Community Service Plan

Joseph DePalma
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The purpose of this study is to see if a school-wide discipline program with positive rewards and consequences is a need for the Happy Dale Elementary School. The study will consist of a case study design that would include all staff members, certified and non-certified to take part. The group will meet as a study team to develop a Community Service Plan in which students who do not follow school rules will have to give back to the school community by participating in school community service.

Students’ in grades three through five will participate in the program. The student body involved will be familiarized with the point system. The system involves deducting points from a student who breaks a school rule. A student will have a certain amount of time to make up the lost points by participating in school community service.

The conclusion of the study shows that students are willing to be responsible for their behavior in order to participate in school functions. Parents and staff members agree that this positive approach to discipline is a very effective way to build a positive school community.
Mini-Abstract

Joseph DePalma  
Community Service Plan  
2002  
Dr. Gerald Lysik  
School Administration

This study will show the effects of a positive discipline program that will benefit students in a positive way and assist teachers with the needed support. Implementation of the Community Service Plan has built a more socially accepted and responsible student.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family, friends, and especially my life partner for all of their support and kind uplifting words.

JSD
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Discipline in schools today seems to be lacking in consistency and appropriate consequences. Schools need a plan that will allow its staff to be an integral part of the decision making process in situations that require disciplinary action. While reviewing current research we will devise a plan of action that will enable our school to fairly implement a discipline program that will encourage positive discipline policies by creating a “Community Service Plan” for violators of the school community rules.

Conceptual Framework

Statement of Research Problem

The intern will devise a positive discipline program throughout the Happy Dale Elementary School that will benefit students in a positive way and assist teachers with the needed support. Implementation of the Community Service Plan will build a more socially accepted and responsible student.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to see if a school-wide discipline program with positive rewards and consequences is a need for the Happy Dale Elementary School. The study will consist of a case study design that would include all staff members, certified and non-certified to take part. The group will meet as a study team to develop a Community Service Plan in which students who do not follow school rules will have to give back to the school community by participating in school community service.
The purpose of the study is to add to our growth as a leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. The intern faces the challenge of treating all individuals with fairness, dignity, and respect. The intern will obtain the knowledge of applied motivational theories and the principles of effective instruction.

Significance of the Problem

This study is important to the success of students who are having difficulty with discipline problems. This study will use new research on discipline problems and programs to make the school and students successful. The topic of discipline is of interest to all persons involved in students’ success.

Overview Questions

Grand Tour

What is the effectiveness of a positive school-wide discipline program?

Sub Questions

What ways will the program be evaluated?

How will we know if the program goals have been met?

How do we keep the program consistent?

How will federal and state laws effect this program with special education students?

How and who will be responsible for the record keeping?
Delimitations

This study will take place at the Happy Dale Elementary School in Woodbury, New Jersey. The subjects will be Pre-k to 5th grade students. The study will also involve the parents, staff, and administration of Happy Dale Elementary School. The intern will meet with the individuals at any time deemed necessary to discuss the program.

Limitations

The intern will need the cooperation of all staff of the Happy Dale Elementary School. Success of the program can only be measured by having accurate and timely data from all persons involved. All staff may not deviate from program once it is implemented.

Design and Methodology

Site and Population Selection

Happy Dale Elementary School is located in the Woodbury Public School District in Woodbury, New Jersey. It is one of three elementary schools located in the urban community. Happy Dale Elementary School provides an excellent education program to children from grades Kindergarten to fifth. Also in this school is a self-contained special education classroom, which meets the needs of five to seven-year-old classified students. Happy Dale is also proud of its current progressive programs that were implemented two years ago. The progressive programs are looping of the first and second grades and multiage education in the fourth and fifth grades. Looping programs enable the student to stay with the same teacher for two years in a row. Happy Dale is a very small school with approximately 120 students. The students come from the immediate area and are not bused. Students come from all socio-economic levels, but the majorities are from
non-educated single parent homes. At one time parent involvement was extensive, but during the past two years parent involvement has dwindled tremendously.

