

STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL LEARNING:  
REPORT TO THE SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SPRING, 1986

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or

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Report to the Springfield School District,  
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The Study of Occupational Learning began in the 1980-81 academic year under the direction of Dr. Jeanne McGee, a member of the faculty of the Department of Sociology at the University of Oregon. The long-range purpose of the study is to follow students' occupational and educational aspirations over a long period of time, to see how the aspirations change, and to determine variables which influence the nature of these aspirations and their changes.

In 1980-81 all fourth graders in the Springfield district who received parental permission were interviewed by trained interviewers and filled out a questionnaire in their classroom under the guidance of the researchers. The interviews focussed on the students' occupational plans, their views of a variety of occupations, and their perceptions of their parents' jobs. The questionnaire focused more on the students' educational attitudes, aspirations, and expectations and their self-concepts. During the summer of 1981 mothers of the fourth graders were sent a questionnaire through the mail. This questionnaire asked about their educational and occupational aspirations for their children, their views about various curricular areas, and their own work history. In addition, information on the students' academic achievement and school attendance was obtained from school records.

In the spring of 1985 the students, by that time in the eighth grade, again filled out a questionnaire. This questionnaire asked about their educational and occupational aspirations and expectations, their views of various curricular areas, their perceptions of middle school and high school, and their leisure time activities. Teachers, counselors, and administrators at the schools were interviewed and completed short written questionnaires regarding their perceptions of the students' aspirations and the school. Mothers of the students were sent questionnaires in the summer of 1985, paralleling those sent in the summer of 1981.

In the 1985-86 school year the students were in ninth grade. They were interviewed, with a schedule closely paralleling that used in the fourth grade, and also completed a questionnaire much like that used in the eighth grade. Plans call for surveying the students again in the 1987-88 school year when they will be in the eleventh grade.

Approximately 609 students are included in the data from the fourth grade, 387 students have data from the eighth grade, 375 mothers returned schedules in the summer of 1981, and 260 mothers returned schedules in the summer of 1985. Two hundred fourteen students and 131 mothers have data from both the fourth and eighth grade surveys. Two hundred twenty-three mother-student pairs have data from the eighth grade. Twenty-five teachers, counselors,

vice-principals and principals completed interviews and questionnaires in the spring of 1985. To date, no systematic biases in the retention of subjects from the fourth to eighth grade have been found, although this analysis has not yet been completed.

The present report focuses on results from the eighth grade surveys of students, mothers and teachers. The first section below describes general characteristics of the students involved in the study including their home situations and their leisure activities. The second section discusses the students' educational attitudes, both their views of particular subjects and their educational aspirations and expectations. The third major section examines curricular areas, looking both at the mothers' views of the importance of various subject areas and the students' plans for pursuing various subject areas in high school. The final and fourth section examines the students' views of their schools, including perceptions of the middle school and their views of what high school will be like.

(Information on the students' occupational aspirations is relatively more difficult to prepare for analysis and thus is not included in this report. It should be available in about six months and another report will be prepared at that time. A report on the results from the fourth grade survey was prepared in 1985 and is available from the author on request.)

The analyses presented below involve primarily summary, descriptive statistics. When parallel information is available from mothers and/or teachers as well as students, the two or three sets of data are compared. In addition, when parallel information is available from both the fourth and eighth grade samples this information is presented. In these comparisons only the respondents with information from both time periods are used in the analysis. Standard statistical inferential tests are used to test whether differences appear by chance. Only statistically significant differences are reported in the text.

#### I. Characteristics of the Sample

Of the 387 students who completed surveys in the 8th grade, 184 are females (48%) and 203 (52%) are males. The largest number of students are from Hamlin and Briggs Middle Schools (34% and 31% of the sample respectively), with 20% of the sample from Springfield Middle School and 15% of the sample from Thurston. Thirty-eight percent of the students report that they attended only one elementary school and one middle school, while an additional 26% report that they attended only a total of three schools during their academic career. Ten percent of the students report attending 6 or more schools since starting first grade.

