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A study of the Renaissance Program in a high school

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A STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE PROGRAM IN A HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness and validity of the Renaissance Program in a high school. The study involved the gathering of statistical data and conducting objective interviews. The resulting information provides the administration and the reader with an understanding of the importance of student motivational programs.

The focus of the study was to evaluate the change in performance of specific student indicators: attendance rates, dropout rates, discipline incidences, and motivation connected with grade retention rate, subject failure, and national honor society membership. The study obtained information on these indicators through statistical data from administration pertaining to high school students in ninth through twelfth grade and interviews with program coordinators. The use of these two types of information creates a better overview of the program effectiveness.

The findings of this study suggest that the difference noted in the performance indicators during the period of time the Renaissance Program was implemented, may have some positive effect. While the study indicated no significant improvement in most of the performance indicators, there was improvement overall in the total sample. The improvement suggests that the Renaissance Program has a positive impact on students.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my Principal and the Renaissance Coordinators who helped me in the collection of data for this study.

I am especially thankful to my wife, family and friends who endured my mood swings and intendance at many events throughout the completion of my research project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The massacre at Columbine High School in April, 1999, was more than four years ago. It is easy to forget that two teenagers had walked into a high school with guns ablaze in a small town creating a shooting spree that killed thirteen people. They then killed themselves. Similarly, it is easy to forget the promises many of us made to ourselves that nothing like that would ever happen in our neighborhood. Today's parents and friends of teenagers pay closer attention to the warning signs of teens' than to Columbine's D. Klebold and E. Harris.

On July 6, 2003, three students from Collingswood High School, a small rural town in South Jersey, surrendered to police due to possession of firearms. Authorities were alerted early that morning by a motorist that three teenagers brandishing guns attempted to highjack his car. Soon thereafter the male students ages 14, 15 and an 18 year old Collingswood graduate, Matthew Lovett, were stopped by the police in an early morning blockade. The occupant's car and its contents revealed that the teenagers were armed with an arsenal including rifles, handguns, machetes, swords and about 2,000 rounds of ammunition. The weapons belonged to Lovett's father; he had permits for the weapons. The juveniles were taken into custody and charged with aggravated assault and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose (Laughlin, Guenther, 2003, July).

Authorities revealed "the carjacking was the first step in a bloodbath the teens believed would end in a shootout with police. The suspects indicated they would first target and shoot some of their classmates. Once the classmates were killed, the teens

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planned to shoot their guns at random. Luckily, the tragedy was averted" (Laughlin, Guenther, 2003, July).

The common thread between the Columbine massacre and the Collingswood incident was described by Friedland (1999) shortly after the Columbine tragedy. "The perpetrators felt rejected and ridiculed by their peers who were a part of a small clique. They resorted to an extreme response to gain revenge or make an empathetic public statement. A warmer, supportive school environment might have identified such outcasts to defuse the hostility and alienation that leads students to violent acts" (Friedland, 1999).

It is believed that schools have to be a place where all students can find their niche and establish a meaningful relationship with peers and the school itself. In addition it would follow that schools need to be a safe place for students to seek refuge from their home environment. Services need to be available to help students cope with their situations. Schools can significantly help students experience success by focusing on their strengths, minimizing anxiety and feelings of helplessness. Feelings of helplessness, if not addressed, can produce children that are avoidance driven. Often children profess that it is easier to remain uninvolved because they can not see a purpose or reward for involving themselves in school activities. They are not concerned that fulfillment can come from a variety of school activities.

Overall student success from all students correlates with societal expectations. Monitoring of this success is important. Testing is not the only way to measure progress. Schools need to be more responsive in order to be responsible to meet individual student's needs whenever possible. In this manner, it may be possible to identify and

assist individual students to be successful. "Schools can improve each student's potential for success by creating programs designed to emphasize unique characteristics. This approach fosters a students place in school if they find their strengths and encouraged to develop them through positive recognition" (Gauld, 1996). "Coaches know that recognition of athletes on the playing field breeds success and intrinsic motivation. Trophies, certificates and team jackets are just a few ways of acknowledgement through extrinsic rewards" (Beckerman, 1996, pg. 31).

In Spring 1985, an idea was born that would transform the way educational institutions could promote academic and personal success of students. An enthusiastic and charismatic Larry Biddle was an assistant principal for Conway High School in South Carolina. He was concerned with the declining state of student success and academic achievement within his school in addition to other South Carolina schools. Mr. Biddle wanted to create some positive changes for the students and teachers in his high school.

The drive to devise a program of positive change became overwhelmingly clear while he attended a school pep rally in the Fall, 1985. The pep rally was attended by the Conway High School student body. During the beginning of the event the freshman class entered the gym for the first time. Apprehensive and cautious at an event of this magnitude they had never experienced before, the freshmen were intimidated by the upper classmen's taunting with booing and hissing noise. The action by the upper classmen was the deciding moment for Mr. Biddle. He vowed that this type of behavior was unacceptable and would not be tolerated.

