The San Francisco 49ers Academy: 
Anatomy of A Better School for At-Risk Youth

I. Introduction

Traditional schooling in East Palo Alto has led to a 35% high school graduation rate, with only 8% of the students going to college (Palo Alto Daily News, 5/20/98). Gang and other criminal activity is exceptionally high.¹ These statistics illustrate that, by the time many East Palo Alto students reach middle school, they are likely to have been exposed to a range of negative factors associated with high crime rates, such as living in conditions of poverty, abuse, and/or neglect. The influence of these environmental factors results in students’ disconnection from the educational process. The impersonal nature of traditional schools in the Ravenswood School District may largely contribute to this disengagement.

Certainly, this belief underlies the mission of the San Francisco 49ers Academy. The Academy is an innovative public/private partnership, combining the work of a non-profit with a public school. In an effort to combat the high dropout and juvenile crime rates in East Palo Alto, the Ravenswood School District, in conjunction with the San Francisco 49ers and Communities in Schools (CIS), created this alternative middle school in 1996. CIS is a national network that connects community resources with schools to “help young people learn, stay in school, and prepare for life” (CIS website).

In addition to traditional district supports, the Academy is supported by an active Board of Directors and the Costco Wholesale Corporation, which provides funding and volunteers for an annual intensive reading camp. The Academy identifies and networks with other community resources to help students learn, stay in school and become better prepared for life. Some service providers include: Planned Parenthood, Big Brother/Big Sister, Child Protective Services and the Juvenile Detention System. Some

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¹ RAND’s 1998 crime data for the state of California reports an FBI Crime Index of just over 5,000 felony and misdemeanor arrests per 100,000 residents. East Palo Alto has a population of approximately 24,000. (RAND, 2000)
of these agencies have on-site offices dedicated to the school’s students, reflecting the close partnership between the school and the service providers.

Almost all of the 128 students currently enrolled at the Academy are from ethnic minority and low-income backgrounds. Eighty-seven percent of the students participate in the free or reduced price lunch program, while 48 percent of the students are classified as English Language Learners. Forty percent of students come from homes where at least one parent is not a high school graduate and 38 percent come from homes where at least one parent has achieved only a high school diploma. Forty-two percent of students are African American, 46 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and 12 percent are Pacific Islander (CDE, 1999 API Report).

Many students, failing in a traditional environment, were referred to the Academy by the juvenile justice system and other local schools that had exhausted strategies for reaching these youth. Some of the students enter the fifth grade at the school with reading and math skills that are 3 - 5 years below grade level (Murnane, 10/13/00).

**School Theory-of-Action**

*"Programs don't change kids...relationships do."*

This simple phrase eloquently captures the mission of the 49ers Academy. More specifically, the Academy’s approach to education is a holistic one based on three key concepts: 1) coordination of services, 2) personalized attention, and 3) accountability (See Appendix B).

The school philosophy portends that by providing students with personal attention and links to the social, health and human services they need, students will receive the emotional support they need to stay in school. This philosophy is based on principles of youth development, which assert that positive outcomes for youth are associated with opportunities to develop a range of critical competencies, identified by the Search Institute as “developmental assets.” Youth gain these critical competencies through opportunities to develop social and practical skills in the context of caring relationships with adults (Search Institute website).
In accordance with its mission, the Academy is committed to helping youth prepare for life by developing their emotional maturity and functional pro-social behavior. Promoting academic progress is another target area for improvement. Strategies for improving both domains are continually tested and modified as the school re-evaluates its progress towards these goals.

The school curriculum is both affective and academic, and relies heavily on the concept of personalized attention. Led by the executive director, Michele Murnane, specific strategies are implemented to provide intensive individualized supports to students. Teachers and counselors work closely with students in and outside of the classroom setting.

Strategies are also in place to reduce school disengagement. Specifically, success in this area is measured in terms of a decreasing number of suspensions, an increase in the overall attendance rate, and retention of students through graduation. The executive director measures youth emotional development using validated self-esteem inventories, and informally assesses impact through continued contact with graduates of the Academy.

The intensity of the emotional supports is matched by the Academy’s aggressive targeting of school-wide academic progress. Under the leadership of the principal, the Academy set incremental goals to bring reading and math performance up to grade level, raise scores on standardized tests to approximate or surpass the performance of other youth considered at-risk, and ensure that English Language Learners meet the same goals set for the whole school. Traditional measures of academic progress include grades, teachers’ tests, and attendance rates.

**Programmatic Structure**

*Enrollment.* Students and parents must choose to be members of the Academy, although many of the students are referred to the school on the basis of severe behavioral deficits and/or academic failure. Each student signs a contract, and their parents are asked to provide cooperative services to the school for two hours per month to demonstrate their commitment.

*Administration.* At the Academy, the principal, Phil Duncan, and the executive director, Michelle Murnane, share administrative duties. The principal’s focus is the academic domain and related
instructional concerns, including curriculum, scheduling, staffing, and student discipline. The executive
director handles budgeting, addresses staff needs, and primarily focuses on building the social support
services for students.

*Teachers.* More is expected of teachers at this school than in traditional middle schools: each teacher
is expected to make two home visits per student per year, maintain monthly phone contact, and supervise
hired tutors for the after-school tutoring program that meets three days per week. For these additional
duties, teachers at this school are compensated $6000 on top of their district-set salaries.

*Instruction.* During its first academic year (1996-1997), the Academy served only boys. Single-
gender instruction emerged during the school’s second year. There are seven self-contained single-gender
classrooms serving girls and boys across the four grade levels, with class sizes hovering around 18
students each. Due to low enrollment, there is one combined fifth/sixth grade class for girls. Classroom
teachers are supported by: a full-time bilingual program specialist; a special education aide; a part-time
reading specialist; and a core of volunteers recruited through various programs, including Americorps,
Teach for America, and local university students. Instruction at the Academy goes beyond the normal
school hours: an extended-day program provides remedial instruction.

*Support Services.* The primary vehicle for providing social supports is through the “case
management” model of counseling students. Two full-time counselors each manage a caseload of half the
student body. These counselors also support youths’ broader needs: for example, a guidance counselor
helps age-eligible youth find summer employment and helps graduates plan their high school classes to
ensure that they are included in more challenging curricular tracks.

Other supports include group therapy provided by the Mental Research Institute and the new
extended school day model that begins November 2000. Child Protective Services also has caseworkers
on-site. Services are provided to parents on behalf of the youth: for instance, the Academy provides
information on health care access to allay fears about the Immigration and Naturalization Services. The
Academy’s support services are supplemented by the work of a multidisciplinary student support team
that includes the program director, principal, and psychologists, as well as the guidance counselors and interns. Also on staff are an intern coordinator and after-school program coordinator.

