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Educating Hong Kong's Youth

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Abstract

This report describes the research and analysis conducted for the improvement of Caritas Charles Vath College, an alternative high school in Hong Kong. This project investigated issues ranging from students' low motivation and self-esteem to discipline in the classroom. The final recommendations were designed to help maintain order in the classroom, keep students motivated and interested, and provide support for both students and teachers, in order to help the school in its mission to produce more successful citizens.

Authorship

All four authors were fully involved in the data collection process and the formation of our recommendations. Each of us has contributed to the writing of all parts of this report and is equally responsible for the final result.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

There is an ongoing concern about the education of youth worldwide, especially in urban areas where a combination of factors has led to an influx of underperforming students. These students have not performed well in the standard teaching environment, but, in general, cities have been reluctant to invest in new approaches which could provide the students with the educations they need. Some schools, including the Caritas Charles Vath College (CCVC) in Hong Kong, have been formed to use unconventional methods where traditional ones have failed, but there are still students who are unsuccessful, even in these alternative schools.

The goal of our project was to make recommendations to the CCVC as to how they might best educate these struggling youth. In order to achieve this, we first had to understand the existing educational system at the CCVC. Then we investigated the key issues that students at the school face, as well as their underlying causes. Finally, we compared the CCVC with other alternative education programs to gather additional ideas that could be useful at this school.

We began by using extensive classroom observation to develop a basic understanding of the school and its students. Then we utilized interviews and surveys of both students and teachers to gain more specific, detailed knowledge. Finally, after completing our analysis and coming up with a tentative list of recommendations, we returned to the school to conduct a focus group with some of the teachers to get their input on our ideas.

The data gathered through these methods provided us with a clear understanding of what is and is not working at the CCVC. We found the school to have a curriculum that helped prepare the students for the future. The three "stream," or concentration, approach utilized by the

school, where the students choose to focus on business, tourism, or art, allows the students to develop their interests. In addition, the teachers at the school are highly motivated, have very positive attitudes, and relate well with the students. Also, we found the environment at the school to be very enjoyable for the students, who generally agreed that they like coming to school. Although there were many positive aspects of the CCVC, we also found some areas where we felt improvements were warranted.

The first area of concern was the lack of discipline in the school. Though there is an existing set of regulations, they are not enforced uniformly. For this reason, we are recommending that the school inform the students from the first day exactly what is expected of them and what the sanctions will be if they fail to follow the rules. Making these rules a prominent feature in the student handbook would be beneficial. In addition, the teachers should be instructed to enforce these regulations consistently. One problem teachers mentioned is that demerits are too severe for many issues that arise, so they are hesitant to punish the students. For this reason, we are also recommending that the current merit system be modified so that more demerits are necessary for expulsion and the punishment can more closely match the offense.

In addition to overall discipline in the school, there is the problem of disorderly conduct in the classrooms. Many students talk, read magazines, or use mobile phones during lessons. In addition to strictly enforcing school regulations against these distractions, as mentioned above, the teachers need to institute a consistent seating plan to reduce or eliminate rowdy behavior. The best seating plan we observed, and the one we are recommending all teachers use, is columns of paired students. This allows for the quiet sharing of resources between the students when necessary, while discouraging large groups of students from forming.

Another area where we focused our efforts was in discovering ways to keep the students motivated and interested. Though the students informed us of their desire for visual aids in the classroom, we saw their use to be limited during classroom observations. We are recommending that, whenever possible, the teachers utilize visual or audio aids in their courses to keep the attention of the students. In addition, we are also suggesting that teachers try to use topics of interest to their students in creating lessons, such as the use of a basketball to teach geometry. One problem that is causing some students to become frustrated or bored is the division of Forms into classes by stream and then ability. If classes were first divided by ability, there would be a smaller range in each class, making it easier for the teachers to adapt their lesson plans and teaching methods to the students.

Though the CCVC is already doing quite a lot to support its students, we feel that more could be done. According to the social workers, the students have nothing to go home to, yet 56% of students rarely or never stay after school. We believe that this number could be improved if more extracurricular activities were provided for the students. The creation of additional sports teams or allowing students to create their own clubs could provide a creative outlet for them while building a sense of community and leadership skills within the students. Also, to help increase support for the students at home, we are suggesting the creation of a Parent-Teacher Association. This should encourage parental involvement and interest in the students' educations. Also, to ensure that the students have the developmental support that they need, we are recommending that the CCVC create a new Counseling Center that is more inviting to students. This center should be relaxing and contain information of interest to students, such as brochures on further education and requirements for popular jobs. Finally, we are recommending

that the CCVC develop an advisory board with representation for each of the streams at the school, which would ensure that the courses offered were preparing the students for available jobs

Finally, we believe that more work could be done to support the teachers at the CCVC. Though they are young and full of passion and interest, their task is a daunting one. Unfortunately, in addition to the expected teaching responsibilities, many teachers have additional administrative duties that require too much time. For this reason, we are suggesting that the CCVC try to obtain support staff to take over some of these responsibilities. This would provide the teachers with more time to develop interesting lessons and visual aids. Finally, with this in mind, we believe that additional training in presentation software would be beneficial in instructing the teachers how to efficiently and effectively create interesting slides for use in their classroom

We are confident that the recommendations outlined here to maintain order in the school, keep the students motivated and interested, and provide additional support for both students and teachers, would greatly benefit the students at the CCVC. We feel certain that these recommendations can be useful to and are feasible at the CCVC and any other schools in Hong Kong in similar situations. We are very optimistic about the Caritas Charles Vath College.

1 Introduction

Too many students leave the educational system unprepared for the world. This is especially true in urban areas, where teenage students face a variety of problems. In some cases, behavioral and motivational problems in teenagers have a negative impact on their contributions to society as adults. In addition, government-mandated testing programs in many countries have led to curricula that are not accommodating to different learning styles. Nonetheless, many teachers still utilize traditional academic teaching methods when educating teens. It is largely possible that this type of learning environment is not conducive to student needs and is the reason for their lack of motivation and inappropriate behavior. Today's educational system must be assessed in order to discover ways to better educate students.

In many cities world-wide, youth unemployment is on the rise. One such city is Hong Kong, where many students have lost sight of the purpose of advanced education. There are organizations in Hong Kong, such as our project sponsor Caritas, that are trying to provide alternative educational opportunities to such students. Specifically at the Caritas Charles Vath College (CCVC), which falls under Caritas' vocational training service, staff and teachers are working to prepare students for the real world. Unfortunately, past educational experiences have left a majority of these students disinterested in further education, and the teachers struggle daily to motivate them to do something constructive with their lives. Caritas and other educational organizations in Hong Kong feel that more could be done to help students who continue to struggle under the current educational system.

Many studies have been done on alternative teaching methods, attempting to overcome behavioral and motivational problems in students around the world. One widely studied topic is the multitude of different learning styles which may contribute to some students' inabilities to

succeed in the standard academic environment. One way to handle this is to allow these students to attend alternative or vocational schools, where the teaching methods and lesson plans can more easily be adapted to each student's needs. Also, researchers have concluded that people, in general, learn better from hands-on or visual methods, and this is something that should be considered in Hong Kong. Some other problems that students face are linked to youth culture. In particular, students facing peer pressure tend to allow their friends' opinions to influence their actions, which is a possible cause of poor study habits. In addition, many parents do not have enough free time to support their children's work habits properly. Facing such challenges, these students would benefit from extra help at school.

The CCVC, which opened in 2003, is a school for students who have had difficulty succeeding in traditional academic environments. This school strives to combat educational problems by training students with an alternative curriculum aimed to develop confidence and life skills that will prepare them for the future. The CCVC teachers and staff hope to inspire increased motivation in their students and continue to search for new methods and ideas to bring to the classroom.

This report contains recommendations to the CCVC as to how the teachers might better educate these underperforming students. In order to achieve this goal, we first had to comprehend the issues faced by these students and determine the reasons why they struggle in school. Through surveys and interviews with the students and staff of the CCVC, as well as through observation of the classroom environment, we ascertained the details of the existing educational environment at the CCVC. Then, by comparing these results with our studies of educational theory and existing alternative schools, we created recommendations for the CCVC detailing how it might better implement its alternative education program. Hopefully, our

suggestions to the CCVC will have a positive impact on the methods utilized to train students to

succeed in whatever their futures might hold.

2   Background

In the quest to determine how to better educate the students of Caritas Charles Vath College, there are many areas to consider. Since Hong Kong is very different from the United States, it is imperative to understand the Special Administrative Region itself, including the current educational system there. Education in general is also important, but even more crucial is a focus on alternative education and how it is used in different parts of the world. In particular, it is necessary to have detailed knowledge of Caritas Charles Vath College in order to determine the basis from which any changes might be made.

2.1   Hong Kong

In order to understand the students who learn in Hong Kong, it is vital to comprehend the background, culture, and educational system there. Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) consists of the Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong Island, the New Territories, Tseun Wan, and 235 other islands scattered across a 2,900 sq. km. area. The developed areas of Hong Kong are some of the most densely populated in the world, with the population density of Kowloon at the end of 2004 measured at 43,030 people per km. (Census & Statistics Department, 2004). Due to this density, citizens of Hong Kong often live in cramped quarters, at least by American standards. Because of this, many students spend the majority of their time outside of their homes and often only return to sleep.

2.1.1 Eastern and Western Culture Clash

Due to its history as a colony of Great Britain, Hong Kong contains a unique blend of Eastern and Western culture. The British decided that, because of its lack of natural resources,

the best way for Hong Kong to prosper was to turn the city into a center for business, trade and manufacturing (Grzeskowiak, 2001, 12). Through many decades of the combined efforts of the British and Chinese residents, Hong Kong became and has endured as one of the most successful business centers in Asia.

While members of Hong Kong's business and financial sectors are familiar with many aspects of Western Society, their values are Eastern and essentially Confucian. Confucianism calls for an immense amount of respect for elders and associates age with wisdom. People in a Confucian society are taught to respect those in authority without question; this relationship, as defined by Confucianism, is the ruler-to-people relationship (Grzeskowiak, 2001, 15). In particular, students in Hong Kong are expected to follow authority figures, such as their teachers, more closely than students in Western Societies.

Another difference between members of many Western societies and those of Chinese societies is directness. Citizens of Hong Kong are often much more reserved and less direct than members of most Western cultures (Bruce Findlay, personal communication November 17, 2004). This is sometimes due to the levels of respect citizens have for their elders and their desire not to contradict higher officials. As a result of this, students in Hong Kong often do not give opinions or ask questions as often as students in other societies, which can lead to a learning environment that is lacking in two-way dialogue.

2.1.2 Educational System in Hong Kong

Because it was a colony of Great Britain until July 1, 1997, Hong Kong has an educational system modeled after the British. Students begin education at the kindergarten level for three years, and continue with six years of primary schooling, followed by three years of

junior secondary schooling, two years of senior secondary schooling and finally a two-year matriculation course that precedes university education.

Before a student can advance from senior secondary to matriculation school, he or she must pass the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam (HKCEE). The HKCEE serves the same purpose as many final schooling evaluation examinations in the United States, such as the Regents exam in New York State, the CAPT test in Connecticut, and the MCAS test in Massachusetts. The HKCEE has a total of forty-five different subject examinations that students can take (HKCEE, 2004, "Subjects Included"). The typical student takes seven or eight, but students looking for exemplarily marks can take up to ten. The HKCEE is a very important examination for students in Hong Kong. "The certificate of HKCEE is well-known and widely recognized in Hong Kong as a formal document for seeking a job or pursuing further studies" (HKCEE, 2004, "Purpose of HKCEE"). After entrance into and completion of matriculation school, a student takes another exam, the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), which is used as the basis for entrance into a university.

In Hong Kong, the average class size for secondary schools is 38.6 students (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2004). The large class size, as well as the reserved nature of the students, can often mean that students shy away from class participation or seeking help from the instructors, both during and after class (Bruce Findlay, personal communication, November 17, 2004).

Currently, the existing educational system in Hong Kong is undergoing reform. A new proposal in Hong Kong calls for a radical change in both curriculum and structure for secondary and university education (Forestier, 2004). The proposal's most notable feature is the abolishment of the HKCEE. Chris Wardlaw, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower and

one of the architects of the reform, stated "The HKCEE is an unnecessary selection device which wastes a lot of students' time and effort, it sets up a blocker for student learning" (Forestier, 2004). The abolishment of the HKCEE would free up teachers to address the students' needs instead of teaching for the exam. "Overall, it is an approach intended to make school more meaningful to students and relevant to society and to reduce the overemphasis on tests and exams" (Forestier, 2004). The change also calls for a six-year secondary education program instead of the seven year program, but by dropping the HKCEE students would only lose two months of formal study time. The universities in Hong Kong would also be changing their programs from three years to four years to allow for a broader background of university study. The reform, if put in place, would involve a four year period of transition.

2.1.3 English Importance in Hong Kong

English is a very important part of life in Hong Kong, where over one-third of the population speaks the language (Bureau of East Asian & Pacific Affairs, 2004). English is also a national language in Hong Kong and is essential due to the large amount of business conducted there. Thus, any student who fully grasps the English language immediately opens up future career opportunities that are not available to less fluent students. Such knowledge is also especially important for students who plan on continuing their education at the university level, where the primary language in many classrooms is English.

2.1.4 Post High School Education Options in Hong Kong

After the completion of the HKCEE and HKALE, students have a wide variety of options for further education. The universities in Hong Kong range from a Science and Technology University to an Academy for Performing Arts. Another option for students who do not pass the

HKALE is to attend programs offered by the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The VTC contains six major development centers: Chinese Cuisine, Financial Services, Hospitality Industry, Information Technology, Management, and Plastics and Tooling.

For those students who do not pass the HKCEE, Project Yi Jin, which began in 2000, is another option. The 600 hour program includes 420 hours in the subjects of Chinese (Cantonese), English (I&II), Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese), Mathematics in Practice, IT Applications and Communication Skills. The final 180 hours are completed in elective courses. For full time students, the program is completed in a one year period. The benefit of this program for students is that, upon completion, the Project Yi Jin certificate is equivalent to five passes on the HKCEE (Project Yi Jin, 2004). "Graduates of Project Yi Jin can apply for government jobs which require five passes in HKCEE (including Chinese and English) or enroll in the continuing education programmes offered by local institutes" (Project Yi Jin, 2004). For the 2004-2005 school year, ten secondary school institutions, including four run by Caritas – Hong Kong, have taken part in a pilot program in which students were given the option of either continuing with the traditional fifth year of secondary school or enrolling in Project Yi Jin as an alternative.

Other options for students who do not complete senior secondary include the Clothing Industry Training Authority and the Construction Industry Training Authority (Census & Statistics Department, 2004). The Clothing Industry Training Authority provides full-time technician courses and craftsman courses in preparation for joining industry. The Construction Industry Training Authority provides one and two year programs which aim to train students to become craftsmen or technicians/supervisors, respectively, for the construction industry. The VTC also offers training at the craftsmen level for students who have completed junior secondary school.

2.1.5 Youth Job Market

The youth job market is the most suffering job market in Hong Kong. At 27.2% near the conclusion of 2003, the fifteen to nineteen age bracket has an unemployment rate of close to four times the overall rate of 7.3% (Census & Statistics Department, 2004). One important reason for this is the lack of completion of the HKCEE. As stated previously, government jobs require at least five passes on the HKCEE. In addition, many jobs at very low wages are taken by immigrants and the very poor, creating tough competition. Without passing the HKCEE and without attending any of the many training programs offered to students after the completion of junior secondary, the students in this age group have a very difficult time finding a job..

2.2 Educational Theory

Education is a very broad topic dealing with teaching and learning in schools all over the world. One important aspect is the educational theory and practices used in dealing with struggling students. Though there are as many teaching methods as there are teachers, most of these can be associated with one or more of a set of standard teaching methods, of which there are two major types, teacher-directed and student-centered.

2.2.1 Teacher-Directed Instruction

One of the most commonly used methods of teaching is teacher-directed instruction. As Tanner, et al. (2003, p. 9) explain in their Instruction Strategies paper, teacher-directed instruction is when the teacher implements a series of "instructional strategies" to help teach a concept to the students. One example of this type of teaching method is the lecture. Though this is not always the best way to teach a student something that needs to truly become a part of his or her knowledge base, Tanner argues that it is the "shortest, quickest method of spanning the gap

between not knowing and knowing" (p. 9). Often, such instruction is used to provide the necessary knowledge for the students to participate in student-involved learning, such as safety procedures before a lab experiment.

As Erdal (2003, p. 9) discusses in his paper entitled Promoting Learner-Centered Instruction, teacher-directed instruction is often used when class sizes are large or resources are low, as the student-centered methods discussed below generally require smaller classes and more resources to do correctly and well. In addition, such teacher-directed methods are utilized when there are national standards or tests for which the teachers must prepare the students. When teaching for such tests, there is only a core set of knowledge that is important, so experience and hands-on work are left out to allow as much time as possible to be focused on preparing the students for the test.

2.2.2 Student-Centered Learning

The other major classification of classroom teaching methods is known as student-centered learning, or cooperative learning, wherein the students become active participants in the learning process. As August, et al. (2002) reveal in their paper on learning styles, teaching methods that involve classroom participation have been found to "[lead] to greater gains in critical thinking and problem solving skills, greater acceptance and tolerance for diversity, and better performance on subsequent examinations" (p. 3). In addition, research conducted by the authors showed that students actually feel that they learn better when they are in a collaborative environment (p. 22), and 91% of the student respondents said that they learn best in classes which involve active student participation, with 85% replying that lecture-only classes were boring (p.14). At the same time, 93% of teachers responded that they felt that students learned

best in classes with active participation (p. 15). Students and teachers alike agree that student-centered learning, when possible, is the best way to educate students.

One method of student-centered learning that teachers sometimes utilize is teaching with technology in the classroom. With the advent of interactive learning software, including educational games, students can have a rewarding, interactive educational experience that is also entertaining. Many software programs now offer voice recognition and grammatical editing tools which could more easily teach students any language in the world. In addition, there are virtual labs that can simulate actual experiments and allow students to become comfortable with certain tasks before transitioning to the real experience.

The research conducted by August (2002) supports the idea that student-centered learning is by far the better choice for dealing with underperforming youth. Students are overwhelmingly in favor of more interactive teaching methods that keep them engrossed during the learning process. This might seem rather intuitive, but it is important to keep in mind when educating unmotivated youth.

2.2.3 Frequent Feedback

In the research conducted by August, Hurtado, Wimsatt, and Dey (2002, p. 19) students very strongly supported frequent feedback from the instructor, with 85% of students calling for more feedback than just the typical test results and final grades. Constant feedback on how students are performing is important for several reasons. It can provide a chance for a student and his or her parents to be proud if the feedback is positive or to discuss possible solutions if it is negative. It can also provide early warning signs that a student does not understand the material before a really important grade, such as an exam. This could be particularly beneficial when dealing with students who are not doing as well in general; an early indication could be

very helpful to both student and teachers. Also, if the student starts to do better, informing them of their improvement could help encourage future success.

2.3 Alternative Education

As long as formalized and standardized educational systems have existed, the question of how to provide the best education for all students has led to a wide variety of educational research and experimentation (Lange and Sletten, 2002). Specifically in the United States, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of high school students who successfully complete their education. Despite efforts in creating new approaches to education, however, many students continue to struggle and fail.

2.3.1 The purpose of alternative education

The purpose of alternative education is to use educational theory to address the individuality and different needs of the students in order to better educate them. Some alternative education programs also aim to help youth who are vulnerable and have been alienated from society and aid them in reintegration (Zweig, 2003). Much experimentation and research has gone into discovering why students struggle and what possible solutions may be implemented to help alleviate this struggle. No two students are the same, so developing methods to teach many different students is quite a challenge. Despite this fact, success rates among students around the world continue to increase, as teachers begin to open their minds and develop more creative, adaptable approaches to education, abandoning the more rigid techniques of the past.

2.3.2 Students in alternative education

Students involved in alternative education are present in these programs for a wide variety of reasons. Some students have disabilities, attention issues, problems with society and

authority, or simply struggle from a lack of motivation. Studies have shown that struggling

students often are not even aware of the purpose behind most assignments given to them

(Lumsden, 1994). This obviously can lead to problems. A student who does not understand the

point of completing an assignment is very unlikely to put much, if any, effort into his or her

work.

One important factor that needs to be considered when attempting to help these troubled

students is their relationship to society. When students lose focus and struggle in school, they

very often alienate themselves from society, which can lead to many problems in the lives of

these struggling youth. There are many reasons why these youth alienate themselves, including:

poverty, a poor educational start, community stress, racial/ethnic/language barriers, family stress

and responsibility, and learning disabilities, to name a few (Zweig, 2003). If these youth do not

reconnect with society, their futures will contain problems that would not otherwise be present.

2.3.3 Different approaches to alternative education

To classify a general method for the education of all students is an impossible task. There

are as many different approaches to teaching as there are teachers and students. Some researchers

believe that there are four strategies that should be used in any educational system, if it is to

successfully teach the largest percentage of students possible (Lumsden, 1994, p. 4):

1) Students' expectations of success should be maintained. Teachers should stress that

learning can take time and is not an easy thing to do. They should stress that mistakes and

confusion can occur, and that there is nothing wrong with that. If students understand that

mistakes are very common, they will be less afraid to put effort into their work and less afraid of

failure. As a result, they can focus more on progress rather than comparison with peers and will

learn that their failures are within their control. This in turn will give them more confidence in their ability to overcome failure.

2) Extrinsic motivation should be supplied to the student. This strategy should not be used too strongly, because students may develop more task-based attitudes, which can in turn lead to further struggling. But if used wisely, extrinsic motivation can produce desirable results. If a student can learn to want to do well without fear of failing, then progress comes easily.

3) Teachers should capitalize on existing intrinsic motivation. They should gear tasks towards students' interests. This can make learning more fun for the student, and help to develop a desire to learn. Using existing intrinsic motivation helps promote novelty and variety in tasks, giving students the opportunity to respond and supply feedback.

4) Students are very much affected by the teacher and the teacher's attitudes and beliefs. This can make it simple to stimulate a student's motivation to learn. Students should be respected, and all should be treated as if they desire to learn. The classroom should be treated as a valuable experience rather than an obligatory test.

2.3.4 Examples of Alternative Education

The alternative teaching methods discussed above are not purely theoretical; they are actually being utilized in schools all over the world to provide students who are having trouble with standard teaching methods another chance to receive an education.

2.3.4.1 Worcester Vocational High School

There are many examples of innovative schooling in the United States. In Worcester, MA, there is a very effective vocational high school, which is successfully utilizing some of the student-centered methods mentioned above. According to the U.S. Department of Education

(2004), vocational schools focus on technical education that prepares students for entry-level

jobs as opposed to a college degree. Students who enroll in these schools tend to be those who

dislike teacher-directed methods used in the academic classroom.

The Director of Vocational and Technical Programs at the Worcester Vocational High

School (WVHS), Mr. Peter Crafts (personal communication, November 30, 2004, see Appendix

O), offered some interesting insight into how students at the WVHS benefit from their

curriculum and experience-based methods. Most importantly, he feels that these students do not

lack motivation, but rather the past methods used to educate them were not meeting their

developing interests and needs. As discussed previously, most students learn better when allowed

to actually practice or apply knowledge themselves, and there have recently been a growing

number of students rejecting the traditional way of academics. The WVHS allows its students to

partake in one of twenty-four technical concentrations—listed in the WVHS materials in

Appendix P—so that they may gain competency in the skills required to develop a career in that

field.

Another dream of Mr. Crafts (personal communication, November 30, 2004) is the,

"digital classroom of the future." The WVHS is moving to a new facility in two years where they

will utilize Smart Boards, projectors, wireless internet, and other technologies to increase the

quality and efficiency of their students' educations. In the near future it may be feasible for

students to take their courses in high-speed wireless common areas and not attend class, or to use

a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) to interact with other students in their classes. However, Mr.

Crafts stressed that along with these new uses of technology, the teachers at the WVHS are

properly trained and motivated to teach their classes using such technology. It is especially

important to establish this level of competency in the instructors from the beginning, because once poor teaching habits form, they are more difficult to reverse.

One of the most important aspects of maintaining professionalism and the validity of the curriculum at WVHS is the use of advisory boards for each of their twenty-two technical concentrations (Peter Crafts, personal communication, November 30, 2004). These advisory boards consist of students, teachers, parents and professionals in each field. They meet periodically throughout the school year to determine graduation standards and to make amendments to the curriculum based on industry needs and personal input. Without these advisory boards the WVHS would not have the proper guidance to support the trades they are teaching or the essentials for providing the students with the best possible education.

Providing students an opportunity to obtain real, hands-on experience in a technical field where there is room for further education and a life-long career is the best path for them and should be the preferred one. Applying the methods developed at the WVHS to the vocational schools Hong Kong should not be difficult given the common ground they share. Hopefully, by emulating some aspects of this model that has obviously worked well for students over many years, other schools could achieve similar results. For more details about this advanced technical high school, see Appendix P.

2.3.4.2 Bridgeport

Bridgeport, an ethnically diverse city in southern Connecticut, is another prime example of alternative education. As one of Connecticut's largest cities, Bridgeport deals with a wide range of students, including those with family issues, legal troubles, and motivational issues, among others. Many of these students attend the alternative schooling of Bridgeport, and, because of this, it is an excellent example of alternative education in action.

Former Bridgeport teacher Bob Moran (personal communication, November 27, 2004, see Appendix O) taught at many of the alternative schools during his tenure in Bridgeport. The first of these was a junior high school that dealt mostly with students who had criminal background. For these students, anger, motivation and self-esteem were the major issues. To help students with anger problems, the school had courses on anger management to improve both their behavior and outlook. The teachers and staff also dealt with motivation by creating a reward system to help increase students' desire to achieve.

