

Building Communities in Schools

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### Abstract

Four elementary school teachers from Fairfax County Virginia explored the value of building a sense of community within a culture that promotes individual competition. The community development included a school-wide initiative promoting play, fun and team-building; a morning (before school) PE skills workshop; an afternoon school newspaper club; and a community building experience for professional staff through the development of a curriculum based writing rubric. Each teacher conducted a needs assessment and worked closely with staff to organize and carry out events that were analyzed for effectiveness through participant surveys and qualitative observations, including anecdotal commentary and photographs. The literature review supports a strong correlation in the value in community building as it relates to student success and achievement, however the results of this research indicates community building projects require long-term commitments in order to achieve desired outcomes.

## Introduction

### *School Context & Demographics*

The schools participating in this umbrella project of building community are all located in Fairfax County, Virginia and the most recent demographic information currently available is from the 2009-2010 academic year. Three years ago, Centreville Elementary School (CES) had the honor of celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> year in existence. Their current building, which opened in 1996, is located in Centreville, Virginia in the western part of Fairfax County and is situated less than three miles from the Prince William County line. The school is home to 950 students, 89 teachers including instructional assistants, counselors and specialists, and three administrators; one principal, Dwayne Young, and two assistant principals. School population indicates a 50/50 split of female to male students; 30% are of limited or no English proficiency; 22% are on free or reduced price lunch; and the ethnic diversity of the school is reported as 31% Asian or Pacific Islander, 10% Black; 12% Hispanic; 38% White and 9% Other (Centreville Elementary School, 2010).

Camelot Elementary School (CamES) is located just outside of the Capital Beltway in Annandale, Virginia very close to Gallows Road and INOVA Fairfax Hospital. It is nestled inside the sleepy suburban Camelot community that has been part of Annandale for almost 50 years (Siegal, 2004). The school is home to 500 students, 56 teachers including instructional assistants, counselors and specialists, and two administrators; one principal, Craig Gfeller and one assistant principal. School population indicates a 48/52 split of female to male students; 36% are of limited or no English proficiency; 37% are on free or reduced price lunch; and the ethnic diversity of the school is reported as 15%

Asian or Pacific Islander, 6% Black; 29% Hispanic; 41% White and 9% Other (Camelot Elementary School, 2010).

Eagle View Elementary School (EVES) was constructed within the last eight years and is located very close to the Fairfax County Government Center and Fair Oaks Shopping Mall. The school is home to 870 students, 95 teachers including instructional assistants, counselors and specialists, and three administrators; one principal, Dr. Patricia Granada and two assistant principals. School population indicates a 45/55 split of female to male students; 36% are of limited or no English proficiency; 21% are on free or reduced price lunch; and the ethnic diversity of the school is reported as 38% Asian or Pacific Islander, 16% Black; 10% Hispanic; 27% White and 10% Other (Eagle View Elementary School, 2010).

Saratoga Elementary School (SES) is located just west of I-95 between Pohick and Rolling Roads. The school is home to 752 students, 80 teachers including instructional assistants, counselors and specialists, and three administrators; one principal, Pat Conklin, and two assistant principals. School population indicates a 47/53 split of female to male students; 32% are of limited or no English proficiency; 36% are on free or reduced price lunch; and the ethnic diversity of the school is reported as 19% Asian or Pacific Islander, 19% Black; 19% Hispanic; 35% White and 9% Other (Saratoga Elementary School, 2010).

#### *Brief Personal Biographies*

CES: The five teachers collaborating on *Mixing and Mingling (M&Ms)* with Carlotta Moulder included Kara Doyle, who has a Masters degree in Education and is a second year teacher; Renee Green has a B.S. degree and is in her sixth year as a teacher (Renee

left on maternity leave April 1); Cindy Hamblen has a B.S. degree and is in her fourth year as a teacher; and Marie Lankford who received a Masters degree in Education and her NBPTS certification in early childhood education the same year and is in her 17<sup>th</sup> year as a teacher. Carlotta Moulder is currently in her sixth year as a kindergarten teacher and is a candidate for a Master of Arts in Education at George Mason University.

CamES: Chris Costanza is in his seventh year of teaching in Fairfax County; all at Camelot ES with the exception of a year and a half being part-time between Camelot and Stenwood Elementary. He is a 2004 graduate of Longwood University in Farmville, VA. Chris Aracich, another part time PE teacher working with Chris at Camelot ES on Wednesdays and Fridays, is in his first year of teaching in Fairfax County. He spends his other three days of the week working at another Fairfax County school, Franconia Elementary in Alexandria. He recently received his bachelor's degree from a college in Ohio.

EVES: There is one teacher and one parent collaborating on the afterschool newspaper club with Ann Brownridge. Nicole Ghanaim is in her third year as a teacher and has a Masters degree in Education. She has been teaching third grade for the past three years at Eagle View. Sue Lee is the PTA President for the current school year. She has three children attending Eagle View – a daughter in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a son in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and another daughter in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Mrs. Lee has been a strong advocate for including, initiating and implementing afterschool enrichment programs. Ann Brownridge is currently in her fifteenth year teaching and is a candidate for a Master of Arts in Education at George Mason University.

SES: The following staff assisted Debbie Blackstone at Saratoga; Marianne Palastro, a music teacher; Marie Meyer, a fourth grade teacher; Lynn O'Neil, a third grade teacher; Zoe Anagnos, a fifth grade teacher; Lisa Kowalek, a first grade teacher; Clare Foley and Julie Tiss, both Special Education teachers; Jill McKeon, a second grade teacher with a special education background; and Tara Maher, hired in late 2009 right out of college as a Reading Teacher .

*Description of Project:*

At CES, M&Ms seeks to provide an opportunity for students and teaching staff to feel more community affiliation through interaction and semi-structured play. Research into school communities shows that when students feel a sense of belonging and ownership within their school, they are happier and more successful as students. (Osterman, 2000, p. 324) While reading Critical Pedagogy (Wink, 2005) Moulder happened upon an idea she had often heard her CES Principal describe. Young had been pushing to start something similar to School Families (p. 162) through M&Ms. By putting students in multi-age groups, kindergarten through sixth grade, teachers lead team-building experiences through which students and teachers get to know each other and begin building a community. M&Ms got its name from the candy of the same name in a discussion between Moulder and Young; he mentioned he thought it would be really cool to have each team's color from one in a bag of M&Ms. This rainbow symbolizes and celebrates our uniqueness as individuals (each color of the rainbow) and sameness (we are all part of the rainbow). M&Ms also stands for Mixers & Minglers and utilized five kindergarten teachers who were asked to lead four 30 minute team-building sessions.

For Costanza, who has been working at Camelot seven years, he began to notice children less and less interested in the activities/sports of their PE classes. These students participate well enough to get good grades, but rarely exert the additional effort required to truly master the skills. Students listen and follow directions during class, then go to recess, play the same game and make up their own rules. After observing recess activities with students making up their own rules to games, Costanza and a colleague decided to hold a before school activity program that would focus on playing the games correctly, using the proper rules and strategies to play the game well enough to not only ensure the success of the pick-up games, but also build in adequate safety measure by following the rules. If the students knew the rules they might be able to coexist and participate in a more relaxed and enjoyable manner, thus allowing for further team and community building possibilities.

At Eagle View, Brownridge's vision of an afterschool newspaper club came as a response to parental concern regarding an over-emphasis on SOL remediation and lack of enrichment programs, now understood as the Race to No Where factor (Abeles, 2009). By involving a group of students to be mentored by faculty, this would be one step towards bringing of a sense of community to her school. Because the school newspaper would be student-created and then distributed to the entire school community, it was thought that the content would be meaningful and relevant to the student body and would be a good way to inform the community of various events taking place within the school. Additionally, this would be a good way to get to know more about various people within the school through interviews, particularly those who tend to be overlooked such as the custodians, cafeteria helpers, secretaries, parent liaison, parent volunteers, etc.

Blackstone started teaching at Saratoga and soon reflected on the words of Wink, "To name, to reflect critically, to act," (2005, p. 22) and with the support of her principal and assistant principals, decided to work towards building a cohesive community that could undertake the quest of developing grade level writing rubrics. Her previous school Keene Mill Elementary had a strong Language Arts program and she soon discovered this was an area of weakness for Saratoga. Blackstone found that language arts teachers were doing their own thing when teaching writing at Saratoga. Most importantly, there was no cohesiveness within this competitive community of Language Arts. There was no common language being taught horizontally or vertically for teachers or students to follow. The evidence was in SOL scores and student writing. (See Appendix D)

Blackstone was concerned for teachers and students after she casually asked various grade level teachers what they used for assessing student writing and came up with very little feedback to use. She then made a decision and suggested during a Language Arts Committee meeting that they write grade level rubrics. The Administration loved the idea and Blackstone was put in charge. Could this help bind language arts teachers and make the SES language art department more of a community? Yes, having a common language and a tool to objectively assess students' writing abilities would help build community among Language Arts teachers. Using it as a pre-conferencing tool will aid the student in creating the best writing product possible.

Keeping the staff informed and trained with rubrics and writing development was done quarterly during Triple Play Mondays. Triple Play Mondays are staff development meetings that focus on Language Arts in a trio combination with Reading, Math, ESOL or



Special Education and tied into Blackstone's change project in community building. The staff rotates among designated rooms every twenty minutes to gain new content training and information. The Triple Play schedule is specifically designed to provide optimum time for vertical articulation and cooperative learning. (See Appendix D)

*Research Question:*

What is the value of community-building within school cultures that promote individual competition?

*Literature Reviewed:*

Play is good for you; play is fun; and most importantly, play is the door to authentic learning. Darwin, Dewey, Elkind, Erickson, Freud, Piaget, Plato, Vygotsky, and Wink, just to name a few, all share an important common belief in the value of play as it relates to learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2010, p. 26). In order to facilitate that play, however, there must first be a sense of community, a feeling of belonging. As Abraham Maslow noted way back in 1954, we all seek to belong to a community (Maslow, 1970, p. 20). “[C]ommunity is not present until members experience feelings of belonging, trust in others, and safety” (Osterman, 2000, p. 323). The purpose of M&Ms is simple, yet powerful. It is a means by which we can strengthen our school community and the sense of belonging that is so necessary for the trust building and feeling of safety that must be in place for learning to occur.

How is play important in learning? By analyzing the elements of play (Kolb & Kolb, p. 28) we can understand play psychology. In playing, we seek stimuli which require focus

and intense attentive investigation, followed by a more relaxed stage of applying knowledge gained through initial investigation (p. 29). Brain research actually indicates a connection between the limbic system and the frontal lobe of the neo-cortex where the stimuli are transformed into meaningful thinking and behavior (p. 29). Further research indicates that depending upon the stage of play, either the left or right brain will more actively engage than the other side. Epistemic play behavior, the intense investigation and knowledge gaining first stage, affects the left hemisphere functions of abstract, symbolic, analytical, rational and logical thought. Ludic play behavior, a term coined by Kolb and Kolb stemming more from the ludicrous, open-play stage (p. 31) refers to right hemispheric activation, the origin of synthetic, concrete, analogical, non-rational, spatial, intuitive, and holistic thought (p. 29). Furthermore, “[A] cross species comparative study suggests that play has a central role in brain development, facilitating the integration of cognitive, social, affective, and sensory-motor systems in mammals” (p. 29). Notice that this does not solely pertain to humans, but mammals! When we play, we step out of our reality into a “higher order” of imaginary thinking that allows us to be however talented, tall, scholarly, creative, immature, or whatever we need to be at that time (Huizinga, 1949, p. 13). Vygotsky says, “In play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (Vygotsky, 2008). Another benefit of play is learning the intrinsic value of an activity. It is in play where we learn “to act in a cognitive, rather than an externally visible realm, relying on internal tendencies and motives, not on incentives supplied by external things” (Vygotsky, 2008). As theorized by Vygotsky, we move from interpersonal to intrapersonal communication and meaning making (Wink & Putney, *A Vision of Vygotsky*, 2010, p. 66) where learning

occurs. “[I]n [this] zone . . . more capable peers are interacting with each other and offering assistance . . . participants are doing today what they are able to do with assistance from others. They will be able to do this problem solving by themselves later when these ideas and words have become internalized” (p. 67). Through the authentic interaction of play, Moulder’s M&Ms are able to, in Vygotsky’s terminology, scaffold and build on funds of knowledge – inherent cultural resources (p. 71) of our school community that illuminate our connection to one another and the group and simultaneously satisfy each child’s need for belonging within that community.