A total of 79% of the students live in families with two parents. Fifty-eight per cent of the students report

that they live with their father and mother and an additional 21% report that they live with their mother and stepfather (17%) or their father and stepmother (4%). Sixteen percent of the students live with their mother only, and the remainder live with either their father (2%) or in some other type of arrangement (3%). Eighty-four per cent of the fathers and 42% of the mothers are reported as being employed full-time. An additional 24% of the mothers work part-time.

The students were asked in the eighth grade questionnaire to check which of a variety of items their parents had established "definite rules". Forty-eight per cent of the students say that there are rules about the time they should be in "on Friday or Saturday nights" and 43% say that there are rules about "time spent on homework." Thirty-one percent report rules exist about "eating dinner with the family," and 24% report rules about "time spent watching TV." Only 20% report rules about "amount of dating" and 9% report rules "against going steady," perhaps because relatively few of the students are yet heavily involved in courtship. Twenty-three percent of the students report rules "against going around with certain girls" and 27% report rules "against going around with certain boys." There are significant sex differences on some of these items, with significantly more girls than boys reporting rules about amount of dating, against going steady, and

against associating with certain girls and boys. These differences probably occur because girls tend to mature and to date at an earlier age than boys.

The students report active lives outside of school hours with 78% reporting involvement in extracurricular activities and 73% reporting that they earn "money working outside the home, after school, weekends or during the summer vacation." Eighty-four percent of the students plan to work in the summer and 87% want to work while in high school. Slightly more girls than boys plan to work during the summer vacation, probably because summer jobs (e.g. babysitting) are generally more available to girls of this age than boys. In contrast, slightly more boys than girls report involvement in after school extracurricular activities.

Tables One and Two show the responses students gave to two questions designed to assess how much time they spent doing a variety of activities on both "a typical school night" and "a typical nonschool day (weekends and holidays)." As shown in Table One the most popular activity for school days appears to be watching television, with 39% reporting they typically spend more than two hours doing so and only 7% reporting that they spend less than one-half hour watching TV. Twenty-nine percent of the students report spending more than two hours listening to the radio. While 6% of the students report spending no time on

homework, 44% report spending from one-half to one hour engaged in homework activities on a typical school night. Forty-five percent of the students report spending at least one-half hour "reading books or magazines for fun."

Responses to the question regarding a typical nonschool day are summarized in Table Two and indicate that watching TV is again the most popular activity, with over half of the students reporting that they spend more than two hours in this activity. However, listening to the radio and talking with friends and family also increase in popularity with well over a third of the students reporting that they spend more than two hours in each of these activities. In addition, more time is reported spent listening to cassettes or tapes, working at a job, and reading for fun.

Significant sex differences appear with five of these items on both the reports of school day and weekend and holiday activities. Girls report spending more time than boys listening to the radio, doing homework, and reading for fun; boys report spending more time watching TV and working on a computer.

In both the fourth and eighth grade questionnaires the students were asked, "How often do you read books or magazines, just for fun, when you're not in school?" Responses could range from "very often" to "never" on a four-point scale. Results indicate that by eighth grade the students are significantly more likely than they were in



fourth grade to respond "very often" and less likely to respond "never." Fourteen per cent of the fourth graders say that they "never" read for fun, while only 3% of the eighth graders gave this response. Sixty-nine per cent of the eighth graders, but only 56% of the students in fourth grade say that they "very often" or "fairly often" read for pleasure.

### Educational Attitudes

In this section the students' views about particular subjects and their more general attitudes toward education are reported.

#### Perceptions of Subject Areas

The students were asked in both the fourth and eighth grade questionnaires how much they liked a given set of subjects, how hard or easy they thought these subjects were, whether or not they did their best work in these areas, and how important each of these subjects was. The mothers were also asked in the 1985 questionnaire to estimate how much they thought their sons or daughters liked each subject and how important they were. Responses to these items are summarized in Table Three.

