

Success At A Waldorf Public Charter School

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to define success at a Waldorf Public Community Charter School (WPCS) in Colorado and analyze how success plays out in the classroom. The difference between how WPCS defines success and how traditional Public School defines success was also analyzed. A review of literature was conducted to determine how traditional Public School and Waldorf Schools define success. Two questionnaires were administered through surveys given to the WPCS community. The first survey, created on Qualtrics®, was administered on the computer to the adult community members and focused on defining success at WPCS. In general, the responses regarding WPCS specifically were positive. The second survey – the Colorado Education Initiative Student Perception Survey – was administered on paper to students in grades 3-7. After the surveys were collected and the data was entered into a spreadsheet, themes were coded and conclusions were made. A WPCS community definition of success was written. The WPCS definition of success was based on 8 themes that were common throughout responses – passion/engagement, well rounded, joy, good citizen/mindful, determination, meet individualized goals, confidence/self-efficacy, and growth. Results from the Student Perception survey were analyzed to determine strengths and weaknesses in classroom experiences. Recommendations were given to support the Public Waldorf school movement. One recommendation was to make clearer the WPCS valued outcomes so that teachers do not end up stuck trying to figure out which outcomes they should be striving for.

Success At A Waldorf Public Charter School

What are Waldorf Schools? Why are they important in our world today? Rudolf Steiner developed Waldorf Education in the early 20th century. Waldorf education principles come from an understanding of what a child needs during development (Waldorf Education, 2015). The whole child matures in Waldorf education through attention to engaging the child's intellectual, physical, spiritual, aesthetic, moral, and emotional proficiency in every aspect of the learning process (Easton, 1997). Learning is developmentally appropriate and experiential so as to educate the child's emotional connection to the process. The arts are incorporated into almost all aspects of learning and teachers work to instill a love of learning in all students while supporting the growth of their individuality. Waldorf education does not focus on outcomes and testing but instead on experiencing the learning process and growing. Therefore, there is not a strong need for testing in Waldorf education because the focus is more on encouraging enthusiasm for learning (Waldorf Education, 2015). Waldorf education emphasizes human relationships and a comprehensive view of each individual student as an evolving human with a unique past, present, and future. Time is given for students to develop and build relationships with teachers. Ideally, one teacher remains with a class for their full eight years. Subjects are repeated in different forms throughout the years and this repetition strengthens students understanding of the material on many levels. A "Main lesson" is taught every day for a block of weeks as another way of incorporating repetition and allowing students to become immersed for an extended period of time in what they are learning. Waldorf education is designed to support the distinctive

challenges, needs, and learning styles that accompany every learner (Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, 2013).

This study focused on a relatively new Waldorf “Inspired” Public Charter School that opened in 2012. According to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), WPCS needs to improve its state standardized test scores and so WPCS is therefore considered a “turnaround” school in 2014. A “turnaround” school is a school that is struggling in the categories of academic achievement, academic growth, and academic growth gaps. Based on the CDE criteria, WPCS is in need of improvement support (CDE, 2016). The school is improving today but still facing some issues. In the 2015/2016 school year, as the students move up in grade level, so does the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the Beginning of Year (BOY) and Middle of Year (MOY) targets. WPCS is attempting to be a Waldorf school while struggling to meet state standards (WPCS Target and Performance Data). What is WPCS’s desired outcome and how does meeting these standards fit into the schools goals? How do desired outcomes in Waldorf schools vary from these standards?

Charter schools in Colorado are public schools operating under a “charter” contract. WPCS operates under the Colorado Charter School Institute, which is a non-district charter school authorizer (CSI, 2016). Charter schools have flexibility in terms of curriculum, but because they are still public schools, they are required to have an educational program that meets state standards (CDE, 2016). How do contrasting expectations between state standards and Waldorf curriculum affect the outcomes in Waldorf public charter schools?

The purpose of this study was to define “success” at WPCS and determine how it plays out in the classroom. The definition of success at WPCS was predicted to be different than the basic state standard definition of success at traditional public schools. In order to understand Waldorf Public schools, Public Schools and Waldorf Schools definitions of success must be understood. Can a Waldorf Public Charter School adhere to the Waldorf instructional principles and outcomes while maintaining a clear definition of success that also meets State Standards?

Review of Literature

Waldorf schools

Waldorf-inspired charter schools are becoming more common today. In 2010 there were about a dozen public Waldorf schools and today there are over 50 (Pappano, 2011). Waldorf schools focus on experiential education so that students develop a love of learning and connection to the world around them (Waldorf Education, 2015). Instead of being told how a cube functions in geometry, students build a cube out of paper and physically discover and experience it on their own. Petrash (2010) explains Waldorf education places a strong value on holistic education. Students in Waldorf schools develop self-confidence and relationships with others while being challenged with rigorous curriculums that are relevant to each student (Oberman, 2008). In order to understand the potential Waldorf-inspired public schools have, we must understand their definition of success and how the desired outcomes vary from Public Schools. The information about Waldorf schools, provided in this literature review, is held as the basis of understanding about what is defined as success in Waldorf education.

Public school definition of success

The definition of academic success today is very complex and often not fully understood. Although the general public defines academic success very broadly, Grade Point Average (GPA) is the most common ways of measuring success and therefore do not always show the complexities of what is sometimes deemed “success” (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015). Success in the public school system is very focused on outcomes. These outcomes are measured by standardized assessments. To many educators, annual assessments are very important. Testing is believed to provide important information to education stakeholders and parents (Morial, 2015). The Common Core Standards are a set of standards that were developed as a set of guidelines to ensure student success after high school (Common Core Standards, 2015). The Common Core Standards Initiative states that if students meet these standards then they will be successful. Interestingly, these standards focus on only math and English language arts. Although the common core standards address critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, they do not dive into the deeper education that a Waldorf curriculum provides.

Raywid (2002) explains student graduation rate is another way to measure success in public schools. If a student makes it through the public school system and meets state standards, then graduating is considered a success. Most educational state standards focus only on basic skills and information. Raywid (2002) recognizes that these standards do not address everything that is important to learn in school and so she lists six things she believes are also worth measuring. She explains how the things that are being measured in schools today to determine students’ success, are only measuring what can be tested on paper. All the other contributors to students’ success are not being measured and so the results of these tests might not be showing what the students have actually

learned. By only focusing on GPA and test scores to determine success, student's potential to show what they have learned as human beings is limited. It is important to recognize these limitations of measuring success in public schools today and how this affects the community's view of success.

Waldorf School's definition of success

Waldorf education, considers success on multiple levels including many that cannot easily be measured. Success to one Waldorf teacher might be that their students feel at home when in the classroom and they have a sense of community (Petrash, 2010). To another teacher success might involve their students learning to think in a holistic way about what is important in life and while building social concerns that go beyond their own personal interest (Easton, 1997). Waldorf teachers are encouraged to develop the spiritual, interpersonal, and aesthetic qualities of students (Easton, 1997). Easton (1997) does not highlight the importance of test scores or meeting state standards for Waldorf education, implying that the learning experience is valued more than the outcomes. Waldorf Education not only educates the head, but also the heart and hands. Giving a student a Waldorf education is like giving them the confidence and toolbox to meet any challenge in life (Ruenzel, 1995).

Students in Waldorf schools have multisensory experiences that evoke creativity and imagination. Students are encouraged to play and supported in developing the left side of their brain. Playing is crucial for children to become socially capable beings, be able to manage stress, and grow problem-solving abilities (Wenner, 2009). Early childhood play not only develops cognitive abilities but also emotional capacities. In our society today, play is being cut out of children's' daily lives (Reading, 2007). In Waldorf

schools however, play is just as important as ever. Children in Waldorf schools are given the opportunity to use play as a way of connecting all that is going on in their lives and grow in their surroundings (Almon, 2003).