In a more structured play atmosphere, “P[hysical] E[ducation] (PE) has an important role to play, not only in physical development, but also in a broadly defined area of pupils’ personal, social and moral development” (Theodoulides & Armour, 2001, p. 5). As in other learning situations, PE students acquire necessary game knowledge and skills at different rates. For those who learn these skills more easily, will their progress and surpassing skills be an asset to their slower achieving peers and benefit the progress the group? This is an often overlooked social aspect of PE. Physical skills such as dribbling and shooting a basketball or pitching and batting a baseball will serve for immediate success at recess, however they also make for life-long enjoyment of the games and respect for highly accomplished players. It is not, however, the norm for most players to acquire fame and success through sports. More the norm is the benefit of the essential life skills such as cooperation and collaboration that are learned and practiced in PE. “Sport and competitive team games are an important part of the social fabric and help develop team work and social interaction” (p. 17). Carroll and Loumidis offer further indication that the ideas and concepts learned during PE can be translated to other aspects of the

student's school day and promote a healthy lifestyle. Skills learned in PE can also help children to focus on enjoyment outside of the physical education setting, where "children will be more inclined to participate in physical activity if they perceive it to be enjoyable, and the chances of continued participation will be increased by enhancing their intrinsic motivation" (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001, p. 25). When students learn sports related skills, they will benefit from the activity for more than the extrinsic motivation of a grade; they will re-create their experience on the playground and experience the intrinsic motivation of peer-to-peer interaction and community. This allows students to focus on the social component of PE as the most important reason for participation. "In addition, through cooperating and working together, children can learn social skills, such as listening to others, taking turns and helping other pupils" (Theodoulides & Armour, p. 8). This summarizes what we hope students will achieve in PE. Through regular practice, students follow simple skills drills, and practice playing the game, experiencing collaboration and cooperation and proving to themselves that they can do anything they want; both inside the gym and out in the real world.

PE class can be extremely competitive. "In the heat of the game, players tend to become overly concerned with winning, pushing their aggressive agenda to the point where they lose sight of the spirit of the game and concerns for others players" (Kolb & Kolb, 2010, p. 43). Despite best efforts, sometimes the games become overly intense and those who are not the most athletic will lose interest and quit. An extra-curricular skills program allows students who might be sensitive to that competitiveness to develop skills and discover the enjoyment of the game.

What is the value of an afterschool newspaper program in an elementary setting?

This question was explored to determine its effectiveness in both increasing student achievement and in building a sense of school community. There is evidence to show that it can help students increase writing ability and help them feel a sense of community.

Community is the concept of belongingness. According to Osterman, “A sense of community is the feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (Osterman, 2000, p. 324). Both Vygotsky and Dewey stress the importance of community in much of their work. They view education as a process that is social, not individualistic and understand the importance of recognizing children’s interpersonal needs and collaborative activities. It is the teacher’s and school’s responsibility to encourage the development of this sense of community by designing communal activities to which all can contribute. Teachers and students share membership in this community, and it is through collaboration that learning occurs.

Above all else, academic accomplishment has unfortunately become the priority, as indicated by our nation-wide political emphasis on standardized achievement tests and the affective needs of students are rarely receiving the formal attention they deserve. “Shaping the school culture are beliefs and practices that nurture individualism and competition, rather than community and collaboration” (p. 324). However, there is substantial evidence suggesting that the sense of belonging influences achievement through its effects on engagement. In a study of two groups of students through their middle school years, (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997, p. 1206) confirmed that peer acceptance and group membership had a strong and significant association with academic achievement.

There are hundreds of elementary and middle school newspapers operating throughout the nation and there are numerous benefits to these student-run operations. “A school newspaper is an excellent way for students to practice their writing and critical thinking skills, and it can help alleviate some of the anxiety which they feel when they’re given a writing assignment to be carried out” (Padgett, 2006, p. 57). Mark Levin, who works for the National Elementary Schools Press Association (NESPA), points to research showing that students who write regularly for a real audience are not as reluctant to write more frequently; they become better writers and writing becomes fun. Because students know their articles will be read by a wider audience, it elicits more meaning for them. School newspapers help everyone feel more informed and connected by highlighting accomplishments, reporting real life school happenings and acting as an official record, providing a history of their community. School newspapers help students, teachers, and parents feel a sense of community, while allowing students to write about things that are meaningful and relevant to them.

Writing rubrics provide students with the focus and expectations that are needed to develop quality writing and provide teachers with a valuable formative assessment and teaching tool for individual students. A common definition that is used for writing rubrics today is, “a document that articulated the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria, or what counts, and describing levels of quality from excellent to poor” (Andrade, Du, & Wang, 2008, p. 3). With such a powerful definition why would some teachers still resist using writing rubrics? Research has shown powerful effects with student writing and shows significantly higher scores for writing and students that understand the qualities of effective writing (p. 3). Students in many schools learn to use rubrics to gain

understandings of benchmarks and the criteria needed for writing excellence. Research indicates “students believed that rubric-referenced assessment was more fair and valuable to their learning” (Holmes & Smith, 2003, p. 320). Andrade compares how students are taught to study math and science where students are given problems or models to examine and interpret for practice. Why can’t we do the same in writing by giving students more writing samples and free-writes? Students can increase their own knowledge of writing by assessing sample pieces against a rubric. Teaching students to understand the criteria of the writing rubric and helping them understand the qualities of effective writing will transfer the needed knowledge to students for successful writing (Andrade, Du, & Wang, 2008, p. 4).

Writing rubrics have proven vital for students that lack the aptitude to self-regulate. “Instructional rubrics can provide the scaffolding that students need to become self-regulated writers” (Saddler & Andrade, 2004, p. 49). Teaching students to use rubrics promotes competency, thus they become more responsible for their own writing. Students use a favorite graphic organizer to implement their plan, and then use a rubric to self-assess their final product. When used properly, students and teachers can readily identify strengths and weaknesses for meaningful writing conferences.

*Data Sources, Analysis Process and How Research Was Used to Inform my School Change Project*

CES: Following each M&Ms meeting, the mentors distributed a simple survey of four to eight yes/no or short answer questions to each student. In the case of kindergarteners

who could not read, they were paired with older students to assist them. Email correspondences from Mr. Young, the kindergarten mentor teachers, teachers who chose students to participate in the program, Mr. Young's administrative assistant, the school registrar, and various parents who had questions about the M&Ms program were reviewed. Additionally, Moulder responded to five telephone voice messages left by parents of students receiving the notice of selection letter.

A survey from the initial M&Ms meeting revealed that 80% had fun; 32% of those who answered question number two participated in a group that used the animal name game as an ice breaker, 35% used the one shoe off and match to its owner game as an ice breaker and 19% used both games as an ice breaker. Question number three asked "What was the best thing about today?" 35% responded "I had fun." 30% responded "I got to meet new people." 19% responded "I got to get out of class." Seven percent responded "I enjoyed playing with the younger kids." Six percent responded "I enjoyed playing with the older kids." When asked if they would like to "do this again." 79% responded yes, 21% said no. There was a 100% affirmative response when asked if they liked their mentor teachers. When asked if there was something they didn't like about the experience, responses included: "I tripped on my lace. . . .The games were boring . . .I didn't like the age differences. . . This game . . . Taking off my shoe . . . I was separated from my BFF and I was the only kid my age."

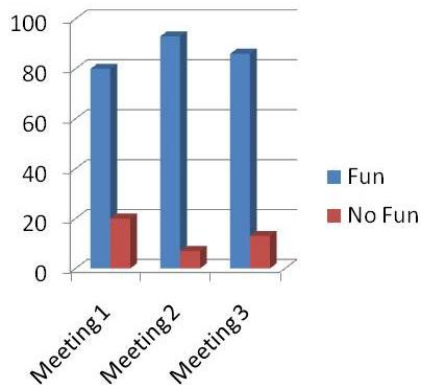
The second M&Ms meeting occurred on a beautiful warm spring Friday afternoon. (See Appendix A.) Of those students surveyed, 93% responded that they had fun, while seven percent did not. 20% had fun getting to know their group better from the first encounter; 20% enjoyed getting to meet new people; 25% reported they liked the idea



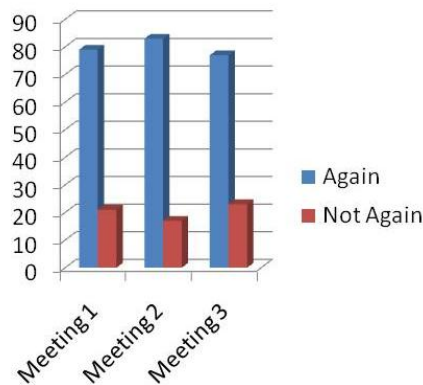
of getting out of class; 19% enjoyed playing with the younger kids; and eight percent enjoyed playing with the older kids. 83% responded that they would like to meet again.

The final meeting of M&Ms occurred on Friday, April 15, the last day of school before Spring Break. The warm spring weather made for a perfect end, allowing for all mentors to join the 85 participating students as they ran relay races on the PE field. A substitute teacher was there for Mrs. Green who was on maternity leave, along with another sub who was there for Mrs. Lankford who was out of town. Final survey results revealed that although 86% had fun, only 68% would like to meet again.

**Did we have fun?**



**Would we do it again?**



Moulder had

interesting trends in the data. Reviewing the table at the left, it can be seen that more children had fun during the second meeting than the first or third

meeting. Additionally, by the third meeting, fewer students were interested in participating in another meeting. In reviewing the surveys and reflecting on conversations with mentors, Moulder noticed differing perceptions of enjoyment between mentors and students. All mentors reported that all of their students loved the idea of chalk drawings during the second meeting, however almost 10% of the students surveyed reported they did not care for that experience at all. Having experienced this perceptual phenomenon before, Moulder questions the integrity of qualitative and anecdotal data where little or

no quantitative data are available for consideration. Additionally, Moulder's understanding of M&Ms is that Principal Young greatly desires to pursue this project for the whole school. In *Drive*, 2009 author Daniel Pink, whom Young regards, Pink argues that the most effective ways to engender staff initiative are through autonomy and sense of purpose. Young will enjoy a successful project by asking for volunteers among staff to lead the initiative.

