fact, in 2009, BWRSD was ranked as the district with the 11th highest dropout rate in the state. (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012c). Examining the dropout data further, clear patterns emerge. From 2005-2009, poor, male students who received special education services were the most likely to drop out of CTHS. In fact, for the graduating 2008-09 school year cohort, only 62.3% of male students, 56% of Special Education students, and 61.3% of low income students graduated in four years (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2009; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2011). The state-wide averages were 78.6% for males, 64.9% for Special Education Students, and 66.9% for low income students (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

It is noteworthy, however, that CTHS actually produced a *lower* than average dropout rate in 2009-2010. This would indicate that in light of CTHS's steady improvement in their dropout rate and their marked improvement over the state average in 2010, that real progress in keeping students in school was made in the district. Examining the data more closely, however, reveals that this may not be entirely the case. Before examining the dropout rate further, it is noteworthy, to examine the

⁵ Excludes students who dropped out but received graduate equivalency degrees. Compiled from data collected from Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012c.

graduation rate at CTHS, which remained consistently lower than state averages during this time (68% in 2009-10 compared to the state average of 82%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2011c). There was no real improvement in the graduation rate in five years at CTHS, despite the lowered dropout rate. How then does one explain the marked improvement in dropout rates?

One area where the dropout rate is lowered at CTHS without resulting in an increased number of graduates is that a higher percentage of students at CTHS receive GED's than students state-wide (5.3% compared to 2%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012c). Students who received GED's are not calculated as drop-outs in state-wide data. The second major factor that contributes to CTHS's seemingly lower number of dropouts is the high percentage of students still considered "in school" by the state. Canal Town has a significantly higher number of students still enrolled in school (18.9%) as compared to the state-wide average (6.6%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2012c). While there are a number of students who did not receive enough credits to graduate in four years and continue to take classes at the high school, the majority of the students still considered enrolled do not fall into this category. Since 2008, the high school has participated in the Early Transition Program (ETP), a dual-enrollment program where high school students are able to take classes at a local community college and receive high school credit for their work. Many students exhibiting risk factors for dropping out of high school at CTHS participate in this program during their Junior and Senior years for free thanks to a large financial

contribution from a local donor. However, according to the principal at Canal Town High School, many of the at-risk students who participate in the program stay enrolled for several years past their expected graduation date despite making little progress in the program. She believed this contributed to the lower dropout rate over the past several years. The large increase in 2011-12 is largely due to these students finally leaving school without earning the credits they needed to graduate (D. MacLeod, personal communication, October 18, 2012). While the data would indicate that CTHS has made progress in significantly reducing their dropout rate over the past five years, closer analysis shows that while some improvements have been made, there are still higher than average numbers of students failing to graduate with a diploma.

The Barstow-Waterton RSD investigated the characteristics of those students who were in the 2005-2009 cohorts and found some revealing information. Fifty-seven percent of the dropouts from this cohort failed to earn enough academic credits to be promoted to the next grade level during the four year period. Further, 52% of those who dropped out had a least one out-of school suspension, and 57% had served multiple days of in-school suspension. Absences for those students who dropped out ranged from 8 to 89 days, and the number of days they were tardy spanned 7 to 33 times (C. Escot, personal communication, November 15, 2010). Clearly, the students who dropped out of CTHS gave clear indications prior to dropping out that they were facing challenges at school.

As previously mentioned, the researcher is a teacher at Canal Town High School and has taught in the district for 11 years, first as a middle school social studies, ESL and English teacher, and currently as high school history teacher. In an effort to gain further insight into the high dropout rate at her school, she conducted an earlier study investigating the demographics of students who drop out of CTHS, which provided some additional noteworthy statistics. Students who dropped out examined in this study also displayed clear warning signs, including academic, behavioral and attendance issues throughout their years at the high school. Students who dropped out of CTHS between 2005 - 2007 failed 44% of their high school classes and had a GPA of .8 (out of 4.0) prior to leaving school, indicating clear levels of academic difficulties. In addition, students who dropped out also displayed behavioral issues, including having, on average, 13 referrals to the school's behavioral interventionist for discipline in their final full year of school and 2 out-of-school suspensions. In addition, 51% of dropouts were given out-of-school suspensions during their final year at school (C. Escot, personal communication, October 28, 2009).

The students who drop out of Canal Town High School are similar to students who drop out of high schools around the country. They face academic, behavioral, and motivational challenges that result in less-than-positive relationships with school. They have more failing grades and a lower G.P.A. than their peers who graduate (Suh & Suh, 2007), have higher number of absences (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001) and a higher number of suspensions (Suh & Suh, 2007). Are there ways that schools can

address these issues through targeted interventions to keep students engaged and successful at school? What strategies might help change school culture to create instruction and support systems that keep students invested and attending? This dissertation will examine the impact that one such intervention has on students and on school culture at a high school in a rural school district. It examines the experience of these groups in connection with two high school courses entitled “Rise Up” and “Leadership in Community Service” offered at CTHS, courses designed and taught by the researcher.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the impact of an intervention in one rural high school on students displaying risk factors for dropping out of high school and to examine its impact on keeping students interested and attached to school. The intervention comes in the form of two courses entitled “Rise Up” and “Leadership in Community Service.” These courses bring together a wide variety of students, some of whom are at-risk of dropping out of school, some of whom are successful in school, and all of whom come from varying economic and social backgrounds.

Rise Up Course

The “Rise Up” course was the first class students were eligible to take in the two-class series and focused on leadership and communication development through

community service-learning, group building, and goal setting. Students in the course were in grades 9-12, and enrolled on a purely voluntary basis. As a traditional high school elective course, students earned five credits for passing the course, as well as a notation on their transcripts for the community service-learning hours they completed over the course of the semester. The course met for an hour and a half each day during either the Spring or Fall semester (90 days). Classes ranged in size from 9-11 students, which was the maximum enrollment range set by the researcher. The course embodied democratic learning principles, with students contributing a great deal to the direction of the course, including choosing and designing all of the community service-learning projects, dictating discussion topics, and setting classroom rules and expectations.

Students were nominated for the course by counselors, teachers, peers and administrators, or they self-nominated. An effort was made to create a class balance of students who were identified as being successful in school and those who were identified as being marginalized in school. Marginalized students, for the purpose of the Rise Up class, were those who displayed five or more risk factors for dropping out of school (i.e. earned failing grades in high school or middle school, had a low grade point average, had a high number of absences and tardies, possessed a high number of suspensions and disciplinary issues, displayed deviant behaviors [including drug use, fighting, minor and major theft, and vandalism], had relationships with deviant peers, displayed a low involvement in school life, had attendance issues, came from a low socio-economic background, and/or whose parents had a low expectation of graduation). Students who were identified as being successful in high school passed all of their classes, had relationships with peers who were positive about school and

academics, had a grade point average of 2.0 or higher, had a low number of absences or tardies, and had few to no discipline issues in school. An effort was made by the researcher to recruit students for the program who had two or more risk factors for dropout (low socio-economic status, low parental support, etc..) but who had also been successful in school.

Rise Up Class Schedule

The Rise Up class operated on the following semester-long schedule:

- During the first week of class students participated in group building and ice breaking activities to create a team-based atmosphere.
- Throughout weeks 2-3, students set class rules and expectations, worked with staff to identify effective group communication strategies and personal strengths that they bring to the group. They also brainstormed community service-learning activities for the semester. Additionally, students identified life goals and aspirations for themselves and shared them with other students in the class.
- Daily, students and the class instructor shared “highs and lows” from the previous day with each other. All set weekly life and school goals that were specific, desirable and achievable and worked with a goal partner to accomplish these goals. Each week, students also participated in “Challenge Day,” where they took part in group

building/ropes course activities to build group cohesiveness and discussed effective communication strategies to help them solve challenges.

- In weeks 3-5, students developed and began their community service-learning projects, which included interviewing community partners about their organizations and opportunities to volunteer for them. Weekly themes were also explored in class activities from this point forward, including topics such as perseverance, stereotyping, accountability, and overcoming personal obstacles and limitations.
- In weeks 6-10, students continued exploring weekly themes, participating in challenge activities, and setting goals. They also participated in CSL projects, including doing work in the community during the school day. Students also took part in a ropes course or rock climbing program off-site.
- In weeks 11-14, students engaged in a culminating large-scale project for one of the community based agencies they worked with during the semester, which often included an evening or all-day activity with the individuals served by the agency. Students also continued goal setting, challenge activities, and theme-based class explorations.

Rise Up Class Community Service-Learning Outcomes

Students in the Rise Up classes for the 2011 and 2012 school years completed nearly 600 hours of service to their community, which included both in-school and out-of-

school activities. The classes partnered with a number of community groups, including the Family Inn and Jessie's House (homeless shelters for families), Indian Falls Griffin's Friends (an organization that supports children with cancer and their families), the Waterton Senior Center, the Hamilton Area Survival Center, Waterton Elementary School, Indian Falls Middle School, and the U.S. Army (adopting local soldiers deployed overseas).

Table 1: Description of Selected Rise Up Projects

Project	Community Partner	Activity
Facility Maintenance	Family Inn	-Students raked leaves, weeded flower beds and planted spring bulbs.
Cakes for Kids	Jessie's House and Family Inn	-Students baked birthday cakes for every child living in the shelters.
Halloween Party	Jessie's House	-Students planned and ran a Halloween party for children living at Jessie's House which included games and performances.
Children's Parties	Griffin's Friends	-Students planned two different parties for children receiving treatment for cancer, which included developing age-appropriate activities and games.

Project	Community Partner	Activity
Coffee and Conversation	Waterton Senior Center	-Students visited with senior citizens at their monthly socializing event and culminated their experience by hosting a senior citizen breakfast at the high school.
Mentoring	Waterton Elementary School	-Students assisted staff at the before-school program running games, art projects and reading with elementary students.
Adopt-a-Soldier	U.S. Army	-Students researched CTHS graduates who were serving overseas, raised money for care packages, and organized letter writing drives for them. -Students worked with families of deployed soldiers to do yard work and other household tasks.
Food Drive	Hamilton Area Survival Center	-Students volunteered at the Survival Center's food pantry for three months, organized a school-wide food drive and educated the community on the work of the FASC and the needs of families throughout our area.
Peer Mentoring	Life Skills Classroom, Canal Town High School	-Students met weekly to tutor and mentor peers in a program for students with developmental challenges. -Students developed an "Adjective Fashion Show" with the students they partnered with and presented it to a school-wide audience.

Leadership in Community Service Course

When students completed the “Rise Up” course, they were able to enroll in the “Leadership in Community Service” (LCS) class. In this course, students partnered with subject-area teachers and their classes throughout the district. They took a leadership role in developing CSL projects for the subject matter classes and provided teachers with support in implementing them over the course of the semester. As with the Rise Up course, the LCS course also focused on leadership and communication development through community service-learning, group building, and goal setting. This course also operated democratically, with students contributing a great deal to the direction of the course, including dictating discussion topics, setting classroom rules and expectations, choosing the teachers who they work with, creating project proposals to present to teachers, working with students to develop a finalized project, and setting budgets for the projects.

The demographics of the LCS class mirrored those of the Rise Up course, with at least 50% of all students enrolled displaying risk factors for dropping out. Each student brought the leadership and communication skills they developed in Rise Up, as well as extensive CSL experience, and a long list of community contacts. Participation in the class was presented as a privilege, and their skills and experience touted as a valuable asset to the success of the program.

The Leadership in Community Service course evolved because many of the marginalized students who made positive school progress in school during the Rise Up

class were faltering once the class ended. After a discussion with the Principal, the class was conceived by the researcher and a grant for its implementation, specifically to provide transportation to large groups of students and to fund several small projects, was secured.

Students in the course were in grades 9-12, and enrolled on a purely voluntary basis. As a traditional high school elective course, students earned 5 credits for successful completion, as well as a notation on their transcripts for the community service-learning hours they had completed over the course of the semester. The course met for an hour and a half each day during the Spring semester (90 days). Eight students enrolled in the course during the 2011 school year, which was the maximum enrollment set by the researcher.

Leadership in Community Service Class Schedule

The LCS class began in late January with several days of group building activities aimed at creating a team-based environment and then continued through June according to the following schedule:

- Students and LCS teacher attended a professional development workshop to learn what CSL is and how it is differentiated from community service.
- Students contacted local service agencies and arranged visits to establish community contacts prior to project development.

- Students attended faculty meetings at each school in the district to educate the faculty about the nature of CSL and solicit teachers who were interested in partnering with the LCS class during the semester.
- After generating a list of interested faculty, students worked in pairs to review the Massachusetts state frameworks for interested teachers' classes.
- Students then generated a brainstormed list of potential CSL projects with other members of the LCS class.
- Students selected five teachers to work with over the course of the semester and made appointments to meet with the teacher to discuss time limitations, subject focus and ideas the teacher might have.
- Students met with the cooperating teachers' classes to review the state frameworks with the class and generate ideas for the CSL project, keeping in mind the guidelines and limitations previously discussed with the cooperating teacher, and administering a preliminary survey.

- Students then created a CSL proposal for the class, which included timelines, budgets, learning objectives, and community partners involved. They then contacted community partners to assess the feasibility of the proposed projects and establish timelines.

- Students had a follow up meeting with the cooperating teacher and presented their project proposal. The proposal was then discussed and amended, if necessary.

- Once the project proposal was approved, students then began to map out the organizational tasks associated with the project and put the project into motion, including filing necessary school paperwork, organizing transportation, and contacting local news agencies.

- The student pairs then implemented the CSL project with the support of the LCS instructor and other students in the class.

- Students will then followed-up with an assessment/reflection form with all members of the CSL partner class.

- Following project completion, students will wrote a reflection chronicling successes, pitfalls to avoid, and ways to make the project better in the future which was placed in a binder for members of the LCS course the following Spring.
- At the completion of the semester, students delivered a Power Point presentation of all of their projects to the school committee.

Leadership in Community Service Class Outcomes

In the first year of the class, the eight students enrolled worked with nine different teachers, primarily at Canal Town High School to complete four distinct CSL projects serving approximately 106 students. Three additional projects, including an 8th grade Citizen Right's project and a 6th grade Nature Trail project were planned but were unable to be completed because of logistical and teacher-related personal issues that arose. All of the teachers who were involved with creating the projects had not used CSL in their classrooms previously, and the majority of students had not completed any community service-learning projects in school in the past.

Table 2: Description Selected Leadership in Community Service Projects

Project	Other Classes Involved	Students Involved	Outcomes
It's Alive--Garden Project	Greenhouse and Life Skills Classes	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planned and Planted and on-campus garden -Planned and conducted a healthy and seasonal food cooking demonstration for 6th grade students at Waterton Elementary School. -Created a small business by selling garden produce at the Indian Falls Farmers Market and donating excess produce to the Hamilton Area Survival Center.
Special Olympics	Physical Education, Rise Up and Life Skills Classes	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentored and trained students participating in the Special Olympics over the course of a 2 month period. -Attended the Special Olympics to support student athletes.
Surviving Middle School	Rise Up class and 6th Grade students from Indian Falls Middle School	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Created a middle school support group for sixth grade students struggling with social issues. -Mentored students, designed activities and provided support over the course of a two month period.
Casino Night	Geometry, Statistics, Marketing, Government and Art Classes	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planned and implemented a community evening of entertainment and casino activities. -Government classes created a video that aired that evening which highlighted state legislators, school staff, students and community members' opinions on the costs and benefits to casinos. -Statistics and Geometry classes calculated the odds of winning each game and ran real-time statistics during the evening. -Art classes developed a design theme for the evening and created a series of murals and decorated the school cafeteria for the event. -The Marketing class created a marketing campaign for the event and solicited prizes to be raffled off the evening of the event.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes had on student relationships, school retention and graduation rates of marginalized students at one rural high school.

Research Questions

- Will the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes have an impact on the relationships that marginalized students develop in school?
- Will the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes have an impact on indicators for school retention such as school attendance, in-school behavior infractions, engagement, grades, passing classes and relationships with adults in school?
- How do students perceive the impact of Rise Up classes on their ability to handle challenging situations, including the decision to stay in school?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Many schools are facing alarming dropout rates and need to develop new approaches to keep the most marginalized students in school. Research has shown that students are most engaged in school when education is problematized, they are engaged in real world settings, are given leadership roles, have hands-on experiences with theoretical

concepts, and make connections to business and community mentors. This project has the potential to address all of these factors. There is little research that looks specifically at how marginalized students are impacted by participating in community service-learning projects or the relationships that participating in these projects develop, and there is none that looks at the impact putting marginalized students in school-wide leadership roles in creating CSL projects. Therefore, this study will contribute considerably to the research in this field.

Definition of Terms

Marginalized Students: Typically, marginalized students have a grade point average in the bottom 25% of their classes and have failed classes, creating a credit deficit that keeps them from promotion or graduation. Frequently, their attitude and conduct gets them in trouble with teachers and administrators in school, and their connections with peers who display anti-school attitudes and behaviors reinforces this pattern. Some of these students lack the basic skills necessary to be successful in school and the familial support to persevere in a challenging school environment.

Successful Students: Typically, students who are identified as being successful in high school pass all of their classes, have relationships with peers who are positive about school and academics, have a grade point average of 2.0 or higher, have a low number of absences or tardies, and have few to no discipline issues in school. They may also participate in one or more extra-curricular school activities, including clubs or sports.

Students At-Risk of Dropping Out: Students who demonstrate risk factors correlated with a high incidence of dropout, including earning failing grades and having a low grade point average, having a high number of absences and tardies, possessing a high number of suspensions and disciplinary issues, displaying deviant behaviors [including drug use, fighting, minor and major theft, and vandalism], having relationships with deviant peers, low involvement in school life, attendance issues, low socio-economic status, and having parents who have a low expectation for graduation.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): a plan that is developed for students who have a documented disability that interferes with their ability to participate successfully in school. The goal of the IEP is to help children reach educational goals easier than they otherwise would. The document is tailored to the individual student's needs as identified by the IEP evaluation process, and is designed to help teachers and other school personnel understand the student's disability and how the disability affects the learning process and how to help the student learn most effectively (Mauro, 2011).

504 Plan: Refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which specifies that no one with a disability can be excluded from participating in federally funded programs or activities, including elementary, secondary or postsecondary schooling. "Disability" in this context refers to a "physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities." This can include physical impairments; illnesses or injuries; communicable diseases; chronic conditions like asthma, allergies and diabetes; and learning problems. A 504 plan spells

out the modifications and accommodations that will be needed for these students to have an opportunity perform at the same level as their peers, and might include such things as wheelchair ramps, blood sugar monitoring, an extra set of textbooks, a peanut-free lunch environment, home instruction, or a tape recorder or keyboard for taking notes. (Mauro, 2011b).

Community Service-Learning (CSL): Community Service-Learning is differentiated from other service, often referred to as “community service” in several ways. Community service is frequently discreet incidents or projects where students participate in activities aimed at contributing to or improving their community. For example, a class might pick up trash or host a blood drive at their school. Conversely, CSL is the process of connecting class curriculum to service work that allows students to meaningfully do hands-on work that reflect the theoretical concepts they study in class. For example, a U.S. Government class that is studying the electoral process might volunteer at polling stations during an election, conduct exit poll interviews, and create a television program for local access television about the ways in which local citizens have voted.

CSL Partner Class: The class with which the Leadership in Community Service class works with to design and implement the CSL project.

Cooperating Teacher: The teacher of of the CSL Partner Class with whom the Leadership in Community Service students work.

Rise Up: The pre-requisite class to Leadership in Community Service. The focus of this class is to develop leadership skills, foster positive in-school and community relationships, and promote improved communication skills. Each student in the class does at least 35 hours of community service-learning work during the semester.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of the study is that it is taking place in a small, rural school district. Were the population larger, or if it was taking place in multiple school districts, the transferability of the study would be more definitive. This intervention also requires a dedicated staff that is interested in trying new approaches in their classrooms and are willing to work with marginalized students often perceived by other school staff as “challenging,” which may be problematic in some schools.

Furthermore, the costs associated with the classes need to be provided by the school district, raised by the teachers and students of the class, or secured through grant funding, which would certainly pose challenges to an underfunded school district.

While a small amount of funding (\$600) was made available to the class by CTHS principal, the majority of the funding for the CSL activities and field trips was raised through teacher/student fundraising and grants applied for by the researcher (approximately \$12,000).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Research on high school dropout began to appear in the early 1980's and continues to be a prolific topic in the educational community. Hundreds of studies on the topic of dropout exist in the ERIC and Education Complete databases, and most is quantitative and survey-based in nature. Many studies were based on data collected in the 1980's as part of national longitudinal studies such as the U.S. Department of Education's High School and Beyond Survey and the National Educational Longitudinal Survey. Despite the age of this data, researchers have continued to use it in studies through the 2000's. Far fewer qualitative and mixed-method studies on dropout exist, which clearly represents a gap in the literature.

For this literature review, twenty-four empirical studies were extracted from the hundreds available on ERIC and Education Complete relating to high school dropout. The search terms used to collect research for this study included "drop out," "dropouts," "high school dropouts," "rural dropout," and "urban dropout." Excluded from this review is research on populations of students with significant special needs (including both cognitive and physical disabilities), and as a result, the focus is limited to general student populations. In addition to the empirical research, ten theoretical works were also included to create a framework for discussing student interest and motivation. After analyzing the research, several clear patterns and categories emerged. Existing research tended to focus on three key areas, including who drops out of high school, why students drop out, and

what works to keep students in school. These categories are the basis for three subsections that follow, in which these questions are examined separately.

In addition, four studies were retrieved from the ERIC and Education Complete databases and from the internet on the impact community service-learning (CSL) has in the classroom. While there is a great deal of literature available regarding how CSL impacts general populations of students, few examine the impact it has on students who exhibit risk factors for dropping out of high school. Included in this review is a meta-analysis of CSL-based studies administered in school settings with a broad spectrum of students, as well as a review of all of the studies that focus on how CSL impacts students at-risk of dropping out of high school. This research is particularly relevant to this study, as the intervention under examination is aimed specifically at students who are marginalized in school.

Who Drops out of School?

Current *No Child Left Behind* policies ensure that schools are being held accountable for students who drop out, pushing them to examine which young people drop out of their institutions. In theory, if risk factors can be identified, schools can be proactive about providing remediation and intervention before dropout becomes a desirable option for students. Researchers have determined several characteristics of dropouts that might prove helpful in identifying students before they drop out, and many of these findings have remained consistent for the last 25 years. These characteristics reflect the

community, personal, family and school relationships that young people have, and the economic and social realities they face. Early literature in the field identified a student's family's income and community characteristics as having an impact on dropout rates, and subsequent research has supported this finding. Barro & Kolstad (1987) examined data from the High School and Beyond Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in their early research. The data included responses from 25,875 students from 1,015 high schools representing a wide demographic range of students and schools from across the U.S. The students were surveyed first when they were sophomores in 1980 and again in 1982. Barro & Kolstad also supplemented this research by collecting transcript data for a sample group of students studied. They found that students from families with low socioeconomic status (SES) were at significant risk of dropping out of school. This data has been supported by both Abbott, Catalano & Hawkins (2000), who examined survey data from students and parents at 18 public elementary schools in Seattle, McWilliams, Everett & Bass (2000), who examined survey data from 48 students in the rural Southeastern U.S., and Suh & Suh (2007) who also examined data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey. Students with a low SES who lived in urban areas were found to be significantly more likely to drop out than those living in suburban and rural areas. In fact, in some urban schools in America, it is not unusual to see dropout rates as high as seventy percent (Fine, 1986; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Therefore, considering that the poorest individuals living in urban settings are disproportionately likely to be people of color, it should come as no surprise that minorities are also far more likely to drop out of school than whites (Grant & Snyder, 1983; U.S. Department

of Education, 2008).

Family characteristics have also been shown to impact dropout rates in schools across America. Barro & Kolstad (1987) identified several factors contributing to early departure from school and found that when parents worked in low skilled, low paid occupations, their children faced a higher risk of dropping out than when they had parents who worked in higher skilled, higher paid occupations. Furthermore, they found that parents' educational attainment was connected to staying in school, and the higher the mother's (and to a lesser degree, the father's) educational attainment was, the less likely a student was to drop out. Several survey-based studies of rural school populations in low socioeconomic areas in the Southeastern United States also indicated that a mother's expectation for graduation reduced a student's likelihood of dropping out of school (Everett, Bass, Steele & McWilliams, 1997; McWilliams, et. al., 2000). Family characteristics and expectations clearly play a role in whether students persist until graduation.

Studies have also indicated that peer relationships and individual behavioral characteristics impact dropout rates. In a mixed method study focusing on students from low SES backgrounds who attended one public high school in New York City, Fine (1986) examined survey data, student and staff interviews and student transcripts. She found that students who exhibited deviant behaviors, including drug use, fighting, vandalism, minor and major theft, and were more likely to drop out of school than those who didn't. Additionally, two longitudinal studies examined survey data from predominantly Caucasian students from mixed SES backgrounds (Janosz, Leblanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 2000) and from low SES

backgrounds (Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz & Tremblay, 2001) attending urban public schools. These researchers found that those students who had strong relationships with deviant peers who engaged in these behaviors were also more likely to leave school early. Abbott, et. al. (2000) found similar patterns in their longitudinal study of students from 18 public elementary schools in economically disadvantaged, high crime neighborhoods in Seattle. In this study, student and parent survey data was collected when students were in 5th grade, 7th grade and when they were 14 and 16 years old, and was supplemented by school data such as student GPA and standardized test scores. While some school attrition of students with these characteristics can be attributed to incarceration and expulsion, many more of these students choose to leave school prior to graduation.

School performance, attendance and in-school behavior have also been shown to impact students' persistence to graduation. Both Abbott, et. al. (2000), Suh & Suh (2007) and Vitaro, et. al. (2001) found that high school dropouts tend to have more failing grades and a lower grade point average (GPA) than their peers who graduate. Barrington & Hendricks (2001), who conducted longitudinal research with 214 students, including 107 dropouts, in two "moderately" sized high schools in a small city in Wisconsin supported these findings, as did Hardre & Reeve (2003) in their survey-based study of 483 students from four rural public high schools in Iowa. Barrington & Hendricks (2001) also discovered that students who drop out have a higher number of absences than their non-drop out peers, and Suh & Suh (2007) found in their analysis of 6,192 student surveys from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey of Youth database that dropouts have more suspensions than graduates. Students who are more

likely to drop out also display a low involvement in school life, including extracurricular activities, as compared to their peers who remain in school (Everett, et. al., 1997; McWilliams, et.al., 2000). Students who drop out tend to be those with the lowest grades, the most disciplinary issues, absences and who have the fewest connections to traditional school life and activities.

Most startling about the research on dropouts is that it suggests that students likely to leave school prior to graduation can be identified as early as third grade. Those who fail classes or who have low grades in elementary school dropout in higher numbers in high school (Everett, et. al., 1997; McWilliams, et. al., 2000). In addition, students who show disruptiveness in elementary school (Vitaro, et. al., 2001) and who receive negative teacher comments on report cards (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001) were also more likely to drop out in high school than their peers. Early indicators of potential dropout clearly exist for students in our nation's schools. Considering

all of the risk factors that indicate a student's increased likelihood of dropping out, schools face the challenge of determining which of these factors are *most* likely to lead to drop out so they can spend limited funds to best effect. Lacking this knowledge, it may be difficult for schools to know who to identify for interventions aimed at retaining students. Further complicating the issue of using statistical data to predict who will drop out is research that suggests the process simply doesn't work. Weber (1989) examined several nationwide studies of dropout prediction scales and determined that these scales only identified about one third of those students who actually dropped out. In their four year study in which they collected survey data from 5,200 middle and high school students from urban school in Texas, Michigan, Arizona

and California, Gleason & Dynarski (2002) found similar results. They found that of five identified risk factors, including demographic characteristics and family background, school performance, personal characteristics, adult responsibilities, and school/neighborhood characteristics, none effectively identified future dropouts. Using inefficient risk factors to identify at-risk students would be costly and might not actually reduce schools' dropout rates a great deal. This potential problem has led researchers to study whether examining multiple risk factors provides a more accurate prediction of who drops out.

In hopes of increasing the accuracy of predicting which students drop out, Suh & Suh (2007) examined the relationship between possessing several risk factors and dropping out of high school. They identified low socioeconomic status, low GPA and multiple suspensions as being the major risk factors for dropout, and found that students with two identifiable risk factors were 90% more likely to drop out than those with only one risk factor, and those with three risk factors were 179% more likely to drop out. Their research further suggests that as students accumulate risk factors, it becomes harder and harder to predict which interventions will be successful in keeping them enrolled and attending school. When multiple risk factors appear, they found, students have more reasons for dropping out, thus making it more difficult to target the one intervention that will make a difference.

The wide body of research that exists regarding those who drop out may help schools identify which students are at risk, but knowing who is most likely to drop out of school is not enough to keep students in school until graduation. In order to understand the issue fully and to

begin to take comprehensive steps toward educating all students, one must not only understand *who* drops out, but also *why* they do.

Why Students Drop Out of School

While there is a wide body of research that indicates who drops out of school, significantly less exists on why students leave prior to graduation. A handful of researchers have done qualitative studies that more deeply examine students' own perceptions of why they've dropped out, while others have focused on the schools themselves and the role they play in student dropout. Since schools appear to spend little time gathering in-depth data from students regarding their decisions to leave the institution (Fine, 1986; Kozol, 2005), research that provides insight into the reasons behind school attrition is particularly important. Studies suggest that there are many reasons young people give for leaving school, including personal perceptions about their innate abilities, relationships with peers and family, and economic and school related issues.