Many students have described their Waldorf Education as one of “rigor, relevance, and relationships” (Oberman, 2008). Waldorf Education supports the idea that “standardized testing is not an accurate or complete reflection of a student’s knowledge, intellectual capacities, or ability to learn” and so instead of focusing on these seemingly pointless assessments, Waldorf educators attempt to instill a love of learning in students through experiences – intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences (Waldorf Education, 2015). Waldorf curriculum educates the will of students and gives them the skills to control their mindset (De Souza, 2012).

The type of Waldorf School has an impact on what is considered success. Private Waldorf schools are concerned with adhering to Rudolf Steiner’s theories (Bamford & Utne, 1991) and curriculum with some variation based on the community. Because these schools are private, they have complete control over the curriculum and the funding is largely tuition based. Success in private Waldorf schools is therefore defined very much by the community and the process of educating in a holistic way. Public Waldorf schools on the other hand attempt to incorporate as much of the Waldorf methodology as possible while still meeting the required State and local standards. In order to receiving government funding, public Waldorf schools must meet certain standards.

Contrasting Expectations: Waldorf Public Schools

The basic foundation of Waldorf education goes against public Waldorf schools. In 1919 when Rudolf Steiner was first asked to develop a school, one of the conditions he

put forth was that “the teachers, those individuals actually in contact with the children, have primary control of the school, with minimum interference from the state or from economic sources” (Waldorf Education, 2015). The idea of a public Waldorf charter school therefore goes against one of the key conditions that Steiner proposed when designing Waldorf education.

In Waldorf public charter schools, students are still held to State and local standards. In Waldorf education, the curriculum does not match these standards. Waldorf education goes at a completely different pace (Appendix 2) than the Common Core Standards and focuses on a less testable form of success (Waldorf Education, 2015). Chauncey (2006) argues education that encourages artistic thought should be every child’s right. In public schools today though, these classes that support creativity are the ones being cut (Chauncey, 2006). The differences between Waldorf and Public schools go very deep.

In our public schools today, students in kindergarten are becoming more stressed than ever before – they are losing the love of learning that Waldorf schools encourage. In elementary school there is frequent student burnout. Upon reaching high school, many students have almost given up on their education. These students by this point cannot think deeply or creatively. How students develop as adults goes back to play in the early years – students need this time to develop and without it, they are facing major difficulties (Almon, 1992). Waldorf education may not have the same test scores in the early grades but as students graduate and move on in life, 91% of Waldorf are active in lifelong education because of the joy and passion for learning that was instilled in the early years of their education (Waldorf Education, 2015).

Waldorf schools prepare students for a future of creative problem solving and connecting the seemingly unconnected (Petrash, 2010). The Waldorf approach instills creative thinking that is necessary for our world today (Almon, 1992). The focus of Waldorf is much more process oriented than traditional public schools with assessed outcomes. Why is it that students in public schools who score well on tests and meet state standards are considered more prepared for success than students who do not score well but have a deep understanding of how to think creatively and build connections and relationships across time and space? What is being measured as success? Parents, teachers, and students define success in many different ways and so in order to even begin measuring success, it must be defined first (Watkins, 2014).

Waldorf education provides an alternative to test-focused education. Instead of preparing for the test, student's whole beings are prepared for life (Oberman, 2008). The connection between Waldorf and traditional Common Core driven public schools is therefore a difficult one. Chauncey (2006) addresses bridging this gap by suggesting that schools need to focus more on art and play and not just doing well on tests. Chauncey (2006) provides evidence about the importance of educating the child holistically. Waldorf Education as an example of this kind of holistic education.

Chauncey (2006) wants the reader to have an understanding of the benefits of a child-centered holistic educational method like Waldorf. The nature and goals of Waldorf are difficult to assess with the standard assessments used today and so Chauncey (2006) argues that there needs to be a deeper kind of assessment that actually assesses what Waldorf schools are trying to teach. Waldorf charter schools are therefore even harder to assess because they are attempting to combine two very different methods of

education. Teacher relationships are very important for student success and in traditional Waldorf schools, these relationships are often so strong that teachers can track student growth without needing formal assessments (Phillippo, 2013). Assessments that look deeper than skills that can be measured on paper, could help show whether or not Waldorf schools are successful in what they are trying to impart to their students. In order for Waldorf methods to be incorporated into public schools, educators must have a well-defined mission, purpose, and expected outcomes and come up with a better way to assess success.

Methods

Participants

The participants in the Qualtrics© Survey consisted of parents, teachers, administrators, staff, board members, and students attending a public charter Waldorf School. Information about age, ethnicity, and gender was not collected. The participants were selected by convenience sampling and the survey was emailed out to the entire community. The sample size drew from the parents, teachers, administrators, and staff at the school. Of these potential respondents, there were a total of 64 responses to the Qualtrics© survey. The majority of the respondents were parent/guardian (Figure 1). There were no specific requirements to be able to take the survey so responses came from anybody interested in participating. All the participants willingly consented to taking the survey.

Students from grade 3 to grade 7 were the participants involved in the Student Perception Survey (Figure 2). There were four 3rd grade classes with a total of 54 survey responses, six 4th grade classes with a total of 67 responses, three 5th grade classes with a

total of 46 responses, one 6th grade class with 18 responses, and five 7th grade classes with a total of 66 responses. The total sample size was 251. This survey did not specifically record data regarding gender.

Apparatus and Materials

A survey made on Qualtrics© was used to collect information about how the WPCS Community defines success (See Appendix 1). The survey included questions about the participant's relationship to WPCS and their views on students' success. There were a total of 10 questions. Four of the ten questions were multiple choice. One of the questions asked participants to respond to statements on a Likert agreement scale about their experience at WPCS. The Likert scale was formatted with the options "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "agree," or "strongly agree." The Likert scale was designed using an acquiescence response set so that participants did not automatically respond the same way to every question. The remaining questions were open written response. Computers were used to take the survey online on Qualtrics©.

The Colorado Education Initiative has created a Student Perception Survey (2016), which teachers use to gain feedback about their students' perception of their education. In the survey, there were 34 statements that used a Likert scale and participants had to respond to the statements with "never," "some of the time," "most of the time," and "always." The statements in this survey were also arranged in an acquiescence response set. There were four main categories of questions – Classroom Management, Student Centered, Classroom Community, and Student Learning. The questions were not grouped in these categories while students were taking the survey but the results were later analyzed in regards to these categories.

Question #7 asked, “how do you think success at WPCS varies from success at more traditional public schools?” The responses from this question were used to analyze how WPCS’s community definition of success plays out in the classroom.

Procedure

This study was emergent. The original interest was to determine if WPCS was successful based on the community definition of success. Through research, it was decided that a conclusion about WPCS’s success could not be made until better forms of assessment were made to measure if WPCS was accomplishing its desired outcomes.

The data for the study was collected mostly through surveys. Information about what outcomes WPCS values, and whether standardized tests assess what they value, was collected through informal conversations with teachers and administrators at WPCS. A survey was created on Qualtrics© and sent to the director of WPCS. The director then distributed the survey by emailing it out to the community. The survey focused on defining success and personal experiences regarding success at WPCS. Before completing the survey, participants had to check a box that said they consented to taking the survey.

After collecting the survey results, the data was analyzed. Descriptive statistics were calculated and recorded such as means and frequencies. Graphs were created in order to visually determine trends. If a class average was exceptionally high or low in one of the four categories, it was analyzed deeper in order to determine the specific question or questions that caused the average to be higher or lower than the other classes.

A graph of responses to Question #4 was created on Qualtrics©. Question #4 asked participants to respond to statements (See Appendix 1). Question #5 asked

participants to write their definition of success. The responses from this question were grouped into themes. Some of the responses very clearly fell under a certain theme and others were carefully considered and either a new theme was created, or they were put under an already existing one. The exact wording of the themes sometimes varied from the participant's written definition but the general idea was never changed. These themes from the open-ended question were then coded and analyzed for frequency. A graph was created to show the most common themes in regards to defining success in the WPCS community. After determining the most common themes, a generalized statement of what WPCS community defines as success was created.

