

**An Alternate Route to Success: A Case Study of a Nontraditional Public High School and
its Effects on Students who Attend**

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Abstract

Not every student is able to succeed in a traditional public school. One school district implemented a solution to this problem by partnering with Big Picture Learning, an organization which specializes in non-traditional education, to open a non-traditional high school. The school features smaller class sizes, more personalized attention from teachers, administrators and counselors, advisory sessions, and internship placements with local businesses. This school was studied to determine if its model was viable in preparing students for success after high school. While the answer to this question is inconclusive, the data suggests that this school is indeed viable in providing another route to success.

Introduction

Public education utilizes a model of pedagogy that contains several inherent flaws and creates learning environments that are not conducive to the success of all students (Lynch, 2017). Public schools herd 20 to 30 or more students into a room with one adult and expect them all to learn the same thing at the same time at the same pace. Their learning and intelligence is measured by their ability to memorize and parrot facts back to the teacher, with little to no emphasis on higher-order thinking; the results wield profound influence on their futures and success in their adult lives. For some students, this traditional model is not conducive to their success. These students who are unable to succeed in a traditional setting are not dumb or lazy, as sometimes exasperated teachers might claim, but they fall through the cracks because something is missing.

One city in New York State has a poverty rate of 51.5 percent, far above the state average and farther above the poverty rate of a neighboring town, which is 3.8 percent (US Census

Bureau, 2018). The school district serving both communities has 11,557 students enrolled, 77 percent of whom are black or Latino, with 14 percent of students categorized as English Language Learners (NYSED, 2018). These groups of students, along with economically disadvantaged students, consistently rank below the average rates of high school graduation and proficiency in all Regents-level subjects (NYSED, 2018) and rank below their white and Asian peers. The African American and Latino graduation rates are 83 and 77.3 percent, respectively, compared to the average graduation rate of 82.6 percent and graduation rates of 91.3 and 96.3 percent for white and Asian students. This disparity shows something is amiss within the community's public schools.

The district implemented a solution in 2017: partnering with an education company called Big Picture Learning, the district opened a new campus of the high school, which, for the purposes of this study, will be called Non-Traditional High School, or NTHS. "Big Picture Learning was established in 1995 with the sole mission of putting students directly at the center of their own learning." (Big Picture Learning, 2021). A newspaper article published several months after this new school launched reported that many students were thriving at this school and state that their grades and attitudes have dramatically improved.

Several years have passed since that article was published. Local reporting alone is not enough to assert that the program is viable. A research study is needed to determine if NTHS is a viable option for students who opt for a nontraditional high school experience. At face-value, NTHS appears to be guiding students towards success but is it actually doing so? This question is addressed in this case study. **The inquiry on which this report is based explores the different approach to high school offered by NTHS, and its effects on student preparation for success**

and success after graduation. The inquiry specifically explores the answers to the following questions:

1. What distinguishes the student experience in a non-traditional high school program from one at a traditional high school?
2. What impact does a non-traditional high school model have on students' preparation for post-graduation?

Theoretical Framework

“I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living (Dewey, 1897).”

NTHS appears to encompass the tenets of John Dewey's theories about education to a greater extent than its traditional counterparts. Dewey believed students should engage in learning by doing (Gibbon, 2019), not by sitting at a desk all day listening to teachers drone on about topics that students have little to no interest in, and which are disconnected from their lives. Dewey rejected the idea that students are empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge; he believed students had to be active participants in their learning and partake in hands-on activities. He believed learning to be a social process with active participation by the student and teacher.

Dewey highlighted problems with the education system that today still go unrectified. A significant issue is the need for relevant and practical curricula (Gibbon, 2019).

Dewey theorized that education was not a process by which students learned a set of skills, but rather an experience in which students develop their potential and learn to use skills for a greater purpose, noting in his 1897 work, *My Pedagogic Creed*, “To prepare him for the future life means to give him command of himself;” (Talebi, 2015). His ideal school taught

students how to live in accompaniment with content knowledge. His ideal school was also a laboratory for social reform and a place for social reform to occur (Talebi, 2015).

The changes implemented in the Dewey school align with what education should be about: discovery and cooperation (Gibbon, 2019). He believed field trips and projects held and still hold far greater educational value than the model employed today. Dewey and his wife are correct in their statement, “Studying alone out of a book is an isolated and unsocial performance,” (Gibbon, 2019). Studying out of a book is a solitary pursuit, but so is sitting at a desk listening to a teacher, especially a teacher out of touch with his or her students’ socioeconomic backgrounds, lecture on a topic that may be of little or no interest to class.

Today’s schools are still utilizing a 19th Century model of education, forcing students to sit at desks and learn facts that are uninteresting to them, irrelevant for preparation for the real 21st Century world, or both, and measuring students’ success by their ability to memorize and regurgitate information.

NTHS is designed to be a solution to the problems described by Dewey so long ago. How the school manifests itself as this solution and its alignment with Dewey’s educational philosophy, whether this alignment is intentional or not, informs the research questions of this study.

Literature Review

NTHS is hardly the first non-traditional high school. In recent years they’ve been created all over the country, with various intentions. Whatever the reasons behind the creation of a non-traditional high school, there are usually similarities between them, even if those similarities are subtle.

Non-Traditional High Schools and Student Engagement

One non-traditional high school in Milwaukee reported higher levels of engagement among its students (Jeffries et. al, 2004). High engagement in coursework correlates with higher academic achievement (Konold, Cornell, Jia, & Malone, 2018). Nontraditional high schools have been successful in increasing student engagement; building self-efficacy can lead to increased engagement (Wilkerson, Min-Chi, Perzigian, & Cakiroglu, 2016).

Good relationships between peers and between students and teachers also increase student engagement and predict academic success. Bullying, so prevalent in traditional school settings, (Rose and Monda-Amaya, 2012) can destroy student motivation and severely reduce academic achievement (Gomes, Martins, Farinha, Silva, Ferreira, Caldas, & Brandão, 2020). Bullying can have devastating lifelong consequences for both perpetrators and victims (Rose and Monda-Amaya). Several studies discussed how the smaller student populations and consequently smaller class sizes found at nontraditional high schools helped cut down on bullying and foster positive, intimate relationships between fellow students and between students and teachers (Antrop-González, 2003; Coyl, Jones, & Dick, 2004; Jeffries et. al, 2004). Students reported that they felt their teachers cared about them more and wanted them to succeed. They also reported that they found greater acceptance by peers. They found their classmates easier to get along with than in traditional high schools. Students also reported that their peers encouraged them to stay in school and work hard. Attitudes and behavior improved, with some students reporting that for the first time they liked school. One school also conducted an intervention in which researchers implemented mindfulness studies in cooperation with a teacher (Wisner and Starzec, 2016); Students gained intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits, including increased self-regulation, improved relationships with teachers, peers, and parents, and increased trust.

Non-Traditional High Schools and Student Achievement

Many students reach middle and high school with poor reading and poor reading comprehension abilities. Interventions can and are instituted to help students who are struggling readers catch up to their peers (Moats, 2001). Traditional high schools are not rectifying this travesty. Nontraditional high schools are combating this problem; 91.7 percent of responding schools implement supplementary reading programs, compared to just 30 percent of traditional schools in the state of North Carolina (Wilkerson et. al).

Non-Traditional High Schools and School Culture and Climate

Some non-traditional high schools are designed to be alternative environments for dangerous students (Joslyn, Vollmer, & Kronfli, 2019). Others are private, charter or even public schools that fill a niche in a given community (Antrop-González, 2003; Jeffries, Hollowell & Powell, 2004). For example, several high schools whose locations are indeterminable were created for students whose behavioral issues are considered extremely dilatory or dangerous and thus detrimental to the learning process (Joslyn et. al, 2004). Several of these use less punitive measures to control behavior. One such measure was the subject of a study in which whole classes played a good behavior game throughout lessons in order to win prizes. The study found that overall there was a significant decrease in behavioral issues. Other nontraditional schools have their own methods of cutting down disruptive behavior. Some are extremely punitive, being described as “soft prisons” in one study (Jeffries et. al, 2004). One such school had invited US Marshals to conduct security checks on students and clamped windows so they would barely open. The study notes that such harsh measures rarely provide the intended results. One aforementioned school in Milwaukee is nonpunitive, with lax security measures and smaller class sizes as a way to produce more cogenity among students and teachers (Jeffries et. al, 2004)

and promotes an atmosphere of trust. Like the aforementioned schools, this one is designed for at-risk students, for whom many this was their last chance at obtaining a high school education.

Parent involvement also plays a significant role in student achievement (Araque, Wietstock, Cova, and Zepeda, 2017; Jensen and Minke, 2017). Latino parents were more likely to be more involved in their children's education if they were more informed about how school systems operated, how to calculate GPA, how to read a report card, how to motivate their children to perform better, and how their children could access college opportunities. Parent involvement at all levels of education correlates with high student achievement, low drop-out rates, lower rates of clinical depression, and increased social/emotional wellbeing. NTHS expects parents to be actively involved in their children's education.

Many students end up in the wrong nontraditional high school, which isn't helpful for them. Research shows that students who are male, African American, Native American, from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and who have disabilities are overrepresented in behavior-focused alternative schools, while Hispanic students were overrepresented in remedial schools. These findings demonstrate possible "disparate enrollment practices among urban traditional and alternative high schools" (Wilkerson., Afacan, Perzigian, Courtright, & Lange, 2018).