Mr. Biddle searched for a way to alleviate or at least minimize this type of intimidation. Mr. Biddle used his resources and savvy to initiate a program that would recognize students for their achievements, no matter how small. He aligned his program to follow the athletic department's program for recognizing athletes by presenting trophies and awards. Subsequently the "Renaissance Program" was created in order to provide positive recognition and reinforcement for students. The program also attempted to reinforce support for the educational staff. The program rewarded students for academic achievement, attendance, positive discipline and school/community service. In addition, the program encouraged respect and appreciation for the faculty.

The program was comprised of:

1. Commitment - teachers have the right to teach and students have the right to learn.

2. Power concepts (4 P's) – performance, promotion, partnership and passion; all serving as the foundation for developing the system.

3. The five "R's" – what we *respect* gets *recognized* and *rewarded*, and that *reinforcing* the *rewards* creates positive *results*.

(L. Biddle, personal communication, Sept.6, 2003).

Other researchers comment that "Renaissance is a journey not a destination. This program is not something that happens overnight; it is something where a final destination point is never going to be reached. It is constant and it is ongoing" (Dempsey, Lund, Mattire, 1990, p.2).

The following years proved challenging for Mr. Biddle but he continued to improve and revise the recognition program named Renaissance. Despite some opposition, he was

able to gather support by enlisting individuals and businesses who recognized the

importance of his program. In a three year period, Mr. Biddle noticed, a marked increase

in his school's attendance, a decrease in the amount of disciplinary actions and fewer

student dropouts. These findings suggested that the Renaissance Program is a success.

The school board and community shared this belief. This acknowledgement of the

Renaissance Program encouraged Mr. Biddle to consult other school districts. Then Mr.

Biddle decided to share his program on a national basis in order to assist schools that

were struggling with similar issues.

In 1988, Mr. Biddle began his national crusade by enlisting a nationally known

sponsor named Jostens, a yearbook and ring company. Jostens provided the services that

enabled Mr. Biddle to create various school recognition programs. He then included

numerous school districts in South Carolina and formed the first coalition of

"Renaissance" schools. Mr. Biddle was able to influence over 100 school districts in

neighboring states. He then continued to spread his concepts on a national basis.

In 2003, the Renaissance Program is established in 15 states and over 6,000

schools. The programs might appear dissimilar in each of the schools but the basic

principals are preserved. The Renaissance Program is also expanding to other non-

educational areas. The program is being adapted to fit situations where individual

motivation is achieved by promoting recognition and reward (L. Biddle, personal

communication, October 6, 2003).

<center>Focus of the Study</center>

The present study endeavored to evaluate the Renaissance Program that is

implemented in the Highland Regional High School. The study focuses on the program

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effectiveness and validity, utilizing two types of data collection in order to evaluate the program. Data collection was gathered by a statistical survey completed by administration and an interview survey given to program coordinators within the school. The coordinators were interviewed to provide specific information not obtainable from the statistical surveys or other sources.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness and validity of the Renaissance Program and how Highland High School Program Coordinators perceive the program. The study provides information from surveys and subsequent statistical data pertaining to the student population. The coordinators perception is compared to factual data and its actual statistical success. Surveys identify areas as well as concerns or suggestions for needed improvement. It is hoped that the resulting information provides a more objective picture of the Renaissance Program. In this manner program administrators can make objective judgments pertaining to the programs effectiveness.

Definition of Terms

Alienation – The act of isolating physically or emotionally, turn away, to be unfriendly.

Attendance rate – Average percent of students who are present in school on a daily basis. Percents are calculated by dividing the average daily student attendance by the average daily student enrollment.

Carjacking – The act of utilizing force to obtain a vehicle from the vehicle driver.

Class size – Average number of students assigned to an English class in the school.

Dropout rate – Percent of students who dropped out during the school year. The percentage of students are calculated by dividing the number of students in grades nine to

twelve who dropped out of school during the period of July to June of each year (New Jersey School Report Card 2002, p. 4).

Endeavored – A conscientious effort toward an end. To work with a set goal or purpose.

Enrollment – Counts students "on roll" in October of each school year.

Extrinsic rewards – Rewards that come from an outside source, such as a friend. One type is praise. Other rewards include body language (smiles, thumbs-up) or using the sense of touch (hand shake, hug, and a pat on the back). Tangible items like candy, prizes and money have also been used as rewards according to other researchers (Chance,1992).

High school proficiency assessment – NJ State test used to assess student knowledge in the core curriculum content standards and to assure sufficient skill to obtain a job.

Intrinsic motivation – Behaviors for which there is no apparent reward except for the behavior itself (Deci, 1971, p. 105).

Language diversity – Majority of language spoken at home.

Mobility rate – Percent of students who entered or left the school during the school year.

Suspension rate – Percent of students who were suspended from school during the year.

Renaissance Program – A recognition program for school age students that recognizes students as individuals and promotes success through commitment and recognition for accomplishments. The program identifies educational staff as a valued and intrinsic part of the program. The Renaissance Program attempts to develop partnerships between the school and community and encouraging unity between school and community (Dempsey, Lund & Mattire, 1990).

