



Chalkboard Project Focus Group Highlights

– MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS –

Summary of research methodology: Eight middle and high school students from different schools in the three county Portland metropolitan area participated in a focus group discussion in July, 2004. There were equal numbers of boys and girls. For part of their discussion time, they met separately.

Highlights of research findings: The findings emerge from the major areas discussed with the students.

Best Practices for Student Achievement

“[Teachers who] care about the individual student and their job.”

“I would be lost without academic support.”

“If you are involved [with activities] you will have a less chance of doing drugs.”

The students gave their schools an average “B” grade for teaching students. “Teachers are doing a good job with students that are teachable.” The students identified what was important to them when asked ways to improve student achievement:

- ◆ *Teachers* who earn their respect through setting high standards, wanting and helping them to succeed, and being able to both teach and relate to students
- ◆ *More parental involvement*, especially with homework, but not *too* involved
- ◆ *Hands-on, experiential learning* like science projects, field trips, and the like (especially valued by the boy students)
- ◆ *Computers and technology*, considered by some a “basic”; they gave teachers mixed reviews on their familiarity with technology and use of it in the classroom
- ◆ *More activities and choices* to help students get a “jump start” on a job or career, meet college desires for “well-rounded individuals,” provide strong incentives for students to achieve, and divert them away from drugs and other such activities
- ◆ *Teaching the basics* that include not just reading, writing math and science, but also teaching social skills, a good work ethic, and “how to get along in life”
- ◆ *Academic support programs*, discussed among the girl students

–STUDENTS Continued–

Themes

A consistent theme among the students was the extremely important role teachers play in their lives. They especially wanted teachers who cared about their job and their students, and they all strongly criticized teachers who “are just doing their job to get a pay check.”

The students also talked about the tremendous impact drug use among students is having.