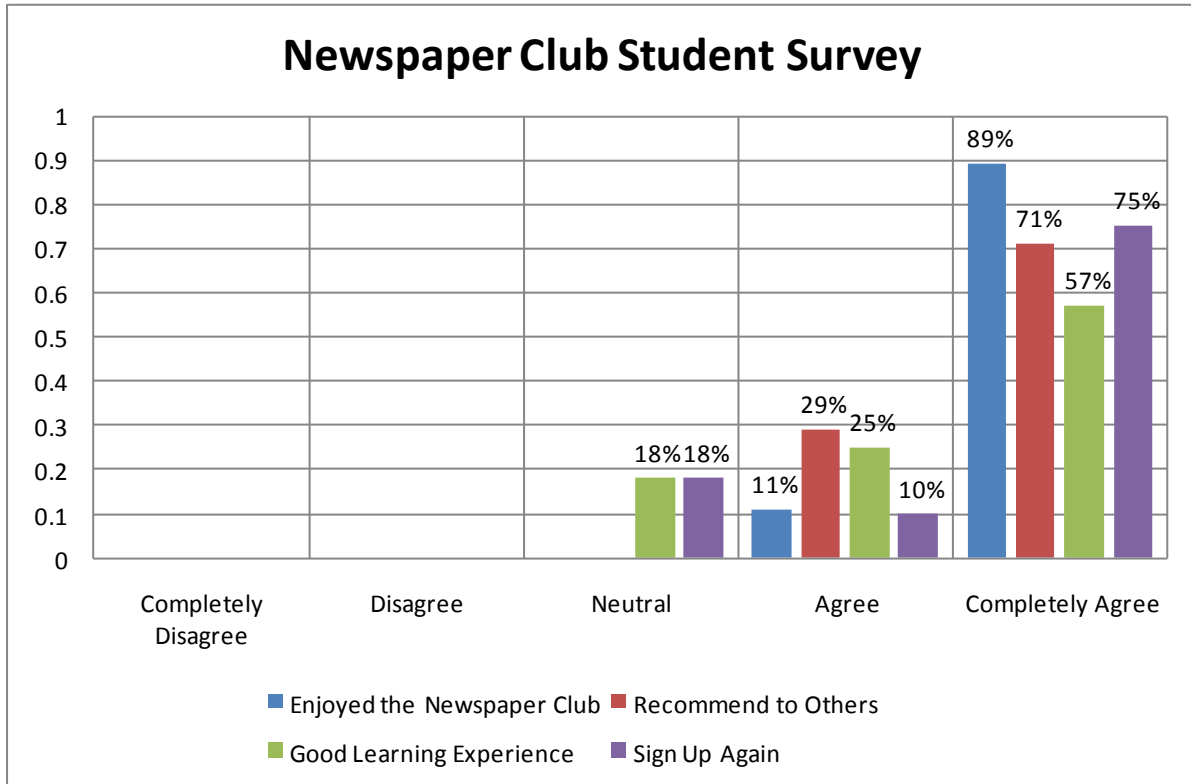
The data that Costanza collected at Camelot was from his personal informal observations about how the students interacted with one another while participating in their games, along with a short survey taken by some of the students given once during each program. The survey contained five questions asking the participants' reactions to the program. Costanza observed that the students participated and worked very well with each other. It is believed that the rarity of behavior issues was because everyone wanted to be there and wanted to get the most activity time with the least amount of distractions. Those students who participated in this project also tended to be students who did not cause many issues during regular PE class times. The students who chose to sign up were the ones who were genuinely interested in being there; no one was excluded or turned away. Surveys indicated an overall positive attitude towards the program; they really liked being able to have a place to come and play the games correctly. Only a few surveys were not positive. Some of the students felt as though they were not able to teach their classmates about some of the games we played. Other students felt that they did not understand the rules of the games. In Costanza's mind this could be a barrier the students feel in that they do not want to teach the wrong rules to their peers. The students might also simply choose not to share their knowledge with anyone else. By observing the

students, it was apparent that a few students did not enjoy themselves as much, but simply came for the sake of something to do. These students did not participate as actively as the others. The goal of this project was to expose the students to the games as much as possible while teaching them the proper rules and regulations they will need to follow as they get older and hopefully continue to play these games. The students who were surveyed tended to agree with the statement “I am able to remember the rules of the games I learn in PE.” This signified they were benefitting from what was taught to them and getting a quality experience from the program. One question concerned teaching other friends the rules of the game. Responses varied greatly in that students seemed somewhat confident about their knowledge, but not always confident enough to teach others. Costanza concluded that students acquired basic knowledge of rules and skills, but not enough to transfer that knowledge to their peers.

Brownridge used four data sources for the Eagle View research process, two prior to initiating the project and two during the project. The first source used was a school climate survey taken at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. This survey was given to all Eagle View parents to ascertain their feelings on how the school performs and on areas that they feel need improvement. Eagle View has a total of 931 families, of which 316 (34%) participated in this survey. Out of the 316 families that participated, 153 (48%) responded to this question. Data revealed the common thread of a desire for more after school programs and activities, less stress on the SOL's, and more of a sense of community and communication among staff, parents and administration. Fifteen comments were made regarding these concerns. Another survey, an “End of the Year Staff Survey” from 2010 was also analyzed where one question asked “Do you have any additional thoughts on

the topic of school community?” Fifteen out of eighteen comments stated a desire and need for more of a sense of community.

The two sources of data used during the change project were the student applications and student questionnaires. Applications were given to interested students in certain grade levels prior to each 8-week session of the newspaper club. Each student had to write about why they thought they would be a good candidate for this club. Most of the applicants stated that they had talents in many areas in addition to being a great writer; they loved photography, drawing cartoons, and using technology. At the end of each session each student was given an exit questionnaire for feedback on their newspaper club experience. They had to rate each of four statements with the choices “completely disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree”, or “completely agree”. The four statements were “I really enjoyed the newspaper club”, “I would recommend the newspaper club to others”, “I thought the newspaper club was a good learning experience”, and “I would like to sign up to be in the newspaper club again”. For each of these statements, at least 82% of the students either agreed or completely agreed.



Brownridge’s research clearly indicated that building a sense of school community is very important in the midst of a school culture that tends to promote individual competition. Fortunately, Eagle View is already a school where administrators, teachers, and parents work collaboratively to best meet the needs of students. Although a sense of community exists, there is always room for growth. The parents who become actively involved are limited to a few. As for the students, although there is a school-wide behavior system in place (PBS Program) which helps to add to a sense of community, developing an afterschool program will certainly boost the sense of community.

The data sources showed that parents believed there was an overemphasis on standardized testing and remediation and they desired enrichment opportunities over SOL review in afterschool programs. With such a strong emphasis placed on math and reading,

writing is being overlooked, and implementing a writing program where students feel a sense of autonomy, the freedom to simply write about topics of interest and relevant to them is a way to make writing meaningful to the newspaper participants. This will ultimately give students excitement for writing.

At Saratoga, Blackstone's project showed that the community building that Blackstone hoped to accomplish with her peers continues slowly with the few people who were open to change from the start continuing to sustain support while other staff slowly become converts. The first year entailed meeting with one grade level teacher at a time and working with the teacher and the Language Arts team for feedback needed to write the rubrics. The enormous undertaking of writing four grade level rubrics in 2009/2010 year was not implemented until late March of 2010 so there was little time for training and feedback from the staff. Blackstone was asked by her Principal and Assistant Principal to continue her work on the rubric project as part of her Master's Change Project in addition to organizing Triple Play training in order to support the rubric project through the final phase. The 2010/2011 focus involved training the staff on how to properly use the rubrics as an assessment for student writing, establishing cohesiveness for language arts teachers and empowering teachers with this resource. Interestingly, those most oppositional and having problems supporting the process were three people who joined the writing committee this year with the idea that they could lobby to change the rubrics further, lobby to cease using rubrics altogether or lobby to continue using their own writing rubric instead of the school rubric.

Blackstone collected several sources of data during the change project at Saratoga and also included the data from the approved School Improvement Plan (SIP). The information proved helpful for developing Triple Play plans, as it clarified areas of weaknesses for students. SOL results from 2006-2009 showed a downward trend in achievement on the grade 5 writing SOL. The pass rate in 2006-2007 was 88.7% decreasing in 2007-2008 to 86%, and decreasing again in 2008-2009 to 78.4%. The pass rate for the 2009-2010 increased slightly to 78.9%. The Students with Disabilities subgroup had a pass rate of 50% in the 2009-2010 school year, demonstrating a 10% increase over the previous school year but still well below the 70% Annual Measurable Objective (AMO). The Economically Disadvantaged subgroup had a pass rate of 69.7%, a decline from the 77.14% pass rate in the 2008-2009 school year. The White subgroup had a pass rate of 70.58%, a decline from the 85.71% pass rate in the 2008-2009 school year. The Black subgroup pass rate was 79.16%, an increase from the 56.25% pass rate in the 2008-2009 school year. The decline could be a combination of many factors at Saratoga. For instance, Saratoga went nearly two years without a Reading/Language Arts Specialist, and lacked cohesiveness within the Language Art Teams as well as lacked any rubric/writing tool.

A survey conducted in October asked teachers if they needed more information to understand their role in supporting student achievement goals. The survey revealed that of 36 people completing the survey, 39.1% had comments for writing that included the following

- having writing rubrics available

- a common rubric, eliminate any old rubrics
- reviewing different writing samples using our rubrics
- the writing rubric needs work in order to be useful
- offering ideas for reworking the new rubric
- making it more user friendly or easier to use
- we need to discuss maybe tweaking the writing rubrics so they become more effective

Survey data allowed Blackstone and the Language Arts committee to plan for the December Triple Play, providing the staff with necessary information and reasons to support the rubrics.

In the December rubric training session, Blackstone was able to make personal observations of staff members as they worked on evaluating student writing samples. After a brief presentation and clarification of questions it was apparent that the teachers actually had fun. Additionally, the sessions revealed positive vertical teamwork experiences, which was a community goal. (See Appendix D) Blackstone's observations found some staff members enthusiastic about using writing rubrics. The schedule was arranged to encourage vertical collaboration among grade levels. Kindergarten, first and second grades were the first set of teachers with whom they worked. Kindergarten teachers worked together discussing where their students' writing corresponded with the rubric. Using their previous rubric they debated the changes they wanted in the new one. Blackstone reminded them to take notes and keep them for next year's revisions. First



grade teachers wanted to make changes by returning to their former rubrics. Blackstone witnessed support and enthusiasm from the second grade team who were using the language from the rubrics, comparing writing samples with each other and asking each other's opinion on how they would grade the writing sample.