Students who choose not to finish school often share personal perceptions about their experiences in the classroom. Skinner, Welborn & Connell (1990) found in her survey-based study of 220 predominantly white elementary school students in suburban upstate New York that dropouts often believe that they can't learn and that this lack of ability is an innate trait. Students also drop out because they don't feel competent in school, reports Wehlage & Rutter (1986), who examined survey data from the longitudinal U.S. Department of Education's High School and Beyond Survey, and Hardre & Reeve (2003) who conducted a survey-based study of students from rural schools in Iowa. In

addition, research suggests that when students believe they don't have self-determination and that others hold control over their learning, they are less likely to persist to graduation (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Skinner, et. al., 1990). Damico & Roth (1994) also found in their case study based research of 40 high school students from geographically diverse areas in Florida that having no clear career aspirations often leads students to drop out. In their survey-based research with 228 students receiving Special Education services in 29 Alabama school districts, Dunn, Chambers & Rabren (2004) found that when students did not feel they were being prepared for life, they were more likely to drop out. Additionally, in her ethnographic work with students from one New York City public high school, Fine (1986) found students felt a sense of hopelessness about the possibility of improving the quality of their lives through education, which led them to drop out. Students' perceptions of their own abilities and opportunities play a significant role in their persistence in school.

In-school relationships also appear to impact students' persistence to graduation. Lee & Burkam (2003), Dunn, et. al. (2004) and Legault, Green-Demers & Pelletier (2006) conducted research with diverse populations and found when students develop positive relationships with teachers, they are more likely to persist. Lee & Burkam analyzed data from *The National Educational Longitudinal Study* of 1998 which included survey data from 3,840 students in 190 urban and suburban high schools, while Legault, et. al.'s research involved three survey-based studies with high school students living in urban regions of the Northeast. Furthermore, Alsbaugh (1998) examined dropout rates in 428 Missouri school districts and compared characteristics of

schools with high and low dropout rates. He concluded that students who lack the opportunity to develop these relationships are more likely to leave. Additionally, the relationships that students have with their in-school peers impacts dropout rates. When students have no positive in-school peer relationships, they are less connected to school, and more likely to drop out (Legault, et. al., 2006). A lack of positive relationships keeps students from feeling connected to the school community and often results in them leaving school.

There are also significant economic issues that lead students to drop out of school. Research suggests that many students leave school because of pure economic need. Students report the need to leave school to seek employment to contribute to their families' household or to support themselves. Additionally, when students saw no relationship between earning a high school diploma and increased economic opportunity, they were more likely to drop out (Fine, 1986). Faced with high unemployment rates in the most economically depressed areas of this country, and few jobs beyond entry level service sector positions, students living in these areas often fail to make any connection between earning a high school diploma and securing a higher paid job. It is not surprising, therefore, that this economic reality leads them to drop out.

Family obligations and attitudes also contribute to student drop out. Students often report having to drop out because of family obligations, like taking care of siblings, sick parents or relatives. While girls are more likely than boys to leave school and take on this "personal sacrifice" for the family, in households with fewer children, boys are taking on this responsibility in

higher numbers (Fine, 1986). Even when family obligations aren't a factor in dropping out, family attitudes can be. When families do not support academic values, like achieving high grades, passing classes, attending school regularly, and graduating, it reinforces behavior that makes success in school less likely and often results in feelings of incompetence in school. Lacking a parental safety net to keep students motivated in times of frustration, student attitudes about the value of education or about their abilities frequently lead to school attrition (Legault, et. al., 2006). Family obligations and attitudes clearly contribute to students' decision to drop out or persist in school.

In addition, a lack of success in school, both academically and behaviorally, is linked to dropping out. Students frequently drop out of school when they have difficulty mastering basic skills and have low grades (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Whelage & Rutter, 1986). When they don't feel as if they fit into the rule structure of school and their personal values don't correspond with those of the schools', it can leave them frustrated, disconnected and often leads them to drop out (Damico & Roth, 1994). Furthermore, students who perceive that the discipline system of school is neither effective nor fair feel further alienated and less successful in school, and they drop out in higher numbers (Wehlage, 1983). Not finding success in school influences students' decisions about staying in school or leaving.

Students provide a great deal of insight into the issues that lead thousands of children to leave school each year, but additional research suggests that it is not just the practices of school administration and teachers, but also the *structure* of schools that contributes to the drop out issue. Alsbaugh (1998) found that certain school characteristics led

students to drop out of school in greater numbers. He found that students were more likely to drop out of large schools, located in communities with high crime rates that had a high number of courses available to students and that spent a low percentage of their budget on extracurricular activities. His research led him to conclude that in these large schools, students were far less likely to feel they were part of a cohort or community because they were not consistently with the same peers for more than a small portion of each day. The result was a lack of connection that led to further alienation from school and for many students and an exodus from school.

Wehlage & Rutter (1986) also examined the extent to which schools contribute to student drop out. He found that students who dropped out of high school showed a slightly higher level of self-esteem than non-college bound graduates in their sophomore year, and a higher expectation of post-graduation educational attainment. However, the experience they had in high school resulted in falling self-esteem and eventual dropout. Wehlage & Rutter found that several significant factors led to their alienation and subsequent departure from school, including the perception that teachers did not care about their educational attainment and that they constantly received signals about their academic inadequacies and deficiencies. He charges that when students reject the institution of school, it stems from a feeling that the institution had first rejected them.

Nieto (1994) found similar patterns in her research. In her case study investigations that focused on ten ethnically, economically and geographically diverse students in middle and high schools that when personal culture is not represented in the curriculum, students perceive that school is unrelated to their

lives. This realization, Nieto argues, leads them to feel alienated from school and eventually leads some students to drop out. When students feel invisible in the curriculum, it seems, they fail to see the value of education, and some decide to leave school prior to graduation.

Research also suggests a connection between high-stakes testing and dropout. One feature of NCLB is that students must pass subject-area tests in order to graduate from high school. While this may be stressful for students, it has also proven stressful to schools, whose Annual Yearly Progress rating is linked to student scores on these same tests (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Heilig, 2008). McNeil, et. al.'s (2008) mixed-methods study of the testing results of 271,000 Texas students, state-wide dropout and retention statistics, and an in-depth case study of one Texas high school, found that high stakes testing impacts dropout in significant ways. Their research suggests that students who fail high stakes tests, or whose teachers suspect they will fail, are retained in high numbers. The result is that a high percentage of these students, who are disproportionally minorities, become frustrated by frequent retention and warehousing in remedial classes. Consequently, they begin to believe they don't have the ability to be successful in the future, and subsequently drop out.

Additionally and more egregiously, some research suggests that schools directly and intentionally contribute to drop out rates by forcing students out of school. For example, when students over 17 years of age had more than 20 successive absences in one New York City school, they were told by administration that they had been discharged from school. Many students were shocked to learn that they were not welcome to return, but few understood that this policy was in direct conflict with the state of New York's obligation to educate students

until age twenty-three (Fine, 1986). Some schools have taken aggressive measures to weed out children who, in their perception, pose challenges to teachers and administrators and lower the school's test scores by actively encouraging their departure from school (McNeil, et. al., 2008). With the new policies of NCLB, these unwritten and unconscionable practices may begin to change. If schools are successful in addressing this issue and do begin to reduce their dropout rates, they must then examine what practices will be most effective in motivating and retaining students.

What Works to Keep Students in School?

There has been a great deal of theoretical literature built on prior research regarding what works to keep students interested and motivated in school. Self-determination theorists argue that in order for students to be self-motivated, three innate psychological needs--competence, autonomy, and relatedness--must be satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In other words, students must feel competent in what they are doing in school, be given autonomy to solve problems and make decisions, and feel that what they study and are asked to do relates to their lives or experience. When school work is relevant to their lives, students are more motivated to *master* knowledge and skills, not just to *demonstrate* them in a classroom (Edleson & Joseph, 2006). These findings have implications for the types of curriculum and instruction employed by teachers who work with marginalized students.

This type of instruction lends itself to what Michael Apple refers to as the “democratic classroom.” Democratic teaching principles give value to students’ lived experience and an authentic voice in the classroom. As a result, they can help marginalized students develop agency in school and build motivation. Apple (2008) argues that schools play a role in ‘legitimizing’ knowledge, and when marginalized students’ are allowed to contribute their own knowledge in valuable ways in the classroom, they become less alienated and more invested in their in-school learning.

Studies suggest that when educators problematize instruction, give students opportunities to solve problems independently, provide them with relevant resources, give consistent feedback and hold them accountable, interest and motivation builds (Blumenfeld, 1991; Engle & Conant, 2002; Hidi & Reminger, 2006). This research suggests that in order to keep all students interested and motivated, the curriculum of school needs to move beyond traditional models of education, punctuated by teacher-talk and textbook reading.

Experiential education theorists contend that when individuals are given the opportunity to concretely engage in work in real world settings that allow them to test theoretical concepts autonomously, meaningful learning occurs (Dewey, 1938). While many educational settings push students to consider the hands-on application of knowledge/phenomena learned, Borzak (1981) argues that a direct, hands-on encounter with the phenomena or concept being studied results in a greater depth of understanding and greater ability to apply knowledge in real life settings. Both self-determination theorists and experiential education theorists argue for the effectiveness of educational models that allow students to engage in activities

that are hands-on, self-driven, reflective, and based in real life experiences.

Is this the type of instruction those students at the greatest risk of dropping out receive? Research would suggest not. In his observations in New York and Chicago schools, Kozol (2005) argued that many schools that serve high numbers of at-risk students employ educational techniques that more closely resemble military practices, supporting the belief that marginalized students need more discipline and hyper-structured learning to compensate for a lack of personal virtue and an innate work ethic. In these schools, curriculum often focuses on skills that prepare students for low-wage jobs in the service industry at the expense of courses and skills that would allow them to transition to college after high school. In other schools, in an attempt to ensure that students pass high-stakes tests, schools warehouse students in classes that focus on test-taking strategies and rote memorization rather than problem-based instruction (McNeil, et. al., 2008). In fact, many students don't even have the luxury of having any organized curriculum what-so-ever. In 1991 in Chicago's inner city schools, for example, 5,700 children in 190 classrooms came to school to find that they had no teachers to teach them (Kozol, 1991). The lack of motivating curriculum present in many public schools further undermines the chances that students most at-risk for dropping out have for graduating. Schools must therefore examine the nature of curriculum and instruction in creating intervention programs for those who are potential dropouts.

Further studies indicate that it is not only what and how curriculum is taught, but who teaches it that is important. Research has found that teachers play an important role in keeping students in school. Students

often drop out when they lack connections to adults in school, therefore it is not surprising that when teachers help these students develop social capital, they are more motivated to persist until graduation. The term social capital describes the relationships that individuals form in a community setting that develop from mutual favors given and received and which results in power or status in that community (Coleman, 1988). Croninger & Lee (2001) found in their examination of the National Educational Longitudinal Study survey data that included 10,979 students from 1,063 schools across America that teacher-based forms of social capital were often developed during after-class conversations and in informal guidance given by teachers. They found that while the resulting social capital benefitted all students, it especially benefitted those students most at-risk of dropping out of high school. Furthermore, Fashola & Slavin (1998), in their examination of 6 dropout prevention and college attendance programs, found that when students perceived that their teachers cared about them, enjoyed teaching, and treated them with positive regard, they were more likely to stay in school. Damico & Roth (1994), in their case study research with 40 Floridian high school students, and Lee & Burkam (2003) in their examination of survey data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study both supported these findings. As schools continue to develop programs and strategies to keep students in school, including opportunities that foster student-teacher relationships will undoubtedly benefit those students most at-risk for dropping out. Research has also shown that parents contribute to students staying in school. Stradford (1993) found in her research with at-risk students participating in a dropout prevention program in rural South Carolina that programs in which parents have frequent contact with teachers and

are encouraged to work with their student on homework and projects, are the most successful in keeping students in school. Effective programs, therefore, must treat parents as an integral part of the solution for student success. Accordingly, inclusion and parental participation, therefore, should be a centerpiece of any intervention program targeting at-risk youth.

In addition, students' perceptions of their status in school have shown to influence the likelihood they will remain until graduation. Fashola & Slavin (1998) found that when at-risk students were given high status roles within school, such as tutoring younger students and taking high-track classes with the support they need to succeed, they were more likely to persist to graduation. In addition, they found that when students felt connected to a positive peer group in school, they were more likely to stay. Therefore, successful interventions should take care to create positive peer communities amongst students and give them opportunities to demonstrate their competency on a regular basis.

Another issue that successful dropout prevention programs address is the economic difficulties that many at-risk students face. As Fine (1986) points out, some students drop out because they must work to earn money for their or their family's survival. Successful dropout prevention programs have been found to include opportunities for students to work in exchange for school credit (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). This not only addresses the economic reasons behind dropping out, but it may also speak to the hopelessness some students feel about their economic futures. Additionally, when students make strong connections to business mentors, they are more likely to persist to graduation (Stradford, 1993) and when programs connect students to attainable futures (be they in

the workforce or through connections to colleges) they are less likely to drop out (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). Having these connections, developing relationships in the business community, and being able to see the tangible benefits a diploma will bring, may help to alleviate the hopelessness that many dropouts feel about their futures and keep them in school until graduation. Another clear need of successful programs is to provide remediation in academic areas where marginalized students struggle. Research has shown that programs that include academic assistance, either during school or after, are more successful at retaining students (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). As logical as this seems, little evidence exists that suggests students who require remediation actually receive it on a wide-spread basis in public schools. In fact, struggling students are often socially promoted and pushed on through school towards graduation without ever developing the skills they need for success there (Kozol, 2005).

In reviewing the literature on which students drop out of high school, why they leave and what works to keep them in school, several key issues regarding the current state of education in America are highlighted. First, it is evident that current school practices do not work for many students, and school administrators and teachers must carefully examine how these practices impact young people most at-risk for dropping out. Secondly, those students who are most vulnerable in society are the most likely to be marginalized by the school experience. Children from families with the least money, living in the most crime-ridden places in this country, who have parents with little education and the least economic opportunity are the ones who are most likely to drop out of high school and face harsh economic consequences. It is also clear that these

students don't simply decide to drop out after successful experiences in the school system, but rather display clear warning signs that they are disengaged, alienated, and need something vastly different than schools are providing. These children suffer in the face of evidence that suggests there are effective ways to ensure that they are not marginalized by our schools and that they can be successful.

If schools are to accomplish their true mission of educating all students, they must begin to rethink the ways in which they create learning opportunities for some young people. It can hardly be argued that educational institutions are doing their jobs when only 70% of students earn a high school diploma with their academic cohort (U. S. National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). In light of evidence that administrators are engaging in unconscionable tactics to push students out before graduation, the time has come for schools to make changes in the ways they educate students, rather than hoping that they will simply fit in to the existing mold of what is effective for some. It remains to be seen if changes in the No Child Left Behind Act will push schools to make necessary reforms so that they can fulfill the democratic promise of helping all students learn to their full potential.

Can Community Service-Learning Curb High School Drop Out?

Existing research suggests that there are better ways to teach marginalized students at-risk for dropping out of high school than are being employed by schools now. Studies indicate that successful models include instruction that promotes competence and autonomy, is authentic, personalized and problematized, provides accountability

and feedback, and builds student, teacher, and economic connections. One such model that has proven successful with general school populations is Community Service-Learning (CSL). Unlike community service, where students complete discrete projects unconnected to school curriculum, CSL takes place when schools and/or teachers give students the opportunity to put theoretical concepts learned in the classroom into practice in authentic situations. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2009) defines CSL as “combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills and knowledge content.” CSL programs offer learners the opportunities to challenge preformed expectations by either confirming or disconfirming them. Schekley & Keeton (1997, chap. 3) argue that it is in this disconfirmation process that learners “tend to rethink, reconceptualize, and even transform the ways in which they view the world.” Service-learning helps students explore both the theoretical and practical applications of knowledge learned in school, while also providing them with opportunities to build community, peer and school connections.

The benefits of CSL programs for general populations of students has been well documented and widely researched. In her extensive meta-analysis of service-learning literature, Billig (2004) concluded that well-designed programs help reduce achievement gaps, develop civic responsibility, increase students’ self-esteem and self-efficacy, and decrease disciplinary referrals and behaviors leading to pregnancy or arrest. Another study examined the impact of CSL programs on schools in low socio-economic areas, which may provide some insight into the impact of service-learning

conducted with marginalized students simply because socio-economic status is an indicator for dropping out. In this study by Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier & Benson (2006), in which 1,799 principals from schools selected from the 2001-2002 Common Core of Data Public School Universe and 217,000 diverse (but not nationally representative) 6th - 12th grade students from 300 American communities were surveyed. Principals surveyed answered questions pertaining to their perception of the impact of service-learning on several academic, social, school climate and community indicators. Students completed the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behavior* survey. The researchers found amongst students from low socio-economic backgrounds a correlation between service-learning and academic success variables. Principals in the study also reported that they perceived CSL to improve student attendance, engagement in school, and academic achievement. In addition, the researchers also argue that while schools in low socio-economic communities engage in service-learning the least, they see the greatest benefits when they do (in measures of academic achievement and school engagement). While the positive impacts of service-learning on general populations of students and those from low socio-economic backgrounds provide an interesting starting point for those wishing to address dropout issues, little research exists on the impact that CSL has on students who are marginalized in school.

While one can find many non-scholarly articles by teachers and administrators advocating the use of service-learning with students at-risk for dropping out, little more than anecdotal evidence supports their claims. In the one, small, non-academic study that does exist, one can see the potential for future research

on this subject. In Delany & Corbett's (1994) study, they evaluate the impact of a high school dropout prevention program serving a "small" group of high school students in Florida. The program was designed with a strong service-learning component in which students engaged in a service project at a school for students with severe, multiple disabilities one to two days per week for five months. They gathered data through student questionnaires, interviews with students and the Principal of the school where the service work took place, student journals, and transcript data. They concluded that service-learning activities were correlated with increased academic performance, improved student self-perception of academic abilities, increased self-esteem and school connectedness and improved faculty/student relationships.

Summary

Research clearly indicates that it is possible to identify students who are at-risk of dropping out high school before they drop out, and that there are interventions that have been shown to increase the likelihood that they will persist to graduation. One intervention in greater need of examination is the use of Community Service-Learning with at-risk student populations. Early studies suggest that it may have a positive impact on keeping marginalized students from dropping out of school, but additional research is necessary. This study will attempt to fill in a gap in the research by further investigating the impact of a school-based CSL program on students displaying risk factors for dropping out of high school.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

“For more than 10 years, about a third of students who could be graduating from high school have not been doing so,” (Balfanz & Legters, 2011).

The sheer number of students who drop out of high school each year in the United States is alarming, and carries high costs for both the individuals who fail to matriculate and for our society as a whole. Research suggests that when students participate in instruction that is problematized (Blumenfeld, 1991; Engle & Conant, 2002; Hidi & Reminger, 2006), gives them an opportunity to apply theoretical work in real-world settings (Dewey, 1938 and Borzak 1981), and is relevant to their lives (Edleson & Joseph, 2006), they are more engaged in school. In fact, in a study commissioned by the Gates Foundation, more than 80% of the student dropouts who were interviewed said that they would have been more likely to stay in school if they had engaging learning programs that connected them to the wider community in meaningful work (Bridgeland & Dilulio, 2006). Furthermore, research has shown that students become more invested in school and less likely to drop out when they are able to develop social capital there, which includes forming positive relationships with teachers (Lee & Burkam, 2003; Dunn, et. al., 2004; Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006), peers (Legault, et. al., 2006) and receiving mentorship from adults in school (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Community service-learning is a methodology that incorporates both the creation of engaging, problem-based instruction and the development of the social relationships

that lead to the development of social capital. Research studies over the past decade indicate that well-designed community service-learning projects improve student engagement, reduce achievement gaps, develop civic responsibility, increase students' self-esteem and self-efficacy, and decrease disciplinary referrals and behaviors leading to pregnancy or arrest (Billig, 2004; Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier & Benson, 2006). These findings pertain to general student populations, but few studies have specifically examined the impact of CSL on students exhibiting multiple risk factors for dropping out of high school. This study will focus on the impact that two courses that incorporate democratic teaching principals, the development of social capital and community service-learning have on marginalized students in a rural, Level 4 high school.

Using data from the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses taught at Canal Town High School over the 2011 and 2012 school years, this dissertation study investigates the impact of the courses on students most likely to drop out of high school. It will examine the personal attitudes, school attendance, relationships with teachers and peers, behavioral records, court involvement, and grade point averages of 30 students taking these courses during the academic year, and will profile 6 of these students in greater depth. Student risk factors for drop out will be examined at both the start and the end of the courses, and the study will assess whether participation in these programs reduced risk factors associated with school dropout and/or if it raised student engagement, satisfaction or commitment to school.

Research Questions

- Will the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes have an impact on the relationships that marginalized students develop in school?
- Will the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes have an impact on indicators for school retention such as school attendance, in-school behavior infractions, engagement, grades and relationships with adults in school?
- How do students perceive the impact of Rise Up classes on their ability to handle challenging situations, including the decision to stay in school?

Enduring Understandings

The Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes were designed by the researcher to address the unusually high dropout rate at Canal Town High School (SEE APPENDIX A and APPENDIX B for course syllabi). The courses were created by examining research that identified the reasons students drop out of high school and the interventions that work to keep them there. These findings were incorporated into the design of the classes in hopes of creating an effective intervention for marginalized students. Several enduring understandings are at the heart of the program, including student empowerment, development of social capital, and providing classroom work that is engaging to students. Each of these areas will be explored in more depth below.

Student Empowerment

The Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses strive to empower students as a way to reconnect them to academic learning and school. The programs do this in two significant ways. The first is that they employ democratic teaching principles that push students to build their leadership, communication, advocacy and diplomacy skills. At the start of each semester, students and the instructor create classroom rules together and all class members sign a contract to abide by them throughout the semester (SEE APPENDIX C). If someone violates the rules, students may themselves raise concerns and lead a class discussion about how to deal with the violation. In addition, students brainstorm, vote on and design all of the community service-learning projects that they engage in and have significant say in the overall design of the courses including topics studied, scheduling and resources used. Students are further empowered because their personal experiences are at the center of daily activities and lessons, and as a result, value is placed on their opinions, family culture and shared experience. Lastly, students also have a significant say in the evaluation of their work and their grades through weekly self-evaluations where they reflect on and rate their work and meet with the instructor to defend their evaluation.

The second significant way that the classes empower students is by turning traditional practice on its head. Many of the students in these classes would be seen as individuals in need of service by others, and often are the objects of interventions. However, instead of bringing in peer tutors or groups that provide interventions to *them*, the classes allow *them* to become the individuals providing the interventions. No longer the recipients, they become the providers, taking community service out of the

domain of the privileged. It allows those who are struggling to impact their wider community and believe in their own efficacy.

Developing Social Capital

The Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service program works to help students develop social capital in several critical ways. The community service-learning projects that students engage in give them opportunities to develop higher status roles in school. By providing services to the school community through the projects they engage in and those they design for other teachers in the district, they develop the sense of trustworthiness and obligation central to the creation of social capital. They work regularly with high status community members including administration, teachers and student leaders to coordinate projects. They also work on projects that address needs in the community, providing valuable services to community members outside of school. In addition, the class incorporates frequent school/home contact, often bringing in parents for meetings, social opportunities, and to solicit their input and participation on projects. Another aspect of the class that fosters social capital is that it builds students' communication skills and helps them to develop the academic language necessary to advocate for their needs and participate fully in the culture of school.

Work that Engages Students

The courses also deliver curriculum that engages students. Students direct much of the learning for the course, identifying and creating service-learning projects that they'd like to take part in, identifying topics they'd like to study or explore, and often

providing resources for class lessons and projects. In addition, the work is relevant to their experiences, as students frequently contribute thoughts, opinions and ideas from their lives outside of school. Engagement is also fostered through problem-based projects that occur in real world settings as students seek to solve community issues outside of the school walls through their CSL projects.

These enduring understandings shape and guide all of the projects and lessons of both courses. To further illustrate how these theoretical frameworks shape instruction, the next section will explore a typical weeks in both classes.

A Typical Week in Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service

While there seldom are “typical days” in either course, a clear pattern emerges when one looks at a week’s worth of lessons. In both courses, students share personal experiences daily in the class time known as “Highs and Lows.” During this activity, each student shares a highlight and a challenge that they faced since they were last in class. Students use this time to discuss successes, disappointments, significant traumas, and issues they are having with peers or family members. Often times, students will ask for feedback from other members of the class, and receive a wide variety of suggestions on how to deal with issues that arise. It also gives students the opportunity to provide tangible and moral support to their classmates in both times of celebration and trial.

Students also set goals in both classes on a weekly basis. Every Monday, students chose a school goal and a life goal to work towards during the next seven days. They record these goals in their personal journal and on a large goal chart in the classroom.

They also choose a goal partner, which changes weekly. The partners are responsible for screening the initial goals to make sure they are desirable, achievable, and specific. They then meet every Wednesday and Friday to check on the progress of these goals. Often, students will have out-of-school contact with their goal partners to keep them focused and to provide stronger support. On Monday of the following week, students meet to assess their goal completion, evaluate what helped them accomplish or kept them from accomplishing their goals, and to record their progress in their personal journals and on the classroom goal chart.

Each Wednesday students in both classes participate in “Challenge Day.” This day includes a wide variety of group building activities that push students to find ways of communicating and solving problems in stressful or challenging situations. For example, in the “Hot Chocolate River” activity, students might be given ten paper plates and told that they can use the plates to cross a one hundred foot area in which the only contact they can have with the floor is atop the paper plates. Paper plates are taken away when students “lose contact” with them. Frequently during this activity, students will lose 30% of their plates due to not fully understanding the rules, distraction or carelessness. The group can then “buy back” plates if one of the members accepts a consequence (which often includes being blindfolded, losing the ability to speak or use a limb). Following the completion of the activity or the time period allotted to complete it, students engage in a debriefing session where they discuss the strengths of the group, where and how communication broke down or was effective, and how the group could improve its performance in future activities (SEE APPENDIX D for additional activities). In the Leadership in Community Service

class, students begin with the group building activities outlined above, but quickly progress to training in how to become group facilitators and better observe group dynamics and communication. This work is done in conjunction with the Marshfield Community College's Outdoor Leadership program with the aim that students will then facilitate these activities at the high school's Unity Day in the late spring. In addition LCS students also work to design and construct new group building "elements" on the school campus. These projects involve stationary and permanent structures that require significant amounts labor to complete. These projects then become part of the Rise Up "Challenge Day" curriculum.

One to two days of the week are dedicated to CSL projects, though this can vary week to week and depend on the project at hand. Students often travel off-site for these projects. Other days are spent on topics centering on leadership, self-esteem, identifying and creating support networks and developing community. On these days, students often participate in discussions, brainstorming sessions and hands-on activities.

Each Friday, students complete a self-evaluation in which they reflect on their work over the past week in each of the courses five goals: leadership development, communication, community building, goal setting, and community service. Students then meet with the researcher to discuss their progress in each of the areas, reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement, and to agree upon a grade for their work during the week. Most Fridays, they also post comments and reflections on our class blog, which highlights work they've done for that week (SEE APPENDIX E for sample self-reflection).

Table 3: Sample Rise Up Week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meeting with Goal Partner to assess last week's goals -Goal Setting for new week -Creating and sharing identity wheels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group Activity and Discussion: Stereotypes and Personal Identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge Day Activities -Human Knot -Hot Chocolate River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Service Day -Work with CHAPS organization to help train a service dog for a local autistic child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete self-assessment -Meet with instructor to discuss self-assessment -Reflect on week on class blog

Table 4: Sample Leadership in Community Service Week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meeting with Goal Partner to assess last week's goals -Goal Setting for new week -Distinguishing between community service, community service-learning, and community based learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Preparing for a visit with a potential cooperating teacher who would like to incorporate CSL into her class. -Preparing for a visit by a local partner, who may serve as a partner for a CSL project. -Assigning interview questions and structuring teacher interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge Day Activities -Students build and pilot use of Flintstone Feet (a new challenge day activity for Rise Up classes to use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Visit by potential cooperating teacher and interview about potential CSL collaboration -Visit by local farmer and interview about potential CSL collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete self-assessment -Meet with instructor to discuss self-assessment -Reflect on week on class blog -Establish schedule for following week based on information gathered in Thursday's interviews.

It is under this framework that the programs operated. These experiences, as well as follow up interviews and a teacher journal, provided the data for the research outlined below.

Research Methods

In this research study, both qualitative and quantitative data were used. Data was gathered from multiple sources generated by students, teacher observations, interviews and surveys, as well as student records. The intent of these methods was to discover the impacts of these programs on the relationships, indicators for dropout and persistence on students displaying multiple risk factors for dropping out of high school.

Participants

Approximately 60 students took the Rise Up or Leadership in Community Service classes during the 2011 and 2012 school years at Canal Town High School. Students were in grades 9-12, ranged in age from 14 - 19 years old, and approximately 60% of them exhibited between five and fourteen indicators for being at risk for dropping out of school including low socio-economic status, failing grades, retention, connection to at-risk peers, behavior issues in school, court involvement, low grade point average, homelessness, attendance issues, providing home care for family members, needing to contribute to the home's finances, and lack of educational support at home. Thirty of these participants identified as having multiple risk factors for dropping out were tracked for the purposes of this study.