The last school at which Mr. Moran (personal communication, November 27, 2004) taught was an alternative school for high school students. Many of the students there had important family responsibilities, including, in many cases, children of their own. The goal of the school was to provide education for students while also allowing them to fulfill out-of-school responsibilities. Because of this, the school taught only a core curriculum and released the students at noon. The students at this school generally had fewer motivational problems than those in the junior high school, but the challenge came in creating abbreviated, interesting, and comprehensive lesson plans. Mr. Moran stated that one way to increase motivation was to show students hard evidence of past success. He said that he would often bring former students who either had found a successful job or graduated from college and have them discuss with the class the benefits of completing high school. Mr. Moran believed the program to be very successful, but unfortunately, due to city funding issues, the school was closed at the conclusion of the 2001-2002 school year.

2.4 Caritas Charles Vath College

The Caritas Charles Vath College is a new Senior Secondary School in Hong Kong for students who were not successful in traditional school systems. The CCVC, which falls under

Caritas' vocational training service, is similar to vocational schools found in the United States. According to the CCVC (2002d), the school is funded in part by its sponsor, Caritas-Hong Kong, and the Direct Subsidy Scheme of Hong Kong SAR. The majority of students who attend are from families in the lower income brackets in Hong Kong. The CCVC exceeds the capabilities of other colleges due to the flexibility it offers in curriculum and post-secondary opportunities to students.

2.4.1 Purpose of the CCVC

Hong Kong SAR's government, in conjunction with the Caritas-Hong Kong organization, created the CCVC for the purpose of providing an alternative choice for students who have struggled in the traditional education system (2002d). The CCVC intends to educate students by utilizing a variety of teaching methods in order to benefit the widest spectrum of student learning styles. The Caritas-Hong Kong organization's own values of, "…fostering love and hope through service to the individual and the community," are reflected here. Bruce Findlay, an English teacher at the CCVC, (personal communication, November 17, 2004) specifies that the educators at the CCVC hope to "…help [students] find their way in society and life."

2.4.2 Demographics of the students who attend

The backgrounds of students at the CCVC vary, but they do have some things in common (CCVC 2002b). For example, each of the approximately 500 CCVC students pays a yearly tuition of $5350 (HKD), which is equal to roughly $688 (USD). According to the CCVC principal, Amy Chan (personal communication, January 13, 2005), this tuition is only slightly more than most families would pay to send their children to traditional, government-sponsored schools and is substantially less than most private schools. The students who attend the CCVC

fall under the categorization of "…the last, the least, and the lost," and most of them have low self-esteem and little motivation or confidence.

2.4.3 Brief description of current curriculum and practices

The goals of the CCVC's curriculum are to develop students' life-long learning abilities, give them the power to advance themselves through life, and mold them into mature and independent young adults who can positively contribute to society (CCVC, 2002a). The structure of the curriculum provides a flexible alternative to stricter systems, by allowing students to enter and exit the program at various times throughout their education and pursue many different post-secondary educational paths as shown in Figure 2-1 below. The core subjects that all students must study are Chinese, English, Mathematics, Putonghua, Word Processing and Business Communication, and Computer and Information Technology. Students can then choose to pursue elective groups, including:

- Commerce, Principle of Accounts, and Economics,

- Travel and Tourism, and

- Graphical Communication and Visual Art.
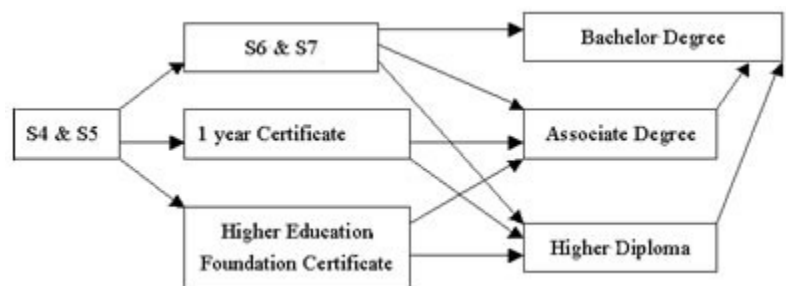
Figure 2-1: Post Secondary Education Options

[Taken from CCVC (2004c)]

2.4.4 Current availability and use of technology

Currently, the CCVC is fortunate enough to be equipped with an adequate amount of modern technology to administer the required courses of Word Processing and Computer and Information Technology, but more interaction with computers in technological courses could greatly benefit any educational program. One whole floor of the school is devoted to computer labs. In addition, every teacher in the school is provided with a laptop computer, and every classroom is equipped with a projector and other audio/visual equipment. In most Hong Kong schools there is a lack of knowledgeable instruction in how to use such technology, but with its increasing importance in the business world, it is important for students to become proficient in computer skills and general technical knowledge.

2.4.5 Expectations of students, parents and staff

There are high, but achievable expectations set by the staff at the CCVC. This staff, made up of a majority of young and creative teachers, hopes to make a positive impact on the education of their students and motivate them to make something of their lives (Bruce Findlay, personal communication, November 17, 2004). Most of these students have missed out on positive reinforcement at home because their parents just do not have the time to keep after them and their school work. The lack of attention given to them in their households is reflected in their efforts at school, which need to be improved dramatically. Because they lack confidence in themselves and their abilities, many students at the CCVC choose to coast through the school year doing the minimum or even not passing classes, but teachers at the school are hopeful that the situation can be improved.

2.5 Conclusion

In the fast-paced and densely populated Hong Kong SAR, it is easy for a few students to be left behind in the mass education of the other children. Educational research and practice has shown that student-centered learning is a much more useful tool for educating such students than the traditional teacher-directed instruction. There is an increase in the number of schools that are being created with the goal of promoting alternative teaching, including Caritas Charles Vath College in Hong Kong. After examining how alternative teaching methods have been used around the world and investigating the details of the CCVC, we were ready to take the theory and adapt it to the unique culture and characteristics of Hong Kong and the students and teachers at Caritas Charles Vath College.

3 Methodology

In order to achieve our ultimate goal of making recommendations to the Caritas Charles Vath College (CCVC) on how it might best educate its students, we utilized a wide variety of methods. We began by using classroom observation to develop a basic understanding of the school and its students. Then we utilized interviews and surveys of both students and teachers to gain more specific, detailed knowledge. Though we had a few limiting factors in our work (see Appendix Q for more information on our limitations), our analysis enabled us to develop a list of recommendations, after which we returned to the school and conducted a focus group with some of the teachers to get their input on our ideas.

3.1 Observations at the CCVC

Observation in the classroom was an important first step in our research at the CCVC. Discovering the positive and negative aspects of the current system at the CCVC was an important goal of our observations. While in the classroom, we took careful note of the reactions of the students to methods used by the teachers. Observational work also played a vital part in identifying the issues that students at the CCVC face on a daily basis, as well as their causes. In order to uncover as much detail about these topics as possible, we conducted twenty-three observations of different classes and teachers. In addition, we played basketball with the students on a regular basis in order to gain rapport, observe their interactions, and obtain feedback in a more relaxed environment.

Another goal of our observations was identifying the attitudes and methods of the CCVC teachers and staff. We were interested in observing what kind of negative and positive reinforcement they used in the classroom. After each observation, we asked the teacher if there

was a noticeable change in the students' actions, in order to ensure that our presence in the classroom was not overly influencing the behavior of the students.

3.2 Observation at the Caritas St. Francis Secondary School

Finding a basis for comparing the CCVC to other schools was another task we accomplished through observation. We visited the Caritas St. Francis Secondary School (CSFSS) and observed four classes there, which provided us with a sufficient understanding for comparison. This visit and these observations also served to identify teaching techniques and policies that could possibly be implemented at the CCVC.

3.3 Teacher and Staff Interviews

In order to further gain insight into the different positive and negative aspects of the CCVC and the issues faced by the students, several interviews were conducted with staff members of the CCVC. These interviews also provided valuable information regarding the causes for the issues that these students must deal with; the interview with the social worker was especially helpful in this area. Specifically, seven teachers and one social worker were interviewed, each being informed of the confidential nature of the interview. Keeping these interviews anonymous allowed the teachers to speak freely, without fear of upsetting their superiors or fellow teachers. See Appendix K and Appendix I for the interview protocols of the teachers and social worker, respectively.

3.4 Student Interviews

In addition to teacher and staff interviews, several student interviews were conducted. A total of eight students were interviewed, which were conducted in confidence like the teacher

interviews. This alleviated the students' fears of how the teachers and staff might react to what was said, allowing the students to speak freely and honestly regarding their opinions of the CCVC. These interviews were conducted in three groups so that the students would feel more comfortable. The data which were collected through these interviews helped us to understand the issues faced by the students and the causes for these issues. The students also enlightened us regarding the positive and negative aspects of the existing system at the CCVC. See Appendix G for the student interview protocol.

3.5 CCVC Student Survey

In order to gather statistical data on many issues and causes for the students' struggles, as well as the student body's opinion of the CCCV, a student survey was conducted. The questions were developed over the course of the first three weeks at the school, as conversation with CCVC staff and students provided insight as to what questions would be beneficial. The questionnaires were distributed with help of the teaching staff, who returned the completed surveys to us later in the week. The survey was completed by 271 of the 430 students at the CCVC. See Appendix C for the survey questionnaire.

3.6 CCVC Teacher Survey

We also developed a teacher in order to supplement our teacher interviews and better understand the opinions and views of the entire teaching staff. The survey was able to help reduce the time spent during interviews on simple questions, allowing us to focus on important, open-ended questions. The survey was completed by eighteen of the twenty-two teachers. See Appendix E for the teacher survey questionnaire.

3.7 Focus Group with CCVC Teachers

The final method we utilized was a focus group conducted with teachers at the CCVC. This focus group was held with five CCVC teachers who were not previously interviewed and were selected to represent a wide range of teaching styles, based on our previous observations and recommendations by our liaison. The purpose of this focus group, which was conducted after the rest of our analysis work had been completed, was to discuss with the teachers our tentative list of recommendations. We wanted to ensure that the teachers felt comfortable that our suggestions would be effective and feasible at the CCVC—especially those that would affect their classrooms. For the focus group protocol questions see Appendix M.

4 Results and Analysis

Through the methods described in the previous chapter, we were able to identify what is and is not working at the CCVC, what issues the students face and their causes, and, overall, what might be suggested to improve the current educational system at the Caritas Charles Vath College. In this chapter we present our analysis of the existing educational system at the CCVC, the issues that the students face, and solutions at other schools that might be adaptable to the CCVC.

4.1 Existing Educational System at the CCVC

Our first objective was to develop a better understanding of the existing educational system at the CCVC. We wanted to find out the opinions of both students and teachers on what is working well at the school and what might need to be changed. In doing so, we discovered many aspects of the school that we needed to take into account when forming our recommendations.

4.1.1 Student Freedom

The level of freedom the students enjoy is one aspect of the school that evoked a variety of responses. During interviews, the students told us that they considered themselves to be very "free" at the CCVC (see Appendix H for the student interview transcripts). They were especially happy with the lack of homework and the long lunch breaks. The students have a fifteen minute recess and seventy-five minute lunch break every day, and most students spend a good portion of time playing basketball or football (soccer) or talking to friends. Some of the teachers, however, were more skeptical of the benefits of this "freedom". They said that it often seems as if the

students only come to school for the purpose of socializing with peers and not to learn (see

Appendix L for the teacher interview transcripts).

4.1.2 After-School Classes

Another feature of the school that some of the students liked was the availability of after-

school classes. Both remedial and advanced courses are available, allowing struggling students

another chance at learning and providing those who are excelling the opportunity to progress

beyond the other students in the class.

4.1.3 Overworked Teachers

Unfortunately, many teachers simply do not have the time to spend teaching students

outside of class, as they already have too many extracurricular responsibilities. For example, at

the same time that they are supposed to be developing lesson plans and helping students, some

teachers are responsible for maintaining the financial books, running the library, or organizing

the student gardening team. In the survey question about how many hours the teachers spend on

activities unrelated to teaching each week, 50% responded that they work more than three hours,

as can be seen below in Figure 4-1 (see Appendix F for the raw teacher survey results). Some

teachers even commented that three hours does not even come close to describing how much

extracurricular work they do each week.
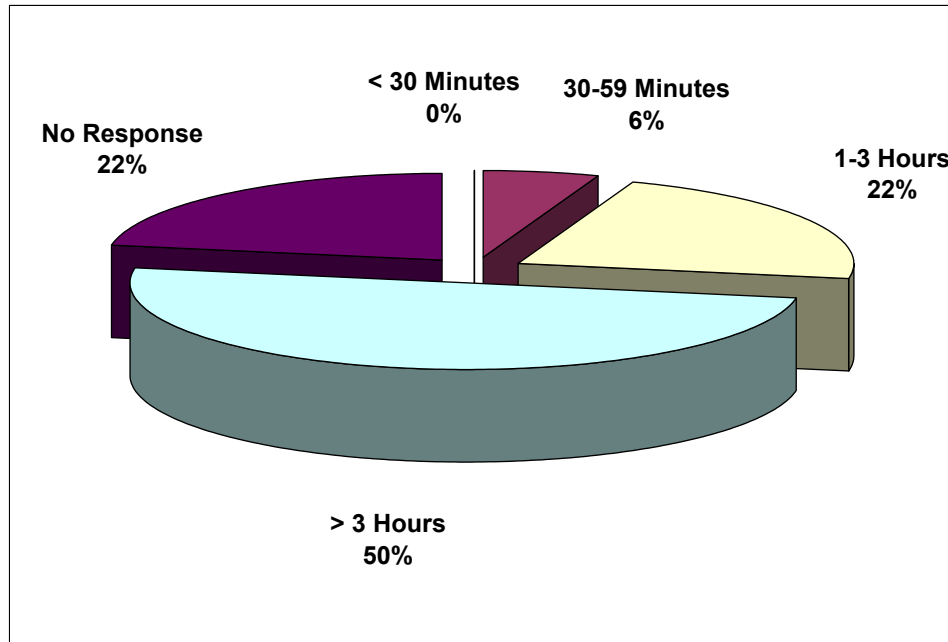
Figure 4-1: Time spent by CCVC teachers per week on extracurricular work (n = 18)

Furthermore, many teachers have additional disciplinary responsibilities outside of class. These responsibilities include acting as a hall monitor during their free periods to help maintain order in the school, assisting the discipline master in conducting detention sessions both after school and during lunch, and reporting student issues to parents. These responsibilities also detract from the time that the teachers could use to work on their lesson plans. During one interview, Teacher F informed us that she never has any time to try to come up with lesson plans because there is too much other work to be done.

4.1.4 Current Curriculum

We were interested in the opinions of students and teachers on the current three-stream (or concentration) curriculum at the CCVC. During interviews, we asked the teachers whether they felt this was a good way to prepare the students or not. They generally agreed that the school's current curriculum was good for students, though Teacher A voiced concern that some

of the students who come to the school do not want any of the streams. As discussed in more

detail in 2.4.3, the three streams offered to students are Business, Tourism, and Art. The students

are forced to choose one, so some end up disliking their selection. This was reinforced by the

student survey, where only 32% of the students said that they usually or always enjoy their

elective class, and almost 10% of the students never do, as can be seen in Figure 4-2 below (see

Appendix D for the raw student survey results).
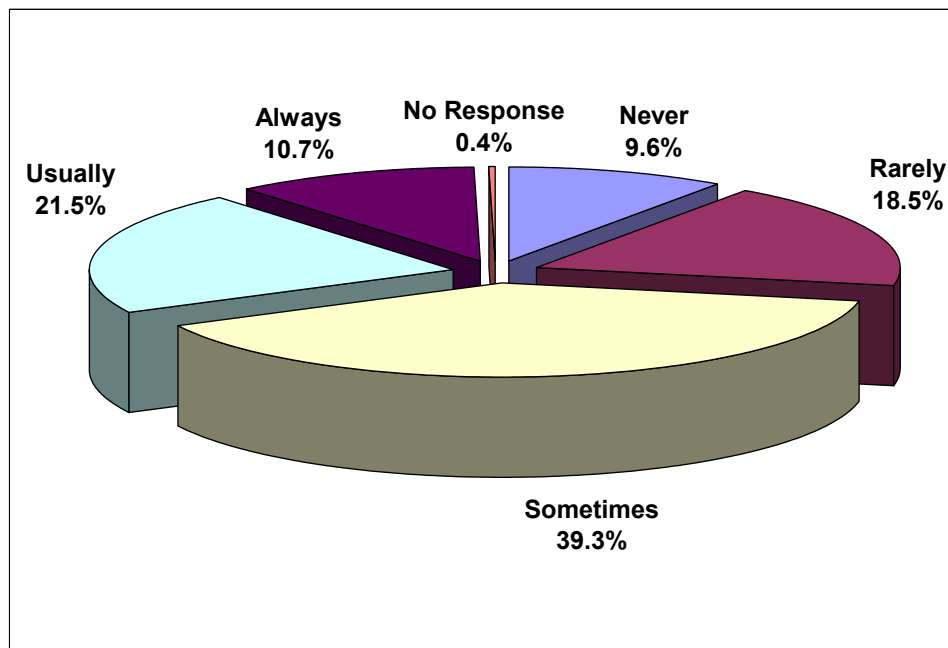
Figure 4-2: Level of student enjoyment of elective class (n = 271)

4.1.5 Enforcement of Regulations

Another negative aspect of the existing school that we discovered was the inconsistent

enforcement of school regulations. This was made especially clear through the interview process,

where Teacher A informed us that, though there are a large number of regulations for the school

that all students are expected to follow, most of these are not enforced consistently. She felt that

this was a problem because students consider some teachers to be unfair. This idea was reiterated

in the teacher survey, where seven teachers responded to our request for additional ideas with

suggestions related to school regulations.

This lack of standardized enforcement is especially evident in areas such as the use of

mobile phones and magazines in class. As can be seen below in Figure 4-3, only one teacher

responded to the teacher survey that he or she usually or always takes away mobile phones or

magazines when they are being used in class. This means that, for the most part, students are free

to use such devices as they please instead of paying attention to the lesson.
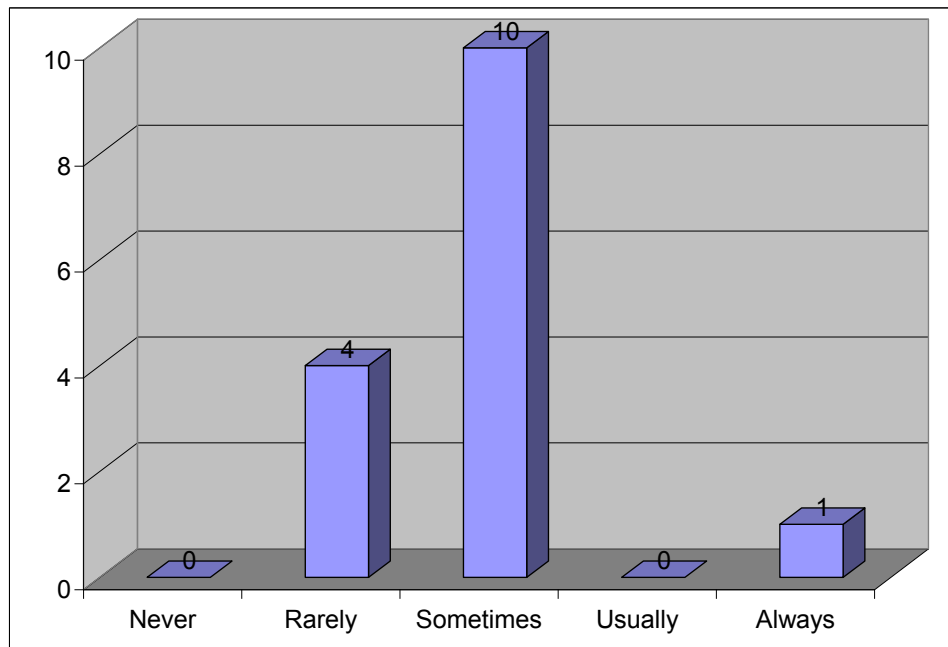
Figure 4-3: Number of teachers who take away mobile phones

Students who talk in class are another major concern. When asked during an interview if

she woke up students who were sleeping, Teacher C said that she would wake up the good

students but allow the bad students to continue sleeping since she would rather have them

sleeping and quiet than awake and rowdy. In this teacher's opinion, rowdy students are an even

bigger problem for teachers than sleeping ones since they are not only missing out on the lesson,

but they are keeping the students around them from learning, as well. The students themselves

agreed that this is an important problem: almost 40% of the students surveyed said that they

usually or always felt that class was too noisy, while less than 19% felt that class was rarely or

never too noisy, as shown below in Figure 4-4.
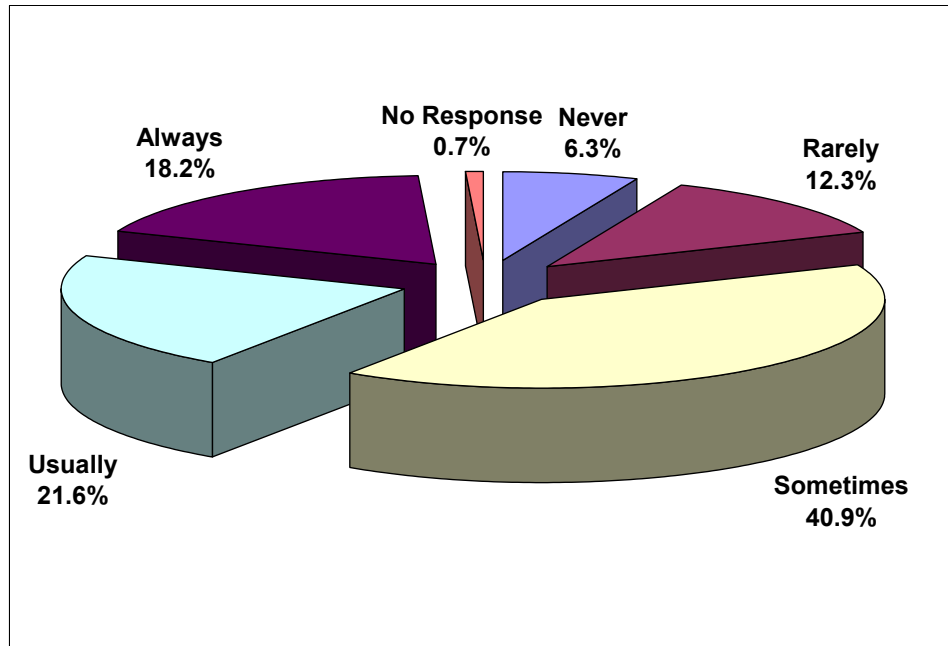
Figure 4-4: Percent of students who feel class is too noisy (n = 271)

4.2 Key Issues that the CCVC Students Face and their Causes

We identified many issues the students face that appear to be responsible for their

struggles in the classroom. The underlying causes of such issues provide a more thorough

explanation of why the students fail to perform well in school. The issues and causes we

identified through extensive observation were reinforced by the results of our surveys and

interviews with teachers and students.

4.2.1 Poor Behavior

The most apparent issue at the CCVC is the poor behavior in the classroom. Through

observation, we noticed a great deal of disruptive student actions that were caused mostly by the

students' behaving as if school was a place to socialize (see Appendix A for our observational notes from the CCVC). Identifying these specific behaviors also relates back to disciplinary problems discussed in 4.1.5, but, more importantly, identifying such conduct led us to the understanding of how to stop it.

Many teachers, when asked, "What is the difference between those students who are doing well in class, and those who are struggling," were of the opinion that the struggling students just come to school to play. Often ,students were observed reading magazines and comics or playing with mobile phones and MP3 players instead of paying attention to the material being taught. Also, a large number of students chose to spend the entire class talking with others about their weekend plans or the newest music and movies, which detracts not only from their education, but also distracts other students who are trying to pay attention.

Seating was a major contributor to excessive talking during class. Even though there are assigned seats in the classrooms at the CCVC, students often moved their seats wherever they wanted. We noticed that the worst disruptions occurred in classrooms where students gathered themselves in a group at the back of the room to talk or even play games. One reason that students tend to change seats is that many want to sit closer to their friends or further away from those they dislike.

Teachers also revealed that many students sleep during class. As we witnessed through our twenty-three class observations at the CCVC, there was an average of three students sleeping through classes; Form 4 classes had an average of 3.9 students sleeping through them, and Form 5 classes had an average of 2.4 students sleeping. This was reinforced in the student survey, where twenty-nine percent of students admitted to "always" or "usually" sleeping through class. Also, from our teacher surveys we discovered that only one teacher usually or always wakes

students up. As discussed in section 4.1.5, the teachers tend to only wake up good students to keep the classroom more manageable.

4.2.2 Student Motivation

One underlying cause for such poor behavior in the classroom is the low level of motivation in the students. Many of them view school as useless, as can be seen in Figure 4-5 below, where only 30% of students said that school is probably or definitely useful. Devoid of the sense of school's importance in their lives, students eventually lose the motivation to complete assignments and pay attention. Because they lack the motivation to learn, these students tend to be disruptive in the classroom.
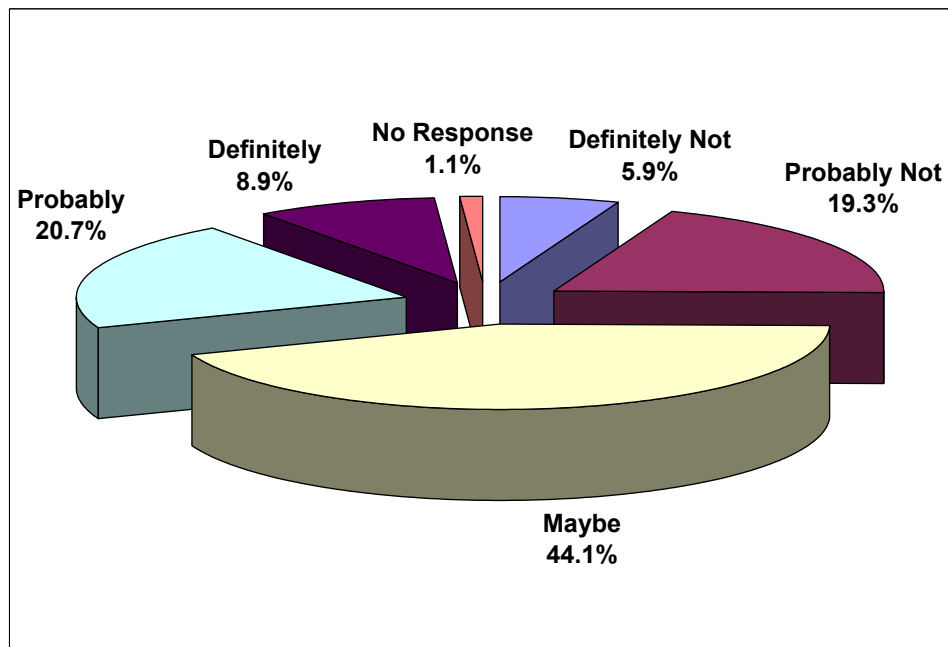
Figure 4-5: Student opinions on the usefulness of school (n = 271)

The course material being taught during school is another cause of low motivation. Due to the range of abilities at the CCVC, each student has a different level of understanding of the

subject matter being taught. After one classroom observation, we talked to a student who had been sleeping, and he explained that the coursework was too difficult for him so he did not even bother trying. In contrast, better students, as discovered through student interviews, can often find the material too easy and boring. These students can then become disinterested with the material and start acting up in class even though they would not normally do so.

