

FACULTY APPROVAL

The Impact of School Climate on Student Choice to Attend

Running Start at White River High School

A Master's Special Project

by

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Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

Title

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The project sought to define the reasons that an ever increasing number of students at White River High School were opting for a Running Start program rather than attending classes full time at White River High School. A survey was created which sought to identify whether school climate issues or financial incentives were the driving force for students that chose Running Start. Students overwhelmingly indicated that the financial incentive of getting college credit for free was a significant factor as to why they chose Running Start. However, the survey results also indicated that school climate factors, such as a lack of college prep classes and academic rigor, factored strongly into the choice to attend Running Start.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

One of the great challenges facing high schools in America today has been the need to meet the curriculum needs of all students within the budgetary restraints of state legislatures and local school boards. The role of public schools in this country expanded greatly since the modern public school system was introduced in the early 20th century. Schools have taken on many roles beyond simply teaching the core academic subjects. These enhanced responsibilities have come about as a result of an expanding global economy, the legal system placing more responsibility on schools for ensuring justice and equality in society, and laws that required schools to take on some of the responsibilities of parents. Schools have had to adapt and adjust through the years in order to meet all of their responsibilities. Throughout the last one hundred years of public education, high schools have evolved from offering two distinct courses of study, a university prep curriculum and a vocational/industrial preparation curriculum, into having all students have to pass high stakes tests in academic areas and still provide a significant amount of choice in vocational areas and academic electives to meet the needs of individual students.

Due to the No Child Left Behind Law, present day high schools must meet Annual Yearly Progress in core academic areas based on state assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). They also have been required to prepare some students for entering the workforce after graduation and other students needed to be prepared for entering college after high school. In addition to preparing students for those post graduation paths, schools have been made responsible for HIV/AIDS awareness, drug and alcohol interventions, individual education programs for special needs students, and a multitude of other programs to try and meet the needs of all students. Most high schools in this country offered a comprehensive curriculum that tried to meet the needs of most students. Relatively speaking, there were a small number of high schools that focused only on one type of training program such as university prep or vocational skills. Schools became creative in finding ways to offer a curriculum that met the needs of diverse learners. The primary responsibility for education in the United States belonged to the individual states. Therefore, the country did not have a national curriculum for high school students that standardized the educational experiences of students and promoted national standards for what the high school experience should look like across the country. In order to meet the needs of more students; schools, along with the help other agencies, have developed numerous programs in order to be able to offer curriculum that met the needs of a diverse population.

The Advanced Placement (AP) program sponsored by the College Board was one example of a nationally recognized program to raise academic rigor and meet the needs of university bound students. There were AP courses offered in many disciplines. They all required a rigorous curriculum and had a comprehensive exam at the end of the course to measure achievement. Most universities in the United States, and many in foreign countries, granted college credit for attaining a qualifying score on an AP exam (The College Board, 2007). Another program created for university bound students was the International Baccalaureate (IB) program originally developed in Geneva, Switzerland, for the children of overseas diplomats. International Baccalaureate required a rigorous standard curriculum, standardized tests, student portfolios, and a culminating core essay (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2007). Many states also offered some type of program in which students earned dual credit status within a high school course. In a dual credit class, students who achieved a certain grade and met defined competencies throughout the curriculum received both high school and college credit through articulation agreements with participating colleges. Students usually paid a nominal fee in order to have the college process the earned credits. In Washington State, high school students have had another option to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. The program was called Running Start. Running Start was created by the state legislature as a way

to expand educational options for students. The program has steadily expanded since its inception. Running Start students did not pay any tuition to the college they attended. Students had the choice during their junior and senior years to attend Running Start as a full time college student or split their time between high school classes and college classes (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2006). Students that attended Running Start full-time for two years could simultaneously earn their high school diploma and an Associate of Arts (AA) degree from the college they attended during high school. Students did not have to try for an AA degree to participate in Running Start. Since Running Start took care of the high school students' tuition, there was a significant incentive to families for students that participated in the Running Start program. High Schools in Washington paid ninety-three percent of the money provided by the state for each individual Running Start student to the college to cover tuition (SBCTC, 2006). Therefore, a degree earning Running Start student essentially received their first two years of college for free.

White River High School (WRHS) tried to meet the needs of its students by offering several AP classes and an expansive vocational program in which many of the classes were offered for dual credit. Despite these offerings, WRHS has seen a growing number of students opt for Running Start over the past few years. This trend has cost WRHS quite a bit of money. The colleges Running

Start students attended received the students' state funding for tuition, thus Running Start cost WRHS funding from the state. Four years ago WRHS instituted an Honors program for ninth and tenth grade students that created a feeder system for AP classes. A major objective for the Honors program and the expansion of dual credit vocational classes was to keep more students at WRHS during their junior and senior years rather than to continue to lose them to Running Start. However, in expanding vocational offerings all non-AP elective English and social studies classes were eliminated from the curriculum five years ago. With more students each year opting for Running Start rather than AP, or other classes offered by WRHS, it stood to reason that the curriculum offered by WRHS, or some other reason such as the overall school climate, drove these students away from the traditional high school experience. Administrators, counselors, and teachers all had differing views about why the numbers of Running Start students at WRHS recently expanded. The expanded Running Start numbers made it necessary to conduct research into whether students opted into Running Start purely for the financial reasons or whether there were underlying curriculum or school climate issues that could be improved in order to keep more students, and their funding, on the WRHS campus full time.

Statement of the Problem

White River High School students continued to choose the Running Start program despite the offering of Advanced Placement courses and increased vocational class offerings. White River High School paid the community colleges for the students that attended Running Start programs. It was possible that White River High School had underlying problems with its curriculum or school climate that drove students to a Running Start program.

Purpose of the Study

The number of White River High School students who chose to attend Running Start programs over the past five years steadily increased. The purpose of this study was to determine if White River High School students who opted for the Running Start program made that choice predominantly for financial reasons, or if there were underlying curriculum and school climate issues that were the driving force behind students choosing Running Start.

Delimitations

This project included students from White River High School that chose to attend a Running Start program during the 2007-2008 school year. Both full-time and part-time Running Start students participated in the survey. Students that were considered White River High School students based on where they lived, but

had never attended classes at WRHS were excluded from the survey due to their the fact they lacked firsthand knowledge of the curriculum or school climate.

Assumptions

The basic assumptions of the research were that all survey participants would consider each question carefully and answer honestly. Also, the list of White River High School students provided to the researcher would be accurate and all of the listed students participated in a Running Start program during the 2007-2008 school year.

Hypothesis

The financial benefit of the Running Start program has always been important to students. However, White River High School students chose to attend a Running Start program rather than stay full time at WRHS due to a lack of academic electives and a school climate that is not appealing to many students serious about their studies.

Significance of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide a factual base of information regarding why students chose to attend Running Start either full or part time during the 2007-2008 school year. No formal survey or research had ever been undertaken to learn why students at White River High School chose to attend Running Start. A debate has occurred for several years among teachers,

counselors, and administrators at White River High School as to why more and more students have chosen to not attend WRHS full time. The study sought to find out the reasons behind the students' decisions to attend a Running Start program. Counselors have maintained that students attend Running Start programs purely for financial reasons. Teachers of academic subject areas have argued that students have not had a choice of challenging academic electives within the WRHS course offerings. Vocational teachers have argued that WRHS has not offered enough vocational courses for students. Administrators have heard all of the various reasons and wanted to know the predominant reasons for why students chose to attend Running Start.

Procedures

For the purpose of this project, the following procedures were implemented:

1. A review of selected literature was conducted. Reviewed research projects and articles were collected using searches through the Heritage University online library and other internet search engines.
2. Permission to conduct research on White River High School students was granted by WRHS principal, Mike Hagadone (see Appendix A).

3. A survey designed to measure reasons why WRHS students chose to attend Running Start was created and approved by the WRHS administrative team (see Appendix B).

4. The survey was sent via mail to sixty-five students attending Running Start courses during the 2007-2008 school year. The survey was sent to students that attended Running Start on a full-time basis and Running Start students that attended Running Start on a part-time basis. There were an additional nineteen WRHS Running Start students who were excluded from the survey due to the fact that they had never attended classes on the WRHS campus and therefore had no knowledge of the curriculum or climate at WRHS. The survey was accompanied by a letter introducing the research and explaining what the research was to be used for (see Appendix C).

5. A follow-up letter and second copy of the survey was sent out via mail to students that did not return the survey within three weeks of the initial mailing. A third letter and survey was sent out to students that did not respond to the second survey request. After three mailings a total of fifty-six surveys were returned.

6. Responses from the Running Start surveys were compiled.

7. The data was presented to the White River High School administrative team and counselors. The data was also presented to the White River High

School Learning Refocus Committee and used specifically by the AP and Academic Rigor subcommittee.

Summary, conclusions, and recommendations concluded the study.

Acronyms

AA. Associate of Arts Degree

AP. Advanced Placement

CTE. Career and Technical Education

IB. International Baccalaureate

OSPI. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

WRHS. White River High School

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

This chapter was organized around the following topics: (a) Running Start, (b) the Advanced Placement program, (c) the International Baccalaureate program, (d) Dual Credit programs, (e) characteristics of high achieving schools, and (f) summary. Running Start has been an option for high school students in

Washington State since it began in 1990. The program offered high school students the chance to earn college credit and high school credit simultaneously. The Advanced Placement (AP) program offered by the College Board has had a long history of providing a college level equivalent class at the high school level. Students enrolled in AP classes earned college credit for having passed the AP exam for each class in which they enrolled. International Baccalaureate (IB) programs have been internationally recognized for their rigor and high standards. Schools adopted IB programs as a way to increase academic achievement and challenge students. Dual Credit programs sought to provide a vocational experience that met the needs of many high school students over the past decade. Dual Credit classes generally offered non-university bound students opportunities to earn advanced credit, and degrees, in vocational classes through articulated Dual Credit programs with sponsoring colleges or technical schools. Dual Credit programs have expanded dramatically and offer options for college bound students as well as the traditional vocational programs. A great deal of research has been done on the characteristics of high achieving schools across the United States and the world. Researchers have identified some common characteristics that were prevalent in many schools that have been considered to be high achieving. School climate has been identified as an important factor in the success of high achieving schools.

Running Start

Running Start was created by the Legislature in 1990. It was part of a law designed to expand educational options for students. The program allowed 11th and 12th grade students to take college courses at Washington's community and technical colleges, as well as Washington State, Eastern Washington and Central Washington Universities, The Evergreen State College, and Northwest Indian College (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2006). Students earned both high school and college credits for their courses. Running Start students and their families have not paid tuition, but they bought their own books and had to provide their own transportation. Running Start students had the option of participating in the program as a part-time student or a full-time student. Students that were part-time Running Start students continued to take some classes at their high school.

Washington's Running Start program was an example of a movement known as Accelerated Learning Options. Many states offered some form of dual/concurrent credit programs as a way to provide students with more options for completing their education (WICHE, 2006). There were no state-mandated high school performance requirements that would prevent a junior or senior from participation in the program. Colleges used standardized tests to determine whether each student had the skills and knowledge to take college-level courses.

If students were deemed not ready for college-level work they were dissuaded from entering the program. While enrolled in the Running Start program, the entire catalog of college courses was available to students including electives, vocational, online, and advanced coursework. Running Start served about 10 percent of the state's juniors and seniors. In 2005-2006 enrollment in the program increased by about 3 percent from the previous year and totaled 16,540 individual students (SBCTC, 2006).