Canal Town High School is part of a rural school district identified as “high need” (over 50% of students fall below the federal poverty line). The school has also been designated a “Level 4” school by the state of Massachusetts, which indicates significant need for improving student performance and has resulted in increased state oversight of the district. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011b). While the district was developing a plan to move the school out of Level 4 status, the superintendent announced at a faculty meeting in the Spring of 2011 that he anticipated the district being moved to “Level 5” status (which would involve a state takeover) within a year’s time (K. Lamm, personal communication, April 8, 2011). However, under the leadership of a new superintendent, the state has granted a one-year reprieve to BWRSD to complete and implement a turn-around plan approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Guided Questions

A variety of sources were used to collect data about the impact the Leadership in Community Service and Rise Up courses had on student relationships, perceptions and persistence in school. Bi-weekly, students in both classes were asked to answer guided questions on their class blogs. Questions focused on their service projects, personal growth, and the relationships that they formed in class. Students contributed nine blog entries over the course of the semester and the responses provided student narratives for the study (SEE APPENDIX F for sample questions).

Surveys

Students also completed pre- and post-class surveys regarding their experiences. These surveys were initially administered as a condition of the Learn and Serve grant awarded for work in the Leadership in Community Service class. The researcher expanded the use of the surveys to the Rise Up course and continued its use in the LCS course after the grant expired as a way of gathering additional feedback and data from students. Each Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service class in the study was surveyed, and, in total, 60 students participated. The surveys included questions pertaining to attitudes about school, relationships with peers and teachers, persistence in challenging situations and student agency (SEE APPENDIX G for surveys).

Focus Groups

The researcher also conducted focus group interviews with students in the Rise Up and the Leadership in Community Service classes and follow up interviews with students who took Rise Up and dropped out of high school. All students who took the courses were invited to participate in the interviews and from this pool, fifteen students were randomly chosen to participate. The researcher emphasized to students that no academic benefit or penalty would result from either participation or non-participation in the interviews, and snacks were provided for those who took part. Focus groups of five students each were interviewed for approximately one hour by the researcher after school hours in her classroom. A semi-structured interview method was used in which participants shared personal perspectives in response to open-ended questions from the researcher (Seidman, 1998) (SEE APPENDIX H). Opportunities were provided for students to include additional thoughts or expand on any of the

questions they found interesting or challenging. The interviews were audio taped, and after reviewing transcripts, the researcher followed up with students when specific questions arose or more information was needed. At the end of the interviews students were asked to create “relationship maps,” where they described their relationships in school before taking Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service and after taking the classes (SEE APPENDIX I). Small groups of students later met with the researcher during the school’s study hall period in her classroom (or at an off-campus location for those who were no longer at school) and reviewed transcripts and quotes to be used in the study. Students had the opportunity to amend or delete their responses.

Reflection Journal

The researcher also kept a daily reflective journal about conversations, observations, and student interactions during CSL projects and class activities. These observations are included as data in this study. Students had the opportunity to review their quotes from these observations during their interview transcript review session and to amend or exclude this data from the study.

Student Records

Student records were also used to examine student outcomes. School records regarding courses taken, attendance, school rule and behavior infractions, and grades were examined for the semester prior to the student taking the courses and during the semester he/she took the course. This data provided a more complete picture of the

impact of the course on relationships, persistence to graduation, and indicators for dropout.

Chapter 4 provides a more in-depth analysis of six students who took at least one of the courses. This in-depth, outcome driven sample provides a clearer picture of students and the impact the courses had on them. For these students, attendance, behavior, grades and school records will be analyzed for *three* years prior to their participation in the program and up until their graduation, the time they dropout, or through the last semester they complete at the conclusion of the study.

Student identifiers will also be examined to identify students who exhibit risk factors for dropping out of school. Students in the Rise Up and LCS classes will be identified by gender, grade point average, attendance, languages spoken, socioeconomic status, school disciplinary records, school performance, court involvement, homelessness, connection to at-risk peers, requirement that they care for family members, and the number of Honors/AP courses taken. These categories will create a more thorough picture of those students involved in the courses and help identify the impact the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service programs have on marginalized students.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the dissertation study in the form of a series of profiles of students who took the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes. The profiles present a snapshot of the students' school, home and life experiences from three years prior to taking the courses until the end of the study period, their graduation, or up to the time they dropped out of high school. Six students were selected from the sixty who were enrolled in the course to provide an in-depth outcome sample of students who took the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes. The students profiled below fall into three categories based on their school outcomes: students who dropped out, those with mixed results, and those who made a successful turnaround in school.

Students Who Dropped Out

Student Profile One

Marcy is a creative, artistic young woman who took the Rise Up Course during her third year in high school. She lived with her parents, two older sisters and younger brother. Up until grade six, she attended elementary school in the Barstow-Waterton School District, but then attended a local charter school for half of her 7th grade year. The researcher first had her as a student in 7th grade when her family pulled her from the charter school and she returned to the district's middle school for the second semester of that year. At that time, she presented as a shy, offbeat young lady who had

no involvement in the extra-curricular life of the school. She often headed home immediately after school to help her mother work in her in-home day care center.

Even in 7th grade, Marcy had a challenging relationship with her family and was often at odds with her parents, particularly with her mother. Family fights and disagreements about school, rules and expectations at home, self-expression and friends were part of her daily life from middle school on. In the Rise Up class, she often discussed feeling that her parents didn't understand her and the pressure she felt from them to be like her older sisters who were athletes and more traditional girls. Early in the course, as referenced in the field notes, she shared with the class,

My parents don't like me for who I am. They always want me to be like K_____ or K_____ and play softball and be all pretty. I'm not that person. Most of the time I feel like they hate me and nothing that I do will ever be good enough for them because I'm not who they want me to be.

She revealed to the class that same semester that she had been diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder in middle school and was on a 504 plan as a result. She often reported in class that she had issues with adults in her life, including her parents, who she felt tried to excessively control her.

Marcy also discussed with the class that she received intermittent in-school counseling services from the school psychologist from 7th grade until she left school. In her final two years in high school, she also received extensive support from her guidance counselor, who met with her weekly.

Marcy's high school experience illustrated progressive levels of disconnectedness over time as demonstrated in her grades and relationships with peers engaging in risky behaviors. During her Freshman year of high school, Marcy earned a 73.3 grade point

average and passed all of her classes that year except for Physical Education. Her grades did decline over the course of the year, however. During the first semester, she earned mostly A's and B's, while she earned mostly C's and D's during the second. She missed 8 days of school that year, and her tardiness was excessive at 19 days. Her behavior was school-appropriate, as she had only one behavior referral that year to the interventionist for using her cell phone in school.

During her Sophomore year of school, Marcy demonstrated clear indicators of detachment. That year, her GPA plummeted to 35.8, and she failed five courses, four of which were in the first semester. She failed English 10 twice that year, Geometry, and two Physical Education courses. Her absences doubled to 16 for the year, and she was tardy 5 times. Her behavior remained consistently strong, as she continued to have no behavior referrals to the interventionist that year.

Marcy's social relationships also changed over time. During her Freshmen year of high school, she reported in the Rise Up class that she had a wide variety of friends in school, from students she called "artistic" to "jocks" to "preps." However, at the end of her Sophomore year she began dating a former graduate who was three years her senior. As her second Sophomore year began and as a result of this new relationship, her social circle expanded to include a variety of older friends. Several of these new friends had dropped out of high school and were unemployed, living on welfare and regularly abusing alcohol and illegal drugs. At the time, Marcy did not approve of the behavior she was seeing and tried to intervene to influence these new friends' choices. According to the field notes, she reported to the class one day,

We were over at Mark's house the other day and he doesn't have heat because he spends all his welfare money on drugs. I keep

telling him that he needs to get clean because it's stupid how he's living and he's going to regret it. He's just high all the time.

That semester, she set life goals in class around counseling these friends about their drug and alcohol use. However, as a result of these new friendships, she reported in class that several of her other in-school friends and her family members had begun distancing themselves from her. The social isolation that she had occasionally felt prior to that point grew to palpable levels.

During the first semester of her second Sophomore year Marcy enrolled in Rise Up. That year, she demonstrated signs of academic improvement, social/emotional growth and the development of social capital amongst school-positive students. Marcy's grades rose during the first semester, and her 66.4 GPA represented the first time she had a passing average in three semesters in high school. While she did fail gym for the fourth time that semester, she passed all of her academic courses for the first time since her Freshman year. Her attendance remained consistent, and she saw a nominal bump in her behavior referrals (from 0 to 2 incidents) over the course of the semester.

Her relationships with her parents and adults at school also showed some improvement during this semester. She would frequently talk through disagreements she had with her mother and with other teachers in school with students in the Rise Up class and ask for feedback. She was open to other students' and the researcher's suggestions about how to deal with conflicts that arose, and reported having success mediating some of the issues. Her relationship with her parents, from her perspective, improved during this time, as recorded in the researcher's field notes.

Things have gotten better with my mom, but they're still not perfect. I feel like I can talk to her more and at least we're not screaming at each

other all the time. When [this last incident] happened, I told her I needed to take a break before we talked about it and it really helped me to calm down.

She also demonstrated signs of improved relationships with other teachers, particularly the Geometry teacher with whom she engaged in constant arguments with at the start of the semester. The field notes indicate a drop in Marcy's complaints about the teacher or his class by 75% from the start to the end of the semester. Clearly, she had improved the quality of her relationships with adults whom she was oppositional towards over the course of the semester.

Marcy also built social capital at school, and reported that her relationships with peers in the Rise Up course gave her a network of support she did not really have at school at that time. She shared with the researcher one day after class,

Getting to know A_____ and A_____ has really helped me to realize that I'm not the only person going through stuff. When A_____’s grandfather was sick, I wrote him that note and then we talked about it on the phone one night. Supporting him made me have to deal with my grandpa dying and he helped me so much. He's become one of my best friends.

She regularly talked to and spent time with these students outside of class, both of whom had positive attitudes towards school and provided her with emotional support and an increased amount of social capital amongst school-based peers.

Marcy also became very invested and engaged in the CSL projects designed by the class, particularly those that involved senior citizens in our community. The class worked with a local senior center, taking part in their monthly “Coffee and Conversation” get-togethers and their food distribution program. She befriended several seniors who showed complete support for the artistic person she was,

complementing her on her pink hair and off-beat clothing choices. “I loved going to the Senior Center,” she said in her exit interview.

Knowing I was helping them to have enough food and to have someone to talk to made me feel good, like I was doing something important. Then I’d see them all in church, which was always fun.

These friendships resulted in some unexpected interactions with her parents. One of the senior citizens intimated to the researcher that when Marcy’s mother made a snide comment to her in church about Marcy’s pink hair, she told her mother out-right that she was over-reacting and that Marcy was perfect just the way she was. Not only was Marcy invested in the projects, but they provided tangible connections to adults in the community who helped build her social capital in it.

Marcy’s behavior and attendance that semester continued to be within school-acceptable levels. She missed five days of school that semester, an improvement over her attendance patterns from the previous year. While she did have challenges with her Geometry teacher and had several parent conferences regarding her behavior and effort in that class, she had only two referrals to the interventionist that semester.

During the semester following Rise Up, Marcy demonstrated a decline in academic performance and school involvement. She had originally been scheduled to take the Leadership in Community Service course, but the course conflicted with the 10th grade English course she was required to take for a third time. She was un-enrolled from the LCS course, and in hopes of compensating for the loss, she was given one block of an academic support class daily and one block every other day. According to the school psychologist, even though these services were not required by Massachusetts state law for a 504 plan, the school sometimes made an exception to this rule. This intervention

seemed to have little effect, as her GPA for that semester dropped to 59.75. She had only two academic classes; English, which she passed with a 61, and History, which she failed with a 28.

A significant life event occurred for Marcy this semester. After leaving the Rise Up class, her social interactions with peers engaging in risky behaviors increased, as did her social isolation at school. One of her closest friends at school dropped out, and the two peers whom she was close to in Rise Up the semester before had graduated. Her remaining in-school friends had significant truancy rates and Marcy reported to the researcher in a follow up interview that:

Things started to fall apart for me then. I didn't have anyone to hang out with at lunch and I didn't know anyone in my classes. It sucked. I had to take that stupid English class again and everyone knew I was a failure. The only people I had left were teachers.

Marcy began to skip school to hang out with her older friends and her in-school friends who were also skipping school. Not happy about Marcy's choices and her continued refusal to abide by house rules, her parents gave her an ultimatum: change her behavior or move out. Marcy chose to leave, and moved in with a series of friends over the summer and into the fall. When she returned to school the following semester, she had no financial support and was added to the free lunch rolls with assistance from the researcher. That semester, both the researcher and her guidance counselor facilitated a connection to a local organization that provided housing for homeless teens, but she decided that she did not want to get an apartment through the program because it had too many rules around curfew and behavior for participants. She continued to live with friends and her grades hovered at a 59.8 GPA for the semester. Her absences showed a

significant increase from the previous semester, rising 430% from 5 to 27 days. She also reported to the researcher in a follow up interview that her drug and alcohol use escalated during this time.

Marcy dropped out of school for the first time the following semester. She was asked to leave several of the friends' homes she was staying at, and finally moved back in with her parents at the end of the fall with the condition that she re-enroll in school that spring. When she returned to school, she remained from February to early April. Her relationships with her parents continued to deteriorate over the course of the semester, she had failing grades in all of her classes, regularly abused illegal substances and had only two friends who remained in school, both of whom missed more than 20 days that semester. Marcy struggled during her time back at school and her few social connections made her feel isolated. She reflected on the time in her follow-up interview:

I wanted to do my own thing and I couldn't stand school. I didn't like the work and I didn't like the people at the school. Half the time they think they're better than everyone else and I don't like feeling stared at like I'm a freak. You know how I dress and how I am. It's not always fun.

She further intimated in that interview that this social isolation and the challenges at home led her to use drugs and alcohol on a regular basis and to start skipping school. She missed 18 days during the three month period she stayed in school that year.

Marcy dropped out of school for the second time in the spring of that year. She met with the researcher during the summer for a final interview and reported that she was living in a local homeless encampment, spending time with new friends in their 20's who lived there, and had escalated her drug and alcohol use.

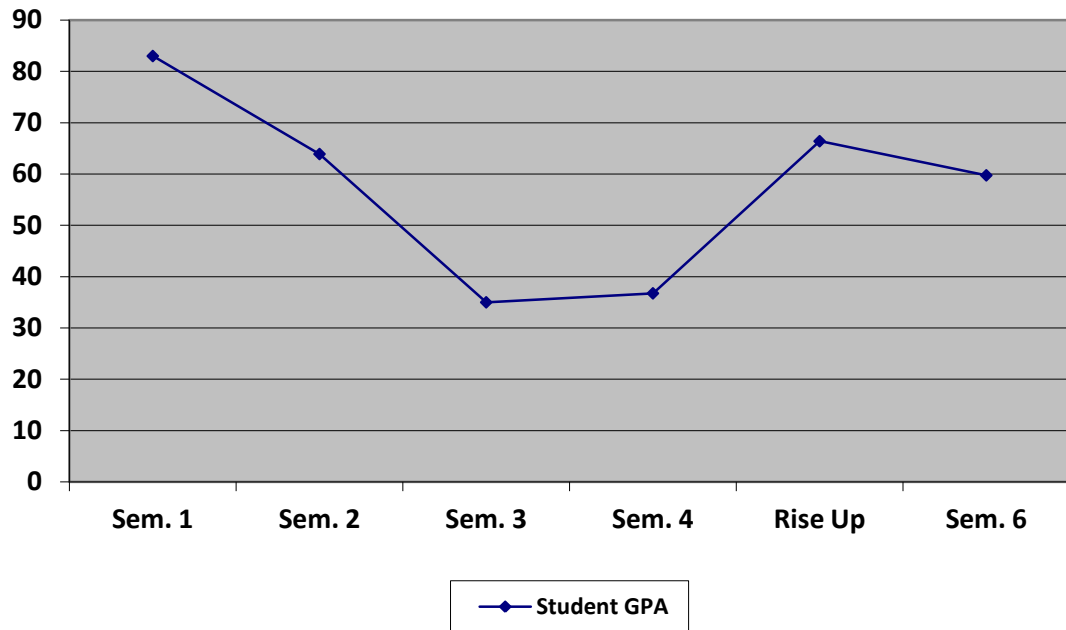


Figure 4: Student 1 GPA History.

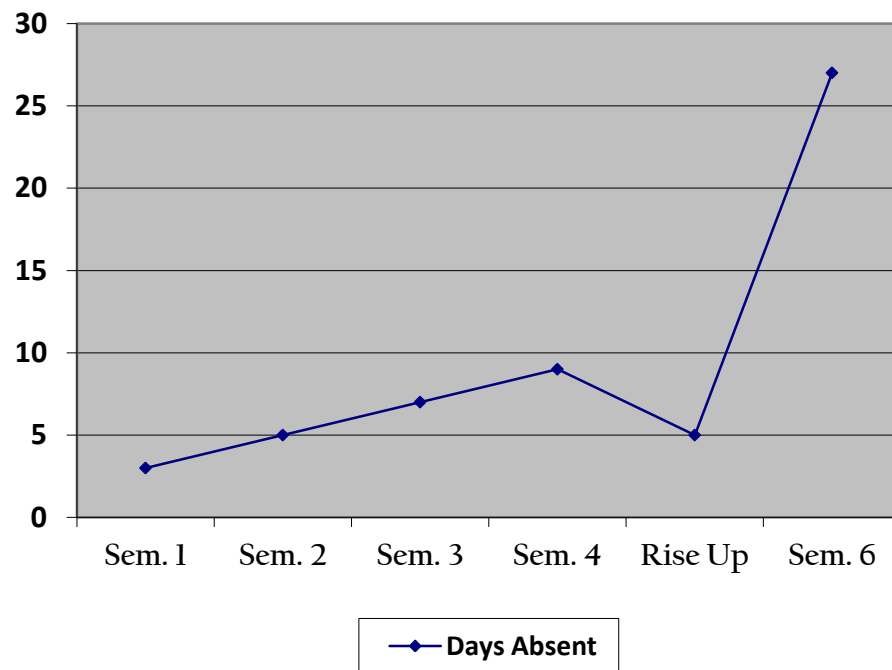


Figure 5: Student 1 Attendance History.

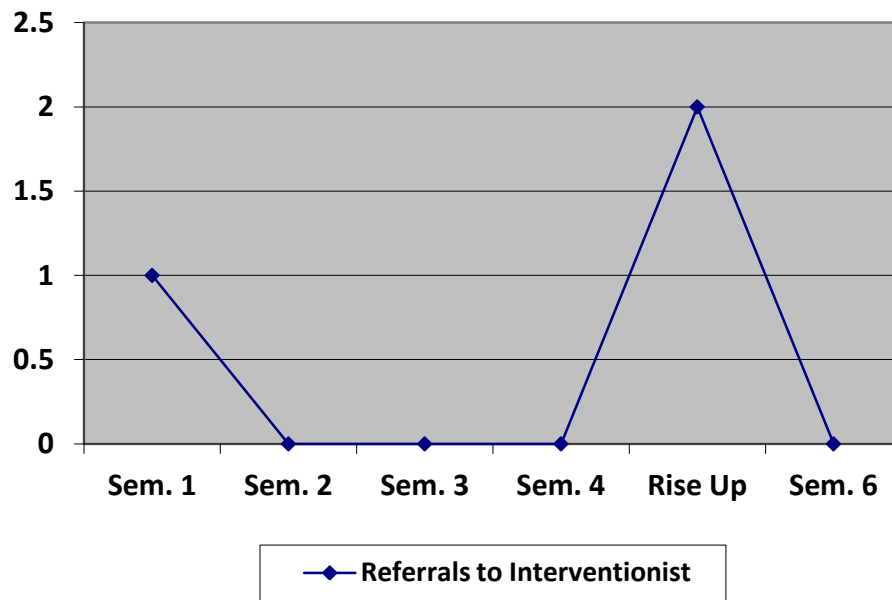


Figure 6: Student Behavior History

Student Profile Two

Mick was a Freshman when he took Rise Up in the Spring semester of that year. A funny and outspoken student, his school experience up to that point had been marked by academic failure and behavior issues. In middle school, he was required to repeat 7th grade. During his first 7th grade year, his GPA was a 59 and he failed English, Math, Math Applications and Family and Consumer Science. His attendance was solid, however, and he missed only five days of school that year. He was given the opportunity to make up both the English and Math classes in summer school, and if he passed them, he would be promoted to 8th grade. That summer, he took that English course with the researcher. He was asked to leave the both the English and Math

classes mid-session due to behavior issues that included excessive disruptions to other students and refusal to do any class related work. As a result, he repeated 7th grade.

During his second 7th grade year, Mick continued to struggle academically, but he passed all of his classes that year except Math Applications with a GPA of 69.

According to the field notes, Mick discussed in the Rise Up course that mid-way through that year he was put on an IEP and started receiving Academic Support services, including a daily block of instruction and found this to be helpful to him.

“Getting on the IEP helped somewhat,” he said in his follow-up interview, “I got some help in math and English and it gave me a break during the day.” While his first semester that year was marked by failure of both of his math classes, his grades improved significantly during the second half of the year. That year Mick’s attendance was also an issue, as his absences jumped to 14.5 and he was tardy 5 times. Behavior was also a major area of concern for Mick that year, as he had 18 referrals to the interventionist primarily for disruptive behavior and two out-of-school suspensions for minor assault and bringing a weapon to school.

Mick began 8th grade on an academic high note, passing every class the first quarter of that year. However, his grades showed a sharp decline beginning in the 2nd quarter of the year. By June, he had failed both English and Social Studies, and his GPA was a 61.8. He showed slight progress in the area of attendance, as his absences declined slightly to 12.5 for the year, however his tardies increased to 15. His behavior that year was marked by 13 referrals to the interventionist, which included two in-school suspensions for use of inappropriate language towards students and staff, bullying, and disruptive behavior. In addition, he

was out-of-school suspended twice that year for possession of a weapon and assault.

Throughout this year and all of his subsequent years in the Barstow-Waterton School District, Mick received counseling support. He freely discussed in the Rise Up course that he saw a school counselor weekly. According to him, the counselor developed a close relationship with both he and his family over the course of several years and that it was extremely beneficial to him emotionally. In his follow-up interview, he said,

Mr. H _____ was the only person in middle school I had any kind of relationship with. I had one friend who was a very bad influence on me, but he almost never showed up for school. If it wasn't for Mr. H _____, I don't think I would have made it through 8th grade.

Mick's lack of connections in school made it extremely difficult for him to build social capital and led to him feeling isolated and disengaged.

In high school, Mick's pattern of academic challenges continued. During the first semester of his Freshman year, he failed both science and pre-algebra, but passed English and his academic support class. His GPA for the semester was a 63.5 and he had 12 referrals to the Interventionist. He was enrolled in the Rise Up course the following semester.

During the Rise Up course, Mick immediately became one of the leaders of the class. He was incredibly enthusiastic about the community projects and about the group building activities they participated in, showing authentic engagement in the work that the class did. In fact, Mick was so proud of one project, baking and selling 600 cupcakes to raise money for a camp for

children with serious illnesses, he continued to talk about it every time he saw the researcher over the next year. “It might be hard to believe that this group of kids made 600 cupcakes,” he wrote in our class blog, “But we raised a lot of money for Hole in the Wall Gang Camp and there’s a kid who got to go to camp because of us.” His pride and investment in these projects often led Mick to go above and beyond, and he would often stay after class and through his lunch time to finish work that hadn’t been completed or to help with final clean-up of activities. Accordingly, Mick’s behavior was always appropriate, and he was never removed from the class or even asked to take a break.

Over the course of the semester, Mick developed several close friendships with other students which extended to outside of school time. Mick was also extremely open about his life and he frequently discussed his personal challenges at school. He often spoke about how he saw the class as an opportunity to change his school identity and to form new relationships. He said in the follow-up interview,

So I tried to be completely myself in RU, which is what you [the researcher] suggested, actually, or else I probably wouldn’t have done it because I was still pretty much closed in then. I didn’t know any of these people but I thought I’d take a chance, take a risk and be me.

The course provided Mick a forum to build social capital by giving him the opportunity to make authentic personal connections with other students. The pride he took in his work and the investment he made in taking personal risk indicated that he was truly engaged in the course.

Mick’s success in the Rise Up course that semester did not translate to other academic areas, however. He failed his academic support class and his pre-Algebra

class for the second time, though he did pass History. He ended the semester with a GPA of 54. His absences remained steady at 12 for the year, but only four of them occurred during the semester he took Rise Up. His tardies that year also rose to 18. Behaviorally, his pattern of disruptive behavior during school continued with 19 referrals (7 of which occurred during the semester he took Rise Up) to the interventionist for cutting class, using inappropriate language, and disrupting class. However, he did not receive any in or out-of-school suspensions for the year.

Mick openly discussed his conflicting emotions about dropping out of school during the course of the semester. Personally, he was inclined to drop out, but his mother's expectation that he graduate kept him in school:

The only reason I stayed in school even after Freshman year was to try and hold on for my Mom's sake because she was really worried about me dropping out and what would happen. She was really worried that if I dropped out of school I would really fall off the deep end emotionally and mentally.

His father had not graduated from high school, and although he regularly encouraged Mick to persist in school, Mick held him up as an example of someone whom the lack of education didn't equate to a lack of success in life. In class one day, he said of his father, "My dad and I love to work. That's what we do. And he never finished high school and he's got a good job" (His father worked as a sales clerk at Home Depot). Mick often voiced the sentiment in class that hard work was far more virtuous than an education.

Further complicating his thoughts on dropping out was the fact that Mick's family struggled financially. He shared in class that he received free lunch at school, lived in subsidized housing and his family frequently had

difficulties paying their bills. He often voiced the sentiment that he wanted to leave school so he could work to help financially support his family.

Mick completed one more semester the following year that included a highly modified school schedule. The Student Support Team, which is a group that consists of the Principal, Vice Principal, Interventionist, and school counselors, intervened and created this new schedule in hopes of keeping Mick in school. Under this half day schedule, he took a 10th grade English class and a math class conducted by his Special Education teacher. He also received credit for a job that he had recently been hired for at the Salvation Army under the school's school-to-work program. He was allowed to come into school mid-morning and leave just after lunch to accommodate his work schedule and his dislike of early morning hours. He failed English that semester and barely passed math with a 60, earning only a 45 GPA. His attendance stayed relatively steady at 6 absences for the semester. He received 12 referrals to the interventionist during the semester, almost all from his math class, for disrespectful behavior, use of communication devices, and abuse of the school's internet policy.

Mick made the decision to drop out of high school at the start of the next semester. While he struggled with the idea because he knew it would disappoint his mother, he was resolved to leave. He said of his decision in his follow up interview,

I felt trapped at school. I knew that everyone had the best intentions but it just wasn't helping at all. There was no way I was going to stay back again, and that was going to happen. School is important, but the school system just wasn't working for me. So I finally just gave up. I said, "I'm just gonna go home and tell my mother." Which was a really hard conversation.

His decision to drop out was also a financial one, as he believed working made more sense to him than staying in school and not earning an income.

In this economy, as hard as it is to find a job, I was trying to hold on to my job more than school at that point because I knew that even if I didn't get my high school diploma, I would still have money somehow because of that job.

Mick's decision to leave was based on his lack of connection to school, financial issues, and failure to see school as pathway to a better economic future for himself. Despite the fact that he knew it would be disappointing to his mother, who clearly encouraged him to stay in school, he dropped out half way through his Sophomore year.

After dropping out of school, Mick continued to live with his parents and work at the Salvation Army. In a final interview with the researcher, he reported that he had lost his job after six months when he was fired for insubordination. At that time, he was searching for a job and mentioned that he was contemplating taking a GED course, but had no timeline for working towards it.

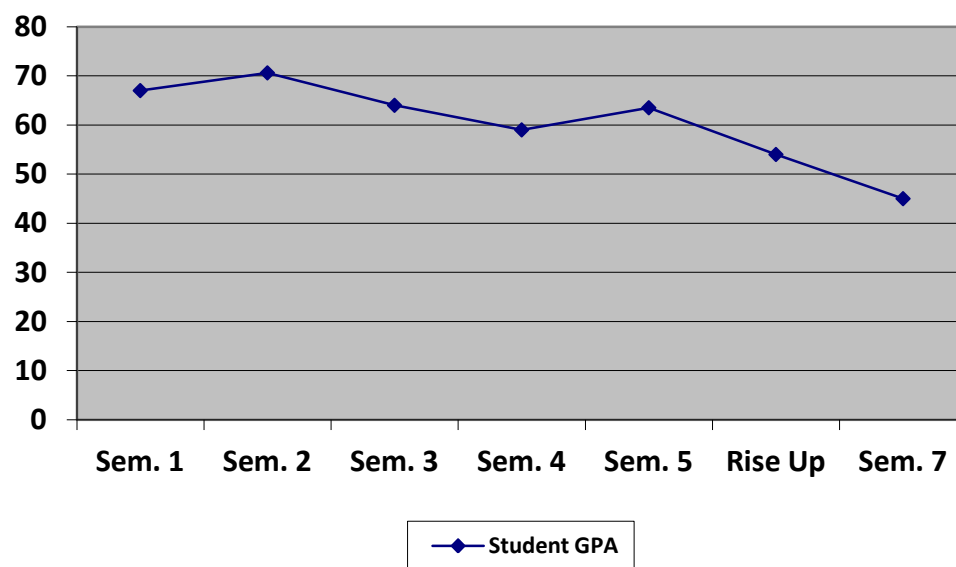


Figure 7: Student 2 GPA History.