Students attend nontraditional high schools because traditional schools aren't conducive to their success, not because they are unfit for schooling. Many elements of nontraditional schools discussed in this section simply cannot be replicated in larger settings. The intimacy found in smaller settings is impossible with schools that may contain thousands of students, with classrooms ranging anywhere from 20 to 40 students or greater, as compared to class sizes of about 15 and a student population rarely exceeding 125 (Antrop-González). One flaw with the

traditional model that nontraditional schools rectify is student input on their learning and school operations. Student voices need to be included in educational policy-making and programming (de la Ossa, 2005). This inclusion helps create more effective learning environments and schools that better serve their students.

Gaps in the Literature

Currently, there is not as much literature that exists on a public non-traditional high school, much less one that is a satellite campus of a much larger, traditional high school. There is also not a lot of literature linking the effects of a non-traditional high school setting on the quantitative variables presented in this study, such as engagement, acceptance, and hope for the future.. There is a lot of study dedicated to qualitative effects, but quantitative factors are just as important. The current literature is also underrepresentation of student and teacher voices. This study focuses heavily on the opinions of both.

Methods

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the principal via email, which is recorded in Appendix F. The methods used to conduct the study were also approved by the principal.

Context

The school district in which NTHS is located encompasses a city, most of two neighboring towns, and a slight area of a third town. As stated in the introduction, the student population is 22% African American, 55% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, 17% white, and 4% multiracial. 14% of students are English Language Learners. The majority-minority student body at NTHS reflects these demographics; the vast majority of students are Latino or African American. The economic demographics of the students body are not recorded in this study, nor is the percentage of English Language Learners.

As of the 2018-2019 academic year, the combined attendance rate of all district high schools is 92 percent. The suspension rate is 8 percent. The three schools have a combined score of 2 out of 4 on the college, career and civic readiness index. The combined graduation rate is 74 percent, though this increases to 84 percent when students who take 5 years to graduate are factored in.

Big Picture Learning (BPL) was founded in 1995 by Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor with the goal of centering learning around students (Big Picture Learning, 2021). Littky and Washor envisioned students spending time in the community and demonstrating what they learned through exhibitions and other media, not through standardized testing. The first BPL school was the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, or The Met, located in Rhode Island. Ninety-six percent of the school's first class graduated in 2000, and 98 percent of those were admitted to institutions of higher learning and received over \$500,000 in scholarships. The Met's success garnered national recognition, and BPL received two grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2001 and 2003 to help launch similar schools across the country. The Met and other BPL schools were praised by then President Obama in 2010 as models worth replicating. There are currently 65 BPL schools across the country, including NTHS, and more around the world.

Big Picture Learning published several learning goals that are on display at NTHS. These goals include empirical reasoning, quantitative reasoning, communication, social reasoning, and person qualities.

The partnership between Big Picture Learning and NTHS is the brainchild of the district superintendent, who sought and received the approval of the local Board of Education in 2016 to create the school.

The author is a graduate student at Pace University. He is a candidate for certification as a grades 7-12 earth science teacher. He is also a substitute teacher in the district that contains NTHS. This is the same district he attended from kindergarten until high school graduation. He has worked at NTHS before, so he was known to several members of the faculty and staff. This connection made it possible to access the school and conduct the study. His prior experience as a substitute teacher at the school helped inform the research questions and the methods by which the study was conducted, including the interview protocols.

For NTHS to be a truly viable alternative to traditional high school, it need not outperform a traditional high school within the district, but should be able to provide in its own right an effective learning environment for students to thrive in and prepare to adapt and thrive in a world that is always in flux and achieve success. This study is not about whether a nontraditional high school is better than a traditional one but about whether a nontraditional high school is viable.

Data Sources

The research questions posed at the end of the introduction were answered using a variety of sources. Most of the data was obtained from primary sources, including interviews, observations, and a survey. Other sources include the Big Picture Learning website and documents provided by the school. The data collected was then analyzed to determine the answers to the research questions.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Sources.

	Data source:	Data source:	Data source:	Data source:
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Research Q: What distinguishes the student experience in a non-traditional high school program from one at a traditional high school?	Big Picture Learning Public Information	Administrator and Teacher Interviews	School documents	Observations of classes, an advisory period, a morning meeting, and exhibitions
Research Q: What impact does an non-traditional high school model have on students' preparation for post-graduation?	School data, obtained from the principal	Administrator and Teacher Interviews	Student surveys	Observations of Exhibitions

Public Records

Big Picture Learning is the company that is partnering with NTHS. Their website provides information on the company's values, how the program works, the schools they partner with, and their history. Several student interviews are featured on the website, and their outcomes tab lists seven papers relating to their program and research on non-traditional high school programs. The information provided was used to fill in the gaps in information obtained from the other methods, namely the organization's vision and role in the schools it works with.

The principal provided numerous documents about the school, including a narrative report card, located in Appendix E, a brochure about the school, a lesson plan template, and a mentor guide. Some data was given verbally, such as the school's graduation rate and number of

suspensions. This data complemented what was learned from surveys, interviews and observations.

Faculty Interviews

_____An intimate understanding of daily life at NTHS and what sets it apart from a traditional high school was gained through interviewing a teacher, an academic coach who is also teaching one class, and the campus principal. These interviews directly sought comparisons of student engagement, student performance, and student behavioral issues, as well as information on how NTHS sets itself apart from a traditional high school. Many of the questions for teachers and administrators are the same in order to gain different perspectives; additional questions will be asked to administrators as they will be more knowledgeable of those topics. These questions yielded qualitative data.

Before any research involving the active participation of the school commenced, the author visited the school to gain permission to conduct the research. There was some delay, as another faculty member had to be asked via email, who then referred it to the principal, who set up a meeting on Google Meets. The principal launched into describing the tenets of an NTHS education, so the interview protocol established was not followed. Nonetheless, valuable qualitative and quantitative information from her answers were obtained. Several follow-up questions were drawn from the list of administrator survey questions, found in Appendix A. The school only has two administrators, so the conversation with the principal was sufficient.

Teacher interviews are another essential component of this study. The entire school only has around 120-160 students, so the intention was to interview five teachers. However, access was only granted to one teacher and one academic coach. This is not interpreted to be a major compromise of accuracy or source of skewing, as there are still a total of three faculty

interviewed, all with unique perspectives based on their position. The instructional coach has worked at the school for two years. She was attracted by the “authentic learning” and program offered by the school. The teacher has been at the school since it opened, making this year her fifth. She teaches art, and previously taught at a K-8 school. She switched schools after meeting with the then-assistant principal, the current principal at NTHS, who was looking for teachers who could think outside the box and teach in a non-traditional environment. The faculty were interviewed together in the office of the academic coach during one of their break periods. The author and the subjects wore facial coverings and maintained social distancing. Before interviews commenced, the author informed them that their identities and answers will be kept confidential, that the school’s identity will remain confidential, and that they are free to skip any questions they would rather not answer. The joint interview took 60 minutes, far longer than anticipated, but there was a lot of information obtained, with answers recorded as handwritten notes. The questions asked are found in Appendix A. They were drafted based on the author’s experiences as a substitute teacher in the building. Data from the interviews was recorded in a notebook and was used to answer the subquestions, or variables, which will in turn help answer the research questions. The answers to these questions influenced the questions asked on the student survey.

The faculty granted permission to be asked follow-up questions. One such question about the number of teachers at NTHS was asked.

Observations

One of the best ways to learn about NTHS was to observe it. The author observed several exhibitions, an advisory period, a morning meeting, and two classes.

Prior to observing, the author had an opportunity to ask one of the teachers interviewed some questions about the exhibitions and had previously obtained a rubric from the principal. Observations were done remotely on Google Meets. Freshman exhibitions were viewed live, albeit some were pre-recorded then broadcast for the class to watch, while senior exhibitions were sent to the author's email account for viewing at his own convenience. Five freshmen exhibitions were observed. Exhibitions were viewed by all students and teachers in each grade. The author was able to listen to feedback given by fellow students and teachers.

Period 1 is the schoolwide advisory period. One advisory was observed in-person. The Morning Meeting is a weekly occurrence in which student achievements are highlighted. One Morning Meeting was observed remotely through Google Classroom the following morning. These observations helped obtain additional data to help answer the research questions. Two classes were observed remotely using Google Classroom: An Italian I class and a studio art class.

Data from observations were recorded in a notebook.

Student Surveys

Student surveys were another crucial component of this research project. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from student surveys, which asked about their experience at NTHS, what they like about it, their engagement in their classes, and what they believe the impact of their experience is on their future. While most questions asked students to determine how much they agree with each statement, some were open-ended to obtain qualitative data along with the quantitative data. The link to the Google Form containing the survey was emailed to the building administrator, who forwarded it to advisory teachers, who forwarded it to their first period students (first period is the schoolwide advisory period). The link was also shared in the chat of one of the observed classes. Students were assured their responses would

remain anonymous. The survey should have taken less than 15 minutes to complete. Answers from the survey were used to answer the subquestions, or variables, which in turn helped answer the research questions. 25 responses were received. Survey questions are located in Appendix B.

As stated above, this survey was modified based on answers to the faculty interview questions, demonstrating good craftsmanship. All data collection tools were developed using feedback from peer researchers.