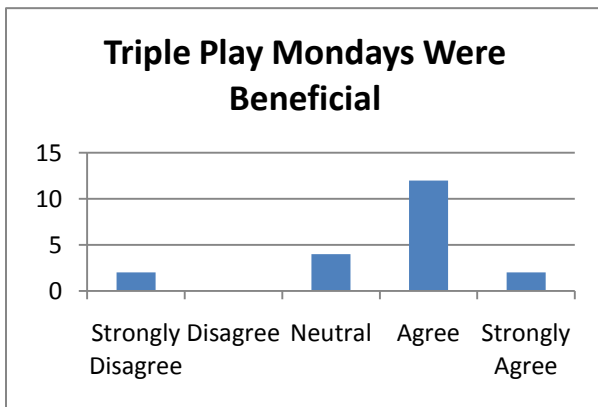
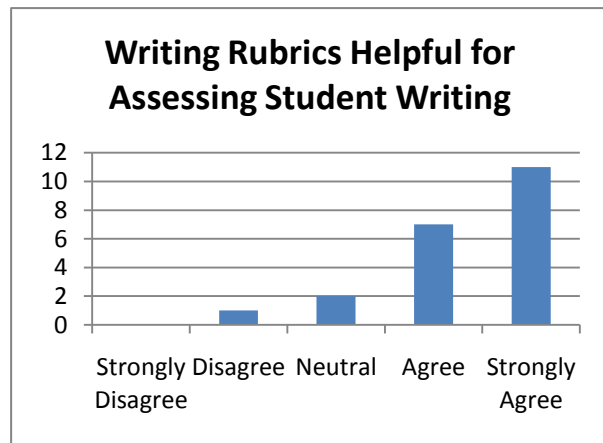
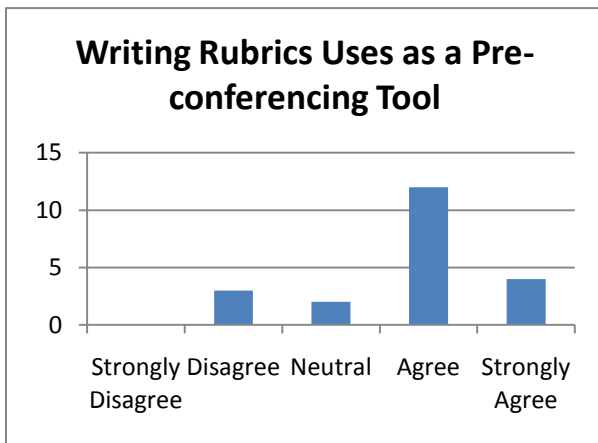
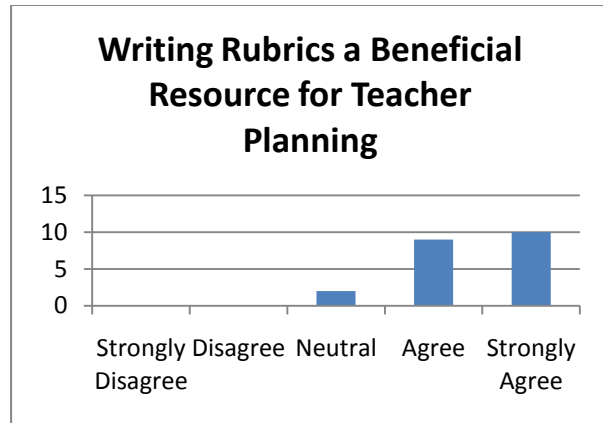
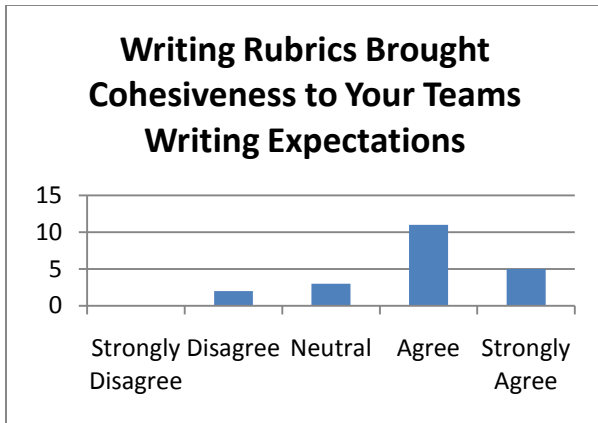
The training with the five third grade teachers was quite productive. Lynn O'Neil, a third grade teacher presented with Blackstone; they both recognized and commented on how receptive and cohesive the team was. The fourth grade team came to socialize and discuss someone's pregnancy, football, restaurants and where to order lunch. This group of teachers are not only friends in school, but also outside of school and are considered the "school click". They did not participate in the training or scoring of student writing samples. One fourth grade teacher working with Blackstone on the SIP and the Language Arts Writing Committee has a difficult time with the insensitivity her team brings to meetings by choosing to ignore agendas and not being engaged in the meetings. As much as this teacher worked to involve her team by distributing the writing samples and handing each member a copy of the rubric, the writing and rubrics sat in front of the fourth grade teachers as they carried on their conversations.

As the fifth and sixth grade teachers came for training, O'Neil managed the training while Blackstone worked directly with the fifth grade teachers. This proved to be a positive experience and exchanging of ideas about scoring and writing strategies; one fifth grade teacher also managed to knit and simultaneously and meaningfully contribute to the discussion. Blackstone's four sixth-grade colleagues stood quietly in the background, unengaged and unsupportive. These teachers are the team specialists in

math, science and special education, and they were joined in the background by the school librarian. Blackstone still wonders why they were so uninterested and has yet to have that crucial conversation with them.

Blackstone's data showed community building and cohesiveness among the lower grades, kindergarten through third grade. The lower grade teachers do not switch classes for Language Arts, which may play a role since all teachers are required to teach language arts. Blackstone has witnessed these teachers growing as collaborative teams sharing resources along with ideas. Blackstone concluded that the fourth grade team did not participate due to other issues. The data supported that fifth and sixth grade teachers who instruct Language Arts were successful in communicating while scoring writing samples, however upper grades teachers who did not teach language arts showed blatant disregard and nonsupport of their colleagues, therefore, less community building.

In April, Blackstone conducted a survey to ascertain further information about the initial research question and any additional feedback that staff might want to share. 22 teachers completed the questionnaire and the feedback presented in graph below was more positive than she expected.



Blackstone concluded that 11% of the teachers agree that the writing rubrics brought cohesiveness to their teams while 5% strongly agree. The data also shows that 10% of the teachers strongly agree about using the rubrics as a resource for planning

with 9% agreeing too. Blackstone was excited about percentage of teachers using the rubrics for assessment 11% strongly agree and 7% agree. Using the rubric as a pre-conferencing tool stunned Blackstone, she did not expect this growth of 12% agree until the following year. There was also data that 4% of teachers strongly agree to support the rubric as a pre-conferencing tool. Triple Play Monday's data wasn't as positive as Blackstone was hoping for. Only 12% agree to the benefits it brought to their Language Arts Teams with 2% agreeing, there was 4% taking neutral stand and 2% strongly disagreeing.

Yes, some staff members were clearly out of their comfort zone as a result of having to implement something that they felt strongly was not needed or they did not like. Whereas, with the small amount of disagreeing or neutral positions in the survey she concluded they are teachers who prefer the status quo. However, as the SOL data showed, Saratoga needed to change their approach and way of teaching writing. The cohesiveness that is building horizontally and vertically, supported by the data, is eye opening and supportive when compared to the fall data.

### *Transformative Process*

Change is difficult, change is slow, change is painful and change is inevitable, but embracing this mantra makes it easier to accept change, both its pros and cons. At CES, Moulder has heard a lot from disgruntled colleagues about how they don't want to change the way they do things. In January 2010, as Principal Young asked CES teachers to consider their teaching assignments and intentions for the 2010-2011 academic year,

he also asked these professionals to sign an agreement that they shared his vision for CES and would commit to using the new tools he had provided them through special training programs. They included Socratic Seminar, Calendar Math, Outdoor Learning, SmartBoard, Think Blocks, Kagan Structures, CETA courses - Tableau, United Streaming, Foundations, Being a Writer, Assessment Walls, instilling a sense of Volunteerism, Buddy Classes, and full participation in Professional Learning Communities Collaborative Team Meetings along with weekly team business meetings. As teachers have been asked to do more with less, these numerous initiatives instituted in the span of three and a half years made the lives of CES staff extremely overwhelming and stressful. Many, if not most, CES staff remain distressed, displeased and disturbed by this litany of new educational tools, the short amount of time they believe Young is expecting proficiency with them, and the equally short amount of time in which he is expecting full implementation. Moulder has taken the view that Young cannot possibly expect perfect execution of these various methodologies the first, second or even third time in use, but that he at least expects staff to start making use of these strategies and becoming familiar enough with the components of each method to be able to use them effectively.

Prior to starting M&Ms, Moulder reflected on a vision of four years ago when she approached a former CES principal with idea of forming a committee to reconfigure the school web site, at which time she was subsequently made the web site curator and became a committee of one. Moulder is not unfamiliar with the operating tactic that when administration appreciates an idea the submitted by staff, they expect the idea people to implement said idea. As it has happened on other occasions, Moulder has learned to carefully consider how involved she wants to become before proffering suggestions,

especially because of other demands on her time. Because a final project was necessary for her graduate program, she considered the M&Ms community building project with the understanding that its execution might not be perfect, but there would be fun for those involved.

The message of the M&Ms communities, first promoted by Young, does not receive unanimous staff support. As Moulder considered that she might be the proverbial messenger, she specifically petitioned teachers who might be sympathetic to her situation. Additionally, she reflected on previous volunteer experiences and personally visited each potential collaborative team member to explain the project and ask for support. People have a difficult time saying no when they are approached in this manner. GMU IET alumni abound at CES, so their names were first on the list. The kindergarten team has been told by another administrator that they enjoy the unique distinction of “walking on water” because of their collaborative abilities, mutual support and professionalism. Moulder knew she could count on them for M&Ms too. Finally, Moulder also approached new CES staff teachers in hopes of engendering a feeling of welcome and belonging to them as well.

Costanza definitely knew that something needed to be done at his school to improve the community and relationships between the students. His observations of how the students acted and reacted to one another were not always in a positive manner especially while they were playing on the playground. The old behaviors that needed to change were the student interactions that sometimes bordered on bullying when a student of lesser ability did not perform up to the standards of the more athletic students. As a teacher Costanza really did not have much authority to intervene since the behaviors were not occurring during his PE class, but during the less structured recess period. Costanza

would mention to the classroom teachers both outside on the playground as well as in passing throughout the building. He did not let these behaviors occur in the gym and attempted to talk to the students about the expected behavior while on the playground. Costanza challenged his assumptions by occasionally confronting the groups of students who were displaying the undesired behaviors. In years past Costanza would not have confronted the students because it was not “happening on his watch” so he thought it wasn’t his place to step in. However, once the behaviors began to spill over into the gym, he felt compelled and a responsibility to attempt to change the behavior. The students continued to behave that way because they might not been told that it was inappropriate. Costanza felt empowered as well as somewhat accountable for the students’ behaviors. He felt that it might reflect badly on him if he continued to turn away from the verbal battles that were occurring during game play. Costanza made a stronger effort to try and change the attitude about how and why you play the game.

Before beginning the project, Brownridge knew that she could take on this task of creating a newspaper club. She also knew in the back of her mind that it would not be “smooth sailing”. Fears of failure were there, but also the idea of success and learning process were there, too. She would continuously amend her initial plans and assumed it would take a while to get people on board because teachers already felt overworked. She understood because she, too, was a teacher who was feeling overworked. There was a constant, nagging thought that there was not enough time to accomplish everything, let alone initiate a newspaper club and publication for the entire school community. Due to this feeling of being overworked, prior to initiating this project she was not thinking about what she could do to make a lasting change to her school, and was simply trying to make

a difference within her classroom, not feeling like she was in a place to even look at the bigger picture.

Brownridge challenged her assumptions about this by simply “jumping in head first” and overcoming the fears that she initially had. As she continued on she began to feel more and more at ease with the process and began to see how she could improve upon what she had started. It became a continuous process of refining. Having begun the third round of this club (Issue 3), she feels that she has come a long way, but she also sees that there is a lot to continue to refine. She has requested the help of a third teacher who will be able to help her in one area in particular that she feels she lacks in, art. Since this third teacher is an art teacher, Brownridge knows that the layout of her third issue will have a more artistic flair.

