

Restructuring Education Through Listening To And Involving Our Children

Dr. Raymond E. Morley
Cooperating Teacher,
And Counselors

The information for this publication was gathered through personal interviews with students by teachers enrolled in graduate classes in July 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1995 offered through Area Education Agency VII—Cedar Falls via Viterbo College, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Class title *"At-Risk Students—A Team Approach"*

Teachers Involved In The Interviews

Laura Angove, Waterloo, Iowa
Christine Bailey, Waterloo, Iowa
Karen Bergan, Victor, Iowa
Alma Bigelow, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Diane Boehmke, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Denise Bovy, Reinbeck, Iowa
Barbara Bowers, Fayette, Iowa
Mary Kay Bowling, Waterloo, Iowa
Carla Brandt, Denver, Iowa
Marlene Brim, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Penny Bunger, Waterloo, Iowa
Sue Burrock, Arlington, Iowa
Betty Butler, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Renee Cabbage, Waterloo, Iowa
Jamie Carroll, Waterloo, Iowa
Barbara Clem, Mediapolis, Iowa
Denise Clipperton, Waverly, Iowa
Robin Courbet, Waterloo, Iowa
Howard Craven, Waterloo, Iowa
Ellen Crayne, Waverly, Iowa
Ann Cunningham, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Craig DeBerg, Dike, Iowa
Phyllis Dedrick, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Scott DeJons, Ankeny, Iowa
Chris Diller, Waterloo, Iowa
Sharon Ellis, Waterloo, Iowa
Carole Eslinger, New Hapton, Iowa
Andrea Finley, Waterloo, Iowa
Nancy Frederiksen, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Claudia Freed, Dike, Iowa
Val Frey, Denver, Iowa
Jean Garauerta, Reinbeck, Iowa
Genie Garthoff, Waterloo, Iowa
Robert Gifford, Janesville, Iowa
Collenn Goodenbour, Waterloo, Iowa
Judy Graf, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Larrie Groothuis, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Cheryl Grosvenor, New Hartford, Iowa
Susan Grotewold, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Barb Harken, Shell Rock, Iowa
Lee Ann Harken, Aplington, Iowa
Linda Harris, Waterloo, Iowa
Winnie Hayes, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Mary Heber, Waterloo, Iowa
David Henney, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Bill Henry, Waterloo, Iowa
Marcia Henry, Waterloo, Iowa
Vicki Holler, Waterloo, Iowa
Julia Howard, Waterloo, Iowa
Becky Kemming, Waverly, Iowa
Mary Kies, Jesup, Iowa
Jim Kilkenny, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Jeff Koch, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Bernie Kohrs, Waterloo, Iowa
Kathleen Latta, Waterloo, Iowa
Terry Laughlin, Clarksville, Iowa
Susan Lyons, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Nancy Magee, Waterloo, Iowa
Edie McCaw, Dike, Iowa
Evan McCormick, Indianola, Iowa
Michele Mead, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Judy Miller, Waterloo, Iowa
Lisa Miller, Sumner, Iowa
Judy Moser, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Donna Nanke, Waterloo, Iowa
Jerry Nissen, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Brenda O'Brien, Waterloo, Iowa
Russ Peatrowsky, Waverly, Iowa
Rodney Payne, La Porte City, Iowa
Chris Peck, Evansdale, Iowa
Susan Pellemounter, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Deb Pfalzgraf, Waterloo, Iowa
David Piersol, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Linda Podhajsky, Waverly, Iowa
Jolene Urdy, Dike, Iowa
Jim Renning, Shell Rock, Iowa
Sally Robinson, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Michael Savage, Marion, Iowa
Denise Schares, Palmer, Iowa
Donna Schildroth, Fredericksburg, Iowa
Christy Schmitt, Hudson, Iowa
J. Matthew Schutt, Waverly, Iowa
Lynn Sellers, Waterloo, Iowa
Kathryn Sharp, Hudson, Iowa
Carol Shelton, Waterloo, Iowa
Marian Sherman, Aplington, Iowa
R. Nickolas Shinstine, Parkersburg, Iowa
Corwin Stuart, Brooklyn, Iowa
Carrie Taylor, Waterloo, Iowa
Theresa Thoms, Steamboat Rock, Iowa
Gail Thornton, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Kathleen Timlin, Lawler, Iowa
Dixie Unangst, Denver, Iowa
Carol Walke, Sumner, Iowa
Liz Waskow, Dunkerton, Iowa
Rhonda Westin, Waterloo, Iowa
Lora Willhite, Waterloo, Iowa
Millicent Williams, Waterloo, Iowa