The administration consists of one principal who is also the Happy Dale school districts Kindergarten to five-curriculum coordinator. Non-Tenured teachers make up a small percent of the faculty. Most of the teachers in the school have three to five years of experiences with the district. Our building also houses the special services staff, which is, located downstairs from the classrooms. On staff at Happy Dale is an art teacher, gym teacher, music teacher, and librarian/technology teacher who are all shared with another elementary school in the district. Also in our school are a school secretary, a curriculum secretary, a custodian and a privatized cafeteria staff. Happy Dale is a family school with years of history. The building is over one hundred and twenty years and in some cases shows its age. During the past year the school has undergone some facelifts but still has a long way to go. The school district in the past years has had a lease purchase agreement in effect however the new budget was voted down by a margin of two to one. This is a big set back for the district and especially for Happy Dale Elementary.

The population sample being studied will be all students’ grades three to five.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection for this study will consist of records kept by teachers on a monthly basis. The intern will examine all data to make sure the program is moving at a good pace. The paper work will be completed by staff and compiled by the school secretary for analysis. Information supplied by the teachers will help the intern evaluate the ongoing performance and progress of the program.
The intern will interview teachers, parents and the student’s pre-and post-action. Pre-action questions will focus on the needs of the persons involved and the post-action will be to evaluate the ongoing performance and progress and what needs to be done to make all students successful in this program.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data collection from the examination of the data collection will be analyzed monthly. Students will be updated monthly on their progress. Students will receive point updates so they can determine what community project they will need to do to earn their points back. All students will start with one hundred points and points will be deducted for violation of the Happy Dale Schools discipline plan. Students will have the opportunity to get points back by participating in school community service. The intern will also use current research to base his findings on. The intern will also seek the expertise of other schools that have used a similar program to evaluate the program at Happy Dale.

Task List

September 2001

Teachers will receive a survey asking them to the best of their knowledge what the point values should be

The intern, staff, and parents will devise a discipline plan

Students will sign contracts

Paperwork templates will be designed and given to staff

A database will be created for recording points
An assembly will be scheduled to inform students and to hand out their point cards

October-March 2001  The intern will keep track of points
Patterns will be investigated
Data collection from staff will be ongoing

March 2001  Students who are in danger of falling below acceptable point levels will receive a conference with intern, Principal and parents
Analyze data; draw conclusions; write paper

June 2001  A celebration for the one hundred point winners will be given
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study is to see if a school-wide discipline program with positive rewards and consequences is a need for the Happy Dale Elementary School. The study will consist of a case study design that would include all staff members, certified and non-certified to take part. The group will meet as a study team to develop a Community Service Plan in which students who do not follow school rules will have to give back to the school community by participating in school community service.

What schools are doing now doesn’t always work for every student. This is true for a multitude of reasons that can be attributed to one or more of the many facets and venues that schools and staff deal with on an everyday basis. However, we need to find a way to make all students accountable for their actions, yet allow the school and its personnel to always be viewed as caring individuals by community, parents, and students. If we continue in the violation/punishment mode we cannot escape what have become our ongoing problems from the same group of students. Thus frustration and failure in more ways than one.

In order for positive discipline to be effective staff should establish a rapport with students, offer compliments, ask how they’re doing in their classes. Always be courteous and respectful, show that you have a sense of humor, just listen when they speak, hear them out. When a student breaks a rule, the staff member is to discuss what took place
and what the consequence will be. Focus on behavior, not feelings. Get a clear picture as
to what has happened. If the student does not answer, then tell him/her objectively what
you saw/heard. Is it against the guidelines of the school? Is this behavior helping or
hurting the student? Focus on the individual. Do not let him/her stray from the issues.
Remember, all misbehavior does not require the student to be referred to the office. To
build a bond of relationship that may eliminate future problems staff should try to end
with a compliment or encouraging word or phrase. Contact the parents to make them
aware of your conversation and also give a role to the schools counselor.