**Goodness: A Definition**

Our assessment of the “goodness” of the 49ers Academy is guided by the context and goals elaborated by the school. The Academy has a clearly outlined theory of action—the idea that: “Programs don’t change kids… relationships do.” In order to meet its own definition of goodness, the Academy must demonstrate its ability to support the emotional and academic development of students through the fostering of relationships. Additionally, our assessment is based on the premise that to carry out its mission of changing kids, the school must also support the growth of all members of the school community, including the teachers’ capacity to serve their students.

We have examined the efficacy of the 49ers Academy based on three factors:

1. Evidence that students are gaining “developmental assets”;
2. The academic program and evidence of academic gains by students; and
3. Teacher support, professional development and empowerment.

In addition to using the context and goals of the school, our definition of “goodness” is drawn from the literature on good schools and on the effective practices of alternative schools. Evidence from research, effective practices, literature, and the core beliefs and practices of the 49ers Academy are woven together in the next three sections of the paper to analyze and synthesize information needed to judge the “goodness” of the 49ers Academy.

**II. Growing Students’ Developmental Assets**

The efforts of Communities in Schools, of which the Academy is a member school, are based on the Search Institute’s framework of “developmental assets.” These assets are the ingredients for a strength-based approach to healthy development.\(^2\) This developmental framework, which undergirds the

\(^2\) Twenty of the assets are external, focusing on positive experiences that young people receive from the people and institutions in their lives such as support from families, neighbors, organizations, and institutions. There are also twenty internal assets, such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity (Search Institute website).
Academy’s philosophy, is consistent with some of the research on the particular needs of at-risk youth, particularly in low-income, urban settings. The Comer schools, which grew out of the School Development Program at the Yale Child Study Center, are based on a similar holistic foundation of schooling. The School Development Program’s mission is based on a commitment to “the total development of all children by creating learning environments that support children’s physical, cognitive, psychological, language, social, and ethical development.” Paralleling the Academy’s belief in relationships, the Comer schools posit, “…children’s most meaningful learning occurs through positive and supportive relationships with caring and nurturing adults…” Additionally, the primary goal of the Comer schools is to “mobilize the entire community of adult caretakers—teachers, administrators, counselors, non-teaching staff, parents, and community members—to support students’ holistic development and to effect academic success” (SDP website). The Academy has a similar comprehensive approach to supporting at-risk students as they negotiate the array of extraordinary personal challenges they face in order to stay in school and become successful adults.

The literature on alternative schools also emphasizes the importance of providing a supportive environment for at-risk students. Larry Conant (1992) found that at-risk students, generally alienated from school, need supportive and “facilitative” schools in order to diminish obstacles to staying in school and discourage dropping out. In a 1997 study of effective alternative schools in the northwest United States, among the characteristics that were most often found were “a clear mission,” “a smaller enrollment than that of mainstream schools,” “a lower ratio of students to staff than in mainstream schools,” and “a more informal, personal relationship between teachers and students, and a family atmosphere” (Paglin & Fager, 1997, p.7). Additionally, Levy & Dulaney report that the establishment of a collaborative student support team (SST) and coordinated services was found to be “moderately” to “very” effective in most cases, and regular communication and meetings of the SST crucial to providing effective support for students (1995, pp.17, 26-27).
Given the context of the 49ers Academy, serving mostly low-income, minority, at-risk youth in East Palo Alto, we believe that the school’s ability to provide the kinds of supports described above is crucial to enabling and empowering students to stay in school, graduate, and obtain employment.

When visiting the school, one observes a climate of safety, community, and respect permeating the campus. Students listen respectfully to teachers, graffiti is absent from walls, and teachers know names of students outside of their class. Such examples are evidence of the caring, respectful ethos that has become part of the school culture. Further, it is clear that the asset building strategies of the Academy have had a beneficial effect on both present and former students. In a sampling of former Academy students, all maintained that time spent there was beneficial and that the relationships they developed with staff were extremely important. Many of the original graduates, now seniors in high school, still return to maintain connections with original staff. All interviewed students, both past and present, felt that the 49ers Academy experience was better than what they had previously known or, what they have/had in high school.

“For the first time, I felt that someone actually cared about me and what I did in school,” comments a former student. “I am now succeeding and I will be going to college next fall. I never would have been able to do this had I not gone to the Academy.”

This student is not alone in his praise for the Academy. In surveys of current students (See Appendix A.7), questions about the nurturing relationships and the benefits they have brought to the students show that the 49ers Academy is indeed changing kids for the better, at least developmentally. In questions targeted at the degree of concern shared between teachers and staff and students, students felt very strongly that these adults both cared about them and strongly encouraged them to succeed (see Appendix A.7). This sentiment was not expressed about the schools they previously attended. Even more telling is the fact that almost all students surveyed cared a great deal about doing well in school.

“I went from a person that was failing school to being the eighth grade salutatorian at the 49ers Academy. When I was in the seventh grade, I was failing the seventh grade, doing bad on the tests, getting bad grades and getting arrested. I thought I would never get good grades and would never be good at anything. I thought I would always be a loser with no education,” explains a former student.
Positive outcomes like these suggest that the relationships built and strengthened at the Academy help build the self-confidence that allows these students to feel good about school and themselves. When surveyed about their opinions of the school, not one student said that they did NOT care about the Academy. In fact, all agreed that they cared, and many cared strongly, about the Academy (See Appendix A.7). This is evidence that the caring relationships found in the school nurture a similarly caring regard in the students for the school itself.

Unfortunately, it is not so easy to measure the long-term effects of the Academy since the school’s earliest graduates are only now in their senior year of high school. Through interviews with former students, it is apparent that the positive attitudes toward academics that the school nurtured at the Academy have faded somewhat. While the positive relationships that some students encountered during their time at the Academy helped them stay in school, for others, it was difficult to remain enrolled in school after leaving the Academy’s supportive environment. However, even those who dropped out of high school attest that the Academy was beneficial for them and say that there are other factors in their lives that have made it difficult to stay in school.

One of the Academy’s first, and most successful graduates, has had a successful high school career and is currently applying to attend college. His success has a great deal to do with the fact that he maintains an extremely close relationship with members of the Academy staff. Other Academy graduates feel that non-scholastic pressures and a lack of continuing positive relationships hinder their ability to remain on a successful path. Yet some of these former students feel optimistic that they will soon return, and they state that this outlook can be directly attributed to the support that they received at the Academy. “I still go back to the Academy whenever I can because I know they will be there for me,” one former student said. “Although I’m not in school right now, I know that I want to get my G.E.D.”
III. Improving Academic Achievement for Students

Although the Academy stresses a strong focus on students’ pro-social development, it also adheres to the belief that it is responsible for students’ academic development. There are several different theories for the academic failure of poor, minority children. In the view of James Comer, director of the School Development Program, the root of poor academic performance is the failure of schools to bridge the social and cultural gap between home and school. This failure is exacerbated by the assumption made by mainstream schools that all children come to school prepared to perform at a certain level. Comer suggests that the key to academic achievement is to promote psychological development in students, which encourages bonding to the school (1988, p.43).