Donald Huff, Waterloo, Iowa
Donna Huff, Waterloo, Iowa
Isabella Johnson, Waterloo, Iowa

Pat Winblade, Jesup, Iowa
Linda Wittenburg, Denver, Iowa
Deb Yuska, Waterloo, Iowa

INTRODUCTION

The results of this simple research have important messages for teachers, administrators, counselors, food service engineers, sanitary engineers, and others who work in and near our schools. Interviews with 408 children speak to what makes them want to be in school. The teachers involved in conducting the interviews are identified on the following pages. The teachers asked students four questions and recorded their responses. The results are provided in four separate formats:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| A) A composite of elementary student responses | Page 3 |
| B) A composite of Junior High school student responses | Page 4 |
| C) A composite of Senior High school student responses | Page 5 |
| D) A total composite of Elementary, Middle School/Junior High, and Senior High School student responses | Pages 6-7 |

SUMMARY

The statements contained in this publication come from children and give important clues about the type of atmosphere students desire in school and in the classroom. The students involved are telling us that cooperative learning, personal attention, clear expectations, rewards, and flexibility are very important. Of extreme importance is the message that students want to feel a sense of accomplishment and it can be gained through a multitude of ways, i.e., helping others, doing something right, cooperating with others, etc.

Students consistently ask for time to **talk** and **express themselves**. It becomes a form of recognition and respect and allows them space for making a contribution. All students want to contribute, but find it hard to find a way to do so. Having time to dialogue with teachers, administrators, and others helps provide a way to contribute.

Students want a chance to assume responsibility for their education...chances that allow them to apply themselves even if they make mistakes. However, it has to be OK to make mistakes. The question becomes how willing are we to allow students to assume responsibility. How much opportunity are we willing to give when mistake after mistake is made?

What students ask for at various education levels (Elementary, Middle School/Junior High, Senior High) is not much different. Elementary students expect many of the same things that secondary students expect of teachers, classmates, and friends. That means that there are definite expectations that can be addressed throughout a school and school district. The expectations can be determined and agreed upon locally by asking students a few basic questions.

Students do have some definite ideas about what will make school a rewarding experience for them. Give them a chance to express themselves, but only if you are willing to listen. The children know when we listen!

**Research Involving Elementary Students
Interviews with 177 Students**

I have a good day with teachers when they:

- Spend time alone with me, give extra help, eat together, invite me to do things, talk to me like one of the popular kids.
- Play a game and celebrate birthdays, have special programs, or have fun, go places/field trips.
- Give rewards (nice notes, say nice things, make you kid of the week, get a star, snacks, free time, extra recess time, free assignments [when you can skip an assignment], stickers), privately let me know I did a good job, hugs me, let me know I'm doing OK.
- Don't holler, get on my nerves, leave no marks on me, are in a good mood, smile, are cheerful, sing, give hugs, stay cool, don't yell, wait for me at the door.
- Don't send me to principal's office, don't give naughty notes.
- Protect me from other kids who pick on me.
- Read to me.
- Let me talk, give me a chance.
- Help me get work done, let me help do chores for the teacher.
- Push me to get work done.
- Listen to me; look at me, talk to **me**, tell me how nice I look.
- Help me understand, keep me busy and give me lots of work.
- Do not push people on me that don't want to work with me.

I have a good day with classmates when we:

- Don't get mad for stupid reasons; don't fight, push, or throw things.
- Talk to one another, don't ignore each other.
- Help each other with work, study together, work on the computer together.
- Go places together, share.
- Don't tease, don't make fun of one another, don't bug each other, don't argue, don't gossip about one another, don't call each other names.
- Invite each other to do things.
- Work together in groups, group activities.
- Have fun together, jokes, laugh together, play together.
- Show up.
- Pay attention.
- Compliment each other, cheer for each other.
- Cooperate.

I have a good day with friends when we:

- Get along, treat each other nice, no fighting, no arguing.
- Share things.
- Do things together, play without cheating.
- Try to help each other, compliment each other.
- Make each other feel good, share secrets, talk.
- Don't share private secrets with others.
- Stay at each other's home.
- Understand it's OK to play with someone else.
- Don't get caught in someone else's mess.
- Get each other involved—talk each other into something fun.
- Apologize for being wrong or for doing something that wasn't right.