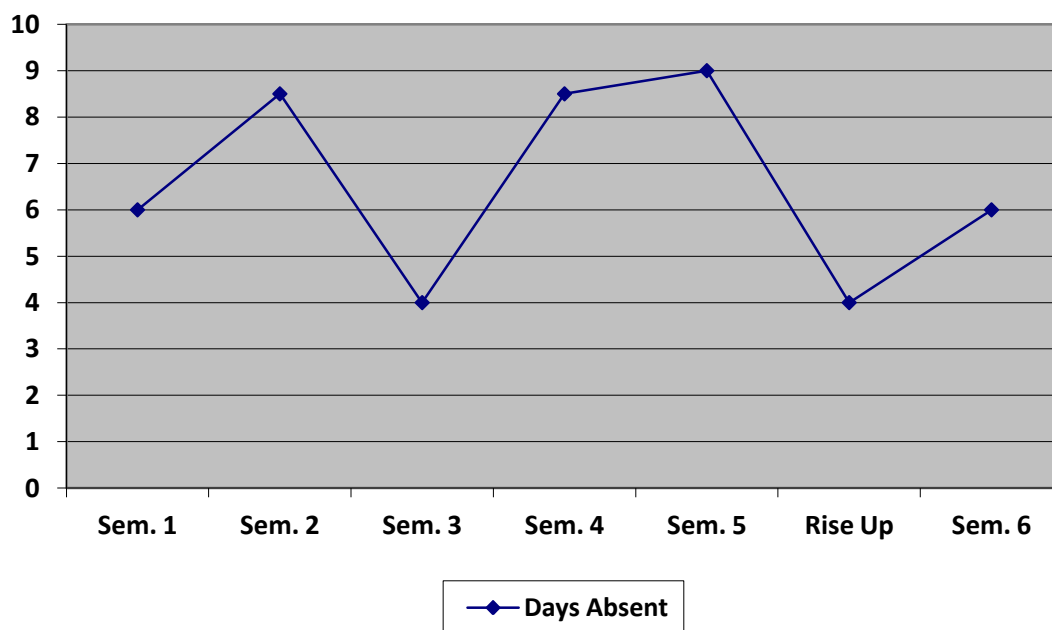


Figure 8: Student 2 Attendance History.

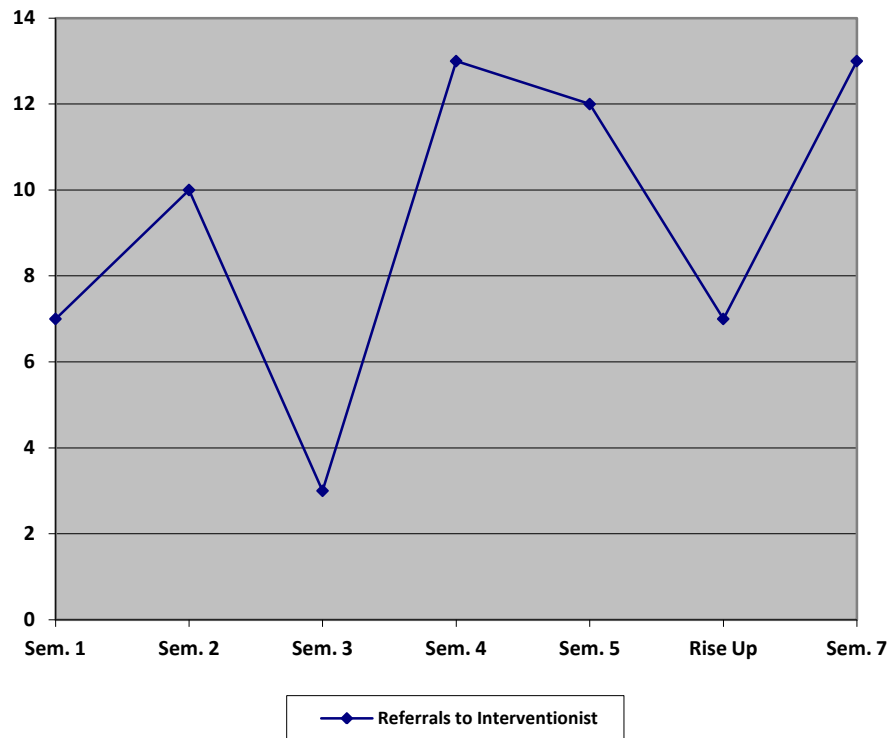


Figure 9: Student 2 Behavior Referral History.

Students With Mixed Results

Student Profile Three

Lee took Rise Up during her final semester of her senior year. She struggled significantly during her early years of high school, and spoke with regularity about challenges she faced during that time in the Rise Up class. She suffered a significant personal trauma during her second year in high school when her mother died after a long illness. She had extremely limited contact with her biological father, who was incarcerated at the time of her mother's death. As a result, she became a ward of the state when she was 15 year old and moved in with her aunt.

The first two years of Lee's high school career were marked by outright failure. In that time, she failed 17 out of the 18 courses that she was enrolled in. The only course

she passed was Reconnecting Youth, an anti-drug and social skills class taught by the guidance counselor. In October of her Sophomore year, her mother died from complications with cancer. During this period she missed significant amounts of school--46 days her first year and 56 days her second year--and on the days she was in school, she was tardy 42 and 91 days respectively.

Lee was extremely socially isolated from both adults and students at school during these years. It was during this time period that the researcher first met Lee, who was a student in her U.S. History course. Lee refused to speak in the class and seldom acknowledged the researcher. An independent study program was set up with the Special Education teacher to allow her to work independently on her history work, but frequent absence and a reluctance to complete work resulted in failure of the class. Additionally, Lee seldom spoke to other students, but when she did, it was often to tell them that she didn't approve of their actions or how they were treating her or other students. "I was angry," she said of the time during her final interview,

I didn't want anyone near me and there were all these stupid people whining about their stupid, drama-filled problems that were just ridiculous. There were days I just wanted to give people a smack down.

Generally, however, Lee's response to stressful or upsetting situations was to completely shut down and refuse to communicate with anyone around her. As a result, and by her own account in the Rise Up class, most students in school avoided interaction with her, and the few friends she did have struggled academically and socially. Unsurprisingly, she did not participate in the extra-curricular life of school in any way.

Lee did receive support at school in the form of counseling. As recorded in the field notes, Lee discussed that she received counseling services throughout her high school years and had a regularly scheduled weekly appointment with a school psychologist. She also had an Individual Education Plan that provided daily special education support services.

During Lee's third and fourth years in high school, the Student Services Team moved her to the high school's Pre-vocational or "Life Skills" program which specialized in working with students with developmental delays. Lee took several classes in this self-contained program during these years, including English, reading and science. She did continue to have some mainstreamed classes over the two year period including Art, Geometry, Algebra and Child Development. Academically, Lee's work showed dramatic improvement. She earned a 73 grade point average for her third year of high school and an 83 her fourth year. By her own report in the Rise Up course, this program helped Lee become far more social with other students and staff members, and built her confidence both academically and socially.

Being in Ms. V's class was awesome. I understood the work and because it was a small class I didn't really get stressed out. The teachers were really nice and I felt like I had people who I could talk to about stuff if I needed to.

While her academic performance was greatly improved, her attendance, while also far better, still indicated some detachment from school. She missed 9 days of school her third year of high school and 17 her fourth year, and had 18 and 22 tardies respectively.

In her final year of high school, she was moved out of the Life Skills program and began receiving services from a traditional special education teacher. By Lee's report in Rise Up class, the relationship she developed with this teacher was quite close and

she could use her room as a time out area if she got stressed out in another class. “Ms. K is awesome. She has my back,” she said of the teacher in class one day. She received one block of academic support daily and an additional block of academic support every other day to provide her with instruction in her mainstreamed classes. The special education teacher also arranged an independent study for Lee with the 12th grade English teacher that was done with her in the special education room.

Socially, her fifth year of high school was marked by social isolation. Lee’s few friends had graduated and she felt left behind and socially isolated. “It totally sucked,” she said in an interview about the start of the year, “Everybody was gone and I was stuck here. It was just stupid. I didn’t have any friends and I didn’t want to be here. I just wanted out.” She felt disenfranchised from school except for the few adults with whom she had made connections over the past several years. The researcher had her in her first semester Government class, and a new relationship was forged that laid the groundwork for her participation in Rise Up the following semester. On several occasions during this time, she articulated to the researcher that she was looking forward to taking the Rise Up course.

Lee had an additional stress placed on her during that fall. Her housing situation became complicated when her aunt kicked her out in December and she went to live with her sister and her sister’s two children in a neighboring town. In order to get to school, Lee had to take a public bus because her sister didn’t have a car. “Moving to Marshfield sucked,” she said of the move in her final interview,

I have to get up so early and walk fifteen minutes to catch the bus and if I miss it I can’t get here until noon. So at that point I just think, “Why bother?” Especially on days when I don’t really want to come. And

my sister doesn't really care if I go to school or not, so it's hard for me to care some days.

This complication, while it impacted her Fall semester only slightly, would have a serious impact on her during the Spring semester of that year.

She finished the Fall semester on an academic high note, earning a GPA of 80, her highest to date in high school. She missed six days of school, which was also a significant improvement from previous years. Her school behavior continued to be strong, as she had only one referral to the interventionist for violation of the school's internet policy.

As the Rise Up course began the next semester, Lee's participation was tentative but showed incredible progress over the course of the semester. At first, she was reluctant to participate, but as the semester wore on, she became progressively more willing to share personal issues and experiences and to take a real leadership role in the class.

"I'm surprised by how much I talk in this class," she wrote on the class blog, "But I feel like this is a family and I could tell people anything." As one of the older students, she frequently talked to younger students about her high school experience, her mother's passing, the life choices she regretted and what she wished she'd done differently.

Students began to look up to her and a great deal of respect between students emerged within the cohort. As a result, Lee began to build her social capital with other students.

Another indication that Lee was invested in the course was her constant presence. In all of her courses, she was given permission to take breaks in the special education room if she needed them. In most classes, according to her Special Education teacher, she would make use of these breaks nearly every day. According to the field notes, she asked to leave the Rise Up class only 4 times during the semester. Her engagement and

investment in the course was evidenced by her active participation, her willingness to share personal details of her life, and her constant presence.

Lee was also very invested in the CSL projects that the class took on. In particular, she was extremely enthusiastic about the project that involved students in the Life Skills program. Rise Up students helped train students for the Special Olympics and travelled with them to the games. Lee, a self-professed anti-athlete and introvert, was frequently seen running with students, modeling how to throw a shot-put and cheering wildly on the field during training sessions. In her closing interview, she said of the experience,

I loved working with the Lifeskills class. It made me feel so happy to work with those kids. Even though I hate all sports, doing it with them wasn't bad because I knew that I was making them excited about being able to do sports.

This project was an example of how the program turns the idea of service on its head, giving Lee the opportunity to provide service to a group of students that she had been a part of just a year before.

In addition to displaying investment in class projects, Lee built deeper social connections in school than she ever had before. Her relationship with the researcher and with other members of the class deepened, giving her additional people in school who she saw as a support. On the blog, she explained,

[The researcher] is one of the most supportive people you can ever meet. I can talk to her about anything and she always cheers me up when I'm mad. I don't have a lot of people who I can really talk to, but she's one of them. This class gave me a place to talk about things that I never thought I'd be able to talk about. I feel like I can share anything here.

These relationships helped to connect Lee a wider school community and to develop a broader support network.

That semester was also one of academic success for Lee, as she earned a 77 GPA for the term and passed all of her classes. Despite the positive academic and social experiences she had, she still had attendance issues. She frequently reported missing the public bus and feeling apathetic about attending school, and in the end, was absent 14 days that semester. By the end of that year, Lee was still two classes short of meeting graduation requirements and it was clear that returning for a sixth year of high school would be untenable for her.

The following year, with the help of the guidance department, the researcher and her special education teacher, she enrolled in the Marshfield Community College Early Transitions Program described in Chapter 1. Funded by an anonymous donor, the program was free for Lee and had the added benefit of being a five minute walk from her current residence. She began working on a self-paced program of study that fall, which she continues to work on and hopes to be finished by the end of the academic year. She still keeps in contact with the researcher and visits the high school occasionally.

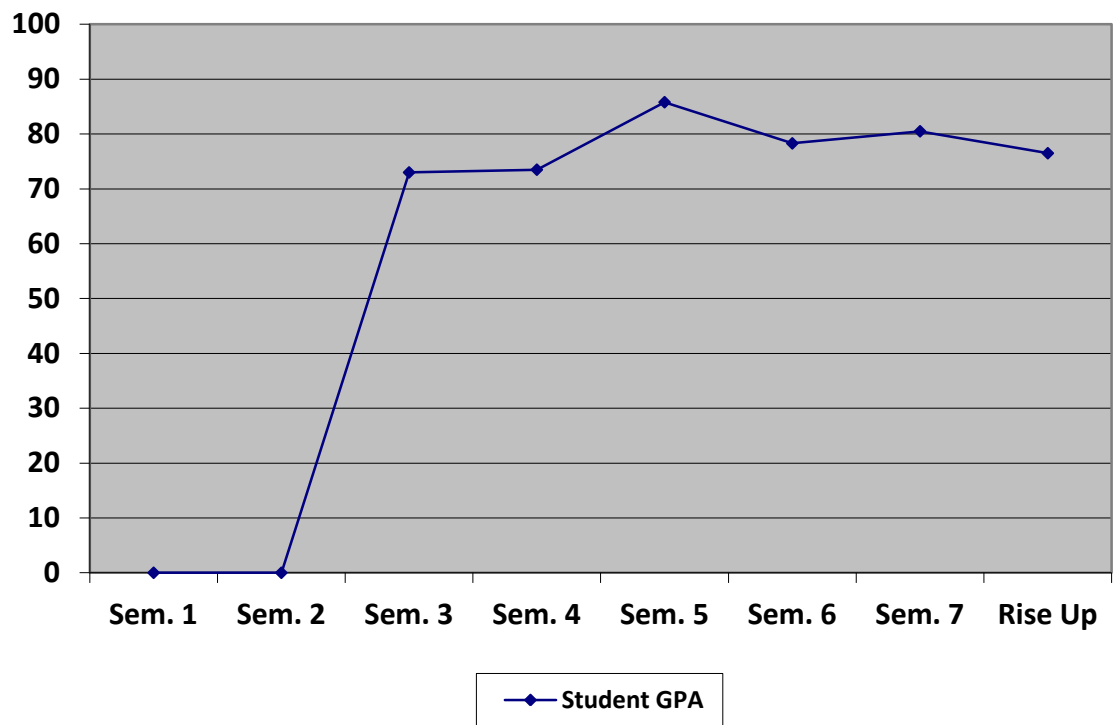


Figure 10: Student 3 GPA History.

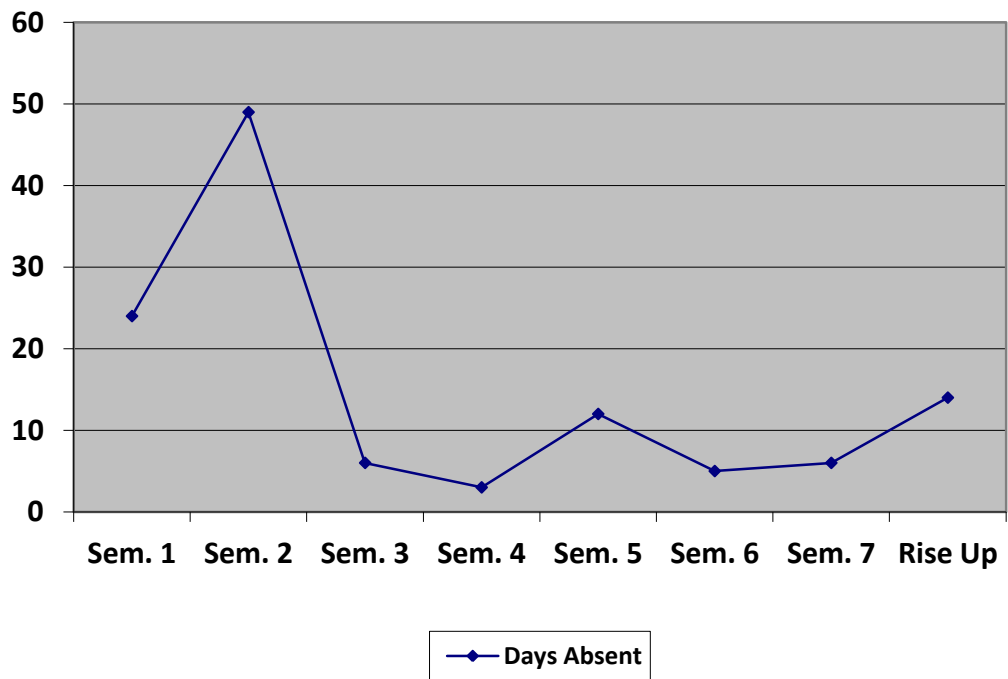


Figure 11: Student 3 Attendance History.

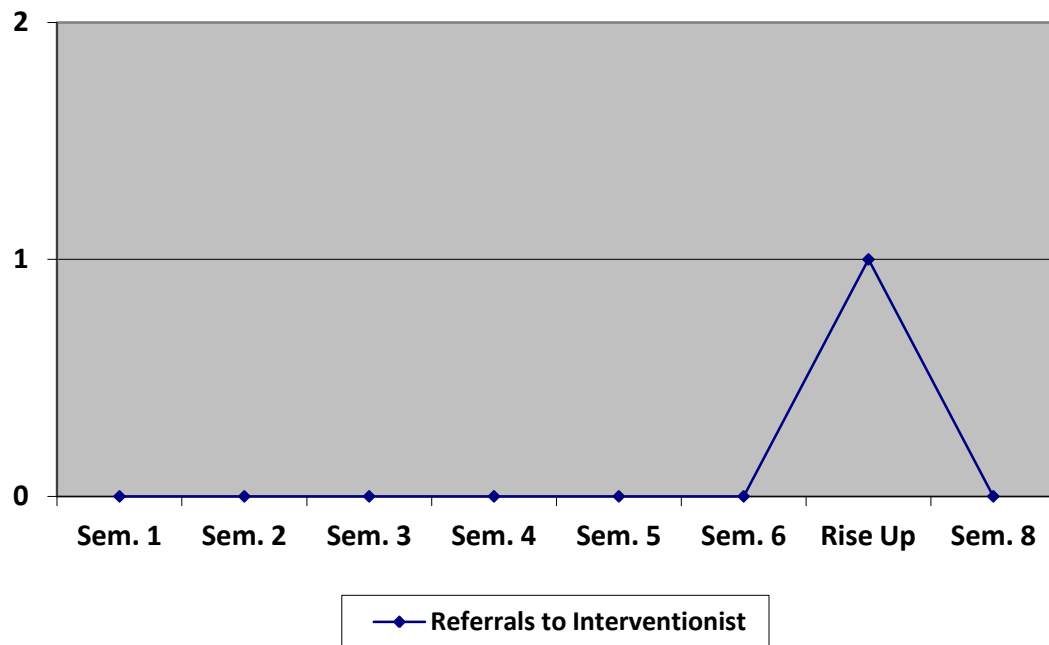


Figure 12: Student 3 Behavior Referral History.

Student Profile Four

Gino was a Freshman when he took Rise Up during the Spring semester. By his report in the Rise Up class, he lived with his mother and his severely developmentally disabled older sister and had minimal contact with his father. His family qualified for free and reduced lunch and moved frequently over the years. According to Gino's reports in Rise Up, these moves were often the result of evictions. No one in his family had graduated from high school, and he mentioned this in his closing Rise Up interview as a motivation for staying in school. "The rest of my family all dropped out and they don't seem that happy doing what they're doing," he said. "I kind of want to stay in school and graduate because of that." While Gino's home life was often marked by frequent upheavals, he saw education as a way to improve his life. However, his

academic achievement and attendance throughout middle school indicated that Gino had multiple risk factors for dropping out of high school.

Gino was a student in a school district in a neighboring town during his 7th grade year, but his performance there was illustrative of the academic pattern he set over the course of his middle school years. His GPA for the year was a 59.9, and he earned his highest grade, a B+, in his academic support class. He failed Physical Education and Social Studies that year, and received a D in Math and a D+ in English. He missed 39 days of school, 38 of them logged as excused absences. All of his grades indicated a progressive decline over the course of the year except for science, in which he showed a small increase during the third and 4th quarters.

Gino moved into the Barstow-Waterton District at the start of his 8th grade year and continued to struggle academically. That year, he earned a 60.8 GPA, and failed two classes, English and Science. During his second 8th grade semester, Gino demonstrated some academic progress, with improved grades across subjects. He brought an IEP with him from his previous school, which allowed him an academic support class daily. The Physical Education requirement was waived for Gino that year, although no documentation exists as to why he was exempt in school records, and none of his 8th grade teachers can recall why. Absence continued to be a significant issue, as he missed 26.5 days of school and had 17 tardies. His school behavior was appropriate, as he received no behavior referrals to the interventionist that year. He also received regular counseling services throughout his 8th grade year (which continued through high school). He would often talk about his school counselor in the Rise Up class, indicating that he was the one adult who he was close to in middle school.

By his report in the Rise Up class, his frequent moves, shyness and family responsibilities had limited his circle of friends at school, and by the end of 8th grade, he felt relatively socially isolated. “I didn’t have a lot of friends or like most of my teachers. I didn’t dislike school, but I didn’t like it either,” he said of his 8th grade year. Gino was invited into for the Rise Up class the following year in hopes of addressing his social isolation and attendance issues.

Gino showed significant academic growth during his first year of high school. He earned an 82 GPA for the year and he passed all of his classes, the first time he had done so in two years. The Physical Education requirement for the year was waived so that Gino could be enrolled in the Rise Up class, so for a second year in a row, he was not required to take gym. His attendance also improved during his Freshman year, dropping slightly to 19 days of school. While this figure was still a concern, it was a third less than the days he missed the previous year. He had only two referrals to the behavior interventionist, one for using a music player during class and the other for refusal to participate in class.

He took the Rise Up course during the Spring semester that year. At first, Gino was shy and reluctant to share his experiences with his classmates, but over time he became far more outgoing and engaged in the course. He was enthusiastic about the projects that students designed and evolved into a leader in the course. He made several friends who he saw out of school hours in the course, widening his social circle considerably. He also got to know several seniors who regularly reached out to him during the school day or out of school to say hello or chat with him.

Basically, and I probably never would have even known C____'s name, M____'s name, S____'s name, K____'s name. Any of them, really. I never would have even started conversations with them. Now when I see them in school, they say hi. M____ says hi to me every time he drives by my house. That wouldn't have happened without this class.

Gino saw the class as helping to make school easier for him socially and giving him connections to students he never would have gotten to know. As a result, his social capital in the school community expanded.

Despite significant progress in school, Gino faced another upheaval at the end of that school year. A family eviction resulted in a sudden and unexpected move to a nearby town. The researcher and the lead teacher of the district program his sister was a part of helped the family complete the school choice paperwork to stay in the district. Because of his sister's disability, special transportation to and from school was provided by the district for both Gino and his sister, allowing him to continue attending CTHS.

The following year, Gino continued to show strong academic progress, earning an 85.3 the first semester of his Sophomore year. His attendance continued to show marginal improvement, dropping to 16 days for the year. Complicating Gino's attendance this year was that if his sister was sick, he often stayed home to care for her. Behaviorally, Gino received no referrals to the Interventionist for the year. He also took on an additional role at home by officially becoming his sister's paid home health aide. He reported to the Leadership in Community Service class, which he took in the spring semester that year, which he contributed the income he earned from the position to help with his family's household expenses.

In the LCS class, he presented as a far more confident and outgoing participant than he did in Rise Up. Field notes indicate that he regularly acted as a leader on class projects and worked with other students to keep them on task and motivated. He was particularly invested two projects--the Casino Night project that his class organized with five other classes in school and with the Special Olympics project where he got to help train students in his sister's class. Gino struggled with participation in physical education class, as is highlighted below, but he regularly and enthusiastically ran with his sister and the other students, showed them how to throw softballs more effectively and demonstrated the long jump. The opportunity to mentor students with disabilities played to his considerable experience working with his sister and many students viewed him as a leader and mentor in the situation. He said of the experience in his follow up interview:

It was funny that I liked that project because I really hate gym, but it made me feel good to know that I was helping those kids. G____ and M____, they'd ask me for advice on how to get the Life Skills kids to listen to them and I knew exactly what to tell them.

The work of the class not only engaged Gino in a meaningful way, but helped him develop social capital amongst his peers and the teachers in that program.

This semester presented another significant challenge for Gino. This was the first semester that he was required to take Physical Education in three years of school, and he constantly struggled with participation and preparation for the class. By his report, he attempted to get his family physician to excuse him from P.E. because of his asthma, but the physician deemed Gino able to participate. He talked about his experience in gym frequently in LCS, one day saying,

I don't want to take gym. I hate gym. If I could just walk I would do that, but I don't want to play the games we have to play. If I walk, I don't get credit. If I don't have my clothes, even if I play, I don't get credit. Sometimes I don't come to school because I have gym that day.

Gino frequently set goals in LCS around participation in gym, but seldom accomplished them. If Gino forgot his gym clothes (which he often did), he would receive no credit for the class that day. Additionally, Gino could only make up classes he missed due to absence after school, which was impossible for him because he took the bus home and his mother didn't have a car. If he did stay, he would need to walk 7 miles home. In the end, he failed the class with a grade for the semester of 13.

Academically that semester Gino displayed significant strengths, earning a 88.5 GPA without P.E. factored in. Because of his extremely low PE grade, however, his semester GPA slipped to a 78. Despite this failure in gym, however, Gino was feeling more academically confident and was ready to push himself the following year.

When Gino returned the following Fall, he had ambitious goals. He had never taken an Honors or AP course before, but he registered for two AP courses that year: Biology and Government. His guidance counselor was concerned about the challenge that two AP courses would pose, especially with his past attendance record. Gino was adamant that he was up for the challenge. According to the School Psychologist, he also lost his academic support for the year, as his IEP was converted to a 504 plan because he had no disability that interfered with his academic progress.

Gino missed five days of school in the first three weeks of the semester and decided, with support of the guidance counselor and the AP Government teacher, to drop that course and take it his senior year. Gino's pattern of absence escalated once again, and

by the end of the semester, he had missed 21 days of school. Frequent calls home by the guidance counselor and the school adjustment counselor went unreturned by Gino's mother. At the end of the semester, Gino's received several grades of "incomplete" and was given two weeks to make up work. In the end, he earned a GPA of 77.3 and had passed his academic classes. Physical Education continued to be a challenge, as he was enrolled in two courses in the department that semester, Recreational Sports and Health. He earned a 60 in the first and a 57 in the second. Gino again maintained appropriate school behavior and had no referrals to the Interventionist for the school year. Currently, Gino is being discussed by the Student Support Team to plan the next steps in helping him better manage his attendance and school performance.

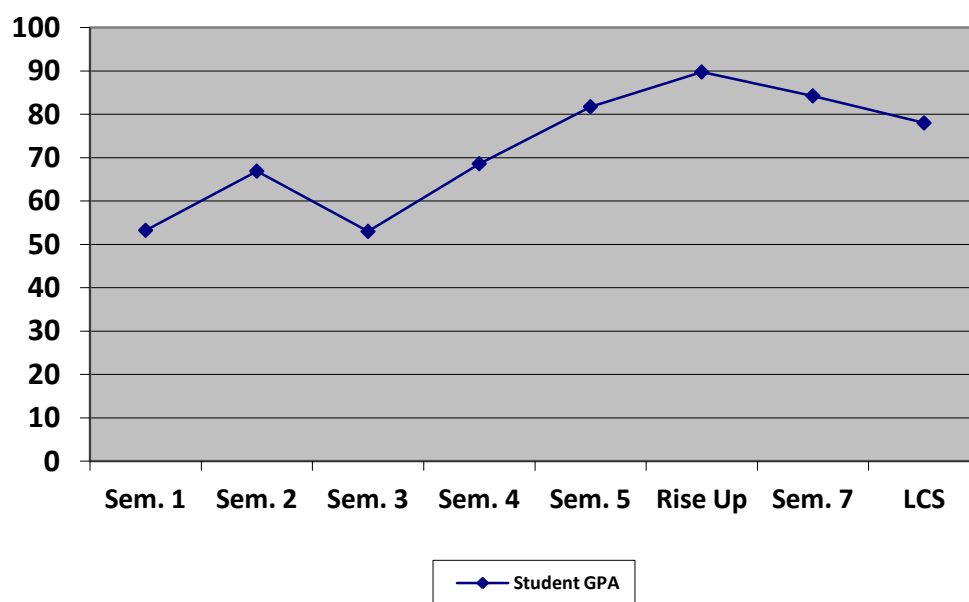


Figure 13: Student 4 GPA History.

