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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study of junior and high school students' views of Indiana school life are presented in this report. The Indiana Youth Poll was administered to a total of 1,560 students from 204 public and 293 private schools in two stages: (1) to individuals; and (2) to discussion groups of 3 to 6 students. Chapter 1 explores students' views about school climate--their likes and dislikes--and the second chapter examines what they are learning in terms of curriculum and personal, social, and life skills. Students' assessments of their schools are described in chapter 3, and dropout and attendance problems are discussed in the fourth chapter. Students assign grades to their schools in the fifth chapter and report their participation in extracurricular activities in chapter 6. Overall, boredom and pressure were two common themes. Findings point to the importance of the teacher/student role and perceptions of curriculum as irrelevant. Appendices include questions for further discussion, copies of the individual and group questionnaires, and 10 blueprints for healthy child development. (15 endn[illegible]MI)

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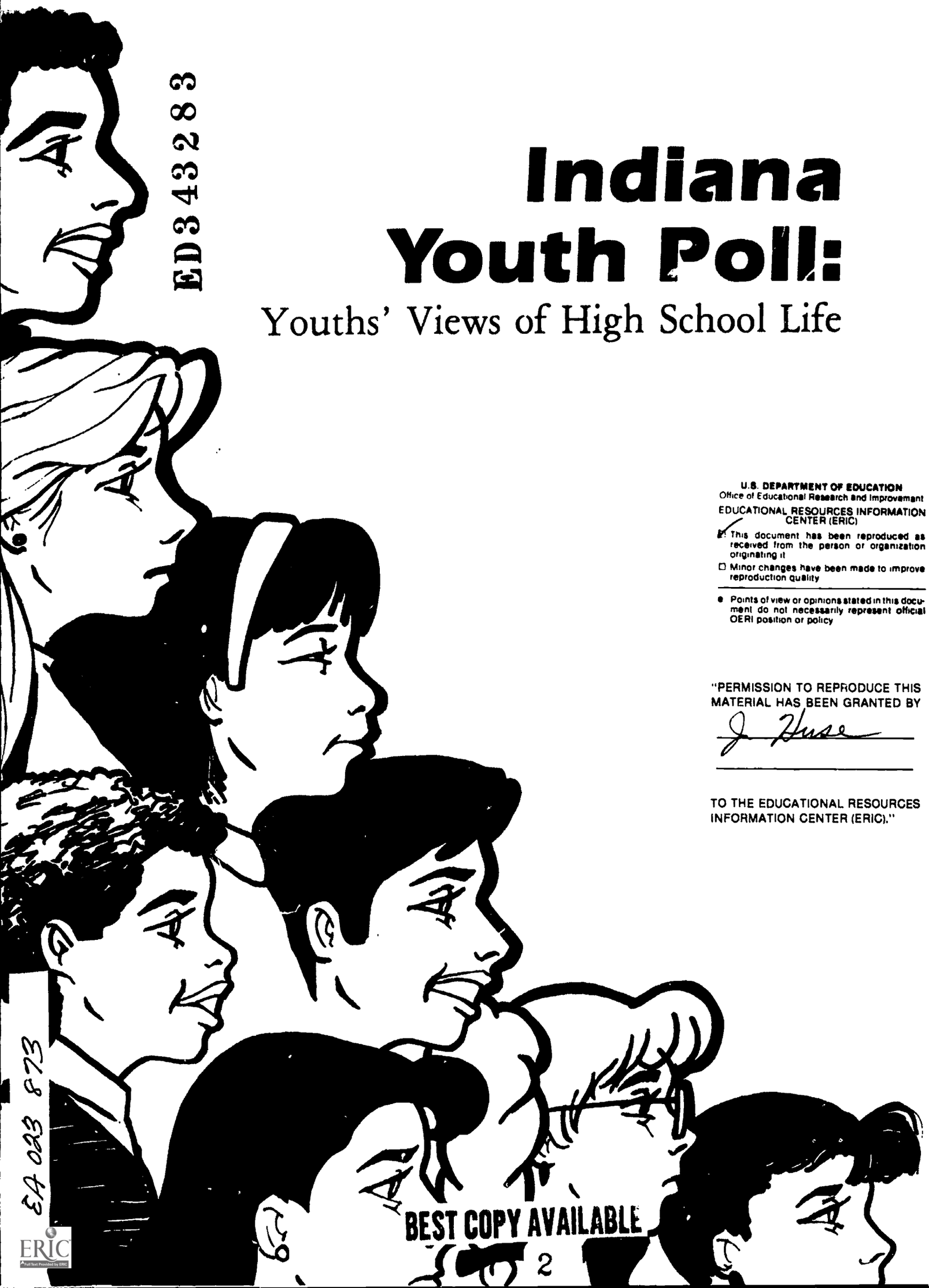
Indiana Youth Poll:

Youths' Views of High School Life



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INDIANA YOUTH POLL:

Youths' Views of High School Life

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INDIANA YOUTH POLL:

Youths' Views of High School Life

INTRODUCTION

With this report of young Hoosiers' views of high school life, the Indiana Youth Institute introduces the first **Indiana Youth Poll.** More than 1,500 young people from across the state took time out from class work, club meetings, or conference activities to respond to our questionnaires and provide us with a view of their busy lives. This report provides young insiders' perspectives on high school life.