Ronald Edmonds, a leader of the Effective Schools movement of the 1980s, attributes the educational failure of urban poor to the failure of schools and teachers to bring poor children to minimal mastery of basic skills. In his view, successful urban schools have strong leadership and a climate of expectation that “all students can learn.” Additionally, he cites an instructional emphasis and an atmosphere conducive to learning as necessary conditions for higher student achievement. Edmonds also cites the 1977 Brookover and Lezotte study, a report that describes ten characteristics of schools successful in improving student achievement. Among these ten characteristics were (1) the accomplishment of basic reading and mathematics objectives, and (2) principals who “were more likely to be an instructional leader, more assertive in his/her institutional role, more of a disciplinarian, and perhaps most of all, assumes responsibility for the evaluation of the achievement of basic objectives” (Edmonds, 1979, pp.18-19). This framework undergirds our analysis of the Academy’s curricular goals and assessment of academic progress for students.

The Academy is committed to raising the academic achievement of its students, but this is not an easy task, given the fact that many of the students enter below grade level. After the Academy’s second year, Murnane realized that the school needed strong instructional leadership from an experienced educator. In response to this need, Duncan was hired to help focus on building a strong curriculum and teaching staff.
According to the Murnane, Duncan has “been a teacher, vice principal, principal…and that has really changed the academic part of our program” (Murnane, 10/13/00).

Duncan came to the Academy with 23 years of teaching experience as well as a background working with at-risk student populations. His service started in the fall of 1998, and at the time of this analysis, is at the beginning of his third year of office at the Academy. Murnane states that before Duncan’s arrival, the quality of instruction at the Academy was poor. She attributes this condition to the first principal’s lack of prior experience in teaching and instructional leadership. Duncan has infused the Academy with high expectations for student academic performance, along with strategies that he passionately believes will lead to competitive levels of achievement, despite these youths’ past chronic failure in other settings.

_Curriculum, Instruction and Standards._ The academic curriculum at the Academy centers around five core subject areas: reading, math, language arts, science and social studies. The school uses a “Phonographix” curriculum as one strategy for approaching grade-level reading for all students. The school day follows a block schedule, divided into learning periods of 90 minutes. Duncan believes that this scheduling plan will help to improve student academic performance by allowing struggling students to spend more time focusing on the core areas, with a special emphasis on math, reading, and language areas. Additionally he has instituted a mandatory after-school tutoring program.

_Accountability._ The 49ers Academy has applied for eligibility to be evaluated according to California’s new alternative accountability system, as authorized by the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA). With alternative accountability status, the Academy will no longer have their data reported by the Academic Performance Index (API). The Academy’s small population (128 students), the severely low starting point of new students (typically 3-4 years behind grade level in reading) and excessively high average yearly mobility rate (45%) render the API score a meaningless measure of the school’s achievements.

More representative of the school’s achievements are improvements made by individual students who have attended the school more than three years. Currently, the school has initiated efforts to track academic progress for those students who are in at least their third year at the Academy. As this tracking
effort began this academic year, no data is available for public review; however, in an interview (11/27/00), Murnane offered promising findings: students with longer enrollment periods are showing increased grade point averages, marked decrease in the number of disciplinary actions, increased attendance, and increased self-esteem quotients on the Cooper-Smith Inventory.

Although the school participates in the alternative accountability system, the Academy continues to strive to help students meet competitive performance standards. Duncan is not merely attempting to improve their performance from current levels of achievement. Instead, he sets the higher goal of bringing students’ academic performance to that mandated by California’s grade-level standards.

Clear Goals. The importance of clear goals is emphasized repeatedly in recent effective schools literature, particularly since the standards-based reform movement has become a fixture in the reform agenda of the last two decades. Jerome Harris’s application of Effective Schools research in Brooklyn, NY led him to conclude that one of the most important elements of comprehensive school reform is a “…clear emphasis on explicit goals in the form of behavioral learning objectives, a standardized curriculum, the use of continuous criterion-referenced tests to measure results and to heighten teacher expectations” (1988, p.294). Harris also concluded that “changing the administrative style of the leadership is the best method to improve the school’s academic performance,” and that it is the leaders who “…create the role model for staff members to follow…[and] develop clear, compelling visions” (1988, pp. 293, 301).

Duncan demonstrates such vision and leadership. He has established the following specific goals for improving academic performance at the Academy:

- Improve the graduation rate to 93% or better, and reduce the dropout rate from 7.4% to a maximum of 1.9%.
- Increase academic performance in core areas with emphasis on reading, math, and language arts with the goal of bringing every student’s reading grade level up by 1.8 units.
- Increase school-wide Stanford-9 scores by 10% each year with a target goal for all students to perform at least at the 47th percentile.
- Increase instructional time lost to poor attendance and suspensions: achieve a yearly consistent attendance rate of at least 97%.
- Improve scores for English Language Learners to meet or exceed the performance of native English students.
Duncan is aware of the level of dysfunction in many Academy students’ homes as well as the impact these problems have on their behavior and performance in the classroom. However, this does not alter his view of what these students are capable of achieving. Several remediation efforts, including a focused curriculum and additional adult assistance, are in place with the explicit goal of raising student grade point averages and increasing scores on standardized tests. In order to meet these goals, Duncan currently focuses on improving reading performance through daily strategies as well as special initiatives, such as participation in a two-week intensive reading camp sponsored by Costco.

Internal Academic Performance Measures. The primary internal measures of student academic performance are teacher-based assessments. Teachers write tests and prepare grades; each teacher uses his/her own system of assigning grades. In addition, the district tests interim school-year progress on academic subjects using the Gates-McKinnedy standardized test. Finally, the Costco reading camp has a verbal interactive assessment procedure established to assess student reading progress at the end of the camp and the end of the academic year.

External Academic Performance Measures. Student scores on the Stanford-9, as reported in the Spring 2000 Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR) report, were very poor overall (CDE website). The majority of students (ranging between 60-90 percent) from each grade scored at or below the 25th percentile in reading, and performance in math was equally poor. In both the previous STAR reports for 1998 and 1999 on the Stanford-9, the majority of Academy student scores were at or below the 25th percentile. Comparisons of the average national percentile rank for the Academy, the Ravenswood District, San Mateo County, and California show that the performance of the Academy students has lagged behind their peers for the past three reporting years (1998, 1999, 2000). However, the gap appears to close for the Academy’s 8th graders in comparison to their district, county, and state peers (See Appendix C).