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted during the 2003/2004 school year. It attempted to measure data until mid year ending in January 2004 at Highland Regional High School. The parameters of the study would include ninth to twelfth grade high school teachers, in addition to the enrolled students of the high school. Some apparent limitations of this study include: a) action research that can only be used with a random sampling of students' due to the large school population; b) available statistical information relevant only to this school; c) time constraints; a repeat survey will not be available during the year to accommodate changing opinions/views; d) subjectivity of the survey instrument; e) findings that can only be applied for this specific high school population.

Setting of the Study

The site of the study is the Black Horse Pike Regional High School District located in Gloucester Township in South New Jersey. The high school district is comprised of three municipalities: Bellmawr, Runnemede and Gloucester Township. These three municipalities form the north east corner of Camden County.

Bellmawr covers approximately 3.02 square miles of land area. In 2000, the population totaled 11,109, a decrease of 1,494 or 13.4% decrease in a decade. Senior citizens over 65 totaled 9.6% decreasing by .3% over a decade, while 23.1% are under the age of 18. Despite the declining population numbers, Bellmawr ranks the tenth most populous municipality in Camden County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

In 2000, the ethnicity of Bellmawr was 92.8% Caucasian. The largest minority group was Hispanic totaling 3.5%, Asians totaled 3.1%, and African Americans totaled 1.2%. There were 4,446 households comprised of 52.3% owned by married couples

and 3,136 live in single family homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Runnemede covers 2.0 square miles and is the smallest of the three school district towns. In 2000, the population totaled 8,533, a decrease of 397 or .95% negative change in a decade. Senior citizens over 65 totaled 8.1% an increase of 2.1%, while 25.5% were under 18. Similar to Bellmawr, the population under 65 years old has decreased but the retired populous in Runnemede had increased (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

In 2000, the ethnic majority of Runnemede was 91.8% Caucasian. The largest minority group was African-American totaling 3.8%, Hispanic 3.6% and Asian 1.5%. The number of households was 3,376 with 47.6% owned by married couples while 2,274 live in single family homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Gloucester Township in 2000 encompassed 23.14 square miles and encompassed the towns of Blackwood, Erial, Hilltop, Blenheim and Chews Landing which are situated within the Philadelphia Metropolitan area. The township is only 8 miles east of Philadelphia and 50 miles west of Atlantic City. The main thorough-fares serving the community are the North/South Freeway Rt. 42, the Black Horse Pike and numerous County and Municipal roads (Gloucester Twp. Municipal Offices).

Gloucester Township was one of the original townships of Old Gloucester County. The boundaries of the county extended from the Delaware River to the Atlantic Ocean until 1683 when it was divided into two townships; Egg Harbor Township and Gloucester Township. Gloucester Township took its name from the Cathedral Town of Gloucester on the banks of the Severn in England. In June 1685, the township was further subdivided into four smaller townships becoming the first New Jersey municipality to incorporate

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and became part of the newly formed County of Camden (Historic & Scenic Preservation Committee Township of Gloucester).

Gloucester Township in 2000 had a population of 64,350, an increase of 9,350 or 11.7%change in a decade. Senior citizens over 65 totaled 5.3% dropping by 1.4% over a decade, while 29.4% are under 18. The town continues to grow using all available land. The ethnic majority of Gloucester Township is 83.1% Caucasian. The largest minority group is African-American who totaled 11.5%, Hispanic totaled 3.0% and Asians totaled 2.6%. The number of households was 23,150 with 55.9% owned by married couples while 16,878 live in single family homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The Township has a Mayor/Council form of government with a full-time Mayor and a seven member council. Gloucester Township provides a full range of municipal services, including police and fire protection to its residents. It is now the third largest municipality in Camden County, NJ. The township offers a variety of new housing choices and styles for all income groups from $250,000 single-family homes down to garden type condominiums and apartment complexes. The average 2 parent blue-collar family income is $45,000. This majority of the community population defeated 9 out of the last 10 budgets, suggesting a disfavor of local tax increases. On the other hand, the community supports the township in most decisions and is significantly active in township sponsored events and fund raisers (Gloucester Twp. Municipal Offices, 2000).

The Gloucester Township School system is comprised of several elementary schools (k-6 grade), three middle schools (6th - 8th grade). They send their 9th–12th grade students to the Black Horse Pike Regional High School District. Gloucester Township encompasses the three high schools which are spread logistically in the township.

The high school buildings, 2 built in the 1960's, are in good shape. The district recently built a new $22 million high school to accommodate the growing township population and relieve the overcrowding of the other schools. Each high school now draws students from different socioeconomic pockets within the community and spends approximately $10,640 per student/year. District teachers have an average of 15 years teaching experience and 24% have advanced masters degree. Advanced degrees are used to implement and teach advanced student courses that the district schools offer. The offered student courses are advanced placement, honors, college-prep and basic level (Black Horse Pike Regional High School District).

The Highland Regional High School sits on a 10-acre parcel of land located at the junction of Erial Road and Blackwood-Clementon Road in Blackwood, New Jersey. The school was built in 1965 and continually expanded to accommodate the growing community population. The high school at present consists of 3 interconnected buildings that house administrative and guidance offices, 60 classrooms, a library, two gyms, two machine shops, an auditorium, cafeteria and a 6 acre playing field (Black Horse Pike Regional High School District).