The Indiana Youth Poll uses a methodology developed more than a decade ago by Diane Hedin and her colleagues at the Center for Youth Development and Research at the University of Minnesota.[1] There, and in Indiana, youth polls provide young people a voice with which to express their views on issues that affect them.[2] Their own words can be read by adults who frequently fail to consult them when making important decisions that affect young lives. The polls enrich our knowledge about adolescents by providing us with insights that illuminate the bare statistical and social facts that may tell us *what* is going on, but little about *what these facts mean to them.*

The Indiana Youth Poll is a project of the Indiana Youth Institute. The first youth poll was conducted from late 1989 through the summer of 1990, with the help of the Indianapolis Junior League. Because the Youth Institute's Youth Advisory Council had not yet

been formed, the topics for the first poll were chosen by adults and reflect adult concerns about trends in statistical data that show Indiana youth receiving lower scores on standardized tests, dropping out of school in greater proportions, attaining less post-secondary education, and migrating out-of-state more frequently than their counterparts in many other parts of the country.[3] The agenda for future youth polls will be set by the Youth Advisory Council.

The Indiana Youth Institute [IYI] is committed to helping Indiana become a state that genuinely cares about its young people. Much of the Institute's work is predicated on 10 Blueprints for Healthy Development (see inside back cover of this report). Two of these Blueprints are relevant to the present study: Building Active Minds and Building Economic Independence. Young Hoosiers deserve "stimulating and nurturing environments that build on their individual experience and expand their knowledge," as well as formal and informal educational experiences that "will prepare them to make the transition from school to work, to contribute to the labor force, and to participate in an economic environment that will grow increasingly more complex and will require lifelong learning." Indiana's education statistics (like those of many other states) raise the question of whether young people are receiving the preparation that they need.

Indiana is being drawn into a period of soul-searching about the quality of the education it is willing to provide for its young people. Not all the concern has been motivated by consideration for the students alone; rather, it arises from the growing awareness that before the century ends, the state will have fewer young people to step into the economic and civic roles being vacated by their elders. While Indiana's economy is expected to grow, the nature of that economy will change. Even entry-level jobs will require critical thinking skills and levels of training well beyond those demanded of earlier generations of Hoosiers. Thus, it becomes critical that the state provide every one of its young people--regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, handicapping condition, geographic location or

economic status--with equal access to the safe, healthy, and nurturing environments they need if they are to become responsible, productive, caring citizens.

The Youth Poll Method

Participation in a Youth Poll takes about 50-60 minutes. Young people are asked to respond in two ways. First, they reply as individuals to a short questionnaire. For the second part of the Poll, students form self-selected discussion groups of three to six people. Each small group appoints one member as its reader/recorder. This person reads a series of related open-ended questions and records as much as possible of the group's discussion that follows. A copy of both sections of the Youth Poll is appended to this report.

The schools and programs that participated in this youth poll were as follows: Beech Grove, Brebeuf Preparatory, Cathedral, Charlton, Eliza Hendricks, Danville Community High School, Indiana School for the Blind, North Knox High School, and Western Boone High School; the Indiana Youth Group, Christamore House Achievement Program, Stop-over, and the Youth Group of the Hispanic American Multicultural Center. Students from the Keystone Club at the Atkins Boys Club, the Victory Baptist Church youth groups, the 4-H Junior Leaders of Boone County, and young friends of the Junior League volunteers helped with the various stages of pretesting.

The Poll was also conducted among participants in four summer youth leadership education programs: Indiana Teen Institute, Indiana Black Expo Youth Corps, the 4-H Junior Leaders Camps, and the Indiana Youth Institute's "Daring to Dream" Conference.[4] All these conferences brought together young people from schools throughout the state. Where separate analyses are given in the discussion that follows, conference participants are identified as the "Leadership" sample.

Altogether, 1,560 students from 204 of Indiana's 352 public high schools and from 20 of the 293 private high schools took part in this poll. These students form

themselves into 391 discussion groups. We make no claims that the students constitute the random sample necessary to draw conclusions about *all* Indiana young people. Student leaders are surely over-represented and young people who are in special education programs or who have already dropped out of school are under-represented. However, the responses do represent the views of a wide range of Indiana's high school students. (See Table 1.)

Where appropriate, the individual responses were coded and analyzed using standard quantitative techniques and statistics. Then, the qualitative content of the group questionnaires was analyzed. This involved "sifting" the responses to each discussion question until major themes emerged. We then tallied the number of times that each theme appeared among the group responses. The youth poll method tries to capture the inner experience of being adolescent; the information is reported in a way that will provide both the "words and the music" of what the young people have told us.

In addition to the major themes that were analyzed as they appeared among the responses to a given group question, there were several themes--most of them in a minor key--that kept recurring throughout the poll. We have referred to these secondary, but still very important themes as "threads," and have included them at various points in the discussion. Some of these threads will be explored more directly in future youth polls.

Table 1. The Youth Poll Participants*	
Gender:	%
Male	41.1
Female	58.9
Ethnicity:[5]	
African American	14.3
Asian	.8
White	78.8
Hispanic	1.0
American Indian	.9
Other	1.3
Grade In School:	
Junior High	1.6
Nine	16.2
Ten	22.8
Eleven	27.4
Twelve or recent graduate	27.0
Family Type:	
2 parent, biological	61.8
2 parent, blended	14.8
1 parent, mother only	16.6
1 parent, father only	2.0
Other Relatives	2.7
Non-Relatives (foster home, group home, etc.)	2.1
School Type:	
Urban	30.5
Suburban	28.4
Town	4.2
Rural	30.9
Other	5.9
School Governance:	
Public	80.5
State-supported (Boy's, Girl's, and Blind schools, etc.)	6.1
Private	13.4

*Where percentages do not total 100%, data were missing.

READING THIS REPORT

Unless otherwise noted, data from this study of Indiana youths are reported in three ways:

1. as percentages of the responses of 1,560 individual students,
2. as percentages of the 391 groups of students that included a given theme among their responses, and
3. as percentages of the total number of separate themes included in all the responses of the 391 groups of students.

The "base" used, will be clear from the title and content of the table.

Written responses to the Youth Poll questions are printed in bold-face italic type. Additional student commentary from recorded discussions is printed in larger italic type.