In addition to the level of difficulty of the material, another factor behind students' low motivation is the way the course material is presented. As seen in classroom observations, students are more attentive and motivated to learn when presented with material having a relation to the students' personal interests. One example of this was during an English class, when the teacher was presenting a speaking lesson on student dating. This seemed to interest many students and keep their attention because it was a topic to which they could relate. We also noticed that students paid more attention when materials were presented visually, but visual aids were not used very often in the classes we observed. During the teacher focus group (see Appendix N for the focus group transcript) the teachers informed us that this was due mostly to time constraints and not an inability to develop such aids or use presentation software.

4.2.3 Student Aspirations

A deeper cause of the students' low motivation is a general lack of aspirations within the student body. One teacher's questionnaire described the students as desiring only to live in the moment and having no real sense of the future. Over one-third of the students are unsure of what they plan on doing after the completion of Form 5, as can be seen in Figure 4-6. Without an idea of what they want to accomplish in their lives, the students sometimes approach classes without a sense of purpose and sit through Form 5 with no motivation to learn.
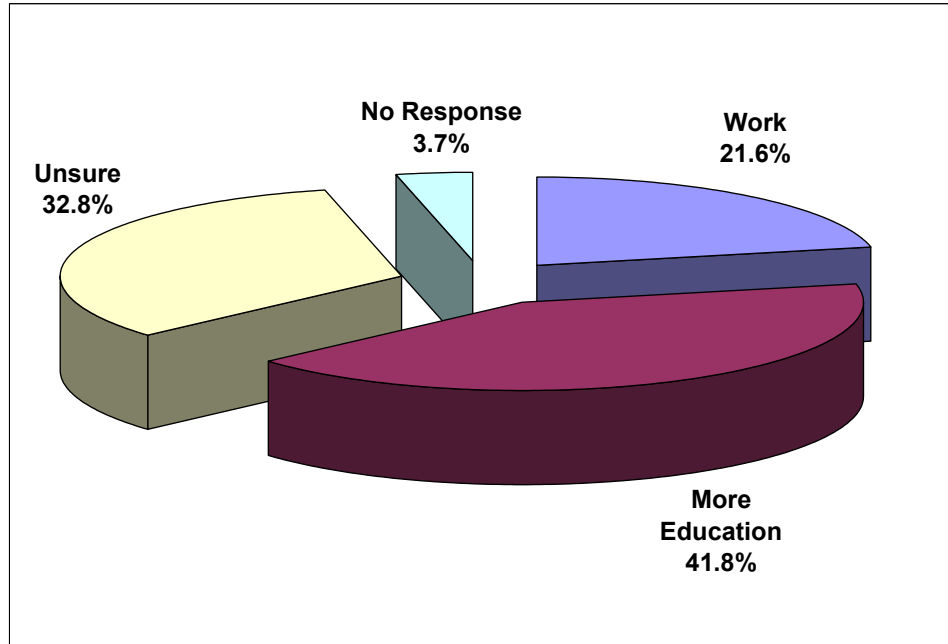
Figure 4-6: Students' Future Plans (n = 271)

Problems also occur for the students who do have a general idea of what kind of job or further education they would like to pursue. Many of these students are unaware of the necessary academic requirements needed to reach these goals. One example identified during a conversation with a teacher was the academic requirements for becoming a police officer. The students who were studying for a future career in the police force were unaware that the needed a pass on the English Form B exam, which is more difficult than the Form A exam. This misunderstanding put the students at a disadvantage with little time to catch up.

One reason behind the students' lack of knowledge in the pursuit of future opportunities is their infrequent interaction with the social workers. As seen in Figure 4-7 below, 66% of the student body responded that they rarely or never talked with the social workers. Many of the students only visit the social workers for disciplinary and emotional problems and do not see the benefits of discussing job and educational opportunities and requirements with them. Because of this, students rarely schedule meetings with the social workers to discuss these matters.
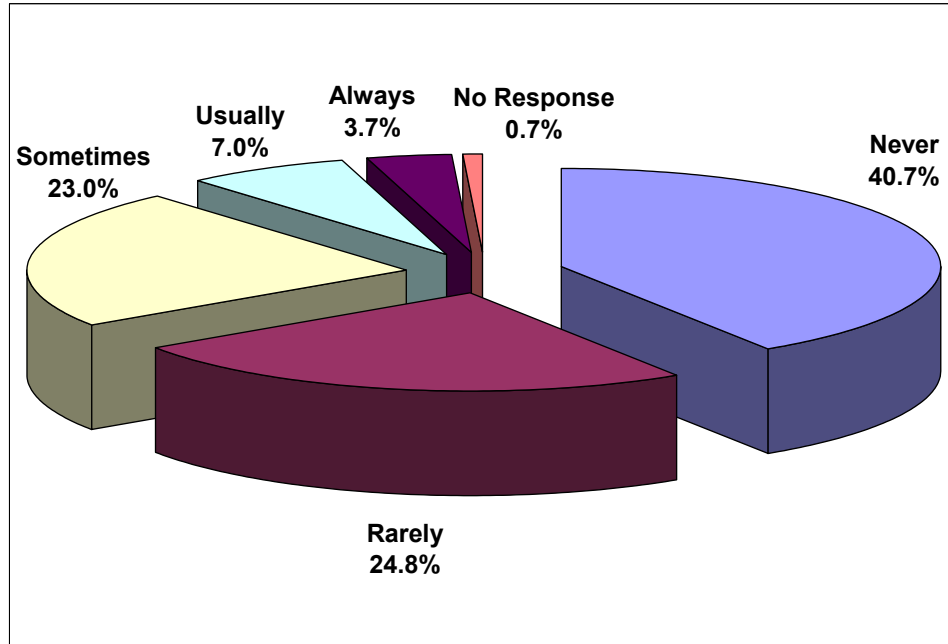
Figure 4-7: Frequency with which students talk to social workers (n = 271)

4.2.4 Self-Esteem

The most fundamental issue that we identified through both teacher and social worker interviews was an overall low level of self-esteem within the student body (see Appendix J for the social worker interview transcript). Without the necessary self-esteem, students at the CCVC often view themselves as incapable of success, and, because of this, they have few goals or aspirations. One important example of low self-esteem is that many of the students, when surveyed, said that they desired to pass the HKCEE, but a much smaller percentage believed that they were going to pass, as shown in Figure 4-8 below.
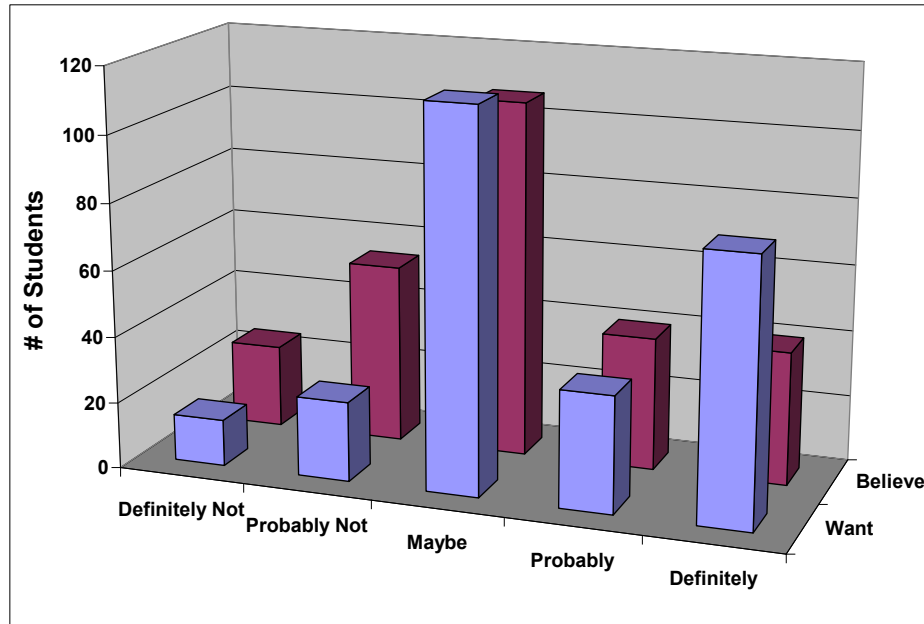
Figure 4-8: Number of students who want to pass and who believe they can pass the HKCEE

During our interview with the social worker, many of the causes of the students' low self-esteem became evident. The most apparent of these was the past academic achievements of the students. The CCVC mainly accepts students who were unable to continue their education at their previous schools for academic or behavioral reasons. These past problems can lead students to believe they are failures, and when they are placed in an environment with students of similar backgrounds, this attitude is reinforced.

In addition to some past failures, many of the students come from unsupportive families. In these cases, the students are not given encouragement from their parents to do their school work and generally do not discuss their progress with their families. From the student survey, we found that 60% of students rarely or never discuss school with their parents, as can be seen below in Figure 4-9, and 33% of students responded that their parents rarely or never encourage them to do homework. Without parental encouragement, students continue to view themselves negatively, and their efforts in school reflect this view.
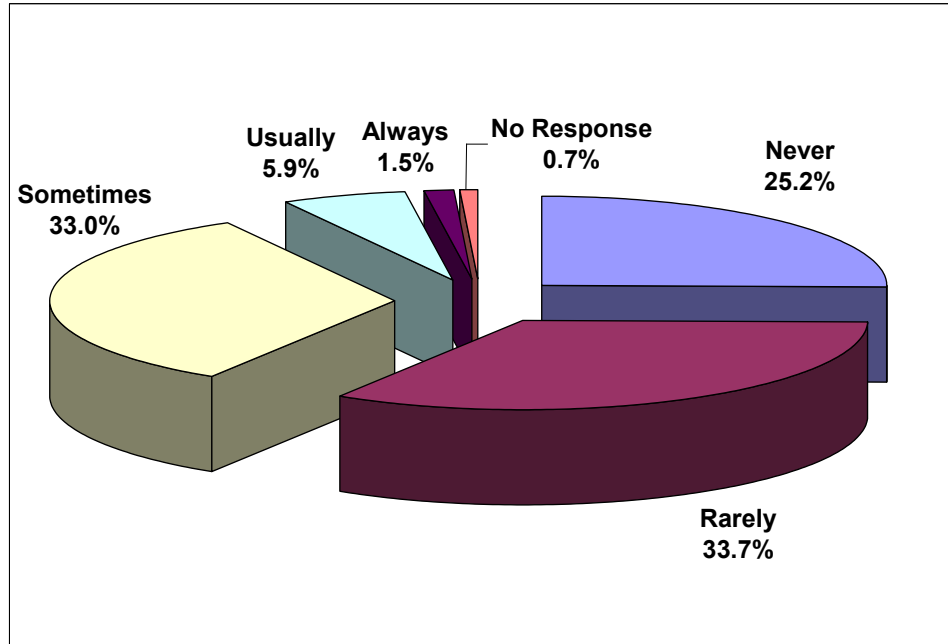
Figure 4-9: Percent of students who discussing school with their parents (n = 271)

Along with the lack of family encouragement, many students come from single-parent or low-income households. In these cases, students can be pressured by their families to gain employment. With this new responsibility, they often begin to believe that they are not meant for anything more than unskilled labor, which detracts from their already poor self-esteem.

One glaring example of students' lack of family support came when interviewing one of the older students at the CCVC. The student stated that, after the conclusion of Form 3, her family did not have the money to send her to Form 4, and instead she began working to help support her family. After six years of working, she was able to save up enough money to afford attending Form 4 and Form 5. During her two years in attendance at the CCVC, her parents have continued to express disapproval of her pursuit of education and want her to go back to work to help support the family.

4.3 Differences between the CCVC and CSFSS

In order to develop a better understanding of how the methods of the CCVC compare to those of a different school, we visited the Caritas St. Francis Secondary School (CSFSS). The information collected from this visit to the CSFSS, helped us develop a preliminary set of recommendations and suggestions for the CCVC.

4.3.1 Student Discipline

As mentioned above, we found many disciplinary problems with the students at the CCVC. While visiting the CSFSS, we did not observe any such behavior (see Appendix B for our observational results from the CSFSS). According to the principal, Vincent Wong, this is simply because the CSFSS has a policy against classroom distractions which is strictly enforced by all teachers and staff. For example, if a student is caught playing with a mobile phone during class, the phone is taken away for three days. This is quite a stringent punishment, since such personal technology plays an important role in the lives of these students, but it has been shown to be a useful deterrent at this school.

Many bad habits of the students are more prevalent and require stronger measures in order to change them. One feature common to the CCVC and the CSFSS is a system of merits and demerits. The two schools do differ, however, because in order to remove a demerit from his or her record at the CCVC, a student only must have a teacher "sign it off," after there has been a noticeable improvement in the student's behavior and classroom performance. At the CSFSS, on the other hand, students' demerits need to be worked off by performing specific, compulsory tasks for the school. The system at the CSFSS has produced better results, as was apparent in our visit, during which we did not witness any punishable student behavior.

When comparing student discipline in these two schools, there are some important differences. The CSFSS has Secondary Form 1 through Form 7, while the CCVC starts with Form 4. This means that the CSFSS has a lot more time to mold the students to its policies and develop in them proper behavioral and study habits. In addition, the CCVC was created very recently and is still in the process of developing its regulations and discipline system. CSFSS, on the other hand, has been around for many years and already has a working system in place.

4.3.2 Teaching Methods

The classes we observed at the CSFSS were very interactive. The teachers used games, such as Hangman and Jeopardy, to keep the students involved in their lessons, and we noticed a very positive response from the students. During the sections of the lesson that did not involve games, many still participated, which is rarely seen at the CCVC. The use of games and more interactive lesson plans helped the students develop an interest in the lessons.

Another difference seen in the instructional methods of the CSFSS when compared with the CCVC is the use of technology. Though both schools have computer labs and other technological resources, teachers at the CSFSS utilized them more constructively. One specific example is the difference between the Computer and Information Technology classes we observed at each school. While the CSFSS class was conducted within a computer lab, the teacher of the same class at the CCVC chose to use a regular classroom. According to the principal of the CCVC, Amy Chan, many teachers do not use the computer lab for fear of students getting out of hand. In addition, as we also witnessed during observation, the process of transporting the students to the classroom would waste much of the forty-five minute class.

4.3.3 **Extracurricular Activities**

The CCVC and the CSFSS both provide extracurricular activities for students. The difference, however, is that the CSFSS offers more variety than the CCVC. This is possible for the school because it received HK$340,000 from the Quality Education Fund. These activities give the students something productive to do with their spare time and may even help the students develop psychologically.

One CCVC teacher's opinion reinforced this idea of providing the students additional options. Teacher E said during an interview that the students are inherently good but lack direction. If the students are given an interesting task to complete, they will put a lot of effort into completing it. For example, at Christmas time the CCVC had a competition where each class decorated its room. Most students, even the poorly behaved ones, were very involved in this activity and enjoyed it very much.

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on our analysis, we have identified four categories of improvements for the CCVC. These are: maintain order in the school, keep students motivated and interested, provide support for the students, and provide support for the teachers.

5.1   Maintain Order in the School

We encountered significant problems at the school regarding discipline and order. Teachers and students alike agreed that the classes were too noisy and "out-of-control" for proper learning to take place. With this in mind, we created a series of recommendations targeted at reducing the severity of some of these problems.

5.1.1   Enforce Regulations

One of the most straightforward ways of maintaining order in the school is to more strictly enforce the school regulations. There is already a set of rules which all students are expected to follow, but many teachers do not enforce them. This has led the students to consider those teachers who do enforce the rules to be mean or overly strict. In order to provide a more consistent environment that is conducive to learning, it is imperative that the school regulations be well known to all students and teachers and that they are followed closely. With this in mind, we are recommending that the school develop a student handbook that clearly lays out the rules and the consequences for breaking them. This handbook should also be delivered to the students' parents so that they understand what is expected of their children.

5.1.2 Merits and Demerits

One reason some teachers gave for not punishing students is that the current demerit system is too severe. It is for this reason that we are also recommending some changes in this system. One suggestion is to make the demerits themselves less severe, by increasing the number necessary for expulsion from the school. Less serious offenses would be punished less severely, while the more serious ones would warrant more demerits, thus allowing a closer tailoring of the punishment to the crime. In addition, as witnessed at the Caritas St. Francis Secondary School (CSFSS), we are recommending the use of community service work as an additional requirement to earn merits. Instead of allowing students to cancel their demerits through simply being good in class, they would be required to work off their punishment by helping the school or the community.

5.1.3 Classroom Organization and Discipline

The final area where order is lacking is in the individual classrooms. Even if they are not breaking school rules, students who are reading magazines or talking are not getting what they need out of their education. Teachers must take away magazines, comic books, mobile phones, and other such distractions when they are being used in the classroom. Keeping the item for three days before returning it to the student has worked well for CSFSS and could reduce the number of offenses at the CCVC, as well.

In addition, a consistent seating plan for all classrooms should be implemented and enforced to help limit the noise level. The most effective system we observed was seating students in pairs (see Figure 5-1 below), allowing students to work quietly together and share supplies as necessary while discouraging large groups of students from sitting together and misbehaving.
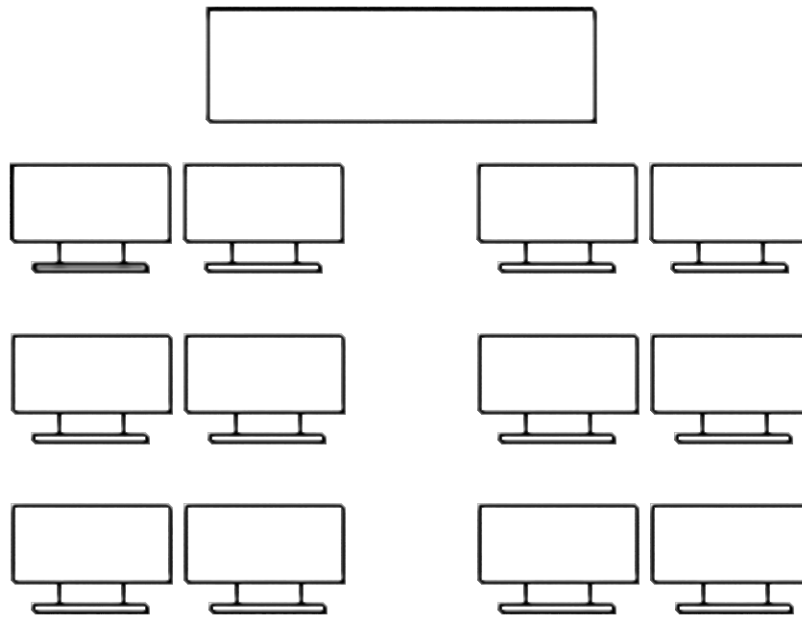
Figure 5-1: Proposed Seating Plan

5.2 Keep Students Motivated and Interested

Throughout our research for this project, one main idea has been constantly reinforced: the students of the CCVC are not lacking intelligence and are not bad people. The biggest problem that these students face within the classroom is a severe lack of motivation and interest in the subject matter. If the students are interested in what they are being taught, they are more likely to pay attention and put more effort into their work. After analyzing our collected data, we have developed some recommendations as to how the CCVC might better instill this sorely needed motivation into the students.

5.2.1 Use of Visual Aids and Technology

Using visual aids and technology in the classroom is one way of keeping students motivated and interested in the lesson. Both of these tools are readily available to all teachers at

the CCVC and allow for more versatile lessons. Specifically, Microsoft PowerPoint is a good

tool for visually representing information. We are recommending that, whenever possible,

teachers utilize these resources to help engage their students.

5.2.2 Topics of Interest to Students

The students at the CCVC have many interests other than their academics which could be

used in the classroom as teaching tools to keep them interested and motivated. Potential

distractions in the classroom could even be incorporated into lessons. For example, a teacher of

the Computer and Information Technology class could take the technical specifications of an

MP3 player and relate the amount of memory it has to the number of songs it can store. Taking

advantage of the students' personal interests could prove to be a very effective tool in motivating

them.

5.2.3 Division of Forms by Academic Ability

Currently, the students of each Form at the CCVC are first divided by their elective

course and then by their academic ability into classes. We recommend that the students be

divided first by academic ability and then by their elective course, so that the problem of

teaching students with widely varying levels of ability is reduced. If all of the better students are

in class together, then more advanced material can be taught at a faster pace, avoiding student

boredom and maintaining interest. Conversely, the students who do not perform well can move

more slowly in their lessons and spend more time on basic concepts. This will help prevent

students from becoming frustrated and losing motivation.

5.3 Provide Support to the Students

As stated in section 4.2.1, one of the largest issues facing students is a lack of self-esteem. In order to resolve this issue, we feel that it is imperative to provide extra support for these students on a daily basis. There are numerous ways for teachers and staff to reach out to these students and make them feel as if somebody cares about them.

5.3.1 Parental Involvement

As we discovered, many students at the CCVC are lacking support from their homes. One way to involve families in their children's educations would be to create a Parent-Teacher Association. Such an association would meet periodically and allow parents and teachers to make joint decisions about the school. At first, of course, this association would only draw out those parents who are already involved in their children's schooling, but as its influence increased, more parents would hopefully see the importance of having an active role in their children's educations. As parents became more involved in the school, they would also begin to take more interest in their children's futures and might even help recruit other parents to become involved.

5.3.2 Extracurricular Activities

Many students like to stay after school to socialize or play sports. Providing more extracurricular activities is one way to make productive use of the students' after school hours. Although there are basketball, table tennis, and football (soccer) teams at the CCVC, this selection does not cover a large enough spectrum to entertain a majority of the student body, especially those students who are not interested in sports at all.

Aside from more athletics, students should also be encouraged to create and sustain student clubs and interest groups. Perhaps the creation of a student government would be the most effective way to draw out student-leaders. Then, once there is a group of students capable of organizing events and making decisions, they could assist other students in the development of clubs and groups. Self-run student groups would provide teamwork and leadership experiences for the students that would greatly benefit them in the future.

A number of students, however, may not be able to commit to club meetings or team practices. For these students, a variety of occasional activities should be offered that they can attend as desired. One such idea is an after school movie or karaoke session, which could be offered in English or Putonghua, in order to continue the students' exposure to such subjects after school. Another idea is to expand the Christmas decoration competition to other times of year; Students enjoyed this type of activity and took pride in their classroom afterward. There are many fun activities that could be held after school hours to build a sense of community within the CCVC.

5.3.3 Expansion of Counseling Center

Although the two social workers at the CCVC attempt to reach out to students, they typically deal only with discipline problems. We believe that more regular interactions with the social workers would be very valuable to the students. By creating an inviting space for a counseling center, more students might view it as a comfortable place to visit. Instead of individual offices, it would be more beneficial to have one common room that serves as a reading and relaxing area for students, with private counseling offices accessible from there. This area should contain informative materials about educational opportunities, such as certificate and degree programs, and specifics on employment opportunities to prepare students for the future.

In addition, referring to the social workers as "counselors" might make them more approachable for students.

Informing students about the counseling services at the CCVC would be most important at the beginning of the Form 4 school year. The best way to do this is to have the social workers visit each classroom and present a briefing about what assistance the counseling center can offer to students. After this first meeting, it would become a student's responsibility to use the counseling center as needed, or possibly at the recommendation of his or her teacher.

The next important meeting should be at the beginning of the Form 5 school year. An individual meeting between a student and one of the social workers should be scheduled in order to set goals for the student to aim for in the year ahead. Once identified, the social worker should assist the student in understanding the objectives that must be met to achieve these goals. From this point on, the responsibility would again fall on the student to continue working towards these objectives.

5.3.4 Advisory Boards

As discussed in section 2.3.4.1, the Worcester Vocational High School established advisory boards for each of its technical areas of study. Such advisory boards could also be beneficial to the CCVC because this school also provides a vocational training service. Working with local industry to identify the proper training procedures and high-demand fields of study would assure the best preparation for the students.

5.4 Provide Support for Teachers

In every school system it is important that teachers are placed in the best possible situation for teaching the students. In analyzing our data we noted that some additional support could greatly improve the circumstances for the teachers.

5.4.1 Additional Staff

As stated in section 4.1.3, many of the teachers are burdened by non-teaching responsibilities. The most time-consuming of these appear to be the administrative and disciplinary duties. Reducing the teachers' administrative responsibilities and assigning them to student-based extracurricular activities would give teachers a greater chance to understand the students' desires and adjust their classes accordingly. Also, by eliminating many of the disciplinary responsibilities of the teachers, more time could be allotted to creating better lesson plans. One option for obtaining more staff could be the incorporation of volunteers. Perhaps parents from the proposed Parent-Teacher Association or senior citizens from the community would be willing to assist occasionally when more help is needed. Arranging for student internships from local universities could be beneficial, as well. In addition, if feasible within the current budgetary constraints, it would be very helpful if additional administrative staff were hired. This new group of staff could be used to take on some of the administrative and disciplinary duties currently assigned to teachers.