The 2001/2002 school year statistics of Highland High School consists of approximately 1,229 students in grades 9-12. The language diversity of English is 93%. The student population has an average class size of 23 pupils and a student/teacher ratio of 12.4:1. The average attendance rate is 93.3%. Student suspension rate is 13.9%.

Mobility rate is 12% and dropout rate is 3.5 % with 32 teaching staff out of 93 who hold a master degree in education. All staff is supervised by 4 principals. The initial offering of High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) was passed by 95% of the

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students, 97.8% of 12th graders graduate, 6% of all students fail a subject and .024 % repeat a full grade level. A majority of 12th graders, approximately 52% went on to attend a two year college, while 33% went to four year institutions. Another 6% went into the working world (New Jersey School Report Card, 2002).

Organization of the Study

The data for this research project was obtained from Renaissance coordinators and statistical information. The statistical survey was completed by administration and interview surveys were obtained from key members of the program. Chapter two contains the review of literature and related information for a review of past studies. Chapter three outlines the design of the study including a description of the development and design of the research instruments, sampling technique, data collection description, and a description of the data analysis plan. Chapter four presents the research findings. Chapter five offers conclusions, implications, and the need for further investigation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Many high schools across the United States appear to be experiencing declining academic achievement and decreasing attendance. The Renaissance Program, currently implemented in 6,000 schools over its 15-year existence, incorporates many incentives to address these problems. The Program fosters a school community by inclusion of educators, students, families and local businesses. The sense of community is thought to provide numerous supports that most students desire and tend to need. When children see the support given to them, excitement is stimulated regarding learning and teamwork between home, school and community. Subsequently the students become excited and want to perform better (Nichols, Miller, 1994).

The effectiveness of the Renaissance Program over a long period of time has not been adequately researched. Minimal information exists in relation to the Renaissance program. The majority of information that is available describes how particular educational institutions are applying the program, but does not describe the programs long term outcome correlating to student success or achievement.

The focus of the literature review relates to factors that are related to student performance negated by the Renaissance Program. Such factors will aid the reader in understanding the objectives of the Renaissance Program. The factors affecting a student's performance include: attendance, dropping out, discipline, and motivation.

Review of the Problem

During the late 1980's, the United States Education Commission was concerned with United States students' falling behind Euro-Asian countries in education. The commission reported that the United States educational reform to raise academic standards enabling students to compete in the global economy was not successful. The failure to raise academic standards on the state level prompted the creation of the National Goals Panel. The National Goals Panel instituted eight educational objectives by 1994. Such goals were established for all schools to accomplish by the year 2000.

Sizer states, "There must be national educational goals. Each state must evolve its own goals congruent with the national objectives. For each of these goals there must be standards and a broad definition of the academic substance implied by those standards" (Sizer, 1995, p.77).

The National Goals are:

- All children in America will start school ready to learn.

- The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

- American students will progress through grades with demonstrated competency.

- United States students will be literate, possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

- Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

- The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills, the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

- Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children.

Numerous schools in the United States have changed in architecture over the years. However, the delivery of instruction in order to meet the reform goals has not been as expedient. Many educators believe the goals are unrealistic and unattainable (Holton, 1995).

"Even though the United States will not meet its ambitious educational goals by the year 2000 target date, the federal panel assigned to track progress toward them isn't giving up. The panel, if renewed by congress, will continue to measure progress and recommend ways states and school districts can achieve the goals. In its ninth annual report, the goals panel says performance has improved on 12 of the 28 indicators it tracks to measure success in achievement of the goals"(Hoff, 1999, p.9)

The reform goals force educators to teach the same curriculum amount in a shorter time period making it more difficult each year. The reform applies pressure to educators and students. Educators must cover increasing amounts of material. Students must successfully absorb this material, test proficient and on grade level to quantify achievement. This increasing pressure can easily affect a student and the major concepts associated with performance (Holton, 1995).

Review of the Major Concepts

Attendance and Dropouts

The high school dropout rate in numerous school districts across the country remains high, compelling administrators to promote measures targeting at risk students. "Many administrators contend hat attendance problems in the early grades are an indication that a student may drop out. In addition, many administrators believe there should be early interventions and programs established to reach those students" (Hoopes, 2001). Prevention measures have shown little impact on the ever increasing problem (Ramsey 1994). Approximately 11% of general high school students drop out of school within the first two years (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). However, special education students have a much higher dropout rate than their cohorts in regular education classes. The term dropout may not be adequate to convey the negative consequences of the premature abandonment of school. Educational suicide may be a more appropriate label (Clifford, 1990, p. 22).

This writer has found studies relating to the possible causes that might be related to dropping out. However, among the many facts and statistics one conclusive or convincing factor does not seem to have been identified. In the writer's experiences of addressing students, it is difficult to accurately predict which students are at risk to drop out of school. Students who face hardships both socially and economically seem to be dependant on the school for support and guidance. One reason for this dependence is the many changes in their environment associated with the transition from elementary to middle to high school. The goals for each of these particular educational settings are

totally different from each other. Some students get lost in the shuffle and are only recognized when negative behavior overshadows academics.