The author's experience as a substitute teacher at NTHS provided him with adequate knowledge to formulate this study. His prior knowledge and the information presented in the literature review were used to create interview questions that would yield the most informative answers with the most relevant information. The questions asked on the student survey were also based on this knowledge, and the survey was modified based on the answers given during the interviews. Those answers created new wonderings while answering others. For example, the principal talked about the need for high parental involvement in their children's education, so a question was added asking students if their parents were involved. The faculty answered questions relating to student behavior, rendering a similar question that was to be asked on the student survey moot and unnecessary, so it was removed. All protocols for obtaining information were peer-reviewed before the study commenced. All identities of persons interviewed and surveyed are anonymous in this study, as is the school and the city in which it's located. This allows for fully honest answers without fear of reprisals. The results are expressed in language that is easy for the average person to understand. The results can be used as part of the foundation of other studies of nontraditional high schools and be used to inform and influence the practices of other schools, including traditional ones.

Results

Both the instructional coach and art teacher bristled as the reference to their school as an “alternative” high school. They noted that the school suffers from preconceived notions that it is for “bad kids” or for students too dumb for regular high school, and that the term, “alternative” contributes to those notions. They preferred the term, “non-traditional”. Indeed, the school exists to serve students who thrive in a non-traditional environment, not because they are unfit for school but because a traditional school model is unfit for them. As a result, the school is named herein as Non-Traditional High School, whereas prior to the interviews it was referred to as Alternative High School. The two terms are synonymous but carry completely different connotations, and both the faculty subjects and the author agree the former term is more neutral if not more positive than the latter.

A lot of information was collected. It was difficult to determine what to report and how much depth should be presented. The results presented represent the data that most fully answers the research questions and gives readers the greatest understanding of everything NTHS has to offer.

The school focuses on the Three Rs: Relationship, Rigorous, Relevant. That order is deliberate; the school focuses first on building relationships between students and their teachers and mentors, then on providing a rigorous curriculum that is relevant to students’ lives. Most of the data was categorized by pertinence to achievement, student engagement, or school climate. Data that didn’t fit into those categories were placed in others. Data from the observed advisory is placed in its own category because the interviewed subjects placed great emphasis on the importance of the advisory, and because the data in that section is pertinent to all three named categories.

The school has 120-160 students and 13 teachers.

Enrolling at NTHS

Students who wish to enroll at NTHS must apply online and be interviewed by all the faculty and staff, including the secretary and janitors but excluding the guidance counselor and principal. These exclusions prevent bias on their part and allows them to welcome all new students without any preconceptions. Parents must also be interviewed. The school requires parents to be 100 percent involved and support their child's education. Parents and students usually interview separately, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are currently interviewed together. Everyone involved in the interview gets a say on whether to admit each student. Enrollment is small; only 30-40 are admitted each year. The school tries to limit class sizes to 15 students. The total enrollment is somewhere between 120 and 160.

NTHS and Student Engagement

Each advisory is given a name; the one observed is called the GOAT Advisory. There were books everywhere! Shelves in the classroom and in the closet were lined with popular teen novels, older novels, and biographies. There were more than 100 books on display. On one of the walls is a quote from Maya Angelou: "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude". On the door were more encouraging statements, including, "We don't want activities without achievement.", "Let's make the most of our time together.", "One Voice", and "When one person is speaking, we look and listen". Also on the door is the Golden Rule: treat others the way you'd want to be treated.

The observed period was dedicated to following up on the exhibitions and discussing reactions to a guest speaker who talked about job opportunities. The teacher emphasized networking as an important way to advance career opportunities, including connecting with mentors' connections. Students were then invited to share the connections they had made.

The students are preparing for their next and last exhibition of the year, which is presently five weeks away. The teacher demonstrated the required research to support a claim; both should relate to each student's Passion Project which is developed through their internship, coursework, and in cooperation with their mentor and advisor. The task for the day was to complete the Edpuzzle certifications or conduct research related to Passion Projects.

Each student is matched with an advisor, who oversees 15 students for the full four years they're in high school. The principal calls the advisory the school's "secret sauce", the cornerstone of NTHS. Each advisor builds an intimate relationship with each student and helps them craft an individual learning plan, which changes each quarter.

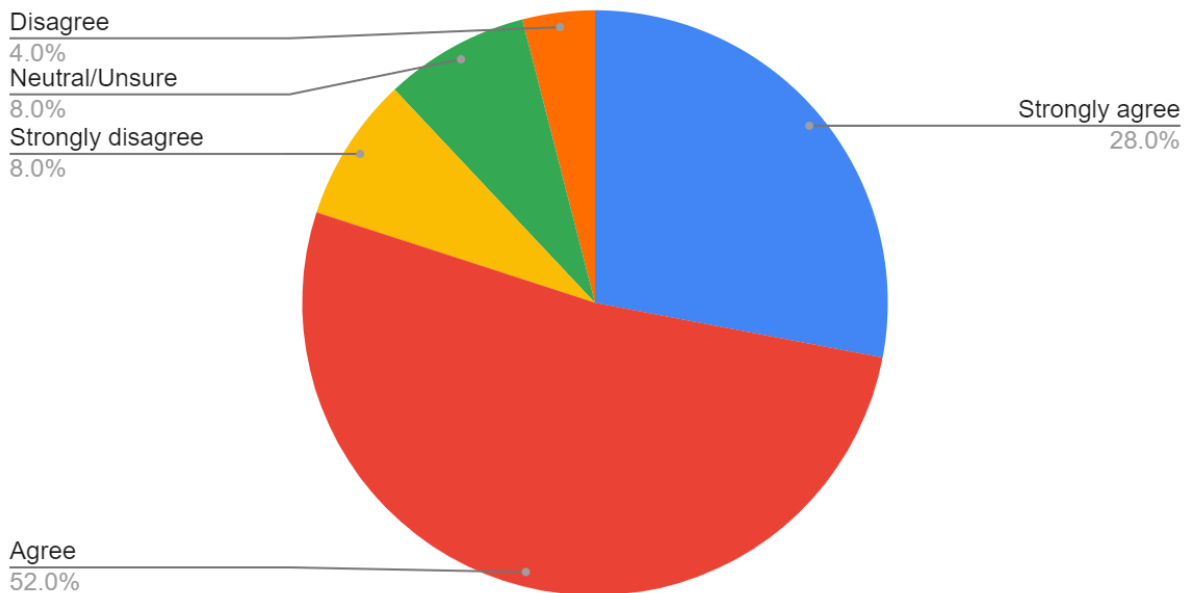
The art teacher and instructional coach echoed the principal's praise of the advisory, stating that the advisor was akin to an additional parent for each student, another adult to hold them accountable. "Advisors know you in and out." They know everything about their students, including their life outside of school. Students can and do call or text their advisor - one of the faculty interviewed recalled that students would call on weekends or at midnight, and that she always answered. Topics included non-academic issues, such as frustration after getting into an argument with parents. Advisors serve as another adult to talk to, and are a neutral party who can point out when a student is in the wrong and help them see that they are in the wrong. The instructional coach emphasized that the school cares about the **whole** student. The advisory is one way in which this is manifested.

As seen in Figure 1, students agree that the advisory is helpful. 80 percent either agree or strongly agree that the advisory improves their experience at NTHS.

Figure 1

Students' opinions on whether the advisory is helpful.

I find the advisory to be helpful in improving my experience at NTHS



Students were asked how the advisory impacted them. Most, though not all, responses were positive and praising of the advisory. While one student responded that it did not impact them, most stated that it helped them stay motivated and focused. One student said, “I’m much more open about my experiences and my feelings, and I care more about other’s outlook.” Another stated, “I got to learn more about myself. And I got to try new things.” Still another remarked that “Advisory has helped me in both being social and staying away from failing”.

The art teacher credited the internship program for getting students out of the classroom and placed with local professionals. This allows them to gain real-world experience and reassess their career goals, giving them the opportunity to test the waters before committing to a decision with long-term implications.