5.4.2 Teacher Training

As discussed in 5.2.1, students often respond better to the use of visual aids and computer presentation programs, so it is important for all teachers to feel comfortable with different methods of presenting information, such as using PowerPoint. By providing a teacher training

session before the beginning of the school year on the use of such technologies, teachers would be more comfortable and confident in how to improve their lesson plans, thus improving student learning. Though the teachers feel that such training is unnecessary because time is the main inhibiting factor, we feel that it could still be beneficial. Increased comfort with and knowledge of these tools would allow the teachers to create presentations and visual aids more quickly, which is important given the shortage of time many teachers face. The best way to handle this training would be to tailor it to the experience of the teachers, providing them with the greatest benefit possible.

5.5 Future work

Many of the recommendations presented here are broad in scope and will require more time and effort to integrate successfully into the CCVC. The following are some areas where we think additional work will be necessary:

- Investigate the best way to teach the students at the CCVC and develop the appropriate lesson plans and visual aids for the teachers.
- Identify the wants and needs of parents in order to create a Parent-Teacher Association.
- Determine the information and materials necessary to develop a career counseling center.
- Establish contacts in industry in order to create advisory boards and obtain input from the business community.
- Identify suitable volunteers from the community to act as teaching assistants or help in other areas of the school.

5.6 Conclusion

We are confident that the recommendations outlined here to maintain order in the school, keep the students motivated and interested, and provide additional support for both students and teachers, would greatly benefit the students at the CCVC. We feel certain that these recommendations can be useful to and are feasible at the CCVC and any other schools in Hong Kong in a similar situation. We are very optimistic that the Caritas Charles Vath College will be a great success.

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Appendix A – Classroom Observation Notes at the CCVC

*Red text denotes instances of teacher discipline.

*Blue text denotes instances of student sleeping.

<u>Form 4</u>

1) 20 Students

- Seats are spread out all over the room.

- Some students are talking and laughing, but they are also yelling in response to the teacher.

- The teacher is giving some students candy for having top scores on the exam.

- Some students are playing with their mobile phones.

- Various reactions from students as they get their exam scores back.

- One student gets up and changes seat.

- One student keeps banging his desk around.

- Another student closes the shades on the windows.

- Teacher raises his voice and looks at the students that were yelling in the corner, but he takes no action.

- One girl gets up and talks to her friend.

- A bunch of students are playing with phones and standing up when the discipline master comes around to the classroom.

- Discipline master removes the most disruptive student from the class.

- Three students are sleeping; two students are facing the back of the room.

- Only six students are paying attention, four of which are sitting front and center.

- Teacher stops to get one student's attention while another one runs across the room, and then he is told to go back to his seat.

- The teacher tries to take a mobile phone from a student, but the student yells at him. The teacher then tells him to put the phone away instead, and he does not do that either.

2) 25 Students

- Teacher begins by handing back exams.

- One student comes in late.

- Students are standing up discussing exams, seeing how everyone else did, and getting rather rowdy.

- One girl starts yelling about her grade, other join.

- One student raises hand with a question on the exam.

- One student ignores the chaos and naps.

- A group of students congregate around the teacher.

- Finally, 15 minutes into class, the teacher begins to use the board.

- The whole class is talking loudly; one shows a magazine to others.

- Teacher tries to make them behave, and starts the lesson.

- Some students interact with the teacher and ask questions.

- Teacher is reviewing exam answers, and the class gets quieted down a bit to see them.

- When the teacher goes to individuals to help with questions, the other act up.

- Most students just are not doing anything, but talking.

- Teacher is still not teaching anything, instead is trying to patrol the class.

- Now the teacher is trying to teach, but students are shouting and she has to reprimand them.

- Two students are having a mock sword fight with their exams.

- One student stands to read someone's newspaper.

- Five students sleeping.

- Four students playing with mobile phones.

- Most students are quiet for the last five minutes of instruction.

- Students tossing candy, one is spiking another's hair.

3) 25 Students

- Class stands and says "good afternoon" to start.

- Teacher yelled at the class to keep quiet because they were very excited after lunch.

- Girl literally jumped up and down having a fit.

- Girl and boy in aisle are trying to kick each other.

- Teacher asks to turn to page one, students quiet down.

- Teacher is asking English questions, but getting Cantonese answers.

- The quiz was about dating and other school issues that helped to keep the students attention, because they can relate to it.

- Two students are taken out of class by the vice principal.

- Six students are sleeping.

- One girl tries to static cling another's hair.

- On girl keeps shouting out answers.

- There are nine students sleeping.

- One girl moved her desk next to another, but the teacher makes her move back, and she begins reading a magazine.

- All of the class starts saying that they are tired and do not want to learn.

4) 17 Students

- There are only 10 students to start the class and then three wander in late.

- One student greets us and cleans the area we are sitting in. The he goes around and fixes crooked banners.

- One student talks to another that is standing outside the classroom.

- One student leaves ad comes back with another who was late.

- Teacher passes back exams and students read them quietly.

- Same student cleaning earlier and picks up things that have blown across the room because of the wind.

- Another student wanders in half way though the class.

- Teacher tells the student who is talking to move seats, but he refuses and then puts his head down.

- Only one student out of sixteen is not reading over their exam.

- Another student knocks, then enters the room twenty minutes late, but he leaves a note for the teacher on the desk.

- Two students have put heads down on their desks.

- A boy and girl are holding hands with their heads down.

- Five students have their heads down, and there are only three girls in this class.

- One boy sits up and wakes the girl next to him.

- A different student gets up to get things that have blown across the room, but the teacher tells him never mind.

- Students ask questions about an answer.

- Ten heads are down, but only three are really sleeping.

- Student knocks exam on the floor and laves it after the bell rings.

- Teacher is writing for a while and no one talks.

- One student pretends to sleep when he is called out of class.

- It is very windy so two students get up to shut the windows.

5) 31 Students

- Students were very friendly toward us, saying "Hi" and "How are you".

- At the beginning of class almost all the students were very attentive, only one or two were talking and only two had their heads down.

- Students sitting in paired rows.

- Teacher uses project a lot and very well.

- Students help teacher take attendance, get up and close blinds when the project is turned on, and also help him pass out papers.

- Teacher is very positive, smiling a lot.

- The majority of class responds to teacher speaking to them and asking them questions.

- One students starts listening to his MP3 player.

- Sporadically a few conversations begin between students, but do not last very long.

- Teacher addresses students individually, and they do not hesitate to respond, many are enthusiastic about it.

- Two students put their heads down momentarily, then they continue to pay attention.

- Teacher actively involves the class, takes a cote or tally and counts how many students raise their hands.

- One student with his head down is listening to music loudly, but he stops and puts away the MP3 player after a statement from the teacher.

- At most there are nine students with their heads down, but only three are sleeping.

- At least two-thirds of students are paying attention the entire time.

- All the students say goodbye in unison to us.

- Teacher says that one or two of the regular trouble makers were missing today.

6) 25 Students

- The teacher is rewarding some students for good scores, and other students are clapping.

- Teacher claps or bangs on desk to get students' attention.

- Some students try to trade candy.

- Teacher gets quiet, crosses arms and stares at students who are talking.

- Class up talking students to do problems on the board, stops him once he gets some wrong.

- Makes fun of students who are talking by looking and saying "blah blah blah".

- Most students have their book open.

- Wrote students name on board who was playing on phone.

- 4 students are sleeping.

- Teacher goes around to make sure everyone is doing work, some students just talking maybe about math, while teacher is helping someone.

- She tells one student to help another, asks who needs help, and goes to those students. One girl runs to teacher with a question.

- Teacher pretends to smack sleeping student.

- Asks the same student to help others.

7) 15 Students

- Students very, nice, talking directly to me.

- 7 Students with their heads down to start class

- Other students talking very much

- Students still seem to be paying attention despite conversations

- Students answer teacher's questions, respond to teacher

- Students address teacher as Missy

- One student want to leave the class, gets teacher's attention and asks permission, teacher writes student a pass before he can leave

- Student enters class 15 minutes late

- One student leaves with permission, but without pass

- One student lifts head off desk and begins participating in class

- Student from another class pokes head off desk and begins participating in class

- One student in far corner plays with cell phone throughout class

- One student constantly changing seats in the room

- Specifically 3 students are very attentive for most of class

- Student who left with note had cut on hand, comes back with band aid on

- Two boys play with a rubber ball, one boy reads a comic book

- Attentive students wake up a sleeping student and laugh at him, make comments sleeping students gets angry,, turns away, eventually goes back to sleep

8) 17 Students

- To get the students attention, he throws a marker at them.

- No students brought anything other than magazines or MP3 players to class.

- Teacher makes one talkative student get up and move seats.

- Girl is telling a boy that he can't sleep in class.

- Teacher is making a story on the board. Some students are participating and giving words for the story.

- One student head down, the rest are paying attention.

- One student put his head down, but stayed awake because of the content of class.

- Then when asked to write on a paper, three students do not even take the assignment from the teacher.

- Student is gone for thirty minutes and returns at the end of class.

- One student sleeps through the bell.

- One student stays doing work after the bell.

9) 18 Students

- Five students are sleeping at the start of class.

- One student in the front row is sitting on his desk.

- Two desks are completely covered by magazines and newspapers.

- Students are coming and going as they please.

- Six students are sleeping, on woke up and went to his locker.

- Six students are paying attention, but saying that the material being taught (the English alphabet) is completely useless and a waste of time.

- A student ripped a paper from the teacher's hand.

- One girl is listening to MP3 player and one student plays on their phone and then makes a phone call.

- A phone rings and the teacher does a dance to the music. Then the student apologizes.

- One student asks if he should copy what the teacher is writing on the board. Two students are taking notes.

- The teacher tells a student to put his phone on vibrate when it goes off again.

- Another phone rings, hand the teacher says that school is not over yet.

- Student asks to go take a shit; the teacher asks him if he can wait. The student says no, so the teacher tells him he better hurry up.

- One girl calls the teacher or another student a dick, when he asked the teacher if he could go to the toilet in the way he phrased it.

Form 5

10) 24 Students

- "No speaking while the teacher is speaking, if you don't listen, you cannot learn."

- Many students respond when asked.

- If some students cannot contribute in English they become quiet, yet many still attempt to speak the language.

- Two students appear to be very distracted, having their own conversation.

- Teacher singles them out and asks them questions.

- When each student is asked to give three words, they become embarrassed, some

   distracted, one student even puts his head down and goes to sleep.

11) 18 Students

- Debate style class which gives meaning to new English topics and subjects that

   the students are interested in.

- Two topics of the debate were smoking and girls wearing pants to school.

- The class was pre-divided by the teacher into pro and con categories.

- Some students speak up if they can speak well.

- Some of the boys change the topic to "dicks".

- Teacher allows them to speak, so long as they are speaking English.

- Some students who can speak English are quiet because they do not want the

   negative attention being discussed by other students.

- None of the females seem to want to speak up in front of the males.

12) 24 Students

- Students show up late, many are distracted.

- Teacher uses microphone, which is harder to understand and very loud.

- Less than one half of the class is paying attention.

- Only two to four students are answering the teacher's questions.

- Groups of students are having separate conversations.

- A mobile phone rings in class.

- Teacher holds up a piece of paper and points at certain figures. The students in the

   back of the room cannot see the details being displayed.

- One student that was paying attention is now recording attendance.

- Some students are reading comics or doing crosswords at their desk.

- One girl brushes her hair.

- Teacher called one student to the front and all the rest became distracted.

- A couple students stood up and switched seats to talk.

- Students throw objects across the room.

- One student is individually given a timer and a piece of paper, then allowed five minutes to prepare before teaching the material to the class.

- He was chosen because he was not paying attention, but he does not efficiently prepare in the five minutes.

- Some students start singing.

- The chosen student heads to the front of the class to instruct the others.

- Some students make fun of him for stuttering.

- More students listen to him than were paying attention to the teacher.

- Students applaud when the student is done teaching.

- Two students are doing drawings for their art class.

13) 34 Students

- Started class with all the students standing and then allowed them to sit.

- Used the projector right away.

- Most students were paying attention and being responsive.

- One student goes to his locker; a few others have side conversations.

- Handouts for the whole class, most students read them.

- The girls are more expressive and involved in this class than boys.

- Students seem to be seated in groups of three, which causes more talking.

- Teacher queried the class, and most students responded by raising hands.

- Three girls in the back are having side conversations, being very loud. They were never asked to stop.

- Some students do not listen while other students are speaking, but then they all applaud after student gives the right answer.

- One girl brushes her hair.

- Four students are sleeping, no one wakes them up.

14) 28 Students

- At the start of class, some students move around to their lockers.

- Only five students did the homework, and only seven even thought about doing it by a show of hands.

- Some students push desks together to share books.

- One girl gets up to erase the board.

- Two students in the front row put their heads down as soon as class starts.

- Not many side conversations at all.

- Most students are paying attention either to the book or to the teacher.

- One student reads a comic book in the back of the room.

- Four students are sleeping at the halfway point in class.

- Something is thrown from one student to another, teacher stops class to see what it was. Student says it was just a tissue to blow his nose, but the teacher is still angry and says that he does not like anything being thrown in his class, "Please just ask next time." Student seems scared.

- Someone laughs, and again the teacher stops class to ask, "What is so funny?"

- Stops the lesson again, puts the microphone down and stairs at two students, tells them to stop messing around, and says its not his problem if they do not want to pay attention, but do not disrupt his class.

- Some students are drawing or fiddling around.

- Approximately seven students leave and are asked to bring a pencil to go to detention.

- Teacher puts his arm around a student he reprimanded earlier and speaks with him privately.

- Seven students are sleeping when the bell rings.

- Teacher says he is not done teaching.

- One student gives the teacher the finger behind his back.

- A mobile phone rings, and the teacher takes it away.

15) 25 Students

- Begins the class with students standing, but they are rowdy.

- Takes ten minutes just to get attendance accounted for.

- Students keep asking the teacher if we will play ball with them after school.

- Teacher makes some students switch seats.

- Boys are telling each other to eat shit.

- There are seven male students sitting in the back of the room talking amongst themselves.

- Teacher went to the back corner to address them.

- Most of the students are paying attention, with just a few side conversations.

- Half way through class, one student asks what we (WPI students) are doing there, even though it was already explained.

- Teacher approaches a student with his head down on the desk.

- Still, about four students are sleeping, while ten have their heads down.

- Students in the far corner are having a card game.

16) 28 Students

- Takes at least 15 minutes to switch classrooms and get settled.

- Teacher tries to start class, but too many students are talking/shouting.

- Students are seated in tables of five, and each group is just playing games.

- One student keeps switching tables.

- Someone threw something at the front of the room.

- Students are talking on mobile phones and listening to MP3 players.

- Some students are excited to draw on the board, but most are not paying attention.

- Eight students are not even facing the front of the classroom.

- Teacher goes to the individual tables to assign drawings and then keeps walking around to check on them.

- Teacher says to a table that just will not do any work, "If you guys are going to come to my class, don't sleep. Don't come here and eat shit." The students respond, "But teacher, we don't know how to eat shit."

- One girl flipped off the teacher.

- Teacher is helping those students who are having trouble.

- One student pretended to slap the teacher.

- 5/6 of the class is doing the assigned work.

17) 30 Students

- Tried to get the whole class to stand at the start of the period.

- Majority of student have their books out and are answering the teachers' questions.

- Seems as though the students are more knowledgeable and confident with their own language.

- The whole class is reciting some verses written on the board.

- When a student turns around to talk, the teacher asks him for an answer.

- The teacher uses some humor in the lesson and is speaking very quickly.

- Some students pass notes and have short side conversations.

- Students seem to enjoy interacting with the teacher, find her humorous, very lively.

- When she allows students to interject in a funny way, many side conversations ensue.

- Teacher uses pre-made posters with magnets on the board instead of slides.

- Order is not restored again, until the teacher has the whole class do another reading off the board.

- One student distracts others around him by playing with an ant on the floor. He picks it up and puts it on the boy next to him.

- One boy seems to be flirting with the girl next to him.

18) 30 Students

- Three students begin with their heads down.

- One student begins doing math on the board.

- Most students are reading from the book.

- Teacher corrects and explains the student's work.

- Students are creating a low chatter, but it is relevant to class material.

- Seating is in three columns, two desks wide, with five rows.

- Many students are responding to the math on the board.

- A paper gets passed back on the face of a sleeping student; he shakes around until it falls off.

- Six students are sleeping; one other has head down with head phones on.

- Nine students have their heads down with at least ten minutes left in class.

- Teacher called another student up to the board.

- Teacher goes around showing students how to do the assignment and wakes and helps those students that were sleeping as well.

- Students remain relatively quiet during the time to do paper work, while the teacher walks around.

- One student walks in with only two minutes left in class.

- One student who has been staring into space all class says he is bored, then turns to another student, asks for a pen, and starts to do the work.

19) 20 Students

- Teacher does not use microphone. Most of the students are still eating snacks and milling around from lunch.

- A group of seven students in the back corner are just having their own conversation and not paying attention.

- Students get up and move around.

- One student tries to sneak out with another while the teacher's back is turned, and then he blocks the teacher's view so that the other can run out.

- One student in the back corner takes off his uniform shirt.

- The teacher tells a yelling student to leave.

- Student leaves to talk on his mobile phone.

- Teacher uses power point slides to teach.

- Although loud and distracted, the group in the back corner is answering the teacher's questions.

- Teacher singles out students who are talking and tries to teach to those who are not paying attention.

- Approximately seven students are paying attention.

- Only five or six students have their books out to follow along.

- Six students are somehow sleeping through all the noise.

- Two students jokingly push and shove in the back of the room.

- Teacher uses a mobile phone as part of the lesson, and it effectively gets the students' attention.

- One student is just playing a game on his phone.

20) 20 Students

- Teacher begins with handouts to the class, most are reviewing them to start, but one student already has his head down.

- Most students are paying attention and responding to teacher questions.

- One girl is answering most questions, her speaking even wakes up a girl in front of her.

- One girl starts singing to and with a boy next to her while she is listening to her MP3 player.

- Students are seated in five single columns, providing for good behavior.

- Two students are taking pictures with their phones.

- One student stands up to read something from another student.

- Teacher stopped to take attendance and students began talking and milling about.

- Teacher ended class five minutes early.

- Five students are listening to MP3 players.

21) 35 males/18 females

- Class is split for males and females.

- Males are playing basketball and badminton.

Attendance is called in a secluded area outside, to get the students in order.

- Males begin playing while the females are still getting organized.

- The female teacher takes a set of playing cards away from the girls, and must also use the microphone outside.

- Some girls are skipping rope.

- Some boys are taking a "physical fitness test" or they may just be having races.

- Teacher shows the girls how to jump faster, higher, and double jump. She is really trying to make something of the activity and keep everyone involved.

- Some of the boys are just watching the girls skip rope.

- One girl ventures to play football (soccer) with boys.

- Two three-on-three basketball games are being played. Four students are playing football (soccer). Three students are just shooting around a basketball. One boy and fifteen girls are jumping rope. Three students are just doing nothing.

- One girl playing basketball with the boys is told to leave.

22) 5 Students

- Students are practicing advanced English, tricky words like "board" and "bored".

- Students suggest other words to go over such as "heel" and "heel".

- Teacher uses humorous drawings on the board.

- Students quietly saw answers. Teacher encourages them.

- Teacher tells the students to try. Tells them that being wrong does not matter.

- Teacher assigns topics and gives the student one minute to think of a three-minute speech on that topic.

- None of the students can fill the three minutes, but the teacher just tries asking them more questions to fill the extra time.

- The students are very shy and speak quietly.

23) 28 Students

- All students working quietly on drawing objects on the table.

- Teacher is visiting individual tables to help students.

- One student gets up and leaves.

- Some students are raising hands or approaching the teacher for help.

- Another student yells and then leaves.

- Some students are walking around to see the others' work.

- This class is very well behaved it seems because most actually are enjoying the drawing.

- A student reenters and talks to others, distracting them.

- One student that is not working, just sitting by himself, staring into space, puts his head down on the desk.

- Teacher tries to talk to the boy with his head down.

- He responds by yelling something and going back to sleep.

- Teacher explains something to the class from the back of the room, but has everyone's attention.

- One boy drops a pencil and swears loudly in English.

- Teacher yells at the boys for talking while continuing to help another student.

Appendix B – Classroom Observation Notes at the CSFSS

<u>Form 1</u>

1) 17 Students

- There are two teachers, one Native English Teacher and one Local.

- Local teacher goes around making them take books out, NET teacher reads and students follow, some students share books.

- To begin class, students stand and say good morning.

- Students must underline words on board.

- Local teacher gives out candy for correct answers.

- NET doesn't always let the same student answer, calls on others to try.

- Does not practice meaning of word just pronunciation.

- Students get distracted when she asks whole class to repeat.

- Now everyone underlines what she says.

- No side conversations.

- Students are working in established teams where they are told to group chairs together.

- Groups are completing a crossword, and the first team done gets candy.

- Most groups working productively, some students joking around.

- Gives candy to all groups when finished, game works well.

- Students must memorize words to play the game (hangman), many students are very anxious to guess a letter.

2) 13 Students

- Students arrive ready to learn, and attentive.

- Pay close attention to teacher's instructions for at least five to ten minutes.

- Break into smaller groups of two to prepare the food.

- Once students have made mixtures they go back and quietly listen to more instruction.

- Again they return to stations and carry out instructions self-sufficiently.

- More instruction followed by students giving the teacher questions.

- One student tries flipping the pancake in the pan, when successful other students applaud.

- This is a double period class.

Form 4

3) 12 Students

- Large size room, teacher uses microphone while teaching web page design, in a computer lab.

- Teacher is also responsible for IT administration and teaching all technical classes.

- Begins class once most students are there.

- Only takes less than five minutes to get everyone to class and started.

- Teacher controls their computers from her desk, and students have a hand out to follow.

- Most students offer answers to questions asked.

- Students then open up web page editing program to do work.

- Some students use internet and check email when teacher is unaware.

- All Students eventually begin designing our web pages.

- Teacher constantly going around the classroom checking and helping students.

Form 6

4) 30 Students

- All students attentive and prepared for class, also has second local teacher who keeps order, makes teams of four for Jeopardy like quiz game.

- One student in back is making ramen, but put it away in his desk.

- Teacher uses the projector for the game.

- Categories include places, Australia, spelling, movies, music, and sports to incorporate students' interests.

- All students paying attention and interested in subject matter and competition.

- Teacher lets the students make up questions for final jeopardy, and then has them stand up and ask the class.

- Reads off final scores and gives candy to the winning team.

Appendix C – Student Survey Questionnaire

（學生問卷調查）

- Are you male or female?   (你的性別?)

         __ Male (男仔)   __ Female (女仔)

- How old are you?   (請填上你的年齡?)

         _____

- What Form are you?   (請填上你的年級)?

         _____

- What do you plan to do upon graduation? (Please select only one)

     你計劃畢業后幹什麼? (請選擇一個)

     __ Work (工作)   __ More Education (繼續學習)   __ Not sure (還不確定)

- Which kind of class do you prefer? (Please select only one)

     你喜歡哪种形式的授課? (請選擇一個)

     __ Lecture (講書) __ Lab/hands-on (動手實驗)   __ Technological (多媒體教學)

For each of the following questions, please circle the most appropriate number.

以下問題，請根據你的情況圈上相應的數字

	Never (絕對不是)	Rarely (很少認爲)	Sometimes (有時認爲)	Usually (經常覺得)	Always (始終贊同)
I like going to school (我喜歡上學)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy working in a group during class (在課堂上,我喜歡分成不同小組去學習)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy using computers (我喜歡用電腦)	1	2	3	4	5
Technology makes class more interesting (多媒體教學能令課堂更加有趣)	1	2	3	4	5
I stay at the school after dismissal (放學後我喜歡留在學校)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy my elective class (我很喜歡我的選修課)	1	2	3	4	5
CCVC is better than my last school (CCVC 比我以前的學校好)	1	2	3	4	5
I like when teachers use the projector (我喜歡老師用投影機教書)	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers focus too much on the HKCEE (老師非常著重會考)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like teachers care about my success (我覺得老師很關心我能否成功)	1	2	3	4	5
I respect my teachers (我尊敬我的老師)	1	2	3	4	5
I can relate to my teachers (我能和老師相處得很好)	1	2	3	4	5
I sit in my assigned seat (我會坐在被分配到的座位上)	1	2	3	4	5
I like wearing my school uniform (我喜歡穿校服上學)	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following questions, please circle the most appropriate number.

以下問題，請根據你的情況圈上相應的數字

	Never (絕對不是)	Rarely (很少認爲)	Sometimes (有時認爲)	Usually (經常覺得)	Always (始終贊同)
I complete homework assignments (我能夠完成家庭作業)	1	2	3	4	5
I fall asleep during class (我在上課時會睡覺)	1	2	3	4	5
I pay attention during class (我能夠在上課時集中精力)	1	2	3	4	5
Classes are too noisy (我覺得上課的時候太吵了)	1	2	3	4	5
I play on my cell phone during class (我在上課的時候會玩手機)	1	2	3	4	5
I read magazines during class (我在上課的時候看雜誌)	1	2	3	4	5
I argue or fight with my parents (我和我的父母爭吵或打架)	1	2	3	4	5
I talk to my parents about how school is going (我經常和我的夥伴討論學校的發展)	1	2	3	4	5
My parents encourage me to do my homework (我的父母鼓勵我自己完成家庭作業)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel pressured by my friends (我常常感到來自朋友的壓力)	1	2	3	4	5
I have girlfriend or boyfriend problems (我被男女感情問題所困擾)	1	2	3	4	5
I talk to the social workers (我會和社工交談)	1	2	3	4	5
My friends work hard in class (我的朋友在課堂上努力學習)	1	2	3	4	5
I want to pass the HKCEE (我希望能通過會考)	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following questions, please circle the most appropriate number.