Most recent research has been focused on defining the characteristics concerning high school dropouts as well as identifying at risk students. Most of the outcomes of the research investigated have been validated as probable reasons for such measures as dropping out of school. However, earlier research concerns itself with causes that are outside of the school and subsequently out of the schools' control. Gage (1990) states: "Nearly every study shows that dropping out is correlated with lower socioeconomic class and minority status. Dropping out of school compounds the difficulties that these individuals deal with on a daily basis. African-American and Hispanics already have a higher dropout ratio than whites. Given these circumstances, those individuals that do not graduate from high school are more likely to earn less and have more difficulty finding and keeping a job. Most will face living a life of poverty" (p.54).

Further research in the area of student dropouts will hopefully impact students and society. A student who drops out does not have the necessary skills to be a competitor in the job market. Higher standards for jobs are increasing, causing individuals to attain higher education to increase their job marketability. This lack of marketability subjects the dropout to higher rates of unemployment, lower earnings and possible health problems. It would seem society must supply the resources needed to support the organizations that supply relief for those individuals (i.e. medicade, unemployment, welfare, etc.) (Gage, 1990).

Students that drop out of school have an impact on the community's perception of the effectiveness of their school as an educational institution. It would be prudent for educational institutions to focus on this area (Gage, 1990).

The National Goals Reform has assisted the continuing proliferation and implementation of the Renaissance Program. The program specifically promotes the recognition and accomplishments of individuals to create an educational atmosphere conducive to learning and an environment students' want to attend. The aim of a positive atmosphere is to increase daily attendance and graduation rates.

Discipline

It is generally believed that a good classroom management skill of teachers maximizes student achievement. When teachers are frequently confronted with students who are disruptive, classroom learning time suffers. Teachers find that they have to enlist supervisors and administrators to provide systematic methods or procedures to address disruptive students.

Hoopes (2001) contends one factor that can influence student performance is school discipline. "The history of school discipline has evolved over the past several decades from corporal punishment into what we know today as an infraction/consequence based system. Here any student who commits a violation in the school's discipline code will receive an infraction, and the school's assistant principals will administer the appropriate discipline" (Hoopes, 2001). However, Ramsey claims, "While many experts would agree that this approach may work for a short time, few believe it works in the long run" (Ramsey, 1994, p. 24).

Students often bring difficulties from their home environment to the school building. While schools struggle to assist the students with the problems on a daily basis, only a strong proactive discipline policy most exactly can minimize the impact on the climate in the building. Unless a school has a strong discipline policy that teachers and administrators enforce consistently, students will continue to have the "upper hand" when it comes to control in the building (Rosen, 1997). As Swymer (1986) states, "A positive school climate will better enable our educators to spend more quality time on instruction and new programs in staff development, curriculum development, etc, will stand a better chance to succeed" (p. 91).

When administrators in some schools try to deal with discipline reactively, they spend excessive amounts of time addressing students who present problems. Administrators frequently need to address the same students repeatedly in various situations. "Schools have a responsibility to help students realize that they are in control of their own behavior and transform persistent misbehaving students into achieving students they deserve to be" (Krajewski, Martinek, & Polks, 1989). Elias (1998) points out that "the possible solution to the problem seems to be a positive, pro-active, problem solving approach to school discipline where students learn there are consequences for their actions; but they also come away from every experience having learned something about themselves" (p. 4).

In order for educational institutions to have an environment conducive to learning, they must have a plan. As Beckerman (1996) maintains:

"Schools must refocus their energies and create an environment where all students are recognized for their accomplishments. Under the current system, educators

spend far too much time disciplining students for inappropriate behavior while those students that come to school every day and do the right things go unnoticed"(p. 34).

The plan needs to meet the needs of the school community. The Renaissance Program can play a large part in providing the needs of the school. Incentives provided by the program are typically associated with the reduction of the amount of discipline required by school staff.

Motivation

Motivation is a concern in any program. Many different opinions exist on motivating factors that help students. The theoretical decision usually faced by schools is deciding if reward based programs should be extrinsically or intrinsically based. The belief in either premise is motivational in influencing opinion one has in terms of predicted efficacy of the Renaissance Program.

The available research suggests that the theory of motivation lies within three constructs: Self-efficacy, Goal orientation and Self–esteem (Nichols, Utesch, 1994).

"Self-efficacy pertains to an individual's personal evaluation of confidence in his or her performance capability on a specific task. An individual's efficacy beliefs influence motivation in several ways. Individuals with low self-efficacy will tend to avoid activities they believe are beyond their capabilities, so they selectively choose easier tasks where the chances for success are greater. The amount of effort that an individual invests in an activity and the level of persistence at difficult tasks are also linked to efficacy. The greater our self-efficacy, the greater our effort and persistence should be, leading to improved achievement" (Bandura, 1986). "A student's self-perception of ability

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(self-esteem) is positively related to achievement and student motivation. Gains in student self-efficacy and persistence should be outcomes of a successful program" (Nichols, Miller, 1994).