There were several benefits to students and their families that chose Running Start. Probably the most significant benefit was that students received college credit without having had to pay college tuition. Running Start reduced college costs on families, as well as reduced the amount of time students spent in school. The fact that students received both college and high school credit allowed full-time Running Start students the option of completing their first two years of college as they completed their junior and senior years of high school. This saved money for students and their parents. It also saved money long term for the state because the state had to pay to support a student's education only once during those two years rather than four years of high school and four years of college. The total amount of money saved by taxpayers, parents, and students in 2005-2006 was estimated at more than \$71.3 million (SBCTC, 2006).

While Running Start had a financial benefit to many families and saved the state a significant amount in terms of the state's overall education spending, it took money from school districts that still have to provide certain services for the Running Start students. Colleges were reimbursed for tuition by the K-12 districts whose students participated in Running Start. Colleges received a statewide standard rate of \$98 per credit for academic programs and \$116 per credit for vocational programs during the 2005-06 academic year. School districts were allowed to keep seven percent of the state funds provided for each student to cover counseling and other overhead (SBCTC, 2006). Schools that had a lot of Running Start students lost money that could have been used to upgrade their curricular offerings or expand programs that provided for college, or vocational, preparation within the typical school environment. Increased Running Start enrollment could have had more than a financial consequence for schools. School climate could be impacted by students leaving and no longer fully participating in the day to day culture of the school. Running Start students could still participate in their high school's activities, but they may also have disconnected themselves from school activities completely. The loss of funding could cause schools to eliminate elective programs that students who did not want to participate in Running Start would have liked to take.

Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement (AP) programs have over the years provided students the opportunity to take rigorous courses in high school that prepared them for a university education. Advanced Placement programs were introduced in the mid-1950s as a way to prepare college bound students for the rigor of university education. The program expanded throughout the years to the point where more than 2.3 million exams were administered to more than 1.3 million students in 2006 (Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan, 2007). Advanced Placement exams were offered in thirty-five classes in twenty subject areas in 2007 (The College Board, 2007). Advanced Placement courses were developed by a committee of college professors and AP teachers. The courses were designed to cover the depth of information, skills, and kinds of assignments typically covered in the corresponding college course. Courses were taught by high school teachers who used the official AP Course Descriptions to guide their instruction. The Course Description of each AP course is regularly revisited through the use of curriculum surveys (The College Board, 2007). The curriculum of each AP course culminated with a comprehensive exam created and graded by the College Board. Students received a score ranging from a five (highest) to a one (lowest). Individual colleges and universities decided on an individual basis how they granted, or if they granted, credit to students with qualifying scores on AP exams. The rapid growth of students that took AP

tests in recent years was most likely caused by several factors. First, the AP program offered a ready made, and recognized, rigorous curriculum that schools could easily fit into existing schedules and academic requirements (Kyburg, et al., 2007). The College Board also created a fully developed program called Pre-AP to help school districts support their AP program. Pre-AP programs offered curriculum support that prepared younger students for the rigor of AP courses. The College Board recommended the creation of Vertical Teams between grade levels to build the necessary skills for success in AP courses (The College Board, 2007). Secondly, the curricular frameworks were augmented by extensive training offerings provided by the College Board and their affiliates. A prepackaged curriculum for rigorous courses offered in high schools was a way for schools with scarce resources to meet the needs of their high-achieving students. Also, programs like AP were increasingly recommended by federal and state government officials as beneficial to raise achievement levels for highly able learners and as a way to close the achievement gap for minority students (Kyburg, et al., 2007). Another factor that has contributed to the growth of AP participation was the widely held belief that students who completed an AP course were more likely to find academic success in college and graduate on time, although there was no definitive research found to corroborate this belief. However, several studies pointed to a connection between participation in AP

courses and subsequent success in college courses (Nugent & Karnes, 2002). Nevertheless, the AP program was the most widely used program to expose secondary students to a college preparation curriculum. The College Board promoted widely the perception that AP course completion was the key to preparing for a successful academic career in college (The College Board, 2007).

International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate program has been increasingly promoted as a pathway to academic success in college. The IB program was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a nonprofit educational foundation (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2007). The original intent of the program was to provide a rigorous secondary curriculum for geographically mobile students that required an internationally recognized curriculum to meet their needs. The goal of the IB program was to standardize international high school equivalent programs across the globe producing a curriculum and sets of exams that would be recognized internationally (Kyburg, et al., 2007). In contrast to the individual AP classes and exams, the IB program required students to complete an entire course of study with requirements in various academic areas. The IB program exhibited rapid growth in the United States over the past decade. In 2007 there

were more than 570,000 students at 2,131 schools in 125 countries participating in IB programs. The United States had 555 schools that offered the secondary Diploma Programme in 2007 (IBO, 2007).

When the IBO created the Diploma Programme, for students aged 16-19, its intention was to create an academic experience that emphasized critical thinking and exposed students to a variety of viewpoints, which fostered tolerance amongst students of different nations. When the Diploma Programme was created it incorporated elements of American, British, and French educational systems. The program is available in three languages: English, Spanish, and French (Nugent & Karnes, 2002). In order to offer an IB program the school must be approved through a formal application and review process. The school must have committed to offering all of the courses in the program required for the diploma (Kyburg, et al., 2007). Teachers must also be trained in the IB curriculum and requirements. Many training opportunities were offered to teachers since the inception of the program. The course of study required in the IB Diploma Programme consisted of six subject groups: language, second language, individuals and societies, experimental sciences, mathematics and computer science, and the arts. Students studied six subjects from the subject groups. The subjects were connected to what was called the core requirements. The core requirements of the IB program involved three activities that are

engaged in as a part of all classes: extended essay, theory of knowledge, and creativity, action, service (IBO, 2007). Student achievement was not assessed solely through exams. In addition to standardized exams, students were required to submit samples of classroom work, participate in an extra-curricular activities or community service, and write a 4,000 word original research project.

International Baccalaureate programs became more popular, much like the AP program, as they were promoted by educators and politicians as an established program that added rigor to the curriculum. The IB program gained in popularity as a more holistic approach to the development of students than the AP program, which emphasized individual classes and exams (Nugent & Karnes, 2002). The holistic approach to the development of the whole student created a strong belief that the IB program was great preparation for university level studies. The number of universities and colleges around the world that recognized the IB diploma grew significantly in the past decade (IBO, 2007).

Dual Credit

Dual Credit programs, also known as accelerated learning options, have been widely offered and promoted across the United States as ways to increase rigor for students as well as better meet the needs of high school students (WICHE, 2006). The benefits of dual credit programs were identified as the following: they provided students with a greater access to a wider range of

rigorous academic and technical courses, they saved students time and money on a college degree, promoted efficiency of learning, and enhanced admission to and retention in college (Kleiner and Lewis, 2005). The Running Start program and the Advanced Placement program discussed previously were examples of types of dual credit programs. Dual credit programs offered students the opportunity to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. At one time these types of programs were limited to high-achieving students; however, such programs have been increasingly seen as a way to support average-achieving students in being prepared for post-secondary education (Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, and Bailey, 2007).

Most schools in the country offered some type of dual credit options for their students. In 2002-2003, 71% of high schools across the country offered dual credit options for students (Waits, Setzer, and Lewis, 2005). The total number of students enrolled in dual credit courses during the 2002-2003 school year was 1.2 million. Of those students enrolled in dual credit courses, 74% were enrolled in courses taught on the high school campus, 23% were enrolled in courses on the campus of a postsecondary institution, and 4% were enrolled in dual credit courses through distance learning programs (Waits, Setzer, and Lewis, 2005). Dual credit enrollment continued to increase in recent years. As of 2006, forty-two states had official policies concerning dual enrollment and some states

considered changes to policy that would expand dual enrollment opportunities for students. Increased enrollment in dual credit programs was seen in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs throughout the country as well. A partnership between CTE and dual enrollment programs was created because dual enrollment goals mirrored many of the goals of CTE reform such as upgrading the rigor and curriculum of CTE courses (Karp, et al., 2007). Dual credit courses offered within the high school curriculum have increased, but not without controversy.

Some policymakers and educators saw dual enrollment options as programs that diluted the quality of education because high school teachers were not qualified to teach college level courses. Some critics argued that dual credit courses did not pay real attention to rigor and relied too much on seat time and standardized tests in the awarding of credits (Krueger, 2006). Despite the criticisms dual enrollment options increased yearly for students in almost every state. While options for high-achieving students were well established and have flourished, options for minorities and disadvantaged students also grew. Several states including Florida, New York, and Utah established inclusive dual credit programs that have been successful in raising the numbers of minority and disadvantaged students participating in dual credit programs. Texas also established a dual credit program designed around a CTE course of study and a

Tech-Prep program (Hughes, Karp, Fermin, and Bailey, 2005). There were many approaches to dual credit programs undertaken by various states. There were also many different approaches to funding the various programs in each state.

However, research studies were not able to identify the single best approach.

There was evidence that dual credit programs smoothed the transition between high school and post secondary institutions and raised student achievement, but the unknowns outweighed the known in identifying the which type of program worked best. There were serious issues about program outcomes, program designs, reliable student data, quality of instruction, and whether dual credit programs led to increased rigor in the classroom (Krueger, 2006).

Characteristics of High Achieving Schools

Studies of successful schools across the country pointed to several common characteristics. Research into what made high achieving schools was undertaken by multiple researchers. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in Washington State produced a study identifying nine characteristics of high-performing schools that became the standard reference on the topic for many other states in the country. The OSPI findings identified the following nine characteristics that made a successful school in a 2005 study (The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008):

1. Clear and Shared Focus

2. High Standards and Expectations
3. Effective School Leadership
4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication
5. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards
6. Frequent Monitoring of Student Learning
7. Focused Professional Development
8. Supportive Learning Environment
9. High Levels of Community and Parent Involvement.

The nine characteristics identified by OSPI were created by synthesizing work from many different researchers over the past twenty years (OSPI, 2008). Similar characteristics were identified in other recent research. A study that looked at high-performing schools in Tennessee identified seven common characteristics among the schools studied: high expectations, curriculum alignment, maximize instructional time, purposeful assessment, collaboration and hard work, effective leadership, and parent involvement (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2005). Another study that looked to synthesize existing research on high achieving schools identified five building blocks and five practices that were identifiable in successful schools. The five building blocks were: a culture of high expectations and caring for students, a safe and disciplined environment, a principal who was a strong instructional leader, hard-working and able teachers, a

rigorous curriculum that emphasizes basic skills in mathematics and literacy. The five practices were: increased instructional time, ongoing diagnostic assessment, parents as partners in learning, professional development to improve student achievement, and collaboration among teachers and staff (Center for Public Education, 2005).