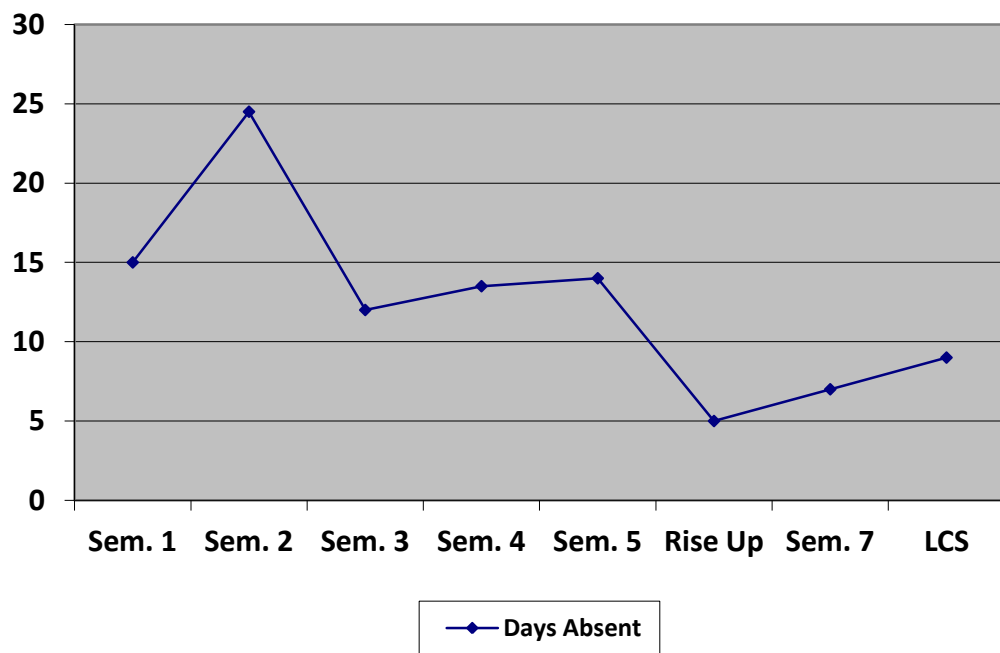


Figure 14: Student 4 Attendance History.

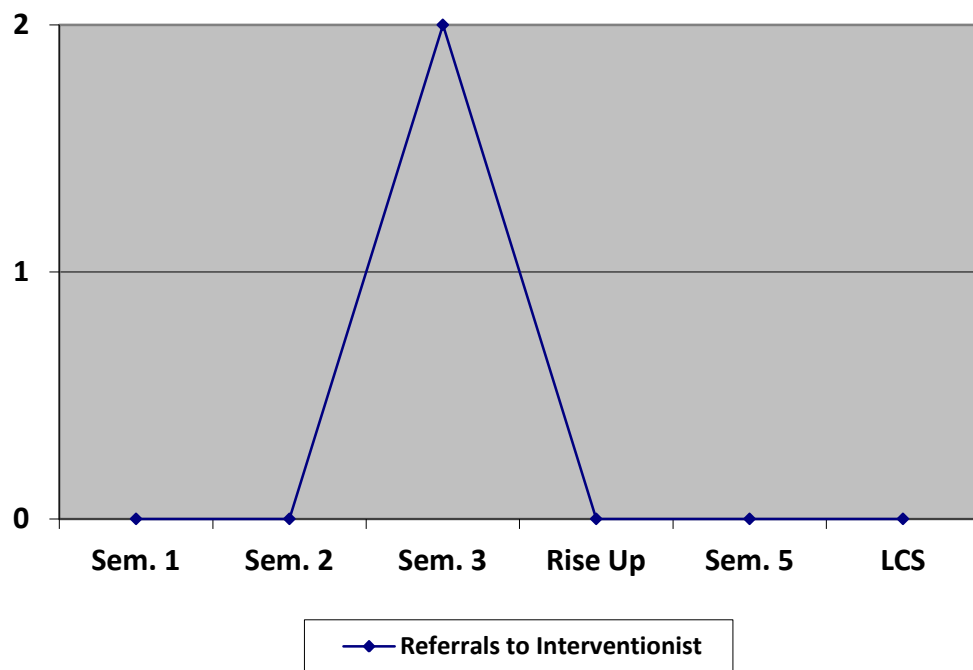


Figure 15: Student 4 Behavior Referral History.

Students Who Were Successful

Student Profile 5

Juan was a Freshman when he took both the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes during two consecutive semesters. An energetic and social young man, he had attended Barstow-Waterton schools since first grade. He lived in Canal Town with his mother and with his older sister, and reported in class that he saw his father only about once every two months, despite wanting more of a relationship with him. Juan's family struggled financially, and he qualified for free lunch at the high school. His academic achievement, attendance, and behavior throughout middle school indicated that Juan had multiple risk factors for dropping out of high school.

His educational experience prior to entering high school, both academically and behaviorally, had been challenging. During his 7th grade year he earned only a 54 grade point average, and he failed English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Math Applications for the year. The only courses he passed in 7th grade were Physical Education, Art and Directed Reading. He had 22 behavior referrals to the Interventionist that year, primarily for disruptive and unsafe behavior, four of which resulted in in-school suspensions, and one that resulted in a 2 day out-of-school suspension. His attendance was also a concern, as he missed 25.5 days of school that year and was tardy 35 times. Despite the significant number of failing courses and absences, Juan was socially promoted to 8th grade that year.

Juan continued to struggle academically the following year. During 8th grade, his cumulative average slipped to 49.2, and he failed Art, Directed Reading, English, Math and Social Studies. That year he passed Reading Support, P.E., and Science, the only

academic course he received credit for in middle school. Behaviorally, Juan continued to struggle, with 25 behavior referrals, four in-school suspensions and three out-of-school suspensions for assault, fighting, and using threatening language towards staff and other students. His attendance record also deteriorated further that year, and he missed 40.5 days of school his 8th grade year and was tardy 30 times. Despite the failure of major core subjects and excessive absences, he was again promoted to the next grade.

Socially, Juan exhibited little connection to school during his 7th and 8th grade years. According to the field notes, he reported that most of his friends during middle school engaged in risky behaviors in-school and out, including fighting, theft, drug use and destruction of property. He said of this time in his final Rise Up interview,

In middle school, my friends and I got in a lot of fights and most of us had been busted by the cops for something. We all hated school and I skipped a lot and stayed home and played video games and hung out with them when they skipped too. Nobody really cared.

The bulk of Juan's social capital at this time came from out of school with friends who reinforced behaviors that minimized the importance of attending school. Not surprisingly, he had no involvement in the extra-curricular life of school, and despite having considerable athletic skills, was ineligible to play school sports because of his failing grades.

Middle school teachers and staff became progressively concerned about Juan's academic success during and took steps to support him. He began seeing a school counselor in 7th grade, and in 8th grade was placed on a 504 plan. The 504, according to Juan's report in the Rise Up class, allowed him to take the break during each block

of instruction. His 8th grade science teacher also invited him to participate in a class that provided struggling students the opportunity to receive tutoring and organizational help one block of class time every other day. Juan accepted and was pulled out of his Health class for the final quarter of his 8th grade year.

That class Mrs. S_____ put me into helped me a little, you know, get organized. If I didn't understand something from class I could ask and there were other kids who I could work with if I had a question.

This remediation appeared to have both perceived and actual impact on Juan, as it was the only core academic course he passed in his two years of middle school.

The also school initiated another intervention during his 8th grade year that had consequences for Juan. According to the Interventionist, as a result of his in-school behavior and excessive absences, the school initiated a Child in Need of Services Plan (CHINS) on his behalf in the court system. As a result, he was put on probation, and following the filing of the CHINS, he had regularly scheduled meetings during and after school with his probation officer. Regular school attendance was made a condition of his probation.

When Juan entered high school the following year, he continued to struggle in his academic classes, but excelled in the Rise Up course. In the course, he presented as an extremely positive member of the class. He was a regular contributor to discussions, actively participated in activities and projects, and was never asked to leave the class or to take a break during class time. Overall, he was consistently focused, polite and engaged during class time, as recorded in the field notes.

He made several new friends in the class who he had never socialized with before. These students were positive about school and had minimal behavior issues in their

classes, which was a sharp contrast from the friends he normally spent time with. He reported in his closing interview,

I didn't really know C____, M____, T____ or A____, but they're really cool. It's like I have a bunch of new people I can talk to who I never had before and they don't judge me. They just know me for me. A lot of my friends skip school a lot and when they're not here, I know I always have someone to talk to at lunch or whatever.

These new relationships provide an example of how the course allowed students like Juan, who lacked social capital in the academy, the opportunity to develop deeper connections with peers who were positive about school.

Juan's school attendance improved significantly during his Freshman year, and he missed only 9 days of school during his Rise Up semester--less than half of the days he missed the previous semester. However, while Juan displayed several positive signs of improvement in the Rise Up course, he continued to struggle in other areas at school. His behavior referrals to the school interventionist rose significantly from 25 for his entire 8th grade year, to 36 for the first semester of high school. He was also suspended once, early in the semester, for bullying. Other subject matter teachers were not seeing the same behavior he exhibited in Rise Up, and he was frequently removed from classes for disruptive behavior and inappropriate language toward faculty and other students. By the end of the semester his GPA dipped to its lowest 3 year point, falling to a 36.25 for the semester. He failed all of his courses (English 9, Algebra and Spanish) except for Rise Up.

High school staff continued to provide interventions aimed at supporting Juan's success in school. He was pulled out of his Spanish class two months before the semester ended, as his grade in the course was so low it was impossible for him to pass

the class. His behavior in the course had become so disruptive that he was asked to leave on a daily basis. In lieu of Spanish, the Interventionist assigned him to a daily study hall in her room, and the researcher regularly used this time to tutor him in history and math, to which he was very receptive. He continued to receive regular counseling services and the Interventionist remained in close contact with his probation officer and Juan's mother.

The following semester, Juan enrolled in the Leadership in Community Service class. He started the semester strong, often taking a leadership role and actively participating in activities, discussions and projects. A month into the course, Juan was deemed ready to be removed from his CHINS by his probation officer because of improvements in school attendance. That semester, perhaps as a result of the removal of the CHINS, his absence rate soared from 9 the prior semester to 19 days. As the semester continued, his absences increased, and he became more distracted and distractible in class. He and another student who had a similar academic background were frequently asked to refocus, take in-class breaks, or to work with other partners. By the end of the semester, as the other student was out of school more frequently, he had turned his behavior and effort around and again became a leader in the class. In other areas, however, this were less positive. He had failed Science, Physical Education and History, and passed only Basic Video and the LCS course. His GPA for the semester was a 37.

Inappropriate behavior in other classes continued as it had the previous semester, and he was suspended twice (for smoking and destruction of school property). At the end of the school year, he was brought back to court by the school

for these escalating behavior issues and absences. At his hearing, the judge promised him that if he returned to court for dangerous behavior or failure to attend school again, he would be sentenced to time in juvenile lock-up. The credits that Juan earned for the year were clearly insufficient to promote him to the next grade level, so he returned the following year as a repeating Freshman.

During his second year as a Freshman, a significant new intervention was implemented. While Juan did have a 504 plan and had a significant pattern of school failure, the school was not legally obligated to provide him with academic support services. On the recommendation of the researcher, the Student Services Team met and decided to ask a Special Education teacher if she would agree allow Juan to take her academic support class. She agreed, and Juan began receiving a block of academic support daily, which he reported to the researcher in a follow up interview. “Academic Support has really helped me to do better in school,” he said. “The teacher helps me to study for tests and get my homework done.” Clearly, Juan saw the new support he was receiving as beneficial.

During his second year as a 9th grader, Juan was off to a promising start. His behavior referrals were down significantly from the previous year, as were his absences. However, a one-week suspension for fighting and bullying in November found him back in court. He told the researcher in a follow-up interview that when he reported to court for his violation, the judge sentenced him to a weekend in lock-up before returning to court for final sentencing. “I knew in the first 10 minutes there,” he reported, “That I never wanted to be here again.” At the hearing, the judge determined that the weekend sentence was sufficient to educate Juan about the realities of lock-up.

Upon his return to school, an additional intervention was put in place, and Juan's schedule was changed so that he would have the researcher's study hall at the end of each day so that the two could have daily check-ins. The researcher also agreed to let Juan use this time complete the large number of community service hours that were part of his sentence by allowing him to work on current Rise Up class projects that required extra support.

By the end of the semester, Juan had made a considerable turn-around. He was absent only four days, down from nineteen the previous semester. His behavior referrals dropped to nine and his GPA for the semester soared to 77. For first time since 7th grade, he didn't fail a single class. In fact, it was the first time since 7th grade that he didn't fail three classes in a given semester. Other teachers in the school began to make a point of seeking out the researcher to discuss the positive changes they had seen in Juan. He also is feeling a newfound sense of pride over his academic accomplishments, displaying his last report card on a bulletin board in the researcher's classroom for other students to see.

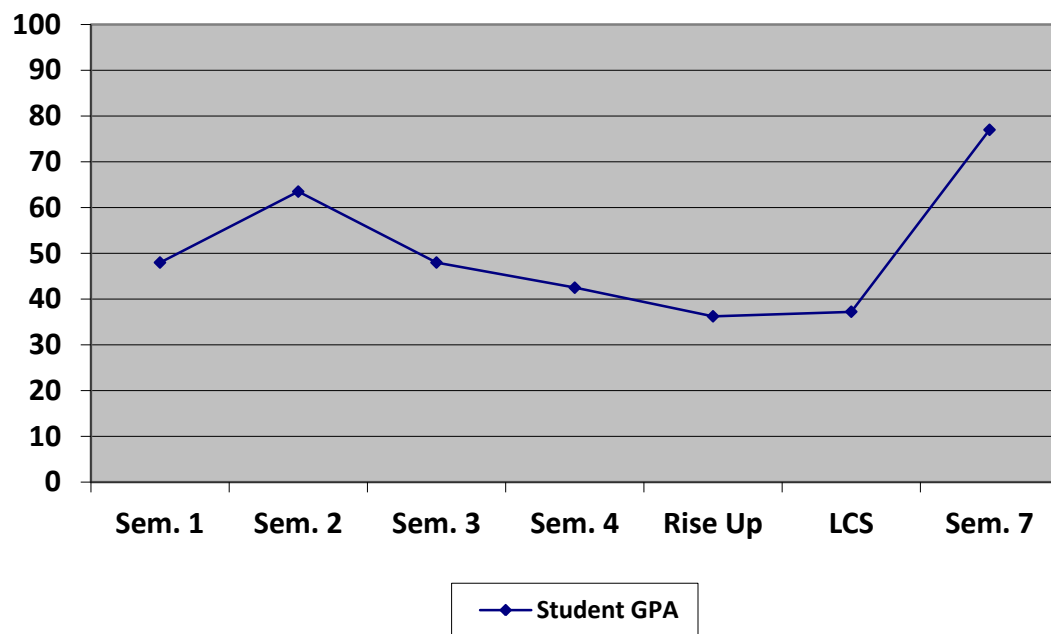


Figure 16: Student GPA History.

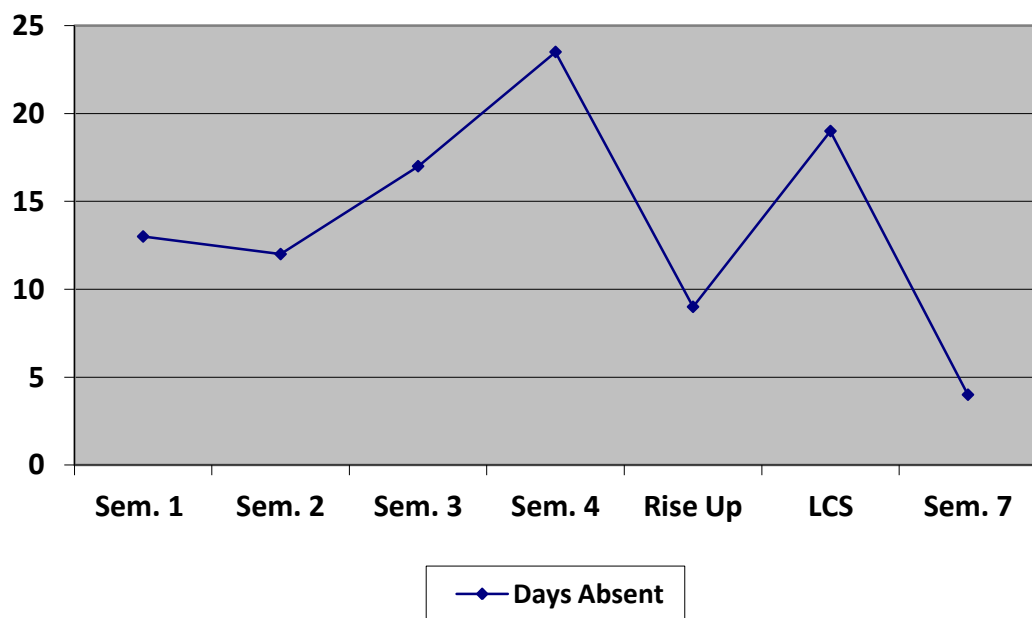


Figure 17: Student 5 Attendance History.

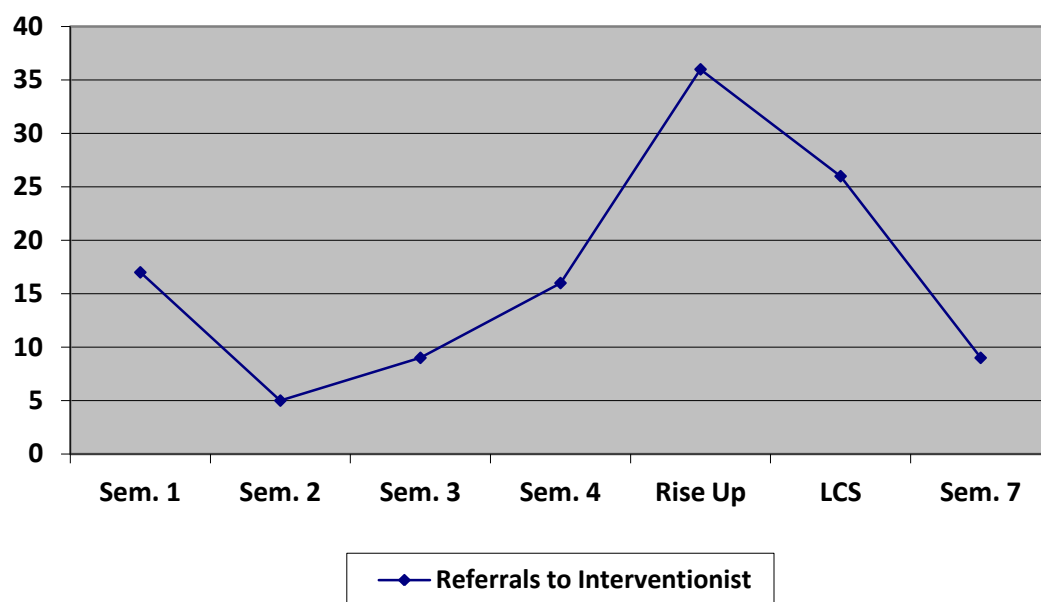


Figure 18: Student 5 Behavior Referral History.

Student Profile Six

Clark took Rise Up his Junior year of high school. The researcher first met him as a 7th grader in her Social Studies class and consistently had contact with him throughout his years in high school. He lived with his mother and younger brother and several of his mother's boyfriends over that time. According to the field notes, Clark's family struggled financially, and as a result, he qualified for free lunch at school. He often spoke in class about needing to get a job to help his mother pay bills at home. He had little contact with his biological father, which he discussed in the Rise Up class several times and identified it as a source of pain in his life. "It makes me feel like crap," he said in class one day,

To know that he doesn't want to see me or talk to me or anything.
He's a chump. Nothing I'll ever do will be good enough for him to
want to get to know me.

In Rise Up, Clark frequently spoke of feeling rejected by his father and his father's family, and had trouble coming to terms with it.

Socially, Clark struggled in school, had few friends and frequently reported to the researcher and to the school Interventionist that he was being teased and picked on by other students. He did receive counseling services throughout his middle and high school years where, by Clark's report in his closing interview, the topic often revolved around his social isolation. He frequently mentioned his counselor in class as someone he could turn to in challenging situations or when he was having a crisis. "Mr. H_____ is cool," he said of the counselor during Rise Up, "I can talk to him about whatever and he'll see me whenever I'm having a problem." Clark's social isolation extended to after school hours, as he had a low involvement in the extra-curricular life of school. He did join the football team during both his junior and senior years, however, but he failed to complete either season because, by his own report, the work required to play was too much for him.

His experience in high school began with reasonable success, but declined over time. As a Freshman, he did well academically, earning a 75 grade point average for the year and passing all of his classes. His attendance was strong, as he missed only 3 days that year, and he was sent to the Interventionist twice that year for verbal outbursts that involved yelling and inappropriate language in class.

Sophomore year saw a considerable academic slide for Clark. He earned a GPA of 61 for the year and failed three classes, including Health and English 10 (which he

failed twice). “I just didn’t feel like doing anything [that year]” he said of the time during his post-Rise Up interview, “I didn’t have anything to motivate me to do good. School didn’t matter and I wasn’t learning anything that would help me get a job.” His attendance continued to be strong, however, with only two absences for the year, and his behavior increased only slightly to three for the year, all for disrespect and insubordination towards teachers. According to the Interventionist, Clark’s anger management towards other students escalated during his 10th grade year, particularly during non-classroom times. She frequently met with him to counsel him on strategies for dealing with his temper and conflicts that she saw arising during lunch and in the hallways. He reported in Rise Up class at the start of the next year to having few friends and feeling isolated at school,

I got no friends here. Nobody likes me. Stupid seniors harass me, Freshmen give me crap, most teachers hate me. I hate this place. I’m just a loser. It’s like I can never get a break and I don’t know why.

His lack of relationships and social capital limited his participation in the life of school in a palpable way, and his academic failures further isolated him from relationships with successful school peers and teachers.

Clark registered for the Rise Up course in the fall of his Junior year. His disruptive behavior and anger management issues became a central area of personal development for him in the course. At the start of the course, he was extremely reluctant to participate in any of the activities that involved sharing personal information or emotions. He would physically sit away from the group at these times or put his head down. During challenge activities where students were put in intentionally frustrating situations, he would frequently break down and swear at other students. “Man, my

temper was out of control then,” he said in a follow up interview, “K_____ knew how push my buttons and I just saw red all the time.” He was frequently given breaks and sent to the Interventionist for this behavior. The researcher spent considerable time helping him to become more aware of the physiological signs of his frustration manifesting itself and encouraged him to take pre-emptive, self-selected breaks before reaching his breaking point.

Over the course of the semester, Clark became increasingly more aware of when he was about to lose his temper and showed considerable progress in choosing to take breaks prior to an outburst, and even developed a sense of humor about losing his temper. “There you go again,” he said to the researcher with a laugh one day after being sent out of the classroom, “Holding me accountable for my bad choices.” As the semester reached the half-way point, he began to participate more actively in sharing activities, sat with the group consistently and seldom put his head down in class.

Clark also became more invested in the service projects that the class took on, including working with senior citizens at the local Senior Center and running a food drive for the Survival Center in town. He said of the experience in our follow up interview, “Just seeing all the food and how everyone helped us was great. We all came together as a school to get it done.” These projects gave Clark the opportunity to improve his social capital in school, become more empowered, be seen as a leader, and take part in engaging work.

He also became close friends with an older female student in class who regularly gave Clark advice and support outside of school hours. Clark’s attendance remained excellent, as he missed no days that semester. By the end of that year, he had 14

referrals to the interventionist, five of which came from the Rise Up class where he was intentionally put in challenging situations aimed at getting him to deal with his emotions in a productive way. Academically, Clark also showed improvement during the course of the semester, earning a 66.5 GPA. While he did fail U.S. History (with a 59), he passed all of his other courses, including English 10 which he was taking for the third time.

The semester following Rise Up, which was the second semester of his Junior year, Clark showed significant academic and behavioral improvement. His GPA that semester rose to a 74, and he passed all of his classes. His behavior referrals plummeted to just 3 for the semester. He attended school every day that semester and his tardies remained consistently low. The researcher continued to see him on a nearly daily basis, as he frequently visited her in her classroom before and after school and during lunch. He took history in a classroom next door to the researcher and often got agitated as a result of something other students or the teacher had said in the course. He would opt to take a break from this class on a regular basis and stop by the researcher's classroom to deescalate and regain his composure before returning. The researcher worked to shorten the length and frequency of these visits over the course of the semester, encouraging Clark to use the skills he had developed in Rise Up.

Socially, he also saw improvements that year. He continued to have a close friendship with the young woman he met in Rise Up and felt less isolated in school and he also developed a strong relationship with another teacher that year. In his closing interview he reported to the interviewer, "It's cool having T__ [in school] even though we fight sometimes. And you and Mr. M_____ help me out a lot too." While Clark had

difficulties at times articulating how important these relationships were to him, his frequent visits to the researcher's classroom, his friendship with the young woman, and his relationship with the other teacher were illustrative of the benefits they were having on him and his growing social capital in school.

During Clark's senior year, he continued to be successful in school. He once again had the researcher as a teacher in her U.S. Government course and would still visit her classroom before and after school and at lunch on a daily basis. He earned a 72.5 G.P.A. for first semester that year and a 79.5 in the spring (his highest average in high school). His behavior referrals remained low during the Fall semester, staying steady at four. During his final semester, he was never sent to the interventionist, but did remove himself from class on two occasions and spent the block in her classroom. His attendance continued to be excellent, and he missed only one day of school that year. Although he continued to have few close friends in school, he began a relationship with his first girlfriend and continued to visit the researcher in her classroom on a daily basis to check-in.

Clark graduated from high school with his cohort that May and is currently working as a security guard. He still returns to school about once a month to visit his teachers.

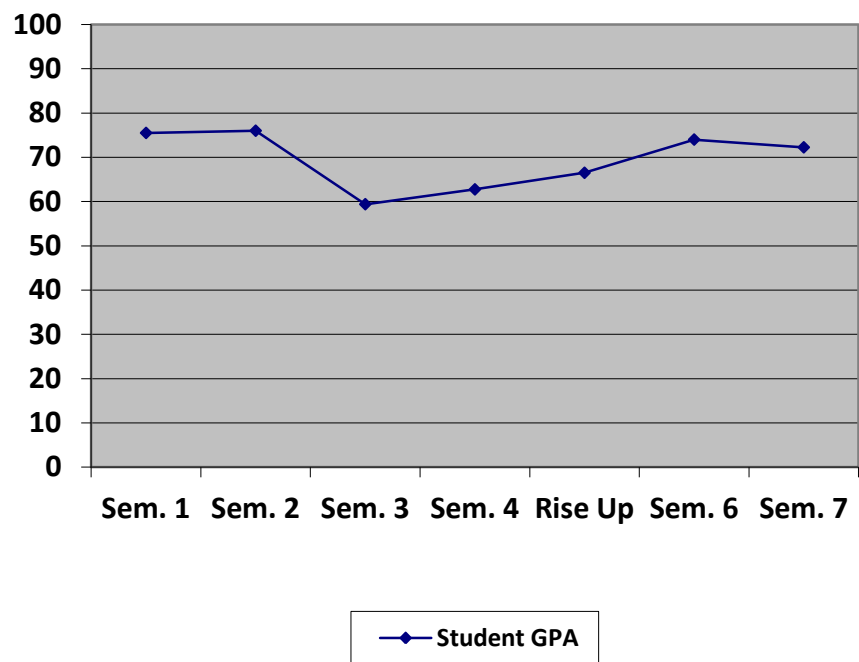


Figure 19: Student 6 GPA History.

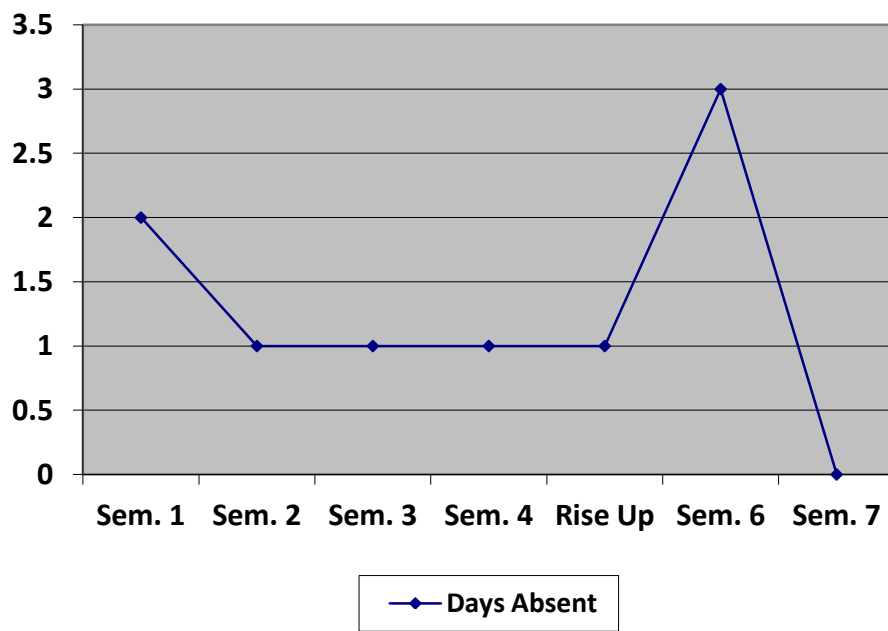


Figure 20: Student 6 Attendance History.