At Saratoga, Blackstone writes that the transformative process of the project was not smooth. Already with a full agenda Blackstone feared failure because of the pull in many directions and like most teachers the never ending workload. The fear of successfully tying a school based project to her master’s project that would become part of the SIP was daunting. Blackstone did not have the energy to start another project nor one that would be lasting to her school. Enlisting the help of her principal and assistant principal the three of them came up with project that permitted Blackstone to still continue her work with the writing rubrics, support her George Mason project and make a change for her school.

Blackstone did what she normally does when she gets overwhelmed, first she prays for guidance and wisdom, then makes a list and numbers it for priorities. Blackstone



conducts SIP meetings once a month and recruited people from the SIP committee to assist in Triple Play Mondays. After having data for what was needed for success, planning became easier for Triple Play Mondays. Blackstone still didn't feel confident with this challenge and remained concerned on how improve staff developments for overworked teachers who did not want it. Blackstone focused on what she hoped would benefit teachers most and be easy and useful in their classrooms.

### *Outcomes of the project*

The M&Ms project was done as a small scale pilot project; there were only three meetings, Appendix A contains more detailed information. The second meeting's survey revealed that more students had fun than at the first meeting or last meeting. The second meeting also had the most students responding that they would like to meet again. In reviewing the data it does not sound like M&Ms had much, if any impact on the CES's community building efforts. Anecdotally, there is another story to tell based on the buzz from the administration, mentor teachers, classroom teachers in general and both the participating students and the non-participating students. Discussions among the mentor teachers indicated that those participants who did not have fun were mostly older fifth and sixth graders. One sixth grader rolled his eyes at Moulder every time he was asked to pair up with a particular second grader. He also responded on the first and second survey that he would not want to do it again. At the end of the third session however, he responded that he would indeed like to continue coming to M&Ms. When Moulder specifically asked him what changed his mind, he responded that he had gotten to know the little second grader and decided he was an "ok kid and would be fun to have as a

friend.” That said it all. Observations and reports from mentor teachers and administration corroborated the enthusiasm, laughter and delight of the younger students who participated as well. Another buzz around the school regarded those who did not participate. Curiosity filled the school on those Friday afternoons when an announcement reminded all M&Ms to please report to the gym. “What are M&Ms? How do I become an M&M?” Recently a kindergarten parent heard something about M&Ms and wanted to know how to get her child involved. Another student asked Moulder when M&Ms was going to meet again and looked absolutely crushed when she heard it was over.

Three 25 minute sessions is not enough time to build trust, establish relationships and feel a sense of community, however it revealed how much the students need and want a program such as this, even if you have to drag them, kicking and screaming to the event. Ideally, M&Ms should commence the first week of school with daily 45-minute meetings the first two weeks. Once the students get to know their teammates and mentors, once a week meetings are necessary to maintain and build on these friendships. Additionally, the pilot groups had 17 students with one teacher. It is hoped that future groups would be composed of 25-26 students and have two staff members instead of just one, thus making for a lower teacher-student ratio. The encounter with the sixth grade student who initially was so not interested in staying with this serves as a testament to the idea that all students should participate with the idea that even when some think they will not enjoy the experience; there is so much to benefit. Lesson learned – all of us, both children and adults should be strongly encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to try new things.

There are two factors to consider regarding the future of M&Ms and Moulder's involvement or non-involvement. Principal Young remains steadfast in his desire to pursue M&Ms on a school-wide basis, however Moulder is recommending implementation commence on a smaller scale first and then add to it little by little. Starting with third & fourth grade students in the first two weeks of school, then adding second and fifth in October, first and sixth in November, then kindergarten in December. A culminating event for the first half of the academic year could be our all-school holiday sing-a-long prior to Winter Break. Another point to consider is Moulder's recent pursuit of a teaching position closer to her home in Burke; should she not stay at CES, the strong likelihood remains that Young will recreate the program next year, or resurrect it in a subsequent year. Coincidentally, the kindergarten team is most interested in continuing M&Ms as the consensus was that the younger they are when you get students involved, the more committed they will be to the community.

Costanza believes the sports program was a success and that the students really enjoyed the opportunity to come before school and participate. This project enlightened him to the ease of running a before school activity and the students are the ones who come out on top. Additionally, running this program in subsequent years is his part in the fight against childhood obesity. The students gained knowledge they will hopefully take with them to educate their families and friends, that will also help everyone maintain healthier lifestyles. As for attendance, with this being the first time offered, expectations were supported in that only a core group of students seemed to be interested in the weekly meetings. Classroom teachers were on board with the program, however with only the limited involvement of ensuring permission slips were returned to Costanza. Only a few of

them inquired about the program and how it worked, but they were excited for students to have a physical outlet in a before-school capacity. Grapevine rumors indicated as well, that some teachers did not appreciate that some students were coming to class in the morning already sweating and smelling.

At Eagle View, Brownridge does not feel that her project has completely changed the culture of the school, at least not yet. It has not made the difference she had hoped for and she feels that it will just take time. She has, however, paved the way to something that will greatly impact the school. The size of the club, limited to a group of ten students per session, was a hindrance but she feels she had to start small-scale to work out the kinks and then build on that. Another hindrance was that teachers continue to feel extremely stressed with what is already expected of them; this is perceived as one more thing and can be construed as the proverbial straw to break the camel's back. In an email asking for colleagues to get involved she received only two responses and those were from specialists. Even with idea of receiving remuneration, absolutely no general education teachers were willing to commit any extra hours beyond their contract time. Many are already committed to other extra-curricular activities. Also of concern is that many teachers have not yet shown their students the newspaper. The first two issues were sent electronically to all staff due to a school-wide effort to go paperless. Along with this electronic copy was a request that was made for teachers to please share them with their students by showing it on their Smart Board or by printing off a few copies for their class. However, in speaking with some students, it was apparent that many were not even aware of a newspaper having been published. It is no surprise then that there have also not been many student or class submissions. Hopefully, this will change.

Ideally, to involve more teachers would allow her to open the club to more students. She would also have the paper published and kept in archive on her school website. Although each issue has been made available online, they were subsequently taken down when new announcements were added. Many parents who have seen a copy of the paper in the office ask where else they can view these. She would like to be able to direct them to the school website. She will also solicit permission to hang a copy or two outside of the office door where many parents stand and wait for students. In addition, she will ask the librarian to keep copies of each issue in the library for students to easily access them.

At Saratoga there are small signs and data that show the school culture is slowly building a cohesive community. The writing rubrics are changing the way teachers approach and instruct language arts. The data show support for the writing rubrics and harmony in language arts. Also, vertical articulation meetings regarding writing are more common and interconnected with a common language. The rubrics are used once a quarter (or more) and attached to students' writing. At the end of the school year a rubric and the students' end of year writing are attached and added to a literacy folder that is passed on to the next grade level.

Not all teachers are supportive of Triple Play Mondays even though it has given purpose to Monday quarterly staff meetings. Some teachers find the trainings beneficial for immediate implementation in their classroom and for most, staff thinking has become positive. There will always be staff members, as the data shows, that struggle with change. The changes that Blackstone has headed since arriving two years ago are big for

Saratoga, but Blackstone believes that the staff at Saratoga can rally around the changes. The project has small successes with plenty of room for growth.

Blackstone would not do anything differently at this point because she learned so much in the process. However, she does have new assumptions about the project. The staff gave valuable feedback for revisions of the rubrics, but they will always be a work in progress. The rubrics will outlive Blackstone's involvement because Debbie Diaz-Arnold (AP) and the Language Arts head from Fairfax County, Pat Hanson had a discussion about them and what grade levels are expected to write. (See Appendix D) The county is coming out with a set of rubrics next year and so they will be distributed next year, however the ones that SES and Blackstone developed were right on target with the state and county requirements!

### *Reflection on the Power of Teachers to Effect Change*

Engendering change requires hope, vision, perseverance, fortitude, patience, community and compassion. A hope for the future allows for the possibilities of a vision. Perseverance and fortitude provide for those times when failure and other obstacles cloud or obliterate the vision. Some changes take hours, some take days, some take years and some takes eons. (Remember, in as much as the Catholic Church embarked on change 50 years ago, it still struggles to complete the efforts first envisioned at the Vatican II Council.) Community, from Latin, literally means "with oneness." Compassion – passion translates "to suffer", com means "with", to suffer with. Genuine members of a community,

those not only accepted but also accepting and compassionate of others, possess qualities that allow them to enact change.

In consideration of this, Moulder embarked on her sixth teaching year in the fall of 2010 with a stronger sense of herself as a professional, both with her students and their parents. She understands that effecting change can only happen when good relationships are in place. Forging relationships requires trust building as the first priority. In Moulder's classroom, trust is built through an open door policy where all parents are invited to visit the class at any time, however, they must be willing to volunteer and help in the room. One parent recently wrote, "I feel invested in your class and have tremendous affection for every single child in your class. They truly are a special group . . . The time I've spent volunteering has enriched my kindergarten experience at Centreville Elementary." Moulder has that parent's trust and understands its enormous value. Her relationship with her students and their families, her colleagues and administration are the ultimate barometer on how she measures her effectiveness as a teacher leader and she will continue to build on that at every possible turn.

Costanza understands that the project was not enacting change for the entire school, but simply for those students in the upper grades (4-6). Students who attended the first sessions talked it up and spread interest via word-of-mouth; more students joined as the program progressed through the year. The students started to ask questions and inquire about the program during the school day as he walked around. Their inquiry into subsequent programs and different sports they would be playing supported Costanza's belief that the students were excited about the program. The project was not without

difficulty. As different programs were offered, the same kids signed for each one. Costanza had hoped that there would be a different group of kids for each activity but that was not the outcome. He did not want to limit the number of programs each student could attend because he did not want to deny anyone the chance to participate. Each program had a 30 student maximum, but never achieved that number.

In hindsight, Costanza thinks the program should have been promoted more. Flyers were put up around the school and the program was explained to the students during PE, but he would now like to go on the morning announcements and visit classrooms. Costanza would like to have found a way to include other grade levels but doing something short of just a free period would make it hard to accommodate all of those different ability levels in the gym at the same time. If he attempted this in the future, Costanza would strongly consider setting up stations for the students to work at their own ability level or look into offering the program on multiple days based on grade levels. He definitely sees himself continuing this program as long as he stays at Camelot and will encourage other teachers to participate. The students will be more interested especially if other adults in the building are involved in this community building aspect. One hurdle he needs to overcome is that some teachers are reluctant to get sweaty early in the morning before the school day starts. What Costanza needs to model for them is a willingness to sacrifice one morning each week and do something positive for our students.

As Brownridge reflects on her project, she feels that it had a good impact on the students who became directly involved in the newspaper club. For those who joined with the intent of contributing artistically rather than writing, they ended up finishing with better writing skills. Others joined because of their love of writing and pursued it with time to



learn important skills such as interviewing, cartooning, or using technology. By just participating, all finished with more than they started off with and certainly with more excitement for writing.

Brownridge believes that this project has helped her see how change can be accomplished within a school. When one puts time and effort on making a difference, eventually change happens no matter how small the steps are. In looking back, she feels very good about what she has started at Eagle View and is very hopeful that it will continue on even without her personal involvement. Although she will be directly involved until the end of the 2010-2011 school year, she plans on taking the necessary steps during that time to ensure that the third issue will get in the hands of more of the students and parents. She will be placing copies of them in convenient locations such as the library, the parent liaison's office, the front window of the office and on her school website. Giving more accessibility will help to ensure more of an interest in the newspaper by both parents and students. Also, by having already involved a few teachers who are very interested in this program, she believes they would be able to continue on with it next year without her direct involvement.