To help maintain the flow and the clarity of the report, the question being discussed is repeated in the margin.

CHAPTER 1

SCHOOL CLIMATE

What Students Like About School

"What do you like about going to school?" was the first of the discussion questions presented to the students. (See Table 2.) For an overwhelming majority (85%), the social relationships available at school were the best part of being there. Educational benefits ranked a distant second (40%). The opportunity to be with friends was mentioned more than twice as often as any other aspect of school.

Table 2. Most Liked Aspects of Going to School

	School/Org. n=236 %*	Leaders n=155 %*	All n=391 %*
Seeing friends, social life	87.7	80.6	84.9
Learning new things, classes, getting an education	34.3	47.1	39.4
Extra-curricular activities/school events	15.3	29.7	21.0
"Opposite sex" is there	21.6	16.1	19.4
Specific courses	17.8	9.7	14.6
Sports	12.3	18.1	14.6
Preparation for the future	11.9	12.3	12.0
Interesting, fun teachers	10.2	7.7	9.2
Get away from home/parents	8.9	8.4	8.7
Meet new, different types of people	4.7	14.2	8.4
Something to do	7.6	1.9	5.4
Nothing	20.8	8.4	15.9
TOTAL RESPONSES	666	457	1123
MEAN RESPONSES PER GROUP	2.8	2.9	2.9

*totals more than 100% because of multiple responses.

Some typical comments included:

"You get to hang out with your friends."

"Mainly we like seeing our friends and being involved with the people."

"School sucks, but some people go to school just to see their friends."

"Time to conjugate [sic] *with people our age."*

About 19% of the groups specifically mentioned being with the opposite sex as what they liked best about school:

"Friends and guys."

"Looking at guys, seeing our boyfriends."

"The opposite sex is there."

"The girls, and sometimes you get a pretty good lunch."

"What do you like about going to school?"

Eight percent of the groups mentioned meeting new and different types of people. The students in the school/organization and leadership conference samples differed in what they "most liked" about school. The leaders were more likely to say they favored sports and the other extracurricular activities and social events to which school provides access. Although socializing was by far the most liked aspect of school, 39% of all groups (47% of the leader groups) did admit to some enjoyment of the educational experience itself:

"School is the only opportunity you have to learn."

"[You are] introduced to new things you wouldn't study on [your] own."

"The vocational training; learning; the GED program; some of the classes give me a challenge...small classes."

"I like certain classes with teacher[s] who can teach and are easy to understand. We get to learn and do different things."

Smaller numbers mentioned specific subjects (15%) and/or included "caring," "fun" or "interesting" teachers (9%) as enjoyable aspects of school. For others (5%), however, school seemed to represent merely the best among not particularly attractive options:

"It's a time passer."

"Keeps you from staying at home doing nothing, keeps you from trouble."

"Gives you something to do during the day."

"You can't make money without going to school."

"Ain't nothing else to do."

For some others (9%), being away from home and the independence afforded by school were appealing:

"It's time to get away from parents and stress of family life."

"Time away from home."

"Getting out of the house."

Amidst the overwhelmingly "present-oriented" responses, there were a few (12%) that recognized the future rewards of attending school:

"Get a good job, career."

"One step closer to college."

"Won't get anywhere without [it]."

"Knowledge for knowledge sake, responsibility, stepping stone for higher education."

At least some member of 62 groups said that there was "nothing" enjoyable about going to school, but only eleven groups gave that as their only answer. In general, this response was embedded in other, perhaps begrudged, commentary:

"Nothing, my friends' fun sometimes, Fridays."

"Not much. We like to go to see our friends."

"Nothing. Don't have to work."

"Friends, except teachers; meet a different breed of people; not a freaking thing."

What Students Dislike About School

Given the answers to the previous question, one might have expected a fairly large number to respond "Everything," to the question: "**What do you dislike about going to school?**" (See Table 3.) This was not the case, however. Only 4% of the groups included this response, and it was the sole answer for only two groups. Two other groups actually reported that there was "nothing" that they *disliked* about school. However, most with dislikes were much more specific.

By a fairly wide margin, teachers in general, their "attitudes" and their expectations, were singled out as major sources of discontent (54%). Another 6% named a specific teacher who undermined enjoyment of school. Some typical replies were:

"Teachers expect too much from certain kids."

"Poor teaching abilities, lack of concern...favoritism in sports."

"Too much favoritism, crazy, senile teachers."

"Teachers can't keep their noses out of your business."

"Teachers not allowing learning while having fun, teachers that don't care about kids or education, tough and unfair teachers."

"Certain teachers making you feel stupid."

"Instructing personnel with distemper."

"Teachers that have favoritisms, teachers that dispense knowledge without having any."

Table 3. Most Disliked Aspects of Going to School

	School/Org. n=236 %	Leaders n=155 %	All n=391 %
Uncaring, poor, "mean" teachers	47.0	64.5	54.0
Homework, term papers	33.5	36.1	34.5
Rules, school disciplinary practice	34.7	15.5	27.1
Getting up early	24.2	20.0	22.5
Long hours, days, year	23.7	13.5	19.7
Student attitudes	15.3	24.5	18.9
Boring, uninteresting classes	5.9	29.0	15.1
School lunch	13.6	16.1	14.6
Boring routines	16.1	9.7	13.6
Stress, pressure for grades	9.3	7.7	8.7
Specific teacher/administrator named	9.7	1.9	6.6
Tests, exams	5.9	6.5	6.1
Curricu	5.9	5.8	5.9
Specific course named	6.4	1.3	4.3
Everything	6.8	0.6	4.3
TOTAL RESPONSES	783	466	1249
MEAN RESPONSES PER GROUP	3.3	3.0	3.0

*Totals are greater than 100% because of multiple responses.

