

Discovery

Putting Character Education at the
Center of Everything That We Do.



Character Education Through the Discovery Process

Why we began!

❑ We Realized:

- Every school has an ethos or culture.
- This culture is created by default or design.
- Too often a school culture is established and maintained through negative peer pressure.

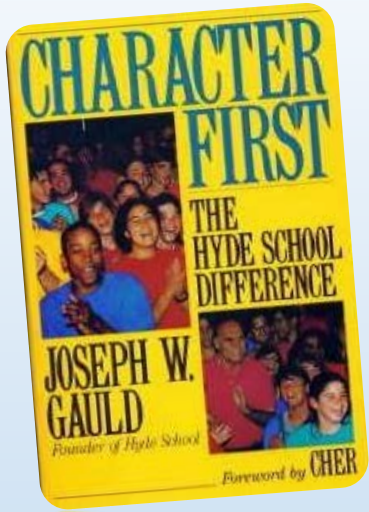
❑ Halifax Middle School decided to design a culture:

- That would promote what good parents have taught their children at home.
- That would promote positive peer pressure among students.

To change this culture:

- To change this culture, we would have to change student **behaviors**.
- To change behaviors, we would have to change student **attitudes**.
- To change attitudes, we would have to change **what students think about**.



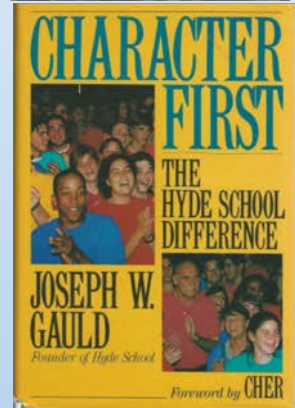


Character Education Through the Discovery Process

How we got started!

Based our program on the Hyde School Model in Maine

- ❖ School Board and Superintendent Support
- ❖ Read Joe Gauld's book, *Character First, The Hyde School Approach*
- ❖ Parent & Community Meetings
- ❖ 10 Teachers Visited Hyde School
- ❖ Tailored Program for Halifax Middle School
- ❖ Teacher In Service Days
- ❖ Continued to Assess and Build
- ❖ Spread to HS, Elementary Schools, other area schools



The Discovery Process

Overview

Promote a positive school environment through a highly organized character development program.

- ❖ Multi-Age Discovery Groups :
- ❖ Elementary School: Students in grades 2-5
- ❖ Middle School groups consist of approximately five each of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders
- ❖ High School groups consist of approximately four each of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders

Groups meet with Discovery Teacher

- ❖ ES: Once per cycle
- ❖ MS: 10 minutes in the morning & 30 minutes in the afternoon.
- ❖ HS: 30 minutes before or after lunch.



The Discovery Process Overview

At the Secondary Level – Discovery Families are grouped into
“Divisions” who participate together on:

- *Seminars and Discussions*
- *Intramurals*
- *Performing Arts*
- *Community and School Service*
- *School-Wide Jobs*
- *Team Building Activities*
- *Clubs*



Five Guiding Principles

Destiny

Truth

Humility

Brother's Keeper

Conscience

HYDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COURAGE • INTEGRITY • LEADERSHIP • CURIOSITY • CONCERN

Discovery Key Words & Principles

(Adopted from the Hyde School and Lickona's 4th and 5th Rs.)

- ✓ **Destiny**- Each of us is gifted with a unique potential that defines a destiny.
- ✓ **Humility** -We trust in a power and purpose beyond ourselves.
- ✓ **Conscience** -We achieve our best by an inner sense of right and wrong.
- ✓ **Truth** -Fact and reality is our primary guide.
- ✓ **Brother's Keeper**- We help others achieve their best.
- ✓ **Courage** -to accept and face new challenges.
- ✓ **Integrity** -to be truly themselves while acting in sound moral character.
- ✓ **Concern** -for others.
- ✓ **Curiosity** -to explore life and learning.
- ✓ **Leadership** -in making the school and community a better place.
- ✓ **Respect** -for the environment, others, and ourselves.
- ✓ **Responsibility** -and accountability for our actions.