Discussion. Though student’s academic progress remains discouragingly low, there is evidence that the Academy possesses the necessary pre-existing conditions to cultivate academic achievement. Edmonds and Brookover & Lezotte outline facilitating factors for academic achievement among students
otherwise at-risk for failure. Key among these factors are strong leadership and a school climate that demands and reinforces high expectations for all students. The extent to which the Academy possesses these factors may be an indication of whether it will be able to improve student achievement in the future. In particular, the following factors extracted from Edmonds’ own research and his summary of the Brookover & Lezotte research have been identified at the Academy:

- Explicitly stated expectations that all Academy students can achieve at a level competitive with other California students.
- Commitment to and strategies aimed at improving basic skills, in particular, intensive targeting of reading and math performance, particularly for the lowest performing students.
- Assertive instructional leadership

The presence of these factors indicates that the Academy may be prepared to sufficiently support student academic achievement. However, what actually happens in the classroom may be the most important factor in determining successful academic outcomes. In order to improve academic achievement, the teaching staff must demonstrate a similar commitment to Duncan’s goals and a capacity to achieve them. The following section examines how the Academy supports its teachers to meet students’ academic and emotional needs.

IV. Teacher Support, Professional Development and Empowerment

When asked what factors make a school “good,” Murnane immediately replies, “I think at any school, it’s what the staff is.” In order to create strong relationships and foster student academic growth, she acknowledges that the school must cultivate a quality staff. In her research on teacher quality and student achievement, Linda Darling-Hammond concurs that one of the most important predictors (that can be controlled) for academic success in any school is the caliber of its teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Background: The teachers. There are seven full-time classroom teachers at the Academy. Although the Academy also employs support staff and paraprofessionals, this section will focus on regular classroom teachers, given both Duncan and Murnane’s focus on supporting and developing the talents of these seven teachers. Of the teachers, the most experienced is the eighth grade boys’ teacher, who has
been teaching for more than fifteen years, and possesses a multi-subject credential. The eighth grade girls’ teacher, previously a librarian, is beginning her second year as an emergency credentialed teacher. Two other teachers taught for part of the year last year, and the remaining three are brand-new. The five first-year teachers all have emergency credentials and take, or plan to take, courses to earn their teaching credentials.

At the Academy, whose mission statement reflects the view that teacher-student relationships are of primary importance, high teacher turnover impairs the school’s ability to provide continuous relationships for students. When surveyed, every teacher reported that working with such a challenging population of students is the hardest part of their jobs. Additionally, Academy teachers have the additional responsibilities of attending occasional Saturday trainings, running an after school tutoring program three days a week, making two home visits a year, and attending regular district and school trainings. In light of the difficult student population and added responsibilities, Murnane explains that the Academy faces an “on-going challenge to recruit the kind of staff you need [for a good school].”

Although Duncan describes previous teachers who “…needed to go, were trying to hide out and retire and were not a good match for the kids,” he notes: “I’ve had the best staff this year that I’ve had in three years.” Retaining high-quality and well-prepared teachers becomes more crucial in alternative schools, where staff members have expanded roles in providing more individualized attention to at-risk students. Research shows that positive working conditions, more than students’ socioeconomic status, are associated with better teacher attendance, more effort, higher morale, and a greater sense of efficacy in the classroom. Positive conditions include: strong, supportive principal leadership; high levels of staff collegiality; high levels of teacher influence on school decisions; and high levels of teacher control over curriculum and instruction (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988 in Ascher, 1991). In an interview, the principal concurs with this viewpoint, describing two factors essential in creating good teachers: teacher support and training. In addition to these two factors, this section will also examine the issue of teacher empowerment, as recent studies place this issue as a crucial feature in developing staff quality (Darling-Hammond 1990; Boettiger, 1998; McCarthy and Still 1993; Elmore 2000).
The First Criterion: Teacher Support

The 18 boys in Ms. Cherie’s seventh grade class are preparing to take a test on the Roman Empire. While the other boys are scrambling to get their pencils and paper, two boys begin to take advantage of the downtime. Seeing their horseplay, Ms. Cherie utters two words in a calm, controlled voice: “Step outside.” Instantly, the boys stop their play. This injunctive clearly has real power. “Aw, come on—Mr. Duncan saw me out there yesterday. If he sees me again…” pleas one boy. The other student heads outside, face down, worried. The first boy follows looking equally repentant.

Three minutes later, Ms. Cherie calls the boys inside. From their relieved expressions, it is clear that Mr. Duncan did not walk by. But the two boys, Ms. Cherie and the rest of the class all know that there is a high probability of encountering Mr. Duncan when asked to “step outside.”

In his article “Effective Schools for the Urban Poor,” Ronald Edmonds reports that principal support of faculty serves as a major component of an effective urban school (1979). When asked about support systems, all seven teachers listed the principal as a source of support. Duncan himself places teacher support as one of his top priorities—and top challenges: “One thing I’ve really tried to focus on this year is doing check-ins ‘Is this clear? How can I help you? Let me come in, let me do this. What do you need?’” As one walks around the Academy, it is a rare hour when Duncan is not seen walking between trailers, ducking in and out of classrooms, and interacting with students and teachers.

In addition to Duncan, teachers also mentioned other support staff, particularly Murnane and on-site caseworkers, as strong sources of support. During observations, these support staff members were seen on the playground, helping in the classroom, pulling students out of the classroom for special instruction and assisting teachers in designing and teaching health education and government lessons. Another support cited by the Academy staff is the small class size. Murnane describes, “smaller class sizes—a maximum of twenty [students] in a self-contained class, where students stay with the same teacher all day to…form relationships with individual students.” In their review of effective school literature, Purkey and Smith list “class size…calculated to increase the sense of personal relationship between student and teacher” as a key factor in effective schools (1983, p.439).

However, though they have the advantage of small classes, in the words of one teacher, “These kids come from a different value system, and it is NOT conducive to learning.” One veteran teacher remarked
that the younger teachers spend “…more time disciplining than teaching.” The executive director cautions, “These are needy kids…and if you are here and you don’t care about them, they will eat you alive.” To cope with working with such a difficult student population, five of the teachers expressed a desire for a full-time aide with them in the classroom to assist with both discipline and instruction.

**The Second Criterion: Professional Development.** In addition to providing general support, Purkey and Smith note that a good school provides “outstanding administrative leadership characterized as ‘supportive of teachers and skilled in providing a structured institutional pattern in which teachers could function effectively’” (1983, p.203). Likewise, the SDP model of school reform recognizes the need for equipping teachers with knowledge in how to best support children’s learning. Comer believes that “armed with theories of child development and education, together with observations of children and school systems, they [school personnel] can diagnose problems in the school and develop solutions” (Comer, 1988, p.48). In his work “Building a New Structure for School Leadership,” Richard Elmore agrees that “…instructional improvement requires continuous learning” (2000, p.20).