A number of groups (19%) put fellow students and student attitudes on their lists:

"School is a collection of biased pigs."

"Upper classmen picking on you, you have to have a good reputation, has nothing to do with your ability."

"Other people (snobs), small minded idiots."

"Lack of student participation and school spirit."

"Drinking (people who are drunk at school), clickish [sic] groups."

"The students and people who talk about others."

"Snobs, preps, geeks, scums."

"Rude people, two-facers."

Students who don't want to learn, APATHY!!!"

"Homework" (35%) and "tests" (6%) were also recurrent items on the students' lists of dislikes. The terms usually were accompanied by little additional commentary other than "too much" or "too hard."

"What do you dislike about going to school?"

Having to get up early (22%) was another frequent complaint; it appeared more often among students in schools with a starting time of 7:30 a.m. Others criticized the amount of time spent in school (19%) and the way it was put to use (including a few complaints about completing questionnaires):

"Too early, too long in class."

"It takes up too much time, it is too early in the morning to get up and come."

"Have to get up too early, classes takes too much time of day."

"Sitting here hour after hour, listening [to] a lot of long, boring lectures, long hours, being inside when it's nice out, getting up too early, get out too late."

"Don't learn enough for time spent in school."

The classroom experience (15%) came in for a share of disapproval ("boring," "stupid," "tedious"), as did the curriculum in general (too few courses, too many requirements, too few advanced placement courses, etc.). Other comments included:

"Wouldn't be so bad if classes weren't so long; not having to learn out of a book by yourself."

"Boring, not challenging enough, needs more excitement, can't learn sitting on your butt all day."

"Having to go to classes that will not be useful in the future."

"Each day is a repeat of the one before."

"Restrictive, uncreative, inconsistent, discourages thought, propagates the system, prevents education, like prison, encourages conformity, you can either be a conformist or a druggie."

Rules and school disciplinary practices (dress codes, in-school suspension, Saturday School) also drew criticism from the students (25%). Some found rules in general objectionable, while others were more specific:

"Being subject to the rules of adults. "

"Dress code, detentions, tardy policy, no chewing gum."

"Undefined punishment."

"Too much bitching about being late."

"Not being able to have a smoking section or an open lunch."

"Feels like we're in prison (too many rules)."

"Dictatorship, stupid rules, treat us like babies."

"What do you dislike about going to school?"

A few students complained that there was too little control in the classroom or school:

"The teachers are not hard enough on troublemakers."

Another small number of students were also critical of the school facilities, their upkeep and general cleanliness. Complaints ranged from the heating and cooling system, or the lack of a pool, to the quality of the library; from too-small lockers and insufficient parking spaces, to the lack of doors on classrooms and bathroom stalls.

Finally, a number of young people (8%) disliked school because they found it stressful for various reasons:

"Stress of getting good grades."

"Struggling to fit in with peers."

"Pressure to be an over-achiever."

"Getting in trouble when I can't get my way."

Overall, the students expressed a greater number and more diverse reasons for disliking school (1,167) than for liking it (1,054).

CHAPTER 2

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LEARNING

The Youth Poll contained several questions related to what young people feel that they are learning:

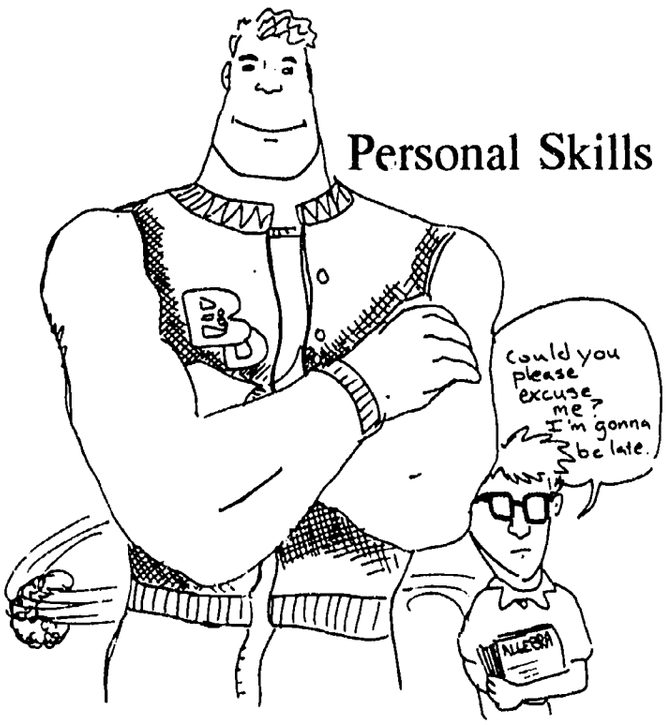
What are the most important things that you are learning in school?

What are the least important things that you are learning in school?

What kinds of things are you learning in school that you think will help you later in life?

What things are you learning in school that help you now, as a teenager?

Their responses were concentrated in four areas: social skills (such as communicating and getting along with others, cooperation and teamwork); personal skills (such as coping with stress, decision-making, critical thinking, responsibility, and developing a work ethic); life skills (citizenship, preparation for college, careers, and "the future"); and the formal curriculum ("the basics," specific subjects or course-related skills). The relative importance accorded to these skills and subject areas varies according to the question. (See Table 4.)



Personal Skills

A majority of the student groups felt that personal skills, such as study habits, decision-making, goal-setting, responsibility, and self-discipline, were the most important things learned in school.

"The most important are responsibility and maturity."

"Respect, responsibility, how to budget time wisely, study habits."

"How to be dependable; do things on time; how to get a job; don't have your mom to tell you."

"How to manage our lives; how to attain and achieve our goals; how to study; how to set goals."