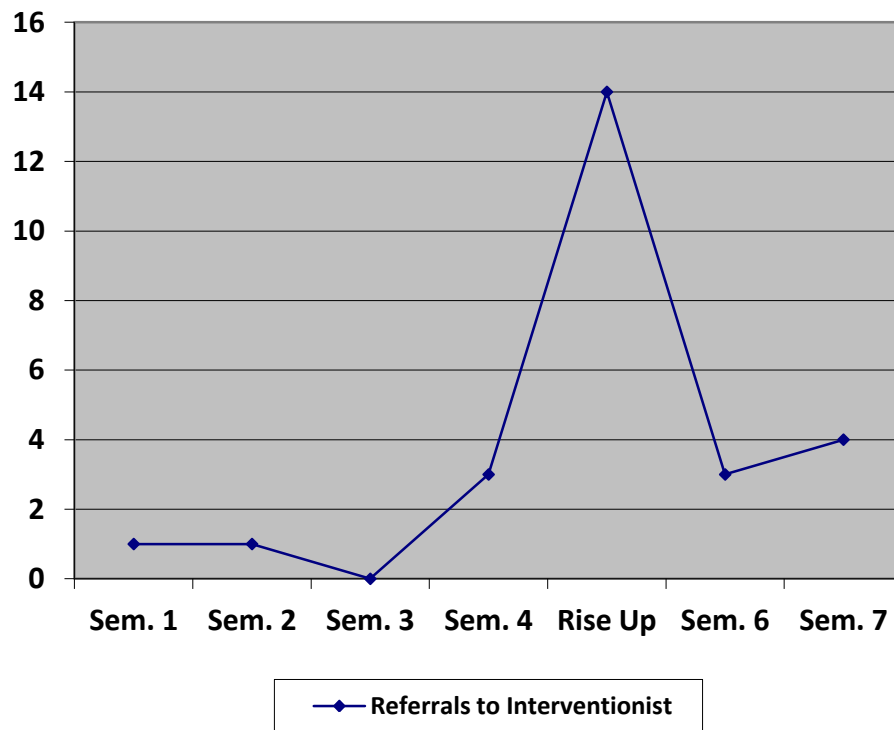


Figure 21: Student 6 Behavior Referral History.

The students profiled in this chapter are a representative sample of the students who participated in the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes. While some of them found the benefits they received in the classes had no lasting impact on their school participation, others made gains in their academic participation and performance, and some had considerable turn-around in school following participation in the course. A summary of student results is presented in the graphs below (Figures 22, 23 and 24).

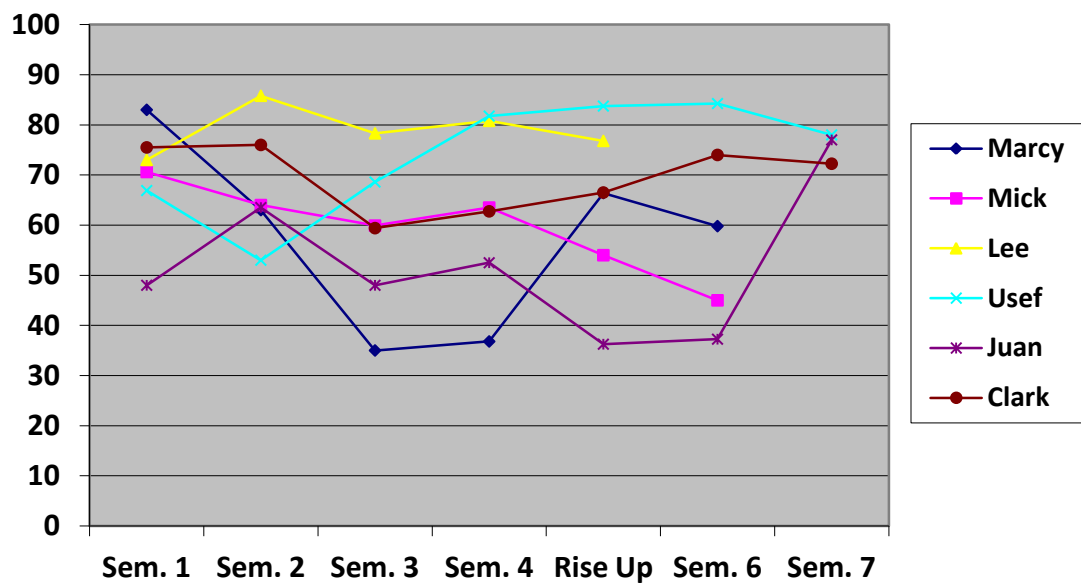


Figure 22: Student GPA History.

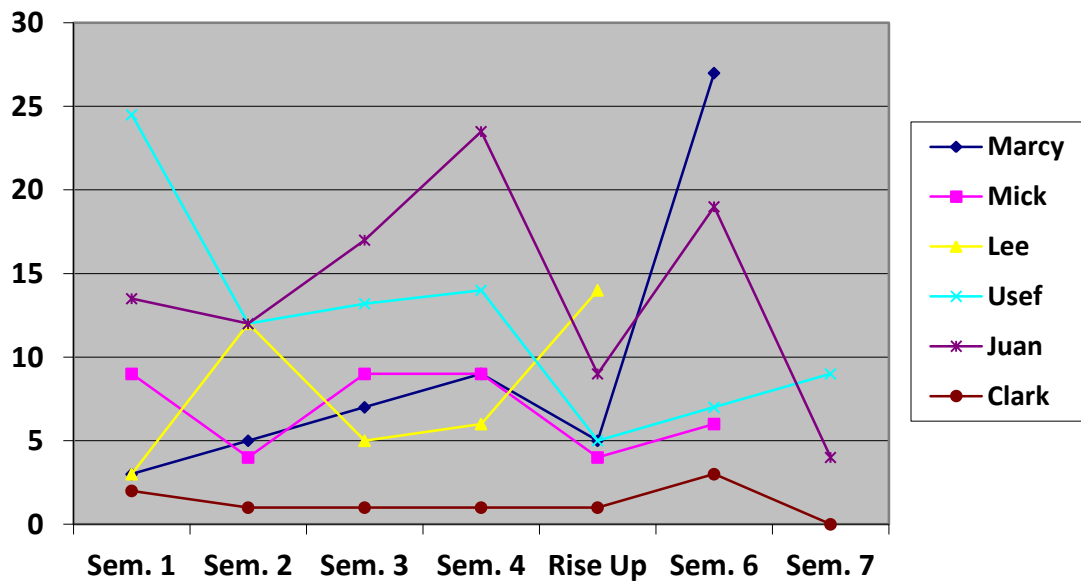


Figure 23: Student Attendance History.

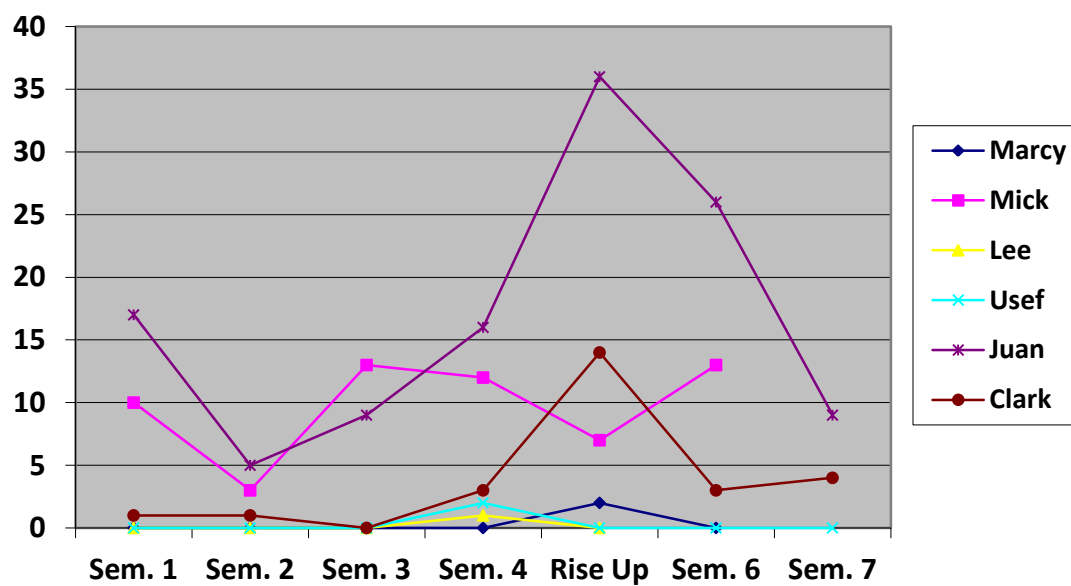


Figure 24: Student Behavior Referral History.

In the following chapter, conclusions of the research will be discussed for the wider sample of students in the areas of relationship development, indicators for dropout, and persistence to graduation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

“At the beginning of the year, we were talking about how there’s one kid who sits in the back of the class and doesn’t say much so they don’t get noticed. But here, everyone gets a chance to get something so they’re not just sitting there all alone. We don’t let people get away with being invisible.” -Karl

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the dissertation study along with recommendations for how schools can use the courses, their principles and structures to engage marginalized students in school.

Three research questions framed the study:

- Will the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes have an impact on the relationships that marginalized students develop in school?
- Will the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes have an impact on indicators for school retention such as school attendance, in-school behavior infractions, engagement, grades, passing classes and relationships with adults in school?
- How do students perceive the impact of Rise Up classes on their ability to handle challenging situations, including the decision to stay in school?

Conclusions of the Study

Based on the findings from this study, a set of policy guidelines for educators interested in using community service-learning programs to respond to the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of school follows. These conclusions reveal which students the programs have the most and least impact on, the impact of the courses on students and their in-school behavior, performance and participation, and the most effective time to administer the program in a student's high school experience.

The Rise Up and LCS programs provide a great deal of benefits for students whose risk factors are centered on school isolation, social issues and depression. The classes give these students access to a caring and supportive community of in-school peers while in class. In addition, this sense of community transfers to students' participation throughout the school day and outside of school. These students feel higher levels of engagement, involvement and agency in the school community as a result of their participation in the classes.

These programs also lead to tangible improvements in school participation among all students, and particularly among students who exhibited the highest risk factors for dropping out of high school. On average, student behavior, attendance and grades improved during the semester Rise Up or Leadership in Community Service courses were taken. In addition, students consistently reported having a positive attitude and greater levels of engagement in school, and felt that they had increased levels of empowerment and social capital in the community as a result of their participation.

While these benefits are significant, it is important to note that the study also demonstrated that the impact of the courses is limited. While all students showed decreased numbers of behavior referrals in the semesters that followed the completion of the course, not all of the benefits transferred to subsequent semesters. The increase in attendance rates and grades that were seen during the Rise Up and LCS courses were not lasting or long-term. When students returned to a full schedule of more traditional classes, average student GPA and days in school dropped. This indicates that while the components of class were effective at fostering positive school attitudes and improved performance, when students returned to the traditional school experience, they fell back to their traditional patterns of involvement.

The implications of the courses for students who had significant risk factors for dropping out of high school were also noteworthy. If a student had more than 10 risk factors for dropping out and more than three consecutive failing semesters, the program alone did not help students persist until graduation. These students reported that while they were enrolled in the either course, it helped keep them in school, but once they returned to a schedule of traditional courses, they no longer felt connected in the way they did while taking the course. Several of these students went on to drop out of high school. However, when the school was willing to provide these students with multiple modifications and interventions, like additional Special Education services, remediation and participation in alternative school programs, they were far more likely to graduate. The research in this study indicates that for students with the highest risk of dropping out of high school and who had an established pattern

of failure, schools need to approach their school success in non-traditional ways, and when they do, they are far more likely to be successful.

Lastly, these programs work best in the long term when used as an early intervention tool. Lasting benefits for students come when they participate early in their academic decline or when their number of risk factors are lower. While it is impossible to predict who will stay in school and who will drop out, no student with less than seven risk factors, even if they had more than three semesters of significantly declining grades, dropped out of high school after taking the course. Students tend to add risk factors over time, rather than reducing them. As the number of risk factors increase, it becomes more and more difficult for schools to implement interventions that keep students in school. Therefore, administering interventions like these early in students' decline in school is key to a successful turn-around.

In the sections below, both the qualitative and quantitative data that supports the conclusions of the research studies are explored. In addition to quantitative data, like school grades, behavior records, and attendance, qualitative data in the form of in-depth student interviews, blog posts, and class discussions is presented. These methods allow students to reflect in deep, meaningful ways about the impact the courses had on their relationships, attitudes about school, engagement and persistence in challenging situations.

Impact of Relationships Marginalized Students Develop in School

In interviews, blog responses and in class discussions, students repeatedly emphasized the impact that Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service had on

them in the area of relationships. Students felt that their school relationships expanded and deepened as a result of the class, and identified three primary areas where these relationships grew, including feeling as if they were part of a supportive community, expanding their social capital, and finding a sense of empowerment they had not felt before. In the following section, students' reflections in these areas will be explored.

Relationship Maps

Following the end-of-semester interviews, students were asked to complete "relationship maps" that charted their in-school relationships with peers and adults in school. Students drew a circle at the center and labeled it as themselves. They were then asked to draw as many rings around themselves as they saw appropriate, with each ring representing a different level of closeness to peers and adults at school. The ring closest to them represented truly close relationships, and the rings emanating outward represented diminishing levels of attachment. One hundred percent of students who created a map indicated expanded relationships as a result of the class. In this section, several representative maps will be explored, and additional maps are included in the appendix (See APPENDIX H).

Fred, a senior whose family had immigrated from Tibet when he was in 7th grade, was exceedingly shy and tentative about his language skills at the start of the course. In his end of semester interview, Fred expressed his initial nervousness about participating in Rise Up because, unlike other classes, it required him to talk and interact with other students. He said,

At the beginning of the year, I didn't really talk that much because I thought people would make fun of my accent, but then after I got

into this class, that changed and I started talking to more people. In most classes, because I'm quiet, do my work and don't cause trouble, the teacher just leaves me alone. You guys weren't going to leave me alone.

In his "before" map, he had only a few close friends, most members of the soccer team that he had played with since 7th grade. He had no one on his second ring, and one other student and the researcher, who he had known since 7th grade, on his third ring. The majority of people in school were placed on his outer-most ring, indicating that he had several "social" friends, but was close to only a few students and teachers in the school.



Figure 25: Relationship Map--Fred

In his "after" map, the relationships he charts are dramatically different. The majority of his relationships were now clustered at the center of his map on the first two rings. His soccer friends were still on his first ring, but added to it were two students from the class, the researcher and her student teacher. His second ring, which had been

empty in his “before” map, included twelve students, including four from his Rise Up class, and one teacher. The other students were friends who had rested on his fourth ring that became closer to throughout the semester. It is noteworthy that on his outermost rings, which had included seventeen names on his “before” map, contained only one name on his “after” map.

Fred saw his relationships become significantly enhanced as a result of the class. Not only did the course help him to develop a community, which included six students on his inner ring, it also helped him to develop closer relationships with friends he was peripherally connected to before the course. By not being allowed to be “left alone,” Fred found a voice in the Rise Up class that then transferred to other areas in school. At his end-of-semester interview, he said, “I have so many friends now, and I talk to so many people. One year ago, I could never believe that this would happen.” Not only did he develop more friendships, but he participated in two school talent shows, something he told the class he had wanted to do for years but had never had the confidence to do. This further invested him in the culture of school and gave him confidence to interact with more students. Fred clearly saw personal growth in his relationships in school as a result of his participation in Rise Up, which also resulted in increased commitment and belonging in the wider school community.

Maggie was a socially isolated Junior when she took the Rise Up course. She struggled with understanding social norms and had a tremendous amount of anxiety when faced with social situations. She received Special Education services and reported to the Rise Up class that she would often ask to leave her other classes to go work alone in the Special Education classroom because she “couldn’t handle the stress

of other people.” The researcher observed while on lunch duty that she often ate lunch in the cafeteria alone or sat alone at a table with students who she did not interact with. On her “before” relationship map, she placed her family and her in-school counselor on her inner-most ring, and on her second ring listed “friends” and “my teachers.” When the researcher followed up with her about the specific friends she was referring to, she clarified that they were not in-school friends, but friends she had made on the internet who lived overseas and whom she had never met in person. On her third ring, she placed the “junior class” and on her outer-most ring, she wrote, “most of the school-like 90%.” She did not identify a single in-school peer by name on her map. At the start of her Rise Up semester, she clearly felt isolated from her peers in school.



Figure 26: Relationship Map--Maggie

Maggie’s “after” map indicated significant transformation, however. In her inner circle, she listed “Rise Up kids,” five of whom she also listed by name, the researcher

and her student teacher. Another student and “teachers” were listed on the second ring. The “junior class” remained on her third ring, and she listed “70% of the school” on her outermost ring. Her family, counselor and internet friends were absent from the map, indicating that she now felt that there were individuals in school with whom she shared concrete relationships. Throughout the course, she frequently reported that she was feeling more a part of school, and for the first time felt a sense of belonging. “Yesterday when I was walking in the hallway,” she said in class one day,

S _____ said ‘hi’ to me today when I was walking in the hall. That was cool because no one’s ever said ‘hi’ to me in the hall before. This class has really changed my life. It’s meant a lot to me. It’s helped me to be less shy about interacting with other kids. I mean, at first it was rather difficult for me to be in the class because I didn’t really know anybody, but I slowly got used to the kids around me and started to interact a lot more.

Maggie clearly identified the personal growth she saw in her ability to interact with other students as stemming from her participation the Rise Up class, and she also saw a transfer of those benefits in the wider school community.

Another student, Gabriel, who transferred to Canal Town High School his Sophomore year from a school in Puerto Rico, had a similar experience. Gabriel, a gregarious student who had done well academically at his previous school and felt he had fit in with the social and cultural norms there, had a very different experience when he first began at CTHS. “When I first got here,” he said in class one day,

I was harassed about being Puerto Rican. There were kids who were saying racist things to me, like calling me a “Spic” and making fun of my accent. It made me really angry and that’s pretty much all I could think about. I thought this might be a place where I was going to have to fight all the time to keep from being bullied.

In his “before” map, Gabriel identified only two in-school friends on his inner circle, both students of color. He identified another student of color and his French teacher on his second level, and three more students of color and one student teacher on his third ring. On his fourth ring was the researcher, who he had talked briefly with on 3-4 occasions, his math teacher, and the school custodians. “Everyone else in school” sat on his outermost ring. It is noteworthy that in a school where the population was 88% white, Gabriel did not have, from his perspective, any meaningful relationships with any white students five months after he arrived.



Figure 27: Relationship Map--Gabriel

At the end of Rise Up, however, Gabriel’s relationship map was radically altered. His inner ring now contained twelve names, which included five teachers and five of

his Rise Up classmates. Two of his classmates were actually written into the circle where his name sat, indicating an extremely close relationship with those two. On his second ring, he now included two more students from the class as well as the custodians and the entire “junior class.” He listed two other students, a teacher and “everyone else” as sitting on his third ring.

Gabriel credited having the opportunity to share personal information in a safe place in school as helping him develop relationships in the class and beyond. During the class, he shared that a few years before his family moved from Puerto Rico his father had committed suicide. In his end of semester interview, he said,

It actually made me open up to people more....It helped me to open up about more, secret, deeper stuff that I have inside me. It really brought us closer and it was really good to know that I didn't only have a family at home, I had a family in the classroom too.

The transformative nature of Gabriel's school experience, from one where he was angry and embattled against a racist school culture to one where he felt comfortable sharing with his peers an extremely painful, personal secret indicated that Gabriel's in-school relationships truly benefitted from the Rise Up class.

Similar to Fred's experience, Gabriel also experienced a transfer of the benefits he saw in Rise Up to his wider school experience. During the spring semester, Gabriel approached the researcher and told her that he planned to run for class president for the following year. The two discussed campaign strategy, speech writing and school culture in preparation for the election. He ran against the incumbent who had served in the position for two years, and when the votes were counted that May, Gabriel had won the election. In his end-of-year interview, he said that even though the decision to run was nerve wracking, it was something “he had to do.” He said,

Before this class, I might have had some ideas that I wanted to help people, but I never actually would do it. Now if I see something's wrong or see that I could help with something, I'll try to do it and even if I fail, I'll keep trying because I know that it's helping someone. And I want to help. If I can help, I want to do it.

This event demonstrated a clear elevation in Gabriel's personal confidence at CTHS, his relationships in school, and in the level of social capital he had developed with peers in there.

These three representative relationship maps indicate that students viewed the Rise Up class as providing opportunities to develop relationships with their in-class peers and create a stable community in school. Furthermore, they also indicate that students' relationships with peers and teachers outside the class deepened, perhaps as a result of the confidence they gained and the personal validation they received from their in-class community.

In the end-of-semester interviews, blogs and class discussions, students further developed the notion that Rise up deepened their relationships in several key areas, including helping them form an in-school community, develop social capital, and become empowered in school. The following sections will focus on each of these areas in more depth.

Developing a Community

Students who took the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes indicated improved perceptions of belonging to a community. These perceptions were revealed in their pre- and post-class surveys, as well as in their interviews, blog posts, and in-class discussions. Thirty-seven percent of students said in their pre-class surveys that they were "not good at all" or "fairly good" at getting others to listen to

their ideas, while in the post-class survey, only 12% felt this way. Furthermore, all but two students indicated they saw personal improvement in their ability to “understand what people are trying to say” and in “helping other students to resolve their conflicts.” Students perceived that they developed skills to help them participate actively and productively in the school community. Students also remarked at length about the role that the two classes played in establishing an authentic community for them in school. Many students expressed having felt isolated or ignored in school prior to taking Rise Up or LCS, and that the classes provided a forum for real relationships to develop.

Students believed the courses were different than traditional courses in school because they provided an opportunity to get to know each other on a deeper level and gave them a support network that they hadn’t had before. Alen, a Freshman whose father had been hit by a roadside bomb while on a tour of duty in Iraq, expressed this sentiment when describing how he utilized the class. Prior to taking Rise Up, he was reluctant to share with even his closest friends how his father’s six month hospitalization was impacting him. During the class, however, he would frequently discuss his father’s progress, his setbacks, and how it was affecting him. He said about the course,

I feel like I can talk to the people in this class about problems. This group is more of a family than just a group of students. We all listened to each other’s problems, worked together on challenges. No one’s left out.

Mick, one of the students profiled in Chapter 4 who went on to drop out of school, explained how the experience was vastly different than other classes in his end-of-semester interview,

When I first walked in here, I didn't know anyone. In a normal school classroom, I probably would have seen those faces every day for the rest of the year and probably not ever had a conversation with them. But in here, everyone is always making jokes with everyone and I can relate to anything anybody says.

This sentiment was mirrored by Phoebe, an introverted Senior who struggled with depression, and as a result often closed herself off from friends and other acquaintances in school. "In this class," she said,

Everyone knows everyone and you talk to them at least every day. In other classes, you sometimes don't talk to everyone that's in your class and you may never even talk to some people at all. In other classes, you're pretty much there to just talk to the teacher and learn the subject, but here you're here to learn about other people and to care about how other people are doing and not just about yourself.

Elizabeth, an ELL student who had had difficulties making friends when she moved to the school the previous year, said of the experience,

In other classes you basically move yourself into the group that you know or the people you know. If you don't know anybody, you just sit back and actually don't care about who's sitting next to you...When you come in here, you look forward to seeing what other people have to say and if they're having problems, you look forward to helping them and not just stand back and say, "I don't care. It's not my problem." We're just a big family here to help each other every time, no matter what.

Students in the classes routinely referred to group as their "family" in blog posts, interviews and during class time. They saw their class as a place where they could find and provide support to each other. Unlike other courses in high school, which they identified as focused on subject matter and discreet tasks, they saw Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service as places to build relationships and have their needs met by other students. They formed a class identity and became part of something they

saw as larger than themselves, and for many students, it was the first time they experienced this type of belonging in school.

The courses also provided an opportunity for students to develop deeper relationships with their classmates in a way that they had not done in other areas of school. Students tended to view student-to-student interactions in other classes as resulting in task-oriented relationships. They felt the work done in Rise Up and LCS, however, yielded more meaningful relationships. Appollo, a Junior who was socially isolated and struggled academically, said of the experience,

The big difference is in other classes when you work and interact with other students, you're working with them to get the work done, so you're not really learning about the person you're working with. You're focusing on how to get the answer...Whereas in this class, you have to learn each other's strengths and weaknesses. Like in our service projects and challenge days, weaknesses will stick out a bit more because if you can't do it everyone else has to help you get past it or encourage you to complete it. In other classes where you're just doing your own work. You sink or swim alone.

Jessica, a Senior who became a class leader in Rise Up, echoed Appollo's sentiments by saying,

I know the other kids in Rise Up better than I know any other kids that I have classes with. We really get to know who each person is--what their strengths are, how to work together, what they're going through at home--mostly because we do challenging things together and have the time to really understand who the other people are.

The nature of the community service-learning projects and the challenge days pushed students to not only explore and master the expectations of the class (building leadership, improving communication, and impacting their community), they also pushed students to develop relationships that were far more authentic than they developed in other classes.

Students also regularly referred to what Jessica and Appollo hinted at as having the opportunity to get to know people's "real selves," versus their "school identity." Mick, who identified his school identity as being an "aggressive, angry, pain in the butt" often intimated that Rise Up gave him the opportunity to be a different person in school. In his end-of-semester interview he said,

I act a lot different in Rise Up, which is the real me and not the normal classroom me. In other classes you don't really have the opportunity to show your real self. It's more just academics, and Rise Up is a way to express the kind of person that you are because you have all these opportunities to show it.

Other students also recognized this reality for themselves and for each other. Gino, who was profiled in Chapter 4 said of Mick (whom he had known for two years) in his end-of-semester interview, "I don't think I would have even seen Mick's real side if it wasn't for this class. I would have just known him as an angry person." Three girls also acknowledged seeing another student's "real self" in the course in their Rise Up closing ceremony (where classmates have the opportunity to talk publicly about each other's participation). Karl, a Junior and football player who publicly advocated his athleticism, his love of pick-up trucks and "muddin'," and a general disdain for most people revealed an entirely different identity during the Rise Up course. The following exchange between the three girls during the ceremony articulates the depth of his identity he was willing to share in the class,

Francesca: Karl, I think you really should let other people see the real you. I would never had known that you were actually a caring person if I didn't have this class with you, and I've known you for what, 10 years? I didn't know about your biological dad [Karl had shared information about his father's drug use] or that you guys had lost your house.

Alicia: I know, you always play it so cool and like you don't care. I think about you singing Celine Dion with Bert [a resident at a nursing home students worked with] and making cupcakes for Griffin's Friends, and that's the real you. I knew you sort of before this, but even when we were hanging out with the same people, I'd never talk to you because I thought you were just a stuck-up football player. Now I see what a nice person you are.

Lexi: This class made me see you in a whole new light and I like you a lot more. I always liked you, but the real you is amazing and I don't want you to be afraid to show that to other people. You have this image and then there's the real you. The real you is better.

The courses provided students with the opportunity to be their authentic selves in school, legitimizing their value to the community and pushing them to risk showing commitment and dedication to school and to a school community. For several of them, showing this commitment to others in a place that had never validated them was a real risk. The course and the students in it fostered the level of trust required to get these students to truly open up and participate on an authentic level.

Students further identified having the opportunity to have their personal experiences legitimized in the class as the basis for their engagement and commitment while there. Having the opportunity to share and discuss personal issues was often credited as the primary, and most meaningful, difference between Rise Up and LCS and traditional classes. Lexi, a Sophomore who struggled with an eating disorder and whose father was killed in a motorcycle accident when she was in 8th grade said, "In here...someone will listen to your problems. But not in every class. Some people will shut you down or not listen to you. In this class, you always know you'll be listened to and be heard." Gino echoed her sentiment when he said,

This class is a place where you can get things off your chest that are happening in school as well as out of school because you have people in this class who will listen to you and they won't tell other people about it. You really develop a bond in here that's hard to develop outside of it.

Phoebe agreed with these two assessments, and added,

This class is more personalized than any other class I've taken. If something's wrong with you...other people in the class or the teachers will know about it and they'll make sure you're okay. It's not like a normal class where you're there to learn whatever the subject's on and that's it. In this class you can talk about stuff that's going on that you can't in other classes.

Students clearly felt that their problems, struggles and personal issues were acknowledged and that who they really were was seen by both students and teachers in these courses. The legitimizing of their personal realities helped to create a community of mutual trust and respect that made success possible.

Developing Social Capital

Students also identified in interviews, discussions and in their blog posts that the personal recognition they received from working on class projects helped them feel validated, develop self-esteem, and find a sense of belonging in school and in the wider community. In fact, 100% of students indicated that they agreed "very strongly" with the statement "at least one teacher or other adult at school believes I will be a success" on their post-class survey, compared with on 73% on the pre-class survey. For many, this emerging social capital was a new experience, and they relished the positive attention they received from adults and peers. They clearly felt proud about the real change they were making in their community

Students believed that the service projects they completed as part of the Rise Up course helped change adults' perceptions of them and validated who they were as people. Marcy, who was profiled in Chapter 4, described their work in her end-of-semester interview as transforming the attitudes of other teachers in the school,

Community service helps teachers see that not all kids are nuisances. Not just annoying little kids who don't do anything. They get to see another side of us. It changes the way they react to us in the hallways and in other classes.

Larie, a Senior who suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from witnessing a domestic assault against her mother and who often acknowledged that she lacked self-confidence said,

We got a lot of thank you notes from different people, and they were the people who it affected and really helped them. And we got a lot of recognition from people throughout the school, like teachers, who said we were doing a great job and it kind of showed more about the type of people who were are. People might not really have known, or who never took the time to know us, now know who we really are.

Larie's reference to people learning about "the type of people who were are," indicates that she lacked validation in school for what she personally had to offer, and the projects that her class completed allowed for validation and recognition. Flavio agreed, and in his end-of-semester interview articulated that the projects helped him feel acknowledged in the community. "[The projects,]" he said,

Get us known. Teachers have told me they've seen me in the paper. Some even have the article hanging on their wall. People come up to me at work all the time and tell me that they've seen me in the paper.