Both the art teacher and instructional coach credited the internship program as having the biggest impact on students at NTHS. The program also has an impact on teachers. They

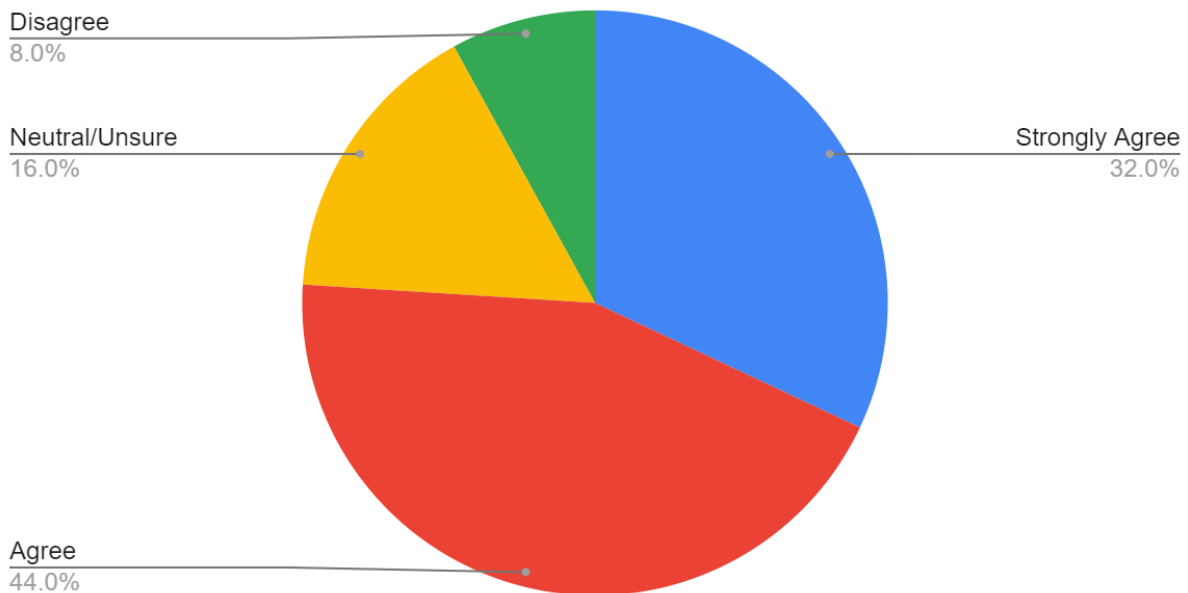
explained that students are often put in boxes or categories based on assumptions by teachers, who then try to push students in a given direction. Students are not pushed at NTHS, instead they are allowed to grow and mature into leaders. The internship program provides a different view of students, one that is detached from academics.

Figure 2 below shows that students agree that the internship program is helpful. Students gave mostly positive commentary about the internship program. One student stated that, “My internship has helped me gain experience for career paths I’m interested in and made me realize what my passion is.” Another remarked that, “My internship has brought light to many new ideas and responsibilities I didn't notice before this genuinely changed my mindset a bit”, while a third stated, “It has helped me connect more with my community.” One student described the internship as a break from school but learning in a different way.

Figure 2

Students’ opinions about the internship program

I find my internship experience helps improve my experience at NTHS.



As stated above, NTHS seeks to make curricula relevant. In the observed Italian I class, the students were learning to use the phrases *C'è* and *Ci sono* to identify the different rooms in the school and identify items in a typical classroom. The class has a daily reflection assignment about what they learned. All students are presently passing the course.

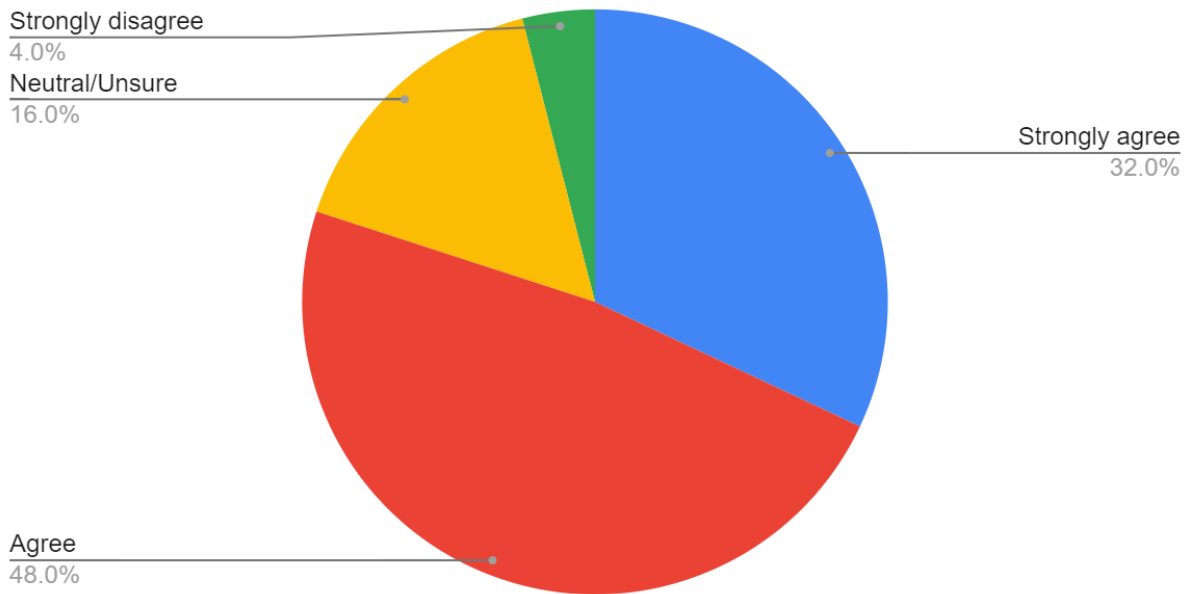
Students in the observed studio art class were using software to make GIFs, or short animated sequences, in preparation for the animation unit. At some point in the period, students were asked which types of animation techniques they were familiar with. They typed their responses in the chat and submitted them at one exact moment in what is called a waterfall chat. Their answers were not recorded in this study, but there were many types that they knew of.

A large majority of students agree that they feel more motivated in their classes at NTHS than they did at their previous schools, as illustrated by Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Students' opinions on the effect of enrolling at NTHS on their motivation in their classes

I feel more motivated in my classes now than before enrolling at NTHS.



NTHS and Student Achievement

Student exhibitions showcase what they learned and how it relates to their Passion Project and internship experience. These presentations are around 15 minutes long, which is a substantial amount of time. These are difficult even for professional researchers. The author would like to take this opportunity to praise the students for their ability to give this type of presentation. Even more praiseworthy is the fact that these were freshmen. Presenting anything is a skill, and several of the observed students have done well developing this skill.

The school strives to improve literacy by reserving 15 minutes during ELA for independent reading. Students must write about what they read in a journal. Over 300 books have been read cumulatively by all students. Writing assignments extend to all courses: students must reflect on what they learned in each one.

The principal also cited the advantage of the school day consisting of eight 51-minute periods versus the nine 41-minute periods of the traditional school day, as another factor in increasing student achievement.

Students demonstrate what they learned through exhibitions. These are presentations about what they learned and how they connected what they learned and their internship experience to their Passion Projects. Exhibitions are the culmination of each student's work over the course of a marking period. This includes their coursework, internship, Passion Project, SMART goals, and how their coursework is connected to their Passion Project. Students also discussed their personalities, shortcomings, and how to surmount those shortcomings. Student progress is tracked through multiple exhibitions. Students work with their advisor and a mentor, usually an employee from the internship location or a member of the community, to help develop their Passion Project. One person presented an exhibition about starting an e-sports club and trying to make it an official high school team, and how this relates to his goal of joining a professional team after high school. Another student is writing a crime novel, and is under the mentorship of a forensic nurse and a forensic author. Still another student's Passion Project is car detailing, and he started his own detailing business *while still in school*. These are typically open to the public and presented in-person, but due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, they were presented online.

The art teacher and instructional coach claim NTHS has had a profound impact on its students. One of them told the story of a student who graduated last year. That student was in special education, but during his time at NTHS he interned with the local chapter of My Brother's Keeper and worked with a mentor there to develop his Passion Project. He is currently studying criminal justice in college. He called the guidance counselor during this school year to

tell her how one of his professors told him that he gave the best presentation, and that he credited his success to the exhibitions, and that he wanted to thank his teachers for giving him confidence in public speaking and presenting. The faculty also discussed another student who had transferred to NTHS after not doing so well at his previous high school, and how that student was performing better after enrolling. The faculty stated that these students and many others at the school would have flown under the radar at a larger school, fallen through the cracks, and not reached their full potential.

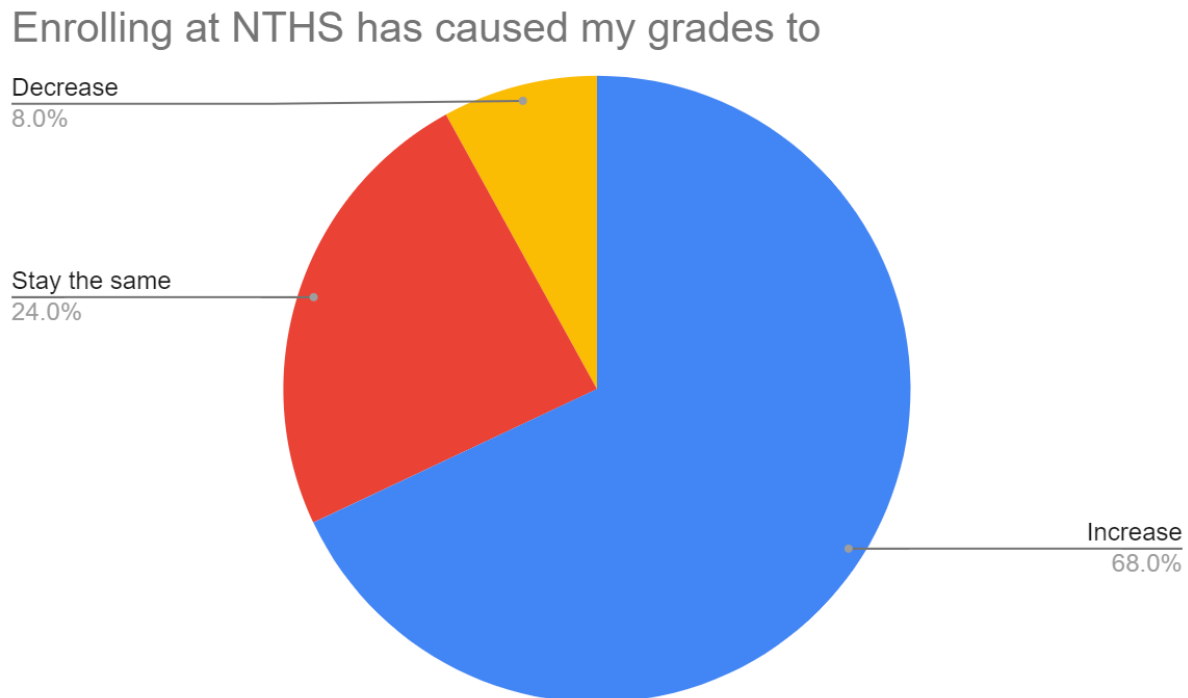
Students' potential was demonstrated at the conclusion of the morning meeting that was observed. The guidance counselor announced which colleges and universities several seniors were admitted to, as well as an announcement that one student was enlisting in the Navy after graduation. Many seniors chose to remain local and enroll at one of the local community colleges. Other schools seniors were admitted to include several SUNY schools, including the Universities at Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo and Stony Brook, the University of Massachusetts, Manhattan College, Temple University, and the Rochester Institute of Technology. An admissions counselor at SUNY Delhi described one applicant from NTHS as "amazing". One student was admitted to 15 colleges and universities and was awarded a full scholarship to New York University. These announcements were made to encourage students in the lower grades to pass their classes and strive for success.