Saratoga teacher Blackstone knows that teachers have power in numbers when they are fighting for a common cause. However, when it comes to teachers making changes within the school community, it is far more difficult when it affects the way teachers work. The writing rubric project affects the way teachers work and she understands that she is not currently the most well-liked person in the building for that reason. Blackstone is okay with her leader teacher role. Her Principals know she is willing

to manage and accomplish a task in the allotted scheduled timeframe. A teacher leader role is new to Blackstone and one that she's still getting used to with fellow teachers seeking her advice or insight. Other colleagues want to share information to gain her support because they know of Blackstone's link to administration. However, Blackstone does not participate in power plays, which is why she continues to gain respect and confidence from her administrators. Behind closed doors Diaz-Arnold and Lursene shared their pride in her dedication and work with her first year heading SIP. In their five years at the school Blackstone was the first teacher that followed through with written goals and accomplished them for Saratoga. The support of her colleagues and administrator is important for Blackstone because it makes for harmonious working conditions. Her view of herself has become less negative and Blackstone has shown positive insight and wisdom as a teacher leader.

The most crucial strategy Blackstone used in working with people was to treat people with respect and kindness at all times. If she believed the respect of her colleagues was not present, she worked extra hard both to gain their respect or show respect for them. It was imperative to use pertinent ideas from *Crucial Conversations*, "who cares, who knows, who must agree, how many people?" (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2002). More importantly, she worked diligently to help people feel relaxed, not threatened by the change and understood the hurdles had more to do with consideration for people's feelings, especially veteran teachers who are used to doing things a certain way or "It's worked like this for years why change?" Surprisingly, a few new teachers were also overwhelmed from not ever having been exposed to the idea of a rubric

before. Blackstone had empathy for the young teachers and really tried to help. She had years of working and parenting experience when she entered the field of teaching six years ago that young teachers out of college often lack. Young teachers are overloaded with learning a new career, juggling a classroom of student behaviors for which they are unprepared and administrative tasks are overwhelming.

Blackstone enjoyed the project after she started progressing with it. The hurdles were getting thirty-two curriculum teachers to support the plan presented and that's not considering resource teachers. Blackstone believes that it's important for administration and teacher leaders to give staff the right and opportunity for feedback. In addition, staff needs to understand when and how that feedback will be used, so that there is a clear line of communication. This sharing of information puts teachers in the know for future plans. The teachers would then know their feedback is vital and not being brushed off or unused. Blackstone is proud of her work at Saratoga and will continue it.

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## Appendix A

### Moulder's M&Ms Project

M&Ms got its name from the candy of the same name in a discussion between Moulder and Young; he mentioned he thought it would be really cool to have each team's color from one in a bag of M&Ms. This rainbow symbolizes and celebrates our uniqueness as individuals (each color of the rainbow) and sameness (we are all part of the rainbow). M&Ms also stands for Mixers & Minglers and utilized five kindergarten teachers who were asked to lead four 30 minute team-building sessions scheduled to occur March 4, March 18, April 1, and April 15. Moulder also asked two teachers from each grade, one through six, to randomly select five students from each class, who were then randomly placed with one of the kindergarten teachers so that each mentor teacher had a total of 17 students; five kindergarteners, and two from each grade, first through sixth. The kindergarten teachers were told to select five students each to participate.

Information letters were sent to the parents of each of the 85 students. The letters also included a sign and return form only in the case of not wanting their child to participate. Only one form was returned with an alternate being chosen to take her place. The reason for choosing students randomly is because of the many times that things happen so randomly and how we oftentimes are expected to finesse our plans to meet those needs. Thus it happened with this project; not all things went as planned. The first and second sessions happened on their planned dates, however two hours before the start of the first session, Cindy Hamblen, one of the mentor teachers, was called out of the building in an emergency. Rather than scrapping the first meeting, we decided to distribute her assigned students among the remaining four mentors. The March 18 session occurred on a beautiful warm spring Friday afternoon. Instead of keeping the groups indoors, each mentor chose a spot outside where we had the students pair up or group up to do chalk drawings. Hamblen's group did a sidewalk mural under the front awning entrance of the school. Moulder had the students trace each other's bodies, labeling their names and talking about various favorites such as foods, TV shows, and what the students were thinking about being when they grew up. Green and Lankford used the opportunity to have older students work with younger ones practicing letter formation and spelling. The April 1 session was cancelled because of Moulder's illness and the rescheduled session on April 8 was cancelled due to a Moulder family emergency. The final session was conducted on April 15, again outside, where all groups came together on an outdoor field and ran relay races. All sessions lasted 30 minutes. Five minutes was allotted for warm-up and getting-to-know-you exercises, 20 minutes for other activities, followed by five minutes of wrap-up and time for students to complete surveys. These sessions occurred from 3:15 until 3:45.

Example of letter sent to parents:

March 1, 2011

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Amin,

As you may already be aware, we here at Centreville Elementary School enjoy very special relationships with our students, CES families and surrounding neighborhood. In keeping with our mission of providing opportunities for positive character development and relationships, we are piloting a school program that will serve as a unique opportunity for students to enjoy some fun while strengthening their peer support network. We are pleased to inform you that Neda was randomly selected to participate in this program on Friday afternoons. Should this pilot prove successful, Neda will have the honor of having helped facilitate the beginning what we hope will be a new CES school wide initiative next year.

Neda, along with 13 other students representing all grade levels, will meet on four alternate Fridays beginning this week, for 30 minutes at the end of the day, to participate in relationship and team building exercises. While CES teachers serve as facilitators for the five small groups of 14, it is our hope that Neda will enjoy the opportunity to build relationships while having some fun on these Fridays.

Carlotta Moulder, one of our teachers, is coordinating this program with the help of Lee Kaiser, our school counselor. If you or your child would prefer not to participate, please sign, detach and return the bottom portion of this page to Neda’s teacher as soon as possible. If you have any comments, questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Carlotta at [ccmoulder@fcps.edu](mailto:ccmoulder@fcps.edu) , or Lee at [lrkaiser@fcps.edu](mailto:lrkaiser@fcps.edu). Or you can call the CES main number, 705-502-3500.

Thank you so much for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Dwayne Young  
Principal  
Centreville Elementary School

-----  
Return this portion only if you do not wish for your child to participate.

I do not wish for my child, \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Moulder provided these next three pages to each mentor for each meeting:

Grade	9 boys Doyle 8 girls	9 boys Green 8 girls	6 boys Hamblen 11 Girls	7 boys Lankford 10 girls	9 boys Moulder 8 girls
Kindergarten	Neda Amin	Austin Ko	Callie Wickham	Louis Couch	Jake Ryan
	Kye Ridgeway-Davis	Glen Pankratz	Zarina Khan	Isabella Rodriguez	Aaron Le
	Chloe Watson	Cameron Smith	Alexa Quiroz	Elias Naimy	Emily Lopez-Gonzales
	Christian Arevalo	Nyla Thomas	Logan Salamone	Noor Elian	Naomi King
1 <sup>st</sup>	Amanda Bartley	Daniel Purdy	Joel Yoon	Madison Nowakowski	Ardit Lumi
	Rachel Hare	Jessiah McCollum	Natalia Santiago	Minh Nguyen	Zunera Nadeem
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Yulee Moon	Sumit Thapa	Madison Aber	Edward Simmons	Andy Kim
	Cheryl Bai	Jeff James	Maggie Heiman	Philip Pham	Stephen DeVera
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Brad Lopez	Gavin Wicke	Rob Clawes	Irina Mendenhall	Jessica Chau
	Morris Ayala-Perez	Trevor Serrano	Raghad Majeed	Yuri Kim	Robert O'Donnell
4 <sup>th</sup>	Nicole Sidhom	Archana Nair	Jordan Wright	Maxwell Leitch	Aman Benyam
	Jack Weimerskirch	Bryce Douglas	Nancy Do	Joanna Manoleras	Jessica Tran
5 <sup>th</sup>	Carter Huntley	Makayla Watson	Tiffany Robinson	Huy Bao	Isabella Betancourth
	Adam Khan	Anisha Beladia	Donald Funes	Laura Cantagallo	Tatiyone Clagett
6 <sup>th</sup>	Drake Randolph	Anna Le	Amber Mundy	Allen Nguyen	Abby Allerding
	David Alves	Sarah Jane Naimy	Sungjoo Park	Kaihla Powell	Jeremy Rathjen

Ice Breakers

- Animal Names** – each person introduces themselves and uses his first initial to name an animal, such as “Hi, I’m Annie Anteater.”
- Shoe ID Game** – the Shoe ID Game is a fun albeit smelly icebreaker game. *Instructions* – everybody takes off a shoe and throws them in a large pile on the floor. On the count of three, each person grabs a shoe from the pile, then find the person with the matching shoe in their other foot and find out their name and three things about them they didn’t already know. Works best with larger groups. After everyone has found their person and asked them the questions, then go around the circle and have everyone introduce the person they talked to and tell the three things about them. This game is a good large group game, though it can be somewhat smelly.
- Categories** - a fun, interactive, introductory get-to-know-you activity for medium to large groups. Works best with large groups (min. is ~15). Useful for celebrating diversity. Particularly useful as an icebreaker, e.g. can be used as an opener for a workshop/conference. Ask everyone to stand up and then to walk around; explain that you will announce a category (see [list](#) or use your own) and that participants should then quickly organize themselves into smaller groups, based on the category to which they belong. Once everyone is organized into their groups, ask each group to identify itself. (Optional) Make a brief comment or ask each group a question. Allow participants time to say hello and mingle/chat with each other when the smaller groups are formed.

Keep things moving by asking participants to walk around before announcing the next category. Continue until the group is “warmed up” and ready for the next activity. This will probably be after ~5 topics, depending on the group, purpose, and time available. Categories can also be used as a fun, simple way to organize people into smaller groups for other activities. For the first category, use one with two options and announce one side of the room for one category and the other side of the room for the other category. This should help participants to get the idea for how the activity works.

- Human Sculptures Game** – Human Sculptures is a fun game that can be used as an icebreaker activity or as a general party game. There are two variations of this game — one version is a competitive guessing game, while the other version is a based on creative interpretations of various topics. The instructions for both versions are below.
  - How to Play Human Sculptures: Guessing Game Version* The facilitator should announce a category (e.g. famous movies or famous songs — the more specific the better). All players are then divided into smaller groups and one team leader is given a pen and paper. Each group brainstorms an idea that goes along with the topic and each team leader must write down the idea on a sheet of paper and turn it in to the leader, who checks that the idea is appropriate for use. Each group then creates a sculpture using their bodies. Every member of the group should comprise some part of the entire sculpture. After a predefined time limit (for example, five minutes), each team looks at each other’s sculpture. Each team is allowed two guesses for what the other team has formed. Whatever group guesses the other group’s sculpture the closest is the winner.



- b. *How to Play Human Sculptures: Noncompetitive Version* – The leader should announce that the group will now participate in a “human clay” activity. Players would be asked to provide their own interpretation or illustration of some category of events or other topics (prepared in advance by the leader). Some examples of categories that could be used:
- i. A topic related to specific subject matter learned in the classroom
  - ii. An important event or experience
  - iii. An important event in history
  - iv. A famous scene from a movie
  - v. A line from a famous song

The leader should demonstrate first (to help put the players at ease, especially those who might be reluctant to act out). This noncompetitive version can be a good way to see how people illustrate content learned in class, or something personally meaningful to them. Have fun!