"You learn that just because you're a good person, good things don't always happen to you."

"What are the most important things that you are learning in school?

What are the least important things that you are learning in school?

"What kinds of things are you learning in school that you think will help you later in life?

"What things are you learning in school that help you now, as a teenager?

Table 4. Importance of Things Learned in School, Now and In Future (All Groups: n = 384)

	Importance		Important in	
	Most	Least	Future	Now
Social skills	169	9*	103	136
Personal skills, values	242	4	177	175
Subverting rules, discipline	4	1	11	15
Conforming to routines, rules, discipline	4	11		
Dealing with authority, hard lessons of life, respect	12	1	13	16
Life skills	29	2	16	12
Career preparation	30	0	18	7
College preparation	14	0	7	7
Classes, academics, "knowledge"	11	27	21	8
Memorization of facts, trivia	--	16	--	--
Specific Courses				
Mathematics	108	85	158	38
Science	48	36	62	7
History/Social Studies	33	61	46	18
English, Composition/Literature	75	47	108	28
Vocational/Business	32	37	138	46
Religion	5	23	13	9
Physical Education/Gym	13	95	6	11
Computer	3	1	16	6
Foreign Language	10	17	25	3
Sex Education/Health	57	17	40	126
Drug Education	12	2	3	47
Reading	22	3	11	5
Art	3	13	7	1
Music	5	25	6	3
Drama/Speech/Debate	1	5	44	23
Driver Education	7	0	5	18
Skills for Living	3	3	8	6
Study Hall	1	7	0	2
Nothing	2	7	14	34

*stereotyping, rumors, gossip, peer pressure

Personal skills gained greater importance on the lists of things that they felt would help them in the future:

"Individuality, limits, reading, communicating, thinking, learning (not just memorizing), self-discipline."

"Dedication, taking responsibility for our own actions, hard work pays off."

"Inner strength against peer pressure."

"How to budget your time...learn how to fake out society, learn difference between public/private schooling, learn that you do fail sometimes, learn that sometimes it's better to quit than to hurt yourself."

"How to live independently, how to budget time and money."

"There is always people trying to rip you off, and good discipline."

Social Skills

Consistent with the earlier emphasis on friendships and relationships, students identifed social skills (in 44% of the groups) among the most important things they learned in school:

"How to 'deal' with others is probably the most important."

"Friendships, respect for self and others."

"Coping skills, how to relate to others."

"How to socialize; opening yourself to others."

"How to get along with others, find out how people really are."

"How to make friends, how to put up with people you dislike."

The students considered learning social skills to be important now and to their adult lives. One group noted, for example, that "getting along with a bad teacher prepares us for getting along with a boss at work." Although elicited more often (35%) in response to the question regarding what was useful to them now, many of the student groups (27%) also thought these same skills would stand them in good stead in the future.

"How to live at home and stay out of trouble, have a good job and a good home life; how to get along with people. I used to start fights, now I can overlook it."

"Cooperation, considerution, participation, listening skills."

"How to get along with people even when it's hard; punctuality; how to have healthy relationships with others."

"Communication, responsibility, authority, leadership."

"How to get along with different people, how to cope with peer pressure, discipline."

"You learn to watch your back."

"How to be snobbish like other students--you feel as though you can compete."

"Learn to think and make friends...learn to put up with people's b.s.--we get a lot of it."

Life Skills

Smaller numbers of groups included life skills on their lists of the most important things they were learning in school. Although many of these skills related to the future (for example, college and career preparation), such reasons appeared only a little over half as frequently among the things they expected to be important in the future. Some of their comments about life skills were:

"Citizenship, prepares you for , ndamental parts of life."

"How to make it through life."

"Learn things [for] college that provides for the future."

"You learn the value of being around people and the basics of living."

"The basics that you need to function in adult life."

"Employment stuff you need for future 'good' jobs."

The Curriculum

"The basics," "school subjects," and specific courses formed a large part of the content of the discussion related to all four questions. (See margin for review.) The good news for those concerned about a future labor force that will be "numerate," is that mathematics courses and related skills were mentioned more than any other subject on the "Most Important" lists. The bad news is that nearly the same pattern emerged on the "Least Important" lists! Mathematics took a back seat on the lists of things that participants found helpful as teenagers ("Math is rarely used at our age," one group noted), but re-assumed the number-one position among the subjects that they expected to serve them well in later life. Most of their responses were fairly

"What are the most important things that you are learning in school?

"What are the least important things that you are learning in school?

"What kinds of things are you learning in school that you think will help you later in life?

"What things are you learning in school that help you now, as a teenager?

general, so it was difficult to discern whether they felt content with fundamental math skills, or viewed advanced courses to be of equal importance. Hints among the "Least Important" commentary suggested the former, however:

"Logarithms."

"Square roots."

"Imaginary numbers and chemistry atoms."

"Calculus."

"Geometry (unless required for your chosen field)."

"How to trisect an obtuse biangle."

Similar patterns held true for science-related courses and skills, and those related to English and literature. They appear often on the "Most Important " lists, but less often on the "Least Important" lists. Both areas received little attention in the "Helpful as Teenagers" category, but they gained considerably among the subjects viewed as valuable for later life. Several students singled out "reading," as the most important (although few did the same for composition or literature), suggesting, as in the case of mathematics, that many may be satisfied with basic skills. Foreign languages appeared relatively infrequently on all four lists.

History and the social and behavioral sciences were thought to be among the "Least Important" things many of the groups were learning, and were infrequently mentioned as important in their current lives. ("Why learn the past, when you're going to live the future?" said one group.) Students also seemed to place little present value on vocational and business courses, but 36% of the groups named them as important in the future.