All three previously discussed studies clearly stated that becoming a high achieving school is a systematic process with no silver bullet or quick fix available (OSPI, 2008; Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2005; Center for Public Education, 2005). There was not a single area identified as more important than another; rather, schools that were high achieving were working specifically on improving in the nine identified characteristics (OSPI, 2008). Most schools were identified as being strong in one area, but only the most successful schools had each of the nine characteristics as strengths. A culture of high expectations and a caring environment was an important element of building a high achieving school. Much of the research pointed to the creation of a culture of high expectations for administration, teachers, staff, and students as necessary in schools that attained high-achieving status (Center for Public Education, 2005). A vision that all students can learn and meet high standards, coupled with students being offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study was another key school climate factor identified by the research (OSPI, 2008). High expectations for

teachers, especially in the areas of instruction and assessment practices, were also singled out as important fundamentals in high achieving schools (OSPI, 2008; Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2005). In order for a high achieving culture to be established, students needed to be offered a rigorous curriculum and all school staff had to hold high expectations for instructional and classroom management practices.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was to address the available research on the topics of (a) Running Start, (b) the Advanced Placement program, (c) The International Baccalaureate program, (d) Dual Credit programs, and (e) characteristics of high achieving schools. Each of the research areas was pertinent to the academic environment at White River High School. The Running Start program in Washington State was established in 1990 and offered high school students a way to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. An important benefit to Running Start students and parents was that students received college credit without having paid tuition. Students could attend Running Start as either a full-time or part-time student. The Advanced Placement program offered by the College Board had a long history of offering a framework for rigorous college level courses while students attended high school. Students were able to earn college credit for achieving qualifying scores on the national exams

completed in May of each school year. The AP program was widely recognized as a dual credit option accepted by most colleges across the United States. The International Baccalaureate program has been promoted as a pathway to success in college. The IB program was originally created for the children of diplomats that needed an internationally recognized rigorous secondary curriculum. The IB program has grown rapidly throughout the United States and internationally. Unlike the AP program, IB students took a full sequence of courses with several culminating activities including exams. Dual credit programs were offered in many forms throughout the country. Multiple research studies identified dual credit programs as a path to increased rigor and relevancy for high school students. Running Start, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate were all examples of dual credit programs. Most states offered some type of dual credit option for high school students. Dual credit programs were originally focused on the needs of more advanced high school students, but evolved into many other programs that cater to the needs of average students. Dual credit options expanded to include CTE programs and Tech Prep. Research on the characteristics of high achieving schools showed a lot of similarities. Research from across the country showed nearly identical results for the keys to creating a high achieving environment at any school.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of the Data

Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topics: (a) Methodology, (b) Participants, (c) Instruments, (d) Design, (e) Procedure, (f) Treatment of Data, (g) Summary. ----Provide a brief overview of the processes and procedures utilized in the conduct of the project.

Methodology

Review of selected literature. A review of selected literature was undertaken in the spring of 2007 as part of Heritage University's Measurement and Evaluation class. Research was initially done on the internet through Proquest. Research continued in the fall of 2007 and into January of 2008. Research articles were obtained through internet searches conducted through the Heritage University library and internet search engines.

Permission to conduct research. Initial permission to conduct research on White River High School student attitudes towards Running Start was granted in the spring of 2007 by the WRHS administrative team. Approval of the finished survey and final permission to conduct the research was granted by Mike Hagadone, principal at WRHS in October 2007. (see Appendix A).

Student Survey. A student survey was developed and given to the WRHS principal, Mike Hagadone, for final approval (see Appendix B). After approval, a list of 2007-2008 WRHS Running Start students was provided by the counseling center. Due to the nature of the questions on the survey, students that had never

attended classes at WRHS and/or were classified as home schooled were excluded from the list and the survey. Students were informed that the survey would be anonymous and asked that all questions be answered truthfully. The students were informed of the reason for the survey and how the survey results would be used. The survey was collected over the course of two months and the data was compiled.

Participants

The participants in the study included fifty-six 11th and 12th grade students enrolled in Running Start through White River High School during the 2007-2008 school year. Thirty-nine students attended Running Start full-time and seventeen respondents attended Running Start on a part-time basis. There were sixty-five WRHS Running Start students that fit the criteria of having attended classes previously at WRHS. Nineteen students were excluded from the survey due to the fact they had not ever attended classes at WRHS. Nine students chose not return the survey despite multiple attempts to get them to return a survey.

Instruments

The survey was designed in two parts. First, an initial survey was conducted in the spring of 2007 with part-time Running Start students in order to test the wording of basic questions and develop an idea of why some students chose to attend Running Start. The final survey was developed in the fall of 2007

after consultation with the counselors and administrative team at White River High School to decide the type of information desired from the survey. The sample was representative because 56 of 65 students responded. The validity of the survey was assured by the review of the survey by the counselors and administrative team at WRHS which ensured that the survey measured the desired information. Also, the directions were reviewed for clarity. The survey was reliable in that it measured all students' feelings regarding Running Start with the same questions and instructions.

Design

The White River Running Start survey was designed as a descriptive research project. The project fit the basic steps of a descriptive research study: a problem was identified, literature was reviewed, an appropriate sample of participants was chosen, valid and reliable data was collected, and that data was analyzed and conclusions were reported.

Procedure

For the purposes of this project, the following procedures were implemented:

1. A review of selected literature was conducted. Reviewed research projects and articles were collected using searches through the Heritage University online library and other internet search engines.

2. Permission to conduct research on White River High School students was granted by WRHS principal, Mike Hagadone (see Appendix A).

3. A survey designed to measure reasons why WRHS students chose to attend Running Start was created and approved by the WRHS administrative team (see Appendix B).

4. The survey was sent via mail to sixty-five students attending Running Start courses during the 2007-2008 school year. The survey was sent to students that attended Running Start on a full-time basis and Running Start students that attended Running Start on a part-time basis. There were an additional nineteen WRHS Running Start students who were excluded from the survey due to the fact that they had never attended classes on the WRHS campus and therefore had no knowledge of the curriculum or climate at WRHS. The survey was accompanied by a letter introducing the research and explaining what the research was to be used for (see Appendix C).

5. A follow-up letter and second copy of the survey was sent out via mail to students that did not return the survey within three weeks of the initial mailing. A third letter and survey was sent out to students that did not respond to the second survey request.

6. Responses from the Running Start surveys were compiled. Summary, conclusions, and recommendations concluded the study.

Treatment of Data

The data was compiled for each survey question. The statements were all independent of the other statements. Consequently, the responses along the semantic differential scale for each statement were compared with each other to determine if there was a clear opinion expressed one way or another to the statement.

Summary

This chapter was designed to review the methodology and treatment of data related to the White River High School Running Start survey. The analysis of data and findings from this study are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

Chapter 4 has been organized around the following topics: (a) description of environment, (b) hypothesis, (c) results of the study, (d) findings, and (e) summary.

Description of the Environment

This project included students from White River High School that chose to attend a Running Start program during the 2007-2008 school year. Both full-time

and part-time Running Start students participated in the survey. Students that were considered White River High School students based on where they lived, but had never attended classes at WRHS were excluded from the survey due to their the fact they lacked firsthand knowledge of the curriculum or school climate.

Hypothesis

The financial benefit of the Running Start program has always been important to students. However, White River High School students chose to attend a Running Start program rather than stay full time at WRHS due to a lack of academic electives and a school climate that is not appealing to many students serious about their studies.

Results of the Study

Students responded to statement #1 in the survey by indicating that they clearly took Running Start courses because they wanted to be challenged academically. Forty-five students (80%) indicated at least some agreement with the statement. Twenty-two indicated complete agreement with the statement, twenty indicated strong agreement, and three students indicated some agreement with the statement. Five (9%) did not agree or disagree with the statement and only six (10%) indicated any level of disagreement with the statement.

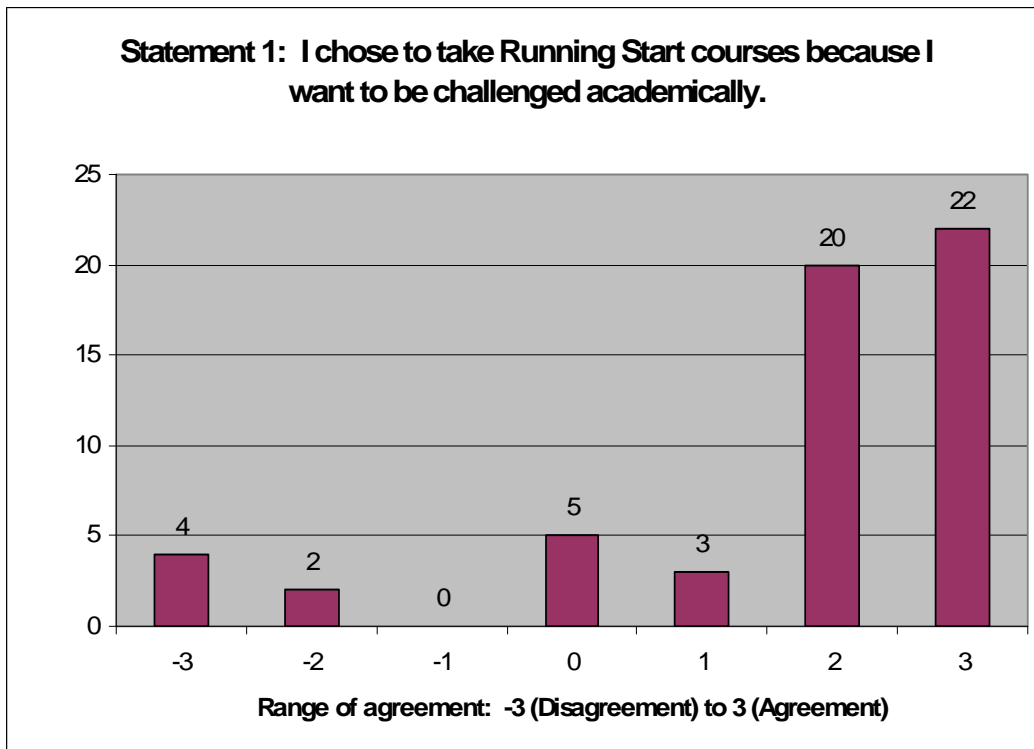


Figure 1: Student responses to Statement #1

Students responded to statement #2 by strongly indicating that they chose to take Running Start courses because White River High School does not offer classes that they wanted to take. Forty students (71%) indicated at least some level of agreement with the statement. Sixteen completely agreed with the statement, twelve students indicated strong agreement and some agreement respectively. Four students (7%) did not agree or disagree with the statement. Only twelve students (21%) expressed any disagreement with the statement.

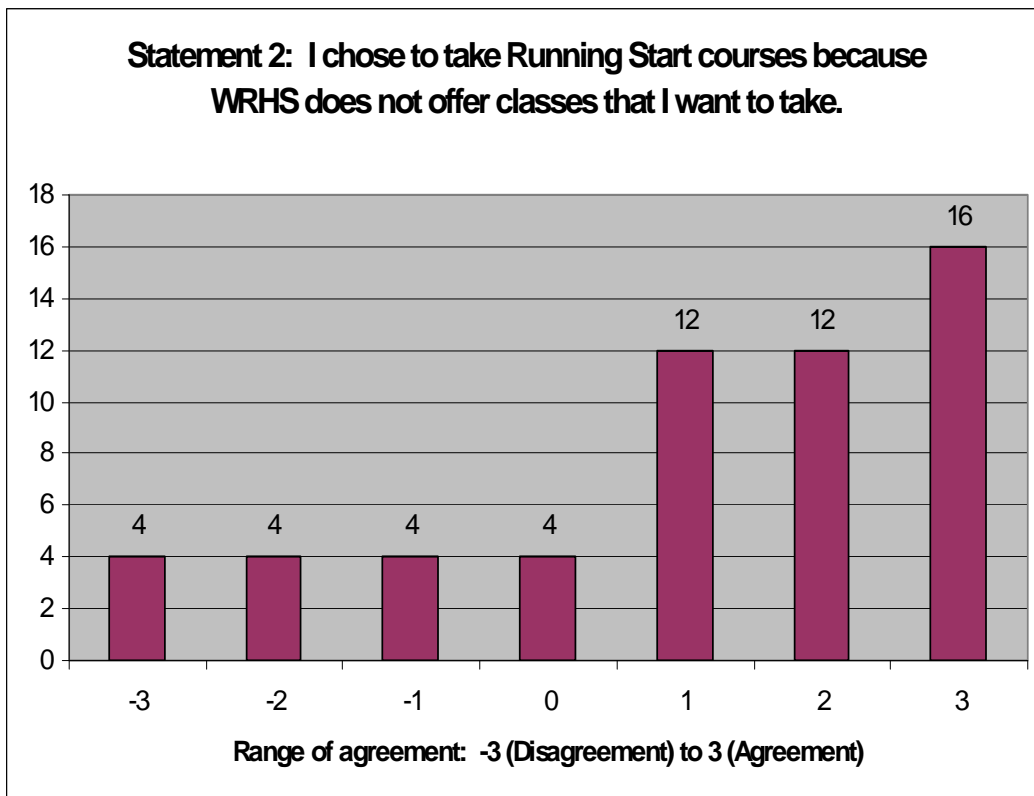


Figure 2: Student responses to Statement #2

Students responded to statement #3 by overwhelmingly indicating that they chose to take Running Start courses for the financial benefit of getting college credits for free. Fifty-two students (93%) completely agreed with the statement. The remaining four students (7%) indicated strong agreement with the statement. One hundred percent of the students indicated at least strong agreement with the statement. No students indicated disagreement with the statement.