The second survey, The Colorado Education Initiative Student Perception Survey, was only administered to students. This survey was used as a way of getting student insight into how effective the teaching methods are at WPCS. The Student Perception (SP) survey was administered on paper to several classes at WPCS ranging from 3rd – 7th grades. Class teachers left the room while students took the survey. An adult, who had no connection to the class or teacher, remained in the room in order to ensure students were behaving while taking the survey.

Convenience sampling was used to select the participants for the Student Perception survey. The Student Perception survey was given to teachers who were willing to administer it during their class. The response rate in the classes it was administered was assumed to be 100% because although teachers did not force students to take the survey, they made it clear that students were expected to complete it.

After the Student Perception Surveys were completed, they were collected and the data was entered into a spreadsheet. The data was coded so that the responses to the

questions could be analyzed. “Never” was coded as 1, “some of the time” was coded as 2, “most of the time” was coded as 3, and “always” was coded as 4. The questions were grouped into four categories – Classroom Management, Student Centered, Classroom Community, and Student Learning. Averages of the categories were calculated for each class involved. From these averages, conclusions were made. When an average in a certain category was lower or higher than expected, it was analyzed deeper and the specific question that lowered or raised the average was determined.

Results and Discussion

This study focused on defining success for WPCS and seeing if and how the desired outcomes are reached in the classroom. Do standardized assessments assess what the WPCS community values? The WPCS’s definition of success was expected to vary from a traditional public school definition and this was true. The results from the two surveys administered provide a basic understanding of how adults in the WPCS community see success and what students experience in the classroom. After the Qualtrics© surveys were collected and the data was coded and analyzed, a WPCS community definition of success was written. In general, most of the participants in the Qualtrics© survey had a positive view of Waldorf methods and the Waldorf Public Charter School (WPCS) specifically.

The responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, and 12 were purely information about the participants and not intended to be analyzed on their own. Question #1 was not analyzed because it was simply an introduction to what the survey explaining to participants why it was important. Question #2 asked participants to consent to taking the survey. For the purpose of understanding who the participants were, Question #3

asked what the participant's relationship was to WPCS (Figure 1). Question #4 had similar responses as Question #3 because it asked participants if they had a child attending WPCS. Question #9 asked what year the participant's child started at WPCS. The data collected from Question #9 did not end up being used in the study. Question #11 and #12 asked participants about being contacted for further questions.

Question #5 asked participants to respond to statements regarding their views of WPCS. Of the 52 respondents to Statement 5.1, 3 parents strongly disagreed (Table 1). Out of the 54 respondents to Statement 5.2, 27 agreed and 13 strongly agreed (Table 1). WPCS success is positively supported by the fact that 40 of the 54 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with Statement 5.2. Of the 53 respondents to Statement 5.3, 18 agreed and 26 strongly agreed. Most respondents to Statement 5.4, 24 of the 52, strongly disagree which again, is a good sign for WPCS (See Table 1). Statement 5.4 and 5.5 are different than the first three because they frame the statement in a negative way to receive different responses. Of the 54 respondents to Statement 5.5, 21 strongly disagreed and 16 disagreed. This means that 69% of respondents believed standardized assessment is a bad tool for measuring success. Most respondents were expected to disagree with Statement 5.5 simply because of the nature of Waldorf schools and how they deemphasize testing. These responses were a little surprising though because most parents responded to Statement 5.3 saying they thought Waldorf inspired methods were good, but with Waldorf inspired public charter schools, testing is required. The issue with this testing comes from the tension between WPCS desired outcomes and the Public School desired outcomes, which are the outcomes being assessed in standardized assessments. Contrary to the previous Statement (5.5) on standardized testing, most

respondents to the last Statement 5.6 agree that WPCS created assessments are important for measuring success. Of the 53 respondents to this statement, only 1 disagreed (Table 1).

Question #6 asked participants to define WPCS success. The eight most frequent themes respondents defined success as were used to come up with the community definition. The eight themes in order of most common to least were: passion/engagement, well rounded, joy, good citizen/mindful, determination, meet individualized goals, confidence/self-efficacy, and growing (Table 2).

Passion and engagement for learning was the most common theme that participants used to define success. Of the 42 respondents to question #6, 43% wrote that passion and engagement was a key indicator of success. There was also a large percentage (29%) that believed being a well-rounded human being was important. According to the WPCS community, many different qualities that are deeper than visible performance define success in education. A successful student is happy, passionate, and engaged in lifelong learning. They face challenges confidently and are determined. Successful students are intrinsically motivated to meet individualized goals. Learning is about the whole human and so being successful in school also means being well rounded and successful in life. A successful student is a mindful citizen. Self-efficacy is also a key part of being a successful student. Success to the WPCS community is less about the product and more about the process of growing.

Question #6 and #7 were slightly repetitive and so the responses to question #7 were analyzed in relation to question #6, which was used to define success. Question #7 asked, “what do you think success means in terms of your child’s/children’s education?”

There were only 34 responses to this question. The reason there were so few responses in comparison to other questions may have been because this question was so similar to the previous question (#5) that respondents did not have anything more to add.

Question #8 asked participants “how do you think success at WPCS varies from success at more traditional public schools?” The responses to this question were grouped into themes and coded. The most common response (53%) was the theme that WPCS “educates the whole child.” The second most common theme (39%) was the idea that testing is not as important at WPCS as it is at traditional public schools. Although WPCS has its own community definition of success, the school still has to administer state assessments. These assessments focus on the state definition of “success” which is based on test scores – it therefore does not mean as much to the WPCS community. The test scores are used to show “success” at WPCS to the state, but the community has a much more in depth understanding of student success.

According to the WPCS mission statement; test scores are not their focus. Students do not sit in desks completing worksheet after worksheet. An education at WPCS involves the whole child and information is not just memorized but instead learning is experienced and digested over time. Out of the 38 responses to question #8, only 2 participants responded with negative comments about success at WPCS specifically. There were several examples provided by respondents about how they see success playing out in the classroom at WPCS and how it varies from traditional public schools. According to responses to question #8, at WPCS students are allowed and encouraged to be themselves while learning. Art, music, and rhythm of routine are integrated into almost all aspects of school. Students are assigned chores each day – this

adds to the students' feeling of ownership and self-efficacy throughout their entire educational experience. The classrooms are organized and decorated in a way that gives them a feeling of home. Sense of self is aligned with academics and through different activities, students embody much of what they are learning. Students are inspired to enjoy learning instead of just focusing on grades. Students have classes such as Cooking Arts and Agricultural Arts, which give them an opportunity to explore and learn skills that are not attributed to "success" in public schools. Each grade has a different focus that aligns with where students are developmentally.

Teachers at WPCS are said to go to great lengths to preserve the preciousness of childhood. Despite the pressure in our society today to speed up child development, teachers at WPCS create experiences that nurture the creative exploration of childhood. They strive to consider students' spiritual, emotional, and cognitive development. Teachers understand that regurgitating information is a waste of time. Deep understanding and developing skills takes time and practice. The responses to question #7 suggest that WPCS does not focus on short-term instant academic growth, but instead the metacognition and well-rounded knowledge base that develops over the years. All of the tasks students take part in are designed to engage their whole being. WPCS does not make students conform to the state mandated "success" that is valued at traditional public schools. WPCS gives students support and allows them to develop at their own pace. In accordance with Steiner's curriculum, teachers give students the space because they know they will advance in time when they are ready (Bamford & Utne, 1991).

The community responses to the Qualtrics© Survey about how success is believed to play out in the classroom were very positive. In terms of analyzing success at

WPCS, is interesting to note how positive the majority of parents are in comparison to the results from the Student Perception survey. The results from the Student Perception survey show more of what is actually happening in the classroom as opposed to what is perceived to be happening in the classroom.