The executive director muses that “it’s been an ongoing challenge for us to recruit the kind of staff we need to implement our vision,” and many urban schools face similar difficulties (Ravitch, 1985). At the Academy, this recruitment difficulty has led to the hiring of inexperienced and under-trained teachers. In his interview, Duncan made it clear that it is “imperative” that he provides quality professional development, given the number of new teachers at the Academy. During observations, three professional development systems emerged:

1. **Formal On-Site Professional Development Systems.** To remedy many teacher’s lack of pre-service training, the Academy administration has developed an extremely rigorous and on-going formal system of staff development, including in-service trainings every Wednesday from 1:10-3:10 that includes topics like: “Phonographix reading method/math workshop, portfolio development, project-based learning and authentic assessment, and SAT-9 test review” (See Appendix D). In addition to formal staff meetings, all teachers submit weekly lesson plans to the principal every Friday, and he conducts biannual formal classroom observations of each teacher.

2. **Informal On-Site Professional Development Systems.** The school also provides “on-going training” for staff members in the areas of “classroom management, curriculum, and day-to-day ‘learning experiences.’” Duncan has instituted a “new teachers’ roundtable” where teachers can discuss their challenges and successes with him in an informal setting. Also, he has fostered an informal mentor-teacher system, where rookie teachers meet with an eighth grade teacher after school. Furthermore,
he has instituted a peer coaching system—where veteran teachers observe and assist rookie teachers—to help disseminate teacher knowledge in the building. By establishing these roundtables, mentors and peer-coaching systems, Mr. Duncan tries to “keep the focus on capabilities,” asking “Who’s here to make it happen?”

3. **Formal District Professional Development Systems.** Half of staff training events are district mandates and the other half are on-site programs tailored to meet the specific needs of the Academy’s teachers (See Appendix D). Mr. Duncan explains that “A lot of that has to do with compliance issues…we [the district] are being monitored by a court monitor in special education, which has created paperwork issues.” Although the teachers give a positive response to their on-site trainings, one teacher sums up the prevailing attitude toward district trainings: “When people say ‘training,’ they put you in a room with a bunch of people, with a bunch of idiots.” However, the teachers still seem to take these trainings seriously.

Though the teachers receive a high level of professional development, they are still struggling. Below are typical sentiments expressed by staff members:

“I’m so over committed…they’re [the students] never where I want them to be.”

“IEPs stress me out.”

“I would think of myself as successful when at least half of my class is passing tests, showing understanding and being motivated.”

“I would like to see more professional development in the content areas and teaching strategies.”

To their credit, the fact that the teachers are continuously reflecting on and refining their practices so diligently is indicative of the staff’s commitment to improving their own teaching practices and to the academic achievement of their students. Brookover and Lezotte found that a less satisfied staff is characteristic of an effective school (Purkey and Smith, 1983, p.434). Thus, although the teachers may have a long road ahead of them, their dedication and lack of complacency, in combination with the high level of administrative support, is likely to lead to better classroom practice and to their own growth as professionals.

**The Third Criterion: Teacher Empowerment.** Empowered teachers have been found to have some degree of input in school decisions “ranging from budget to personnel” (McCarthy and Still 1993, p.72), a voice in curricula, instruction on pedagogical strategies (Muncey and McQuillan p.139, year), occasions to evaluate themselves and others, and introduction to new professional practices (Elmore 2000, p.22). OERI sums up the notion of empowerment with the statement that a good school gives teachers a “sense of belonging by allowing them some say about what happens in the school” (1986, p.146). Empowerment
can also entail providing teachers with promotional opportunities, breaking down schools into small communities, flexible scheduling and team teaching (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Corcoran, et al., 1988). This greater sense of efficacy and control among teachers leads to stronger teacher-student connections. (Farber & Ascher, 1991). Given its small size, the Academy seems to hold the potential for granting its teachers a high degree of empowerment.

Three of the teachers cite leadership roles such as being a union representative, a peer coach, or having the freedom to design a project-based learning unit. These teachers also make statements like “I have a lot of self-control” or “I get to decide how to present the curriculum.” However, not all teachers are interested in becoming “empowered”. Some teachers do not express a desire to assume leadership roles. Often, these teachers cite that there is “no time to collaborate.” Duncan explains that he has a leadership team, a program quality review team, a positive behavior team, and a crisis response team. However, four of the teachers do not serve on any of these teams. The fact that only half the staff has taken advantage of opportunities to serve in leadership capacities seems consistent with Smylie and Hart’s observation that “…professional community and the social capital that accompanies it may vary substantially among groups of teachers within schools” (1999, p. 428). Thus, though some teachers at the Academy are empowered, the school as a whole is still working towards developing what Marshall terms the “collegiality and positive staff culture” necessary to sustain a good school (1993, p. 230).

Discussion. Purkey and Smith note that “Frequent transfers are destructive and likely to retard, if not prevent, the growth of a coherent and on-going school personality” necessary to create an effective school” (1983, p.443). Both Duncan and Murnane have tapped into this wisdom, and realize that, to create a good school, they must make their goal of “decreasing staff turnover” a priority. In pursuit of this goal, the administration provides its teachers with high levels of support. Additionally, teachers have a variety of formal and informal professional development mechanisms in place at the school. Smylie and Hart write that harnessing such social capital can “provide channels for new information that in turn facilitates individual action.” (1999, p. 423-6).
The Academy administration realizes that they still have many challenges. Six of the seven teachers have less than two years of experience, and many of the teachers are facing great difficulties in the areas of classroom management and curriculum design. Additionally, district requirements place additional demands on the already overworked staff. Although it is difficult to judge a school based on a few site visits and interviews, it is safe to say that strong teacher support and professional development is provided to help teachers overcome these hurdles. Additionally, although the mechanisms are not completely in place, the administration is working hard to provide all teachers with the skills that will allow them to have more autonomy in the classroom and assume more collaborative and leadership roles in the school.

Duncan’s primary goal for the teaching staff is to “Have a teacher more than two years.” The Academy’s focus on teacher support and professional development illustrates that, despite some enormous challenges, the school is doing its best to create the conditions that encourage teachers to stay at the school, thus allowing the school to succeed in its goals of relationship-building and academic improvement.

V. Leadership

The importance of the principal’s leadership as the key “mover” of the Academy’s recent focus on academic goals and staff support has not been lost on us, even though leadership was not one of the aspects we originally considered in our criteria for judging the Academy’s “goodness.” After several observations and interviews, it became apparent that the principal has almost single-handedly transformed the curricular and instructional program of the school from one that had little direction to one that is very focused on improving student achievement. Duncan’s ability to articulate clear instructional goals and strategies for reaching them, as well as his ability to get “buy-in” from the staff, has redirected teachers’ energy toward more constructive goals for student learning. He has also been the main player in creating the staff support structures and professional development program for teachers. The fact that every teacher cited Duncan as a source of support is indicative of the trust and confidence he has gained from faculty. Duncan embodies characteristics of both the “interactional” and “transformational” leader
(Smylie & Hart, 1999). Given Duncan’s centrality to the enactment of school goals for improved academic performance and increased teacher support, his presence at the school may be key to continued success in these domains.