As students completed the CSL projects in the course, they felt pride in what they were doing and they knew they were making a difference. However, it was the acknowledgement of adults in school that validated their worth and indicated a shift in how others viewed them. This emerging social capital made them feel more valued in the larger school community.

Students also developed social capital amongst members of the out-of-school community, and regularly articulated the value of their work to others. They frequently reflected on the personal value that their work brought to others and that they had caused a shift in perception of some of their community members. Ian, a Sophomore who had been in a behavior modification program at the high school for anger management issues for four years said in his end-of-semester interview,

To see people happy. We make them happy. When I made Bert that snowman and reindeer at the nursing home, that just made her really happy. I did that. It's just awesome to see because I don't get to do that for people very often.

He then added later in the interview that as a result of their work, "The elderly and other people that we work with don't think all teenagers are little punks like they might have before." From his perspective, these projects helped others to see him, perhaps for the first time, not only as a person who was making tangible change in his community, but also one who was positive influence on others.

Gino agreed when he outlined the impact that the Casino Night project had on other students in the high school who he viewed as marginalized. In his end-of-semester interview he explained with pride,

We brought a lot of people closer with some of the activities we've done, like Casino night. We brought people in who didn't do much in the school or outside of the school in. Some people don't do stuff. I never see them around, but at Casino Night, there were people there who never go to anything, ever.

Gino clearly was beginning to envision himself as an agent of change in his school community. While he had once been one of the students who "never go to anything, ever," he was now helping others to engage and become part of the school community.

Students also received recognition from community groups, including the Barstow-Waterton Community School Partnership, who recognized the work that students had done in the community at a large banquet with other community leaders. The impact of the award can be seen in the following exchange between three students during the end-of-semester interview:

Albert: What about that award we got? It was good because people acknowledged what we did and appreciated it.

Gino: And we got a lot of feedback from people who were there on our giant poster.

Juan: It was pretty cool. I liked being acknowledged for the good things I've done.

Gino: Up until this class I just felt like another person who wasn't making a difference. I was just in the crowd. When I got to this class, I really felt like I was making a difference in the world.

Not only were students developing an awareness of the impact they could make on their community, community members were acknowledging their contributions. The tangible feedback that students received helped them build social capital and feel as if they truly belonged.

Developing a Sense of Empowerment in the Community

Students in the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses routinely identified the CSL projects they completed as a source of empowerment. The notion that they could be the providers, not just the recipients, of service made them feel influential and valued, and the voice and sense of control they developed gave them confidence in their own abilities.

For many of the students involved in the projects, their participation went beyond wanting to “help out” other people and helped them feel as if they were giving back for service they had received. For years, Gino’s family had struggled financially and had needed to make regular use of food bank programs. His class decided to participate in “Brown Bag Day,” a food distribution program for senior citizens. Gino’s experience participating in this program is illustrated in the following in-class conversation with the interviewer:

HB: Anything specific that we did this semester that you thought was significant?

Gino: Probably Brown Bag Day. I liked helping people out. People who don’t have a lot of food.

HB: Why do you think you liked that so much?

Gino: Because I know how it feels to be in that situation. It was good to finally be able to give back.

Mick articulated a similar sentiment when discussing a fundraiser his class carried out for the *Hole in the Wall Gang Camp*, a summer program for children who have serious illnesses like cancer and diabetes. During his final interview, he discussed the project:

Mick: In Rise Up, we have to decide what we're going to do ourselves, so when you come up with an idea, it reflects the kind of person that you are. So when our class was determined to make and sell 1,500 cupcakes, I mean, that just shows the kind of people that we are. It shows we were trying to raise as much money as possible for a good cause.

HB: For kids you'd never meet.

Mick: For kids we'll never see so they can go to camp and have a good time. There's nothing more fun than a summer camp.

HB: Have you ever gone to camp?

Mick: No.

HB: So not only for kids you'll never meet, but for an opportunity you've never had.

Mick: Exactly.

Mick and his family had been the recipients of what he called "charity" all of his life, and Rise Up gave him the opportunity to give back. Mick's clear pride in what his class had done was effusive and he clearly felt empowered that he was able to give another child an opportunity to have an experience he had never had.

Students also believed that the two courses helped them to find their voice in school. The confidence that they gained from the projects, as well as the tangible benefits that they saw helped them become more integrated and assertive in school.

Larie said in her end-of-semester interview,

I learned how to stand up for myself, which was something I couldn't really do before. I gained confidence from the things that we were doing and people seeing the good rather than seeing what I

couldn't do or thinking that I was dumb. It was like, well, look at the things that I'm doing. Even when I was sick or frustrated, I didn't stop. I was really determined. It made me not believe someone when they told me I couldn't do something because I had already accomplished a lot.

Gino agreed with Larie's sentiment, articulating that the course transformed his participation in school,

Before I used to not really talk that much because I used to think that nobody wanted to hear what I had to say. But when I got in here, I realized that that wasn't really true. I started acting more like myself instead of this shy person over in the corner.

Having the opportunity to solve complex, authentic problems in their community and being welcomed into an environment that honored and encouraged their participation provided students with the opportunity to develop their voice in school.

Students also felt empowered by the control they had over the direction of the class and the projects that they participated in. Mick identified the hierarchical nature of most classes as an impediment to his participation:

It's the free speaking ability in this class that makes it different. In a formal class, you really got to raise your hand, and the teacher likes your idea or knocks it down. In normal classes I always felt like I was being knocked down. Rise Up is more about sharing your ideas and together deciding what to do to solve a problem.

Mick saw the decision making power students had to solve a given problem as different from his traditional experience in school. This new experience, which reflected the democratic teaching principals of the course, gave him a sense of control he had never felt over his education. Flavio, a Senior who had failed multiple courses during his high school career, agreed. He articulated in his end-of-semester interview that he felt empowered by the methodologies at the heart of the class,

CSL, goal setting and creating classroom rules brings us [students and teachers] together. It puts us on the same level. Teachers are learning new stuff at the same time as us. We're all learning together and they're not just teaching.

The hierarchy between teachers and students in traditional classrooms was broken down through the democratic nature of the projects he highlighted. These projects gave Flavio a greater sense of control by allowing him to develop a different kind of relationship with teachers, peers and with himself. In this paradigm, all individuals bring something of value to the projects and have something to learn. This resulted in students who felt empowered and in control of their own learning.

The relationships that students developed as a result of the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes were noteworthy and a divergence from those typical to traditional classrooms. Students became part of an in-school community that many of them had never been a part of before, developed social capital with school-based adults and community members, and became empowered in the school setting. The experience for many students was transformative and provided a newfound opportunity for connection to school.

While students clearly received benefits in the area of developing relationships in the Rise and Leadership in Community Service classes, the impact on school retention that the courses had must also be examined. In the following section, school attendance, behavior, engagement, relationships with in-school adults and grades will be examined to gain a broader picture of the impact of these two programs.

Impact on Indicators for School Retention

School Attendance

School attendance data for the 30 students involved in the study was pulled from Canal Town High School and Indian Falls Middle School records. The data indicates that the Rise Up and Leadership in Community service class had a positive impact on school attendance, particularly among students with the highest number of risk factors for dropping out of high school. Sixty-four percent of the students enrolled in Rise Up or Leadership in Community Service saw increased attendance during the semester they participated in these courses. If students who had chronic attendance issues (missed more than 15 days/semester for more than two semesters) are excluded, the figure rises to 81% of students seeing improved attendance. While these statistics are positive, the data shows that the rise in attendance rates seldom translates to increased school attendance after the course ends. Further analysis of the data illustrates noteworthy trends, including which students have the biggest attendance increases during and immediately following participation in the courses.

All Rise Up and LCS students whose attendance was examined for this study showed a slight improvement in the number of days they attended school (4%) (SEE TABLE 5). When students with chronic absence were excluded from the analysis, there was a slightly higher (8.8%) improvement in days students attended. Generally, both courses nominally improved student attendance for the semester they were enrolled, which is a positive trend. When the data was examined to identify the impact it had on students who were most at-risk for dropping out, however, the findings were far more significant.

Table 5: Student Attendance Over Time

	Days Missed the Semester Before Rise Up	Days Missed During the Rise UP or LCS Semester	Percent Increase/Decrease of pre-class absences	Days Missed the Semester After Rise Up or LCS	Percent Increase/Decrease of pre-class absences
All Students	4.8	4.6	4% decrease	5.3	10% increase
Students with 15 or less absences per semester	3.4	3.1	8.8% Decrease	3.64	7% Increase
Students with less than 10 risk factors for dropping out	4	3.68	8% decrease	4	0%
Students with 10 or more risk factors for dropping out	10.2	7.87	23% decrease	9.6	5.8% decrease
Students with 3 semesters of significant decline in grades and/or who failed 4 or more classes in high school	10	8.5	15% decrease	8.2	18% decrease

The data was first examined for students who had fewer than ten risk factors for dropping out, and the course proved to be beneficial for those students' attendance as well. They saw an 8% decrease in their number of absences during the semester they participated in the course. It was the students with ten or more risk factors for dropping out who saw the most significant gains, however. Those students saw a 23% decrease

in the number of absences they had for the semester. When students with 7 or more risk factors were examined, the number dipped slightly, but was still significant at 17.3% decrease in the number of days absent for the semester. Students who were experiencing significant academic challenges (had three semesters of significantly declining grades or who had failed more than four classes in high school) also showed improvement, with a 15% decrease in their days absent. Overall, when students enrolled in the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes, they saw an improvement in their attendance, particularly those who were most at-risk for dropping out. Student end-of-semester interviews indicate that they perceived the courses as the factor causing their improved attendance.

In end-of-semester interviews, many students identified Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service as motivating them to come to school and to persist through what they perceived as challenging school days. Even students who had no significant issues with attendance felt like the class was a motivating factor in getting them to school and provided a part of the day to look forward to. Alen, who had a history of strong attendance, said of Rise Up,

In the morning when my mom wakes me up I'll just sit there staring blankly at the t.v. and think, "I don't want to go to school today." Then I'll think about what we're going to do today [in Rise Up] because we always do something fun in this class and it makes it a lot easier to get up.

Lexi, who also had good school attendance, expressed the enthusiasm she felt about coming to the class in this way,

When I'm in class in the morning, I say, okay, one more class until Rise Up. Or in the beginning of the school day, I'll say, two more classes until Rise Up, because in this class I just don't feel stressed, and after

we say our highs and lows, I just throw my low away. I clear it out of my head. It makes me in a better mood for the rest of the day and I just can't wait to come back the next day.

While both of these students had regular attendance, the course clearly provided them with incentive to attend.

Other students who had significant attendance issues also saw the course as a motivating factor in attending school. Gino, who missed a large amount of school in the two years prior, reported that the course was a central component of his improved attendance,

My attendance in 8th grade was something like 30 absences, and last year [when I was in Rise Up] it was 15. This year [now that I'm in LCS], it is even less. It's mainly because this is the class that I look forward to each day. It's the funnest class and the one I learn the most in and it's more hands-on than any other class. I like being in this class, so it's why I usually come to school.

Albert, a Freshman who had also missed 15 days of school the previous year said,

When I wake up in the morning and am not really feeling that good, I just want to go back to bed but I think that I have this class today and actually want to go. I fight the sickness and go in anyway because I really want to be here.

Both students identified the course as providing motivation to come to school on days that they might have normally skipped or stayed home. They identified the hands-on nature of the activities and their engagement in the subject matter as fueling their attendance.

Even students who dropped out indicated that Rise Up prolonged their school attendance. Mick, who left CTHS mid-way through his Sophomore year, said,

Rise Up kept me in school a lot of days. One day when I had to stay home because I had bronchitis, I argued with my mom for about an hour because I wanted to go in so I wouldn't miss Rise Up.

Despite being socially disenfranchised and failing all of his other classes, the course kept him attending school. Marcy, who dropped out during her Junior year, agreed. She said in her follow-up interview, “I was happy in Rise Up. School should make more classes like that. That one class helped me get through the rest of the day. I’d be waiting for that class all day. I loved being there.” Both of these students, despite being isolated and not finding acceptance elsewhere in school, felt motivated to attend because of the Rise Up course.

The Rise Up and LCS courses did not, however, result in improved or stable attendance in the semester following the class for students overall. Students who participated in the courses saw a 10% increase in absences in the semester following Rise Up or LCS. However, when student data was examined for students most at risk for dropping out, a more hopeful picture emerges. Students who had more than ten risk factors for dropping out and students who were experiencing significant academic failure did see improvements in their attendance from the semester prior to taking the courses, with a 5.8% and 18% decrease in their number of absences respectively. Students who were the most at-risk benefitted the most in the area of improved attendance from participation in the two courses.

Relationships with In-School Adults:

Students in the Rise Up and LCS courses identified improved relationships with in-school adults as a tangible benefit they received from the courses. Relationships with both the researcher and her student teacher were described by participants as being significantly different than with other adults in school. Students showed improved

perceptions on every indicator for relationships with adults in school between their pre- and post-class surveys, including “at least one teacher or other adult at school listens to me when I have something to say,” “at least one teacher or other adult at school really cares about me,” and “at least one teacher or other adult at school notices when I’m not there.” Ninety-five percent of students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with all of these statements on their post-class survey, compared to just 72% on the pre-class surveys. Furthermore, students believed that quality of their relationships with instructors of Rise Up and LCS were deeper, demonstrated a greater amount of trust, and exhibited a level of respect they didn’t have with other in-school adults.

Students identified the democratic teaching principals of the class as being central to the creation of stronger relationships. Rena, a Freshman who had a significant hearing impairment and who experienced many social challenges in school said in her end-of-semester interview,

The relationships with the adults in this class are a lot stronger than with other adults in school and I feel like I trust the adults in this class. I don’t feel like I can open up to other adults. You treat us like we’re on the same level as you. We’re not below you which some teachers actually think. Like they’re better than us. Yes, we’re students and you’re teachers, but treat us the same. I’m glad that you guys do.

Elizabeth agreed with this sentiment, saying,

Some teachers think they’re a little bit better than us because they’re a teacher and older. If you treat us like that, we will not be open to you and if we need help, we’re not going to ask you. But here, I feel like I can come anytime and ask for help. With other teachers that’s really hard to do.

Both of these students felt that the democratic nature of the relationships they formed with the instructors helped them feel more respected as individuals and allowed them to reveal more about issues they were facing in school and in their lives.

Other students identified this deeper relationship as being a result of having the opportunity to get to know teachers on a personal level. Juan, who was profiled in Chapter 4, said of his experience in school,

In my opinion, other teachers are strictly business because all they care about is the work and if students are doing the work. In this class, we talk about stuff that is really happening in our lives.

Appollo echoed this sentiment by stating,

We get to know the adults in this class a lot more...You get to learn what their interests are, what bums them out, while in other classes, the only interaction you have with the teacher is "I have a question. How do you do this?" I feel like the teachers are also learning and learning with us. Instead of sending us off to learn it and occasionally looking over to make sure we're still doing it and doing their grading, the teachers here are actually just as involved in the projects as the students.

Students identified having opportunities for personal interaction and joint-learning as central to the development of relationships with adults in the courses. They viewed these relationships as deeper, more personal and more democratic than other relationships they had with adults in school.

School Behavior:

Students enrolled in the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses showed a reduction in the number of referrals they had to the school interventionist for discipline during the semester they were enrolled in the classes. When examining all

student data for this study, the average number of referrals was 3.8 for the semester prior to taking either class. While enrolled in one of the two courses, students showed a decline in referrals, which stood at an average of 3.4 referrals. After participation in the course, the number of referrals dropped significantly to an average of 2.1, a 44% decrease over their referrals prior to taking the course (SEE TABLE 6). This downward trend in referrals suggests that the courses positively impacted students' behavior in school.

Table 6: Student Behavior Referrals Over Time

	Referrals to Interventionist semester prior to Rise Up or LCS	Referrals During Rise Up or LCS	Percent Increase or Decrease	Referrals After Rise Up or LCS	Percent Increase or Decrease
All Students	3.8	3.4	10% decrease	2.1	44% decrease
Students with more than 15 absences one semester in high school	1.7	1.4	17% decrease	1.1	35.3% decrease
Students experiencing significant academic failure	7.75	8	3.2% increase	4.4	43% decrease
Students with over 10 risk factors for dropping out of school	10.4	10.4	0%	5.6	46% decrease

Similar downward trends could be seen in students who had the highest risk factors for dropping out. Those who had more than 15 absences during a single semester saw a decline in their referrals from an average 1.7 referrals in the semester before taking one of the courses, to 1.4 referrals during and 1.1 referrals in the semester that followed their participation, a drop of 35.3%. Also, students with more than ten risk factors for dropping out of school saw improvements in their referrals overall. While these students saw no decrease during their semester in the courses, their referrals dropped 46% in the semester following Rise Up. Interestingly, the only students who actually saw an increase in behavior referrals were those students who were experiencing significant academic challenges (three semesters of significantly declining grades or who had failed more than four classes in high school). Those students actually saw a 3.2% increase in their behavior referrals during the semester they participated in one of the courses. It is noteworthy, however, that after completing the class, their number of referrals dropped 43% from the semester prior to Rise Up, nearly identical progress to the larger cohort of students. The rise in referrals during the semester in the courses might be attributed to the challenging situations that the class intentionally places students in. Students are pushed, as was explored in Chapter 4 in Clark's profile, to participate in activities that challenge them to develop communication skills in class. In addition, students also develop strategies to deal with conflict in other areas of their life, including with peers and in other classes. Perhaps, as was suggested in Chapter 4, the bump in referrals during the Rise Up/LCS semester is due to students' trial and error of applying these strategies in real life situations.

Overall, students saw a drop in the number of behavior referrals that they received while taking the Rise Up and LCS classes. This drop was exhibited not only during enrollment in these courses, but also carried over to the next academic semester, indicating that the course had positive impact on their in-school behavior.

Grades:

Students in the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses showed an slight increase in their grades while enrolled in the courses. Sixty-three percent of students who took the course saw an increase in their GPA in the semester during participation in the courses. Prior to taking the courses, the average student GPA's was 71.2. During enrollment in the courses, that average rose to 76.5 (a 7.4% increase). In the semester following, students' average GPA decreased slightly to 74.5, which still represented a 4.6% increase in GPA from the semester prior to taking the classes (SEE TABLE 7). This trend stayed consistent across all data sets.

Table 7: Student GPA Over Time

	GPA Semester Before Rise Up or LCS	GPA During Rise Up or LCS	Percent Increase or Decrease	GPA Semester After Rise Up or LCS	Percentage Increase or Decrease
All Students	71.2	76.5	7.4% increase	74.5	4.6% increase
Students with 10 or more risk factors for dropout	56.9	59.5	4.5% increase	51.8	10.7% decrease
Students with 3 or more semesters of significant grade decline or who failed more than 4 courses	59.3	62.4	5% increase	59	.5% decrease

Students who had more than 10 risk factors for dropping out also saw a bump in their GPA while they were enrolled in the courses, rising from 56.9 prior to enrollment in the classes to 59.5 while enrolled (a 4.5% increase). However, in the following semester, the average GPA dropped significantly to 51.8 (10.7% lower than the semester prior to taking the course). For students who were experiencing significant academic challenges (3 semesters of significant decline in grades or 4 or more failed classes in high school), there was also an increase in GPA during enrollment in the courses. Prior to taking the classes, their average GPA was 59.3, but it rose to 62.4 during the course (up 4.5%). However, after the course, their GPA average followed the trend and dropped to a 59 average.

The data indicates that students do not receive a lasting bump in their GPA from taking the Rise Up or LCS courses, although they do see a bump during the semester that they are in one of the classes. While the Rise Up course gives students some short term gains academically, it does not push students who are most at-risk for dropping out to have lasting academic improvements in other courses.

Engagement:

Students in the Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service courses expressed consistent feedback about how the work of these classes was significantly more engaging than work in their other courses. In their pre-class surveys, 33% of students indicated that they felt work they did in school was meaningful and important, while 74.5% reported feeling that work was meaningful in their post-class survey, representing a significant shift in mindset. Students identified the authentic learning tasks and the mode of instruction used as being particularly motivating for them. Students saw these modalities as both challenging and engaging, and helped them to become invested in the work of the course.

Many students who often reported being disengaged in their other classes were truly engaged in the Rise Up and LCS classes. Some credited the CSL methodology as being the key to their engagement. In his end-of-semester interview, Flavio simply stated “[CSL] gets me looking forward to doing something new and I’ve never felt that way about school before.” Jamat believed that participating in activities that were hands-on was the secret to his engagement in the class, saying,

The projects in this class are just more hands-on than projects in other classes. It’s something that I can do, that

I'm good at. I can't just sit in the classroom and listen to a teacher talk for hours. Here, I actually get to get out and help people.

And Larie further articulated in her end-of-semester interview,

Not all people are good with sitting down and staring at paper for hours on end, which is what school mostly is. Not everyone's good at the "in the classroom" stuff. But in Rise Up, you still got stuff done and learned about yourself, what you had to offer, and you got to help people. It is a different approach to learning, which I think is a lot better for a whole lot of people.

Marginalized students repeatedly emphasized that the CSL methodology played to their strengths, appealed to their learning style and allowed them to demonstrate mastery more effectively than other teaching methods they encountered in school.

In addition, students identified the authentic nature of the instruction, the problem solving they got to do, and the agency they were granted in doing it as particularly engaging and motivating. In one interaction between three students, these points were illustrated:

Juan: In this class you don't just have to sit there for an hour and a half, you actually do some hands-on stuff and get to help a lot of people.

Gino: Also, we did stuff that we wanted to do. It wasn't the teacher telling us what to do. It was stuff we all picked.

Albert: In other classes you don't sit around and discuss things about the community.

Juan: I liked it because instead of the teacher always giving orders, we got to actually sit down and think about the community and what we could do to make it better.

Albert: It made me feel responsible to know that we had control over something.

Gino: I think that since we picked it, it wasn't boring to us. It was something we wanted to do and was exciting and fun. Unlike when you're told to do something, which with teachers is usually how it is and it's boring and you don't want to do it. I think more kids are more likely to act out when they're told what to do than if they can pick something on their own.

These students clearly felt they were solving real-life problems for which their input and opinions were crucial. They were engaged in the projects because they were able to identify community problems and were given the tools to solve them on their own.

Mick echoed the sentiments of many students when he articulated disbelief in being able to participate in a project that, from his perspective, was beyond the scope of what he expected to do in school. "You see all these things in the newspaper," he said in his end-of-semester interview,

And you see them on t.v., and this school is doing this, and that school is doing something else. When I came to this school, I thought, "Well, this is never going to happen here. We're never going to do anything. I'm going to be bored. I'm probably going to get more detentions and get suspended." Then I got to RU and it was like, "I just raised \$800 for someone! I just did something for someone." It gets you ready to work with people you don't know and gets you ready to work in the workplace. Being able to relate to people, communicate better and be more open about the kind of person you really are. Usually you don't get that opportunity in school.

Mick was amazed that students in a school that he attended were able to take part in projects such as these. Even more powerful, however, is that Mick, and many of the students who participated in the classes, would likely not be trusted to participate in these projects in more traditional classrooms because of past behavior and school history.

In Rise Up and LCS, students were given the opportunity to show strengths that were seldom revealed in school, and as a result, their engagement in the class surpassed their traditional school participation. They consistently credited the impact they were having on the community as being a significant motivator for participating in the class in meaningful ways. Students were highly engaged and invested in the outcomes of the projects, and their engagement and motivation remained higher than in other areas of school.

Ability to Persist in Challenging Situations

The Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes make an impact on how students perceive their persistence in challenging situations. In interviews, blog posts and class discussions students revealed that the classes helped them develop skills to confront difficulties they faced in their lives more effectively, and also made their inter- and intra-personal conflicts easier to manage in positive ways. While not all students who took the classes went on to graduate, several students with multiple risk factors for dropping out did credit the class with helping them to persist until graduation. In fact, survey data revealed that 97% of students who took the class agreed or strongly agreed that they “plan[ned] to graduate,” while only 93% of students indicated these choices on their pre-class surveys. Even those who did drop out reported transferring some of the skills that they developed in Rise Up into challenging situations in their post-high school lives.

Students identified growth in their ability to handle interpersonal conflicts as a tangible benefit they received from Rise Up. They saw the Challenge Days and the

service-learning projects as central to this development, as they required students to compromise with others and deal with frustrations that arose. Gino said of the benefits he received in his end-of-semester interview,

Before, when I worked with people on projects and when I had an idea, it would usually clash with the other person's and I wasn't very good at coming to a compromise. It wasn't easy for us to bring our ideas together so that they would be one thing. But this class has helped me do that, to talk things out, to give a little and get a little.

Elizabeth echoed Gino's sentiments when she reflected on the frustration her class faced on Challenge Days. She felt these experiences had changed the way she worked with other students and faced difficult situations. In her end-of-semester interview, she said,

Our Challenge Days have been getting more challenging and people get a little frustrated, but we try to get out of it by staying positive. I've learned that when you talk about being frustrated instead of bottling it up and letting it really bother you, it helps you move forward to solve some of these problems. Also, when you can realize you're getting frustrated and remind yourself to stay positive, it really helps.

Clark, whose explosive temper had led to an increasing number of conflicts with other students the year before he took Rise Up, saw similar benefits. He said of the class in his end-of-semester interview,

During this class it seemed like you intentionally put me in situations that you knew were going to push my buttons. I would get so mad and just lose it with other kids. But then you helped me figure out how to deal with it next time, and little by little I figured out how to not lose it. By the end of the semester I could keep my temper in check and get through stuff that normally pushed me over the edge.

These students clearly saw Rise Up as helping them develop their ability to deal with interpersonal challenges that arose in a more productive manner. They expanded their skills for dealing with others in frustrating situations and saw tangible progress in these areas.

Other students believed the classes helped them with intra-personal relationships, and for many, helped them shift their self-concept considerably. In her end-of-semester interview, Larie identified the CSL projects as being central to improving her self-esteem and giving her the strength to challenge others who attempted to diminish her worth, something she had struggled with for years. She remarked,

I gained a lot of confidence from the things we were doing and people seeing the good rather than seeing what I couldn't do or thinking that I'm dumb. The things that you normally do in school are on paper, but the things we do in this class gave me some actual, tangible things and I could say, "Well, no. I did this, and this, and this." And it gave me confidence to say, "Hold on a minute. I already did this, and you can't tell me I can't do it." It changed how I dealt with people who tried to push me around and minimize me, which happened to me a lot before this.

Maggie, who never believed that she could be an influence on others, said that her outlook about her ability to influence others in challenging situations had profoundly changed. She reflected,

I almost can't believe how much I've changed, but now I can comfortably take charge of small situations and help people to move forward. [In the activity we did the other day] I just solved it. The group followed me without question. It was really surprising...seeing the group just follow along with my plan and made me feel like a real leader. I have become "a girl of action." That's how I feel like I'll deal with most situations that will come up in my life from now on.

These students shifted their perceptions about their own worth, capabilities and how the world saw them. This paradigm shift not only impacted their personal perceptions, but

also influenced how they interacted with others in the world, particularly in challenging situations.

Other students saw benefits in the ways they dealt with challenging personal situations stemming from their life experience. Elly, a Sophomore, who had for years been shuffled between relatives and who had attended four schools in the two years prior to taking Rise Up, reported tremendous growth in this area. She said that the class helped her to learn how to express her frustrations with adults in her life in a more positive way. Up to that point, she had either chosen not to voice her opinions about how her well-being was an afterthought to her family or had exploded after suppressing these thoughts. She felt the class helped her develop a means to make her voice heard in challenging situations instead of turning her anger inward. She said at her end-of-semester interview,

Now I'm not afraid to speak my mind when I'm frustrated or angry or upset, and like everyone else in this class, that is what I love. I used to bottle it all up and let it eat away at me until I exploded. Now I know how to deal with it in a way that will help me and not hurt me.

Phoebe, a senior who began seeing a therapist for the first time after the class ended, agreed with this sentiment. In her end-of-semester interview, she reported that Rise Up was immensely valuable in helping her deal with a significant childhood trauma. She felt the class pushed her to finally open up about her mother's death six years earlier and the serious emotional and psychological issues it had caused her. "This class got me to open up about a lot of stuff that I've never opened up to anyone about before," she said,

I never talked about any of it, not even to my closest friends. Nothing about my mother dying, my depression, or any of this stuff that's going on right now. If I didn't have this class I would have kept shutting off, trying to ignore it and keeping it all in. It has helped me get the help I need to move forward with my life. I've learned that talking about stuff, sharing what I'm going through can actually help. It's changed my life.

The course pushed students to face significant personal challenges in a way that they had simply not been able to do in the past. Both students felt they were able to deal with personal conflicts in situations where they often had little power in more manageable, constructive ways.

Students also felt that the courses helped them to gain new perspectives about overcoming life's challenges in a broader way. Many students reported developing a new outlook on life and a more positive approach to dealing with challenging situations as a result of the class. Francesca, a Junior who lived in what she called a "chaotic" home environment and who had a history of instigating , in her words, "major drama" in school said of her transformed outlook on the class blog,

I won't freak out about the little things anymore, because I realize that there are bigger problems that are much more serious than the things I normally worry about. And in the future, I will not be afraid to ask for help if I have a problem. I've learned that when you ask for help, you usually get it.