The importance accorded to physical fitness, health, and sex education provides interesting insights for adults who are concerned about teen behavior. Physical fitness received little mention in the young people's commentary, despite the fact that today's teens are likely to be obese, to have elevated blood cholesterol counts, and to receive low scores on standard fitness tests, all factors increasing their risk for future health problems.[7] Presumably these risk factors are reduced by the activities carried out in physical education classes. One might expect the students to see the

classes as important for this reason--or, if for no other reason than that they provide a necessary break from academic routines. There was no evidence of such attitudes in the responses to the Youth Poll questions. Physical education was barely mentioned on any of the three lists that would have revealed importance attached to it. On the contrary, this area held first place on the list of areas deemed "Least Important."

The questions we asked did not reveal the tudents' explanations for these patterns. Some do come to mind as possibilities, however. Generally, the adolescent years are the most healthy of the entire lifetime, so that many may take "fitness" for granted. Further, young people of this age live very much in the present and typically are unable to predict long-term consequences of their behavior. It is also possible that the inconveniences related to "P.E." (changing clothes, breaking up the school day, etc.) are felt to outweigh potential benefits, or students may see little connection between what they actually do in these classes and their own physical fitness either now or in the future.

"What are the most important things that you are learning in school?

"What are the least important things that you are learning in school?

"What kinds of things are you learning in school that you think will help you later in life?

"What things are you learning in school that help you now, as a teenager?

A very different pattern emerged in the importance attached to health and sex education classes. These courses were ranked third (behind mathematics and English) on the "Most Important" lists, and scarcely mentioned among the "Least Important." However, among the courses identified as useful to them today, as students, sex education was a runaway number-one. The high relevance to their daily lives that young people place on sex education courses should surely be a factor in ongoing adult debates about their appropriateness in the high school curriculum. It was also of interest that drug education, although seen as important to the young people's lives, was ranked a distant second. Perhaps as a reflection of their primary orientation to the present (or their views of adult behavior), neither of these subjects was accorded much importance for later life.

Among the many answers given by the students to all four questions about the lessons they were learning in school, were threads of cynicism and subversion of authority, possibly reflective of their own life styles as well as their perceptions that much of adult life attains less than the ideal. For example, comments regarding important things they were learning included:

"How to...cut corners."

"The drug culture (how to hide them from the authorities)."

"How not to get along with people, what makes you tick, etc."

"The way to play the game."

"Sex ed, a good sucker punch are the most important."

"How to sleep in a chair, chewing gum and Skoal without getting caught."

"How to be bored. How to be a brownie."

Such remarks were certainly not indicative of the whole (appearing on fewer than 4% of the lists). For the most part, young people expect to gain some future benefit from much of what they are learning. Even if the present importance of schooling is not particularly obvious, the majority say they are willing to "do what you gotta do" to get a high school diploma. Their pragmatic acquiescence to sitting through classes that they find irrelevant may be letting educators off the hook too easily, and their answers to other questions suggest that compliance is not achieved without cost.

CHAPTER 3

STUDENTS JUDGE THEIR SCHOOLS

Part of the cost, both to the young people and to those trying to educate them, is revealed in the ways that they answered the question: **"When you think of a typical day at school, what words come to mind?"** Overwhelmingly, their free associations described a world of boredom and apathy. (See Table 5.) Initially, we tallied the first expression recorded, since research tradition holds that in free association, first words are generally the most salient. Of the 391 lists analyzed, 81% began with a negative term. One-hundred sixty three of the lists (42%) began with a single word: BORING! Another 91 (23%) contained related negative terms such as "tedium," "long," "tiring," and "no surprises." The students' indictments did not end with monotony. Forty groups (10%) began their lists with terms describing stress ("fights," "Hell," "frustrating," "excruciating on the brain"), while 24 more (6%) used additional negative terms, a number of them scatological, or obscene. Altogether, eight out of ten first words listed were negative. There were a few (4.6%) terms that could be considered neutral ("plain," "average," "O.K."). Only a slightly larger number of groups (13.0%) began their lists with a positive term ("fun," "educational," "interesting," "busy").

Table 5. Words Describing a Typical Day in School*

	1st Word %	All Terms %
Total Negative Terms	81.3	72.1
Boring	41.7	30.2
Related terms (long, monotonous, tedious, tiring)	23.3	23.4
Stress-related terms	10.2	11.7
Other negative terms	6.1	6.8
Positive	13.0	22.4
Neutral	4.6	4.7
Uncodable	1.0	.7
TOTAL	99.9	99.9

* 391 groups reporting.

"When you think of a typical day at school, what words come to mind?"

When we reached beyond students' first responses, the picture improved a bit. Boredom and tedium continued to dominate (54%), and additional negative terms brought the total to 72%. The proportion of neutral terms increased to nearly 5% and that of positive terms to 22%. The differences in the first-word and total tallies are hardly a cause for celebration. The following lists are typical:

"Long, boring, tiresome, fun filled (sometimes)."

"Boring, depressing, fun, crazy, hectic, busy, challenging, diverse."

"Boring, confusion, battles, fights."

"A lot of the time it is very boring. [T]here is a lot of monotony, but still every day is different."

"Boring, caffeine, long, fast paced, stressful, discouraging, depressive, lonely, bleak, grim, fun--sometimes."

"Tiring, unfulfilling, inadequate time to use facilities such as library and guidance, boredom, repetitious."

"Boring, drugs, trying to get a date with that special person."

"Boring, headaches, fights, taking unnecessary classes."

When young people use terms with great frequency, they are likely to be "code words" having a broader meaning than the standard dictionary definition. It seemed that the term "boring" was being used in this way. We wanted to make sure that we were understanding all that they were telling us, and attempted to "decode" this word in discussions with several groups of students who had completed the Poll. We asked them: **"What do you mean when you say that school is 'boring'?"**

"Means there's nothing to do. The teacher's always talking and we have no idea what they're talking about. Just something you don't like and wasting your time."