Discovery Process

Common Language

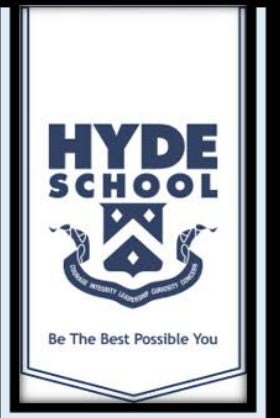
- ☐ Maintain positive thoughts
- ☐ Is this **Your Best**?
- ☐ **Truth** is our primary guide.
- ☐ Are you following the **Golden Rule**?
- ☐ Are you acting as a **Brother's Keeper**?
- ☐ Are you being a **Leader**?
- ☐ What is your **Conscience** telling you?
- ☐ Our actions affect others!
- ☐ You can't control other people, but **you can control yourself**.
- ☐ We need to "**Clear the Decks**" to deal with issues.
- ☐ What is discussed in the Discovery Room, **STAYS** in the Discovery Room. (This is true to a large extent to protect the feelings of those involved; however, there are important exceptions such as when a person is threatening to harm himself or another.
- ☐ Leave a place **better than you found it**.
- ☐ Are you part of the solution or part of the problem?
- ☐ It is natural to feel "fear or anger," but it is **better to respond through "compassion or concern."**
- ☐ Will my words or actions **make the situation better** or worse?
- ☐ We all have a **purpose** in life. When we are "on purpose," our words and actions **make the world a better place**.
- ☐ All kids want to **do the right thing**.
- ☐ Most parents are teaching right and wrong. Why are the expectations any different at school?
- ☐ Do what is right, not what is cool.
- ☐ Character is what you say and do when no one else is looking.





Seminars

- ❖ Discussions and seminars focus on character building concepts.
- ❖ Teacher guided; student driven. "Draw out, Don't Dump In."
- ❖ Guidelines are defined.
- ❖ Students respond to short-answer questions.
- ❖ Any student may speak his/her mind about the issue or topic.
- ❖ All shall be heard without interruption or judgment.
- ❖ Utilize the Action/Reflection Cycle.



Intramurals



Everyone participates. Opportunity for all.

Sportsmanship and cooperation are our primary goals. We are supportive and encouraging.

Modified volleyball, handball, basketball, and kickball are favorite activities.

We are not all gifted athletes, but we strive to give our personal best.

Push ourselves beyond our comfort zone.

Action/Reflection Cycle

School-Wide Jobs

- ❖ Remove scuff marks in halls
- ❖ Put up chairs in cafeteria
- ❖ Sweep entrances
- ❖ Dust locker tops
- ❖ Mop hallways
- ❖ Clean windows
- ❖ Classroom clean- up
- ❖ Sanitize Desks



Performing Arts

- ❖ All students in each Middle School Discovery Group are responsible to participate in two performances with the student body and community: Annual Veteran's Day Tribute and Talent Show
- ❖ Everyone participates. Opportunity for all.
- ❖ We are supportive and encouraging.
- ❖ We are not all gifted actors, dancers, or musicians, but we strive to give our personal best.
- ❖ Push ourselves beyond our comfort zone.
- ❖ High School Film Fest



Community Service Activities

- ❖ **Collection for Charitable Organizations**
- ❖ **Food and clothing drives**
- ❖ **Community clean ups**
- ❖ **Assisting at the local food bank**
- ❖ **Create posters for school or community events**
- ❖ **Spirit Days**
- ❖ **Letters to veterans**
- ❖ **Earth Day grocery bags**
- ❖ **Crafts and potted plants for nursing homes**
- ❖ **Visits to nursing homes**