From Table Three it may be seen that students most often say that physical education is the subject they like a lot, that is too easy for them, in which they do their best

work, and that is least important. Perceptions about the four academic areas are relatively similar, except for a tendency for the students to report liking language arts the least, to least often do their best work there, and to rank math as substantially more important than the other areas.

In comparing the students' fourth grade and eighth grade responses, it may be seen that they generally report liking the subjects less in eighth grade than in fourth grade, they less often rate the subjects as "too easy" or report doing their best work, and they tend to rank the subjects, with the exception of math, as less important to learn. These changes are statistically significant except for the changes in liking science and math, how easy science is, doing their best work in social studies, and the importance of math, language arts, and science.

Mothers are more likely than their sons or daughters to report that they like a given subject than are the students themselves. These differences are significant in all the subject areas. The mothers rate language arts, p.e. and social studies as more important than the students do, with each of these differences reaching statistical significance.

Boys and girls tend to respond differently to a number of areas in the eighth grade. Girls more often report that they like math and language arts, that language arts is important, and that they do their best work in this area. Boys more often report that they like social studies and

p.e., that math and p.e. are easy for them, and that they do their best work in p.e.

#### Academic Self-Concept

Measures of what is termed here academic self-concept involve two broad areas: 1) students' views of the quality of their work and how others view it; and 2) students' future educational aspirations and expectations.

Work Quality -- The majority of the eighth graders in the study report that they are bothered when they don't do well in school as "they know they can." In response to the stimulus item, "It bothers me when I don't do well in school," 51% of the eighth graders respond "very much" and 41% respond "a little." Only 8% say "not much" or "not at all." In contrast, in fourth grade only 38% of the group say that they were bothered "very much," and 23% say that it bothered them "not at all" or "not much." These changes are highly significant.

Table 4 summarizes the students' answers to a series of questions which ask about how they would rate their own school work compared to that of their friends, classmates, and potential peers in high school and in college. The students generally say that their work is about the same quality as others or somewhat better. Only when asked to "forget" how teachers mark their work do they tend to give

themselves higher ratings, with almost three-quarters saying that their work is better than others.

The students were also asked how they thought their teachers would "rate" their school work and their behavior. Sixty-one percent of the students say that the teachers would rate their work as good or very good and only 7% say that the teachers would rate it poor or very poor. Sixty-five percent of the students say that the teachers would rate their behavior as good or very good and 8% say that they would rate it as poor. Girls are more likely than boys to say that the teachers would rate their behavior good or very good.

The teachers, administrators and counselors in each school were asked to estimate how many of the students in their school were "capable of getting good grades" and were "achieving as well as they can." The students were also asked, "What kind of grades do you think you really can get if you try?" Sixty-four percent of the students say they could get "mostly A's; 34% of the students say they could get mostly B's. Only 2 of the 25 teachers say most of the students are doing as well as they can, but most (three-fourths) of the teachers say one-half are achieving to their potential. Over half of the teachers say that most of the students are capable of getting good grades, while the remainder estimate that one-half of the students could get good grades.

(Teachers were also asked to give individual ratings of the behavior, achievement, and potential of each student in their class, but these ratings are not yet available for analysis. The results from that analysis will be available at a later date.)

Educational Aspirations and Expectations -- Table 5 summarizes the students' own educational aspirations, their expectations of actual educational attainment, and their views of what others expect of them. It is clear that the students' aspirations are higher than either their own expectations or those they perceive others holding for them. While 71% of the students would like to finish college, only 51% expect that they will actually do so. Eighty percent of the students report that they expect to spend at least some time in community college or the equivalent. The students tend to report that their parents have slightly higher expectations than they do, that they perceive their teachers as having similar expectations to their own and their friends as having lower expectations for them than they hold for themselves.

Table 6 summarizes the mothers' responses to a series of questions asking how they would feel if their sons or daughters quit school after finishing a given level and what level of schooling they actually expect their students to finish. It may be seen that a majority of the mothers would

like their sons or daughters to attain higher educational levels. This is even more true in eighth grade than in fourth grade. However, fewer of the mothers actually expect the students to complete these levels with less than half of the mothers expecting their son or daughter to complete at least four years of college. While mothers' educational expectations are higher in the 8th grade than in the 4th grade this difference is significant only for the expectation of completing four years of college.