Goal orientation described by Dweck and Leggett (1988) is distinguished between two motivational patterns:

1. Mastery response: challenging tasks are sought and effort is increased in the face of difficulty.

2. Helpless response: challenge is avoided and performance decreases following the onset of task difficulty.

A diverse underlying goal orientation with each of these motivational patterns exists. A "Helpless motivational pattern is associated with a *performance goal orientation*. Individuals with performance goals are concerned with positive evaluations of their abilities in comparison with others, from a teacher, peer group, or self-evaluation. Such individuals are usually described as avoiding challenging tasks and exhibiting low persistence when challenged. Mastery motivational patterns tend to have *learning goal orientations*. Such individuals are described as focused on increasing their competency on a specific task. The primary goal is to obtain knowledge and improve skills. Individuals with learning goals seek reasonable challenges and tend to persist in their efforts when faced with adversity, while those with performance goals avoid challenging tasks. They also tend to display low persistence when difficulties arise" (Dweck, 1988).

Woolfolk (1995) defined self-esteem as "our evaluation of our own self-concept or the value we place on our own abilities and behaviors. The developing self-esteem of an individual is influenced by parents, family members in early childhood, and friends,

teachers and school mates as the child grows" (pg. 74). As children mature, their views of themselves become more differentiated; therefore, multiple concepts of the self are developed. These broad arenas are affected by the relationship of the developing child to his or her family, school and peers. "Students with greater self-esteem are more likely to be successful academically in school" (Marsh, 1990). "Higher self-esteem is related to more favorable attitudes toward school, classroom behavior and greater peer popularity" (Cauley, Tyler, 1989).

A significant amount of the population think teachers should be blamed for the problems that currently exist in our schools. Other individuals think that students should carry the blame. On the other hand, some surmise that all those involved lack the motivation to improve the situation (Nichols, Utesch, 1998). If we intend to address the situation, three factors need to be understood. In this way, all involved may have a realistic possibility to add to overall improvement in the school.

Summary

Without understanding the underlying concepts and how they relate to students performance, reform can not be achieved in individual students. The research suggests that the structuring of a high school included with an intrinsic and extrinsic reward recognition program provides a positive school atmosphere. However, the positives of the Renaissance Program to help schools meet the National Goals should be considered by school administrators without delay.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the Renaissance Program and to evaluate data regarding attendance figures, dropout rates, discipline incidents, and student motivation. The study was conducted at a high school that is part of the South Jersey Delaware Valley Renaissance Consortium. A quantitative analysis of the data was computed to evaluate the level of change after the implementation of the program. A qualitative data analysis was also incorporated for a different perspective from an administrator and renaissance coordinators that statistical data may not disclose.

General Description of the Research Design

Statistical data was collected from Renaissance information recorded since the program inception at the high school. The data was charted and graphed for easier evaluation of the major areas of concern: attendance, dropouts, discipline and motivation. A quantitative analysis was computed to evaluate the level of change after the program implementation.

The qualitative data was compiled by an interview process of Renaissance coordinators and incorporated into the analysis. The data from the coordinators is used to support the statistical information and provide an objective analysis of the data.

Development and Design of the Research

The research questions that follow provided the basis for this study:

What is the effect of the Renaissance Program on high school students?

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Are student attendance rates considerably changed?

2. Are student dropout rates considerably changed?

3. Are repeat grade level student rates considerably changed?

4. Are student disciplinary incidences considerably changed?

5. Are student failure rates in at least one subject considerably changed?

6. Are enrollment rates in national honor society significantly changed?

Description of the Sampling and Sampling Techniques

In order to establish and clarify the appropriateness of the interview instrument, a sample questionnaire was presented to Renaissance committee members who would not be a part of the interviewed group. The members judged the suitability of each item. The process allowed instrument revision to assure the questions were understandable and included issues related to the studies purpose.

Description of the Data Collection Approach

Survey data was collected from administration who kept yearly statistical information from the programs implementation to the present. The collected data from the areas of concern was assembled on a spread sheet.

An additional tool in the data collection included interviews with key Renaissance coordinators. The Renaissance coordinators provided data from personal observations and experiences working in the program.

Interviews were conducted with individuals that were directly involved with the implementation of the Renaissance Program at the school. An open-ended questionnaire was used in interviews to gather as much information as possible from each participant. Individuals were interviewed separately and motivated by the interviewer to share their knowledge.

Description of the Data Analysis Plan

Once all of the quantitative information was collected, it was entered into the SPSS Statistics Program for evaluation. The analysis consisted of central tendency, standard deviation and T-test of repeated measure. The analysis compared the statistical data from the year of implementation and each following year of its ten year existence.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the Renaissance Program and evaluate its

effects on student attendance rate, dropout figures, discipline incidents and student

motivation. The content of this chapter tries to analyze the data gathered from a survey

pertaining to student performance. The survey instrument was given to administration

that provided the necessary statistical research data.

In conjunction with the statistical data to provide additional information, interviews

were conducted. Interview participants consisted of a principal and two program

coordinators providing information from six questions that coincided with the research.

The interviewed principal initiated the South Jersey Delaware Valley Renaissance

Consortium over ten years ago. The interviewed Renaissance coordinators have been

involved in the program since its introduction into the high school. Information from

these two sources provided additional information to produce a better understanding of

the results.