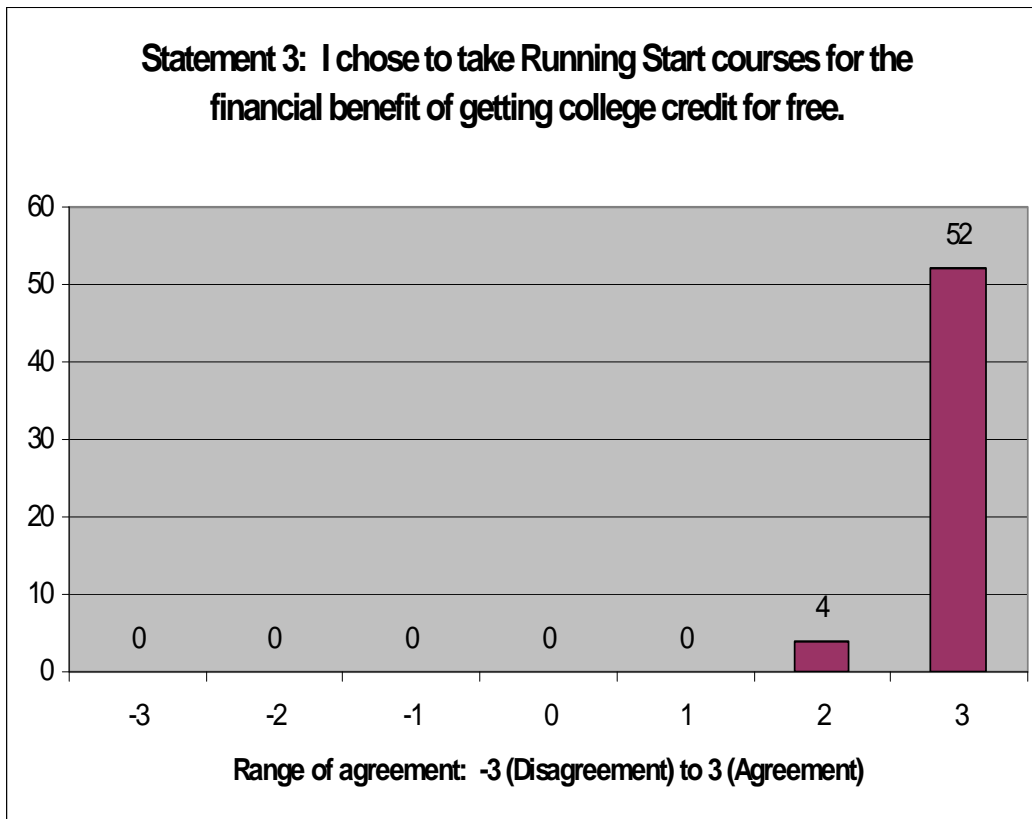


Figure 3: Student responses to Statement #3

Students responded to statement #4 by strongly indicating they chose to take Running Start courses because they wanted to be in classes with other students who wanted to learn as much as they did. Forty-eight students (86%) indicated some level of agreement with the statement. Twenty-seven students completely agreed with the statement. Thirteen students strongly agreed with the statement and eight students indicated some agreement with the statement. Five

students (9%) did not agree or disagree with the statement. Only three students (5%) indicated any level of disagreement with the statement.

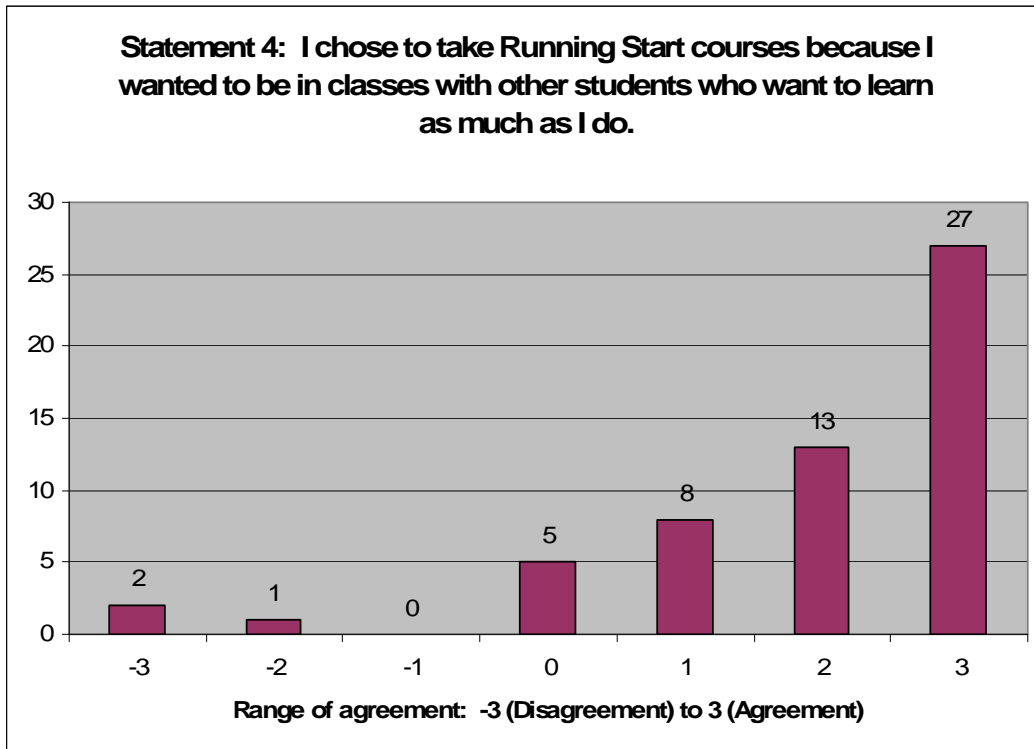


Figure 4: Student responses to statement #4

Students responded to statement #5 by indicating a strong disagreement with the idea that they chose to take Running Start courses because their friends registered for Running Start and they wanted to take some classes with their friends. Thirty-four students (61%) expressed some level of disagreement with the statement. Twenty-five indicated complete disagreement with the statement. Four students expressed strong disagreement with the statement and five students

indicated some disagreement. Eight students (14%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only fourteen students (25%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement.

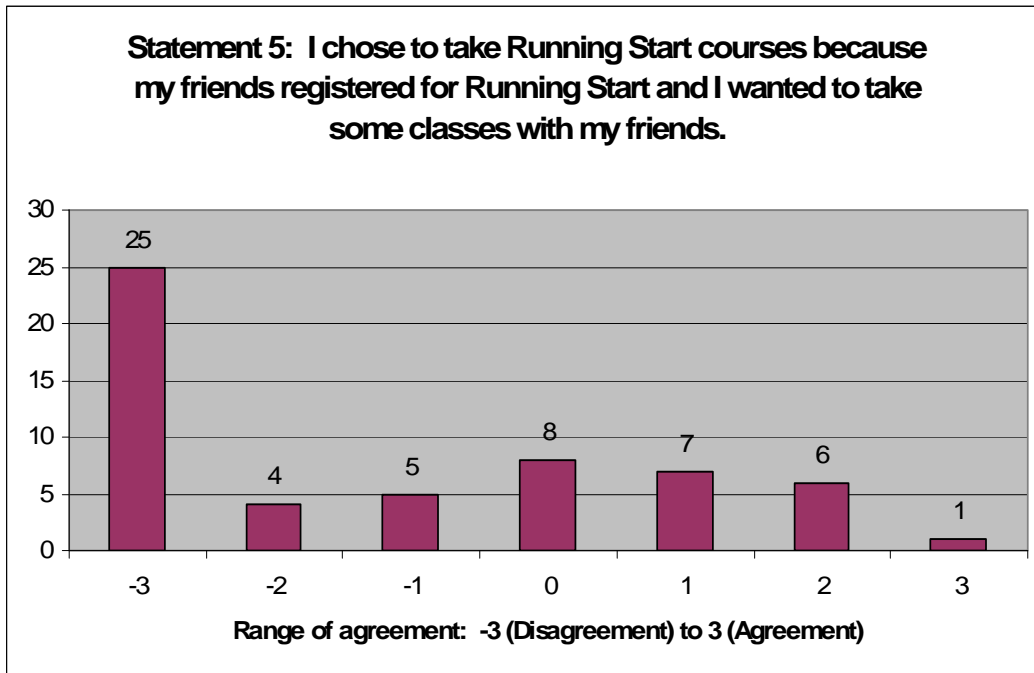


Figure 5: Student responses to statement #5

Students responded to statement #6 by splitting their opinions that they chose to take Running Start courses because they did not feel connected to the rest of the students at White River High School. Twenty-five students (45%) indicated some level of agreement with the statement. Twenty-five students (45%) also indicated some level of disagreement with the statement. Six students (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Although the percentages

of support were evenly split, more students (16) expressed complete disagreement with the statement than chose any other response.