以下問題，請根據你的情況圈上相應的數字

	Definitely Not (肯定不會)	Probably Not (可能不會)	Maybe (可能)	Probably (很可能)	Definitely (肯定會)
I want to pass the HKCEE (我希望能通過會考)	1	2	3	4	5
My friends want to pass the HKCEE (我的朋友希望能通過會考)	1	2	3	4	5
I think I can pass the HKCEE (我想我有能力通過會考)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel school is useful (我覺得學校對我是有用的)	1	2	3	4	5
I will continue on to Form 6 (我會繼續上中六)	1	2	3	4	5
I will have a good job someday (我將來會有一份好工作的)	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D – Student Survey Results

Male Student Surveys Received 136   **Female Student Surveys Received 109**
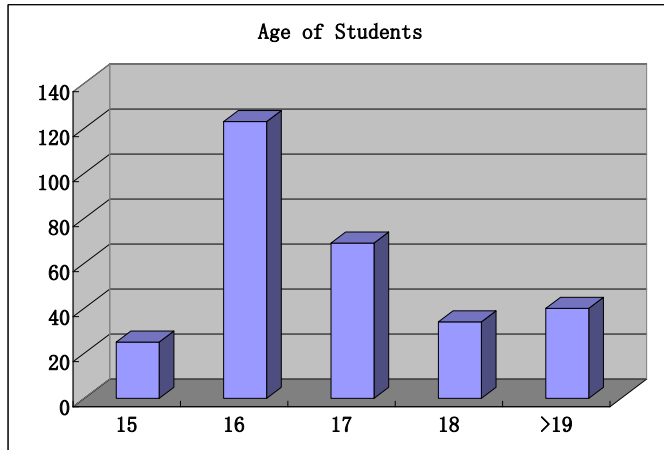
Average Age of Students Surveyed 16.58
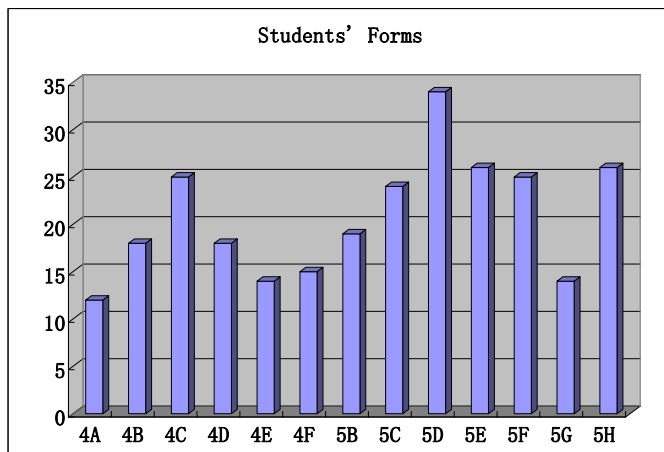
Total Form 4 Students Surveyed 102   **Total Form 5 Students Surveyed 168**

	Work	Further Education	Unsure	No Response
What do you plan on doing after graduation?	58	112	88	10

	Lecture	Lab/Hands-On	Technology	No Response
What kind of class do you prefer?	22	108	126	13

Each of the following Tables shows the total number of students who responded with each answer to each question and the average answer given by the students.

Question	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	No Response	Average Response
6. I like going to school	20	31	152	48	18	0	3.05
7. I enjoy working in a group during class	21	70	99	57	32	1	2.95
8. I enjoy using computers	11	15	80	78	85	1	3.78
9. Technology makes class more interesting	17	21	99	79	52	2	3.48
10. I stay at the school after dismissal	72	79	86	24	8	1	2.32
11. I enjoy my elective class	26	50	106	58	29	1	3.05
12. CCVC is better than my last school	65	33	95	35	42	0	2.84
13. I like when teachers use the projector	16	48	136	46	23	1	3.04
14. Teachers focus too much on the HKCEE	15	31	98	76	50	0	3.43
15. I feel like teachers care about my success	17	38	113	74	24	2	3.19
16. I respect my teachers	15	27	94	92	42	0	3.44
17. I can relate to my teachers	14	30	100	96	29	1	3.36
18. I sit in my assigned seat	16	40	77	76	60	1	3.46
19. I like wearing my school uniform	33	38	99	51	49	0	3.17

Question	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	No Response	Average Response
20. I complete my homework assignments	33	53	128	39	14	2	2.81
21.I fall asleep in class	22	48	119	51	28	2	3.06
22. I pay attention during class	22	39	152	39	12	5	2.92
23. Classes are too noisy	17	33	110	58	49	2	3.33
24. I play on my cell phone during class	65	82	87	15	17	3	2.39
25. I read magazines during class	51	87	101	13	16	2	2.46
26. I argue or fight with my parents	86	88	72	15	7	2	2.14
27. I talk to my parents about how school is going	68	91	89	16	4	2	2.24
28. My parents encourage me to do my homework	33	56	117	37	24	2	2.85
29. I feel pressured by my friends	62	85	86	23	12	2	2.40
30. I have girlfriend or boyfriend problems	83	80	71	16	18	2	2.28
31. I talk to the social workers	110	67	62	19	10	2	2.07
32.My friends work hard in class	44	64	119	26	15	2	2.64

Question	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Maybe	Probably	Definitely	No Response	Average Response
33. I want to pass the HKCEE	14	24	114	35	79	4	3.53
34. My friends want to pass the HKCEE	10	19	121	62	55	3	3.50
35. I think I can pass the HKCEE	25	54	107	40	40	3	3.05
36. I feel school is useful	16	52	119	56	24	3	3.07
37. I will continue on to study	31	70	84	42	38	4	2.95
39. I will have a good job someday	7	30	116	45	69	3	3.52

Appendix E – Teacher Survey Questionnaire

Instructions: This is a confidential, anonymous survey. Please complete at your convenience and return to the brown folder on the table near the WPI students. Thank you for your help.

What Form do you teach?

_____

Are you pressured to "teach to" the HKCEE?

__ Yes   __ No

If not, do you ever find yourself doing this anyway?

__ Yes   __ No

Would students here benefit from a more hands-on approach to learning?

__ Yes   __ No

Would students benefit from more involvement with technology?

__ Yes   __ No

Do you use visual aids during class?

__ Yes   __ No

Do you use the computer and projector during class?

__ Yes   __ No

Do you know how to use PowerPoint or other presentation software?

__ Yes   __ No

Do you feel intimidated by your students?

__ Never   __ Rarely   __ Sometimes   __ Usually   __Always

Do you take away a students cell phones, magazines, etc. if you see them being used?

__ Never   __ Rarely   __ Sometimes   __ Usually   __Always

Do you wake up students who are sleeping in class?

__ Never   __ Rarely   __ Sometimes   __ Usually   __Always

What percentages of your students would you say attend class everyday?

__ Less than 20%   __ Between 20% and 39%

__ Between 40% and 59%   __ Between 60% and 79%

__ 80% or higher

How much time do you spend helping the students outside of class per week?

__ Less than 30 minutes   __ Between 30 and 59 minutes

__ Between 1 and 3 hours   __ More than 3 hours

Do you have school responsibilities outside of teaching?

__ Yes   __ No

If so, does this responsibility involve working with students?

_Yes   __No

How long do you spend on these responsibilities per week?

__ Less than 30 minutes   __ Between 30 and 59 minutes

__ Between 1 and 3 hours   __ More than 3 hours

Can you think of any other issues the students face?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why do you think Form 4 students have worse behavior, and how could these be addressed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have any suggestions as to how to improve the CCVC?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F – Teacher Survey Results

The following table shows the percentage of teachers who responded to each question with an answer of yes and the percentage of teachers who answered no.

Question	Yes (%)	No(%)
Are you pressured to "teach to" the HKCEE?	56	44
If not, do you ever find yourself doing this anyway?	44	56
Would students here benefit from a more hands-on approach to learning?	80	20
Would students here benefit from more involvement with technology?	65	35
Do you use visual aids during class?	76	24
Do you use the computer and projector during class?	78	22
Do you know how to use PowerPoint or other presentation software?	100	0

The following table shows the number of teachers who responded to the corresponding answers and the average response of the teachers.

Question	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Average
Do you feel intimidated by your students?	0	2	8	2	1	3.15
Do you take away a students cell phones, magazines, etc. if you see them being used?	0	4	10	0	1	2.87
Do you wake up students who are sleeping in class?	0	3	7	3	2	3.27

The following two tables show the number of teachers who responded to the corresponding answer.

Question	>20%	20 -39%	40-59%	60-79%	>80%
What percentages of your students would you say attend class everyday?	1	4	5	3	4

Question	< 30 min	30 -59 min	1 – 3 hours	> 3 hours
How much time do you spend helping students outside of class per week?	1	3	10	3

The following table shows the percentage of teachers who responded to each question with an answer of yes and the percentage of teachers who answered no.

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do you have school responsibilities outside of teaching?	93	7
If so, does this responsibility involve working with students?	71	29

The following table shows the number of teachers who responded to the corresponding answer.

Question	< 30 min	30 -59 min	1 – 3 hours	> 3 hours
How much time do you spend on these responsibilities per week?	0	1	4	9

Open Ended Questions

1. Can you think of any other issues students face?

Teacher 1: They lack self-esteem & encouragement from families. They are the type of people who are not suitable for sitting in on formal exams. They are full of talents outside the academic study.

Teacher 2: family problems, love affairs, peer pressure & the difficulty of finding part time jobs.

Teacher 4: Most of the students are facing a lot of problems which come from their parents & family. Also, about 20% of the students here feel hard to communicate with the other 80% "naughty" students. Also, they have to face the fact that they also might not find anything to do.

Teacher 5: Emotional problems and conflicts with family

Teacher 7: Family problems, low social class, lack of support and resources. They are afraid of English and with low level of Chinese & English have low confidence and motivation.

Teacher 8: Our students do not realize the importance of working/studying for their future. Many of them see little/no future for themselves and do not try because of this. They live for the day, sometimes, the moment. With this attitude in about 70% of the student body it is almost impossible to motivate them to learn no matter what form the teaching takes. Many have given up any hope of success in any field.

Teacher 9: They think that going to school is playing rather than studying.

Teacher 11: Emotional problems, family problems and issues with love.

Teacher 12: The future, their family problems.

Teacher 13: Stress, love affair problems, problems with family.
Teacher 14: Pressure from family or society.

Teacher 15: They feel that they can't learn. (i.e. they lose confidence in learning)

Teacher 16: Lack of motivation in learning, disciplinary problem, emotional problem.

Teacher 17: Boredom, lack of motivation, limited view of their future. Some domestic issues out of school such as jobs which take their energy away.

2. Why do you think Form 4 students have worse behavior, and how could this be addressed?

Teacher 1: I don't teach Form 4. Can't give any comment.

Teacher 2: low self-esteem, family problems, do not have goal in life, peer pressure. Should have put more efforts on counseling discipline and awards. Students need encouragement as well.

Teacher 4: I don't think Form 4 students have worse behavior. There are a lot of Form 5 students have worse behavior, but they are worse in different ways.

Teacher 5: They have difficulties controlling their behavior.

Teacher 6: Although I have no class in Form 4 I find the above feelings only by my observations.

Teacher 7: Low social class. Growing background was full of failure experience No self confidence with low self-esteem. More manpower in teachers, small group teaching, provide students with success experience through Extra-Curricular Activities.

Teacher 12: They come from low banding school and they have low motivation for learning. They don't want to study, since they think school is difficult and boring.

Teacher 13: Low motivation in class, attention seeking and doing some abnormal behavior such as screaming, laughing loudly and disturbing the class.

Teacher 14: Form 5 students behave better because they have a feeling of belonging after staying with teachers for 1 year.

Teacher 15: They don't have a sense of belonging here.

Teacher 16: As form 4 students come from different schools with different culture, they are hard to adapt to new rules and regulation in a short period of time.

Teacher 17: Form 4 seem to be worse behaved because they have not yet settled into the school culture. Added to this, Form 5 are in most part taught by more experienced teachers and those who have taught at CCVC. (Stricter/Disciplinarians)

Teacher 18: They lack motivation because they are low achievers. As teachers, we should let them have a sense of achievement. Also, they don't think that learning is important. They think that being in school is a waste of time. We should try to get them to see the importance of studying.

3. Do you have any suggestions as to how to improve the CCVC?

Teacher 1: 1) I could see the problem ongoing from the school administration. Teachers have to be involved in too much student affairs & less time to prepare for lesson plan. There is not a clear set of policies and procedures to follow. 2) Lack of support from management. Teachers can work closely with each other but not with the office staff.

Teacher 2: 1) More teachers are needed 2) More extra-curricular activities are needed 3) Students should shoulder more responsibilities in schools eg. Librarians perfects   4) Punishments are needed eg. Students have to stay after school if they break the rules during lessons

Teacher 4: 1) The communication between the staff, including teachers, principal, clerks, the students and their parents is not good enough. 2) We might have to make it clear if our school could change to be a special school. While there are a lot of students who need counseling not only learning.

Teacher 5: Hire more staff and review all policies

Teacher 6: Very difficult to say in a few words, but the discipline matters are most important in the school.

Teacher 7: To improve the discipline affairs policy and arrangement in school. To improve the coordination and provide more human resources, make "space" for teachers.

Teacher 12: Put more effort on discipline areas.

Teacher 13: 1) Discipline should be executed strictly. 2) More counseling to students. Give concern, care and courage to the students.

Teacher 14: More human resources involved.

Teacher 15: Better communication between staff and teachers (or among teachers) is needed

Teacher 16: Improve the administrative system to increase efficiency of work. This can make room for teachers to have more time to deal with the students.

Teacher 17: We must develop a curriculum that is more on tune with the life style of our students. Lesson plans that teach through fun and discovery, but in some way angled to arm students with the knowledge that they will need to be prepared for traditional examinations.

Teacher 18: 1) Lessen administrative work 2) Employ more staff 3) Have fewer meetings 4) State clear the instructions and guidelines.

Appendix G – Interview Protocol with CCVC Students

- Do your friends affect your school work?

- Do you friends do their school work?

- Do you spend a lot of time with friends?

- Does your life at home affect your school work?

- Do your parents work a lot?

- Do you parents encourage you to do your work?

- Do your parents spend time helping you with school work?

- Do you get enough help from teachers?

- Do you ever meet with teachers outside of class to discuss problems?

- Would you enjoy school more if hands-on learning was used more often?

- What is your favorite thing about Caritas Charles Vath College? Least favorite? Why?

- Do you feel they teach you things they would not if there was no HKCEE?

- Will you go on to more education or a job after you graduate?

- If education, what will you go to school for?

- If a job, what kind of job will you look for?

Appendix H – Student Interview Transcripts

Mini Focus Group with Three Good Students
Date and Time Conducted: 4:00 pm February 1st 2005
Interviewer: Dan and Rebecca
Recorder: Dan

Students Labeled A, B, C from left to right.

D: Did you think of any questions that you want to ask us? It's all right if you didn't.

C: Why did you come to this school?

D: We are from a university in the USA, and we came here to do a project for our university. We're here working with the principal, Ms. Chan, and the teachers and all of you to try and make the school better, to try and improve the conditions in the school for everyone.

R: We're doing some research on the students and teachers, and that's why we're asking you questions, and why we'll be doing some surverys. Hopefully we will be able to determine some good things about the school and some bad things that can change to make it a better school.

B: Who gave you money to come to Hong Kong? USA Government?

D: No, we had to pay for ourselves to come here.

R: About US$1,000 to fly.

D: Yeah, so about HK$8,000 just to fly here.

C: Where are you living?

D: We're living in Yau Ma Tei.

B: Do you like Hong Kong?

D: Yes.

B: Why?

C: Is it your first time here?

D: Yes. Actually, this is my first time outside of the USA. I like Hong Kong because it is very different from any place I've been. Always lots of people, and lots of different things to see.

R: Yes and always lots to do.

A: (Chinese to the other two)

C: What do you think of Hong Kong people?

D: I think that the people here are very nice.

R: Very friendly.

D: A lot of times in big cities in the USA, a lot of people are not so nice. But most people here are very friendly and nice.

B: (gets phone call)

C: What is that?

D: That's my mp3 player. I'm actually recording this so we can go back and check anything if we need to. I can turn it off if any of you want me to.

B: Where will you go during Chinese New Year?

D: I personally don't really have any plans. I'll probably go to certain areas of the city like Tsim Sha Tsui, Mong Kok, Central to see the parades. And explore parts of the city.

C: What food do like best in Hong Kong?

R: Yoshinoya. Do you know that restaurant? We eat there a lot.

D: I pretty much like all the food that I've had here. There's a few things that I didn't really like, but…

C: Do you think it's cheap?

R: Yes, it's cheap.

C: Do you eat chicken?

R: Yes, I've eaten chicken.

D: I have eaten chicken as well, and I've also eaten a lot of things that some of the other WPI students won't eat. But it's good.

R: I like squid.

B: So do you go shopping?

D: Yes, we do some shopping. I did a lot of shopping in the beginning, but then I realized that I don't have a lot of money to spend, so I decided not do as much shopping. That way I can save up my money for the end of the trip, and then go shopping. I plan on buying presents for my friends and family back home.

R: We went to the Temple St. night market, and some other markets.

(speaking Chinese)

C: Herman says that he wants to go shopping with you on Saturday.

R: Where?

B: Maybe Mong Kok, Tsim Sha Tsui, or Central.

D: Okay.

R: Okay. You can email us with the time and place. We'll plan it that way.

(email address exchanged)

R: Do you have anymore questions? Maybe we can ask you some questions.

C: Okay.

D: What types of things do you like to do with your spare time, like on the weekends and after classes.

C: On holiday?

D: On any day. Do you go to clubs, or do karaoke, or things like that?

B: Studying.

D: So it seems like you are all good students. Do you get good grades?

B: Yes. We are ready for exams.

C: They are hard.

D: So do you think you will ba able to pass the exam when you take it?

R: Are you confident about the exam? Are you worried?

C: Not worried.

R: So you aren't worried about the exam. Do you want to go on to Form 6 and Form 7 later?
C: Yes.

D: How about the two of you [H and M]?

B: Maybe. Maybe not.

D: Maybe get a job?

R: Or a certificate?

B: Take another course.

R: Do you know what type of course? What are you interested in?

B: I don't know yet.

R: That's okay.

D: Yeah. When I was in your grade, I didn't know either.

R: What course do you take here? What elective?

C: Commerce and accounting. Economics.

R: You are all in the same class?

C: The two of us [C and H].

R: So what class are the two of you [C and H] in?

C: 5H.

D: And what class are you in [M]?

A: 5G.

R: So you all do economics?

C: Yes.

R: If you went to another course, would you still want to do economics [H], or something different?

B: I like music. I want to pay the guitar.

R: My brother plays the guitar. My brother also doesn't know if he wants to go off to college. He's eighteen.

A: Uh, cooking. I like cooking.

C: Do you like to play basketball?

D: Yes. One of the students who is here with us, Matt, he likes it better than I do. He's also better at it than I am. I actually like to play lots of sports. Mainly I'm a runner, a sprinter. Do you play any sports?

C: Badminton.

B: Basketball. Do you have a meeting?

D: No, we don't have a meeting to go to right now, so you don't have to worry about that. Do any of you have a meeting to get to? Do you have the time to continue?

C: Yes. In your time in Hong Kong, have you learned any Cantonese?

D: Well, a little. Not that much. I know how to count, and some phrases, but…

R: It's hard to learn the different tones.

C: I think that English is different.

R: Maybe you can tell us about in the classroom. Is it distracting when other students talk a lot. Is it hard for you to concentrate?

(Becky has to leave)

D: As she was saying, if other students are talking, or shouting, or even just not paying attention, do you find it distracting or sometimes irritating?

C: It can be distracting. Sometimes we can ignore it.

B: Do you have questions with the language in Hong Kong?

C: Do you think that the language is different?

D: Yes, it is very different.

C: If people don't speak English, how do you communicate?

D: It depends.

C: Body language?

D: Well, yes sometimes body language helps, and sometimes, if we're in a store or restaurant there is a sign with English and Chinese writing, and we can point to help show what we mean to say.

B: Are you busy now?

D: No, I'm not busy right now. I kept time free to talk to you today. So don't worry. Do you all have the time?

B: Yes, I am not busy.

C: This is a good English lesson.

D: Well, you all speak very good English. Do you all like school, and enjoy your classes.

C,H,A: Yes.

B: I like Mr. Bruce. He is nice.

D: You like Bruce. Yes he is nice.

C: He makes us want to try.

D: So helps you to want to learn and do well. Is there anything in particular that he does which helps to motivate you?

C: He let's us read the news, and teaches us about the world.

D: Do your parents and your family help and support you with your school work?

H,C,A: Yes.

C: How long will you be staying in Hong Kong.

B: Seven weeks.

D: Yes, seven weeks. I will be leaving on March 4. There are about 20 of us here from the US, some doing different projects, and we will all be leaving around March 4. Some may stay longer, or even travel to other places.

C: So you will be here for the Chinese New Year?

D: Yes, we will be here for the Chinese New Year. What do you plan to do for the Chinese New Year?

B: I would go to Japan, but I have no money.

D: Yes, Japan is very expensive.

B: Maybe I will go to China.

B: Do you like China?

D: Yes.

C: What do you think of how Chinese people celebrate the Chinese New Year?

D: You mean your traditions?

C: Yes.

D: It is very different from how we celebrate in the USA, at least in a few ways. We have lots of parades and big celebrations, but not quite so much as here. We might have one or two days off for holidays, but even then many people still work. We know that here many businesses close for many days around the New Year.

B: When you leave Hong Kong, will you stay in contact?

D: You mean stay in contact with you?

B: Yes.

D: Yes, of course. We have actually met a couple of students from the HKPU, and we plan on staying in contact with them. You can email me as well, if you want to. I would like it.

B: Do you use MSN Messenger?

D: Yes, I use that.

B: We can have a video meeting.

D: Yes, I have a camera, so we could do that.

C: What do you think about our school?

D: I like it. I think it is a nice school. All of the teachers and everyone is very nice. Do you all like the school?

B: Very free here.

D: So you have lots of freedom.

C: Many friends. Do you know anyone who lives in Hong Kong?

D: I do not, but I think there are a few of us who came from the USA who know some people that live in Hong Kong, and also China.

B: Have you ever been to China?

C: Where would you like to go in China?

B: In the country of China.

D: I don't really know. I would definitely like to visit the mainland someday. I want to visit as many different places as I can. But that will probably be a while in the future, because I don't have the money or the time to do it now.

B: Yes, money is very important. In America, do you have a mobile phone?

D: I don't have a mobile phone.

C: What have you been doing at the school?

D: So far, we've been observing students and classes, and we've had discussions and interviews with some of the teachers. We've been doing and gathering information. So far, we've had a few different ideas to suggest, like the possibility of more teachers incorporating the use of technology into their lessons and maybe making them a little more interactive and interesting. Things like using the projector and powerpoint, and trying different things to get the students' attention. Another idea we've had concerns the more poorly behaved students. If they are not paying attention, and doing something like reading a comic book or playing with a mobile phone, some teachers will address this problem, but some teachers won't do anything. We were thinking that if all the teachers did the same thing, like if they all took away the comic books or mobile phones there would be a different response. Maybe the students would learn not to do such things in class. We think because it seems like if one student goes into a class, and doesn't have their mobile phone taken away and then goes into another class and doesn't get it taken away, it's not really going to affect their behavior. So we have a few little ideas like that. For now we're just thinking and developing ideas as we go. It seems to us that some of the major problems may be outside of the school. We feel that society's treatment of the students may have a lot to do with their problems. The students have a lack of confidence, and they feel that they can't do well because they are looked down on by everyone. We also see the HKCEE as a problem, because it is very difficult, and it also may force a lot of teachers to teach certain material which may be boring and then some students lose interest, and stop trying. But in general, it's just a scary and intimidating thing to all students.

C: How do schools here compare to your schools?

D: We've found that most schools here are very different from each, but in the US most schools are very similar, at least on your level. When you get up to the university level, there are very different schools that may focus on different things.

C: What are you studying?

D: I actually have two majors which I'm focusing on. Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Drama/Theatre.

C: Do you want to learn any other languages?

D: If I had the chance, I would like to learn Russian or German because they are very strongly present in my heritage, and I also just like the languages. Hopefully someday I can even travel to Germany and Russia. In fact, I'd like to learn as many languages as possible, if I could. Are there anymore questions that you would like to ask me?

C: No.

D: Okay. Well, thank you for talking with me and answering my

Mini Focus Group with One Unmotivated, One Older and Two Other Students
Date and Time Conducted: 4:00 pm February 3rd 2005
Interviewer: Dan and Matthew with Translation help from Philip Ng
Recorder: Dan

Students numbered 1-4 (left to right at the table)
2 = Older Student
4 = Unmotivated Student

D: I'll be recording this little discussion with my mp3 player. If anyone is uncomfortable with me recording this and doesn't want me to, then that's fine. I can turn it off. We'll be asking some questions, and I wanted to record so we can clarify some things later if we need to. Do you understand?

1-4: Yes.

M: So shall we get started?

D: We were wondering if you likes the school here and if you like your classes.

3: I like the school, but I don't like the classes.

2: Sometimes I like it, sometimes I don't.

M: What do you like about it [2]?

2: I like some of the teachers because they understand what they are teaching, and what is going on. I like my tourism class.

M: What classes do you like [4]?

4: Chinese. I like it because of the teacher, Ms. Chan. I like Ms. Chan.

M: What types of things do you want to do after graduation?

4: Social Work.

M: Like Kelvin?

4: Yes.

M: How about the rest of you?

D: It's all right if you don't know.

3: I want to teach piano.

2: I haven't really thought about it much.
1: It isn't really your business.

D: Do you feel pressure from other students to behave in certain ways, be it bad or good?

3: We don't generally feel any peer pressure. It doesn't help that some students disrupt the class, but the biggest problem is that we want to learn, and the other students make it hard to hear the teacher.

D: Do your friends and family support you in your school work?

2: My parents and friends don't like me going to school. My parents want me to find a job, and help out around the house.