The results from the Student Perception Survey were organized into four categories - Classroom Management, Student Centered, Classroom Community, and Student Learning (Figures 9 to 12). The questions for each of these four categories were listed in the Student Perception Survey Toolkit, which is designed to help analyze responses (The Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). The results were analyzed in terms of grade, and then further analyzed in terms of teacher and subject.

All the results calculated for 6th grade are important to acknowledge but do not hold much weight because the sample size for 6th grade consisted of only one class and so the results are therefore based on 18 responses. Any analysis of the 6th grade data cannot be used to make any generalizations or further assumptions. The 6th grade class had the highest average scores in all of the categories except for classroom community (Figures 8-11). Another important aspect of the data that should be noted is that many of the responses may have been from the same students but in different classes.

High averages, relating to positive student perception, were expected. Grades or classes that scored particularly low in a certain category or on a particular question were analyzed further. Grade 3 scored the lowest on average Classroom Management and grade 7 scored the lowest on average Student Learning (Table 3 and Table 5). The averages in the other categories were all relatively close. It makes sense that 3rd grade

would score the lowest on Classroom Management – these students at this age are beginning to understand their independence (WPCS, 2016).

There were four 3rd grade classes that took the Student Perception Survey. The 3rd grade Spanish class had the lowest averages in all categories (See Figure 4). The data from every 3rd grade class was looked at to determine which statements had significantly lower or higher averages than the rest. In the category Student Learning, there was an average score of 1.25 on Statement #18. Statement #18 said, “My teacher writes notes on my work that help me do better next time.” This average of 1.25 indicates that the average participant, across all four 3rd grade classes involved, responded “never.” A common theme throughout the responses from the Qualtrics© survey was that it is important for students to meet individualized goals – if students never get individualized feedback though how are they supposed to do this? Another interesting statement average in the Student Learning category was 1.5 for Statement #9. Statement #9 said, “my teacher uses a lot of different ways to explain things.” This average of 1.5 meant that students responded on average either “never” or “some of the time.” Interestingly on the WPCS’s website under 3rd grade, it is stated that multiple modalities are used when teaching so that students with different learning preferences have the opportunity to learn. Here is a disconnection between the goals of WPCS and what is actually happening in the classroom according to students. If Waldorf methods were stuck to more strictly, this disconnection might not exist. The Student Centered category for 3rd grade also had a surprisingly low average on one statement. Statement #31 said, “My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school.” The average response was 1.13, which means that on average in 3rd grade the students responded “never.” This average was surprisingly low

because a lot of what Waldorf is about is knowing students beyond just learning in the classroom.

In all of the 4th grade classes that took the survey, Classroom Community received the highest or second highest average score (Figure 5). Statement #20, in the Classroom Community category, had the highest average score of 3.64. This statement said, “My teacher cares about me.” This average score of 3.64 means that on average, 4th grade students believed that their teacher “always” cared about them. In 4th grade students are beginning to exhibit their individualities and so it is very important that they feel this support from teachers (WPCS, 2016). In all of the 4th grade classes except Ag Arts, Student Learning was the second highest or highest average. In this 4th grade Ag Arts class, Statement #6 received across the board 1’s, which meant that when students responded to “my teacher makes sure we think hard about things we read and write,” they all said “never.” The negative responses in terms of Agricultural Arts are interesting because Agricultural Arts in concept seems like an opportunity for students to think for themselves and discover, but in reality according to students themselves, this is not the case. In Waldorf education, thinking critically and deeply in all aspects of life is very important and so if Waldorf methodology were more present, it is possible the responses to this statement would be more positive (Oberman, 2008).

In all three 5th grade classes, Classroom Community was the highest average score (Figure 6). Most students said “always” for the majority of the questions under the category Classroom Community. The category Student Centered is relatively low in all three classes (Figure 6). Interestingly, similar to 3rd grade the 5th grade students responded to Statement #31 negatively. Statement #31 – “my teacher knows what my

life is like outside of school” – had one of the lowest average scores. The average score was 1.95, which means on average students responded “some of the time.” Waldorf education, specifically WPCS, claims to focus on the “inner life and natural rhythms of the child” (WPCS, 2016). Responses to the Qualtrics© survey suggest the importance of knowing students as individuals. Although the WPCS vision and responses to the Qualtrics© survey indicate that teachers should know the child and not just the student, students do not feel this is true in practice.

There is not enough data from the 6th grade Student Perception survey to make any generalizations. Observations can be made but they only apply to this specific class. When looking at Figure 7, Classroom Management is low but Student Learning is high, which seems slightly contradictory. Statement #8, which is part of the Student Learning category, received all 4’s except for one 3. This statement said, “in this class, it is more important to understand the lesson than to memorize the answers.” Out of the 18 students, 17 said this statement was always true. A strong focus of Waldorf education is on understanding and experiencing instead of memorizing and so it therefore makes sense that in a Waldorf Charter school students would respond that memorization is less important (Waldorf Education, 2015).

Of the five 7th grade classes that took the survey, two of them have average scores in all categories that are within 0.18 of each other (see Figure 8). Having average scores that are all relatively close to each other, and between 2.5-3.00, shows that these classes are relatively good in all four categories “most of the time.” The lowest average score was in Mike’s class. Statement #17 under the Student Learning category, “my teacher talks to me about my work to help me understand my mistakes,” received an average

score of 1. This score is surprising because it is expected that the teachers would have a close connection with student learning.

These findings are important because WPCS is neither a traditional public school nor a private Waldorf school. In order for WPCS to be successful, the school community must understand what they define as success in the context of a public charter. If WPCS does not have a clear vision of success, then how are teachers expected to align with the school to meet its goals? Teachers, parents, and administrators must recognize that their views on WPCS's success do not completely match up with students report experiencing. There must be communication between all people involved. Children, parents, teachers, and administrators must be in accordance with each other in terms of what is happening and what is desired to be happening.

An unresolved problem that this study leaves is the question of where the disconnect is happening between what WPCS wants to accomplish and what is happening in the classroom according to students. Why are the responses to the Qualtrics© survey so positive and the responses to the Student Perception survey more varied?

Summary and Recommendations

The WPCS definition of success is different than a traditional public school definition of success, which focuses on test scores, meeting standards, and GPA. The definition of success at WPCS is that students are passionate, engaged, and find joy in learning. Successful students are not just students in a classroom but well-rounded citizens. They are determined and meet individualized goals with confidence. Successful students are growing and continuously moving forward. This process focused definition of success is very different the product focused definition that public schools adhere to.

WPCS is stuck in a dilemma. Because they are a public Waldorf School, it is causing issues with the Waldorf approach. The school very much wants to incorporate Waldorf methods but the ideals in theory and the actions in practice are not connected strongly enough. WPCS has stakeholders – public stakeholders – and so they have to follow public rules. The clients of WPCS on the other hand though, while public citizens, are Waldorf clients. It is a difficult balance but in order for it to be successful, the results from the two surveys in this study suggest that WPCS needs to stay more faithful to Waldorf methodology. The teachers, parents, administrators, staff, and board members who responded to the Qualtrics© survey agree on a definition of success that is consistent with Steiner’s definition of success in private public Waldorf schools. The issues that come up from the Student Perception survey all seem to be ones that could be fixed by sticking more rigidly to the Waldorf methodology.

One limitation of this study was that students may have taken the Student Perception survey multiple times and therefore become uninterested in taking the time to read each question fully before answering. There may have also been students in a class who chose not to take the survey at all. Another limitation could have been that not all classes took the Student Perception survey and so the results may be slightly skewed. A future study could be to see how different grades responded differently to the same teacher and subject. A general weakness of this study was the two surveys that were administered – these surveys could have been crafted more carefully to get results that were clearer in answering the question of: what is success at WPCS and how does it play out in the classroom?