VI. Analysis

The importance of context cannot be emphasized enough in judging the goodness of the 49ers Academy. The Academy is currently beginning its fifth year of operation. Moreover, each year’s influx of fifth-grade students brings in a new group of students with behavioral, emotional, and academic problems. It is the explicit mission of the Academy to serve this particular population. Accordingly, in this evaluation, we take into consideration not only measurable outcomes, such as internal and state assessments and anecdotal evidence, but also the processes in the academy that are conducive to producing the kind of caring school climate, support services, and relationships that the school’s mission values as most important to these students’ development. Also, we consider the educational practices that have the potential to produce positive achievement outcomes for students. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, this study was limited in its ability to see the outcomes of more recent school initiatives, such as the new-teacher support group, teacher mentoring, the after-school tutoring program, and the new student council.

Developing students’ developmental assets. Although overall academic success remains low, alternative assessments suggest that the school is succeeding in other ways. Through the strong relationships that are cultivated between the adults at the school and students, positive outcomes transcend the classroom and make a difference in the lives of students and former students in sometimes life-changing ways. In keeping with their mission, the staff’s attempts to change each of their students through strong relationships have proven immensely successful in allowing the students and graduates to feel better about themselves, and ultimately increase their chances for a better life. Because many of the Academy’s students confront difficult challenges in their home environment, changing behaviors and building self-esteem is a prerequisite for achieving academic success for these students. In the surveys of
current and former students, it became apparent that relationships built at the Academy strengthen students’ self-esteem and instill a desire for success. Though these kinds of impacts are not yet measurable in concrete numbers (given that the oldest class of former students is still in its senior year of high school), the Academy appears to be succeeding in its core mission.

*Improving academic achievement for students.* While emotional development and relationship building remains the Academy’s core strategy, there has been a shift in the last two years to a greater balance between students’ emotional development and academic achievement. The Academy has much to accomplish in the area of academics. One of the most commonly used measures of a school’s success is the short-term gains (as evidenced by improved test scores) and long-term outcomes for students (high school drop-out rate, successful employment, college attendance). However, because of the school’s short history, it has been difficult to effectively measure academic outcomes either through longitudinal tracking or through standardized assessments (API ratings do not reflect individual students’ academic gains). Each year, many of the incoming students enter with STAR/Stanford-9 test scores significantly below grade level, keeping the school’s average scores perpetually below average. Furthermore, because the students begin from such a low point, even if there are gains during the course of a students’ stay at the Academy, the gains have not been great enough to reach or surpass the 50th percentile.

Since arriving at the Academy, Duncan has taken a strong leadership role in strengthening the academic component of the school. To that end, he has articulated specific strategies for reaching the targets he has set for student achievement. This focused attention on basic subjects like reading, writing and mathematics has led to gains in students’ reading and math scores, bringing some students, previously years behind, up to near grade level. High expectations for student performance, clear goals, and participation in an accountability system commensurate with the challenges the school faces, have also served to create a culture of learning that holds the potential to produce positive academic outcomes.

*Supporting faculty members’ professional growth and continuous learning.* Just as the Academy has been implementing systems designed to achieve students’ academic success, the administration is making concerted efforts to provide the kinds of supports that teachers need to be effective in serving the unique
needs of its students. The principal and executive director recognize the extraordinary demands of being a teacher at the Academy, and have developed a coordinated strategy to help alleviate teacher stress level by providing comprehensive structures.

However, these efforts have been undermined by extremely high turnover rates and the annual influx of new, inexperienced, emergency-credentialed teachers into the staff’s ranks. This high turnover rate, based on anecdotal evidence, seems to have much to do with the specific challenges of teaching students who have serious academic deficiencies, personal family problems, and behavioral/emotional disturbance. At the Academy, which demands even more from its teachers, staying at the school beyond one year is a feat in itself.

VI. Conclusion

Advocates for urban, poor, and minority students emphasize the primacy of improving academic outcomes for students. James Comer, Ron Edmonds, Jerome Harris, and Principal Michael Johnson (of the Science Skills Center in Brooklyn, NY), blame schools that do not expect high levels of academic achievement--for all students, including those we consider “at-risk,”--for the current inequities in schooling. Comer emphasizes the ever-increasing importance of preparing at-risk students for life: “Job opportunities increasingly reside in service and technology industries, but poor minorities are the least likely to have the social and academic skills these jobs demand. Unless schools can find a way to educate them and bring them into the mainstream, all the problems associated with unemployment and alienation will escalate” (1988, p.42). In assuming this daunting challenge, the 49ers Academy has met with mixed, but promising results. Yet, this school demonstrates that combining social and emotional supports with academic remediation may prove a critical factor for effectively serving the specific needs of at-risk youth.

As the school begins to collect academic performance data for those students that remain in the school over time, early evidence indicates that the sub-marginal performance of students at the 49ers Academy may be improving. Anecdotal evidence, including Murnane’s report that students’ scores on
self-esteem measures are improving, show that the school may be considered, on the whole, a success in
terms of its own core goals. Improved performance on standardized exams and attendance indicates
increasing engagement with the schooling process, while the pro-social behaviors needed to access
academic instruction are improving as well. Duncan’s aggressive strategies for remediation and raising
overall student achievement have been effective in several similar urban schools, and must be met with
sustained commitment by administration and staff over the years.

Given the intensity of supports required to work effectively with its high-risk student population,
adequate support for teachers is essential to the school’s overall success. The Academy works hard to
provide general and instructional supports for its teachers, as well as opportunities to continuously learn
and grow professionally. Also, by seeking to end teachers’ isolation, Duncan has been able to increase
the sense of a common purpose that is crucial to a positive school culture that is conducive to good
learning and teaching. All of these supports and opportunities are consistent with the research that
describes strategies for growing a good staff and creating conditions that will encourage teachers to stay
at the school. The results have not been dramatic so far, but we believe that there is a great deal of
potential for positive academic outcomes, both in terms of improving teachers’ abilities to assist students
and reducing turnover.