Students don't just receive standard report cards at the end of each quarter. They also receive narrative report cards as shown in Appendix E, which detail their progress on various expectations. For example, a 72 in social studies doesn't explain much. The principal stated that the narrative report card provides greater insight into how the student earned a 72.

While the average GPA of students at NTHS was not obtained, the most students reported that their grades have increased since enrolling at the school, as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4

Students' opinions on the effect of enrolling at NTHS on their grades



NTHS has been active for five years as of June 2021, and boasts a graduation rate of 93 percent.

NTSH and School Culture and Climate

The school strives to use these relationships to create equity and help students advocate for themselves. Students may already have a negative relationship with school and feel disenfranchised by the time they enter the ninth grade. The faculty at NTHS are committed to mending this relationship. When behavioral issues arise, restorative circles - called Circles of Power and Respect (CPR), are utilized to solve the problem at the source, diving deep beneath

the surface of the misbehavior to get to the root cause. Faculty and staff relate to students' behavioral norms. The school emphasizes the use of "I" statements. Twice a week students are given the opportunity to discuss their feelings. These strategies give students the tools they need to become self-advocates and prevent the need for harsh disciplinary measures. According to the principal, there have been just four suspensions in four years, with less than 10 office referrals over that same time period.

"Students are not inferior to teachers." NTHS is well aware of the power dynamic that exists between students and teachers, and seeks to bring balance into that dynamic. Students are considered partners in their education, with teachers learning from students just as students learn from teachers. Students also see that faculty and staff are human.

The faculty attest to a pronounced change in exhibited behavior and attitude by students from eighth to twelfth grade. The art teacher remarked that the school she previously taught at, which is in the same district as NTHS, was very punitive. There was no opportunity to sit and talk with the student to be disciplined. She mentioned that suspensions are used sparingly, which aligns with the principal's statistic of four suspensions in four years, and that she has not written a referral for four consecutive years - every year she has taught there except her first.

The instructional coach emphasized that students are first; all decisions are made with students in mind. All activities the school offers, including poetry slams, morning meetings, and the fall and spring gyms, are either student-led or have heavy student involvement. Students have the opportunity to give feedback, which is used to increase student engagement in the classroom and in school operations.

NTHS utilizes a program called Ace Connect, in which each student is paired with another student from a different grade and different advisory. Each student is charged with

holding his or her partner accountable. They encourage each other to strive for success and complete their coursework. During the observed Ace Connect Time, a period set aside during the Morning Meeting (described below), each student pair discussed the following topics, which related to their recently presented exhibitions:

1. Wins: 3 things that went really well during the exhibitions. What are you proud of? Anything new or surprising?
2. Losses: What didn't go well? Any goals not achieved? Any regrets?
3. Fixes: How can you fix your mistakes? How will you make sure problems don't return? What will you do to support one another?
4. Ah Has: What brilliant insights did you come across? What new ideas are you excited about? Did you find anything inspirational or reflective?
5. Goals for next week: What do you want to accomplish before the next Ace Connect? How will you keep each other motivated?

Students were also supposed to discuss their projects and share their contact information with each other. As with all aspects of NTHS, students gave feedback on the rollout of Ace Connect, which was taken into consideration.

There is an assembly called the Morning Meeting held every Friday morning. Students and the author logged into the observed meeting to the sound of upbeat music. The meeting started with several non-advisor shoutouts, or recognition of students for achievements such as improved work ethic, a project addressing racism, and work in Ceramics, as well as the principal's admiration of the exhibitions she watched. Each shoutout was marked with two sets of two quick claps.

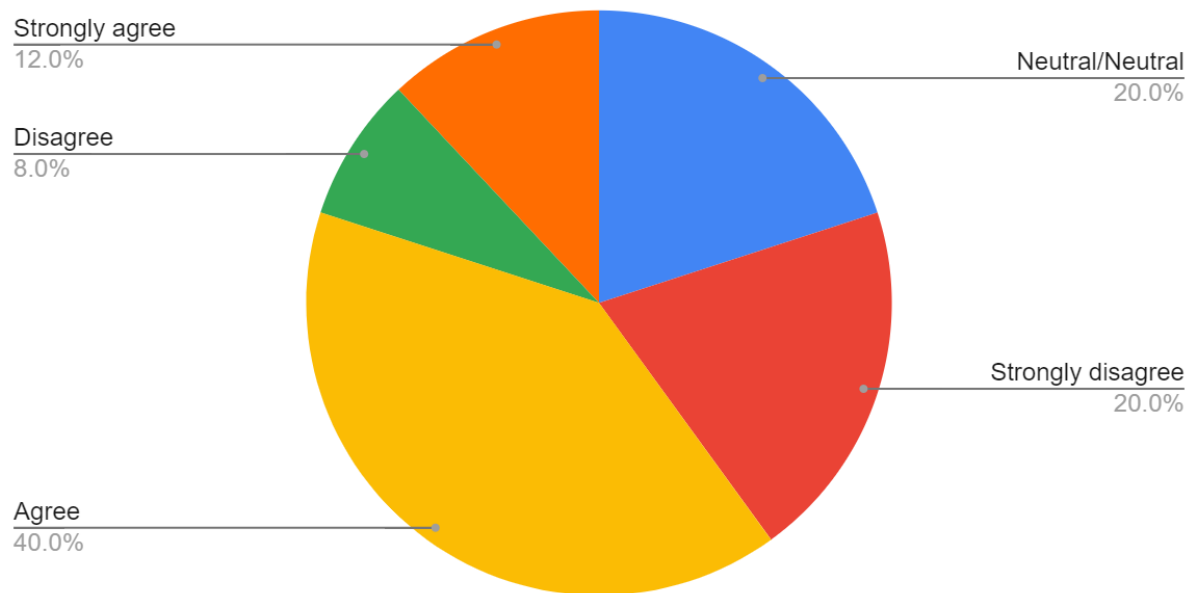
The meeting then progressed to the outlook for the end of the year, with the calendar presented detailing when Graduation Day is and other upcoming events that were not recorded. Afterwards, a student presented a poem expressing appreciation for the principal since it was Administration Day.

Students' opinions of the morning meeting were mixed, as shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5

Students' opinions of the Morning Meeting

I find the morning assemblies to be helpful in improving my experience at NTHS.



Big Picture Learning describes the expectations students should have of their school. These are in Appendix C.

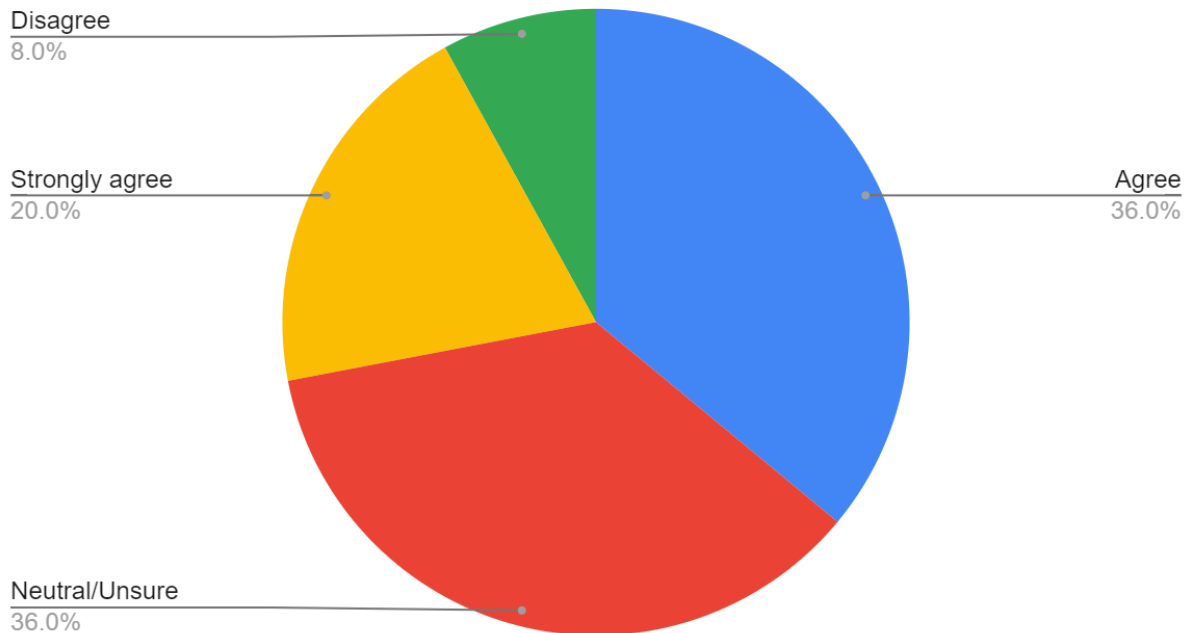
Big Picture Learning lays out what it calls the 10 Distinguishers that separate a school like NTHS from a traditional school:

1. One student at a time: A holistic approach to student learning, which is individualized based on interests, talents and needs.
2. Advisory structure: BPL considers the advisory to be the heart and soul of any of its schools, and echoes the faculties' emphasis on its importance. BPL states that students describe the advisory as a second family.
3. Learning through interests and internships: BPL believes real world learning is best carried out in the real world. Students are placed in internships based on interests and complete projects, known at NTHS as passion projects. These projects encompass all coursework as well as the internships and advisories.
4. Parent and family engagement: Parents are supposed to play an important role in their children's learning. However, according to figure 6 below, many students aren't sure if their parents are involved, with a slight majority reporting that their parents were involved.

Figure 6

Student's opinions on whether their parents are actively involved in their education

My parents are actively involved in my education.



5. School culture: trust, respect, and equality between students and adults as described in this section. Students take on leadership roles and are given a voice in decisions the school makes, just as the faculty stated. Faculty and staff at NTHS are addressed by their first names, for example the author would not be addressed as Mr. Geraci but instead as Mr. Pietro.
6. Authentic assessment: No tests at NTHS; instead students are assessed through their exhibitions, and their progress is tracked. Students at NTHS present three exhibitions per year.
7. School organization: NTHS exhibits a culture of collaboration and communication as described in this section.
8. Leadership: NTHS gives staff more autonomy over the operations of the school. The principal described a dream team, which consists of the advisory coach, instructional

coach, and guidance counselor, which makes decisions about how the school moves forward.

9. Post-secondary planning: there is active planning for students' next steps after high school, which include college, trade school, the military, or entering the workforce.
10. Professional development: occurs regularly during advisory periods.

One project at NTHS involved combating negative perceptions about the school as a place for bad or dumb kids by creating kids' books describing the student experience. Students stated in the books that they were treated like family and that they loved it there.

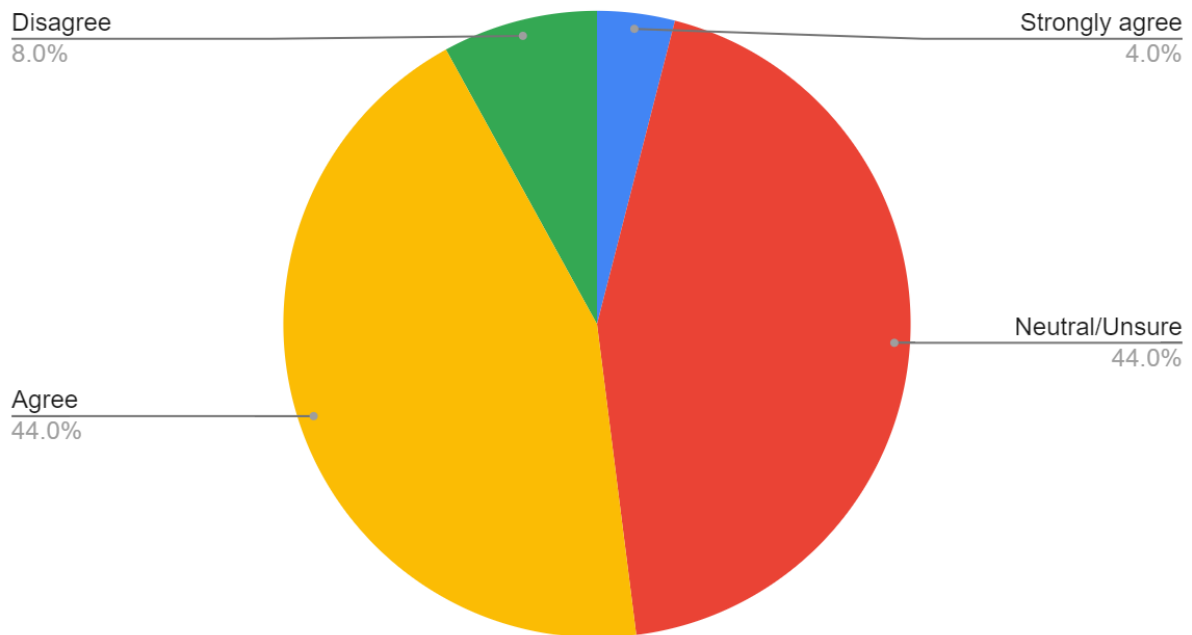
The school focuses on real world events and provides a safe environment for such conversations to take place. These conversations revolve around identity, values, and social justice. There are posters around the school that pertain to topics of social justice, including LGBTQ equality, global warming, police brutality, gun violence, and poaching. One of the posters was an announcement of an upcoming Teen Talks Mindfulness Open Mic. This forum is a place where students can discuss real-life issues any anything else they wish to talk about.

Only a plurality of students believed they were accepted by their peers, as detailed in figure 7 below.

Figure 7

Students' opinions of whether they are accepted by their peers

Count of I am accepted by my peers.

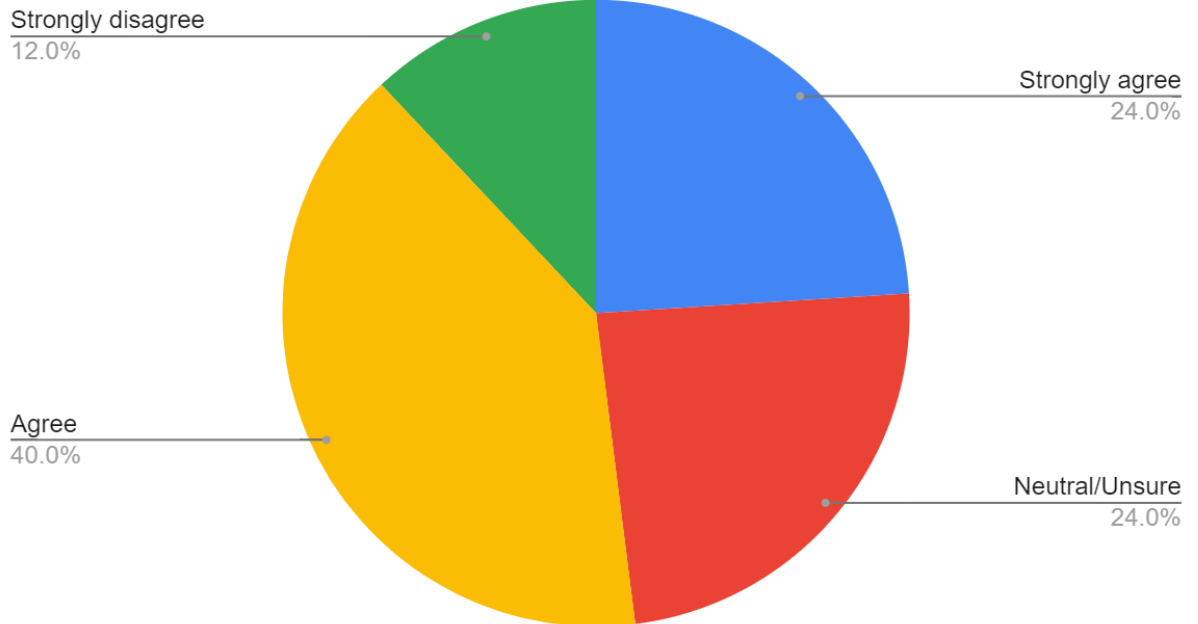


In contrast, according to Figure 5, more students answered that they believed they belonged at NTHS, although a large minority were unsure or maintained a neutral stance.

Figure 8

Students' opinions of whether they belong at NTHS

I feel like I belong at NTHS.



Improving NTHS

The faculty interviewed mentioned that there is room for improvement with the academic portion of the program. The school is pushing to make curricula more student-driven and more incorporating of student interests, community issues, and social justice.

The Regents Exams are a major obstacle to realizing the vision stated above. It is more difficult to perform nontraditional work in some courses, especially the maths and sciences, because of the Regents. The laboratory requirements for the science courses further interfere with the school's vision. Without these burdens, students would be free to do projects and not worry about content. Faculty are presently attempting to blend and reconcile the nontraditional aspects of the school and the strict curricular structure demanded by the Regents Exams.

Making a Difference

NTHS employs various strategies relating to student engagement, student achievement, and school climate and culture. What are the summary results of these strategies? As demonstrated in Figures 9 and 10, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated that they believed attending the school has made a difference in their lives and made them more hopeful about their futures. More data is in Appendix D.