Data Results from Research Questions

Research Question #1: Are student attendance rates considerably changed?

The analysis used the data gathered from the descriptive statistic "attendance".

The performance of this descriptor was evaluated on the last six years of the Renaissance

Program ten year history. The first four years did not have complete information; those

years were excluded from the analysis. The T-test identified a mean of -1148.8, a

standard deviation of 1009.318, and a standard error of 451.38 (Table 1). It was

determined through analysis that the findings were not significant at the .05 level.

Table 1
Student Attendance Rates – T Test for Repeated Measures

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Total Sample	-1148.800	1009.318	451.380	-1.965	4	.640

Research Question # 2: Are student dropout rates considerably changed?

The analysis used the data gathered from the descriptive statistic "dropout".

The performance of this descriptor was evaluated on the last six years of the Renaissance

Program ten year history. The first four years did not have complete information; those

years were excluded from the analysis. The T-test identified a mean of -2.740, a standard

deviation of 2.807, and a standard error of 1.255 (Table 2). It was determined through

analysis that the findings were not significant at the .05 level.

Table 2
Student Drop Out Rates – T Test for Repeated Measures

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Total Sample	-2.7400	2.8076	1.255	-2.18	4	.095

Research Question # 3: Are repeat grade level student rates considerably changed?

The analysis used the data gathered from the descriptive statistic "repeat grade

level". The performance of this descriptor was evaluated on the ten years of the

Renaissance Program history. The T-test identified a mean of 3.400, a standard deviation

of 2.4832, and a standard error of .034 (Table 3). It was determined through analysis that

the findings were significant at the .05 level.

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Table 3
Student Repeat Grade Level – T Test for Repeated Measures

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Total Sample	3.400	2.4832	1.077	3.157	4	.034

Research Question # 4: Are student disciplinary incidences considerably changed?

The analysis used the data gathered from the descriptive statistic "disciplinary incidences". The performance of this descriptor was evaluated on the ten years of the Renaissance Program history. The T-test identified a mean of 1.800, a standard deviation of 11.388, and a standard error of 5.093 (Table 4). It was determined through analysis that the findings were not significant at the .05 level.

Table 4
Student Disciplinary Incidences – T Test for Repeated Measures

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)
Total Sample	1.800	11.3886	5.093	.353	4	.742

Research Question # 5: Are failure rates in at least one subject considerably changed?

The analysis used the data gathered from the descriptive statistic "failure in one subject". The performance of this descriptor was evaluated on the ten years of the Renaissance Program history. The T-test identified a mean of 7.000, a standard deviation of 4.743, and a standard error of 2.121 (Table 5). It was determined through analysis that the findings were significant at the .05 level.

Table 5
Student Failures in One Subject – T Test for Repeated Measures

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Total Sample	7.000	4.7434	2.121	3.30	4	.030

Research Question # 6: Are enrollment rates in NHS significantly changed?

The analysis used the data gathered from the descriptive statistic "Enrollment rate NHS".

The performance of this descriptor was evaluated on the ten years of the Renaissance

Program history. The T-test identified a mean of -12.00, a standard deviation of 38.190,

and a standard error of .521 (Table 6). It was determined through analysis that the

findings were not significant at the .05 level.

Table 6
Enrollment Rates in the National Honor Society – T Test for Repeated Measures

	Mean Std.	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Total Sample	-12.000	38.1903	17.079	-.703	4	.521

Data from Interview Related Questions

Interview Question #1: Are student attendance rates considerably changed?

All participants agreed that the Renaissance Program has helped students in their

school improve attendance and lateness to school.

Interview Question # 2: Are student dropout rates considerably changed?

All participants agreed that it has not affected the dropout rate. The schools dropout

rate is one of the highest in the region but numerous factors influence that rate. It is

suggested that those students that dropout may not have significant interest in the

incentives, it is unclear what will inspire them.

Interview Question # 3: Are repeat grade level student rates considerably changed?

Two participants agreed and one disagreed that the program does not affect those

students that repeat a grade. It is possible that the majority of repeat students do not have

self-confidence or the understanding of what they need to do to be successful in school.

Interview Question # 4: Are student disciplinary incidences considerably changed?

One respondent strongly agreed and two agreed that the program positively affects student discipline. It is suggested that student motivation to obtain Renaissance cards helps promote good behavior.

Interview Question # 5: Are failures in at least one subject considerably changed??

All respondents strongly agree that failure rates are decreased as students strive to maintain Renaissance status. It is suggested that student incentives through the Renaissance program increase a student's motivational factor.

Interview Question # 6: Are national honor society enrollment rates considerably changed?

All agree that the Renaissance Program has helped increase membership in the NHS since the programs inception. It is suggested that NHS students are inherently motivated but the Renaissance Program helps prospective members strive harder to reach their goals.

Summary

All the variables were statistically evaluated individually. These variables for the total sample did not show statistical significance at a .05 level. Two variables from the cluster: repeat grade and subject failures, when evaluated separately showed significance.