"Type of place where you can't leave when you want to leave. There's always people telling you what to do. You don't like that as a kid. You want to get out and express yourself."

"They just present the material and it's there. A lot of the time they don't make it interesting to learn. It's just that Reagan was born on

blah, and was assassinated on whatever. It's just stated facts. There aren't very many teachers who bring forth the materials and you're going, WOW!"

"You walk into the room and they just talk and talk and talk. It never goes into your head. Some of the things are just, 'Who cares.'"

"[The teachers] think they know everything. They don't. We know what they don't know."

"[S]itting in classes for seven hours, five days a week. It just gets old."

"Another teacher always talks about her tenure. 'You can't fire me, I have tenure.'

"They just talk too much."

"They just never shut up."

"They're preaching to us, too."

"Sometimes they don't know what they're talking about. And when you correct them, they get mad."

"It seems that they don't have enough confidence in themselves that they can teach you."

"Sometimes I don't think it's just the teacher, it's the subject. Some subjects are just boring. If you're not interested in chemistry or physics, no matter what the teacher does, it's not going to help."

"Around here teachers don't really try to put anything into class. And they can't stay out of other people's business. They just don't try; they do it to get their money and that's it. We need more than just lecturing. Lecture and take notes. And if it's not lecturing, you just sit and do a work sheet."

"If you're not going to learn anything, why bother going? Why go to school to do algebra if you want to be a secretary? You need special

classes. You ain't gonna need it. My mother's 41 and she ain't never needed no algebra."

"What do you mean when you say that school is 'boring'?"

Their meanings seemed to boil down to lack of clarity and "three R's:" too much **repetition** in the material presented by teachers; too much **regurgitation** expected in student work; and too little **respect** accorded students by faculty and administrators. Some of their answers were instructive:

In these discussions we also asked what the students thought would make school more interesting. As was the case with their complaints, almost all their answers involved teacher attitudes and teaching styles:

"When they put you into groups and let you express yourself. Then you don't have someone telling you what they really want to hear and not what you want to say."

Describing a favorite teacher: *"He doesn't talk above you. You can say whatever you want. He challenges you...He makes you think."*

Describing the ideal teacher: *"Someone that you can relate to. Someone that will listen to you. Allowing...the students [to] get involved."*

"We have a really good science teacher. He's been everywhere and he tells us about it."

"We're expected to go to college in two years, and in my opinion, that's on the verge of adulthood. We should be treated as adults, given a fair shot."

Describing the ideal teacher: *"Someone fun, not always strict, not a put-down teacher. Someone who makes education fun. The teacher on '227.'"*

Describing teachers in general: *"I don't care how long they have been teachers. They need to be made to go back to school. They need to be given tests to make sure they're competent. They have notes and tests they've been doing for 20 years."*

Describing what they would like in a class: "Students to be more involved. We're not first graders. Raising your hand is O.K., but sometimes you don't need to...I understand the lectures, but they could open it up at the end."

The discussions were echoes of the responses to the youth poll question: "**If you could change your school, what three things would you do?**" Of course, there were a few somewhat frivolous responses ("Serve french fries more often in the cafeteria," "Put better looking guys/girls in," "Change the school colors," "Co-ed bathrooms and showers"), but most represented serious recommendations. (See Table 6.)

Table 6. Changes Students Would Make in Their School

	%
Teaching staff (fire, hire, pay better)	18.4
Rules, discipline policy and practice	17.8
Schedule, hours, length of school year	12.1
Facilities and equipment	11.8
Curriculum (add courses, eliminate requirements)	10.9
Student attitudes, eliminate cliques	6.0
School lunch, food	5.5
Administrators and school board	4.4
Class size, teaching styles, atmosphere, texts	3.1
Extra-curricular activity	2.9
Better racial balance, eliminate racism and sexism	2.8
Increase student role in decision-making	1.2
Finance (bigger budget, lower tuition, more even distribution)	1.2
Other	1.8
TOTAL NUMBER OF SUGGESTED CHANGES: 1,245	99.9

By far, the most frequently identified changes involved school personnel (teachers [18%], and this time, administrators as well [4%]) and the ways they performed their roles. Fifty-one percent of the 391 groups mentioned replacing teachers or modifying teacher attitudes among the changes that they would make. For the first time, a few students acknowledged that conditions might be less than ideal for their teachers, and suggested giving them contracts, or paying the "good ones" more. Most of these "teacher"

themes already have been explored and need not be reiterated here. However, one thread of commentary related to student/faculty relationships emerged with greater salience among the suggestions for improvement. Several groups would give students a broader role in school governance:

> ***"More participation by students with faculty in making important decisions."***

> ***"Rules made by kids--a student board that acts as a dean, [with] punishments determined by students."***

> ***"That the students have more say in rules/decisions."***

"If you could change your school, what three things would you do?"

Other recommendations for change presented familiar themes: "More freedom," "more electives," "more breaks," "less homework," "fewer rules," "shorter days," "better textbooks," "better food," and "bigger lockers." There were other threads of ideas expressed elsewhere that received greater emphasis here. Several of the comments suggest that the role of athletics is a point of contention for some students. While there were a few who felt that there should be more school spirit and better student support for teams, more felt that there should be *less* emphasis on football and basketball, and a greater range of options offered, particularly for girls. There were several remarks about sports as a drain on school academic resources. Others objected to coaches teaching academic subjects, and more, to what they felt was "favoritism" shown to athletes by teachers and administrators:

> ***From discussion group:*** *"Teachers favor athletes, when they get into fights, they get off scot free. Everyone is supposed to respect the athlete. I think the funds should be spread a little more evenly among sports. All the funds go to football and basketball."*

"Racism" was another of the threads that appeared elsewhere, but received greater emphasis here, as an aspect that students would like to change. Young people of color in nearly all-white schools expressed feelings of isolation in wishes for "more black teachers," or, as one group put it, "more black anything, besides [in] the kitchen." Some of the other comments included:

> ***"Hire more black teachers, install <u>black</u> history class."***

"Make it racially balanced."