Figure 9

Students' opinion on whether attending NTHS has made a difference in their lives

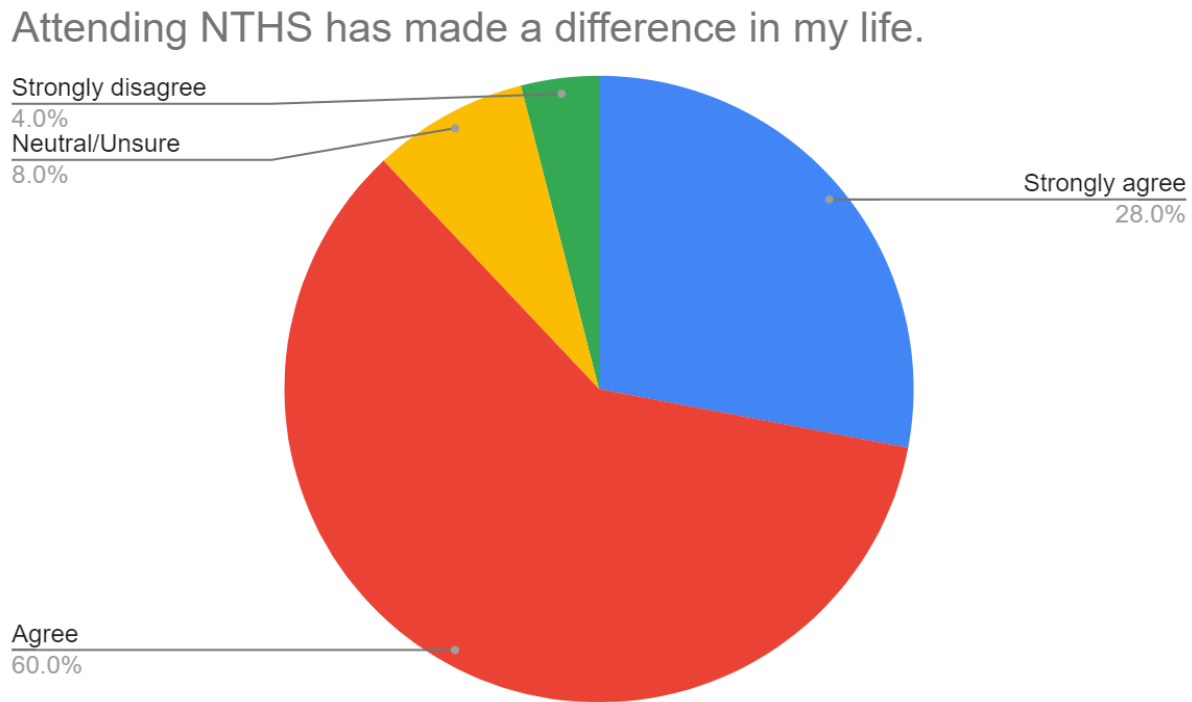
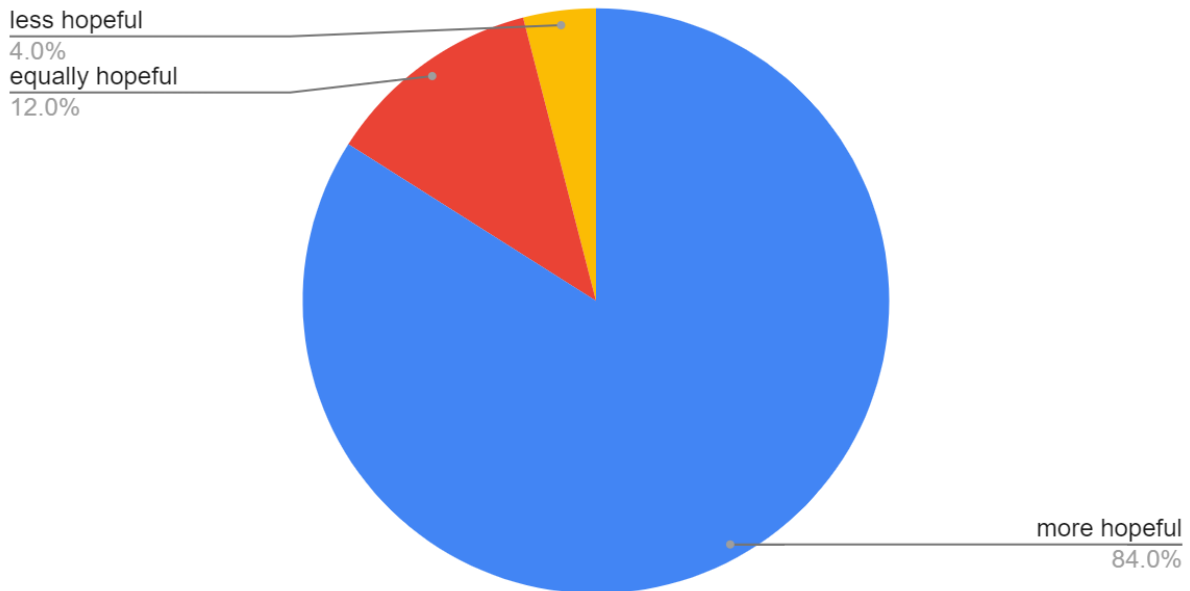


Figure 10

Students' opinion on the impact of attending NTHS and how hopeful they are about their futures

I have become _____ about my future since enrolling at NTHS.



Students were asked why they chose to attend NTHS. Most answered that they wanted a smaller learning environment, and that school was “difficult”. Two students stated that they were forced to attend. One student mistakenly believed that NTHS didn’t assign homework. Most students stated that they feel good about attending NTHS. While one student said the school was not for them, another stated, “west has change(d) me, i used to let people walked over me or like i used to care when people didn't want to be friends with me, i used to care what people think about me, now i don't care i can basically say i found myself in away, i used to get in a lot of drama in middle school now i stay out of it,”. Another student stated that NTHS is “welcoming and its what school is supposed to look like.” Still another student said that “Although the small school setting is for me, the activities of the school are quite overwhelming and inconvenient for someone who is introverted.” A respondent remarked that NTHS “will always be the school I

love the most because of the environment I just hope I can come back in the future to talk about my experience to other students.”, while another stated that they do not want to leave.

Discussion

Responses to Research Questions

This study focused on two questions: what does NTHS do differently that distinguishes it from a traditional high school, and how does this prepare students for life after high school? The results describe the key factors: the advisory, internship program, assessments other than standardized testing, and individualized learning plans based on Passion Projects. Several of these aspects connect to what was learned in the literature review. That section discussed how smaller, tight-knit classrooms and more intimate student-teacher relationships contribute to higher levels of engagement, which in turn contribute to increased performance and success. The literature review also discussed how non-punitive strategies can help mitigate behavioral issues. There is a high degree of alignment between the information presented in the literature review and the practices of NTHS.

How these practices impact student achievement after high school is a harder question to answer. NTHS does have a higher graduation rate than the combined district graduation rate, but another campus has a graduation rate just two percent lower, and that campus is a traditional high school. It is possible that there are issues at the main campus that contribute to a lower graduation rate there.

There is conclusive evidence that the restorative justice strategies for dealing with misbehavior is effective. The three combined campuses have a suspension rate of 8 percent. However NTHS has seen just 4 suspensions in 4 years. If the assumed student body is 120, then the suspension rate for NTHS is 0.8 percent, ten times lower than the average.

While there is conclusive evidence that the strategies to mitigate misbehavior are effective, whether NTHS is viable, that is whether or not students are adequately prepared for adult life, is indeterminable with this study. There simply aren't any conclusive answers to this question. The only way to determine that answer would be to use data from this study and another case study that follows the lives of NTHS alumni for several years and reports what each subject has accomplished. This study would inform the latter and provide evidence that their success after graduation did not occur by chance, but happened because of the program offered at NTHS. However, the data predicts higher rates of student success, which includes going to college, joining the military, and obtaining employment with the benefits and salary needed to live a middle class lifestyle. The vast majority of students reported that they feel more motivated in their coursework. The majority of respondents reported that they feel accepted by their peers and that their parents were involved in their education. The majority reported that their grades have increased since enrolling at NTHS, and a whopping 22 out of 25 students said attending NTHS has made a difference in their life. There are some curiosities in the survey data. 44 percent of respondents stated they weren't sure if they were accepted by their peers, and 36 percent weren't sure if their parents were involved in their education. It is possible that they do not know what those look like or how to identify peer acceptance or active parental involvement. Those are sizable minorities, too large to ignore. Unfortunately, there is no way to follow up with these students and ask why they selected the unsure/neutral option. Compounding the problem is this combined choice. How many truly did not know, and how many simply did not agree or disagree?

The most startling survey result was the data on the morning meeting and peer acceptance. Just 52 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the morning meeting was

helpful, and only 48 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were accepted by their peers. It is possible that the miswording of the morning meeting as Friday assembly caused confusion and skewed the data. If not, then the school may want to consider asking for feedback on the morning meeting and revising it accordingly. The latter statistic is especially odd in the face of all the encouraging comments observed in the chats left by students. The school may want to consider investigating that as well.