For over a quarter of a century, the number one concern facing America’s public
schools has been discipline (Fitsimmons, 1998). What educators are finding, however, is
that the root of the problem goes beyond rule breaking. Many of today’s students need
more than just sound and consistent discipline policies they also need positive behavioral
management. In classrooms where students can make choices about learning and have
tasks worth to explore, the need for punishments or rewards declines sharply (Brandt,
1995). The literature that has been explored has definitely supported the efforts of this
thesis. Many of the review articles explain that educators have been seeking new ways to
move beyond traditional punishment and provide for all students the opportunities to
learn self-discipline. Researchers have begun to study and advocate for broader,
proactive, positive school-wide discipline systems that include behavioral support
(Fitsimmons, 1998).

Researchers today have studied many reasons leading to misbehavior. Children
today face an extremely challenging social environment (Berreth & Berman, 1997).
They experience growing economic disparity, the increasing acceptance of violence and
abuse, a sense of disenchantment with government, and society's emphasis on self-interest and material goods. Too many young people feel hopeless, helpless, and powerless (Berreth & Berman, 1997). Berreth and Berman have studied the reasons for misbehavior by connecting it to our need for a more moral society and school community. As stated above children are confronted today with society's ills face to face with nowhere to turn for explanation. It is the role of the schools to provide these students with direction. Such feelings and experiences undermine children's ability to help others, to trust, and to see meaningful possibilities for their own future. Young people are easily seduced by material culture that promotes instant gratification. The violence they see around them desensitizes them to their own pain and that of others. Brandt (1995) explains that punishment is destructive. Working with children to see their fullest potential is the ideal situation to more positive behavior. Rewards and punishments are both ways of manipulating behavior. Wade (1997) discussed a plan that was implemented at an elementary school that followed the assertive discipline format (Canter, 1992). The plan featured rewards and consequences. This program did work however; only in the short term did it work. There was improved behavior and new school spirit camaraderie. But they saw too many students weren't concerned about the impact of their behavior on others or about permanently displaying more responsible behavior; they were motivated solely by the rewards. Clearly that school was manipulating and controlling behavior instead of instilling sound values. After reading, reflection, and realizing that this situation is also alive at my school, we as a team of professionals decided to change our approach as did the school Wade (1997) was researching. The plan was to drop the detention rooms and the monthly rewards and
focus on the work presented by Charney (1992) and Kohn (1993). Much to our surprise, students did not seem to miss the awards, and their behavior got no worse. During the last few months, we initiated many changes. We replaced rewards with school wide celebrations and replaced consequences with problem solving. Now when students misbehave, we encourage them to reflect on their behavior and its effect on others. We then ask them to come up with a plan for restitution or other solution to the problem.

Every piece of literature that had been reviewed supports the use of putting children in charge. There are at least 70 studies showing that extrinsic motivators are not merely ineffective over the long haul but counterproductive with respect to the things that concern us the most: desire to learn, commitment to good values, and so on (Kohn, 1995). Fitsimmons (1997) calls for districts on a continuing basis to always evaluate from a preventive standpoint that schools can benefit from having in place a clearly defined, consistently enforced behavioral management system that is designed to support students in controlling their own behaviors. Our original goals were to control student behavior and build community, but along the way we learned that these are conflicting goals. If students work together in a caring environment on tasks that they are responsible for, a system of rewards and punishments isn’t necessary (Kohn, 1996). Thus we defined a new goal—helping students become responsible citizens of our school community. Our students have taught us that to establish a positive learning environment and a true community, adults must give up control in areas that students are developmentally able to handle. Schools like businesses, have enjoyed far greater—more lasting—success when the frontline workers take an active role in identifying and solving workplace problems (Wade, 1997)
The evidence from all of the reviewed studies strongly supports the concept of positive discipline and opens many doors to further research and study. In future studies researchers should focus more on obtaining actual data to support their findings. In all of the literature, most of the research was based on theory and beliefs and none of them have strong valid data to prove their findings to support their theories. A recommendation to future studies would be to collect data from previous years to compare with new data during the implementation of new theories.
Chapter 3

Design of the Study

The purpose of this study is to see if a school-wide discipline program with positive rewards and consequences is a need for the Happy Dale Elementary School. The study will consist of a case study design that would include all staff members, certified and non-certified to take part. The group will meet as a study team to develop a Community Service Plan in which students who do not follow school rules will have to give back to the school community by participating in school community service.