Team Building Activities



- ☐ Cooperation
- ☐ Teamwork
- ☐ Perseverance

How We Know It Works



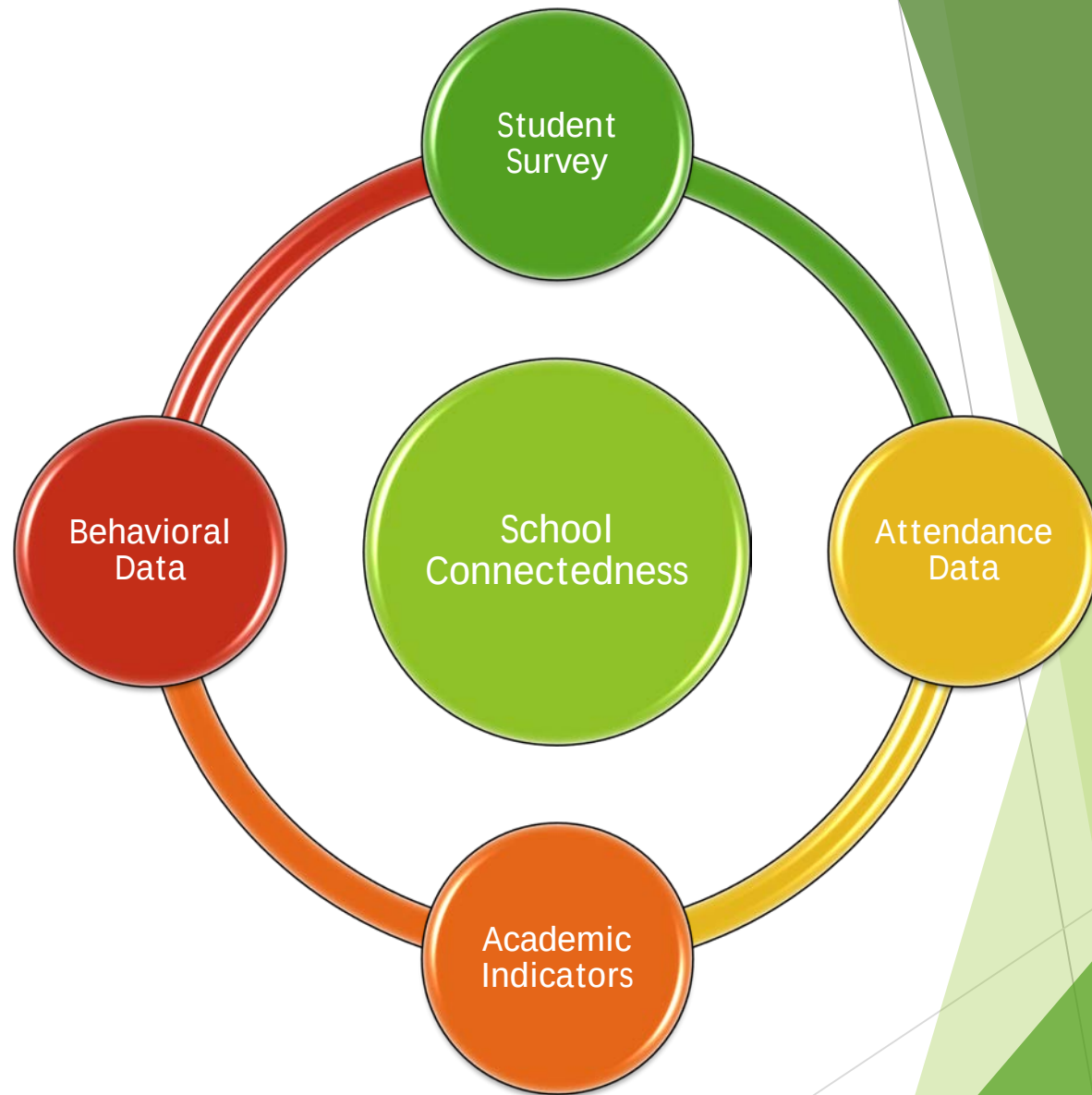
- ❖ Atmosphere of “community” within school
- ❖ Students feel more included and have a sense of connection to the school and to one another.
- ❖ Students are demonstrating better coping skills in their day-to-day interactions with both other students and adults.
- ❖ There is better rapport between younger and older students.
- ❖ 6th graders look up to 7th and 8th graders rather than fear them.
- ❖ 7th and 8th graders rise to expectations that they are to be positive role models and leaders.

School Connectedness

Students feel...