What happens in school when I get a sense of achievement:

- Get to be a leader, get a spot on the team.
- Get to work on things that interest me.
- Right answers, good work, rewards and compliments, hugs and kisses, good note sent home.
- Fun, win prizes.
- Doing well in school, pass a test, get an "A," get a good test paper on a hard subject.
- Help others, get a pat on the back, invited to be a helper.
- Finish work, finish work on time, reach goals.
- Knowing I learned something new.
- When I can see something in my mind.
- When I improve.
- When I know my facts.
- When my group wins.
- Do things right, when I remember all my stuff.
- When I make somebody happy.
- When I get certificates/good results from Principal.
- Get through the day without trouble and somebody notices.
- Practicing then doing well in competition.
- Try something new and achieve it.

I have a good day with teachers when they:

- Make class fun, are happy, make me laugh, play with me.
- Let you ask questions, doesn't talk too much.
- Say Hi, talk to me, write notes to me.
- Treat you nice even if they are in a bad mood, act happy.
- Give you help, give you extra help, allow enough time to get things done, give me time to work on homework at the end of the day, let me alone to do things by myself.
- Are not mad at me, don't nag.
- Explain things so you are sure of yourself.
- Don't give too much homework, small assignments.
- Treat us equally.
- Don't yell at you.
- Make things interesting, assign a variety of things so I don't get bored, explain what is trying to be taught, does extraordinary things.
- Give me rewards, say I do a good job when I do, tell others about my good job.
- Don't get me into trouble, don't call on me if my hand is not up.
- Answer all my questions, wants to know my opinion, finish assignments on time.
- Celebrate birthdays.
- Help me with my problems, understand when I have a problem.
- Let me be responsible, give me responsibility.

I have a good day with classmates when we:

- Help each other with work.
- Are not mouthy, don't fight.
- Don't make fun of each other, hassle.
- Don't bother each other when we don't want to be bothered.
- Get to work, get work done, come prepared for class.
- Have parties and games we like, celebrate special occasions, laugh together.
- Help each other with a problem, are willing to help with a problem.
- Talk to each other.
- Listen in class, listen to each other, ask questions that help each other learn, agree on what is to be done.
- Give each other approval.
- Don't act out so the teacher has to stop and discipline us, cooperate with the teacher.
- Are courteous.
- Do activities instead of teacher talking, do activities together.
- Invite each other to go places and do things.

I have a good day with friends when we:

- Don't tease too much.
- Help with chores and school work.
- Have fun, play.
- Talk to each other, smile at each other.
- Find something to do that we like, sometimes do things we are not supposed to do as long as it is not really bad.
- Win when competing.
- Say what is on our minds.
- Plan things together.
- Do things for each other.
- Invite us to go someplace or do something.
- Don't boss each other around.
- Get through the day without trouble.
- Have no disagreements, are in a good mood, get along, no fights, not mad at each other, don't ignore each other, don't talk behind our back.
- Dare to meet a new person.

What happens in school when I get a sense of achievement:

- Worked hard during school day, get homework done in school.
- Get work completed, get a **big** assignment done.
- Get good grades, especially the best; pass a subject.
- Remember information.
- Do well when a project is really hard, do better than others/sometimes better than everybody.
- Teacher takes a personal interest in what I've done.
- Teacher says I'm doing well.
- When I make it to class/school on time.
- Doing what I am supposed to.
- Working fast because I understand, getting things done quickly.
- Understand what I am doing.
- Finish things on my own.
- Sports.
- Get compliments for work by teachers and others, teacher tells others about my good work, teacher recognizes me by name, teacher asks for my opinion and pays attention to it.
- Help others or give ideas to others
- Do something different from the rest of the crowd.

I have a good day with teachers when they:

- Greet me entering class.
- Look at me.
- Are willing to help, take time to help me.
- Have a good attitude, don't bring problems to class.
- Encourage me, compliment me, want to know my opinions, point out my strengths as well as my weaknesses, lets me ask questions.
- Have fun, good mood, don't argue, humor, games.
- When they don't call on me in class because I hate to answer questions in front of class.
- Are organized, get work back on time, know what we are doing for the day and get at it, don't waste time.
- Listen, be patient.
- Teach something valuable, no mickey mouse, explain things so I can understand.
- Are on time, in class before students show up.
- Recognize me, recognize me by name, talk to me about things other than school.
- Change routines, different techniques, creative.
- Give me a chance, involve me in discussion, demonstrate they want me to understand, ask me to help them.
- Let me work at my own pace, don't get delayed by others.
- Are fair, don't blame or criticize, don't nag, don't preach at me.
- Come to me to check how things are going, let me talk to them about my problems.
- Talk to me, small discussion before class, form groups around the teacher's desk.