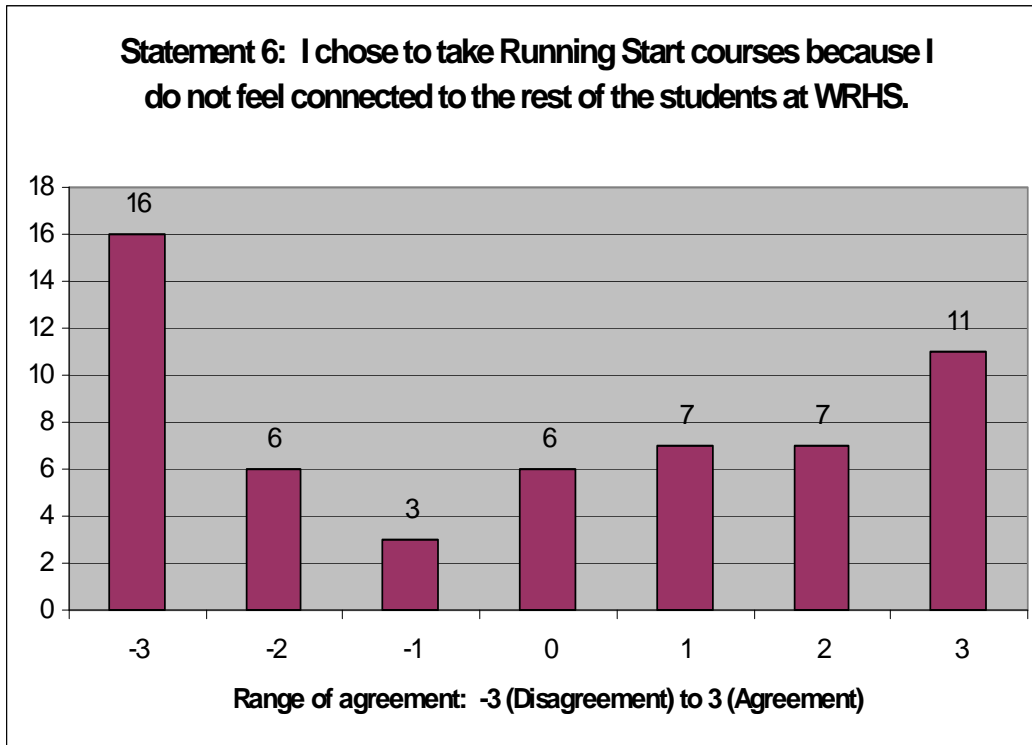


Figure 6: Student responses to statement #6

Students responded to statement #7 by expressing strong agreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because classes at WRHS did not challenge them. Forty students (71%) indicated at least some level of agreement with the statement. Twelve students completely agreed. Thirteen students strongly agreed and fifteen students indicated some agreement with the statement.

Six students (11%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only ten students (18%) expressed any level of disagreement with the statement.

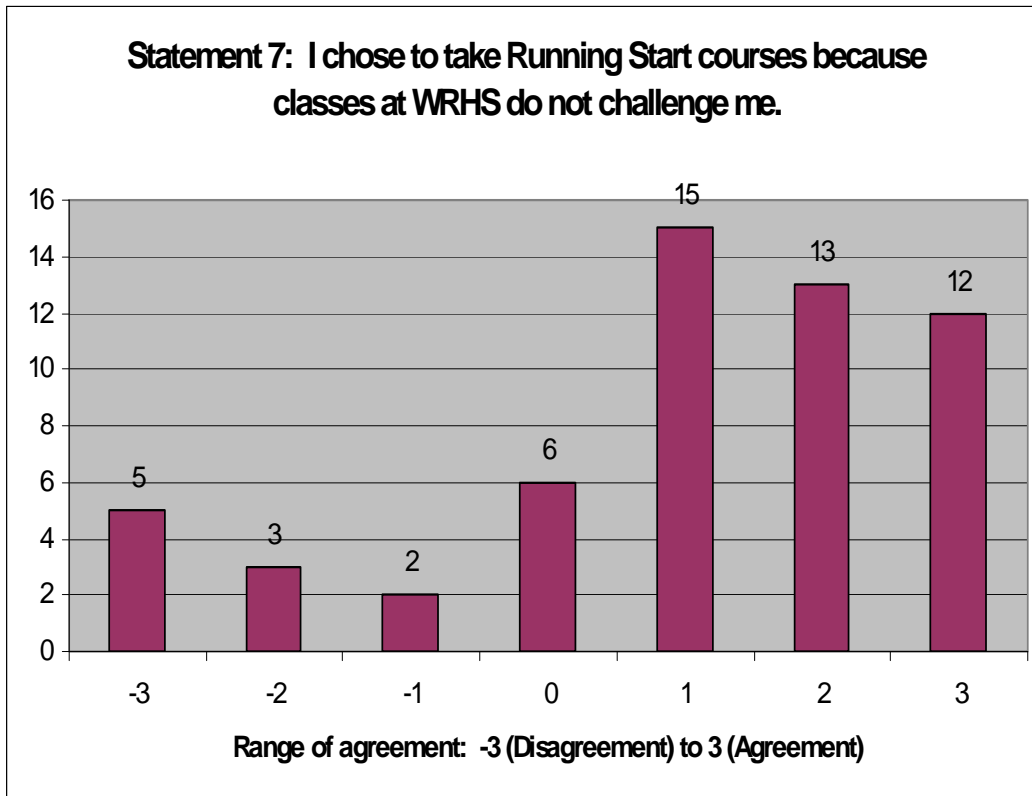


Figure 7: Student responses to statement #7

Students responded to statement #8 by indicating strong agreement with the statement that they chose to take Running Start courses because they felt that the curriculum at White River High School does not adequately prepare students for college. Forty-one students (73%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement. Nineteen students completely agreed with the statement. Nine students strongly agreed and thirteen somewhat agreed with the statement. Five

students (9%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only ten students (18%) expressed any level of disagreement with the statement.

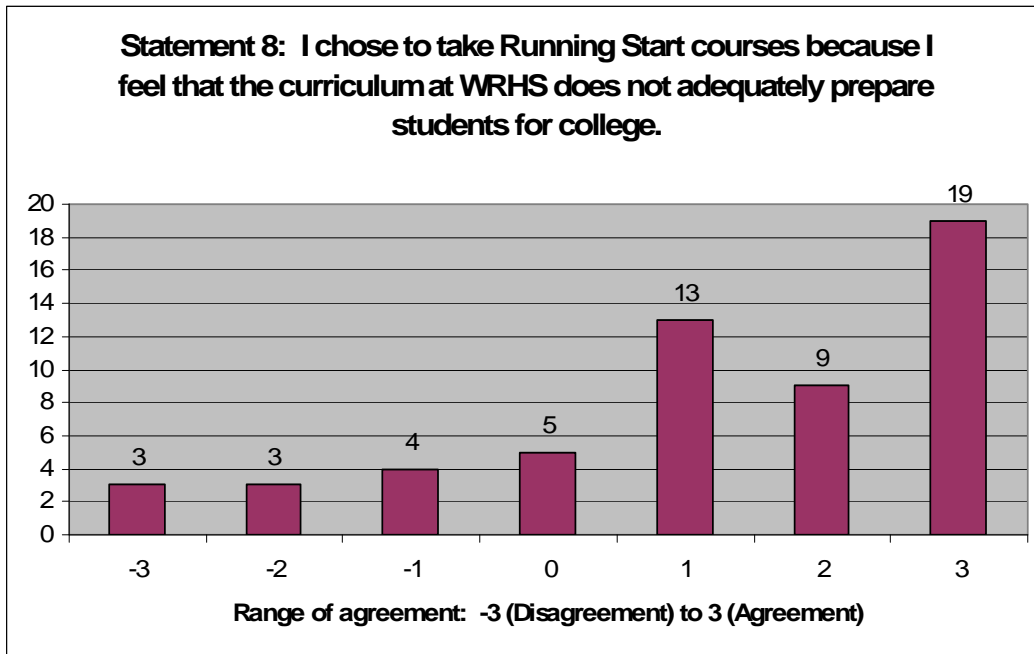


Figure 8: Student responses to statement #8

Students responded to statement #9 by indicating slight agreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because the Advanced Placement courses offered at White River High School did not fit their needs. The largest single response was fourteen students (25%) choosing to neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Twenty-five students (45%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement. Ten students completely agreed with the statement. Nine students strongly agreed and six students somewhat agreed with

the statement. Seventeen students (30%) disagreed at some level with the statement. Eight students completely agreed with the statement.



Figure 9: Student responses to statement #9

Students responded to statement #10 by expressing agreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because teachers at White River High School did not make courses challenging enough for them. Twenty-eight students (50%) indicated some level of agreement with the statement. Six expressed complete agreement. Eight indicated strong agreement and fourteen indicated some agreement with the statement. Thirteen students (23%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Fifteen students (27%) expressed some level of disagreement with the statement.

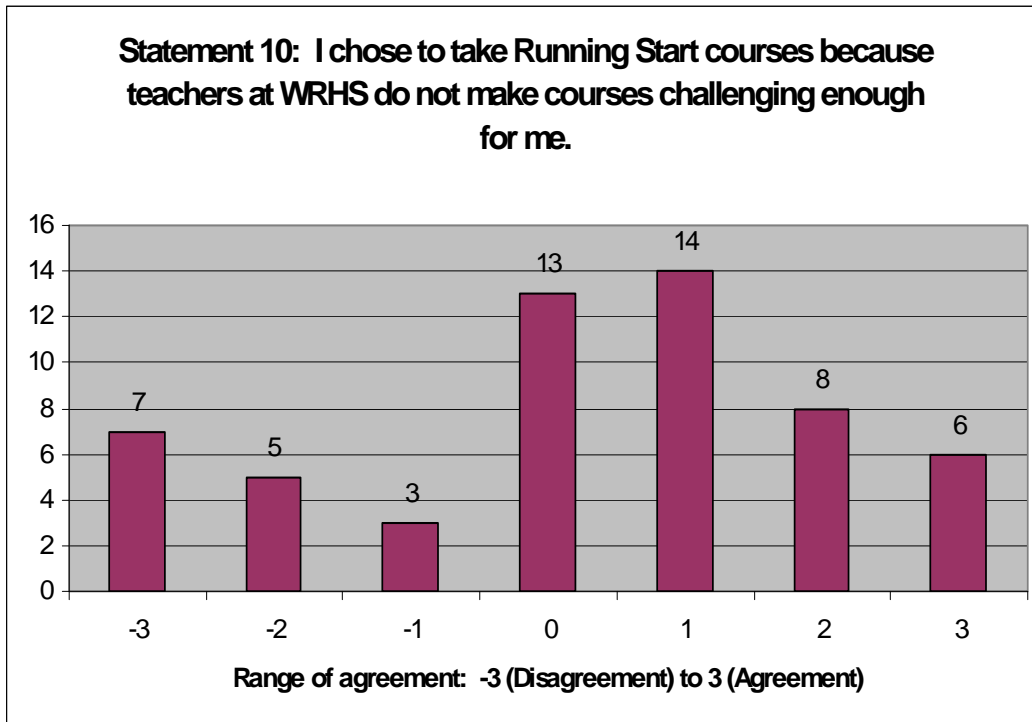


Figure 10: Student responses to statement #10

Students responded to statement #11 that they chose to take Running Start courses rather than White River High School Advanced Placement courses because they did not want to take the Advanced Placement test in order to possibly earn college credit in a fairly even manner. Twenty-six students (46%) expressed some level of disagreement with the statement. Eighteen students indicated complete disagreement with the statement. Ten students (18%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Twenty students (36%) indicated some level of agreement with the statement. Eleven students completely agreed with the statement.