This issue of not knowing who or how many times students took the Student Perception Survey could have been avoided if in the research design a unique identifier had been put in the procedure. If a unique identifier had been used, it would have been possible to know if a student took it twice. It is possible that the 6th grade data is just as reliable as all the other grades because students could have taken the survey multiple times in other grades and so the number of students who participated was actually the same. A general conclusion can be made though that the data from this the Student Perception Survey is not predictable particularly in 6th grade. The results are not necessarily and accurate representation of the teaching methods and student perception.

A recommendation for WPCS would be to begin a conversation in the community about what is important and from there set clearer goals. At district board meetings, there is a different audience than the WPCS community. The school district board holds the charter and so although test scores are not highly important to WPCS, they are in to the school district board. It is therefore important that the entire WPCS community is in agreement with what is important to them so that when they are in front of the school board, they can be confident in WPCS's success no matter the test scores and GPA of students. A recommendation for this situation is not to let it interfere with the curriculum and professional development at WPCS. WPCS needs to stay faithful to Waldorf methodology.

Waldorf education has great potential for educating students for the future. A background in Waldorf education provides students with the skills to be strong in the workforce (Petrash, 2010). Waldorf students leave school with a much stronger ability to think creatively than their peers at traditional public schools (Almon, 1992). Not only

does Waldorf education provide a joyful and less stressful alternative to traditional public school, but it also prepares students for all that they may face in our changing world (Easton, 1997). If Waldorf education can become more accessible through public charter schools, then an increased amount of effort should be put into improving the connection between meeting state standards and Waldorf curriculum. Public Waldorf Charter schools with state accountability could become the affordable answer for our future generation.

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List of Tables and Figures**Table 1:** Community member responses to Qualtrics© Survey question #5. Responses on a Likert scale using an acquiescence set. Mean responses are on the right (n = 52 to 54)

#	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total Responses	Mean
1	By enrolling my child in WPCS, I felt my child would be a more successful learner.	3	0	8	17	24	52	4.13
2	I think that in general the students at WPCS are successful.	1	0	13	27	13	54	3.94
3	I think the Waldorf-Inspired method of teaching is successful.	2	0	7	18	26	53	4.25
4	Since enrolling my child, I have found her/him to become less successful as a learner.	24	12	10	5	1	52	1.98
5	I think standardized assessment (eg. PPARC) is an important tool for measuring success.	21	16	12	4	1	54	2.04
6	I think WPCS created assessments are an important tool for measuring success.	0	1	20	21	11	53	3.79

Table 2: The most common themes community members listed in response to the question the Qualtrics© survey asking them to define success at WPCS. n=43

Passion/engagement	18
Well-rounded	12
Joy	9
Good	
citizen/mindful	9
Determination	8
Meet individualized	
goals	8
Confidence/self-	
efficacy	7
Growing	7

Table 3: The average Student Learning by grade. Student Learning is “how teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve” (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

Grade 3	2.95
Grade 4	3.04
Grade 5	3.02
Grade 6	3.21
Grade 7	2.68

Table 4: The average Student Centered Environment by grade. Student Centered Environment is how teachers create an environment that responds to individual students’ backgrounds, strengths, and interests (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

Grade 3	2.59
Grade 4	2.69
Grade 5	2.47
Grade 6	3.06
Grade 7	2.69

Table 5: The average Classroom Management by grade. Classroom Management is how teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

Grade 3	2.57
Grade 4	2.82
Grade 5	2.72
Grade 6	2.95
Grade 7	2.8

Table 6: The average Classroom Community by grade. Classroom Community is how teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

Grade 3	2.77
Grade 4	3.32
Grade 5	3.13
Grade 6	3.01
Grade 7	2.76

Figure 1: Shows who participants were that responded to the Qualtrics© survey. n=54

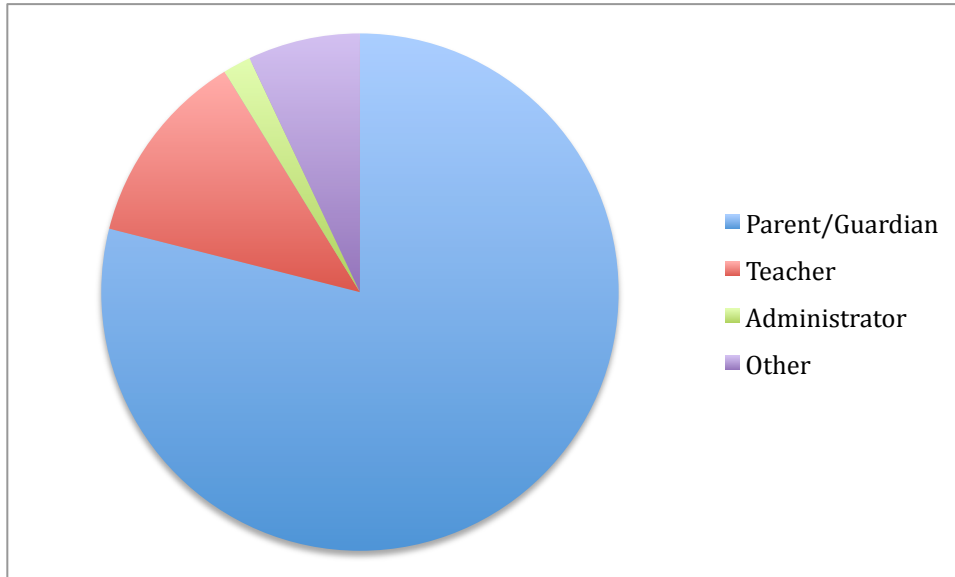


Figure 2: Shows the number of students who responded to the Student Perception Survey in each grade. n=251

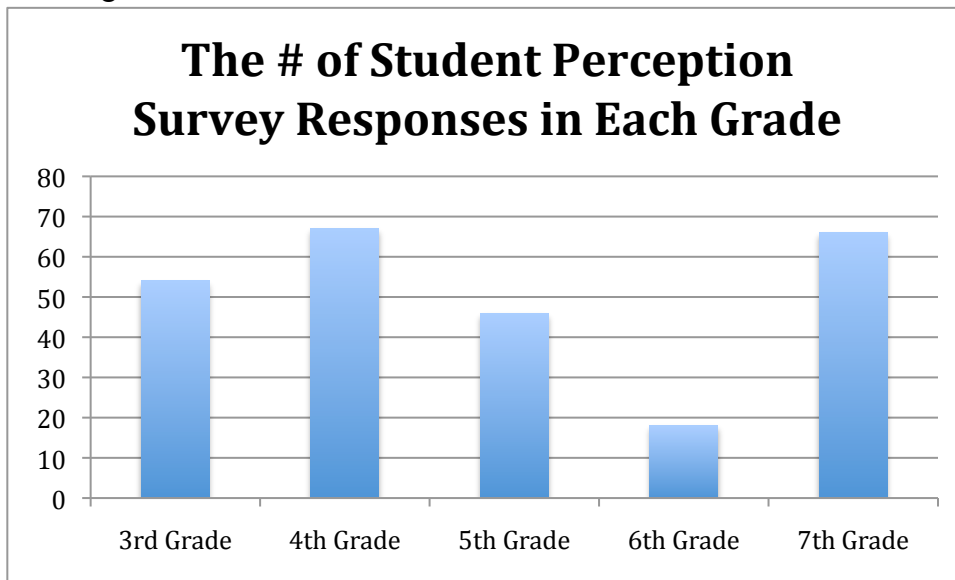


Figure 3: Themes found in community responses defining success (Question #6 of Qualtrics© survey). n=43