I have a good day with classmates when we:

- Are having fun, good mood.
- Help each other, help with homework, accept opinions of each other, let each other be part of the group when everyone is equal and treated alike.
- Leave each other alone to get work done.
- Give respect to teachers, don't get them in a bad mood.
- Get involved in class discussions, talk to each other, come prepared for class.
- Celebrate special events.
- Don't pick on each other, don't make fun of me in class, no put-downs.
- Are in group work, work together to accomplish one thing, can get active and out of our seats.
- Don't let popularity get in the way.
- Give each other ideas, ask questions in class, rely on me for help/answers.
- When they mind their own business, leave me alone, don't bother me.
- Celebrate special events, share same concerns.

I have a good day with friends when we:

- Can joke around, **pretend** nothing is serious.
- Have a pleasant time, no grudges, treat each other positively, give support, encourage each other, smile, don't talk behind our back.
- Trust each other, agree with each other.
- We help each other make decisions, give each other ideas, **care for each other**, help solve problems, just being there, don't leave me alone when I need help.
- Get a chance to be together, get a chance to be together with those of my own choice, celebrate important events like birthdays, stay at each other's house, go to some classes together, eat lunch together.
- Write to each other, chance to pass notes.
- Break up fights.

What happens in school when I get a sense of achievement:

- Get good grades, get an "A," pass a test.
- Do good work on a project, satisfied, get work posted up as a good example, get to class on time with all the things I need.
- Others compliment my work.
- Someone says "Hi," "Good Job," encourages me, praises me when I am right.
- Make it through the day without going to the office.
- Learn by mistakes, mistakes are OK.
- Liked and respected.
- When things go the way I want them to.
- Able to raise my hand with a right answer.
- Get work in on time, something completed in classroom, get my work done so I don't have to take it home.
- Not monitored all the time and still get work done.
- Choose your teachers and classes; sports.
- Understand a new idea; good communication.
- My brain is full and my body is tired.
- Perform well in front of others.
- When somebody "really" needs me, when I make somebody happy.
- Selected for student council, selected to be a leader, selected student of the month.

**Composite of Elementary, Middle School/Junior High, and Senior High Students Responses
Interviews with 408 Students – 177 Elementary, 117 Junior High, 114 Senior High**

I have a good day with teachers when they:

I have a good day with classmates when we:

-
- Spend time alone with us, check with us to see how things are going, give extra help, eat together, are willing to help, talk about personal problems, read/talk to us, lets us help, invite us to do things.
 - Play games and celebrate birthdays, have special programs, have fun, make us laugh; play with us, go places/field trips.
 - Don't holler or get on our nerves, don't yell, leave no marks on us, don't argue, are not made at us, don't bring problems to class, no nagging, don't preach at us.
 - Are in a good mood, smile, cheerful, nice even in a bad mood, act happy, have a good attitude, joke around, sing, give hugs, stay cool.
 - Look at us, greet us upon entering class, wait for us at the door, recognize us, say Hi, tells us how nice we look, treat us equally, no favorites.
 - Listen to us, let us talk, talks to us, small discussion before class, form groups around the teacher's desk, want to know our opinion, give us a chance, ask us to help them, let us ask questions, involve us in discussions, understands when we are having a problem, do not call on us if our hands are down, are patient.
 - Help us understand, explain things so you are sure of yourself and what the teacher is trying to teach, answer all of our questions, help us get work done, give us time to work on homework at the end of the day, give examples.
 - When a teacher doesn't push people on us that don't want to work with us.
 - Help us with our problems, don't send us to principal's office, don't give out naughty notes, are fair, don't blame or criticize, cooperate, protect us from other kids who pick on us, talk to us about things other than school.
 - Point out strengths as well as weaknesses.
 - Organized, get work back on time, identify what is to be done and gets us at it, don't waste time, help us finish assignments on time, are on time or before students show up, allow enough time to get work finished, pushes us.
 - Teach something valuable, no mickey mouse, teach hard and easy stuff, demonstrate that they want us to understand.
 - Make things interesting, give interesting assignments, give a variety of experiences so we don't get bored, keep us busy, give lots of work, doesn't talk so much, different techniques, creative, do extraordinary things, let us work at our own pace so we don't get delayed by others, make learning fun.
 - Let us alone to do things by ourselves, give us responsibility; don't call on me in class because I hate to answer questions in front of the class.
 - Give us rewards; privately says I do a good job when I do, tell others about our good work, give out nice notes, get a star, make us kids of the week, provide snacks, give us some free time, extra recess time, free assignments (when you can skip an assignments), let us know we are doing OK; compliments us, wants us to do well, and work hard, gives us stickers.
 - Don't tease – make fun of each other, don't bug each other, don't argue, don't bother each other when we don't want to be bothered, don't judge each other, no put-downs, mind our own business, leave each other along.
 - Celebrate special occasions, have fun and are in a good mood, joke, play with each other, laugh together, get active and out of our seats.
 - Help each other with a problem, are willing to help each other, listen and respond, include each other, treat each other alike/equally, share the same concerns, rely on each other for help/answers, do things together.
 - Talk to each other, say hello in the morning, share, go places together, do activities together instead of teacher talking, work together in groups, invite each other to do things.
 - Show up, keep commitments.
 - Compliment each other, cheer for each other, laugh together, play together.
 - Don't ignore each other, talk to each other, act like we like each other.
 - Give respect to the teacher, don't get them in bad mood, don't act up which requires time for discipline, cooperate with the teacher, pay attention, don't disrupt class.
 - Get to work, get work done, work hard.
 - Are not mouthy, don't fight, no one gets mad for stupid reasons, don't push or throw things, don't call each other names.
 - Help each other with work, study together, work on the computer together, work together to accomplish one thing.
 - Get involved in class discussions, talk to each other, give each other ideas, be prepared for class, ask questions that can help us learn, agree on what is to be done.
 - Are courteous.
 - Don't let popularity get in the way.