Information is available on how much education the mothers have had. Mothers who have had at least some college themselves hold significantly higher educational aspirations and expectations for their students. There were no differences between the responses of mothers of sons and mothers of daughters except for a tendency for mothers of sons to be slightly more unhappy if their sons would not have training beyond high school.

The teachers were asked to estimate how many of the students in their school would actually finish each of the levels of education listed in Table 6. The majority of the teachers thought that most or almost all of the students would finish high school, some or one-half of the students would complete technical school or community college training, and some would complete a four year college program or graduate or professional school.

In general, the expectations that parents and teachers hold for the students are lower than those that the students hold for themselves. In addition, the actual expectations of the parents and teachers appear to be lower than the students' perceptions of these expectations. It should be noted, however, that this comparison involves summary statistics (percentages) only. An analysis of the comparison of expectations held for individual students by parents and teachers with those held by students will be completed at a later date.

Even though only about half of the students expect to finish a four-year college, 84% of the students report that someone has told them that they "should go on to college" when they are older. This contrasts with 75% of the students reporting this encouragement in the fourth grade, a statistically significant increase.

Over the four years the students have become significantly less likely to say that they would "like to work in a lumber or paper mill (like Weyerhaeuser) someday. In the fourth grade 77% of the students said they would not want to work in a mill, but by eighth grade this had risen to 86%. In the fourth grade 6% said yes and 17% said maybe; in the eighth grade these percentages were 2 and 12% respectively. (Although it cannot be determined from the present analysis if this is related to rising educational

expectations or changes in the local economy, this will be the focus of later analyses.)

#### Views of the Curriculum

Two general areas of data relate to the subjects' views of the curriculum of the school: the mothers' views about areas which should be given greater or less emphasis in the classroom, and vocational and academic subjects which the students want to take in high school and those which the mothers also endorse.

#### Time Given to Subjects

Table 7 summarizes the mothers' views about areas of the curriculum which should be given more and less time in the classroom both in the fourth and eighth grades. Fully two-thirds of the mothers in both years say that no subject should be given less attention. Art, P.E. and music are the subjects most often mentioned as needing less time, although less than 20% of the mothers mention even these. Language arts, math, spelling, and science are the subjects most often mentioned as needing more time. The only significant changes over time involve the tendency for mothers after the eighth grade to say more often that language arts should have more classroom time but to less often say that P.E. should have more classroom time. The increased emphasis on language arts may reflect the fact that in the eighth grade



it incorporates reading, which was a separate subject in the fourth grade.

Courses Endorsed by Students and Mothers

In the eighth grade the students were asked which of a list of courses they would like to take when they went to high school. In the fourth grade the mothers were asked which of a list of job skills they would like their son or daughter to learn in high school. In the eighth grade the list was expanded to include academic courses as well and the mothers were simply asked to indicate which courses they would like to have their son or daughter take during high school.

Results from these questions are given in Table 8. Looking first at the students' preferences for academic courses, it may be seen that the most popular choice is a foreign language, followed closely by career education, with over half of the students wanting to take these subjects. Over forty percent of the students would like to take algebra and computer science, but less than one third say they would like to take advanced mathematics, chemistry, geometry or physics. The differences in the choices of males and females are significant in four of the eight courses in this section, with girls more often wanting to take a foreign language, algebra, and career education, and boys more often wanting to take computer science.

The mothers are more likely than the students to say that they would like to have the students take the various academic courses, and this difference is statistically significant for all eight academic courses. The most popular academic course marked by the mothers in the eighth grade is computer science, selected by 84% of the mothers. The next most popular courses matched the top selections of the students: a foreign language and career education. Over two-thirds of the mothers choose advanced mathematics and algebra, and over half choose chemistry and geometry. Physics is the only subject marked by less than 50% of the mothers. The only academic course which mothers of boys and girls mark differently is computer science, which is chosen by more mothers of sons than mothers of daughters. No sex differences appear in the selection of other math courses or sciences.