3: My parents are supportive.

4: My parents don't care. I have the freedom to do what I want.

M: Do you parents ever encourage you to do homework?

3: There is no homework.

M: I remember the two of you, 2 and 4, in Bruce's speed class after school. Why do you go to this class?

2: To learn more English, because my English is not very good. I want to learn English.

M: What do you like about Bruce?

1: He is very nice, and he is easy to understand.

2: English isn't really that hard, I just have a hard time controlling my voice.

D: Would you like it if the teachers had more time to teach you, like if they all had extra classes like Bruce? Do you think that could help with all of your subjects?

1-4: Yes, we would like that.

M: How do you think you'll do on the HKCEE?

1: Scared.

2: I am scared.

4: I think I'll fail.

3: Of course I want to pass.
4: If you want something, you want it. If you do something, you do it.

D: Do you participate in class?

2: Yes, we like to speak up in class. If we don't always use English we won't learn it, and we won't speak it.

M: Do you think that many students feel they have already failed the HKCEE, and have stopped trying in class?

4: Yeah. They usually give up.

3: Some people really try anyway. But the majority gives up and fails.

M: Do you think that the classes should be more arranged by the ability of the students?

2: It's not fair to say who is better than who. This creates a hierarchy within the school.

3: We want to give all the students equal opportunity. Also, since this school only has Forms 4 and 5, there is not much difference between the students.

M: So do you think that even though you don't want to split up into classes, the bad students still distract you in class?

3: What you learn is based off what you listen to. So if you pay attention you will do well. We can just ignore the disruptive students if we need to. Sometimes they are so loud that it is hard to ignore them.

M: What about times when the teacher is trying to give a lesson, but the material is too easy for some students and too difficult for others?

3: Yes, we feel that sometimes the material is too easy.

M: So even though you feel bored in class sometimes, you don't want to split up the classes by ability?

D: What we mean when we talk about splitting up the classes is we don't want to make it unfair for some students, but rather we want to make things more specialized. That way the better students can be taught harder material and the poorer students can focus more on basics and move at a slower pace.

3: We have after school classes which are more specialized that you can sign up for.

M: Are they in classes other than English?

3: There are all kinds of classes.
2: This is hard because I don't know how to say what I want in English.

D: Well we think you speak very good English.

1,2: Really?

D: When you try it's good. Don't worry about it.

2: We try to speak English to each other, but just end up laughing because it's hard.

M: Do you guys have any questions you want to ask us?

3: Do you know any Cantonese?

M: I only know one phrase, and you don't want me to say it.

2: That isn't fair.

M: Do you guys want to do more school next year?

2,3: If we can get there, we will.

M: Like Form 6?

2: Form 7.

3: Form 6. You [2] need to finish Form 6 before you can go to Form 7.

2: I still want to go to Form 7.

4: I want to find a job so I can get money and go on vacation. In the long term, I want to do social work, but short term I don't know. You can only do social work for a long time.

3: Do you do work and school at the same time?

M: I finish college in three months, and then I get a job. In June.

2: What do you want to do?

M: Engineering. Working with computers and things like that. Who are your favorite teachers?

2: Johnny. He is handsome and funny. He teaches a lot of things.

4: Ms. Chan is my dream girl.

M: What is her first name?

4: Maggie. Maggie Chan.

M: She teaches Chinese.

3: Yes.

M: Who is your favorite teacher?

3: Ms. Lee. She teaches Math.

M: What is her first name?

3: Hei Tung.

M: Do you have a favorite teacher [1]?

1: Leo Lee.

M: Why do you like Leo and Hei Tung?

3: She is easy to understand.

1: Leo is very knowledgeable. He is like a dictionary. He knows a lot of things.

M: What does Leo teach?

1: Putonghua.

M: What do you think of other students playing with their mobile phones in class?

3: It's not good.

4: Terrible.

M: What do you think the teachers should do?

3: They should care somewhat. The teachers really have no control.

M: How old is everyone?

2: 22 years old.

3: I'm 16 years old.

4: 21.

1: 20.

2: I stopped going to school because my family could not pay for it. So I waited for six years and saved up money to go back to school.

M: How about you others?

1: I came from mainland China. I stayed back one year.

4: I came from China, too. But I didn't stay back.

2: We didn't know, coming in here, that we would have the opportunity to ask you questions. We don't have any prepared. We really like conversing with you.

D: Well, if you ever want to talk to us anytime, feel free to come up to us and ask any questions.

M: Do you have anymore questions for us? I don't think I have anything else to ask them.

D: Yeah, I don't have anymore questions either.

Interview with a Reserved Student (X)
Date and Time Conducted: 4:00 pm February 1st 2005
Interviewer: Dan with Translation help from Kevin Zhang
Recorder: Dan

D: I just want to ask you a few questions about how you feel about the school.

X: I think the school is pretty good.

D: Are there any particular things you like or dislike? Who are your favorite teachers?

X: Maggie, and Johnny, and Heather.

D: Why do you like them?

X: They are nice.

D: Do you participate much in class? Do you pay attention during lessons?

X: Sometimes.

D: Do you talk to friends in class, or do you find it distracting when other people talk in class?

X: I sometimes talk to friends, but it is distracting when other people talk in class.

D: Do you try hard, and study? Or do you not really care how you do in your classes?

X: Yes, I do try hard, and want to do well.

D: Do you think you can pass the HKCEE?

X: I'm not sure. Maybe I can't.

D: Do your friends work hard, and do they support you?

X: Yes.

D: Does your family support you?

X: Yes.

D: Do you have any plans for after you graduate? Like studying more or getting a job?

X: Find a job.

D: What kind of job?

X: I don't know yet.

D: Is there anything that you don't like in particular about this school?

X: Some students do stupid things.

D: Are you ever bored in class?

X: Yes.

D: Is it that the material is easy or not interesting?

X: Sometimes one, sometimes the other.

D: How do you feel about staying in one class room for the entire day, except for your electives? Does it make you want to get out of that room?

X: No.

D: Would you like it if you had more time to talk to teachers outside of class? Would it be nice if teachers had more time outside of class for students?

X: That would be nice.

D: I think that's all the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

X: No.

D: Well, thanks for sitting down with me, and helping me out.

Appendix I – Interview Protocol with Social Worker

- What does your job entail?

- Have you been with the school since it opened?

- Do you interact with many students on a daily basis?

- How well would you say you know the students?

- What do you feel is the biggest challenge to student's success?

- Have you had chances to meet the parents of any struggling students?

- Would you say these students had support from their families?

- Do you think students in general here have support from their families?

- Would you say that peer pressure has an affect on the students?

- Can you think of any other issues the students face?

Appendix J – Social Worker Interview Transcript

Interview with Social Worker
Date and Time Conducted: 9:30 am January 24ᵗʰ 2005
Interviewer: Matthew
Recorder: Daniel

M: What does your job entail here at the CCVC?

L: Half time social worker and I have another duty here. Kelvin is a full time worker in this school. I am a half time worker. Tuesday Thursday and Friday. Join 3 arts: Counseling (emotional, family problems), hold groups (developmental groups, sex and love, if some students have discipline problems), hold mass group.

M: Do students need to set up appointments, or just come and knock on door?

L: Usually referred by teacher. Sometimes my have a problem: crying in class a lot, or breaking school rules. SO the teacher may send them to me.

M: Is there one cause that stands out more than others?

L: You mean the nature of problem?

M: Yes.

L: Most students have discipline problem when they come to me, and end up bringing up other issues themselves. Most have a problem in dating, especially girls. They have issues with making friends, especially girlfriends or boyfriends.

M: So this is on their minds in class, and this causes hem to act up in class?

L: They might be having problems with their boy/girlfriend. They start relationships quickly, sometimes right when they come to the school. This other may be in the class, and causes stress. They don't know how to handle the emotions they feel and the stress.

M: Is there peer pressure? Do the students come and talk to you about that?

L: Yes, some students are bullied by other students. They may be too shy or subdued, and other students ask why they work to please the teacher, and other students laugh at them for it. It is better in some students minds to rebel and not be nice to the teachers.

M: So if students are nice to the teachers and behave, other students look down on these "teacher's pets."

L: Yes

M: Do you ever talk to the bullies?

L: Yes. They are referred by teachers usually. They tend to have family problems, and this can lead to their poor behaviors.

M: Is this more common among the bullies, or is it a problem among all students. In the US, students are alt. schools have family problems where their family does not support them because they don't feel they will succeed. Are the parents of these students supportive?

L: Most students are not supported by parents. The parents don't know how to teach the adolescents. Most come from lower class, and even broken families. The parents don't know how to help the students, and the students don't' want to listen to their more traditional teaching methods. SO students don't like going home, and many don't go home at night. They just go back late at night only to sleep.

M: So this school closes at night at about 6, and the students are removed from campus.

L: I wouldn't know.

M: Well what do the students do when they leave?

L: Karaoke, some students go to disco. They want to spend time with their friends, and they don't want to go home.

M: Do students smoke because they feel it will help them fit in?

L: It is part of their culture. Some students come to me and say they want to quit because smoking is expensive and bad for health, but it is hard because they go to the bathroom with friends, and they all smoke.

M: Do you think peer pressure is the biggest influence on behavior?

L: Yes. Many students don't speak foul language when they arrive in Sept. but in a few months have begun. It is part of the culture, I think.

M: We spoke with a students recently who said that his friend… (HKCEE). His friends give up because they don't feel they have time. Is there a reason for that? Most students don't have a high opinion of themselves. Do they have low self-esteem?

L: Yes. Don't know if you know the background of our school. We have only form 4 and 5. Normally when you study form 3, you can go to form 4 in your own school. But if you have academic or behavior problems, your school won't promote you to form 4, so you have to find your own school for form 4. SO students don't feel good about themselves. Some students describe themselves as rubbish. Society does not make them feel good about themselves. They feel that they cannot learn, or that they don't have the ability to study. They don't think they have

the ability to catch up with their studies, and they can't catch up. And they see that their peers here come from a similar background, and they all feel the same way. They become passive, and don't really try in form 5. They think they will graduate and get a simple job that doesn't require academic achievement. Only a few students feel they will go on to form 6, and try hard to get there.

M: Does the school at all help them to find jobs? Is there a career center, or is that another part of your job?

L: It is another part of our job, I think. When they are about to leave school and don't feel they can get a job, many teachers will refer them to us, and we will talk to them and tell that about their options and that they have choices.

M: Do you think that parents may contribute to their feelings of being rubbish? Do they possibly have siblings that perform better then them in life, and they see themselves as that much worse because they see someone else succeeding where they fail and the parents compare them with a sibling and rub in this feeling of inadequacy?

L: Yes, many parents do compare them to siblings, so they still try to compete. Since they cannot make themselves look better, they try to be the worst or look the worst. Some try to win in sports or other ways.

M: So they want a way to show their parents that they can be good at some things.

L: Yes, parents and their friends.

M: Do you ever meet any of these parents?

L: Yes. Many of these parents don't understand why their children are like this. Some come to see us, others call on phone. The want to know why their children have these problems. Most only call us because we are so far out of the way, and the parents work and don't have time.

M: You were talking about how the children only go home to sleep, and spend the rest of the time going our, so the students and parents might not have the best communication. Do you ever meet with parents and students, acting as a middle man?

L: Yes, but only sometimes. Many parents don't want to come out and meet. Most of the time, the parents will speak up and the students will sit quietly. Hey don't know how to respond to the parents punishments.

L: Do you ever speak to the students?

M: Yes, we have had conversations with the students. We have spoken with them and we feel with these schools in the US that self-esteem is the biggest issue. Do you have self esteem classes or other ways to help teach students that it's worth going to classes and trying? Sometimes when I was in school they would have graduates come back and explain what they

are doing and what they plan for the future. This school has only bee open for two years, but what can be done to help teach these students what can be done to keep them from falling into a construction job.

L: We try to help give them self esteem. We try to show them that even if they can't succeed academically, they still have other good skills. I remember one student who had no self esteem and didn't try, but spent some time at the fire station working and learned to become a good worker and gained some skills, and ended up becoming appositive students and a hard worker. Some students can change for the better.

M: Do you think that it might be a good idea to have a policeman or fireman to come in and speak to the students about their work?

L: Sometimes we have assemblies and people come in and speak to students about their career paths, and the students really enjoy this.

M: Do a lot of students want to work for Disney?

L: Yes many students do and have tourism classes and are learning magic and other skills that would be useful for Disney.

L: What do you think of our school?

M: It's very similar to schools in the US. Ms. Chan was telling us about how the schools are divided up. In general, it's interesting how some of the classes compare. Sometimes you'll sit in one class at one point in the day, and they'll be well behaved, but that same class ay a different time will be rambunctious and act up. It's different in the US.

L: Different teachers have different methods. Do you understand Cantonese?

M: No, but we can figure out what is going on from body language and such.

L: Any students approach you and talk to you?

M: Yes, there are a few everyday. Me and Dan play basketball, and when we finish talk to the students afterward. It seems that the kids who are overly enthusiastic and say hi, and there are some who are shy and quiet and kind of look away. So there are differences.

Appendix K – Interview Protocol with CCVC Teachers

- What percentage of your class would you say is doing excellent, average, and poor?

- What is the difference between achieving and non achieving students?

- Do you feel that there is a good level of student participation in class?

- If not, what could be causing the students' poor participation?

- Have you had chances to meet the parents of any struggling students?

- Would you say these students had home support?

- Do students in general here have support from their homes?

- Would you say that peer pressure has an affect on the students?

- Could students here be trained specifically for a job that is in high demand in HK?

- How much time do you spend helping the students outside of class? *

- What is your reaction when students sleep?

- Do you have any ideas on how to stop this?

- What do you do when a student is playing with their cell phone?

- Do you have any ideas or suggestions that you believe could be implemented in school to create a better learning environment?

Appendix L – Teacher Interview Transcripts

Interview with Teacher A (Chinese Instructor)
Date and Time Conducted: 11:00 AM, January 27th, 2005
Interviewer: Rebecca
Recorder: Brandon

R: We just have some basic questions to try to figure out a little more about the students and the classes. We were wondering what percentage of your classes would you say the students are doing well, passing, doing average, or doing poorly. So out of a hundred percent of the class, how many, what percentage, are failing.

Teacher A: You mean overall or for a particular class?

R: Overall.

Teacher A: For some classes, for example 5D, that you visited… Do I need to go one-by-one or just overall?

R: An overall picture would be fine

Teacher A: Okay. Maybe 40% pass, I think.

R: Okay, and can you see what the difference is between the students who are doing well and passing, and those that are doing poorly. Like, how much they pay attention, and can you recognize who are the good students and who are the bad students easily?

Teacher A: Of course I can recognize them. For example, they sit there and look at their desks. 40% pass and 10% average, and 50% fail.

R: Oh wow. Do you feel that you get good participation from the students during class? Like maybe a percentage again of who participates and who just doesn't pay attention. Maybe if you ask a question, how many respond.

Teacher A: They like to answer questions. They like a challenge. 50% of my questions they will respond to.

R: Do you have any idea what could be causing the lack of participation. I know you said they like the challenge and like to participate, but what about those students that don't participate. Do you know why they aren't participating?

Teacher A: They just don't have an interest to answer the questions. They don't understand what I'm talking about maybe sometimes. Because they don't just pay attention to me. They are doing there own things.

R: Have you had any chances to meet any of the parents of students who aren't doing well?

Teacher A: Yeah, you mean the well students?

R: The bad students.

Teacher A: The bad students, we get lots of chances to meet their parents. To talk, but not face to face. Through the phone.

R: Would you say that you have support from your parents to try to do better?

Teacher A: No I don't think so. I think their parents don't give enough support to them. That's why their behavior is so bad.

R: Probably because of their parents?

Teacher A: Mostly because of their parents.

R: Would you say their friends have a big effect on how they do in the classroom? Compared to their family?

Teacher A: Their peer influence you mean?

R: Yeah.

Teacher A: Of course. I think this is most important.

R: Would you say compared to their family life though, do you think they just care about their friends? Or do you think if they had more pressure from home…?

Teacher A: I think maybe parents, maybe their family.

R: You have a different curriculum here at the school. Do you think that it helps the students that they can be trained specifically to do one type of job when they graduate? Do you think that's good for them to learn one type of job?

Teacher A: To a certain extent I think it's good for them. But most of the students they come here because they don't have the chance to search for any other better schools. So they come here and we force them to choose either this or that. So most of them don't have an interest in that particular stream I think. Just because they need to choose one. That's why they don't enjoy it.

R: Yeah, we've seem some students in the art classes that don't like drawing. Do you think they should offer more choices than the three that they offer right. Do you think there should be more selection?

Teacher A: Maybe.

R: What is your reaction in class when anyone is sleeping?

Teacher A: This year we separated the students according to their ability. C and D they are good classes. If the students in these classes sleep I would try to wake them up. In A and B sometimes I think that it's already quite good if they sleep and don't disturb me. Actually I don't think that's good thinking, but sometimes I just give up. Of course I would try to wake them up. But they will fall back asleep very soon. It's very tiring often.

R: Do you have any ideas on how to stop the students from falling asleep?

Teacher A: I think as a teacher it's quite important for me to prepare a lesson according to their ability, their type. Sometimes I try to change my way of teaching. I think that works. I think mostly because of the teacher, maybe because of the chapters or the content. The method, it's very important. I've been teaching for two years, so I just try to know what is the best method to teach them.

R: We noticed that another problem is the students play with cell phones in class all of the time. What is your reaction to that.

Teacher A: I try to stop them. This is a new school, and the regulations are not so straight. So it's not a matter of one teacher or two teachers. It's the whole school. It's the atmosphere I think, it's very important. To just copy others, follow others in what they are doing. I don't think that just we can do this.

R: That's what we were thinking. We've seen a lot of classrooms and you see how some teachers do it and how others do it, but when there's not consistency.

Teacher A: Consistency, yeah.

R: Do you have any other idea or suggestions that we could use here to create a better learning environment? Anything that worked particularly well for you?

Teacher A: Suggest a method?

R: Do you have any certain type of ideas that have worked very well for you, about controlling the students or keeping them interested, or anything special that you can think of.

Teacher A: Maybe we don't have enough manpower. Sometimes we don't have the courage to do some patrols in the school. They just smoke in the toilets, but nobody can stop them. They just continue to do so day-by-day.

R: That's not allowed, smoking in the toilets, but they do it anyways?

Teacher A: Of course! And maybe we should work out the regulations strictly. Because we actually have a lot of regulations, but just a few of them are being worked out, others are just forgotten. It's a pity. That's why some students think that teachers are not very fair. Because sometimes you carry out this and sometimes you don't do this.

R: We noticed that, so if some teachers are strict, they get mad at those teachers, and other teachers they can just walk all over because they're not strict.

Teacher A: Yeah, I agree.

R: We were thinking standard discipline rules would be better.

Teacher A: Yeah. It's not easy. Is it finished?

R: Yes, we're finished. Thank you.

Teacher A: Thank you, and if you ever need anything else just ask me.

R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Teacher B (Geography Teacher)
Date and Time Conducted: 11:45 AM, January 28th, 2005
Interviewer: Daniel
Recorder: Matthew

D: What percentage of your classes does a good job?

Teacher B: I think the students are not so cooperative. Their motivation to learn is very low. As you can see they are not interested in the lesson. Because the examination is coming soon they have given up. Most students feel that it is okay to just sit in the classroom until they graduate. They do not have any concern about the examination because they assume that they will fail. Only one in two students actually care. Some students will run out of the classroom and just play basketball. So in my opinion their motivation is low.

D: Do you think they could pass the exam if they gave effort?

Teacher B: Because I think the syllabus in HK is not attractive to these students they will not care until a few days before the exam. During the exam I see that some students will sleep from the beginning to the end of the exam.

D: Do you have any good student participation?

Teacher B: Sometimes, they will be captured by other things outside the classroom. Their attention shifts away from class very easily. They will go to the toilet to smoke with each other. Sometimes in the mornings is better. They do not have as many things in the morning to capture

their attention. I make sure to appreciate them when they answer my questions. The boys are happy to gain my appreciation but the syllabus is very tight. I do not have enough time to give classroom activities due to the need to prepare for the examination.

D: So you feel restricted by the exam?

Teacher B: Yes of course because very limited amounts are ready for the exam. I am very eager to give the students who have the chance the opportunity. I do not want to give up these students.

D: What could possibly do with the freedom to not teach to the HKCEE?

Teacher B: If I had more freedom from the test I could have much more freedom in the classroom. Form 5 is very difficult. Last year in Form 4 the discipline is very bad and the Form 4 teachers spend too much time disciplining students. 2 of the 3 text books we use are supposed to be completed in Form 4 but do to their behavior they finish a very limited amount of what they are supposed to. When I teach geography there are many interesting things to do such as field trips and movies however due to time constraints we don't have time to do it.

D: Do you have any ideas for the general students?

Teacher B: I have some ideas. I think we should reschedule the syllabus to split the classes. If some students are capable they should be place with other students who are capable. So that students who are not capable of the examination can be taught other important ideas. These student should learn the basic concepts and fundamentals because they can't understand more advanced topics without these basic concepts. I believe if they are separated then I could create different more appropriate syllabus.

D: How many hours a week do you spend with students outside the classroom?

Teacher B: 1 to 2 hour remedial classes a week for students who want to learn more. And about 1 to 2 hours everyday talking to students about their disciplinary problems.

D: Do you go to the students or do they come to you?

Teacher B: I must take the first step to get them to discuss their problems with me.

D: How do you feel peer pressure affects the class?

Teacher B: Very much. Some students do not smoke in the past but they will with kids who do now. Some students will cheat the teachers and others who do not sometimes start

D: How do you deal with sleeping during class?

Teacher B: In some bad classes sleeping is good. If they don't sleep they will disrupt the class. Some students sleeping is good. But most of the students are either disturbing the class talking with each other or paying attention to my lesson.

D: Are there usual large groups or one or two students who create problems?

Teacher B: There are different levels. One or two may have psychological problems. The next are students who only want to play. And this is about half the class. They do not have any target in their life. They do not see the importance of learning things. Some of these students don't disrupt the class because they have respect for the teacher these are the students who usually make up about 1/3 of the class. The other 10% or 20% are eager to learn. But some students will be very sad because they want to learn but the class is to noisy.

Interview with Teacher C (Business Instructor)
Date and Time Conducted: 3:00 PM, January 28th, 2005
Interviewer: Rebecca
Recorder: Brandon

R: Just to start off, what percentage of your classes do you think, in general, of the classes that you teach, of the students, are passing or failing or just doing about average?

Teacher C: You mean the coursework or the homework?

R: They have to get grades to pass the course right?

Teacher C: From a general impression…? Or do you mean from my requirements or from a general impression?

R: More like, what percent of class would you consider are the good students, and then the average middle, and then the poor students.

Teacher C: I think if I took an average, there's 40 students in the class for every class that I'm now teaching. So maybe 40 students in each class, I think maybe 5 students are really good students. They work hard and they try to take notes in lessons. They hand in the homework to me on time. So I think maybe 5 students in 40 students are good students in each class. However, take an average, I think for those that are acceptable to me, I think around maybe 15. 15 are okay. I think they're less motivated, but I think that their behavior in the class is acceptable. But I think 20, maybe half of the students, I cannot accept their behavior in the classroom.

R: And do you… what are the noticeable differences between the students who are good and the ones who are doing unacceptable. Behavior-wise, the big differences between them.

Teacher C: Maybe I think the motivation is the main concern. For the motivated students, they work hard, they ask you questions so that they can learn from you. If they do nothing at home, they have no ambition, they can't learn anything. And they aren't motivated. If they can't follow they have nothing to do. So they'll do something that disrupts the classroom. Maybe they keep on talking or they read comic books. Singing, playing games on the gameboy.

R: So do you think that in the class there's a good level of participation in the students or not? Are there a good amount of students who participate in class? Or does it kind go along with what you said before, 50% of them or half of them are not participating, not paying attention.

Teacher C: About half. For the best class I think about half. But for some classes that are most of the students are less motivated maybe not half, maybe 30 are not good, maybe just 10 are okay.

R: Have you had the opportunity to meet any of the parents of those students that are struggling?

Teacher C: Yes, of course. If they're behavior is not acceptable, I think I will first give a phone call… actually I will talk to the students first. I won't give a call to their parents…it's a second step. So first I will talk with the students, "do you know whether you are disrupting the classroom?" first, let them know that their behavior is not acceptable. If I have talked to them maybe one to two time and they still cannot improve their behavior I will talk to their parents. I think it's a must. I will explain the situation with them, I will talk with the discipline master as well, to seek some advice from them. If the parents…I will arrange an opportune time with the parents so that I can have an interview, a meeting, a sharing with the parents. I will have an interview with both the parents and the students together, so that both of them know what is happening, maybe with the discipline master. I think the problem is… the main concern for having a meeting with the parents is to let them know the situation otherwise they…we're cooperating with the family and the parents the teachers are cooperating to help the students improve their behavior. And it's a good way to understand some background about the students. Maybe their past experience is not good for learning. Maybe they have lots of family problems, or emotional problems. So it's a way to get some information. Because they are all form 4 students when they come here, we don't know the background information about form 1 to form 3. So we have to get some background information. So if we do everything but it seems that we can't help the students, maybe we will talk to the counselor, a school social worker, or the discipline master to think of some ways to help them.

R: Do you think that these students have support from their parents and their parents encourage them to…

Teacher C: Yes, I think it's a big problem for the students here. Most of the students, they have a lot of problems in the family. That's why they have poor behavior in the school, they cannot get the support from the parents. Some families are very poor, they don't have much money so he parents do not have time to take care of the students, so they cannot get support from the family so they just disrupt the classroom. I think besides the family, the also have poor behavior because of poor learning experiences before. Some of them can't follow when I teach English. They just can't follow what their teachers are talking. Starting in the past, maybe starting in kindergarten, so they don't have any successful experience starting when they were young. So that's why I think that they want to give up.

R: Do you think that another factor could be peer pressure? Do they experience that?