The quantitative data used in this sample did not produce any significant results. However, the qualitative data from the interviews suggested the Renaissance coordinators favored the program. These program stakeholders, relying on their years of involvement, believe the program makes a difference.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The Renaissance Program was developed and implemented in 1985 by Larry Biddle, Principal in a South Carolina High School. He developed the Renaissance Program in an effort to increase student achievement. Mr. Biddle's plan involved the increase of student attendance and achievement while decreasing disciplinary incidences and dropouts in his school.

The Renaissance Program is primarily for school age students. It recognizes students as individuals, promoting success through commitment and recognition for accomplishments. The program also identifies educational staff as valued and intrinsic participants of the program. The Renaissance Program attempts to develop business partnerships with the community. The program constantly changes with a diversity of implementation I order to meet the individual needs of the school population and community.

The Renaissance Program has grown nationally since its inception in 1988. The program has extended across the country promoting its success as a positive recognition program. The program's growth continues to produce innovative ways of promoting student recognition, respect, and improved academic performance.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Renaissance Program effectiveness. The study collected information from surveys and statistical data pertaining to specific key areas of concern of the student population. The coordinator's perception was compared to statistical data.

Data was gathered through the following research questions in this study:

1. Are student attendance rates considerably changed over the last ten years?

2. Are student dropout rates considerably changed over the last ten years?

3. Are repeat grade level rates considerably changed over the last ten years?

4. Are disciplinary incidences considerably changed over the last ten years?

5. Are student grade point averages considerably changed over the last ten years?

6. Are enrollment rates in national honor society significantly changed over the last ten years?

The conclusion of this study will combine all collected data to provide an objective overview of the information.

Implications of Study on Student Performance

The results of this study suggest that the Renaissance Program may have some positive effect on student performance according to the indicated variables. There were slight statistical differences between most of the variables. The overall results were supportive.

A significant difference did occur in two of the six variables at the .05 level. The two significant variables that produced the greatest change are "Repeat Grade Level" and "Failure in at Least One Subject". The significance of these two factors is substantiated by the testimonies submitted through the coordinator interviews, providing validity to the statistical significance of each variable.

Implications of Study on Leadership Skills

The result of this study on the Renaissance Program may aid in providing school administrators with objective information regarding aspects of some program decisions.

The study provides data on areas that affect student achievement and academic areas. However, a level of statistical significance did not suggest a cause and effect situation. Improvement is however, judged to be salient by program coordinators.

Implications of Study on Organizational Change

The results of this study indicate that in this instance, minimal positive student change was found statistically significant. The results are not conclusive in regards to the effect the organizational structure has on the programs success.

Impact of the Study

The results of the study impacted the involved groups in varying ways. The study provided administrators and program coordinators with information to make informed decisions about the programs success on student achievement. The collected data was used to suggest change for the purpose of program improvement.

The study provides data in areas of student performance through a statistical format for the students, parents and the community to observe. The difference in areas of student performance validated the programs effectiveness and promoted the continued support for the program.

Conclusion

This study suggests that the Renaissance Program may not provide adequate levels of incentive needed to improve student achievement. Any incentives provided can not motivate every student to achieve; some students are just not reachable. The results suggest that the Renaissance Program might not be adequate for all schools. Proper implementation and program support does not guarantee a positive impact on student performance. Correspondingly, when evaluating a program for implementation, it is

mindful not to believe everything one hears about the success of any program, unless experiencing it first hand.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations for future study are suggested:

1. A study that evaluates the factors used in the present investigation should include a period of time prior to the implementation of the program.

2. It is recommended that future study include all the district schools for comparison between the separate communities that comprise the total school district student population.

3. A study may be conducted on the effect of the Renaissance Program regarding student's gender and race as possible modifying factors.

4. It is recommended that a future studies evaluate the Renaissance Program in other coalitions across the country, in order to account for possible geographical differences.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Renaissance Program Survey Consent Form

Name of Participant: _____

<div align="center">print name</div>

The following are participant obligations:

1. Participation in this survey is voluntary and all or any part does not have to be answered.

2. This survey is being conducted to collect data for research for a Rowan University thesis project on the Renaissance Program.

3. The purpose of this is to collect data for the purpose of how the school population perceives the Renaissance Program.

4. All responses will be kept confidential.

5. The Research Investigator is Christopher Nowak.

Signature: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions on the Effects of the Renaissance Program on Attendance, Dropouts, Disciplinary Incidences, and Motivation connected with Grade Retention, Subject Failure, and NHS Enrollment.

Interview Questions

1. Do you think the Renaissance Program helps improve academic performance?

2. Do you believe the Renaissance Program helps students improve attendance?

3. Does the Renaissance Program motivate students?

4. Do you believe the Renaissance Program affects student failure rates?

5. Does the Renaissance Program decrease school disciplinary incidences?

6. Do you believe the Renaissance Program affects the enrollment in the NHS?

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Survey Instrument
1993 – 2003

School Name: _____

School Year	Students Enrolled	Avg. Daily Attendance	% of Drop Outs	Students Disciplined Mjr. Incidents	% Students Repeat Grade	% NHS Student Members	% Students One Failure during Year
1993-1994							
1994-1995							
1995-1996							
1996-1997							
1997-1998							
1998-1999							
1999-2000							
2000-2001							
2001-2002							
2002-2003							