Information is available on the mothers' level of educational attainment. When the choices of mothers who have attended some college are compared to those of mothers who have not gone beyond high school or some technical training a number of significant differences appear. Mothers with some college education are significantly more likely than their counterparts to say that they would like to have their son or daughter take a foreign language, algebra, chemistry, computer science, and geometry, but less likely to say they would like to have their student take

career education. These differences are larger in magnitude than the sex difference noted above. (Information on the social class of the students is not fully coded yet, but when this information is available a similar analysis will be conducted with their responses.)

The most popular vocational courses for the students are electronics, home economics, and mechanics, marked by over one-fourth of the students. Slightly fewer students mark accounting, clerical and secretarial training, health occupations, metal work, marketing, sales work, and food service training, with the other areas receiving even fewer choices. Significant sex differences appear in the choices of all but marketing or sales work training. Girls more often choose accounting, clerical, food service and health occupations training as well as home economics. Boys more often choose agriculture, construction, electronics, forestry, mechanics, and metal work training.

With the exception of food service and metal work training the mothers again mark each of the vocational courses more often than do their sons or daughters. Differences between the mothers' and students' choices are statistically significant for accounting, clerical, food service, health occupations, home economics, and marketing and sales training. Paralleling the results with the students, the mothers of sons and daughters have significantly different choices for 11 of the 12 vocational

courses listed, with the direction of the difference paralleling those of the students' differences in choices.

There are significant differences in the choices of the mothers with different levels of education for 3 of the courses. Mothers with lower educational levels more often want their sons or daughters to take agricultural, electronics, or forestry training.

Data for the fourth grade are available only for the vocational courses and indicate that the mothers tend to choose more course work or training for their students in the earlier year. These differences are statistically significant for all of the areas except food service.

#### Perceptions of the School Environment

One aim of the study is to gather information which can be used to examine the students' transition from middle school to high school. While a complete analysis of this issue must wait until data gathered during high school are analyzed, it is possible to examine the students' and the mothers' perceptions of the middle school environment and their perceptions of what the high school environment will be like. The analysis here focuses on how much the students like school, how they describe their teachers, and what problems they believe occur in middle school and high school. Information is also presented on mothers' and teachers' views of these areas when available.

### How Much Students Like School

When asked how much they like going to middle school, 42% of the students mark "a lot," 41% mark "somewhat," 12% say "not very much," and only 5% say "not at all." The mothers tend to estimate that their sons or daughters like middle school even more, with 56% marking "a lot" and 38% marking "somewhat." Only 6% of the mothers say that their students do not like going to middle school. This difference is statistically significant.

The students and mothers are also asked how much they thought they would like going to high school. The responses to these questions are significantly more positive, with 62% of the students and 73% of the mothers estimating they would like going to high school "a lot" and 35% of the students and 25% of the mothers marking "somewhat." The differences in the mother and student ratings of attitude toward high school are not statistically significant.

### Perceptions of Teachers

Both the students and the mothers were asked to mark which of a series of adjectives described the teachers in the middle school and the high school the students would attend in the next academic year. The results of this analysis are given in Table 9. At least half of both the students and mothers say that the middle school teachers are friendly, willing to help and expect the students to do

their best. One-third or fewer of the students say that the teachers are too strict, too easy with school work, or understand their problems. Mothers are significantly more likely than students to say that the teachers are too easy with school work and expect students to do their best, but are significantly less likely than the students to say that the teachers are too strict. Significant differences appear between boys and girls in 3 of the 6 descriptors of middle school teachers, with girls more likely than boys to say that teachers expect the best of their students and are willing to help. Boys are more likely than girls to say that the teachers are too easy.