Teacher C: Yes. Some of students smoke. Sometimes they will…some of them smoke quite a lot. And some students may be because of the peer pressure they smoke as well. I think that's the big

problems of peer pressure. If they live quite far away, if they take one hour to travel, after this hour they can go to school, but they're always late. They're excuse is that I have to go with my friends. I always tell them, if you go to school by yourself it is no problem, But no, I have to stay with my friends. So it's the peer pressure.

R: Do you think that having the specific job training, the specific courses they can choose here, does help if they can go on to a certain job when they get out of here.

Teacher C: Yes, because I think that our courses are different from the schools outside. It is divided into three main streams, traveling, arts, and business. Some of students may, well, traveling is really important because Disneyland is under construction. So I think it provides a nice chance for them to develop their interests in learning.

R: Do you think that maybe having extra…well we've noticed that some of them sign up for art and then don't do any drawing in art class. Maybe they signed up for it again because their friends signed up for it or something, but do you think offering more choices like that would be… like instead of just the three, if there were more, would that be possible or a good thing?

Teacher C: I know some students like costumes..or makeup. So maybe in the coming years there is a certificate course. I think that these three streams should remain. Because this is a high school, so if we organize everything just like the others it is just a regular high school, and I think we should provide something of difference. And I think these three main streams suit our students.

R: And do you think that there are job opportunities in those streams when they graduate from here, or when they finish form 5 if they did not go onto more schooling? Well there is the Disneyworld coming. And say they do art as their stream, are there going to be jobs for them to do in art?

Teacher C: But I think it provides an opportunity for them to further study. Because in Hong Kong, after they graduate from form 5, they can study different kinds of certificates or higher diploma. So I think it's a step stone for them. So after they have graduation from commerce or traveling or arts they can further study, maybe in the Caritas because Caritas is a big organization. We have some certificates for adults. So they can further study in these courses. So I think it's a step stone for them. So if they develop an interest in commerce they can get an accounting certificate for the future. So I agree with that.

R: How much time do you think that you spend helping students outside of class? I don't know if that happens too much here, but do students ever come to you for help with assignments, or other things like that?

Teacher C: Yes. It divides into two. Because we have extra-curricular activities. And I'm the person in charge of the gardening team. I think it's an excuse for me to keep in touch with the students. So I find an excuse I come to the gardening team on Thursday, so I can have a chance to keep in touch with the students. To be honest its quite busy because I have to spend a lot of time preparing lessons because I'm rather new and I'm fresh. So I spend a lot of time doing

preparation work and some administration work. Also we have to have at least one meeting with the students each semester. We have to talk with them about what do they like most in this school, what do they get from this school, what are they planning for in the future, so at least we should meet one student once in each semester so that we can keep in touch with the students.

R: What is your reaction in the classroom to students who are sleeping?

Teacher C: Sorry?

R: If they're asleep do you just go on or do you have a reaction, do you try to wake them up or…?

Teacher C: For students here, some sleep. Sometimes some of them will do their own thing, such as they read their comics, or use their mobile phones, or talk with others. But I am serious about that, so I will knock on their desks to warn them, just like what I did last time. And some of them will say foul language in the class. I won't have conference with them at that moment, because I still have my teaching, but after the lesson I will ask some of them to come up and talk to me. I will explain to them, "do you know what you are doing? You are an adult." Some of them are maybe eighteen, maybe somewhat younger, maybe sixteen, but I am sure that they know what they are doing. But I will talk with them. Some will argue that they don't think that it's foul language, but I will explain to them that if I listen to that, and I think that it's foul language, then you are insulting me. So I will talk with them. If they do something that's really wrong I will ask them to have a report. There's a form for students to fill in. Maybe sometimes they play cards during lesson, and that's not acceptable, it's not just talking. So, we will give them a form to fill in, and then I will give them demerits, or give the case to the discipline master. But if its not that serious, sometimes I'll just knock on their desks.

R: Lastly, do you have any suggestions for us as to what could be done here to improve the student motivation? Do you have anything that has worked well for you?

Teacher C: I think encouragement is really important, because they have low self-esteem, because they can't catch up with what you are talking about sometimes. Though they seem like they don't care, I'm sure that they do want to have good academic results. I think that everyone wishes to have that. So I think that they have low self-esteem and don't have that much confidence, so encouragement is really important. Even now I tell them, if you work harder, you can get an awesome examination. We also have an award, so that if they do something really good in the classroom, or they have great improvement, we will give them some encouragement. Just to encourage them. If they do really good and hand in homework to you, even though its really worse inside, I'll give them the stamp, to encourage them. So I think encouragement, and provide more activities, because they are active. They don't like just listening; they like visual things or audio, so give them some visuals in the classroom, or give them activities. This year is much better because we have quite a lot of activities, more activities for the students, so I think it's much better.

R: Okay, thank you very much.

Interview with Teacher D (Commerce Instructor)
Date and Time Conducted: 10:15 AM, January 31st, 2005
Interviewer: Matthew
Recorder: Daniel

M: What percentage of the kids are performing well in class? Any of your classes in general.

Teacher D: In comparison, Form 5 is better than Form 4.

M: Why is that?

Teacher D: Maybe the quality of students in 5, especially in 5H.

M: We noticed in your class that you use Powerpoint, do you think it helps?

Teacher D: Yes, very much. It gets there attention, the visuals.

M: We noticed the little sound effects at you use, also. Do you think that also helps get the kids' attention a little bit better than writing on the board?

Teacher D: Yes.

M: What do you think is the reason for kids not paying attention?

Teacher D: In 4D, half of the students are okay. Some listen, but many of them are not motivated, not willing to learn.

M: Do you have any methods to try to get them to learn? Or even sometimes it seems that when the disruptive students sleep, you can let them sleep. So you can teach to the kids that want to learn. Is that sometimes the case?

Teacher D: Most of time, some students have no interest. They feel very tired, and have no motivation. They have no interest in any subject. I think that some students come to school only to kill time, and spend time with their friends.

M: Do you think that some students would do well in class if they weren't bunched up with their friends? Do you think they behave poorly because they think it's what their friends want them to do? Peer pressure?

Teacher D: A little bit.

M: What kind of jobs do you think these unmotivated students might be able to get after school, if they don't pass the HKCEE?

Teacher D: Some students will find jobs, but they are difficult to find here, in this time. Some would like to continue their studies, but I think that they don't have the ability to continue.

M: We noticed that after class you talked to a bunch of students and helped them out. How much time do you spend out of class helping students? Do you do that regularly? How often, after class, do you spend time with students?

Teacher D: I talk to them directly, and some of the students in the class I talk to them, especially if they have behavior problems. And also, after school, sometimes I phone their parents and tell them of the student's behavior in the school.

M: How do parents usually react when you call them?

Teacher D: Positively.

M: What do parents usually do? Just talk to the students and try to get them to work harder?

Teacher D: Sometimes the parents talk to the students, in class.

M: What class do you mean?

Teacher D: 4D. In classes, I talk to the teachers and they talk to the parents. It is the form teacher's job to contact parents.

M: When students play on their cell phone, what do you do?

Teacher D: I stop them.

M: What is the school policy on cell phones? I know that they are supposed to be taken away, but are they held for a certain amount of time, or are they given back at the end of class?

Teacher D: If I think I have to do so, I take it away and talk to the students.

M: Do you have any suggestions on how to better teach these students? Like any ideas. We noticed that when you're using Powerpoint, more students pay attention. Maybe some teachers could benefit from possibly using visual aids. Do you have any other ideas?

Teacher D: I do my best to capture their attention. But some of the students have no interest.

M: So it's very difficult to get their attention. Is it impossible sometimes?

Teacher D: Yes.

M: When you use Powerpoint do students participate better? Do you think they will answer your questions better?

Teacher D: I write questions, and some students answer, but they are few. They don't really have any idea of what to answer for this topic.

M: Other than phone conversations, do you ever meet with parents in person?

Teacher D: Yes. Sometimes I phone parents to have them come to school.

M: Do you ever talk to parents and students at the same time?

Teacher D: Mostly students are unwilling to talk to parents about their problems.

M: After talking to the parents, do you notice a significant change in the student's behavior?

Teacher D: Sometimes a little change. Most parents cannot really control their children. Most students don't listen to their parents. What they say.

M: I don't know if I have any more questions at this time. Do you have any comments you would like to make?

Teacher D: When you came to 4D, the students were behaving very well.

M: Why was this?

Teacher D: Maybe because some foreigners are there. They don't know you, and you come to class and they behave better. But half of the class is okay. Especially in the first lesson, they behave very well. They are the worst in the last lesson.

M: Form 5 classes are split up into electives, and then split up further by student performance. In form 4 are they just split up by elective and not performance?

Teacher D: Yes.

M: Could that cause more problems? Could that be a reason why Form 4 is worse behaved?

Teacher D: Yes, this is true, and since they are mixed it can cause more problems.

M: Do you think there is any way that in the future Form 4 students could be arranged by performance as well as electives? Would this help?

Teacher D: Yes, that is a good idea. You can see this evident in 5H in comparison to 5G. In 5H, most of the students pay attention, but in 5G you can observe differences. It's easier to teach 5H because they behave.

M: So it's easier to teach 5H because there are more good students.

Teacher D: The result is better in 5H when the students go for the HKCEE because they are more attentive.

M: Any other comments you would like to make?

Teacher D: The big problem is how to motivate the learning, and the discipline of the students. Getting them to stay in class and listen to what teachers say.

M: Do you have any questions [Dan]?

D: Actually, yes. Do you feel any pressure to teach to HKCEE? I mean, do you feel as though you can't teach some things that you want because you have to prepare students for the HKCEE?

Teacher D: I have no problem teaching toward HKCEE. I have taught seniors in the past, and have taught to the exam before. 90% are very good, teaching to seniors. But in this school, students have no motivation. A few students are okay, and I talk to them and remind them why they have to learn.

M: So is it more stressful teaching at this school than other schools?

Teacher D: Yes, yes.

M: How do you deal with that? It seems that at this school, in order to be able to teach at this school you have to be able to shrug off or ignore some of the things that the students do in order to continue teaching them. We've seen some students even yelling at teachers in class. Does that ever happen to you?

Teacher D: Occasionally. Time is more of a problem. I don't have much time to think of my method of teaching. Teachers are responsible for administrative duties here. I take care of accounting for the school, also promotional activities. I think there is no time to use to develop your teaching methods. More time could be used to make better teaching methods. If I have time, I can design more and more activities for learning.

M: What do you do for accounting for the school?

Teacher D: I am the commerce teacher. I have two offices, and I do checking duties for the school. I have to manage my time very well. In other schools, teachers are confined to teaching. But here the non-teaching duties are many. We cannot spend very much time working on changing our teaching method. It's a shortcoming. If I have more time, I can talk to every student and learn their abilities to better improve their learning, but I have no such time.

M: I think that's all we have. Thank you.

Teacher D: If you have any questions, feel free to talk to me.

Interview with Teacher E (English Instructor)
Date and Time Conducted: 2:30 PM, February 1ˢᵗ, 2005
Interviewer: Matthew
Recorder: Daniel

M: Motivation?

Teacher E: The students do not respect the teachers, and so they do not want to listen to the teachers. Even though there are many rules and regulations, they do not follow them.

M: The school has rules for the teachers to follow. Do you think that sometimes the rules aren't always followed? Do you think the students would get used to the rules if they were all enforced? Or do you think teachers will always do their own thing?

Teacher E: I think the students know that some teachers are very strict and that they cannot get away with it. They follow some rules, but some students try to bargain with the teachers. I think the main reason why the students do not follow the rules is because they do not like school. They also have many emotional problems which are linked to their family background.

M: Yes, we've noticed from other interviews that many students come from single family homes and their parents don't encourage them. We recently found out that teachers have different duties other than teaching. Do you have duties other than teaching?

Teacher E: I have to do a lot of administration work. I count student absences, demerits, merits. And I have other duties like clubs or committees because they are compulsory. So I have to choose some of them

M: How much time a week do you spend on this type of work?

Teacher E: I am only a half teacher, but I am half administrative staff.

M: Are there a lot of people who are half teacher, half staff?

Teacher E: Yes.

M: How many periods do you have to teach a day?

Teacher E: Well I have 27 periods per week.

M: So you have about three periods free everyday?

Teacher E: Yes.

M: What do you do with that time, with the free periods when you are not teaching?

Teacher E: I help the students with their discipline problems.

M: What types of discipline problems do you have to deal with?

Teacher E: Mobile phones, shouting at teachers, foul language, making the room dirty. Sometimes the students throw things, even at people. The worst one was to burn the bulletin board on the fourth floor. And there is fighting, and some students steal other students' belongings, and also smoking in toilets.

M: Are you in charge of disciplining your form, or is it when students are disciplined is it the subject teachers that talk to them, or is it redirected to the form teacher?

Teacher E: It depends on the circumstances. If it is in Form class, I will take care of it. However, if I am the subject teacher I will take care of it, and sometimes I walk around school and take care of problems that I see. So there are three different situations.

M: How much time during the school day do you have to work on your lesson plan?

Teacher E: Not much. Sometimes I come in on Saturday to prepare my lessons.

M: So it must be tiring to come in on Saturdays.

Teacher E: Yes.

M: Do you have a set time slot where you walk around school, or is it just in between classes?

Teacher E: During free lessons. Also we have to go the detention class for the late comers.

M: What happens in the detention class?

Teacher E: They have to copy notes for different subjects.

M: So that's just for anyone that shows up late and misses a class?

Teacher E: For those who are really late, I think after 9:30, they have to go to the detention class.

M: So different teachers have to

Teacher E: Yes.

M: Do you give them the notes that they have to copy and walk around to make sure that they take the notes?

Teacher E: Yes, yes. Detention class happens during lunch or after school. If they are late they stay for 25 minutes, but if they are later than 9:30, then they stay for 50 minutes.

M: And the teacher has to stay for this extra time too?

Teacher E: Yes.

M: As an English teacher, what do you find is the most difficult part of teaching the class?

Teacher E: They don't want to learn English. Even some basic vocabulary, they don't know. And they have problems with sentence structure. They always fail in English so they don't want to learn. So they have a very strong resistance.

M: How do you try to get over this resistance?

Teacher E: I try to make the lessons easier. I will focus on teaching them vocabulary. I use Powerpoint and pictures to help, and also have dictations.

M: How do you deal with when students sleep in your class?

Teacher E: It depends. Some students are trouble makers, and it can be a good thing. Some are willing to learn, and I will wake them up.

M: Do you have any ideas that might make teaching the students better? We've heard ideas of hiring more staff to alleviate teachers of their administrative duties.Do you have any broad ideas as to how things could be changed to improve the school environment for everyone?

Teacher E: I would want to lessen paperwork. Most of the paperwork is redundant. There is too much. Also hire more staff for the office. For the English subject, we need a different textbook. It does not work well with the students.

M: Do you ever find yourself focusing a lot on teaching just for the HKCEE? Do you think it is restrictive?

Teacher E: I don't think it is restrictive. I think it gives them a goal to learn English.

M: So the students who want to pass and move on have something to strive for. What about the other students?

Teacher E: Some students really give up and it is hard to save them. Besides motivation, one thing that makes it difficult to teach them is that their standards are uneven. Some may be very good and some may be very bad. So if I teach easy things the good students are bored, and if I teach hard things the poor students struggle. Students will always complain, either way.

M: In Form 4 students aren't really grouped by ability like in Form 5. Do you think there is some way that during the year Form 4 could be split up by ability to facilitate education? Do you have any idea as to how classes could be arranged to put good students together?

Teacher E: It is hard to do because the students are arranged according to their subjects, by their electives.

M: So 4A and 4B students are both a mixture of poor and good students. So they could be arranged more so.

Teacher E: Actually they could be arranged as well. But not so easily.

M: Do students participate in your class much? Is it only in the better classes? How do you try to get them to participate?

Teacher E: Only a few students answer my questions. The others ignore me, or have other things to occupy them.

M: Is there anything in particular that you try to do to get these students to answer?

Teacher E: I try to get them to answer my questions if they aren't participating.

M: Have you tried rewarding the students when they participate to try to get more students to do so?

Teacher E: Sometimes. It's interesting because they care about their mark, but they cheat. They want good grades but they don't want to work hard to get them. In tests and dictation they will always try to cheat.

M: Do you think it would be a good idea to let the students know how English could benefit them in the future? Maybe in the beginning of the school year show them how studying English can help them, or do you think they would ignore this?

Teacher E: At the beginning of the term, another teacher and I have a lesson together to teach the importance of English, but they just ignore us.

M: Is it just English or every subject?

Teacher E: Every subject.

M: Is there anyway that the school could better show the importance of studying? Do you think it would be good to have speakers come and tell the students how important getting an education was to them?

Teacher E: I'm part of the career counseling team, and we discuss this, but the students aren't that interested. It very is hard to tell what they are interested in. One of the main difficulties in teaching them is that there is no learning atmosphere. Sometimes we get very frustrated. Students don't try and we wonder what we are doing here, and why we are trying.

M: Any other comments?

Teacher E: I think that students can progress, maybe not academically, but with extracurricular activities. It is also good for us to have a good relationship with them. When you were asking about teaching the students, I don't have a concrete approach to teaching, I try to relate with then students so I can better teach them.

M: Do you think it would be easier to develop a better relationship with the students if you didn't have so many administrative duties?

Teacher E: Yes. Some of the students want to talk to me, but I do not always have time.

M: I think that's pretty much all of my questions. Do you have any questions [Rebecca]?

R: Actually, yes. When you were talking about the students having more extracurricular activities, do you have any types of suggestions?

Teacher E: Sports are very popular with this school. Some of the students come to school just to play sports.

R: Do you think there could be more with organized sports, or different clubs?

Teacher E: Yes. Before Christmas there is a classroom decorating competition. Even some bad students want to do this and get involved.

R: Is that the only time of year that happens? Do you think maybe similar things could be done for other holidays?

Teacher E: Yes.

M: The basketball tournament the other day seemed to entertain the students. So do you think that things like that would make the students happy and make them want to participate in class?

Teacher E: Yes. And even doing charity work and services like that might be good.

R: We've been told that the students are very active and perhaps if we gave them good things to do it would help them.

M: That's about it. Thank you.

Interview with Teacher F (Putonghua Instructor)
Date and Time Conducted: 4:00 PM, February 3rd, 2005
Interviewer: Rebecca
Recorder: Brandon

R: What percentage of the students are failing, doing average, and passing? On average.

Teacher F: On Average. I have six classes, four classes are Form 4 and the others are Form 5. So, in Form 4 about 60% are below average, 40% are above average. About 5-10% are good students.

R: So, when you some are below average and some are above average, do you mean that they're passing or not passing the classes?

Teacher F: They're failing.

R: So about 60% are failing?

Teacher F: More than 60% are failing. If you calculate the marks they get on the exam, more than 60% are failing, maybe 70%.

R: Okay. What do you think the biggest difference is between the students that are doing well and the ones that are failing

Teacher F: They're not willing to… They want to play since they come here because many, many are students that are used to playing. But in their previous schools they behaved better, but here there are many students who behave bad.

R: Do you feel that there is a good level or participation in class, or not enough participation b y the students?

Teacher F: Surely not enough. Most of them sleep, and when they don't sleep they play, or read comics. Form 5 students like to read comics, Form 4 students like to play.

R: What would you do if the students are sleeping, what do you usually do, wake them up or let them sleep?

Teacher F: Sometimes I let them sleep, it depends on the students. If the student is very naughty, I'll let them sleep. If they are not naughty, I'll wake them up.

R: They're less harmful when they're sleeping?

Teacher F: Yes, definitely.

R: What about with magazines or phones or MP3 players, do you take them away?

Teacher F: I'll take them away, but sometimes they'll read their comics under their desks, so sometimes it's difficult to take them away.

R: They try to hide it?

Teacher F: Yes.

R: Do you have the chance to ever meet with the parents of these students who are poorly behaved?

Teacher F: Yes, when they do something wrong, something very serious, I'll see the parents.

R: Do you think that the student's behavior improves after you talk to the parents?

Teacher F: No. Sometimes the parents give up on the child. SO its very difficult to do.

R: So you don't think students have the support at home to do their work or for school?

Teacher F: No.

R: Do you think that peer pressure has a lot of influence on the students?

Teacher F: Sure, sure. They love to get here because they love to play. They have many chances to play during the lessons, and before them in the morning.

R: How much time, do you think, in a week do you spend helping students outside of class?

Teacher F: About 1-2 hours every day. Because we are doing a development plan plan for the students. Every teacher has to work on a development plan for every student. So about 1-2 hours every day.

R: Do you have other duties outside of just teaching for this school? Because some of the teachers have different things, like I know Yuki does the gardening team.

Teacher F: Oh, ECA? Extracurricular Activities?

R: Yes, which of those do you do?

Teacher F: I choose committee. We stay and do board meetings and make decisions.

R: Does that take up a lot of time that you could be working on lesson plans, or with students.

Teacher F: I don't do lesson plans now. When we were studying we do lesson plans, but now we don't have enough time.

R: Do you think its because you have extra responsibilities?

Teacher F: Yes, yes.

R: The last thing is, do you think that the three streams that the students can study here, is that good for them, that they're being prepared for one type of job when they leave the school?

Teacher F: I think the curriculum here is very good. Especially for them, I think. All of the lessons are good for them, because there are technical lessons, you know? The singing, dancing, magic… I think they get advantages from this curriculum.

R: Do you have any suggestions as to how the students could be helped more?

Teacher F: I don't know, maybe time, it takes time. If you get close to them and becomes friends with them, they will obey you. But if you aren't his or her friend, what you say will annoy them. So, the first thing is, we are waiting to be his or her friend. So I don't know what to do. Actually, this is my first job, so I'm just learning.

R: Are there any final concerns that you think we should be aware of about the students?

Teacher F: Sometimes they are unhappy, but they will not tell you. Today, I saw a girl in the class, asleep. But I found out that she was crying, so it's important for the teacher to see the students. If they are sleeping, is it really sleeping? That girl today was arguing with her boyfriend, which is also my class student.

R: Okay, that's all, thank you very much.

Appendix M – CCVC Teacher Focus Group Questions

- We are suggesting that all of the teachers enforce the rules equally, how do you feel about this?

- We think that students should be required to stay after school and work off demerits, do you think this will help?

- Do you think volunteers from the community or local universities will alleviate the time constraints on you?

- Do you think that a standardized seating plan of paired rows will be feasible and helpful?

- Do you think that it would be possible for teachers to utilize more visual aids during lessons?

- Do you think additional training is presentation software like PowerPoint would help make teachers more comfortable in using them?

- We think using distractions like MP3 players in lesson plans could keep the students more interested. Do you think this would help?

- Do you think teachers could better adapt lessons plans to students if forms were divided first by academic ability and then by stream?

- Do you think the creation of a Parent-Teacher Association would be possible and helpful?

- Do you think it would benefit the students if they were required to visit the social workers once each year?

Appendix N – CCVC Teacher Focus Group Transcript

Moderator: Daniel Gilbreath(M)
Secretary: Rebecca O'Neil

1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are teachers

M: Thank you for coming, I know you are all very busy, so we will try to make this a brief conversation about our ideas. We are trying to make this school better for the students and for you teachers and for everyone. The first thing we've noticed is that the enforcement of rules isn't the same for every class. Say for example a student is playing with a magazine, only some teachers take it away from them. We are suggesting that every teacher enforce the rules equally. So then the students will get used to it, do you think this will work in the classroom.

1: I agree with that, we tried at the very beginning, but it was quite difficult. It became very emotional because the students would become very emotional with us. Nearly half of them will have conflict with us.

2: We want to do that in the same way.

1: Yes, we want to do that but it begins to interfere with teaching the good students.

M: Another idea we came up with was in to the merit/demerit system, we think that the students should have to stay after school and try to work it off, learn some responsibility. Maybe little things like stay after school and clean up the classroom.

2: I would do anything for that. We try to do that but many students don't care about working off the demerit, they don't care. That's a big problem.

1: We tried this first, when they behave bad or come late and need to stay after, but we have tried and it didn't work.

3: It is mainly because of a shortage of manpower, it is difficult to keep them after school and it still requires for the detention class for teachers to go gather the students. This year we have been lucky since we have more teachers here. It has been more of a success this year, for deterring them from coming to school late because we have more people to help.

M: That brings up another thing we have noticed, that you teachers are very busy, so we are recommending adding more staff. Somehow, whether it is hiring more teachers or taking on students from universities or volunteers from the community.

3: We would welcome them from local university, but they are very busy too. I think that the principal is trying to bring the university students. They will send some teachers here to practice.

1: It is good for them to learn and get mentor to become a teacher, but in this school the type of student it gives them a shock. Then we have to take care of them too, and become the mentor. Still, we welcome them.

M: Another idea we have had is in the classroom the way that seating is arranged, it could work better if there was a standardized seating plan in the classroom. We see that the best arrangement is in paired rows.

2: So all classrooms have the same? Ok.

3: Some teachers try to rearrange the seats every few weeks to see who can sit next to whom and get along. Sometimes they will try to cheat the teachers and switch seats. This is very usual in Hong Kong; you can use the seating to control the behavior.

2: I rearrange my class to give them the best learning and motivation.

4: There is research done on these best seating plans, so you can consider the behavior and what you are trying to teach in the classroom. Actually the use of seating is best for letting them know or consider what they should do in the classroom. I think it is a good way to get them to behave more better. Maybe it is unique to the teacher.

3: Actually it is very time consuming to arrange the seats because it is very time consuming to do it, and we have to print out a different version every week. It can become very confusing with so many different charts.

M: As far as teaching in the classroom goes, when visual aids are used, such as posters or projector, the students seem to enjoy it more.

3: In my experience that is definitely better because they are mostly for the visual learners, they are so used to looking at the computer. I use the projector a lot and it works well.

2: I teacher Phys Ed. But in the classroom I do use power point.

M: We heard that all of the teachers know how to use power point, but they still don't all use it in the classroom. For example, I know how to use it, but I do not use it a lot because I am not comfortable with it. Then it would take me a long time to make a power point. So many if we could get more of the teachers comfortable…

4: More of the teachers know how, but it just takes too long to make.