The population sample being studied is students’ in grades third thru fifth. The students attend the Happy Dale Elementary School in Woodbury, New Jersey. The location of the school is set in a small community. The community has stayed the same economically as well as socially over the past ten years. Most of the students attending Happy Dale Elementary come from single parent homes. Students in these grades will all be part of the data collection. The students range in age from 8 to 12 years old and attend classes at Happy Dale Elementary school on a regular bases. Students in this population must have attended the school in previous years in order to obtain previous behavior data. Students who entered the school new this year would be part of the next years sample population and will have solid data from this year to provide a comparison for next years sample.
Survey questions were created to obtain feedback from the Happy Dale staff as well as the members of the Happy Dale community. Questions of initial and ending survey are furnished in the appendix A section of the thesis. This data reflects the response of staff and parents to the implementation of the program based on a Lykert scale.

The staff of Happy Dale will give any collected data to the intern for the intern to analyze. The intern will make the necessary point deductions or additions to the students’ current database. Staff member surveys will be coded to see if there are varying opinions among different staff members. The data received from the individuals will be charted and placed in appendix B. This data will help future administrators know where the strengths and weaknesses are in the organization. This data will also help the district to schedule appropriate staff in-services focusing on student behavior.
Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

The purpose of this study is to see if a school-wide discipline program with positive rewards and consequences is a need for the Happy Dale Elementary School. The study will consist of a case study design that would include all staff members, certified and non-certified to take part. The group will meet as a study team to develop a Community Service Plan in which students who do not follow school rules will have to give back to the school community by participating in school community service.

The results of the study came to me as no surprise considering the concerns raised from staff and parents. The initial survey proved that there definitely was a need for a school-wide discipline program. The initial survey also indicated that non-certified staff needs to be trained about dealing with student behavior than certified staff. The certified staff showed a frustration in receiving guidance and support from administration. All staff members certified and non-certified overwhelmingly said that discipline is lacking in our school. 100% of the staff responded that discipline is a problem (appendix B). All staff also stated that there is lack of support to assist them with student behaviors. Support to the intern was given by a 100% support of all staff. This number was very encouraging to the intern. With the entire staff at an agreement for support this would enable the intern to keep the program consistent and will also help in achieving the interns goals. In the survey addressed to the non-certified staff, staff members appeared
to be distant from the training opportunities. The training opportunities may lack interest
due to limited funding and time non-certified staff is in the building. The intern
understands this to be a lack of knowledge about positive discipline issues. If the non-
certified staff was aware of what positive discipline was the number of positive results
could have increased. The other factor that may have played a part here is that non-
certified staff such as cafeteria workers believed that the teaching staff and administration
should be the ones to correct student behavior. This attitude among non-certified staff is
not uncommon in just our district. This attitude among those individuals is present
throughout Americas’ schools according to Wade (1997). If staff members at a school do
not have some sort of ownership in their school, then some may distance themselves from
the policymaking body and go about their day to receive a paycheck.

From the data collected it shows that not only is a discipline program needed but
there also needs to be a connection of staff members. Through the implementation of the
Nutty Points Program the intern hopes to address both the discipline problem and
improve staff communication.

Parents who were sent the same survey took the same approach. Parents
overwhelmingly supported the fact that the discipline problems were coming from a
certain population. The intern did not ask the parents or the staff members in the surveys
to identify the individuals they thought were the “discipline problems”. The intern
wanted to see if parents and staff did recognize a certain group by asking this question.
The intern also did not want to implicate one group. The intern felt this would further rip
apart the staff connection. Through a random sample of parents and staff the intern was
able to make the assessment that the targeted population for this program would be the
intermediate grades of three through five. Through conversations with parents and staff the intern found the same patterns. The older the children get the more freedom they try to achieve. Another point that was taken into consideration was that all of the students at this school have been together since Kindergarten. There are no other children for these individuals to communicate with. One parent stated, “It’s like being in a marriage.” “There needs to be a change in routines.” The intern agreed that something has to be done to stimulate the relationships however changing routines may not be the way to go. Many staff members through casual conversation agreed that these students need responsibilities. They need to have more direction and be more involved in enriching themselves instead of being involved in competing with others.