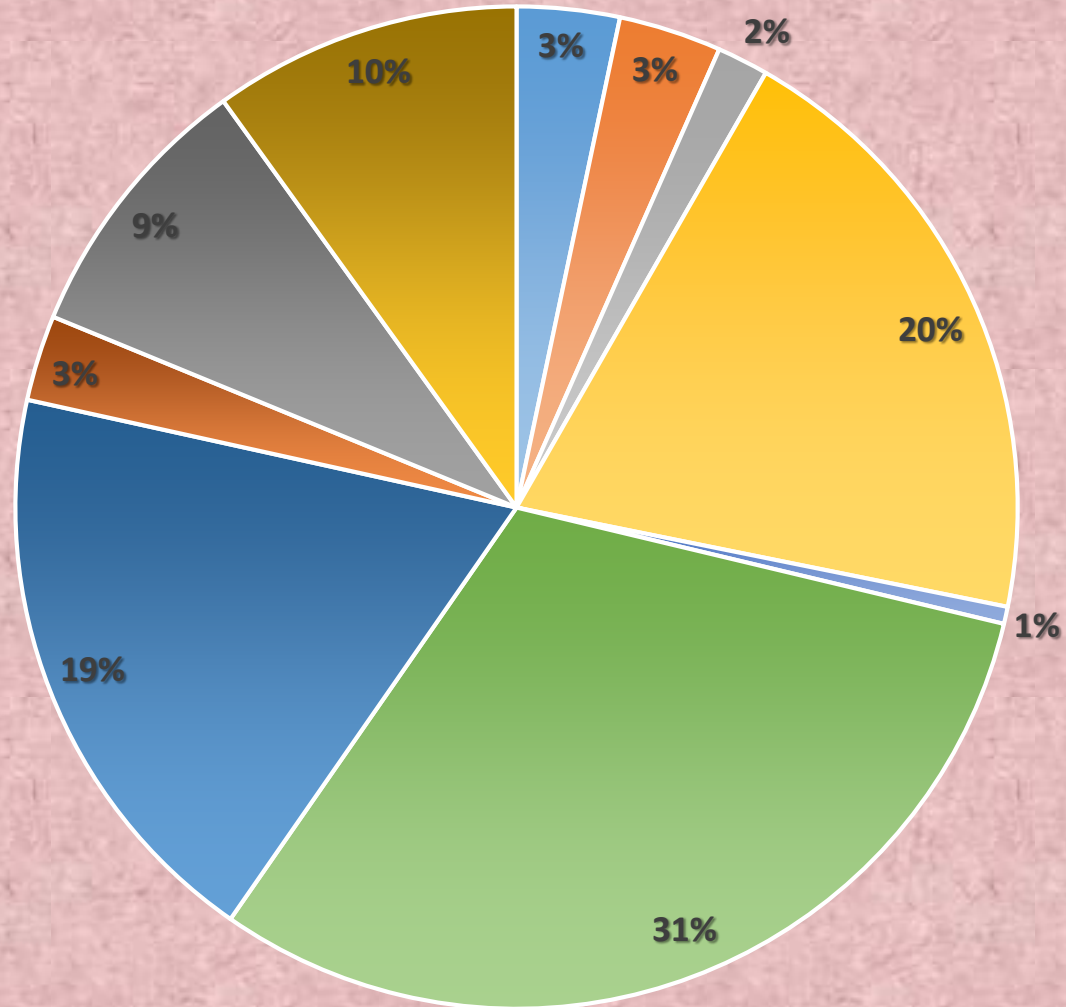
- they are a part of the school
- adults care about them personally
- their learning matters
- they have positive peer interactions
- they have supportive relationships with adults
- the staff consistently treats them with respect

(Goodenow, 1983)



2015 Survey of HAHS Underclassmen.

What Discovery Activities are most Meaningful?