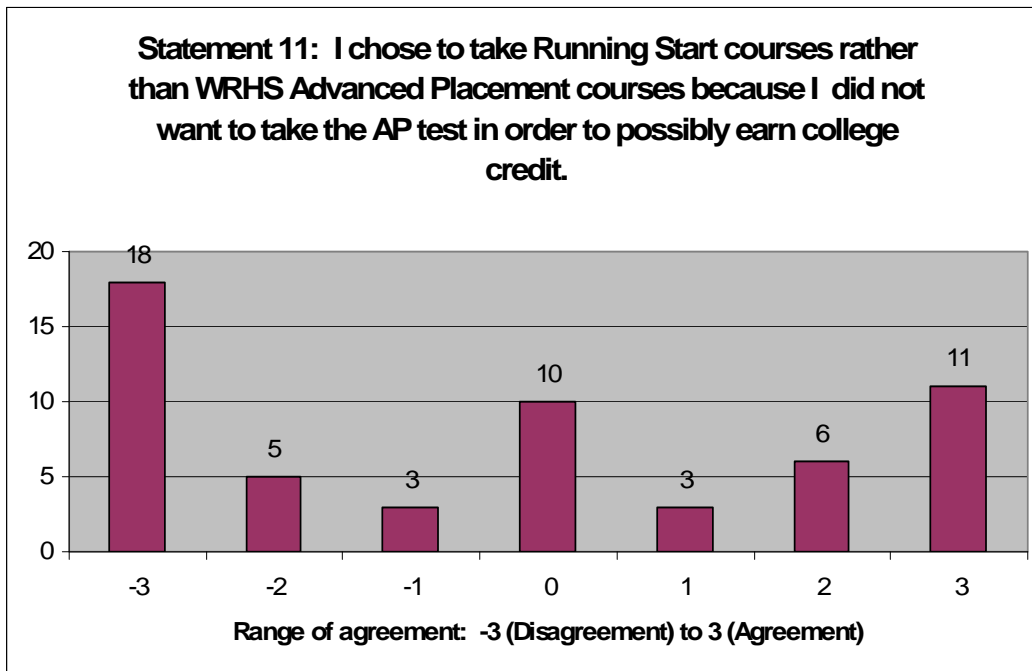


Figure 11: Student responses to statement #11

Students responded to statement #12 by expressing strong disagreement that they chose to take Running Start courses rather than Advanced Placement courses because they heard Running Start courses were easier than Advanced Placement courses. Forty-two students (75%) indicated some level of disagreement with the statement. Thirty-one students completely disagreed with the statement. Eight students strongly disagreed and three students somewhat disagreed with the statement. Nine students (16%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only five students (9%) expressed any level of agreement with the statement.

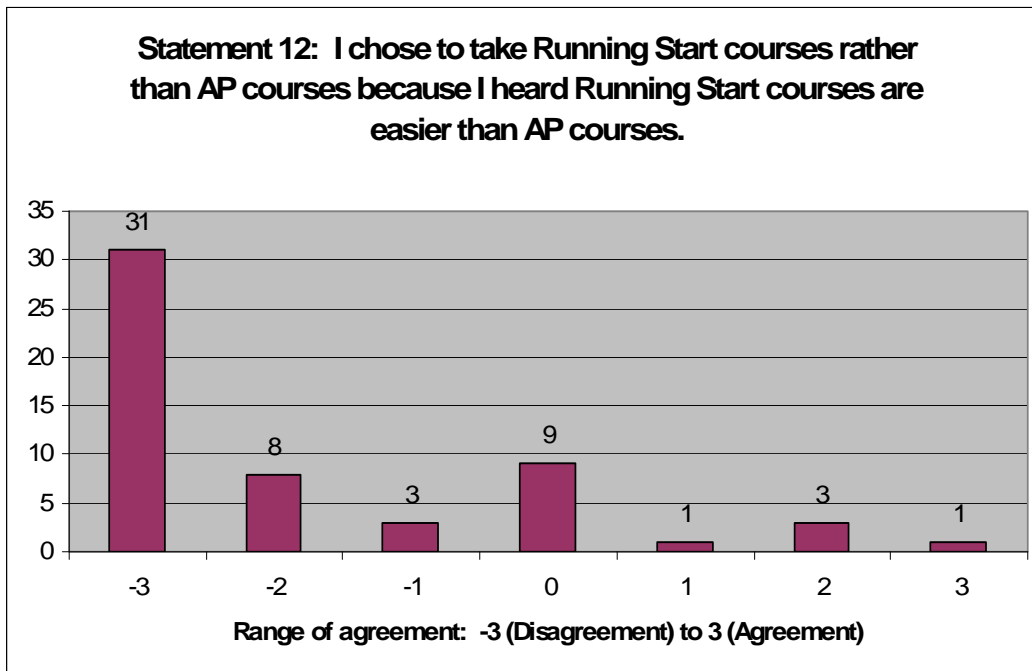


Figure 12: Student responses to statement #12

Students responded to statement #13 by expressing general agreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because they did not believe the educational environment at White River High School will help them reach their full potential. Forty-two students (75%) indicated some level of agreement with the statement. Fourteen students indicated complete agreement. Sixteen students expressed strong agreement and twelve indicated some agreement with the statement. Four students (7%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Ten students (18%) indicated at least some level of disagreement with the statement.

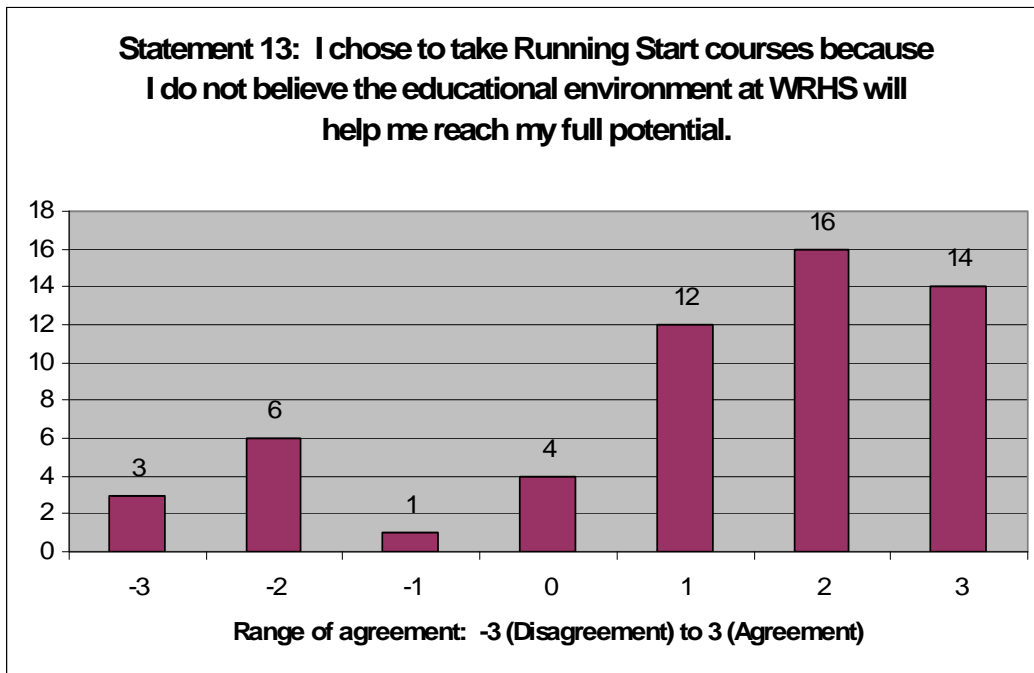


Figure 13: Student responses to statement #13

Students responded to statement #14 by indicating general agreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because White River High School teachers allow too much socializing in the classroom, rather than focusing on learning. Thirty students (54%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement. Sixteen completely agreed with the statement. Two expressed strong agreement and twelve indicated some agreement with the statement. Ten students (18%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Sixteen students (28%) expressed at least some level of disagreement with the statement.

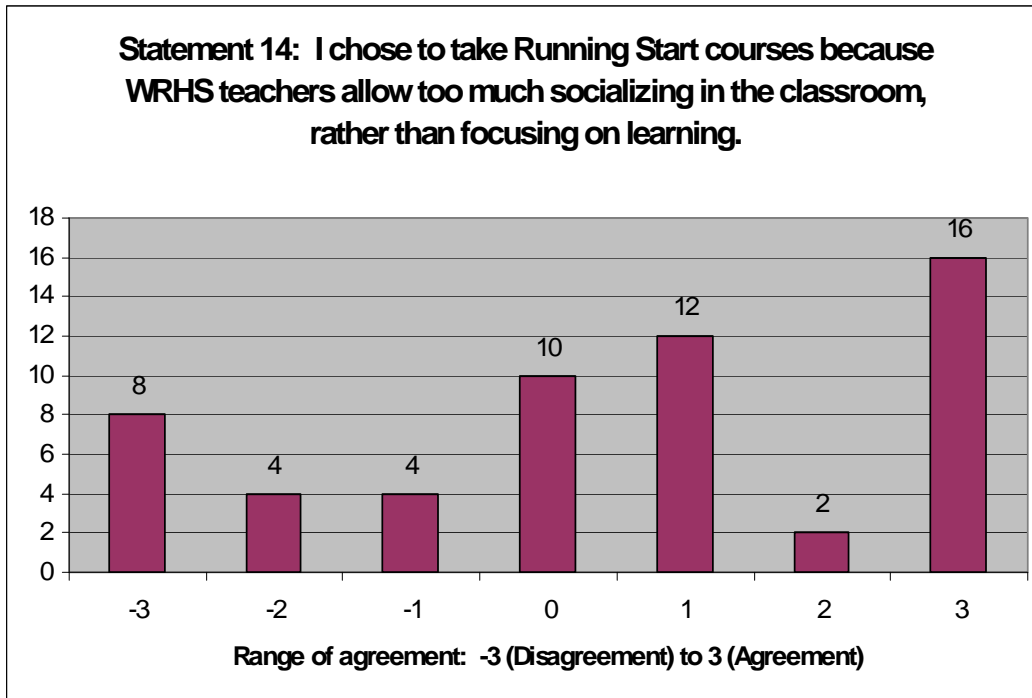


Figure 14: Student responses to statement #14

Students responded to statement #15 by expressing strong agreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because they liked the atmosphere of the Community College more than the school climate of White River High School. Forty-three students (77%) indicated some level of agreement with the statement. Thirty-two students expressed complete agreement. Eight students indicated strong agreement and three students expressed some agreement with the statement. Six students (11%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only seven students (12%) indicated any level of disagreement with the statement.

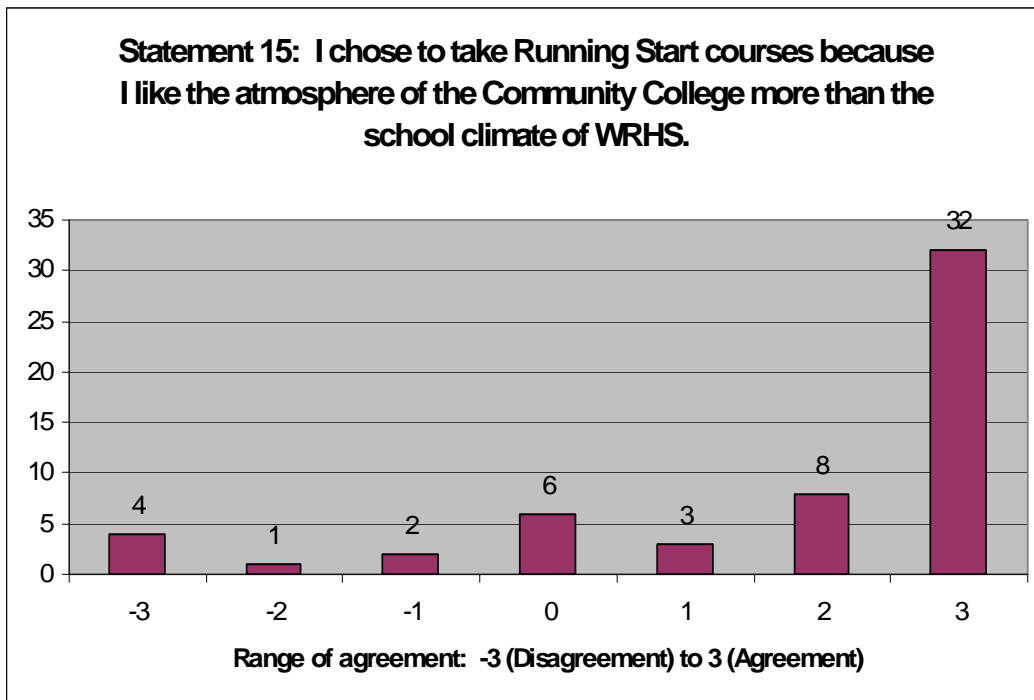


Figure 15: Student responses to statement #15

Students responded to statement #16 by not indicating clear agreement or disagreement that they chose to take Running Start courses because the White River High School courses that offer dual credit are not challenging enough for them. Twenty-one students (38%) indicated at least some agreement with the statement. Two students completely agreed. Twelve students strongly agreed and seven students somewhat agreed with the statement. Sixteen students (28%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Nineteen students (34%) expressed at least some level of disagreement with the statement. Ten completely

disagreed. Three strongly disagreed and six somewhat disagreed with the statement.