The most encouraging result by far was the fact that 21 respondents, 84 percent, stated that they are more hopeful about their future since enrolling at NTHS. That is a strong predictor, though by no means a guaranterer, of NTHS-influenced student success. This statistic is compounded by the short response answers. One student stated they didn't want to leave. Several students stated that they were able to find themselves and discover their passions, that they were in a better environment and would have struggled at the larger main campus. Most of the respondents actually liked going to school!

The results correlate with the literature discussed in the literature review. Smaller class sizes, listening to student input, restorative justice strategies, and taking time to improve literacy skills, all discussed in the literature presented, are employed at NTHS, and the data suggests these contribute to NTHS's students' engagement in their coursework, as well as their increased grades and their feeling of belonging at the school and their increased hope for their futures. These factors drive engagement, which in turn drives success.

Implications

There is no reason why aspects of the program offered at NTHS cannot be implemented in traditional settings. While the advisory might be more difficult to implement due to the larger size of traditional classes, students can still be paired up as they are for Ace Connect, and they

can hold each other accountable. Traditional schools can be less punitive and embrace restorative justice strategies. Traditional schools can work to place students in internships or employment, especially upperclassmen who have lighter schedules. Narrative report cards can also be used to detail student performance. These strategies would not cost any money to implement. A study should be conducted about an action plan in which elements of NTHS or another BPL school are implemented in a traditional school or classroom.

The author is now interested in teaching at NTHS, or at the very least introducing elements of its program into his classroom when he starts his teaching career.

Limitations

It should be noted that there was no way to prevent a student from completing the survey more than once, which would skew the data and damage its accuracy. Only two faculty members and the principal were interviewed, though the information they provided was plentiful and contributed to the results. The author was unable to directly ask students any questions or follow up based on answers to the survey. The author is curious about parents' perceptions of NTHS, but that was not part of the original design of this study and it was never added due to time constraints. These time constraints also limited how many observations could be conducted. Since there are only 13 teachers at NTHS, it would be interesting to determine if the level of cohesion among the faculty affects the students. Unfortunately, this was not thought of until the study was completed.

Conclusion

It is difficult to articulate what the expectations of this study were before it was conducted. The author had hoped to find conclusive evidence about the viability of NTHS. While that did not occur, this study can be used in conjunction with another study which focuses on

what non-traditional high school students accomplish after graduation to relate that success with the results presented herein.

Students need to gain the knowledge and tools necessary to attain success after high school and eventually lead the changes that make their communities and the world a better place. A lot of material emphasized today can be learned indirectly through hands-on activities or learned on students' own time based on their interests. Dewey's model was a brilliant step in the right direction, and such a model can be repurposed for the 21st Century and be applied to students of any socioeconomic background, not just the middle class.

Schools in America today have failed to modernize to accommodate the developments of the Information Age, just as schools in the late 1800s failed to modernize to accommodate the developments of the Second Industrial Revolution. John Dewey's criticisms of schools at that time were valid and are still applicable today. His solution was a more hands-on approach that was conducive to learning by discovery and learning by doing. While present-day schools do utilize this model to a degree, more aspects need to be implemented, and the curricula need to be modernized to prepare students to succeed in the 21st Century. NTHS has risen to this challenge, and the results predict that it will succeed.

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Appendix A: Faculty Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

1. How did you come to teach at *Non-Traditional High School (NTHS)** and how long have you worked here?
2. What makes the student experience distinctive at *NTHS*?
3. Which aspect of the program at *NTHS* do you believe has the biggest impact on students?
4. What effects do the advisory, assemblies, and first-name basis have on relationships between students and teachers and students and administrators and students' academics?
5. Can you compare student performance, engagement, and behavior at *NTHS* to classes you've taught at other schools?
6. What issues exist at *NTHS* that can be improved?
7. Do you believe that overall the program at *NTHS* makes a difference in students' academics and in their lives?
 - a. How do you know? Are there any stories that illustrate this?

*The name of the school has been replaced with the generic in Italics throughout these appendices.

Administrator Interview Questions - note that not all questions listed were asked.

1. How does the student experience at *NTHS* differ from that of *a traditional high school***?
2. Which aspect of the program at *NTHS* do you believe has the biggest impact on students?
3. What benefits are obtained by confiscating cell phones for the day?
4. What effects do the advisory, assemblies, and first-name basis have on relationships between students and teachers and students and administrators?
5. Can you tell me about how students are placed in internships and how this aspect of the program works?
6. Do you believe the students' internships influence their performance and behavior in class?
7. Can you compare student performance and behavior at *NTHS* to those of other schools you've worked at?
8. What issues exist at *NTHS*, especially any issues that don't exist *at a traditional high school*, that can be improved?
9. Do you believe that overall the program at *NTHS* makes a difference in students' lives?
10. What is the process for enrolling students at *NTHS*? Do they have to apply? If so, which factors determine who is admitted?

**The names of other high schools were replaced with a generic.

Appendix B: Student Survey Questions

Student Survey Questions

1. I find the advisory to be helpful in improving my experience at *NTHS*.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. What impact has the advisory had on you as a student and as a person?
(open-ended)
3. I find the morning assemblies to be helpful in improving my experience at *NTHS*.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
4. I find my internship experience helps improve my experience at *NTHS*.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
5. What impact has your internship had on you as a student and as a person?
(open-ended)
6. I feel more motivated in my classes now than before enrolling at *NTHS*.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
7. I am accepted by my peers.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral

- d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
8. Describe how you feel about attending *NTHS*? (open-ended)
9. I feel like I belong at *NTHS*.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
10. My parents are actively involved in my education.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
11. Enrolling at *NTHS* has caused my grades to
- a. Decrease.
 - b. Stay the same.
 - c. Increase.
12. Attending NFA *NTHS* has made a difference in my life.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure/neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
13. Describe how you feel about attending *NTHS*. (open-ended)
14. Why did you choose to attend *NTHS*? (open-ended)
15. I have become _____ about my future since enrolling at *NTHS*.
- a. More hopeful
 - b. Equally hopeful
 - c. Less hopeful
16. Do you have any additional comments about your experience at *NTHS*?
(open-ended)

Appendix C: BPL's expectations students should have of their school

Big Picture Learning lays out the expectations students should have of their school. These expectations are on display at the school and include the following:

1. Play: opportunities to explore, make mistakes and learn from them; opportunities to experiment and speculate.
2. Timing: the opportunity to learn outside a standard sequence; teachers helping students determine the proper time for pursuing projects or taking a course.
3. Time: the opportunity for each student to partake in broad and deep learning at his or own pace.
4. Practice: opportunities to practice the skills learned under guidance from teachers.
5. Choice: Real choices by students as to what, when and how they will learn and demonstrate what they learned with help from teachers.
6. Relationships: intimate relationships between students and teachers and relationships between students and the community.
7. Relevance: Students find what they learn to be relevant to their interests, including career interests, and teachers help students connect their schoolwork to the community and to the world.
8. Authenticity: the work students perform is considered meaningful to the outside community.
9. Challenge: Students are held to high standards through rigorous curricula.
10. Application: Opportunities to apply what was learned in real-world settings and contexts, including solving problems facing the community and the world.

Appendix D: Students' opinions about attending NTHS

Describe how you feel about attending <i>NTHS</i> .
i feel good about attending west

Its school

I feel good knowing I attend *NTHS* because this school has given me many opportunities to participate in connecting with the whole school and community.

I love west my last 2 years been amazing its just this year really sucks for me in general.

I like how small it is, teachers can help out more and I can get comfortable with peers and teachers.

Although the small school setting is for me, the activities of the school are quite overwhelming and inconvenient for someone who is introverted.

Its school

My experience here has been very positive and I love the energy and overall vibe of my peers and teachers.

Its school

in the middle.

Although the small school setting is for me, the activities of the school are quite overwhelming and inconvenient for someone who is introverted.

I feel like *NTHS* is kind of cool for a school

NTHS has change me, i used to let people walked over me or like i used to care when people didn't want to be friends with me, i used to care what people think about me, now i don't care i can basically say i found myself in away, i used to get in a lot of drama in middle school now i stay out of it,

glad

I didn't want to come to this school. I don't think that this is the school for me

welcoming and its what school is supposed to look like

Good.

i feel like it has improved my education and my grades

i feel like its a fun experience

I really like *NTHS* everyone is nice and close the school is small so it really helps a student get comfortable more quickly and it helps you get to know your peers as well

i feel proud that i came here!

I feel just okay about attending this school.

great

Appendix E: Narrative Report Card

NON-TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL NARRATIVE

1ST QUARTER

STUDENT PROFILE			
Student:			
Advisor:		Date:	
Mentor:		LTI Site	
Grade:		Quarter	1 st

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

❖ Sketchbook Work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
❖ Artist Biography Report	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	EMPIRICAL REASONING						
	Environmental Science						
LTI ER Work:		EE 4 = A	ME 3 = B	AE 2 = C	BE 1 = D	U 0 = F	N/A
❖ Internship ER Work:		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
❖		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		EE	ME	AE	BE	U	N/A
❖ Comprehension of Environmental Issues in Society		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
❖ Demonstrates Creative Application of Scientific Method		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
❖ Reasoning and Analyzing of Empirical Concepts		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EE – Exceeds Expectations
BE – Below Expectations

ME – Meets Expectations

AE – Approaching Expectations
U – Unscorable/Unacceptable

Advisor Signature

Principal Signature

Appendix F: Email from the principal of NTHS giving permission to move forward with the study by way of faculty interviews