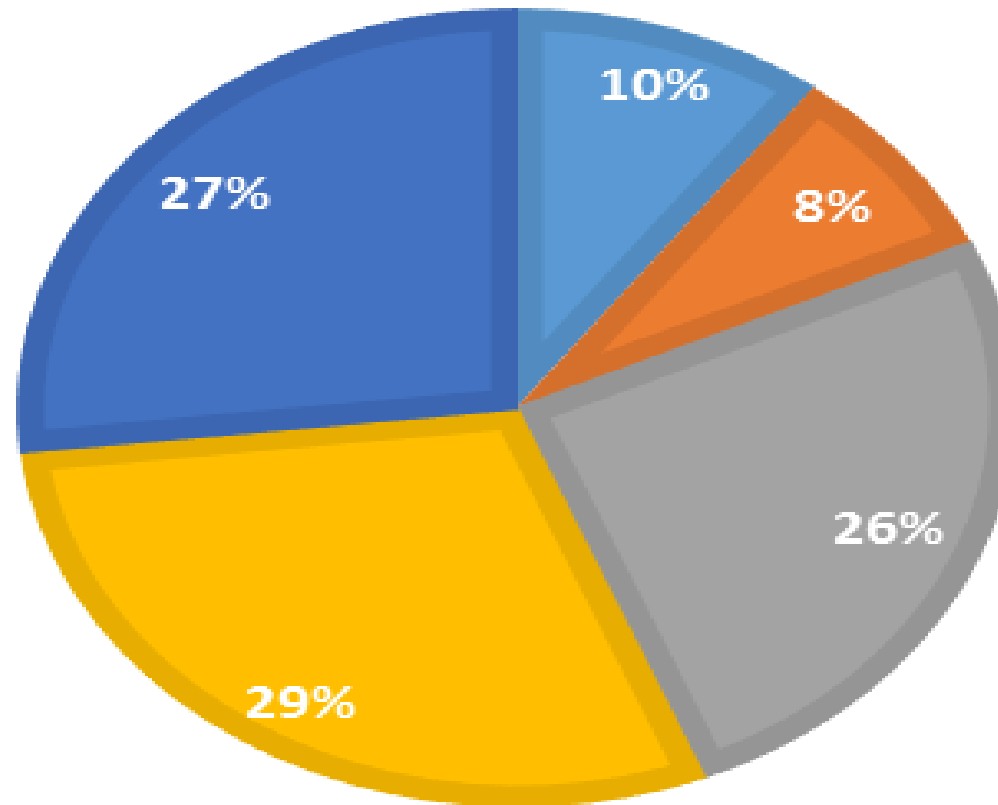


- Academic Days
- Building Comradery
- Clear the Deck
- Community Service
- D&A Prevention
- Intramurals
- Lessons
- Movies & Skits
- Multiple or All
- other