In light of the background characteristics of the Academy’s student population, there is a high
likelihood that without the Academy, these students would never have achieved the milestones of regular
attendance; improvement in scores and grades (however modest); or the functional, pro-social behaviors
requisite for progress in school and healthy adult lives. Though the school continues to struggle to
translate its system of academic and social supports into measurable academic advancement, and explores
ways to better assist teachers in supporting students’ needs, the Academy shows early promise of offering
high risk students a better chance for success.
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Appendix A.1: Methodology

In order to determine the degree to which the Academy has achieved its own mission, we interviewed each of the key staff responsible for enacting the school goals: the executive director (see Appendix A.2), the school principal (Appendix A.3), all seven teachers on staff (Appendix A.4), and the two guidance counselors (Appendix A.5). Interviews were designed to gather information about the school’s mission, specific practices, and assessment of the school’s progress from the staff perspective. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with ten graduates of the Academy. In addition, we observed each of the classrooms for a minimum of one hour (Appendix A.6). One member of the team sat in on two staff development meetings. In total, twelve visits were made to the school during the months of October and November, twice as a whole group, and several times individually.

To learn more about student attitudes, we surveyed 8\textsuperscript{th} graders—15 girls and 7 boys using a survey that is comparable to the Search Institute’s developmental assets survey (Appendix A.7). Surveys were conducted by reading the questions and possible answers aloud to small groups of students, who followed along and noted their responses on their own surveys. Students were informed that their responses would be anonymous and their names were not noted on the completed surveys. To learn more about former graduates, 10 out of 45 were contacted and interviewed about their experiences at the school. Given the level of mobility of the graduates, it was difficult to contact more.

To compare and expand what we learned from the interviews, we incorporated a review of public documents in our research design. These documents included materials published by the Academy (Appendix B), standardized test results and demographic data from the California Department of Education (Appendix C), as well as the websites of the Academy and its partner, Communities in Schools.
Appendix A.1: Methodology (con’t)

Limitations and Strengths

Given that the mission of the academy is to serve the emotional and academic needs of students, the absence of in-depth interviews with current students and insights from parents limits the degree to which we can assess the impact of the Academy on these students. Additionally, the students surveyed—both present and former--were drawn from a convenience, not a random, sample. It is possible that different students may have offered differing insights. These limitation notwithstanding, the diversity of the research tools used, e.g. interview, observation, and documentation review, as well as the triangulation of information from these sources, enabled us to assess the school from numerous dimensions, relieving the analysis of bias from the school staff or a one-sided view of the school from standardized measures alone.
Appendix A.2: Interview protocol for Michele Murnane, Executive Director

I. Background and Structure

1. Tell us about your school mission and philosophy.
   - Why/how was the academy founded?
   - How well do you feel you are adhering to your mission/philosophy?
   - Were there any challenges you have had to overcome in making your vision a reality?
   - What do you believe to be your greatest success?

2. What does the personnel structure of your school look like?
   (Follow-up)
   - Who makes hiring decisions?
   - Budgeting decisions?
   - Curriculum decisions?
   - What role do outside organizations play in the academy?
   Probe: for example, CIS? Others?

II. Teachers

3. How does the Academy assist in helping teachers improve their practice?
   - What professional development opportunities are available to teachers?
   - Do teachers take advantage of these opportunities?
   - Is there collaboration among faculty, administration, parents, and outside community?
   - How do support staff and classroom teachers collaborate?

4. How does the school support its teachers?
   - What are some support systems in place for your teachers?
   - Beyond their normal teaching responsibilities, what is expected of teachers?
   Possible Probes: How late are teachers in the building? Do they come in on weekends?
    - What is the teacher turn-over rate?

5. What role do faculty, staff, and parents have in making policy decisions for the school?

III. Students

6. How does the Academy communicate expectations to students?
   - Does the academy have rules? What are the rules? Probe for: rules for behavior, rules for performance
   - How do students know what the rules are?
   - How did the academy arrive at its current student discipline policy?
Appendix A. 2 (con’t)

IV. Assessment

7. How does the Academy evaluate its own success? By what measures do you rate your own progress?
   -What are the Academy criteria for student success? Probe: Academic? Behavior? Other?
   -How do you assess/measure student success? Probe: What, if any, tests are used for this purpose?

8. According to these measures, how are students doing?
   -What procedures are used at the Academy when students do not perform as expected academically?
   -What non-academic support (i.e., counselors) do you provide for students?

9. If given unlimited resources, what more would you like to provide?
   (All follow up, really)
   -Can we see test scores (if that’s a priority)
   -Can we see retention rates ("")
   -Can we see teacher turnover rates ("")
   -Other indicators of success
   -Ways to gauge student attitudes

V. Logistical Questions:

   -How can we be of the most benefit to you?
   -When are staff meetings?
   -When are PTA meetings?
   -Is it OK for us to observe? If so, What would you like for us to observe?
   -Names of veteran teachers we could interview
   -Names of rookie teachers
   -Names of parents
   -Can we observe in classrooms?
Appendix A.3 Interview protocol for Phil Duncan, Principal

1) Describe the Academics at the 49ers Academy

2) Describe your staff. What support systems are in place for the teachers?

3) Describe the social support systems that you can in place for your students

4) What successes have you seen at the Academy?

5) What challenges?

6) Logistical questions: Can we observe a staff meeting? When is the best time to interview teachers?
Appendix A.4: Interview protocol for Academy teachers

Teacher Name__________________
Grade Level_________________________

1) What is your educational background?

2) What is your past experience?

3) What type of credential do you hold?

4) What support systems (at home and at school) are in place for you?

5) What successes have you seen this year?

6) What challenges have you seen this year?

7) What leadership roles do you have at the Academy?

8) What would you like to see improved at the school (particularly for staff support)?
Appendix A.5: Interview protocol for two guidance counselors

Counselor Name____________________

What is your educational background?

What is your past experience?

What type of counseling degree do you hold?

Explain the case management system?

What successes have you seen this year?

What challenges have you seen this year?

How does your role differ from the teachers?

What strategies do you implement to garner trust from the students?
Appendix A.7: Classroom observation protocol

Teacher__________________ Date_____________
Grade_____ boys or girls (circle one) Time_____________

Classroom setup
#Students_____
Seating arrangements

Resources (computers, books, A/V)

Wall hangings (bulletin boards, chalkboards, posters)

Instructional Content (subject matter, specific content/skills targeted)
   Academic

   Behavioral/Social skills/Affective (character/emotional dev.)