As with the descriptions of middle school teachers, over half of the students and mothers say that high school teachers will be friendly and expect the best of their students. However over half of the mothers but only about one-third of the students expect the teachers to be willing to help them. Similarly, only 19% of the students, but 39% of the mothers expect the high school teachers to be understanding of students' problems. As with the middle school data, there are significant differences between the mothers' and students' ratings of whether the teachers will be "too easy" or "too strict" and whether the teachers will expect the best of their students. The mother-student differences in ratings of the teachers' understanding of problems and willingness to help are also statistically

significant. Only one of the descriptors of high school teachers is significantly different for the two sex groups, with girls more likely than boys to expect the high school teachers to expect the best of their students.

Descriptions of middle and high school teachers are significantly different only for the mothers' ratings of how friendly, easy, and understanding the two groups are. Differences in the students' perceptions of the two groups are not statistically significant.

#### Perceived Problems in Middle and High Schools

The students, mothers, and teachers were all asked about problems which they believed typified the middle schools. The students and mothers were also asked about problems they believe occur in the high schools. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 10.

For the middle school, the most commonly cited problem, by both students and mothers is students talking back to teachers or other adults, noted by 77% of the students and 60% of the mothers. Over half of the students say that students being absent from class and fighting with each other were problems, but only 26% and 39% of the mothers cite these as problems. Over 40% of the students say that students skipping class and students destroying or hurting school property are problems, but again substantially fewer mothers held this view. A third or fewer of the students

cite robbery or theft, smoking, drug and alcohol use as problems. Slightly more mothers see robbery and drug use as problems. The differences in the mothers' and students' perceptions are statistically significant for all of the cited problems except drug and alcohol use. While mothers of boys and mothers of girls have similar perceptions of school problems, male and female students tend to respond differently, with girls more likely than boys to cite absenteeism, fighting, vandalism, smoking, and drugs as problems.

The responses of teachers tend to parallel those of students, with talking back and absenteeism being mentioned as more serious problems. Each of the other areas is seen as at least a minor problem by the teachers.

When asked about areas that they thought would be problems in high school, substantially more items are checked by the students, with absenteeism being the only area marked by fewer than one-half of them. Over 70% of the students say that skipping class, smoking, and drug and alcohol abuse are problems, and almost as many cite fighting and talking back. Robbery and vandalism are noted as problems by over one-half of the students. The mothers most often cite drug use as a problem, with smoking and alcohol abuse are mentioned slightly less often. More than half of the mothers also mention skipping class and talking back as problems. Fewer than half of the mothers, however, mention



absenteeism, fighting robbery or vandalism. The frequency of citation of high school problems by mothers and students is significantly different for all areas except absenteeism, drug, and alcohol abuse. In contrast to the citing of middle school problems, boys and girls do not differ in their perceptions of problems in the high school.

When views of high school and middle school are compared, it may be seen that both mothers and students believe that there will be more problems in the high schools. The difference in middle school and high school ratings is significant for all the areas for students and for all but fighting and talking back for parents.

Table One  
 Eighth Grade Students' Reports of Time Spent on Activities  
 on a Typical School Night

Activity	Time Spent					Total	
	None	Less than 1/2 hour	1/2 hour- 1 hour	1-2 hours	More than 2 hours	%	N
a. Watching TV	2	5	26	28	39	100	384
b. Listening to the radio	8	27	22	14	29	100	381
c. Listening to cassettes/tapes	30	27	16	11	16	100	378
d. Working on a computer	72	15	8	3	2	100	375
e. Doing homework	6	18	44	22	9	100	378
f. Talking with friends	8	36	26	17	13	100	381
g. Talking with family members	5	32	30	16	17	100	383
h. Working at a job	58	12	12	7	11	100	375
i. Reading books or magazines for fun	21	34	26	11	8	100	381

Table Two  
 Eighth Grade Students' Reports of Time Spent on Activities  
 on a Typical Non-School Day