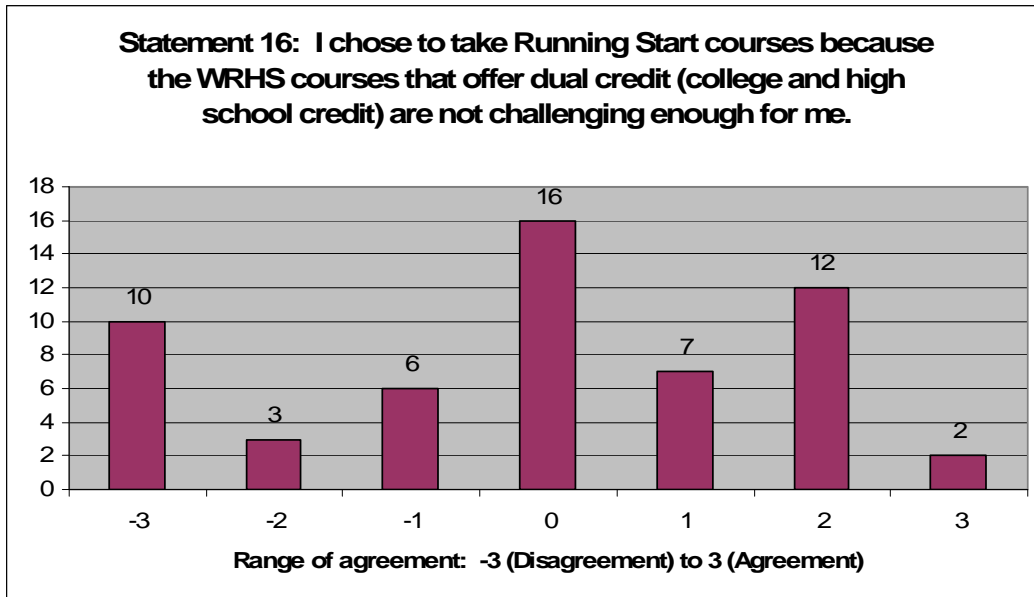


Figure 16: Student responses to statement #16

Students responded to statement #17 by not indicating clear agreement or disagreement that they would be more likely to take a full time schedule at White River High School if the schedule offered more classes for college bound students. Twenty two students (39%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement. Twenty-two students (39%) also expressed some level of disagreement with the statement. Eight students completely agreed with the statement. Eleven students completely disagreed with the statement. Twelve students (21%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

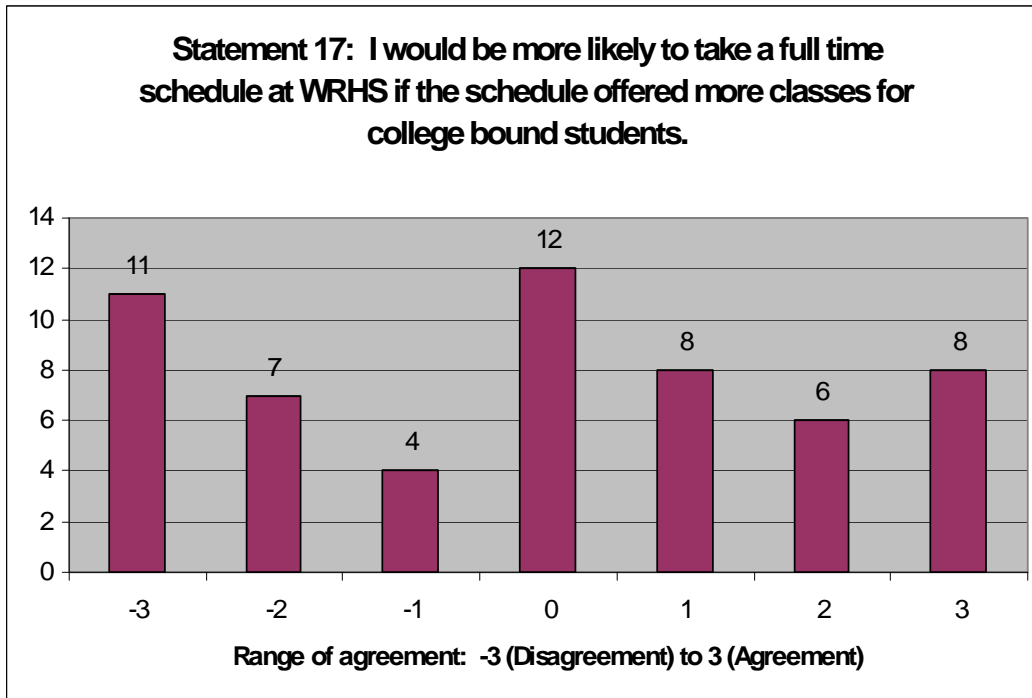


Figure 17: Student responses to statement #17

Students responded to statement #18 by indicating slight disagreement that they would be more likely to take a full time schedule at White River High School if the schedule offered more vocational classes. Twenty-five students (45%) indicated at least some level of disagreement with the statement. Fifteen students completely disagreed with the statement. Four strongly disagreed and six somewhat disagreed with the statement. Nineteen students (34%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only twelve students (21%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement.

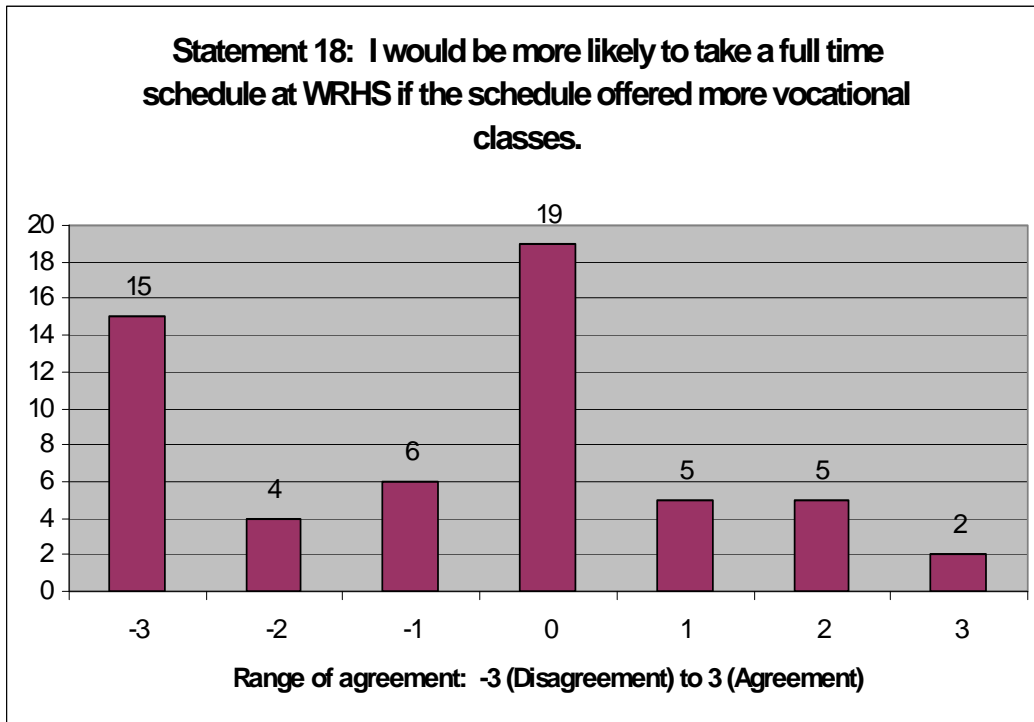


Figure 18: Student responses to statement #18

Students responded to statement #19 by indicating their Running Start status for the 2007-2008 school year. Thirty-nine students (70%) were full-time Running Start students. Seventeen students (30%) that responded to the survey were part-time Running Start students during the 2007-2008 school year. Full-time Running Start students took all of their classes at a community college. Part-time students took some classes at White River High School and some classes at a community college.

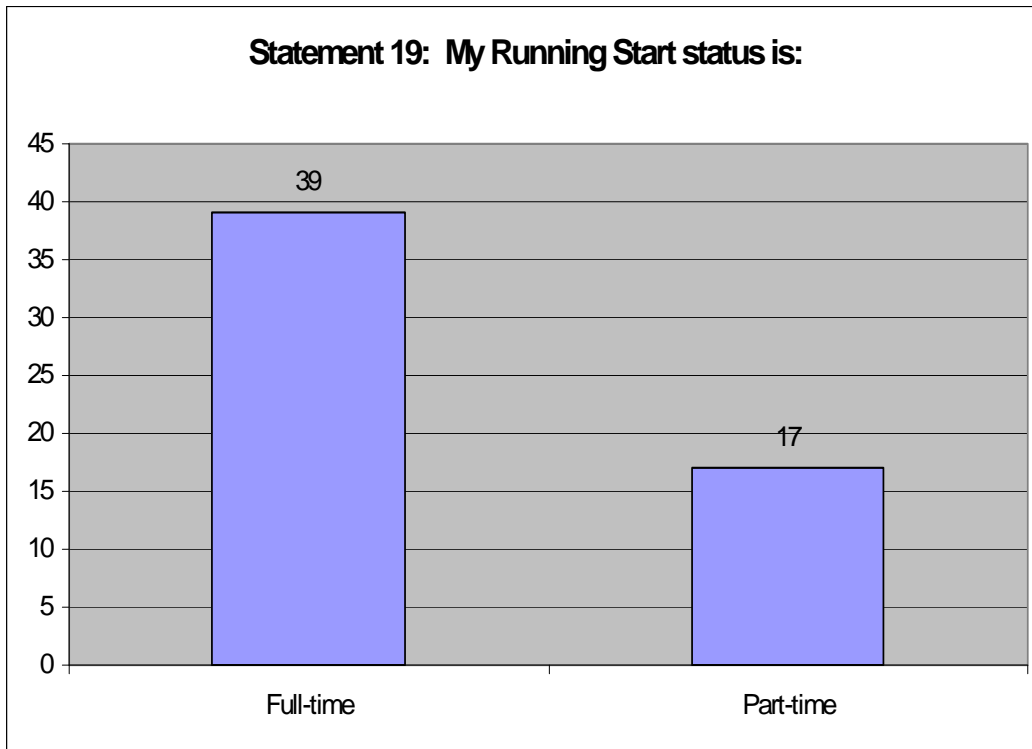


Figure 19: Student responses to statement #19

Students were asked to complete two free response questions following the nineteen previous statements. The first free response statement asked students to list their top three reasons for opting for the Running Start program. Not all students provided three responses to the statement. As can be seen in table 1, there were three general areas that garnered the most responses. School climate issues, particularly a more serious environment and/or more serious students, were mentioned thirty-nine times. Financial reasons were mentioned thirty-eight

times. Students indicated, via thirty-three responses, that they wanted more academic rigor and challenge than was offered at White River High School. Only two other responses were mentioned more than ten times. Wanting more independence, more convenient class times, and less total time at school was mentioned twenty times. Finally, nineteen responses indicated students wanted to earn college credit early and/or they wanted a dual credit program. There were eight other general responses, but none were mentioned more than five times.