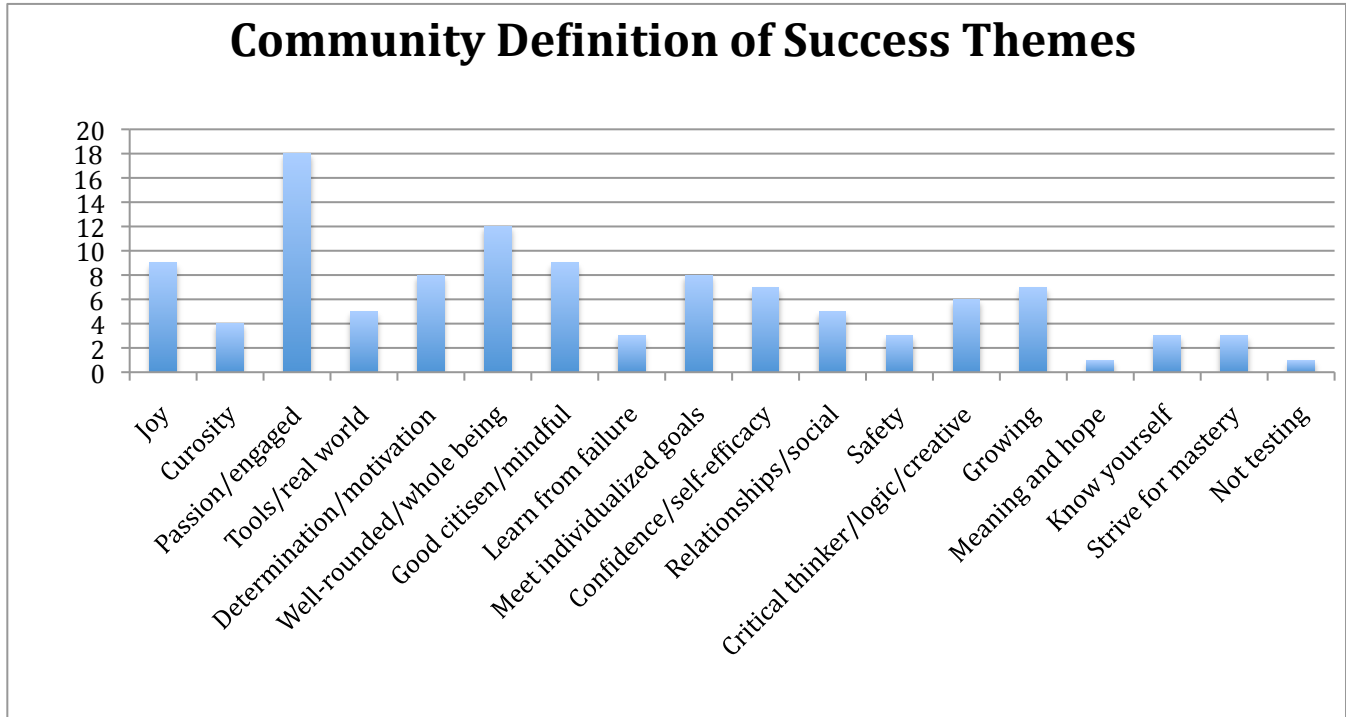


Figure 4: Shows 3rd grade averages in four categories based on class. n=54

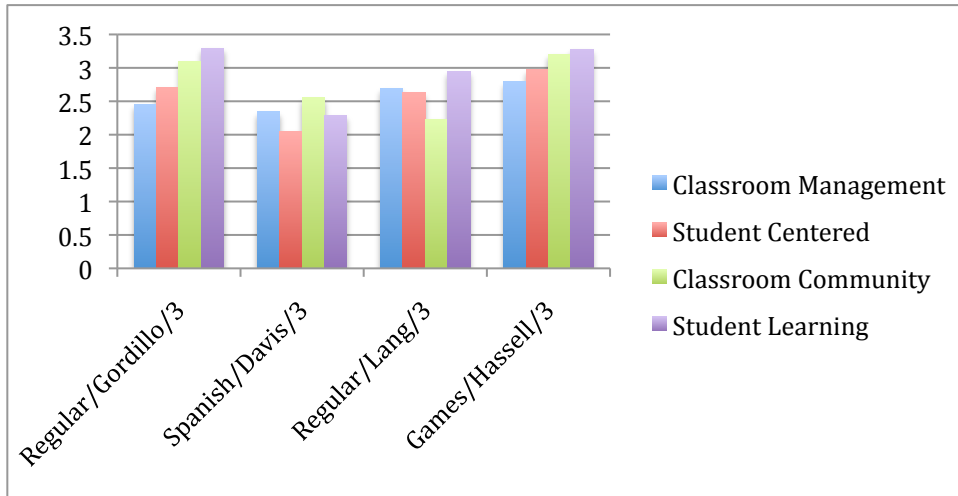


Figure 5: Shows 4th grade averages in four categories based on class. n=67

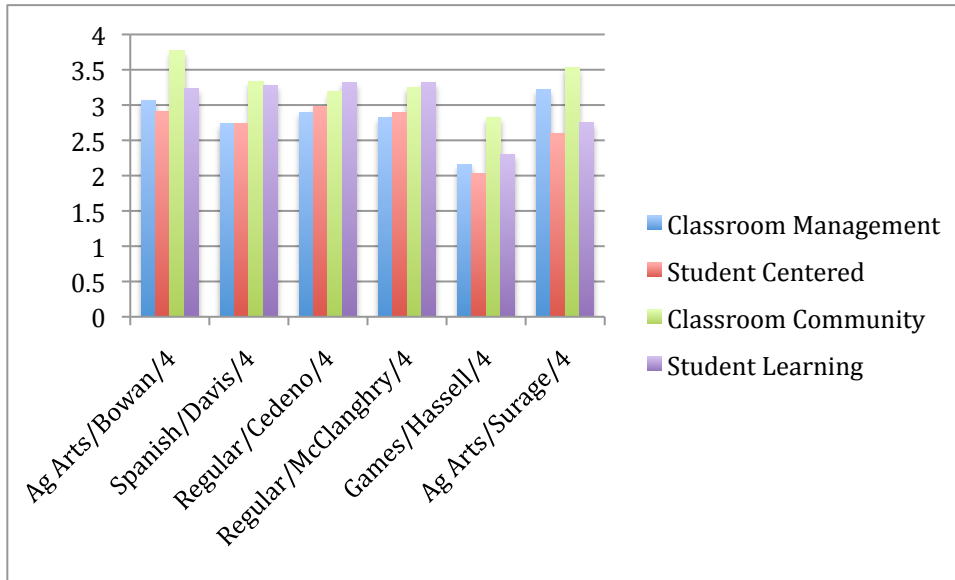


Figure 6: Shows 5th grade averages in four categories based on class. n=46

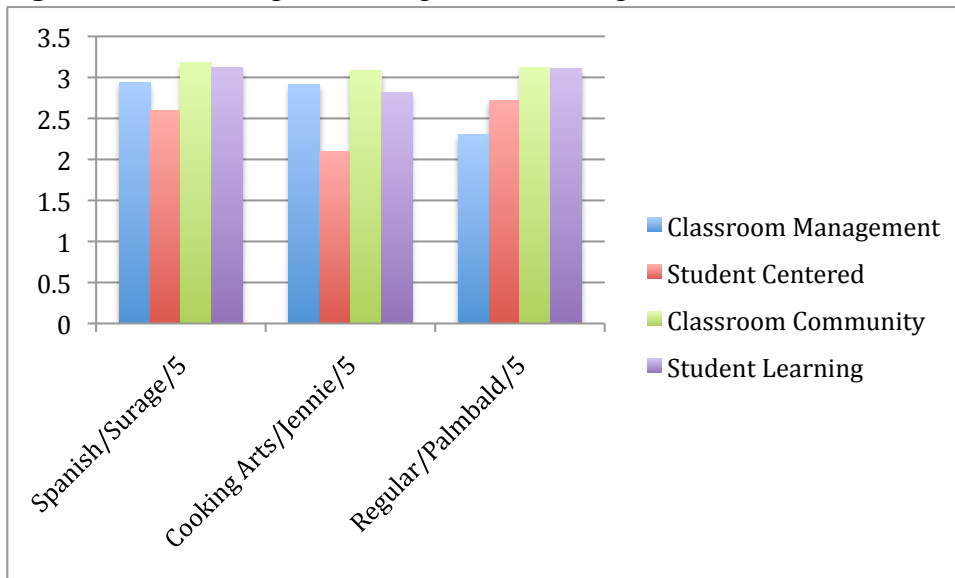


Figure 7: Shows 6th grade averages in four categories based on class. n=18

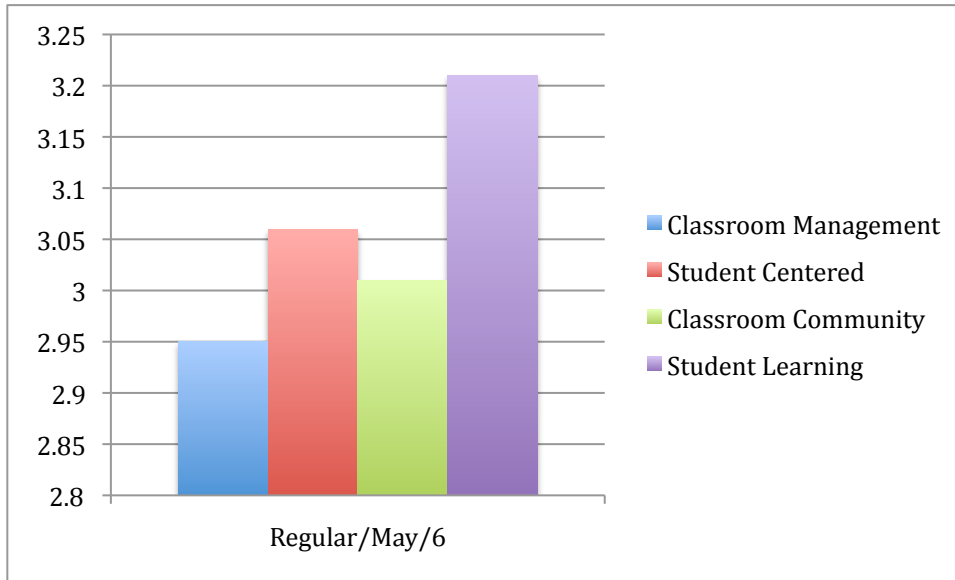


Figure 8: Shows 7th grade averages in four categories based on class. n=66

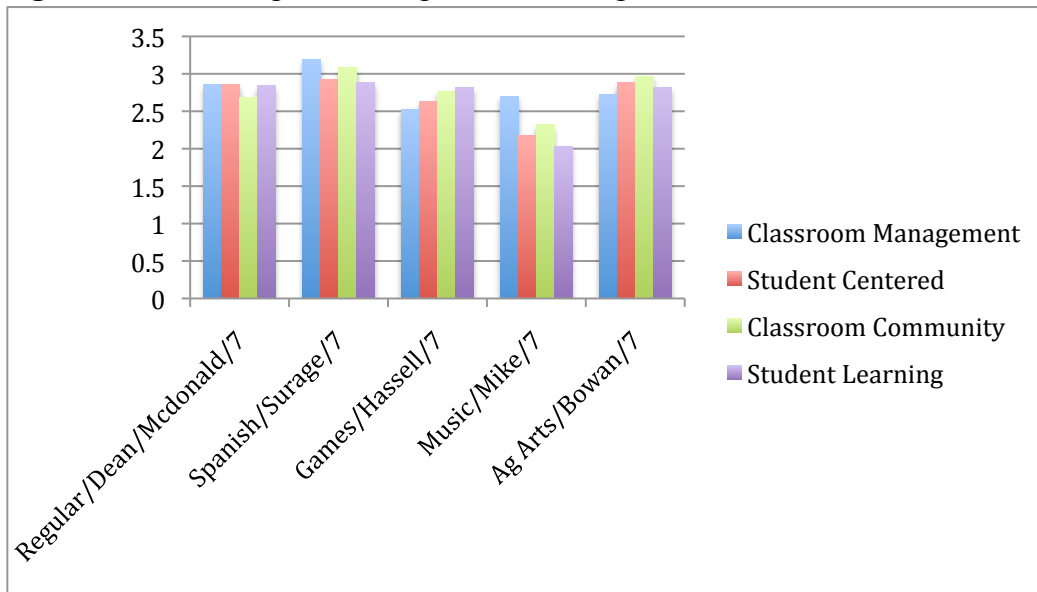