Elly reflected that her outlook of herself and on the relationships she had with others had changed, indicating a tangible shift in how she viewed herself and the world. She said,

I never thought I that I could have such influence over a group or that I could offer someone as much as I can. This class helped me make such deep connections with people. I used to find it so hard to trust people but I'm starting to realize that I can expect

more from people, that everyone isn't like my family, that I may not be like them. [This class] instilled values that I did not get at home.

Elizabeth reported developing a better perspective on how to deal with obstacles and challenges, saying,

This class has helped me realize that life isn't easy, neither for us or for the people we helped. But life is a group of challenges that you need to have fun with or it will be really hard. I now see life as a puzzle I'm putting together every day. Tomorrow will be a better day, or maybe it will get better in a week. It's always going to get better.

Jamie had a similar perception, explaining her new-found persistence in her end-of-semester interview,

I've learned from this class that life is short and sometimes cruel. You can either let it overcome you or you can fight through it. I've learned that I will never, never give up on a dream, no matter how big it may be. No task is ever impossible. I now believe in my ability to get what I want out of life.

These students all experienced a shift in their life outlook and felt that the courses had better prepared them to deal with challenging situations and obstacles that arose in their life. For many, this shift was a radical departure from their philosophical starting point and indicated a newfound persistence in difficult times.

Even students who went on to drop out of school reported receiving benefits from the class in the area of persistence in challenging situations. Mick, who grew to regret both his behavior in school and the persona he had developed over the years there, reflected on the depression he fell into after dropping out and how he pulled himself out of it in his follow up interview. He reported that employing the goal setting strategies students used on a weekly basis in the Rise Up course was extremely helpful in facilitating a personal change. "I started focusing on changing my character," he said,

Because I didn't really like who I was and who I felt like I had to be in school. I wrote a list of all the things I didn't like put it on my coffee table so I would see it every day when I got up. I would say, maybe I can change doing this today. Small steps. Just like what we talked about in Rise Up.

Mick was able to use class-based goal setting strategies to help him persist in a very difficult personal situation. Marcy, who had been diagnosed many years earlier with Oppositional Defiant Disorder also transferred some of what she learned in Rise Up to situations in her life after she dropped out. She reported in her follow up interview,

[The class] helped me figure out a better way to deal with stress and even with people who I fought with. When you [the researcher] got upset about something, you didn't really show it, or I guess you did but you didn't react all angry. You were cheery about it. You'd have a smile on your face. You'd tell us to settle down, but you never yelled. And the next day was a new day, it didn't drag on. I'm trying to be like that a lot more lately and it does help. It makes it a whole lot easier to get along with people and not get in fights all the time.

Both students used approaches that were modeled and practiced in class to help them deal with challenging situations that arose in their lives after they dropped out. While the class may have been too small an intervention too late in their high school careers to keep them in school, they still developed skills to persist in challenging situations after they dropped out.

Other students with a high number of risk factors for dropping out did persist despite significant obstacles, and they credited Rise Up with helping them to stay in school. Lee, who had struggled for years and who, at 19, was on the verge of quitting school said in her end-of-semester interview,

This class meant everything to me this year. I probably wouldn't have graduated without it. This was my sixth year of high school, and all my friends were gone and I was really ready to

give up. This class gave me a place to belong, to feel like I had a family, and kept me going when I wanted to quit. I didn't really believe that I could push myself as hard as I could to do things that were hard and miserable, like English [laughs], but [the class] kept me going.

Flavio, who failed to graduate with his cohort but went on to earn the required credits in a dual-enrollment course at a local community college, saw similar benefits. He said in a follow up interview,

It took me a year to pass the two courses that I needed to get my diploma. I failed two classes at GCC, but I kept going. I kept thinking about setting my goals in [Rise Up] and following through on what I wanted. I thought about some of the people we talked about and the problems that they had but that they kept going no matter how bad it was. That kept me going. Just because it was hard, I wasn't going to give up.

Both of these students credit their Rise Up experience with helping them to develop skills and attitudes that they found essential to their persistence towards graduation. They parlayed the skills and relationships they had formed in class into strategies for success in other areas, which carried them to graduation.

The Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service classes help students develop skills to persist in challenging situations. After the class, students are able to more effectively deal with conflict in interpersonal relationships and to face personal obstacles. Many experience a shift in their self-concept and develop a new outlook on life and challenge. Even students who dropped out of high school report that they used the skills they developed in class to help them persist in difficult situations post-high school, while other students credit the class with giving them strategies that kept them in school.

Issues for Schools

The experiences of students in the Rise Up and LCS classes raise important issues for schools, educators and curriculum coordinators. First, it requires a commitment to keeping all students in school, no matter their academic history, behavior or affect and to identifying these students early on in their academic struggle. While it might be easy to identify students in the nadir of their academic performance, the key to successful intervention with these types of programs is early identification. Schools must put in a great deal of effort to identify students who are beginning to show signs of being at-risk for dropping out, which requires constant, quality communication between teachers, counselors, staff and students. Committing time and resources to this identification before students become “red flagged” and about to drop out requires a proactive mindset. Teachers, counselors and administrators must make a conscious decision to get to know all their students in order for a program such as this to be truly successful.

Second, committing to a program such as this requires both additional resources and flexibility on the part of school districts. Administration must be willing to risk funding a program that doesn’t focus on repeating subject-matter courses for struggling students, which is the primary treatment generally administered to students who fail. One part time position at Canal Town High School was expanded to full time to accommodate the increased teaching load added to the school schedule, at a cost to the district of approximately \$23,000. Additionally, the Administration had to be flexible about other graduation requirements to ensure that students who most needed the course, got it. For example, for many students at CTHS, fitting the class into their long-

block schedule was a challenge, and many received waivers for physical education because it conflicted with the course. Despite vocal opposition from several faculty members about these types of exemptions, the Administration was steadfast in support of the program and providing students with a different treatment than they had traditionally received to combat their risk factors for dropping out. Without this type of support, it would be unlikely that this program would have reached the students who needed it most.

Another issue for schools is that this program requires educators who are willing to go beyond the traditional scope of the school day to provide programming for students. The researcher routinely provided transportation in her personal vehicle for projects outside of school, ran projects that took place out of school hours, met with parents off campus, and provided access to students during her preparation period and extensively after school hours. This program would not likely have the same results if run by a teacher who was merely assigned to teach the course. Investment and a belief in the benefits of the course are a requirement of the teaching staff. In addition, in the era of increased teacher scrutiny and the new teacher evaluation system in Massachusetts, teachers might be leery to volunteer to teach a course that does not rely on traditional assessments.

Additionally, the success of these programs relies on creating a heterogeneous grouping of students that is clearly vetted and matched based on risk factors, personal history and experience. This requires that adults in school be willing to do the extra work necessary to create these effective groupings. The researcher worked extensively with guidance counselors, the school interventionist, counselors and teachers from both

the high school and middle school to create viable, balanced groupings of students. In addition, all students were interviewed prior to taking the course so that the researcher could get a sense of their personalities, motivations and affect. This process took a considerable amount of time and communication, but it was central to the success of the program. Following the creation of the proposed groupings, the researcher had to work in concert with the guidance department to examine student schedules and adjust the groupings as needed based on scheduling issues. Schools and teachers would need to be committed to doing this work in order for a program such as this to work.

Lastly, and most significantly for schools, this study reveals that marginalized students feel disengaged and disenfranchised by their school experience. The enduring understandings of this course and the methodologies it employed were extremely effective at re-engaging, motivating and giving students a voice in school. While schools may lack the resources to incorporate a program such as this into their program of studies, they certainly can train teachers to use some of the strategies in traditional classrooms. Community service-learning, democratic teaching principles and student-generated projects are all methodologies that can be easily built into subject matter classes, provided school are willing to provide professional development in these areas. While all students respond to these approaches in positive ways, it is those who are most marginalized in school that see the greatest benefits from them. In addition, since students who benefit most from Rise Up and LCS don't see lasting academic benefits after they leave the courses, changing how we deliver instruction in other areas of school to mirror methods that worked in these classes would likely be very beneficial for our most at-risk students.

In order for a program like Rise Up and Leadership in Community Service to work, school districts and educators must be invested in them on a deep level. They require both financial commitment and flexibility on the part of schools, dedicated teachers willing to work outside of the scope of the traditional classroom, and committed adults willing to work together to ensure successful groupings of students. In addition, schools must be willing to analyze student data for risk-factors of dropout and commit to early intervention with students. While these issues are real, this study demonstrates that even in a small, cash-strapped district, programming such as this is not only viable, but can be demonstrably successful as well. In addition, the study has shown that the methodologies employed in the classes are very successful with marginalized students, and these approaches can be incorporated easily into subject-matter classes when teachers are provided with the appropriate professional development.

Future Recommendations

The results of this study provide a starting point for work with students marginalized by their school experience. While informative, additional work in this area is imperative. Future research could examine the impact that truly early intervention has on students by implementing a program such as this in the middle grades with students demonstrating early risk factors that lead to drop out. In addition, the research indicated that these programs were not effective at keeping many students with a high number of risk factors for dropping out in school unless they were part of a more comprehensive group of interventions. Incorporating programs such as these into more in-depth, alternative programs for students at high risk of dropping out may yield

more effective, widespread results. Lastly, with more diverse groups of students attending institutions of higher learning and facing the cultural challenges associated with that transition, using programs such as these to address college retention would be of interest.

APPENDIX A

RISE UP SYLLABUS

Rise Up
Fall - 2011
Ms. Batchelor

Course Objectives:

- *To develop leadership skills
- *To build communication skills
- *To create an in-class community
- *To identify and address issues in the community through community service-learning projects
- *To learn how to set measurable, achievable and specific goals and work toward accomplishing them.

Grading:

In this class, you will participate in the grading process. Each week, you will complete a “Self-Assessment” in which you will reflect on your work for that week in relation to the goals of the class. We will then meet to discuss your assessment and talk together about your accomplishments and areas where you are still improving. Together, we will agree on your grade for the week.

Participation:

This class will be only as good as your participation in it. Unlike other classes, you will help develop the projects and curriculum of this class on a regular basis. Your voice in this process is essential. In addition, I will frequently ask you to step out of your personal comfort zone in many of the activities that we do. This is an essential part of the class and you will be supported by myself and your classmates in the process. Your willingness to take risk in your participation will make this a more meaningful experience for all of us.

Absence:

The group will not be the same without you, so ideally, you’ll never miss this class. If you do, however, we will miss you. I will expect that when you return we will meet during GAP time to discuss what we did in class and to make up missing work/assignments.

Help Days:

I'm here Monday and Wednesday after school, but I am generally available most days. If you are unable to come on Monday or Wednesday, please check with me to be sure that I will be available on another day. You can also contact me by email for any reason at the address below.

Contact Information:

email: hbatchelor@bwrsd.org
phone: 413-863-9341

APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY SERVICE SYLLABUS

LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY SERVICE
SPRING - 2011
Ms. Batchelor

Course Objectives:

- *To develop leadership skills
- *To build communication skills
- *To create an in-class community
- *To identify and address issues in the community through community service-learning projects
- *To expand the use of community service-learning in traditional classes at CTHS by working with teachers and their classes to develop and implement these projects.

Grading:

In this class, you will participate in the grading process. Each week, you will complete a “Self-Assessment” in which you will reflect on your work for that week in relation to the goals of the class. We will then meet to discuss your assessment and talk together about your accomplishments and areas where you are still improving. Together, we will agree on your grade for the week.

Participation:

This class will be only as good as your participation in it. Unlike other classes, you will help develop the projects and curriculum of this class on a regular basis. Your voice in this process is essential. In addition, I will frequently ask you to step out of your personal comfort zone in many of the activities that we do. This is an essential part of the class and you will be supported by myself and your classmates in the process. Your willingness to take risk in your participation will make this a more meaningful experience for all of us.

Absence:

The group will not be the same without you, so ideally, you’ll never miss this class. If you do, however, we will miss you. I will expect that when you return we will meet during GAP time to discuss what we did in class and to make up missing work/assignments.

Help Days:

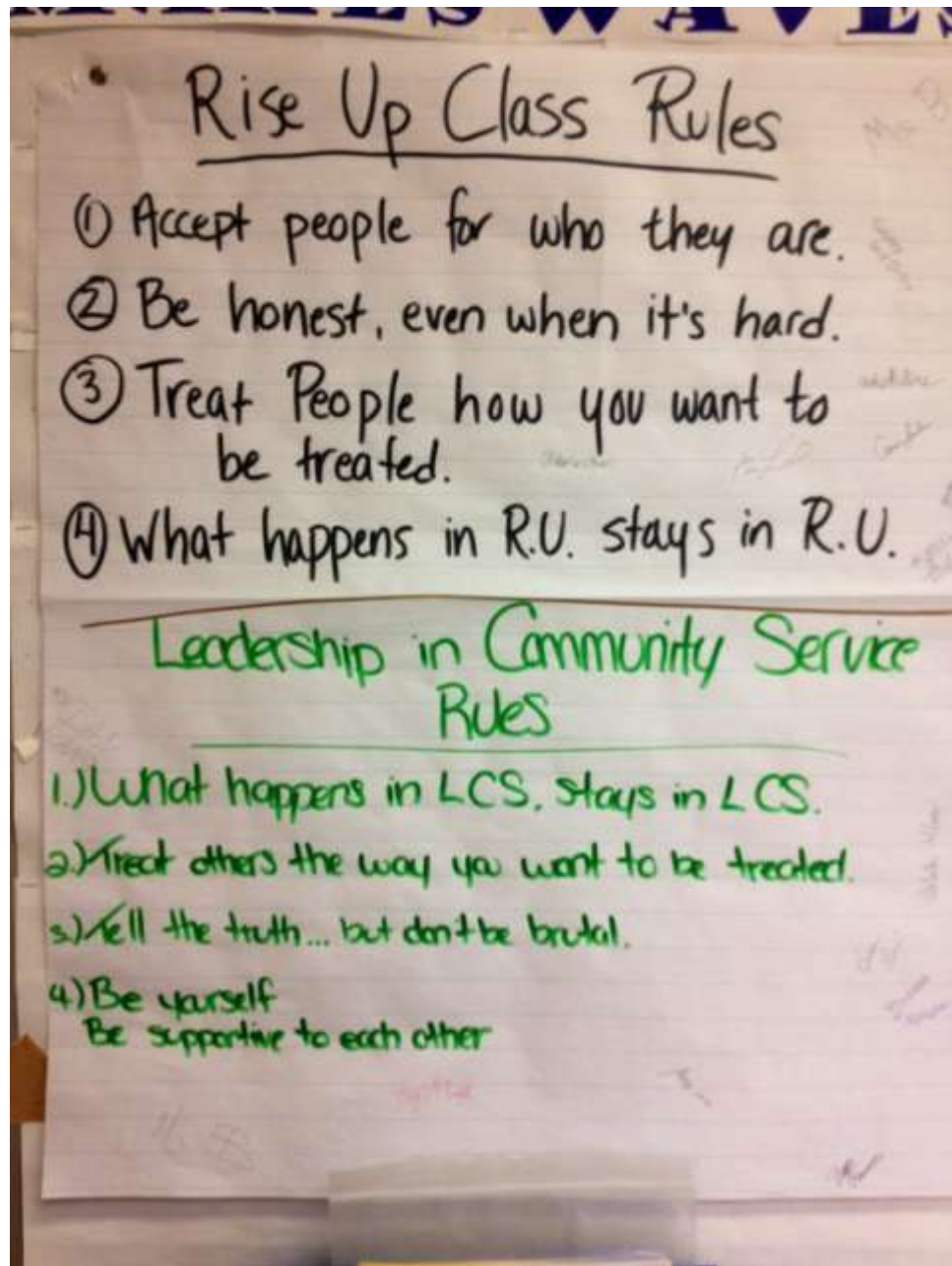
I'm here Monday and Wednesday after school, but I am generally available most days. If you are unable to come on Monday or Wednesday, please check with me to be sure that I will be available on another day. You can also contact me by email for any reason at the address below.

Contact Information:

email: hbatchelor@gmrds.org
phone: 413-863-9341

APPENDIX C

CLASS RULES



APPENDIX D

GROUP BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Other group building activities mentioned in Chapter 3 are described below:

FLINTSTONE FEET: Students use two 2" x 6" x 8' boards that have 8 rope hand holds attached to walk a 50' distance, retrieve an object and then walk in reverse to the starting point. All students must remain in contact with both boards at all times, although all students need not have a hand-hold.

HUMAN KNOT: Students stand in a circle and with their right hand, join hands with another student. Students then, with their left hand, join hands with a different student in the circle. Without letting go of hands, students must "untie" the "knot" they have just formed.

APPENDIX 3
WEEKLY SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Rise Up Self-Evaluation

Here are the goals of Rise Up:

- Build leadership skills
- Develop a strong in and out of school community
- Push yourself out of your comfort zone
- Improve your communication skills
- Improve our community

1. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have worked on your leadership skills this week:

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

2. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have helped develop our community in this class or with our community this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

3. Give at least one example of how you have pushed yourself out of your comfort zone this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

4. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have helped to build your communication skills this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

5. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have helped to improve our community this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

6. How many days have you been on time and in class this week? If you've been late or missed class, please explain the reason below:

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

7. What is one area of this class that you plan to improve upon next week? What steps do you plan to take to improve your performance?

Name:

LCS Self-Evaluation

Here are the goals of LCS:

- Build leadership skills
- Develop a strong in and out of school community
- Push yourself out of your comfort zone
- Improve your communication skills
- Help design and implement CSL projects in our community

1. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have worked on your leadership skills this week:

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

2. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have helped develop our community in this class or with our community this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

3. Give at least one example of how you have pushed yourself out of your comfort zone this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

4. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have helped to build your communication skills this week.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

5. Give at least one descriptive example of how you have worked toward creating CSL projects in our school.

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

6. How many days have you been on time and in class this week? If you've been late or missed class, please explain the reason below:

Now rank your overall performance in this area:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10

7. What is one area of this class that you plan to improve upon next week? What steps do you plan to take to improve your performance?

APPENDIX F

GUIDED QUESTIONS

The following are four guided questions that students used in the Fall of 2011 to complete the class blog for that week:

- What contributions did you make to the group at the Ropes Course this week?
How was the experience overall for you?
- How did you push yourself out of your comfort zone there?
- We did our first Project Beautiful activity this week. How do you think it impacted the community?
- Choose one student from the group who you feel showed noteworthy leadership this week and give them a shout out.

APPENDIX G

STUDENT SURVEYS

Pre-Survey:

Learn and Serve America Resiliency Student Survey (Grades 6-12)

Directions: We are conducting a research study on the effect of service-learning on students and their communities. This is a *survey*, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. It is important that you answer each question honestly. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. You do not have to participate in the study, and you can stop participating at any time. You can skip a question if you do not want to answer it. If you decide not to participate, you will not be in any kind of trouble. If you have any questions about the survey, please raise your hand and the person giving the survey will help you. If you have any personal concerns about the survey, you can speak with a school counselor.

By writing your name below, you agree to complete the survey. The survey is voluntary. We will make every effort to keep the information we collect confidential, and your individual answers will not be reported to anyone.

Name (please print): _____

Name (signature): _____

Date: _____

**Resiliency Learn and Serve
Student Survey (Grades 6-12)**

School : _____ Teacher : _____

1. Today's date: _____
2. Are you a male or female?
☐ Male ☐ Female
3. Grade level: _____
4. How would you describe your ethnic background? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)
☐ White
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
☐ Black/African American
☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ Other (specify): _____
5. Have you ever been involved in any of the following? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)
☐ Sports
☐ Academic Club (for example, Math Club, Drama Club)
☐ Service Club (e.g., Scouts, Key Club, 4H, Booster Club. This does not include "service-learning" projects.)
☐ Student Leadership Group (for example, student council)
☐ Other clubs
☐ Job
☐ None of the above
6. Have you ever been a volunteer or provided community service? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)
☐ Yes, in school
☐ Yes, with a youth organization
☐ Yes, with my church
☐ Yes, with my family
☐ Yes, with my neighborhood
☐ No
7. What grades do you get, on average?
☐ Mostly A's
☐ Mostly B's
☐ Mostly C's
☐ Mostly D's
☐ Mostly F's

Your School

8. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I do things at my school that make a difference.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. At least one teacher or other adult at school believes I will be a success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The school work I am assigned is meaningful and important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I do interesting activities at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. At school, I help decide things like class activities or rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. At least one teacher or other adult at school listens to me when I have something to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. At least one teacher or other adult at school notices when I am not there.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. At least one teacher or other adult at school listens to students' ideas about how to improve the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. At least one teacher or other adult at school always wants me to do my best.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. At least one teacher or other adult at school really cares about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. The things I am learning in school will be important for my future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

About You

9. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I enjoy working together with other students my age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I stand up for myself without putting others down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I plan to graduate from high school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.				
f. I have goals and plans for the future.				

Post-Survey:

**Learn and Serve America
Resilience Student Survey (Grades 6-12)**

Directions: We are conducting a research study on the effect of service-learning on students and their communities. This is a *survey*, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. It is important that you answer each question honestly. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. You do not have to participate in the study, and you can stop participating at any time. You can skip a question if you do not want to answer it. If you decide not to participate, you will not be in any kind of trouble. If you have any questions about the survey, please raise your hand and the person giving the survey will help you. If you have any personal concerns about the survey, you can speak with a school counselor.

By writing your name below, you agree to complete the survey. The survey is voluntary. We will make every effort to keep the information we collect confidential, and your individual answers will not be reported to anyone.

Name (please print): _____

Name (signature): _____

Date: _____

**Resilience Learn and Serve
Student Survey (Grades 6-12)**

School : _____ Teacher : _____

1. Today's date: _____

2. Are you a male or female?

☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Grade level: _____

4. How would you describe your ethnic background? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- ☐ White
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

5. Have you ever been involved in any of the following? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Academic Club (for example, Math Club, Drama Club)
- ☐ Service Club (e.g., Scouts, Key Club, 4H, Booster Club. This does not include "service-learning" projects.)
- ☐ Student Leadership Group (for example, student council)
- ☐ Other clubs
- ☐ Job
- ☐ None of the above

6. Have you ever been a volunteer or provided community service? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- ☐ Yes, in school before this year
- ☐ Yes, with a youth organization
- ☐ Yes, with my church
- ☐ Yes, with my family
- ☐ Yes, with my neighborhood
- ☐ No

7. What grades do you get, on average?

- ☐ Mostly A's
- ☐ Mostly B's
- ☐ Mostly C's
- ☐ Mostly D's
- ☐ Mostly F's

Your School

8. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I do things at my school that make a difference.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. At least one teacher or other adult at school believes I will be a success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The school work I am assigned is meaningful and important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I do interesting activities at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. At school, I help decide things like class activities or rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. At least one teacher or other adult at school listens to me when I have something to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. At least one teacher or other adult at school notices when I am not there.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. At least one teacher or other adult at school listens to students' ideas about how to improve the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. At least one teacher or other adult at school always wants me to do my best.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. At least one teacher or other adult at school really cares about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. The things I am learning in school will be important for my future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

About You

9. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I enjoy working together with other students my age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I stand up for myself without putting others down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I plan to graduate from high school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I have goals and plans for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Please rate yourself on the skills below. On the LEFT of the skill, please rate yourself based on how good were you at the beginning of your service-learning project. On the RIGHT of the skill, please rate how good you are NOW.

Beginning of Project				Skill	Now			
Not Good At All	Fairly Good	Very Good	Excellent		Not Good At All	Fairly Good	Very Good	Excellent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	EXAMPLE: (You feel you went from fairly good to very good at...) Shooting a basketball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Finding resources for a community project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Leading a group project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Understanding what other people are trying to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Getting others to listen to my ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Speaking in front of groups of people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Predicting the consequences of actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	g. Finding information to solve problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	h. Writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	i. Doing research on problems in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	j. Helping other students to resolve their conflicts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

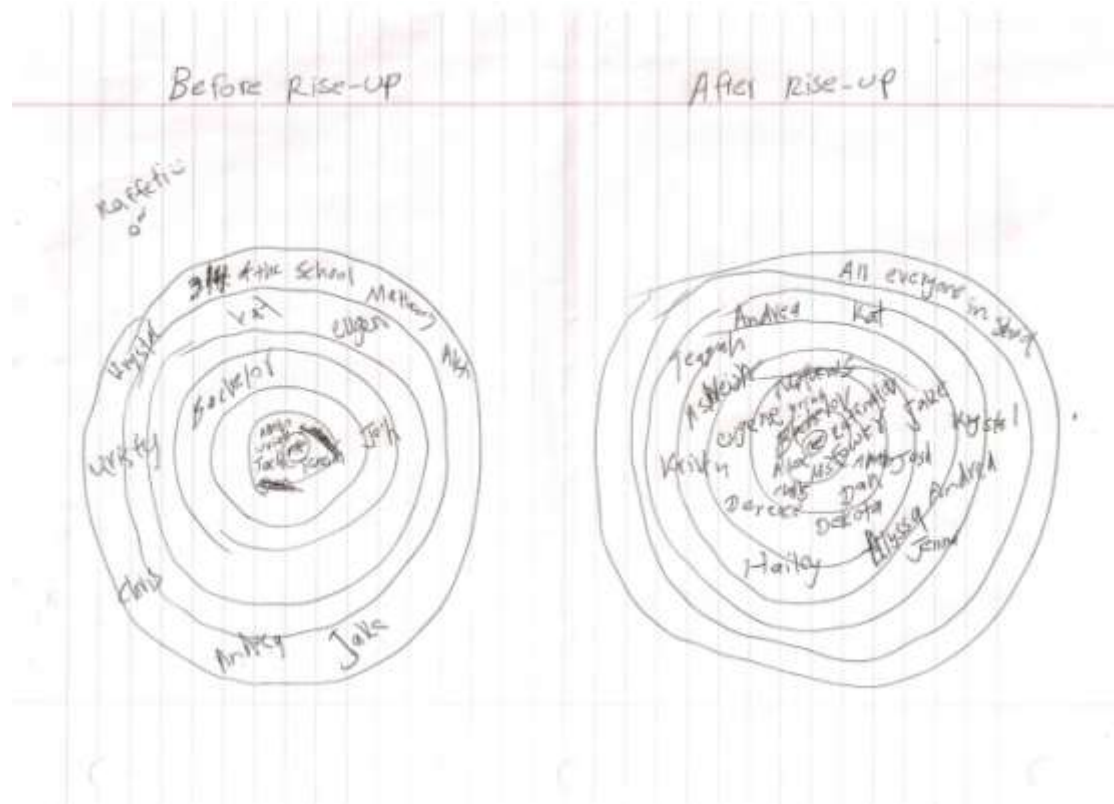
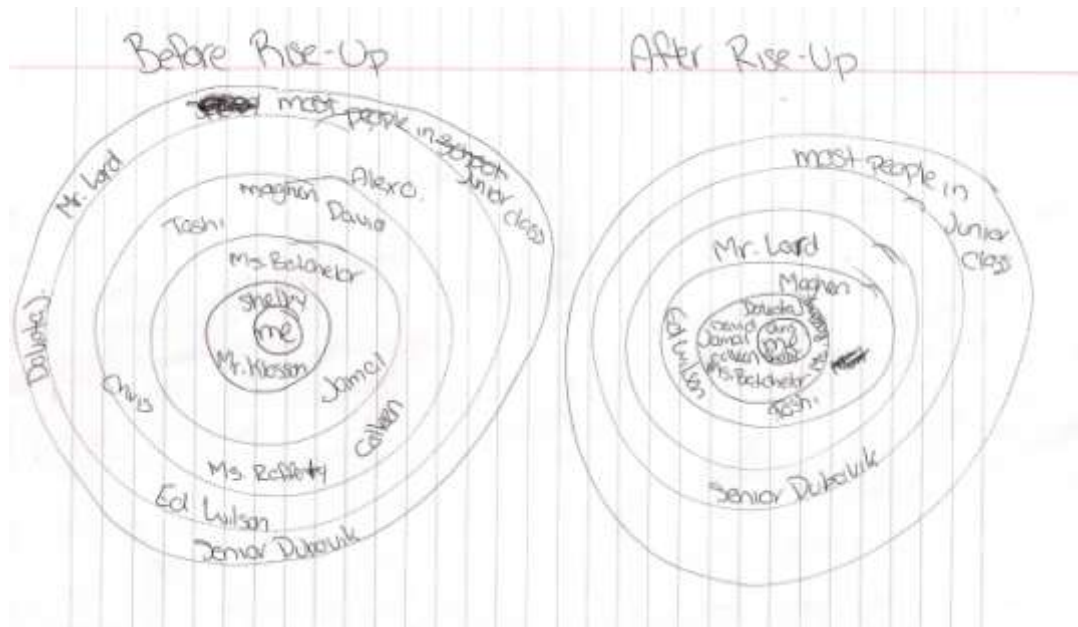
APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were used in the student interviews:

- Tell me a little about your school experience, both positive and not positive, before you took the Rise Up class.
- How has the Rise Up class differed from other classes?
- Are the relationships you've formed with other students in this class different or the same as relationships you have with students in other classes?
- Are the relationships you've formed with other adults in this class different or the same as relationships you have with students in other classes?
- How have the CSL projects we've done impacted you? The community?
- Has the class had any impact on your attitude about school? Your attendance?
- Have you ever thought about dropping out of school? What motivated these thoughts? What kept you in school?
- How has the class affected you personally, academically, and in terms of your future plans?
- Has the class had any impact on how you deal with challenging situations?
- Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

RELATIONSHIP MAPS



Before Rise-Up



After Rise-Up



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