Instructional Methods (frequency & time spent)
Direction instruction ("chalk&talk")

Class discussion

Small group activities/discussion

One-on-one tutoring

Interpersonal Interactions (relationship building)
Teacher/Class

Teacher/Student

Student/Student

Other adult/Student
Appendix A.7: Classroom observation protocol (con’t)

Progress Evaluation (checking individual student progress)
How does the teacher check individual students’ progress so s/he knows the students are “getting it”? (e.g. asking questions, short quizzes, students coming up to board, helping individual students)

Student Behaviors

Level of engagement/participation in learning activities, discussions
(look at body language, how often students raise their hands, ask questions, call out)

Conformity to school/classroom rules/behavioral standards

Student language/tone
Appendix A.6: Student Survey Questions and Results
Sections from Youth Questionnaire for the 49ers Academy

(Student response rates are listed immediately after the option. Numbers are listed as such: –8)

1. I get along well with adults in my family.
   Strongly Agree -6    Agree -8   Not Sure -7    Disagree -3    Strongly Disagree

2. Adults in my family give me help and support when I need it.
   Strongly Agree -6    Agree -15   Not Sure -2    Disagree -1    Strongly Disagree

3. Adults in my family listen to me.
   Strongly Agree -4    Agree -13   Not Sure -4    Disagree -2    Strongly Disagree

4. My neighbors care about me.
   Strongly Agree -2    Agree -10   Not Sure -8    Disagree -2    Strongly Disagree

5. My teachers care about me.
   Strongly Agree -12    Agree -8    Not Sure -4    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

6. Adults in my city listen to what I have to say.
   Strongly Agree -4    Agree -5    Not Sure -12    Disagree -1    Strongly Disagree

7. In my city, kids can make a difference.
   Strongly Agree -6    Agree -9    Not Sure -9    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

8. About how often does an adult in your family…. (circle one)
   Help you with your schoolwork? every day –4 most days -5 sometimes-9 rarely-1 never-4
   Talk to you about school? every day –10 most days-3 sometimes-9 rarely-2 never
   Ask about homework? every day –13 most days –6 sometimes-2 rarely never-3
   Visit the Academy? every day most days-11 sometimes-10 rarely-8 never-2

9. Adults ask me for help.
   Every Day -3 Most Days -6 Sometimes -10 Rarely -4 Never -1

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3 The questions are based on the SEARCH Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets
10. The projects I work on at school are meaningful to me.

   Every Day -8  Most Days-8  Sometimes-6  Rarely  Never-2

11. Adults—besides my teacher—at the 49ers Academy (counselors, coaches) spend time with me.

   Every Day -7  Most Days-6  Sometimes-7  Rarely-3  Never-1

12. Adults in my family spend time helping other people.

   Every Day -2  Most Days-9  Sometimes-9  Rarely-3  Never-1

13. How many adults (NOT ones in your family) have you known for more than a year who…

   You look forward to spending time with 0 -2  1 -1  2 -3  3 -6  4 -3  5 -2  more than 5-7

   Talk with you at least once a month 0 -3  1 -2  2 -1  3 -2  4 -2  5-4  more than 5-9

   Do things that are wrong or dangerous 0 -7  1 -1  2 -1  3 -2  4 -3  5-1  more than 5-4

14. Students in my school care about me.

   Strongly Agree -8  Agree -10  Not Sure-5  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

15. Counselors at my school care about me.

   Strongly Agree -5  Agree -12  Not Sure-7  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

16. Adults (counselors, teachers, or coaches) at my school encourage me.

   Strongly Agree -13  Agree -9  Not Sure -2  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

17. Students help decide what happens at the 49ers Academy.

   Strongly Agree -4  Agree -12  Not Sure -6  Disagree -1  Strongly Disagree -1

18. In the 49ers Academy, there are clear rules about what students can and cannot do.

   Strongly Agree -6  Agree -12  Not Sure -5  Disagree -1  Strongly Disagree

19. If I break a rule at school, I will get in trouble.

   Strongly Agree -13  Agree -9  Not Sure -2  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
20. **At the 49ers Academy, you’ll get in trouble for using alcohol and other drugs.**

   Strongly Agree -17  Agree -6  Not Sure -1  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

21. **Teachers at my school encourage me to be the best I can be.**

   Everyday -16  Most Days –6  Sometimes Rarely -1  Never

22. **Adults in my family encourage me to be the best I can be.**

   Everyday -15  Most Days –6  Sometimes –2  Rarely -1  Never

23. **I don’t care how well I do in school.**

   Strongly Agree Agree -1  Not Sure-3  Disagree-6  Strongly Disagree-14

24. **My teacher would say I am good at planning ahead.**

   Strongly Agree -1  Agree-11  Not Sure-10  Disagree-1  Strongly Disagree-1

25. **I care about the 49ers Academy.**

   Strongly Agree -10  Agree -14  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

26. **When I am an adult, I will have a good life.**

   Strongly Agree -13  Agree -7  Not Sure-3  Disagree  Strongly Disagree-1
Appendix B: Academy Brochure
Appendix C: National Percentile Rank for Average Student Scores on Stanford-9

49ers Academy
National Percentile Rank for Average Student Scores on Stanford-9
Math and Reading Subtests

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Appendix D: Staff Meeting Schedule
Appendix E: Distribution of this Weighty Load
Dear Professor Cuban,

Let’s just say that this has been a fantastic group. On-the-ball, hardworking, positive, encouraging, insightful, diligent, and the list goes on. (No, literally, the list does go on…)

1. Donielle was always positive and supportive. At the first meeting, she organized a schedule for completing the various sections, and within a week, she had already written the first two sections. Amazing! Specifically, her portions were the introduction, organizational structure, and the academic section. With the rest of the group, Donielle participated in interviewing Murnane and Duncan and observing in a classroom. Also, Donielle conducted follow-up interviews with Murnane in order to collect academic information. Finally, her amazing self worked in collaboration on editing, proofreading and presenting the final product.

2. Michael was key in linking us to the Academy. He arranged the initial visits, and was instrumental in us not “sticking out like a sore thumb” at the Academy. Also hardworking and a great group member, Mike wrote the section on relationship support. In addition to participating in interviews with Murnane and Duncan and conducting class observations, Mike interviewed the two guidance counselors and tracked down the former graduates. Furthermore, this technological wizard created the PowerPoint show for our final presentation, and assisted with proofreading and presenting the final product.

3. Ruth not only is a fantastic and diligent researcher, she also ordered the pizza for our group meeting. She wrote the final analysis, and many of the citations woven throughout the text can be attributed to her incredible efforts. In addition to participating in interviews with Murnane and Duncan and conducting class observations, Ruth interviewed additional teachers and conducted additional classroom observations. Also key was her fabulous acceptance of the dreaded role of “Queen of the Correct Citations” and “Duchess of the APA Bibliography.” And again, Ruth worked in collaboration on editing, proofreading and presenting the final product.

4. Andrea, in her abundance of energy, spent much time on-site at the Academy. Her primary duty was writing the teacher section. To do so, she conducted several additional classroom observations and teacher interviews. Additionally, she observed two staff meetings. And, with the rest of the gang, she participated in interviews with Murnane and Duncan. Additionally, she adopted the student survey questions from the Search Institute, and administered the survey. Finally, like everyone else in this stupendous group, Andrea worked in collaboration on editing, proofreading and presenting the final product.

In short, all group members participated in planning, researching, writing, revising and presenting this project. Each of us had unique contributions, and together we have, indeed, finished, this magnum opus.

Sincerely,
Michael       Donielle
Ruth          Andrea