5. **Balloon Game** – a fun game that should get kids laughing is “Balloon Buns.” Give each camper an uninflated balloon with a small, rolled or folded-up message inside of it. Ask campers to blow up and tie their balloons and sit in a circle with them in their laps. Then, at the sound of a bell or signal such as “go” all campers should sit on their balloons. As soon as a pop is heard, all students should get off of their balloons and the camper(s) whose balloons popped will have to do whatever was written inside of the balloon. The messages should be funny commands like “bark like a dog” or “quack like a duck” or “do a dance.” Continue the game until all campers have popped their balloons and performed their silly commands.

Read more: Camp Ideas and Games for Kids | eHow.com [http://www.ehow.com/info\\_7944867\\_camp-ideas-games-kids.html#ixzz1F6808IkY](http://www.ehow.com/info_7944867_camp-ideas-games-kids.html#ixzz1F6808IkY)

6. **Ghost** – Three or four players are chosen to be the ghosts. The rest of the group needs to scatter across the playing space and choose a spot to stand in. All players need to close their eyes. The ghosts will roam about the playing space. They will try to scare the people by standing close behind the players for 10 seconds without them knowing. If this happens, the ghost will tap them on their head and they will sit down quietly. If a person suspects a person behind them, they would ask, “Is there a ghost behind me?” If they are right then they become a ghost. If they are wrong they are out and should sit down.

Team Builders

1. **Giants, Wizards, & Elves** - Giants, Wizards, and Elves is a fun, silly icebreaker game that is a good way to break the ice at meetings or in classrooms. It's a simple game based on the classic game of rock, paper, and scissors.

*Setup*

Teach everyone how to become three characters: the giant, the wizard, and the elf. Each character features hand motions and a noise.

For the giant, each person stands on their tippy toes, lifts up their arms, and makes an angry growling noise: “Roooar!”

For the wizard, each person crouches a little bit, flutters their fingers as though they are casting a spell, and they make a magical noise: “Woooo!”

For the elf, each person gets down very low on their knees, cups their hands around their ears, and makes a high pitched elf noise: “Eeeeeee!”

Practice each motion together a few times. Divide everyone into two teams and have them separate into opposite sides of the room. The game involves several rounds. For each round, the following takes place:

- a. Each team forms a huddle and decides to become a giant, wizard, or elf.
- b. Both teams then line up and face each other, about 5 feet apart.
- c. The facilitator says “3..2..1..Go!”
- d. Each team acts out the giant, wizard, or elf (whatever they decided to become).
- e. As soon as they act out their character, the winner tries to grab the loser and pulls as many people over to their side as they can. The loser tries to run away, back to their side, in order to be safe. The winner of each round is determined by the following. The giant defeats the elf because giants “squash” elves. Elves defeat wizards by outsmarting them, chewing at their legs. The wizard defeats the giant by “zapping” them with a magic spell. Identical characters are a draw (no one wins). This process keeps repeating for multiple rounds until one team is entirely consumed (or when time runs out.)

2. **Jigsaw Search** – Students especially enjoy the search aspect of this activity. The teacher prepares construction paper jigsaw puzzle shapes of several different colors. The shape may be symbolic of a topic being introduced. These are cut as a jig saw puzzle with the number of pieces matching the desired group size from two to four.

The teacher allows students to select one puzzle piece from a container as they walk into the room. At the designated time, students search the room for peers who have puzzle pieces that fit theirs and then team up with those students to perform a task. Some interesting tasks might be introducing a partner, making a poster to define a concept, decorating puzzle pieces, and making a mobile. Having students print their names on both sides of their puzzle piece might facilitate name learning during the search activity. The names could be erased or crossed out if puzzle pieces are reused.

Note: If the number of puzzle pieces does not match the number of students in the room, some students will not have a complete group. Left over puzzle pieces can be placed on a table for students to check to see if their group will be short members. To avoid groups being short members you could use two-piece puzzles and participate with a student left out yourself.

### **Stringing Conversation Together**

Cut string or yarn into pieces of different lengths. Each piece should have a matching piece of the same length. There should be enough pieces so that each student will have one. Then give each student one piece of string, and challenge each student to find the other student who has a string of the same length. After students find their matches, they can take turns introducing themselves to one another. You can provide a list of questions to help students "break the ice," or students can come up with their own. You might extend the activity by having each student introduce his or her partner to the class.

### **A Tangled Web**

Gather students in a circle sitting around you on the floor. Hold a large ball of yarn. Start by telling the students something about yourself. Then roll the ball of yarn to a student without letting go of the end of the yarn. The student who gets the ball of yarn tells his or her name and something good about himself or herself. Then the student rolls the yarn to somebody else, holding on to the strand of yarn. Soon students have created a giant web. After everyone has spoken, you and all the students stand up, continuing to hold the yarn. Start a discussion of how this activity relates to the idea of teamwork -- for example, the students need to work together and not let others down. To drive home your point about teamwork, have one student drop his or her strand of yarn; that will demonstrate to students how the web weakens if the class isn't working together.

### **All Aboard!**

This activity requires working together in close physical proximity in order to solve a practical, physical problem. It tends to emphasize group communication, cooperation, patience and problem solving strategy, as well as issues related to physical self and physical proximity.

The activity can be run in many different ways.

Basic method: Ask the whole group to try to fit inside a small area which can be marked by:

- small platforms, or
- circle of rope, or
- tarpaulin or blanket

When the group succeeds, decrease the area (e.g., changing platforms, shrinking the circle, or folding the tarp) and challenge the group again. How far can the group go?

Cautions: Obviously people are going to need to feel physically comfortable in order to get physically close and be supportive of one another. So make sure people are warmed up and preferably have removed excessive jewelry, watches, etc.





Friday, April 15, 2011

1. Did you have fun today? Please circle only one answer.

Yes

No

2. What was the best thing about today? Please circle only one answer.

- a. I had fun getting to know my group better than last time.
- b. I got to meet new people.
- c. I got to get out of class.
- d. I enjoyed playing with the younger kids.
- e. I enjoyed playing with the older kids.

3. Would you like to do this again? Please circle only one answer.

Yes

No

4. What grade are you in?

Appendix B

Costanza PE Project:

The project will have different sessions that will hopefully coincide with our themed units during the school year. When the project began it was only open to 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students but as the program preceded it was opened up to 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. I did this because for the most part the upper grades (4-6) were the only ones who got to play a modified game at the end of a unit.

The project will have different sessions that will hopefully coincide with our themed units during the school year. When the project began it was only open to 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students but as the program preceded it was opened up to 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. I did this because for the most part the upper grades (4-6) were the only ones who got to play a modified game at the end of a unit. The program ran once a week for roughly a month at a time with a meeting day of Wednesday mornings from 8:15-8:45am. At some point during each program, a survey was given to the students. The results are below.

Results of Camelot ES student survey

*Please answer these questions truthfully and without the help of anyone else. Your answers are only for research purposes and will not reflect on you in any way so there is no need to put your name on this survey.*

**1. I like to participate in game situations in PE.**

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Strongly agree

0	2	10	17	30
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**2. I am able to remember the rules of the games I learn in PE.**

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Strongly agree

3	5	18	23	10
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**3. I like to participate in the games/activities we learn outside of school.**

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Strongly agree

0	3	11	20	25
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**4. I feel I am able to teach my classmates how to play the game properly using the rules learned during PE.**

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Strongly agree

5	8	13	18	15
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**5. I feel that I will continue to participate in these games as I grow older.**

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Strongly agree

0	5	22	18	14
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## Appendix C

### Brownridge Newspaper Project:

Brownridge secured Dr. Granada's permission to begin the project with one caveat, to ensure participating teachers would receive remuneration since they would be working after contract hours. From there she spoke with a few teachers who showed interest in participating in this endeavor. She met with Ms. Ghanaim, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, and with Mrs. Anthony and Mrs. Small, both reading specialists. After sharing her thoughts on how this idea could be carried out and receiving input from each of these teachers, she then spoke with Mrs. Stewart-Hamlett, the school's financial assistant, to discuss regulations around teacher pay and to find out costs of printing. A meeting was then set with the PTA for November 9, 2010. Ann met with the PTA board to discuss her ideas of implementing this afterschool program and to request their support for the costs of printing and for scholarships. After a vote, they agreed to provide support in all of the ways that were requested. Ann continued to work collaboratively with each of the 3 teachers through ongoing meetings, with a constant exchange of ideas. Applications were made and distributed to one grade at a time. Each grade level was given a short presentation on the newspaper club and the students were encouraged to apply. A total of nineteen 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders were accepted into the club for the first 8 sessions (Issue 1). The students voted on a name for the newspaper and the sections to be included in the paper. They had the autonomy to choose which sections they wanted to be involved in, who they would work with, and people they would want to interview. They learned interviewing skills and writing skills (plan, draft, revise, edit, publish) and then were able to also use the computer lab to type up and publish their articles. Once they completed their articles, they were able to choose an "extra" section of the newspaper that they had an interest in to work on such as cartoons, artwork puzzles, poetry, etc. Announcements were sent out to students and teachers for writing submissions. From the submissions that were made, the newspaper staff chose a few to include in the paper.

By the eighth session, Volume 1, Issue 1 of Soaring News was published and distributed electronically to the entire staff and to the PTA. It was also added to both our school and PTA website for the community to view. Each student participant received one hard copy to take home.

Ann continued with two more rounds for both Issue 2 and Issue 3 during the months of March and May. Issue 2 was created by a group of ten 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and Issue 3 will be created by a group of ten 4<sup>th</sup> graders. For Issue 3, an email announcement was also made to the staff requesting the help of an additional teacher, in an attempt to get more people involved. Ms. Haab, the art teacher, expressed interest and will now be helping out for Issue 3. This will be the last issue of the school year.

School newspapers also provide students with feelings of autonomy. In *Drive*, Pink states "a sense of autonomy has a powerful effect on individual performance and attitude. It's in our basic nature to be curious and self-directed" (2009, p. 89). Jeff Gunthers, CEO of Meddius, a computer software and hardware company, launched an experiment on autonomy by implementing a "results-only work environment" (ROWE). Employees do not have work schedules and instead, they simply show up and leave when it suits them. Their primary task is to get the work done. Says Gunther, "How they do it,

when they do it, and where they do it is up to them” (p. 86). Although some people outside of Meddius thought this crazy, in Gunther’s view, his team was accomplishing more under this new arrangement. Employees became “more focused on the work itself rather than on whether someone would call them a slacker for leaving at three P.M. to watch a daughter’s soccer game” (p. 87). “According to a cluster of recent behavioral science studies, autonomous motivation promotes greater conceptual understanding, better grades, enhanced persistence at school and in sporting activities, higher productivity, less burnout, and greater levels of psychological well-being” (pp. 90-91). “Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement” (pp. 93-94).



**Appendix D:  
Debbie Blackstone Writing Rubric & Triple Play Project**

At Bennett Woods Elementary School the administrators, teachers, and staff are committed to continually build a school of readers and writers. They seek out professional development and material that enhance teaching skills and student learning. Recently, a teacher from Bennett Woods was interviewed after the staff formally attributed their writing success to her. She had analyzed released state test along with scoring criteria. Also, she consulted with experts from the state and writing specialists too (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007, p.227). She shared her notebook of reserch with her commnuty of teachers “it provided detailed information about the writing test scoring rubrics. She developed versions of the rubrics for both teachers and parents of” (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007, p. 227). The teachers and students at Bennett Woods were well trained and prepared after new state langauge arts standards changed from attnedng a two day meeting. Today “just about every composition was graded against a rubric, which is consistent with how writing is graded on the and other high-stakes writing assessments” (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007, p. 228).