After analyzing the results of the pre-surveys the intern went full force into the implementation of the Nutty Points Program. The program was received with a standing ovation at the parent Back to School night and has received support from the entire community and faculty. The program has thus far been successful. Children who have shown responsible behavior have been awarded during marking period assemblies. Students who have struggled with the program have been given positive support to achieve their goal. Many students have worked hard to bring themselves to the level of responsibility expected of them. All students at these assemblies were honored with their hard work and achievement. Staff members throughout the school have been spending extra time with those individuals who need the extra push to let them achieve their goal. Many staff members have approached the intern congratulating him on his success and would hope this program would be continued in the future.
After analyzing the post-surveys the intern found that the numbers have taken a
tremendous turn. In the post-surveys it was found that certified, non-certified staff, and
parents have all seen an improvement in student behavior since the installation of the
Nutty Points program. During the pre-survey 81% of parents agreed that student
behavior was worsened over the previous year. After the Nutty Points program was in
place for seven months 5% of the parents still believe behavior has worsened. In the pre-
survey 100% of certified and non-certified staff believed behavior in the students top be
worse. After the Nutty Points program was in place only 8% still believed that discipline
had worsened.

Staff who believed that discipline had worsened were staff that had students who
were not part of the research. Children in the lower grades did not participate in the
Nutty Points program and therefore did not receive any type of school-wide discipline.
The discipline of these children was to be handled by the teacher and administration.
Overall the results stated in appendix B show that the positive handling of discipline was
very successful for students and for teachers.

When students are approached with a program that can make them successful and
make them feel like part of a school community the more they are willing to adjust their
behavior. Teachers, students, and parents felt that the Nutty Points program created a
more friendly and learning environment in the school.
Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

The purpose of this study is to see if a school-wide discipline program with positive rewards and consequences is a need for the Happy Dale Elementary School. The study will consist of a case study design that would include all staff members, certified and non-certified to take part. The group will meet as a study team to develop a Community Service Plan in which students who do not follow school rules will have to give back to the school community by participating in school community service.

The effectiveness of positive discipline can create a warm and productive learning environment. Many students in schools today feel the pressures of doing well and pleasing their parents all at the same time. With this pleasing students feel the overwhelming pressures of trying to succeed. When students are pushed to their highest potential behavioral responses may begin. Most students don’t start the day saying they are going to be bad. When students are given the chance to prove that they can contribute something positive to the schools learning environment they will try their hardest to succeed. If students who choose to behave in an unacceptable way they need to understand that they have upset the learning environment and that they need to give something back to keep the school in positive territory.

The intern has shown students, teachers, and parents through his leadership skills that children can be redeemed and that a positive school-learning environment can
co-exist together. The intern demonstrated that when students understand their behaviors and what implications they have on themselves and the environment of the school they will work their hardest to fix the problems. The students involved in the Nutty Points program have not only grown socially through the eyes of their peers, parents, and teachers but also have grown academically responsible. The students have also become role models to the younger students that they have met along their journey. The younger students see that when a student breaks a rule that there are consequences but they are achievable and fair.

The future of Nutty Point is already in discussion. The program will be tailored to fit the younger children next year. This seems to be a need that was indicated by staff members as well as parents. There is also interest in the program from the other two elementary schools in the district. The superintendent of schools as well as the Board of Education has recommended this program to be part of the 2002-2003 school year in the other two elementary schools. Staff at the other schools is excited about the program however, questions have come up about who will develop the program in the other schools and maintain its viability. The program was at no cost to Happy Dale Elementary School since the intern as his thesis project implemented the program. If the program were to be implemented at the other schools a stipend for time spent would have to be created to follow union guidelines for extra-curricular work. In a time when budgets are tight, this program may have to be implemented and maintained by administration. The hope of the intern is that this valuable program could continue next year. The intern has already begun investigating ways to implement the program without extra funding. One way that is being considered by the Board of Education is to build this program into the
counselor’s curriculum at all three schools. If the program is built into the counselor’s curriculum it can easily be adapted into the classrooms as part of the National character education program. There is not a soul who objects to this program however; time and money are playing a huge role into its implementation.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Research Instruments
Pre-Survey of Parents

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for my thesis in my Graduate program at Rowan.