Activity	None	Less than 1/2 hour	Time Spent			Total %	N
			1/2 hour- 1 hour	1-2 hours	More than 2 hours		
a. Watching TV	3	7	14	19	57	100	386
b. Listening to the radio	6	13	21	19	41	100	382
c. Listening to cassettes/tapes	22	20	17	17	24	100	380
d. Working on a computer	70	11	8	5	6	100	378
e. Doing homework	29	27	27	12	5	100	382
f. Talking with friends	4	13	20	20	43	100	381
g. Talking with family members	5	18	23	20	34	100	374
h. Working at a job	43	9	14	9	25	100	374
i. Reading books or magazines for fun	23	23	25	12	17	100	380

Table Three  
 Perceptions of Five Subject Areas by Students in Fourth  
 and Eighth Grades and Mothers in the Eighth Grade\*

Perception	Subjects				
	Language Arts	Math	P.E.	Science	Social Studies
Like a lot					
Students, 4th Grade	19	48	66	37	21
Students, 8th Grade	12	25	43	29	25
Mothers, 8th Grade	21	35	47	33	29
Much too easy for me					
Students, 4th Grade	25	28	62	22	21
Students, 8th Grade	7	7	27	8	6
Doing my best work					
Students, 4th Grade	50	61	65	52	46
Students, 8th Grade	36	42	53	43	40
Is very important to learn					
Students, 4th Grade	66	90	44	69	58
Students, 8th Grade	58	90	15	57	37
Mothers, 8th Grade	85	90	19	54	42

\*Numbers in the table indicate the percentage of each sample giving the indicated response regarding each subject area.

Table Four  
Eighth Grade Students' Ratings of The Quality of Their School Work  
in Comparison to Various Groups

Comparison Group	Ratings					Totals %
	Better than all	Better than most	About the same	Poorer than most	Poorer than all	
1. Friends	3	29	64	4	4	100
2. Classmates	2	30	60	7	1	100
3. High school classmates	7	32	58	2	1	100
4. College class- mates	4	18	72	5	1	100
5. Self-rating	8	64	24	4	0	100

N=387

Actual wording of the items and possible responses is as follows:

1. Think of your friends. Do you think you can do school work better, the same or poorer than your friends? (better than all of them, better than most of them, about the same, poorer than most of them, poorer than all of them)

2. Think of the students in your class. Do you think you can do school work better, the same, or poorer than the students in your class? (responses the same as to number 1)

3. When you finish high school, do you think you will be one of the best students, about the same as most, or below most of the students? (one of the best, better than most of the students, same as most of the students, below most of the students, one of the worst)

4. If you went to college, do you think you would be one of the best students, the same as most, or below most of the students? (responses the same as to number 3)

5. Forget how your teachers mark your work. How good do you think your own work is? (excellent, good, same as most of the students, below most of the students, poor)

Table 5  
Eighth Grade Students' Educational Aspirations, Expectations,  
and Perceived Expectations of Others

	Schooling Level						Total %	N
	Some High School	Finish High School	Some Junior College	Finish Junior College	Some 4-year College	Finish 4-year College		
1. Students' aspirations	1	12	4	11	1	71	100	386
2. Students' expectations	1	19	7	12	10	51	100	387
3. Best friend's expectations	3*	24	6	13	9	45	100	385
4. Parents' expectations	2**	17	5	10	9	57	100	387
5. Teacher's expectations	1	18	6	12	10	53	100	379

\* Includes 2 people who responded "finish middle school"

\*\* Includes 1 person who responded "finish middle school"

Exact wording of the items and responses is as follows:

1. If you had your choice, how far would you like to go in school? (go to high school for a while but stop before graduation, finish high school [graduate], go to community college for a while, finish community college, go to four-year college for a year or two, but stop before graduation, finish a four-year college [graduate])
2. Sometimes, what actually happens is different from what we'd like. How far do you think you really will go in school? (same responses as to number 1)
3. How far do you think your best friend believes you will go in school? (same answers as above, with the addition of "finish middle school")
4. How far do you think your parents believe you will go in school? (same answers as to number 3)
5. How far do you think the teacher you like the best believes you will go in school? (same answers as to number 3)

Table Six  
 Mothers' Educational Aspirations and Expectations  
 for Students in Fourth and Eighth Grades

Level of Education	Aspirations*		Expectations**	
	4th grade	8th grade	4th grade	8th grade
1. Finish high school	4	16	96	98
2. Technical school/ community college	25	49	61	65
3. Finish 4-year college	51	79	31	46
4. Finish graduate or professional school	61	85	11	16

\*In both the fourth and eighth grade the mothers were asked how they would feel if their son or daughter stopped going to school after finishing each of the levels listed above. The numbers in the table are the percentage of mothers saying they would be very happy or a little happy if their son or daughter stopped at that point.