Table 1:

Please list, in your own words, the top three reasons you opted for the Running Start program.

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>
- School Climate issues -more serious environment/more serious students	39
- Financial reasons	38
- Want more rigor/college prep courses/challenge/WRHS too easy	33
- Want independence/more convenient class times/less time at school	20

- Want AA early/want college credit early/dual credit	19
- Shorter classes	5
- More knowledgeable teachers	3
- Don't want to take AP test for credit	2
- More student-centered/personalized approach	1
- Availability of Gay/Straight Student Alliance	1
- Friends all took Running Start	1
- Limited arts program at WRHS	1
- Online access to courses	1

The second free response question asked students to list three courses they wished were offered at White River High School that were not currently in the schedule. Not all students responded to this question and some students that did respond indicated less than three responses. Nineteen different types of responses were provided as seen in table 2. Social Studies electives received twenty-two responses. Science electives were mentioned twenty-one times. English electives received eleven responses. Those three areas were the only categories that received more than ten total responses. Three different areas received six responses respectively: more foreign language options, different psychology

classes, and more physical education options. None of the other thirteen categories received more than four responses.

Table 2:

Please list three courses you wish were offered at WRHS that currently are not in the schedule.

<u>Courses</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>
- Social Studies electives -history, world history, world cultures, area studies	22
- Science electives -marine biology, astronomy, microbiology, physics, behavioral science, geology, anthropology	21
- English electives -literature electives, creative writing, mythology, Shakespeare	11
- More foreign language options -German, Chinese, Japanese, AP Spanish	6
-Different psychology classes	6
- More PE options -yoga, pilates, swimming	6
- Computer Science -database management, SQL	4

- Philosophy	3
- More advanced math options	3
- More arts courses	3
-advanced photography	
- Business classes	3
-how to run your own business	
- Fashion Design	2
- Criminal Justice	1
- Journalism	1
- Any college course that is not AP or costs \$	1
- Game Design	1
- Debate	1
- Driver's Education	1
- Sculpting Metal	1

Findings

Based upon the data compiled from the Running Start student survey, the following findings were apparent:

1. The financial benefit of attending Running Start was a strong deciding factor for every student that chose Running Start during the 2007-2008 school year.
2. Most students chose to attend a Running Start program because they like the atmosphere of community college better than they like the atmosphere of White River High School.

3. Most students chose to take Running Start because they felt that the White River High School curriculum would not adequately prepare them for college.
4. Most students opted for Running Start because they wanted to attend classes with students that have a mature approach and wanted to learn as much as they did.
5. Most students chose Running Start because they wanted to be challenged academically.
6. Student that chose to attend Running Start would like White River High School to offer more academic electives, particularly social studies and science electives.
7. Although school climate issues proved to be a very important factor in the decision to attend Running Start, the hypothesis was not supported due to the fact that every student indicated that the financial benefit of Running Start factored strongly into their decision.

Summary

This chapter was designed to analyze the data and identify the findings. From the data, the hypothesis was not supported. School climate issues did prove to be an important reason that most students chose to attend a Running Start program based on how students responded to the survey statements and the free

response segment of the survey. However, students overwhelmingly indicated that the financial benefit of Running Start played an important role in their decision to attend Running Start. Therefore, it is not clear that school climate issues were the most important factor when students chose to attend Running Start. Chapter 5 will summarize the study, draw conclusions, and make recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topic: (a) introduction, (b) summary, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if White River High School students who opted for the Running Start program made that choice predominantly for financial reasons, or if there were underlying curriculum and school climate issues that were the driving force behind students choosing Running Start. The hypothesis of the project was that WRHS students chose Running Start primarily because of underlying school climate issues. Various programs for college bound students, such as Advanced Placement, International

Baccalaureate, Dual Credit programs, and characteristics of high achieving schools, were researched and compared with the Running Start program in Washington State. A survey of White River High School Running Start students was created and given to students in the fall of 2007. The results of the survey were compiled and the responses were carefully examined to look for strong indicators of why students chose Running Start. Both financial and school climate issues proved to be important factors in WRHS students choosing to attend Running Start. Although school climate issues were important, the hypothesis was not supported.

Conclusions

Based upon the results of the student survey, the district assessment, and the analyzed data, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. As shown in Figure 3, the lure of earning college credit for free was an important determining factor when students chose to take Running Start courses.
2. Many students opted for Running Start because they did not feel that White River High School adequately prepared them for college.
3. Students strongly indicated that they wanted to be challenged academically and they wanted to attend classes with students that wanted to learn as much as they did.

4. As shown in Figure 15, many students chose Running Start because they like the atmosphere of Community College more than the school climate of White River High School.
5. The free response data compiled in Table 1 showed that school climate and academic rigor issues were equally important as financial considerations when students chose to attend Running Start.
6. As shown in Table 2, students strongly indicated that they would like more academic electives offered at White River High School. Students would particularly like more social studies, science, and English electives offered.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Specific instructional strategies need to be implemented to increase academic rigor in all classes.
2. The school master schedule needs to reflect a college prep curriculum so students that intend to go to college feel that White River High School can meet their college preparation needs.
3. Academic electives in social studies, science, and English need to be added to the master schedule to attract more students to the college

preparation opportunities within the curriculum at White River High School.

4. An honors or Pre-Advanced Placement program needs to be implemented in the ninth and tenth grades to prepare students for advanced classes as eleventh and twelfth graders. Students involved in those programs should be provided with a plan through the counseling center to guide them through the college preparation program at WRHS so they are less likely to entertain thoughts of attending Running Start unless it is purely for financial reasons.

5. A school-wide effort needs to be undertaken to challenge students to reach their potential academically. An emphasis on relevancy of the curriculum in each class will help students understand the importance of academic rigor.

6. Students of all abilities and interests need to be made to feel welcome and understand that they are valued and part of something important when they attend classes at White River High School. This should be accomplished by a partnership between students, teachers, administrators, and the community.

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Appendix A

I, Mike Hagadone as White River High School Principal, give Troy Tornow permission to conduct his Running Start survey and data compilation as his research project for the Masters in Education Degree at Heritage University during the 2007 – 2008 academic school year at White River High School.

Mike Hagadone

Date

White River High School Principal

Appendix B

**WHITE RIVER HIGH SCHOOL
2007-2008 RUNNING START SURVEY**

This survey is designed as part of a study of student attitudes about Running Start amongst WRHS students currently participating in the program. Take your time and consider each question carefully and answer truthfully. Your individual answers will be kept confidential. Please return the completed survey to Mr. Tornow via the envelope provided by Friday, Dec. 7. Thank you for your participation.

Responses to the survey items will be placed on a semantic differential scale ranging from -3 (Disagree) to 3 (Agree). Circle the number along the scale that best describes your feelings about each statement. The number circled indicates the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. For example, 3 equals complete agreement and -3 equals complete disagreement.

Please respond to the following statements:

1. I chose to take Running Start courses because I wanted to be challenged academically.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

2. I chose to take Running Start courses because WRHS does not offer classes that I want to take.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

3. I chose to take Running Start courses for the financial benefit of getting college credit for free.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

4. I chose to take Running Start courses because I wanted to be in classes with other students who want to learn as much as I do.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

5. I chose to take Running Start courses because my friends registered for Running Start and I wanted to take some classes with my friends.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

6. I chose to take Running Start courses because I do not feel connected to the rest of the students at WRHS.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

Responses to the survey items will be placed on a semantic differential scale ranging from -3 (Disagree) to 3 (Agree). Circle the number along the scale that best describes your feelings about each statement.

7. I chose to take Running Start courses because classes at WRHS do not challenge me.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

8. I chose to take Running Start courses because I feel that the curriculum at WRHS does not adequately prepare students for college.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

9. I chose to take Running Start courses because the Advanced Placement courses offered at WRHS do not fit my needs.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

10. I chose to take Running Start courses because teachers at WRHS do not make courses challenging enough for me.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

11. I chose to take Running Start courses rather than WRHS Advanced Placement courses because I did not want to take the AP test in order to possibly earn college credit.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

12. I chose to take Running Start courses rather than AP courses because I heard Running Start courses are easier than AP courses.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

13. I chose to take Running Start courses because I do not believe the educational environment at WRHS will help me reach my full potential.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

14. I chose to take Running Start courses because WRHS teachers allow too much socializing in the classroom, rather than focusing on learning.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

15. I chose to take Running Start courses because I like the atmosphere of the Community College more than the school climate of WRHS.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

Responses to the survey items will be placed on a semantic differential scale ranging from -3 (Disagree) to 3 (Agree). Circle the number along the scale that best describes your feelings about each statement.

16. I chose to take Running Start courses because the WRHS courses that offer dual credit (college and high school credit) are not challenging enough for me.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

17. I would be more likely to take a full time schedule at WRHS if the schedule offered more classes for college bound students.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

18. I would be more likely to take a full time schedule at WRHS if the schedule offered more vocational classes.

Disagree -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Agree

19. My Running Start status is: Full-time Part-time

Please list, in your own words, the top three reasons you opted for the Running Start program:

1.

2.

3.

Please list three courses you wish were offered at WRHS that currently are not in the schedule:

1.

2.

3.

Appendix C

11/8/07

Dear WRHS Running Start Student:

This is an introductory letter to our 2007-2008 White River High School Running Start survey. I am conducting research on the Running Start program and why WRHS students have chosen to attend Running Start. The information gathered through the survey will be used in two ways. First, the data gathered will be used by WRHS school administration, staff, and counselors to analyze the overall school program and identify curriculum needs. Secondly, the data gathered will be included in a research project through Heritage University as part of my program to earn a Masters in Educational Administration degree at the end of the 2007-2008 school year. There has been a lot of debate within the WRHS faculty throughout the years as to why Running Start appeals to so many students. Hopefully, your participation in the survey can help us draw some conclusions as to why Running Start is such a popular alternative to the WRHS curriculum.

Your participation in the survey is essential to us being able to gather accurate information. Your answers will be kept confidential; however, I will track who has returned the surveys due to the fact we need full participation. The survey should take no more than fifteen minutes to complete. Please take your time and answer thoughtfully. The survey asks you to respond to each statement on a semantic differential scale ranging from "Disagree" to "Agree". The scale goes from -3 (Disagree) to 3 (Agree). Please circle the number that indicates how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. For example, circling a 3 indicates complete agreement with the statement and a -3 indicates complete disagreement with the statement. If you have any questions about how to complete the survey please call me.

Thanks in advance for taking the time to complete the survey. The administrative team at WRHS is looking forward to the information you provide and applying that data to future curriculum decisions at the high school. Please send in the survey as soon as possible.

Thanks,

Troy Tornow
Dean of Students
White River High School
360-829-5509