Please choose the best answer for each question. Please choose only one.

Your responses will be analyzed to see if there are behavior issues at our school.

1= most definitely 2= somewhat 3= not at all

1. Do you feel that discipline is lacking at our school?  1  2  3
2. Is there a plan in effect to help your child?  1  2  3
3. Has discipline worsened over the years?  1  2  3
4. Are the discipline problems within a certain population?  1  2  3
5. Is there support from school?  1  2  3
6. Would a school-wide discipline program help?  1  2  3
7. Would you support a school-wide program?  1  2  3
8. Should the program focus on positive discipline?  1  2  3
9. Would you like to be involved?  1  2  3
10. Would you like a workshop on student discipline?  1  2  3

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey. Please return to me by September 12, 2001.

Thank you,

Joe DePalma
Pre-Survey of Staff

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for my thesis in my Graduate program at Rowan.

Please choose the best answer for each question. Please choose only one.

Your responses will be analyzed to see if there are behavior issues at our school.

1= most definitely  2= somewhat  3= not at all

1. Do you feel that discipline is lacking at our school? 1 2 3
2. Is there a plan in effect to help you? 1 2 3
3. Has discipline worsened over the years? 1 2 3
4. Are the discipline problems within a certain population? 1 2 3
5. Is there support from administration? 1 2 3
6. Would a school-wide discipline program help? 1 2 3
7. Would you support a school-wide program? 1 2 3
8. Should the program focus on positive discipline? 1 2 3
9. Should parents be involved? 1 2 3
10. Would you like an in-service on student discipline? 1 2 3

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey. Please return to me by September 12, 2001.

Thank you,

Joe DePalma
Post-Survey of Parents

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for my thesis in my Graduate program at Rowan.

Please choose the best answer for each question. Please choose only one.

Your response will be analyzed to show if the Nutty Point program at our school was successful.

1= most definitely    2= somewhat    3= not at all

1. Do you feel that discipline is lacking at our school? 1 2 3
2. Is there a plan in effect to help your child? 1 2 3
3. Has discipline worsened this year? 1 2 3
4. Are the discipline problems within a certain population? 1 2 3
5. Is there support from school? 1 2 3
6. Did you notice a change in student behavior while the school-wide discipline program was in effect? 1 2 3
7. Would you support the program next year? 1 2 3
8. Was the program focused on positive discipline? 1 2 3
9. Were you involved? 1 2 3
10. Would you like workshops on student discipline to continue? 1 2 3

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey. Please return to me by March 12, 2001.

Thank you,

Joe DePalma
Post-Survey of Staff

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for my thesis in my Graduate program at Rowan.

Please choose the best answer for each question. Please choose only one.

Your response will be analyzed to show if the Nutty Point program at our school was successful.

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1. Do you feel that discipline is lacking at our school? 1 2 3
2. Is there a plan in effect to help? 1 2 3
3. Has discipline worsened this year? 1 2 3
4. Are the discipline problems within a certain population? 1 2 3
5. Is there support from administration? 1 2 3
6. Did you notice a change in student behavior while the school-wide discipline program was in effect? 1 2 3
7. Would you support the program next year? 1 2 3
8. Was the program focused on positive discipline? 1 2 3
9. Were you involved? 1 2 3
10. Would you like in-services on student discipline to continue? 1 2 3

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey. Please return to me by March 12, 2001.

Thank you,

Joe DePalma
Appendix B

Results of Surveys and Data Charts
Parent Results of Pre-Survey

Surveys sent out 121
Surveys received 84

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Staff Results of Pre-Survey (Certified Staff)

Surveys sent out 12
Surveys received 12

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Staff Results of Pre-Survey (Non-Certified Staff)

Surveys sent out 12
Surveys received 9

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### Parent Results of Post-Survey

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Surveys received: 105

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Staff Results of Post-Survey (Certified Staff)

Surveys sent out 12
Surveys received 12

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Staff Results of Post-Survey (Non-Certified Staff)

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