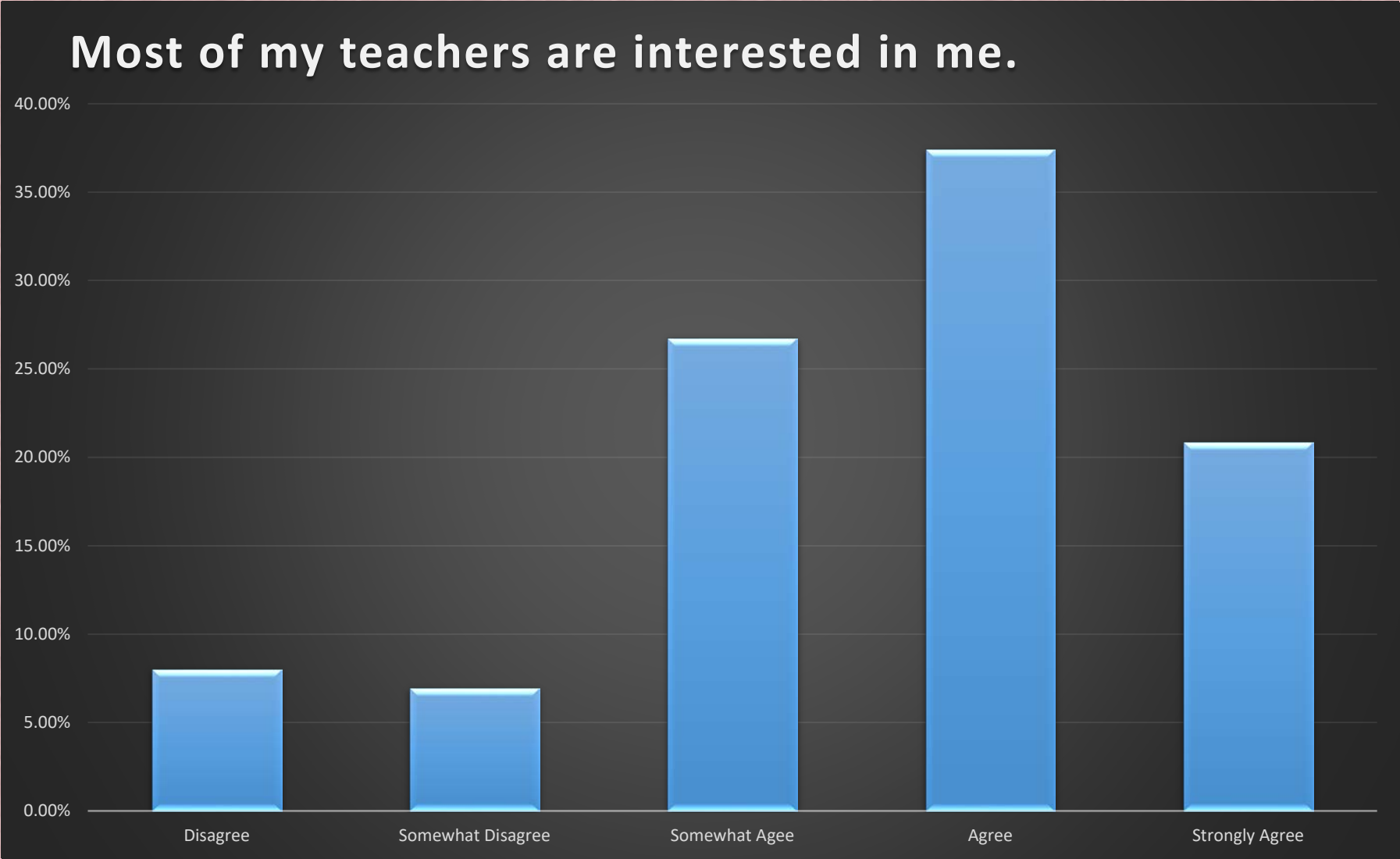
2015 Survey of HAHS Underclassmen.

I FEEL LIKE A PART OF MY SCHOOL

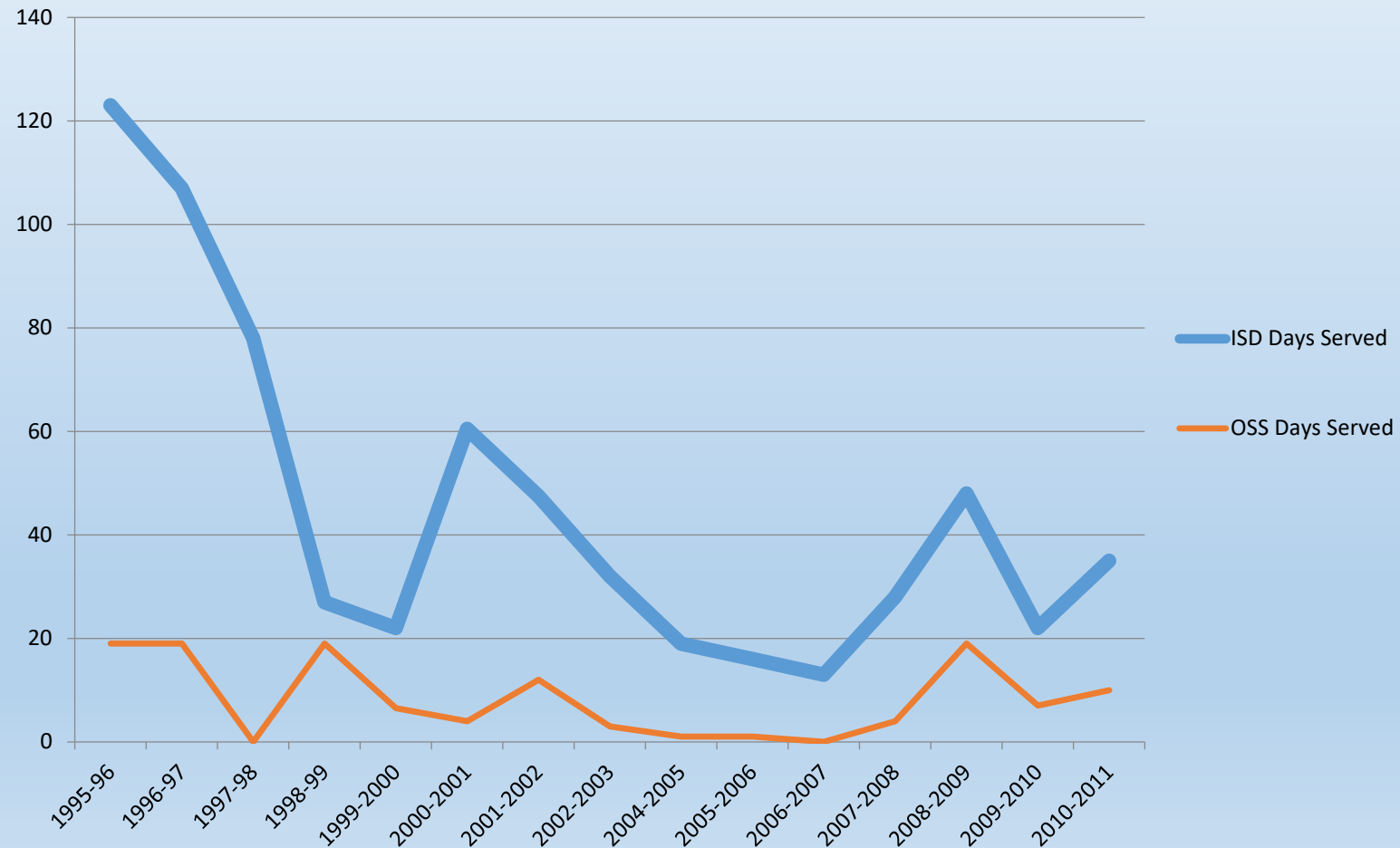
■ Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree



2015 Survey of HAHS Underclassmen.



Halifax How We Know It Works



How We Know It Works

- ❑ Positive peer pressure has developed.
- ❑ Students hold one another accountable.
- ❑ Better rapport between students and teachers
- ❑ Early morning contact with Discovery teacher and Discovery Group helps to ground students for the day and gives them an outlet to resolve problems that may have occurred in school or at home.
- ❑ Students demonstrate greater pride in our school.
- ❑ Almost no graffiti or vandalism



How We Know It Works



- ☐ Fewer failures
- ☐ Because students are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings with their Discovery Group, many students are able to use these skills to better communicate with their parents.
- ☐ Fewer discipline referrals for negative behavior
- ☐ Almost no physical fights since the program began

Our Students Speak...

- “The Discovery Group is like an extended family”
- “We are taught to accept people for who they are and because of that we don’t fight”
- “Teachers are more open with kids. We can tell teachers how we feel, and we talk about issues and the world”
- “Our teachers respect us”
- “We learn to be ourselves and make our own choices”
- “Discovery helps Halifax be a nicer town”





“Even after students have been in the high school for several years. They still come back to my Discovery group to talk to me and meet with my new students. And they make it a point that Discovery is important”
A Halifax Middle School Teacher

“I noticed that there was a dramatic difference in the behavior of the Halifax Middle School students-positive difference-compared to other schools where I substituted.”
A Halifax Substitute Teacher

“There is increased rapport between students and teachers. There is one more significant adult in their lives who they can trust”
- Middle School Parent

“My daughter commented that the students are kinder to each others’ feelings first before they say or do something.”
-Parent

How We Know It Works



Recognized in 2001 as a National School of Character
Recognized in 2015 as a State School of Character



Program was recognized for Educational Excellence at 2010 PASA-PSBA School Leadership Conference



Recognized in 2011 by the Shippensburg University School Study Council for sustaining an Exemplary Program

Various visitors continue to view the Discovery Process:

1. Local School Districts
2. Local Media
<http://www.abc27.com/video?clipId=6293223&autostart=true>
3. Pennsylvania Department of Education
4. Pennsylvania Middle School Association
5. Guests from Singapore
6. Feature article in Taiwanese Parent Magazine
7. Dr. Thomas Lickona and Dr. Ryota Yaginuma (Japan)