4: Yes it even takes a long time to use the projector, five or ten minutes.

M: Another thing in the classroom is using things that the students are interested in like a basketball in math class or an MP3 player in the computer class. Do you think this would work?

1: Yes.

M: The next thing involves how the classes are broken up, and we understand how it is broken up, such as divided by concentration, and then ability. Maybe it would be better if they were divided by ability first and then go to their stream course.

3: There are two main thoughts with your idea. First, that you break them up by ability and next that you split them by stream. This cannot work because this is what we can do at the very beginning… this kind of classification is very controversial in Hong Kong, like the elite students and schools, they want to … so we have to consider more factors here like motivation and different problems, and it takes us a whole day to split them up.

M: Ok so you still do not have a definite plan for breaking it up.

3: Yes, I would support that; let's do it. I would say I agree with that. It is still difficult though because the students get to class, and wonder who their classmate is and if their friends are in class. We have to be very careful because the worst students come to this school. They have very low motivation and we don't want to discourage them. But the idea would be fairer to the good students and fairer for the struggling students.

M: We think that will allow the teacher to go slower for some students, and hopefully those students don't mind being put in a different class that will move at a slower pace. That way they can focus on what they need and not be as fru

1: The current Form 5 class is separated according to academic.

3: For example A and B are smaller 20 or 30 students and C and D are bigger with 35 and 36.

4: Not based only on academic results, but also on students and learning attention and chemistry.

M: Another thing we were thinking to alleviate stress on you in the classroom is having good students helping the other students. It would help you and help those better students feel better about themselves.

3: Well, I tried that having a student as my teaching assistant, but then he disappeared, but the students are not reliable enough.

2: The first and second time it works very well. But after a while these same students get annoyed, because it is basic concepts to students who do not understand. First time you tell them, and second time and third time and they still don't understand.

3: Maybe that would take some time to get the students ready to do that. It is a good idea, but it will take time to work.

M: We would like to get the parents more involved, and starts a parent-teacher association.

3: Sure

1: Sure, but the students in our school many have single parent. Or even many have problems with the parents at this point.

3: We did try to establish a PTA with parents who like to participate in school activity. Transportation is hard, and we have an open day for parents to come here as well. This is a good direction and we should work on it.

M: One example we would like to talk about is the classroom decoration around Christmas time, maybe we can do more of this at different times of the year to get the students more involved and build school spirit. Maybe have more teams and more clubs. We notice that some students stay, but others just go out and wander the city, so we thought giving them more activities.

2: Maybe some of them haven't had good experience at other schools so they don't like to stay here.

3: Also some students live far away from here, so they cannot stay very late because they must leave when the bus schedule comes.

4: We try to arrange more clubs and things, but not many of them wanted to.

M: They like to learn this way, such as during the school day we go out and take them for a visit, they like to learn like this as opposed to staying in the classroom.

M: The last thing is about the social workers and we noticed that the students could take advantage of that more since they are usually only used for discipline. In the US counselors are used to help them plan their future. So if students here had to visit the social worker once or twice during the year, the social workers could point them in the right direction.

3: So you mean beating the problem instead of treating it after, prevent it. We do have this orientation program and program for students to try to see what going to school one year will do for them. Also they are trying to arrange groups of students to go and visit careers. We also try and arrange some leadership camp to bring the students together. I have seen that the social workers take very active and

M: So it seems that most of these ideas are already

3: We still like you very much, the students really like to talk to you and play basketball, and they want you to stay longer. You have some very good observation, even though you have only been here a short time.

Appendix O – Background Interview Transcripts

Interviewee: Bob Moran
Position: Retired Alternative School Teacher
Date and Time Conducted: 3:00 PM, November 27th, 2004
Interviewer: Matthew
Recorder: Matthew

MS: I understand that you formerly taught in Alternative Schools in Bridgeport what were these schools like?

BM: Well I taught in three different schools. The first two were with Jr. High Students who were pretty much screw ups. Many of whom had committed crimes and failed out of school. These students did not deal well with structure at all. The final school that I taught at was for High School students. These students were here for many reasons. Several of the students had children of their own and needed the alternative school so they could work and support their family while at work.

MS: So at these schools what was the motivation of the students like?

BM: At the Jr. High School it was terrible. The students really did not understand responsibility and really did not care about school at all. In fact many of these kids were simply in attendance of school because it was mandated by the courts due to their being on probation. The students at the High School for the most part had responsibilities and because of this had motivation. Students at the High School were there often due to its flexible schedule. The school only taught core courses and concluded classes at noon which allowed the students to go out an work.

MS: What were some of the things you did to try to motivate the students?

BM: Often to get some of the students to do work it was like pulling teeth. So it was really essential to set a reward structure for the students. Whether it be something as simple as candy, rewards were the only leverage you have as a teacher to get the truly unmotivated kids to work. And forget about homework for these students it just was not getting done.

MS: What were some other issues that these students had?

BM: Well many of these kids came from unstable families. In fact I had some of the students parents when I taught in the regular school systems who themselves were screw ups. There usually was very little family guidance. Often these students were just told that they were pathetic and sooner or later they came to believe it. The students self esteem because of this was incredibly low. Also, for the most part the students in these alternative schools had very low skill level in academics.

MS: So realizing these issues what were your main objectives with these students?

BM: It was very important to adapt to the students needs. As a teacher at an alternative school it was very important to note what the students could and could not do and use these to create methods that the students would benefit from. For instance many of the students had a difficult time reading so often I would tape record myself reading the book and play it during class and have the children follow along. This way the students would get less frustrated reading words that they may not understand. Another important issue was to establish the self esteem of the students, because they are so beaten down you have to convince them they can do things. The students like to see hard evidence of possibilities. So one thing that the school always did was bring in graduates of the high school who either proceeded to college or obtained a good job.

MS: I see, unfortunately the school we will be working for has only been in session for two years.

BM: Even if you bring in recently graduated students just to show them some hard evidence it could be beneficial.

MS: That is true. How often do students fail at the school?

BM: Well really you don't want to fail these kids because they had no self esteem and it would be like throwing more dirt on someone who's already buried. So as a teacher you made a large effort to get every student to succeed and gain self esteem.

MS: Another question I have is, I know its Bridgeport and I doubt it, but did your school have any computers?

BM: We did have 3 computers but they weren't really used for any education purposes. They were more used for games. Again this was a reward that we used to get students to participate in classes more often.

MS: I see. What else do you think Bridgeport could do to improve its alternative education system?

BM: Well unfortunately they cut the program two years ago due to funding issues. They basically gave up on these kids and forced them to go to regular schools where they are more likely to fail. It was unfortunate.

MS: Well I don't really have anymore questions. Thank You for your time.

BM: You are very welcome.

Interviewee: Mr. Peter Crafts
Position: Director of Technical and Vocational Programs
Date and Time Conducted: 1:30 PM, November 30th, 2004
Interviewer: Rebecca
Recorder: Rebecca

PC: So what exactly is this project in Hong Kong all about?

RO: Well, my group is going to be working at the new Caritas Charles Vath College which educates 4th and 5th secondary, high school aged, students. I see that your position here is accountable for providing leadership in the planning and implementation of current and future vocational technical programs. This is exactly what we hope to assist with at the CCVC in Hong Kong.

RO: So on a broader spectrum, are there particular reasons that students come to this school, or is there a certain type of students that attend here?

PC: Well actually there is a reputation that we as vocational schools are trying to get past and are in reality isn't true anymore. We have 300 students on a waiting list to get in here. Every middle school student in Worcester has the opportunity to tour all the high schools and choose one. This is becoming an application school by choice. Where academic students are increasing along with the number of honors classes we offer. The percentage of students we have going onto college now is seventy percent. Really when they leave here, their technical strengths are better, but their academics are lacking. Even if they just go onto an associate's degree, that really gives them two years to get accustomed to an academic environment before transferring to a bachelor's degree. Then they come out with 2 degrees and hands-on experience, and are even better off. They still have to meet all state requirements and we are driven by all that bureaucracy, but they also have to pass the testing of their technical field, which is harder.

RO: I am kind of surprised to hear that, and that's great, but would you say that you have students here who are not motivated towards education?

PC: Its not that they aren't motivated, but they just hate what they see in the academic side because it's wrong. Most people didn't like high school, but they train teachers to go back and teach it the same. There is less parental support now than you might even have had, and especially for inner city kids. I also hate to hear "alternative school," I cringe when I hear that description. Maybe the traditional way should be the alternative, teaching now-a-days is horrific.

RO: Well I also see that you work directly with the faculty here. What can be done on their behalf to combat the student's difficulties?

PC: Well making sure that the teachers are trained to use all the available technology is extremely important. We should be teaching our classes like TV show, and some teachers really manage to do that well. Kids really hate to read so the sooner you can turn someone onto that the sooner and faster they will learn. Group or individual projects work a lot better than just assigning reading or writing that they don't want to do. Forcing them to go out there and find the

information on their own and make sense of it is a better way of teaching. Getting the academic teachers into it is hysterical. I would say about fifty percent of teachers actually hate their jobs, and students can sense it. In some way or another, students are going to react negatively to that from a young age, whether they act out in the classroom or just become withdrawn and don't care. The most important thing is to mold your faculty with motivating and caring teachers. There shouldn't even really be difference between them, their styles and abilities should be interchangeable between subjects. An English teacher should be able to teach English sufficiently in a mechanics lab, and the opposite should be true for the mechanics teacher. This is something that is harder to change later, so you need to build this way in the beginning before people get stuck in bad habits.

RO: How does this sort of education impact the student's future?

PC: Well we have a ninety-eight percent graduation rate, and what these kids are tested on is competency as opposed to courses.

RO: Well I know here in MA. We have the MCAS test, and they have something similar in Hong Kong that students must pass to move on. The CCVC is working on getting around that with these students. Would you suggest different methods at the CCVC as compared to standard practices?

PC: Well, here we said, our students can pass the MCAS. Not only are they as good as the other students, they are better. So I would say they should still take the test in Hong Kong. Only what you might look at is how the tests are administered. Are they just typical paper and pencil, because some students don't do well with that sort of evaluation? Don't lower standards, but maybe find better ways to meet them. For example, computerize the test, or build it to prove competency in some way. If its for a language, have them speak to someone or to a computer.

RO: How is technology used here?

CP: Well we use the actual huge CNC machines in our manufacturing lab here. When people at WPI need the big machine they come to our lab, because you just have the small ones. Students at WPI might be able to program something to build on CAD or ProE, but most of them from what I've seen, can't actually build it on a machine. That is what you need technicians for, and we teach them how to do it. Here we just don't teach about things, but students use technology to actually know how to do something, and they learn faster this way.

RO: Does the technology keep them more interested?

CP: Well it is critical for them to know how to use it. You could teach English on a computer program through application, through trial and error, where the computer edits your work as you go. There is voice recognition software on computers, there are writing tablets laptops that would be more exciting for students to use. Projection and smart boards can allow students to review their work with the whole class and utilize peer editing and team work. Virtual labs are a great lead into actual labs, especially with students who might be timid about dissections or things like that. Being able to teach hands on things on a computer first makes the transition to the real

experience much easier. Video conferencing and faster internet, all these things will change education as we know it. Students won't even need to come to class, and as we know most of them would probably rather be sleeping than attending 8am classes. If teens are more apt to be awake at 1am then why should they be able to attend their class then, online?

RO: So what impact would you say, this technology has on their future?

CP: Well it is essential. I don't mean just basic computer skills like Windows, or Microsoft Office, or Power Point. Students are quick enough now that they can teach themselves programs like that. Advancing technology however is going to change everything as we know it. They should really have their own tool kit, foor each area of study. All the equipment they need in their field and have a solid knowledge of how to use it. We should make online courses available, school should be more flexible. Maybe students should have either a laptop or PDA that allows them to work along with their class as its happening or at another time. There could be common areas in the school for them to go to do their work. They wouldn't even have to go to class, but you would know which teachers were doing their job well, because the students would still be there. The digital classroom of tomorrow is not that far away. We can use these technological advances to better education around the world.

RO: What is the overall aim for these students?

CP: Well as a school we aim to be exploratory. Let them choose what they want to do, choose a concentration, try out different things. Here we can only offer concentrations that have a future in them for the students to receive more education and possibility for advancement in their careers. You should use heavy surveying in Hong Kong of students and parents, what they want to be when they grow up; what types of careers are available to them. Then build from there. Very importantly, we have advisory boards for the technical areas here. Each of the twenty-two areas of concentration has a board made up of some students, parents, teachers and professionals in the field. They review the program every year to make sure it is meeting industry standards, and they are responsible for setting graduation standards. Then the chairs of those boards meet as a whole to discuss how things are going. Sometimes they go to the school board to point out how well things are going, and hopefully get more funding. That is the most important things, advisory boards, because without real input and monitoring, the technical education might not live up to what is needed in the real world.

Appendix P – Reference Information from the WVHS

Worcester's "New" Vocational High School

Creating the Future through Technology, Training and Talent

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY
OF WORCESTER VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The trade school movement in the early 1900s was one of the most important changes in public education. This revolutionary approach to education began in Worcester, Massachusetts with the opening of the Worcester Trade School. At that time, local industrialists whose companies were the very foundation of the local economy saw the need for trained workers. These individuals – Milton P. Higgins, George F. Fuller, Louis H. Buckley, George I. Alden, George Jeppson, and others who were closely connected with Worcester industry – had the foresight to see that manufacturing processes and machinery were growing ever more complex, and on-the-job training simply wasn't enough to meet their needs for skilled workers in their shops and factories. The Worcester Trade School opened in 1908 to provide the training and talent to fuel the Worcester area economy, an economy that was largely based on metals manufacturing, textiles and abrasives. It was one of the first vocational high schools in the country. The original building at Wheaton Square opened with 50 students. The cost for construction - $117,000 - was funded entirely by private dollars. At the forefront of this effort was Milton P. Higgins, a man who came to be known as the father of the trade school movement.

Within five years, the new school was overcrowded with 400 day students and 800 men in evening classes. In 1911 another Worcester industrialist, David Hale Fanning, donated $100,000 to begin a girls' trade school. The David Hale Fanning School opened in 1921 at a cost of $350,000, and was funded by a combination of private and city funds.

Independent Boards of Trustees governed both the Boys Trade School and the David Hale Fanning School until 1998. Today, the two schools have merged into the Worcester Public School System. Worcester Vocational High School is part of the Carnegie-funded school reform project, the Small Learning Communities Initiative, in partnership with Clark University and Worcester Public Schools.

The mission of Worcester Vocational High School is to educate and prepare our students, both academically and technically, to meet the challenges of a global society. The school provides its students with a dynamic technical and academic education of world-class standards and specific occupational proficiencies to prepare them to be competent, responsible, and contributing members of society, as well as to support and meet the needs of the greater Worcester business community.

OUR REGION'S EMERGING ECONOMY

Technology and training needs by area companies demand that our students - their future employees - have the best training using the most advanced technology available. Our students deserve the best so we can help them become the best - for their future and ours.

– Ted Coghlin, Chairman, Worcester Vocational Schools Advisory Boards

The new economy is here. It is an economic fabric woven with growth sectors like high tech and biotechnology, financial services, health care, and education, metals manufacturing and abrasives. Changes in the 21st century labor market demand that students achieve higher levels of both academic and technical skill. Students must be trained in areas that drive this new economy - business management, manufacturing, construction and health. They must be proficient with computers, problem-solvers, understand customer service, and so much more.

A new generation of skilled worker is emerging: the technician. During the last decade, the technician was the fastest growing occupation at 37%, surpassing engineering at 27% (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Skilled technical professionals provide the foundation of a functioning technical economy.

Mr. James H. Harrington recognized the crucial connection between education and the economy. In an address at Quinsigamond Community College, he stated that …our global competitors have made vocational and technical education available on a far broader scale than we have in this country, and recommended developing a far more comprehensive system of vocational and technical education through our vocational schools and our community colleges to prepare students for the highly skilled technical professions essential for our 21st Century economy. The new Worcester Vocational High School is meeting that challenge.

THE NEW SCHOOL: PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Worcester Vocational High School is an invaluable educational and economic development engine for our city and region. The entire community must come together to ensure this continues for the next 100 years by building a new state-of-the art facility.

- Timothy Murray, Mayor of Worcester

We are delighted with the new equipment at the Vocational School and the prospect of the new school building. The new building will be a huge leap into the future for vocational education in Worcester. You can feel the enthusiasm of the students, teachers and administrators pulsing through the school. They are like runners at the starting line: their training is done and they are ready to go!

- Susan Woodbury, Chair, George I. Alden Trust

Reports and input from educators and private sector businesses over the past decade have highlighted the need for Worcester to build a new vocational high school, and to equip it with the latest technology - the tools of the 21st century - in order to ensure that graduates continue to be job ready.

In 1997, NEASC (the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the regional accrediting body for schools and colleges) notified Worcester Vocational School that it was placed on a warning status as a result of the school's physical condition, which posed a threat to the institution's ability to retain its accreditation. City officials and educators agreed that the prospect of losing accreditation was unacceptable. Worcester has been at the forefront of the vocational school movement, and there was too much at stake to let this invaluable educational and economic development engine for our city and region falter. City officials voted to build a new vocational school, rather than try to retrofit the existing complex at an estimated cost of $120 million. Elected officials, educators, industry leaders and the community-at-large came together – as they had nearly a century ago – to launch a public-private partnership that would benefit the community.

A NEW HIGH SCHOOL THAT WORKS

On June 10, 2002, ground was broken for Worcester's new Vocational High School, a state-of-the-art 400,000 square foot building that will be the skills learning center for fueling area corporate, business, and industry growth. Housing 1500 day students plus an after-hours population of 3,000 students in over 100 classrooms, 24 learning centers, numerous shops, support areas, retail stores, restaurants, a fully-operational bank, automotive repair and collision service areas, a health clinic, and meeting and tourism facilities, the new vocational school will fulfill many community needs.

Scheduled to open in 2006, the new Worcester Vocational High School will be literally built to work. The new school will accommodate 1,500 students during the school day. Early mornings, the school will offer ESL and skill-building classes. After school hours, additional classes will be offered to students from other schools. Evenings and weekends, up to 3,000 students, many of them employees from area companies, will have the opportunity to upgrade their skills. Classrooms and shops will be outfitted with the latest technology for each of the applied disciplines. This is the first new vocational high school to be built in Massachusetts in over 25 years.

The four Technology Academies and twenty-four Learning Centers are as follows:

FORMATION TECHNOLOGY & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SERVICES	ALLIED HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES ACADEMY	CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGIES ACADEMY	ALDEN DESIGN AND ENGINEERING ACADEMY
Graphic Communications	Health Assistant	Carpentry	Automotive Technician
Office Technology	Environmental & Biotechnical Technology	Electrical	Auto Collision Technology
Culinary Arts	Medical & Pharmacy Lab Assistant	Heating, Air, Ventilation & Refrigeration	Drafting / Auto CAD
Hotel, Restaurant Management & Tourism	Veterinary Tech Assistant	Sheet Metal	Machine Tool (CAM) Technology
Finance & Marketing	Early Childhood Education	Plumbing & Pipefitting	Electro/Mechanical Technology
Telecommunications Cisco A+ Academy	Cosmetology & Personal Services	Interior Design & Finishes	Welding & Metal Technology

Construction of the new facility will cost $60 million, of which $6 million has been budgeted by the city of Worcester. State and federal school building assistance funds are providing a nine-to-one match to meet the rest of the construction costs. Equipment will cost another $30 million. Private interests have stepped up to meet the equipment costs with a $3 million capital fundraising campaign, the Technology Fund. The money raised by this private campaign will also qualify for the matching funds to meet the $30 million needed for up-to-date tools, training aids, equipment and systems for all students. All fundraising costs are being privately underwritten, so every dollar raised goes directly towards needed equipment and technology. The Massachusetts Manufacturing Advancement Center, a 501(c)(3) organization, is the fiscal agent for the school's fundraising. This private fundraising effort continues a long Worcester tradition: in 1908, Worcester Trade School, one of the first vocational high schools in the country, was built with funds contributed by local industrialists.

THE WORCESTER VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY FUND: THE PRIVATE EDGE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Our nation and our region are in the midst of what can be viewed as a new industrial revolution, brought about by the computer and other emerging technologies. Our global competitors are responding to this challenge by making vocational and technical education available on a far broader scale than we have done in the United States.

At the turn of the last century, industries and private philanthropy invested their funds to begin the Worcester Vocational High School, and one of the first public-private partnerships was born. That tradition continues today, with many businesses contributing equipment and serving as advisors to program development.

Together, the city and state will contribute over $60-million to build this technical center of excellence. Given the magnitude of the cost for constructing the school, the City of Worcester was not able to recommend sufficient funds to provide the new school with the needed technology and equipment.

The private sector once again has the opportunity to participate in an extraordinary public-private partnership that will leverage $9.00 for every $1.00 contributed toward the Worcester Vocational High School Technology Fund. This Fund seeks $3-million in private funds to equip the school with the state-of the-art equipment for the four academies and 24 learning centers.

The leverage effect of private contributions has already been demonstrated. A grant from the George I. Alden Trust allowed the school to purchase three Haas CNC machine centers. The Haas supplier, Trident Machine Tools, Inc., was so impressed with the machine technology program and level of training that is offered at the school's Building D shops that they entrusted another CNC machine worth $135,000 to the school. In addition, Trident will replace, at no cost to the school, this machine with the newest technology when the new school opens. Saint Gobain, and Morgan Construction help provide the accessories, supplies, and equipment to train students on this equipment. In turn, Voke assists in training students and staff at area colleges that also have Haas equipment, including WPI and Quinsigamond Community College.

PROJECT TIMETABLE

March 2002	The first $6.3-million for School Building Assistance funds was approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Board of Education. This allowed the city administration to proceed with contracting for asbestos removal prior to building demolition on the site.
April 2002	City administration hires Heery International as the construction manager. The process of value engineering to ensure that the job is done in the most cost-effective manner has begun.
June 2002	Site work begins June 10, 2002
Spring 2003	Construction contracts are awarded; construction begins
Fall 2006	The new school opens

SUMMARY

In 1956, Carter Higgins spoke directly to the vocational school graduating students as follows: You will be helping not only industry, but your country, at a time when our world leadership is challenged. These words spoken nearly 50 years ago could not ring more true today. With the new Worcester Vocational High School, built to work, equipped with cutting edge tools and technology, Worcester once again leads the way in providing the training, technology, and talent to fuel the new economy – for our region, for our nation, and for our time.

Appendix Q – Limitations of Note for Future Educational Hong Kong IQPs

As with any data collection process, we encountered a variety of limiting factors and were required to make the appropriate changes to our methodology. Many of the problems that occurred during our eight weeks in Hong Kong developed specifically from our interaction with the CCVC, and would affect anyone working with any other Hong Kong secondary school in a similar manner. Another important limiting factor that we anticipated before our arrival, but may have underestimated, was the reserved nature of the Chinese teachers and students. Each of the following limitations forced us to adapt our methods to best cope with the presented situation.

Chinese New Year

One major limitation affecting the completion of our methods was the Chinese New Year holiday. While the three day period of the holiday was foreseen, the two weeks during which the school was on vacation was not. This created a sense of urgency to finish all of our necessary data collection within the first four weeks of the term and resulted in some scheduling conflicts. For future students completing IQPs with the need of attending schools for observation and other work it is very important that this two week period is accounted for early within the project and scheduled around.

Classroom Observation

While the classroom observations as a whole provided much insight as to the reactions between the students and teachers on a class by class basis there was one limitation which reduced their overall worth to the group. Because no one in our group is fluent in Cantonese, it

was often difficult to fully comprehend the interactions between students and teachers and whether or not the students were positively interacting during class. While we tried to remedy this by attending class with fluent Cantonese speaking WPI students, it was not always a viable option, as these students were also completing their respective projects and were unable to make the commute to Tung Chung on more than one or two occasions. For groups that do not contain a native speaker it is important and very useful to have native speakers attend classes with you at every opportunity to get the best information out of the observation sessions.

Survey

Due to time constraints imposed by the Chinese New Year holiday, our survey was produced with a few small errors. The translation provided by our Hong Kong Polytechnic University colleagues included one mistake in which the word "parents" was translated into the word "partners". This brings up two important issues that can be dealt with more efficiently in the future. First scheduling around the Chinese New Year immediately and coming to Hong Kong with more concrete survey questions would have given us more time to avoid these issues. Also, it is important with any translation that it be checked by another bilingual person to verify it's accuracy.

Student Interviews

With respect to student interviews, there was both a limitation and a compromise. The limitation came in scheduling the interviews with the students. The interviews were set up through the students' respective teachers for the lunch session or after school. However, on several occasions the students forgot about the interview and proceeded to lunch or home as normal. Due to the time restriction as stated above, we were unable to reschedule some of these

interviews. The compromise was made while conducting the interviews. Because no members of our group were fluent in Cantonese, it was necessary for a translator to be present. During the instances when we could not provide our own translator, we allowed the students to attend the interviews with a friend or two who spoke English well enough to act as a translator. These interviews, in turn, became a discussion about the school and other life topics. The interviewer attempted to intertwine all of the questions desired to be asked to the students during a normal conversation to get important facts while still allowing the students to be in a comfortable environment. This turned our interviews into small focus groups, but we were still able to obtain the data we were looking for.

General Advice for Future Projects

When dealing with teachers and students in Hong Kong it is vastly important that things are organized and explained well. When handing out a survey to the students it is important that administration is informed days in advance as our first attempt to hand out the survey was denied because we desired to announce over the speakers. Also, when scheduling interviews with students, it is important to have a general knowledge of who the interviewee is. As stated prior it can be difficult to track down the students even with knowledge of who they are. When conducting teacher interviews be aware of their busy scheduling and be prepared for a wealth of cancellations and rescheduling. Having a flexible schedule as to the time of conducting teacher interviews is very important in the ability to interview them.