\*\*In both the fourth and eighth grade the mothers were asked how likely they thought it was that their son or daughter would actually finish each of the levels listed above. The numbers in the table are the percentage of mothers saying that their student would complete that level "almost for sure" or "fairly" surely.

Table Seven  
 Percentage of Mothers who Believe Subjects Should be Given  
 More or Less Time in Fourth and Eighth Grades

Subject	Less Time		More Time	
	4th grade	8th grade	4th grade	8th grade
Social Studies	4	8	16	15
Art	18	17	9	6
P.E.	13	15	8	4
Language Arts	1	1	31	39
Science	5	3	20	25
Music	16	15	6	5
Math	1	0	40	38
Spelling	1	2	37	37
None	68	67	34	38



Table Eight  
 Courses Endorsed by Students, Eighth Grade,  
 and Mothers, Fourth and Eighth Grade\*

Subjects	Mothers		Students 8th gr.
	4th gr.	8th gr.	
<b>Academic Courses:</b>			
a foreign language	--	71	58
advanced mathematics	--	69	28
algebra	--	68	42
chemistry	--	56	28
computer science	--	84	46
geometry	--	56	31
physics	--	39	26
career education	--	74	54
<b>Vocational Courses:</b>			
accounting	74	43	24
agriculture	30	6	5
clerical and secretarial	46	33	20
construction	35	12	11
electronics	52	36	31
forestry	--	13	11
food service	11	8	14
health occupations	60	28	18
home economics	--	32	28
marketing or sales work	29	34	15
mechanics	51	31	27
metal work	28	13	16

\*Figures in the table represent the percentage of students or mothers in a given year who say they would like to take the subject or would like their son or daughter learn the skill (mothers, 4th grade) or take the subject (mothers, 8th grade).

Table Nine  
 Students' and Mothers'  
 Perceptions of Middle and High School Teachers\*

	Middle School		High School			
	Students	Mothers	Students	Mothers	Students	Mothers
friendly	68	68	53	68	59	68
too strict	32	7	30	22	5	22
too easy with school work	9	28	2	9	15	9
understand students' problems	28	33	19	22	39	22
expect students to do their best	56	68	56	58	72	58
willing to help students	50	57	34	48	63	48

\*Numbers in the table represent the percentage of students or mothers checking a description as typical of students in the middle or high school.

Table Ten  
Students', Mothers', and Teachers' Perceptions of Problems  
in the Middle Schools and High Schools\*

	Middle School			High School	
	Students*	Mothers*	Teachers**	Students*	Mothers*
absenteeism	51	26	60 (100)	42 59	42
skipping class	44	16	8 (92)	74 76	55
fighting	57	39	24 (92)	67 40	35
robbery/theft	27	35	20 (96)	51 38	44
vandalism	43	22	20 (100)	57 44	26
smoking	33	26	20 (92)	79 76	62
drug use	31	35	24 (96)	75 63	75
alcohol use	26	22	36 (84)	70 53	65
talking back	77	60	60 (40)	65 50	56

\*Numbers in these columns represent the percentage of students or mothers checking a description as typical of students in the middle or high schools.

\*\*Includes teachers, counselors, vice principals and principals. School staff were asked to indicate the degree to which each area was a problem in their school. The first number given in this column indicates the percentage saying the problem was serious or moderate. The second number (in parentheses) gives the percentage who say it was at least a minor problem. Very few teachers described any of the problems listed as serious.

*checked*  
9<sup>th</sup> a lot 63  
some 32