Figure 9: Shows the average Student Learning by grade. Student Learning is “how teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve” (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

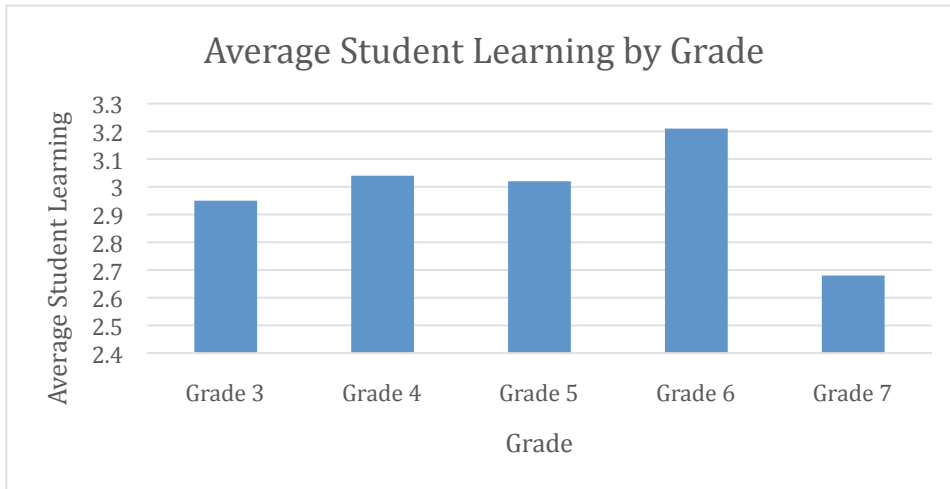


Figure 10: Shows the average Student Centered Environment by grade. Student Centered Environment is how teachers create an environment that responds to individual students’ backgrounds, strengths, and interests (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

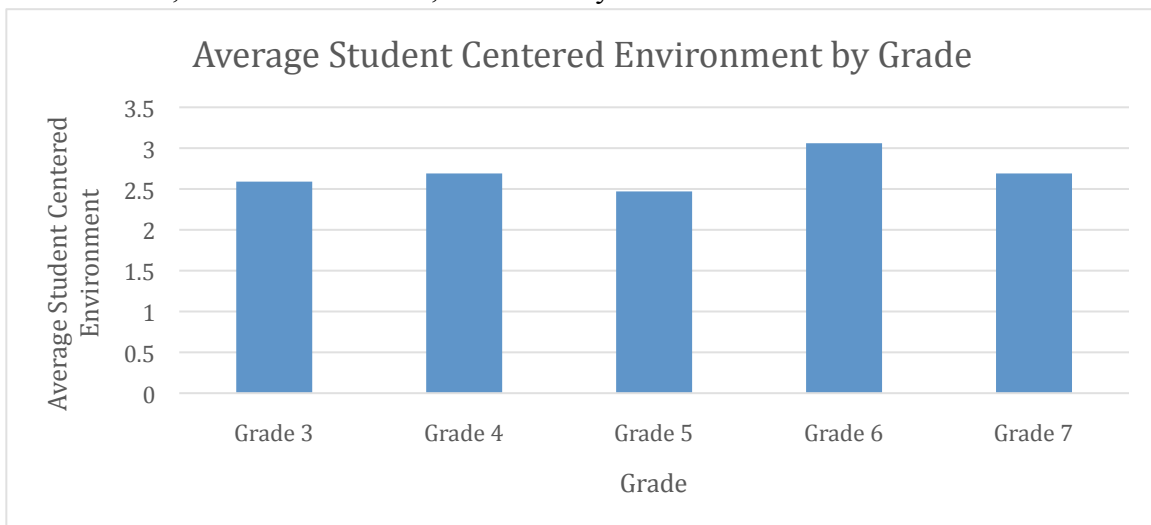


Figure 11: Shows the average Classroom Management by grade. Classroom Management is how teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251