**Composite of Elementary, Middle School/Junior High, and Senior High Students Responses
Interviews with 408 Students – 177 Elementary, 117 Junior High, 114 Senior High**

I have a good day with friends when we:

What happens in school when I get a sense of achievement:

-
- Don't tease too much, don't talk behind our back.
 - Trust each other, don't share personal secrets all over the place, keep secrets.
 - Can joke around, pretend nothing is serious, have fun, play without cheating, be together—stay at each other's home, celebrate important events.
 - When we don't get caught in the middle of someone else's mess.
 - Get each other involved, talk each other into something fun.
 - Make each other feel good, talk and share secrets, do things for each other, say what is on our minds.
 - Spend time together each day, just be there, don't leave each other alone when we need help, go to some classes together, each lunch together.
 - Help each other make decisions, give each other ideas, help each other with work/projects, care for each other, always be there for each other, help solve problems, plan things together, win together, listen and understand each other sometimes do things we are not supposed to do as long as it is not really bad.
 - Have a pleasant time, no grudges, treat each other positively, give support, encourage each other, smile.
 - Write to each other.
 - Have no disagreements, not mad at each other, don't ignore each other, don't fuss when somebody else wins, get through a day without trouble.
 - Dare to meet a new person.
 - Don't boss each other around.
 - Invite each other to go someplace or be on a team or special group.
 - Break up fights.
 - Understand when we want to play with someone else.
 - Apologize for being wrong or doing something that wasn't right.
 - Choose your teacher or classes.
 - Learn by mistakes—mistakes are OK.
 - Get good grades, especially the best, pass a subject, get the right answer, do something right, able to raise our hand with the right answer, do well when a project is really hard, good note sent home, get a good test paper on a hard subject, get an "A," get a **big** assignment done, reach goals.
 - Selected to be a leader, help others, perform well in front of others, selected to be a teacher, asked to help when teachers ask for help, recognized for being loyal, praised when right.
 - When we can make somebody happy.
 - Do good work on a project and feel satisfied, **get work done**, get work posted up as a good example, work hard during the school day, finish work on time, get something done in the classroom, get work done without constant monitoring, get work done so we don't have to take it home, do better than others/sometimes better than everybody.
 - Do what we are supposed to, understand what we are doing/know what is going on, work fast because we understand, know our facts.
 - When my brain is full and my body is tired.
 - Teacher takes a personal interest in what we've done, good communication with the teacher, get a pat on the back, liked and respected, not monitored all the time.
 - Sports, get a spot on a team.
 - When someone "really" needs me.
 - Selected for student council, selected student of the month.
 - Teacher says my name in class, pays attention to my opinions.
 - When things go the way we want them to.
 - Knowing we learned something new, when we improve, when we win, understand a new idea, pass a test, gain knowledge.
 - Others compliment our work, someone encourages us, get compliments from the teacher, teacher tells others about our good work, teacher says we are doing well, teacher takes a personal interest in what we have done, win prizes, recognized for improving, selected to be first, first to use things and books.
 - When we get certificates/good results from principal.
 - Get through the day without trouble and somebody notices.
 - Do something different from the rest of the crowd.
 - When we make it to class/school on time with all the things we need.
 - Make it through the day without going to the office.
 - Practicing then doing well in competition.