**Debra Blackstone  
IET 2011  
Data Source  
Of  
Personal Observations  
During Triple Play Monday**

<b>Observations</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Interpretations, Notes</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> group Mvnt. Neg.attn, ca. rubr, twk coop	Why the moving and negative attention? Why did they bring their oil rubrics?	The first group of teachers had many questions that they were nervous about asking. I don't think they are used to working with committee members where their opinion is valued and needed. It's hard to let go of something you're comfortable with. Shared cooperative behavior.
2 <sup>nd</sup> group Wow & ugh 3 <sup>rd</sup> wrks. Lrn., ldsp, rspt, shr. Imag, in ps. Wy	How can you bottle this team and share their enthusiasm for risk-taking?	Third grade came to learn, they are leaders and respect leadership roles. Their imagination for positive ways to use the writing rubrics was engaging. Cooperative works.
4 <sup>th</sup> whr. Prty. Lts. Frnsp. Nt. Lrn. Ftbl, preg, rest. Soc.	Who do you think you are and how do you get away with it?	The fourth grade team doesn't even notice when they get negative attention? They were there to socialize about football, pregnancy, restaurants, anything but to learn.
3 <sup>rd</sup> group psattn &ngattn, lk resp, rsk, kn, stn	Why is she knitting? Why are they just standing there?	Fifth and part of sixth showed positive attention and cooperative behavior. Others in the group lacked respect , stood in a small group of four watching other work collaboratively. One teacher even did her knitting.

**From:** Diaz-Arnold, Debbie  
**Sent:** Monday, November 22, 2010 9:36 AM  
**To:** Anagnos, Zoe; Andrews, Kerri; Ansari, Bilkis; Ashford, Joan D; Baird, Denise M.; Barnes, Michelle M.; Bates, Christine A.; Beavers, Mickey C; Bickmore, Candace; Blackstone, Debra A.; Cernohorsky, Mardi; Coakley, Ann E; Coffin, Kelsey H.; Coffman, Steven D; Conklin, Pat; Cunningham, Jane M.; Curry, Larae A; Deliee, Chip; Diaz-Arnold, Debbie; Dixon, Jennifer A.1; Dodd, Larry C; Donovan, Brianna; Eadie, Robert; Evjen, Ruth H.; Fackner, Suzanne L.; Fagan, John J.; Ferguson, Brenda; Foley, Clare K.; Francois, Rebecca S; Gooding, Michelle L; Hamilton, Tyrone C.; Harrington, Alana L.; HarringtonFreihofer, Cathleen L.; Henderson, Yolanda L.; Hickman, Charmaine F.; Hillard, Ashley; Jimmo, Lynn; Jones, Emily; Kern, Jennifer; King, Sarah E.; Kirby, Rose M; Kowalek, Lisa M.; Lee, Deena; Lockhart, Marilyn; Lynn, Debbie; Maher, Tara; Manikas, Melanie A.; McInnis, Bev; McKeon, Jill C.; McKissick, Dona M; Meade, Jane H.; Mehlberg, Stacy M.; Meyer, Marie J.; Moffa, Margaret; Moran, Susan C; Nicolais, Eric S.; Ogborn, Kathy; O'Neill, Kim S; O'Neill, Lynn A; Palastro, Marianne A; Payne, Hadley; Potasinski, Audrey; Prevost, MaryEllen; PrewittRodriguez, Victoria J.; Reardon, Kathy H; Rismiller, Susan F; Robinson, Jordan; Sacco, Lesley; Sansbury, Michelle A; Seaton, Linda; Sepehri, Nahid; Smith, Marta; Spitznagel, Jessica; Stephens, Amy; Stewart, Michele; Sudak, Rena C; Taylor, Joyce A; Taylor, Susan; Tiss, Julie; Tompkins, Rod; Valdez, Rosanna; Wedekindt, Karen S; Wells, Betty S; White, Adrienne R; Wickizer, Barbara F.; Will, Kathy; Williams, Nicole T.; Ziegler, Victoria J  
**Subject:** Triple Play Monday Schedule Clarification

Kindergarten , 1 <sup>st</sup> grade, 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade teachers Start in room 135 then move on to the next room.	3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers/Music Start in room 130 then move on to next room.	5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers P.E./Librarian Start in room 131 then move on to next room.
2:05 Room 135 Writing	2:05 Room 130 Reading	2:05 Room 131 Literacy
2:35 Room 130 Reading	2:35 Room 131 Literacy	2:35 Room 135 Writing
3:05 Room 131 Literacy	3:05 Room 135 Writing	3:05 Room 130 Reading

We will have our Triple Play [this afternoon](#) immediately following our social which will begin at 1:45 in the cafeteria. Our SIP reading and writing committees will be sharing Word Study and Writing Rubrics respectively. Emily Jones and Melanie Manikas will be sharing information from their lead teacher meetings on literacy.

You will be traveling to three different sessions in three different rooms for Triple Play.

Our writing committee will be reviewing the writing rubrics that were developed last year. Please be reminded that these were developed by last year's committee with several opportunities for grade level feedback. As we use these, the writing committee will continue to use your ongoing feedback to tweak the rubrics through-out the year.

Our reading committee will be sharing the Word Study program. We have purchased a set of materials for each grade level. Once they come in and have been cataloged, they will be distributed to team leaders.

Melanie Manikas and Emily Jones will be sharing information they received in August from their lead teacher meetings.

Thank you in advance to all of the committees that have already worked so hard to make our Triple Play Monday a success. As you review the schedule, please do not hesitate to ask for clarity; this is still a new method in delivering staff development and there still might be lingering questions.

**From:** Luerssen, Jamie B.  
**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2009 10:47 AM  
**To:** Blackstone, Debra A.; O'Neill, Kim S; DiazArnold, Deborah; Maher, Tara; Foley, Clare K.; Snead, Deena M.  
**Subject:** FW: English Department: Writing Rubric  
**Attachments:** Rubric student 0-4 Two.doc; Rubric student 0-4.doc

You will find the middle school rubrics attached. They will be a great guide for the grade 6 writing rubric.  
Jamie

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**From:** Daly, Lauren R.  
**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2009 7:48 AM  
**To:** Luerssen, Jamie B.  
**Subject:** RE: English Department: Writing Rubric

Good morning,

Amy Beth Marta forwarded me your email about six trait rubrics. I've attached the one we use here at Key. It is similar to Vicky Spandel's writing rubrics but was adapted by Fairfax County. Middle school English teachers are required to use the six trait rubric for every major writing assignment we assign and grade.

Hope this helps – let me know if we can answer any questions!

Thanks,

Lori Daly  
English Department Chair  
Key Middle School

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**From:** Luerssen, Jamie B.  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 12, 2009 4:32 PM  
**To:** Marta, Amy Beth  
**Cc:** DiazArnold, Deborah  
**Subject:** English Department: Writing Rubric

Hello Amy,

I am one of the assistant principals at Saratoga ES and we are currently revising our grade 6 writing rubric. I am wondering if you could please put me in contact with the chair of the English department because I am hoping he/she can email me copies of the writing rubric that is used in grade 7 and 8 at Key. We would like to include this as a model as we create our rubric.

Please feel free to forward this email to the chair of the English dept or whoever could help us with this information if that would be easiest. Thanks in advance for your help! I appreciate it.

Jamie

Jamie Luerssen  
Assistant Principal  
Saratoga ES  
703-440-2605

**From:** Tiss, Julie  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 05, 2011 12:44 PM  
**To:** Cernohorsky, Mardi; Cunningham, Jane M.; Foley, Clare K.; Francois, Rebecca S; Gooding, Michelle L; Maher, Tara; McKeon, Jill C.; Spitznagel, Jessica  
**Cc:** Blackstone, Debra A.  
**Subject:** FW: Writing

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Team,

I will not be able to make this week's CLT, but looks like your agenda is full. Shall I report back to you where the Writing Committee is in terms of the writing rubric next week? Basically we need to use it at least once a quarter, and also as we encounter difficulties or have suggestions we should make notes and Clare and/or I can share those with the writing committee. - julie

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**From:** Blackstone, Debra A.  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 04, 2011 12:49 PM  
**To:** Tiss, Julie; McKeon, Jill C.; Foley, Clare K.; O'Neill, Lynn A; Kowalek, Lisa M.; Meyer, Marie J.; Palastro, Marianne A  
**Cc:** Diaz-Arnold, Debbie; Deliee, Chip  
**Subject:** Writing

Hi Wonderful Writing Team,

Happy New Year to all of you and welcome back! We had so much to talk about during our last meeting that I didn't get to share the copies I had for you. I will put them in one grade level box and you can take them to your CLT meeting to share.

Also, don't forget to share the information about paragraph writing from Pat Hanson, at District Office with your colleagues at CLT. To refresh your memory in second grade we need to work on writing a paragraph, third grade needs work on developing a well constructed paragraph, fourth and fifth grade multiple paragraphs, and sixth grade well developed five paragraphs.

Thank you,

Debbie

October 25 Edit

Design Survey

Collect Responses

Analyze Results

Default Report ▼




+ Add Report

## Response Summary




Total Started Survey: 36  
Total Completed Survey: 35 (97.2%)

PAGE: EVALUATION






**1. The time allowed for in each session was sufficient for me to learn about the topic.** [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Disagree 	5.6%	2
Not sure 	5.6%	2
Agree 	88.9%	32
answered question		36
skipped question		0

**2. I understand the student achievement goals and work plans that I will be supporting this school year.** [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Not Sure 	16.7%	6
Agree 	77.8%	28
Strongly Agree 	5.6%	2
answered question		36
skipped question		0

**3. I need more specific information to understand my role in supporting each student achievement goal marked.** [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
LA-Writing 	39.1%	9
LA-Reading 	30.4%	7
Math 	43.5%	10
Essential Life Skills-Goal Setting 	43.5%	10
Responsibility to the Community-Environmental Stewardship and Service Learning 	21.7%	5
answered question		23
skipped question		13

Debra Blackstone  
 Change Project  
 Data Sources  
 IET 2011

Language Arts Schedule for Triple Play Monday

<p>Reviewing of the Rubric using grade level writing samples.</p> <p>2:05 P.M.                  Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup>, grade, Special Education Teachers</p> <p>4 Kindergarten Teachers                  4 Instructional Assistants                  5 First grade Teachers                  5 1<sup>st</sup> grade Instructional Assistants                  5 Second Grade Teachers                  ED Center 1 teacher and 1 Instructional Assistant                  2 Special Education Teachers</p>	<p>Reviewing of the Rubric using grade level writing samples.</p> <p>2:35                  5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers                  P.E./Librarian</p> <p>4 Fifth grade Teachers                  4 Sixth grade Teachers                  5/6<sup>th</sup> combo ED Center 1 Teacher and 1 Instructional Assistant                  2 Physical Education Teachers                  1 Librarian                  2 ESOL Teachers                  4 Special Education Teachers</p>	<p>Reviewing of the Rubric using grade level writing samples.</p> <p>3:05                  3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 4<sup>th</sup> teachers/Music</p> <p>4 Fourth grade Teachers                  5 Third grade Teachers                  4/5<sup>th</sup> combo ED Center I Teacher and 1 Instructional Assistant                  2 Music Teachers                  2 ESOL Teachers                  3 Special Education Teachers</p>
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