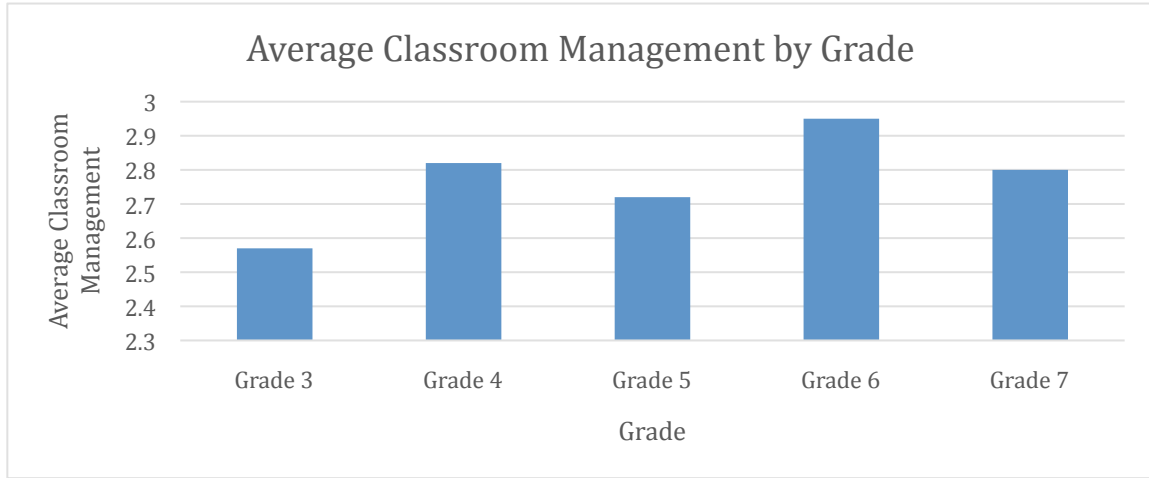
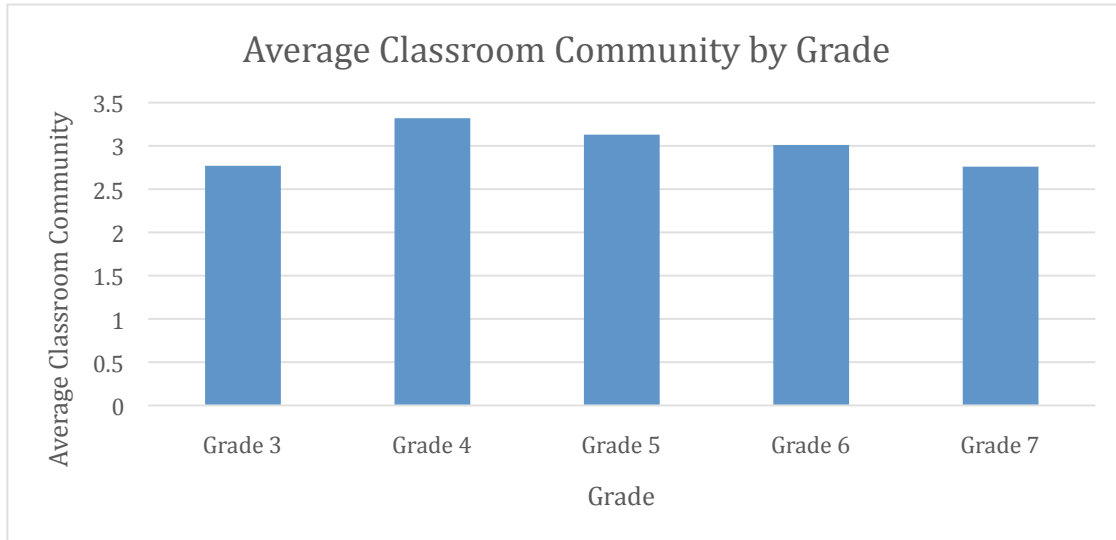


Figure 12: Shows the average Classroom Community by grade. Classroom Community is how teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued (Colorado Education Initiative, 2016). 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, and 4=always. n=251



Appendix 1: The survey made on Qualtrics© that was sent out to the WPCS community.

Success at MS

Q1: You are invited to take part in a research survey about the successfulness of WPCS. I, Chloë Rowse, am studying what Waldorf school “success” in general means to students, teachers, administrators and parents at WPCS because I want to differentiate WPCS’s local concept of success from a more theoretical educational definition of success in order to understand how these definitions may vary. Your participation will require approximately 20 minutes. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this survey. The benefits of this interview will be a deeper understanding of whether WPCS is successful based on the community’s definition of success. This is important information going forward as many new Waldorf Inspired schools are starting across the country. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study you can withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with anyone at Colorado College or WPCS. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and digital data will be stored in secure computer files after it is entered. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified. If you have questions or want a copy or summary of this study’s results, you can contact the researcher at the email address below. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact the Colorado College Institutional Research Board chair, Amanda Udis-Kessler at 719-227-8177 or audiskessler@coloradocollege.edu. Completing this survey indicates that you are 18 years of age or older and indicates your consent to participate in the research. Chloë Rowse Colorado College Department of Education (719) 389 - 6146 Tel chloe.rowse@coloradocollege.edu

Q2 I consent to take this survey

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q3 What is your relationship to WPCS? (select all that apply)

- I am a parent/guardian (1)
- I am a teacher (2)
- I am an administrator (3)
- Other (4) _____

Q4 Do you have a child attending WPCS?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q5 Please respond to the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
By enrolling my child in WPCS, I felt my child would be a more successful learner. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that in general the students at WPCS are successful. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the Waldorf-Inspired method of teaching is successful. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Since enrolling my child, I have found her/him to become less successful as a learner. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think standardized assessment (eg. PPARC) is an important tool for measuring success. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think WPCS created assessments are an important tool for measuring success. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 What is your definition of success?

Answer If Do you have a child attending WPCS? Yes Is Selected

Q7 What do you think success means in terms of your child's/children's education?

Q8 How do you think success at WPCS varies from success at more traditional public schools?

Answer If Do you have a child attending WPCS? Yes Is Selected

Q9 What year did your child start at WPCS?

Q10 Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about Waldorf-Inspired school success?

Q11 Would you be willing to be contacted for followup on the data collected by this survey?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q12 If yes, please provide your contact information.

Appendix 2: Shows how Common Core Standards line up with Waldorf Curriculum.
(Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, 2013)

Common Core Standards, Kindergarten English Language Arts: Reading Informational Text

Common Core Standards, ELA Kindergarten: Reading Informational Texts	Student Achievement In the Waldorf Curriculum		
Student Achievement In the Waldorf Curriculum	At Same Grade Level As CC	In WC At Different Grade Level	Notes and Comments
Kindergarten students:			Informational texts appropriate initially at Grade 3
Key Ideas and Details			
RI 1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.		Gr. 3	
RI 2. With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.		Gr. 3	
RI 3. With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text		Gr. 3	
<i>Craft and Structure</i>			
RI 4. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text. (See grade K Language standards 4-6 for additional expectations) (CA)		Gr. 3	
RI 5. Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.		Gr. 2	
RI 6. Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.		Gr. 3	
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas			
RI 7. With prompting and support, describe the relationships between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts.)		Gr. 3	

RI 8. With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.		Gr. 4	
RI 9. With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).		Gr. 4	
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity			
RI 10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.		Gr. 3	
RI 10a. Activate prior knowledge related to the information and events in texts. (CA)		Gr. 3	
RI 10b. Use illustrations and context to make predictions about text. (CA)		Gr. 3	