White students in nearly all-black schools expressed similar feelings. One student argued in support of school choice:

"The thing about an open school idea is that like [my school] is so black and I am so white that I get harassed in the worst way. Many, many whites do get harassed in all-black schools. And the same thing [happens] with black kids in white schools.

Another said of racial tension:

"Our school was half black, half white and had racial wars once a week."

Several young people participating in one-way busing to Indianapolis suburban township schools said in an after-poll discussion that they felt unwanted by their host schools. While their parents talked about loyalty to the old district schools, these students said they found it hard to generate the same kind of spirit for their own schools today.

Gay and lesbian young people felt particularly poorly served by their schools. They spoke of inaccurate information in textbooks, uninformed counselors, and harassment and beatings from other students, about which they alleged that teachers and administrators did little or nothing. The following comments are from a discussion group:

"I changed schools because I was being harassed. My sister was starting to be harassed, so I went to another high school and my parents had to give guardianship of me to someone else in another town. We went to a lawyer and they gave up guardianship. I lived in another town for two or three months...and then moved back home and finished out my high school."

Regarding the role of counselors: *"I didn't know how to go to them. I didn't think they would understand. All those people that the counselor thought so highly of were the harassers."*

"If you could change your school, what three things would you do?"

About a guidance counselor: *"I switched schools. My guidance counselor I got there knew I was gay because I was transferred to a school and I had major problems so I had to move out of state. My guidance counselor there was very helpful and very sincere."*

About a teacher: *"She was a lesbian and she didn't help other kids because she was afraid of losing her job and her responsibilities. If anybody found out, she'd lose her job."*

"I think that the educators need to be educated. They need to put aside what they think, and think about the people they are educating, and not try to confuse us by their feelings."

"I think that it's time that gay people have a group. There are sports groups, you got your jocks, you got your punk heads and you got your...you know, you got all these groups. Then there's us, and we just wander around the halls looking, is there anyone else like me?"

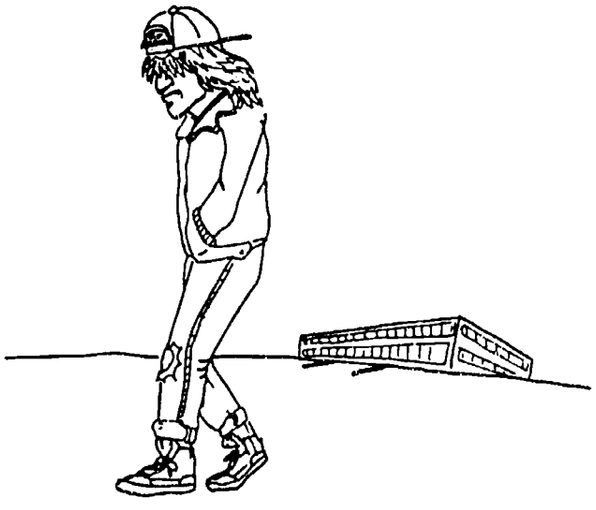
CHAPTER 4

SKIPPING AND DROPPING OUT

The age-old student practice of "playing hookey" continues in spite of adult efforts that range from locking the school doors to penalties of in- and out-of-school suspensions. We asked students, "**Why do some youths decide to skip classes?**" In responding, they emphasized themes of tedium were prominent. (See Table 7.)

Table 7. Why Students Skip Class

	%
Classes are boring, long	14.5
Peer pressure, to be with friends	10.2
Students themselves are bored	9.9
Students don't like class, don't want to go	9.0
Students stressed; have personal, family problems	8.5
Teachers don't care, students don't like teacher	8.5
Students lazy, don't care, don't want to learn	8.0
Students need a break, need to smoke, are hungry	6.6
Students have other things to do	6.4
For fun, adventure, to get away with it	6.2
Homework not done, to get out of a test	4.5
To drink, do drugs	4.3
To rebel against authority	2.7
Other	.4
TOTAL NUMBER OF REASONS GIVEN: 985	99.9



However, in placing blame, the young people seemed to make a distinction between bored, "burned-out" students, and boring schools with unvarying routines and uninteresting classes, poorly taught. The latter theme was the more prominent:

"[School is s]o damn boring, need [a] break from teachers."

"Because [classes are] boring and teachers don't respect [students]."

"Don't like the teacher or class, boredom, class is useless."

"Why do some youths decide to skip classes?"

"Same routine, day after day."

"Boring and stupid, don't want to spend every minute in school."

"Think it's boring, don't enjoy teachers, hate subject, want to be with friends."

"Boring, no sense in class--can get away with it--can't cope with teacher."

"[Classes] are boring and [students] are sick of the same old grind."

"Teachers put them down, don't enjoy the class."

"Don't want to go to class with an unfair teacher."

"It's the pits. Teachers here put you to sleep."

"It's a hell-hole here. It sucks!"

A number of the answers placed responsibility for skipping school on the students themselves:

"No interest in class, want some time alone, for the hell of it, to have something to tell their kids."

"They're bored, rebellious, sick of people ragging on them all the time."

"They're hungry, restless, or unmotivated--would rather be outside enjoying the day than wasting time in class."

"Because they're ignorant in the sense that they don't know [how] important an education is, they're not taught this."

"The students don't care--they take no responsibility--they like to show off--gain attention--peer pressure."

"Boredom, burn-out, don't care attitude."

"They feel that they already know enough of their classes, they think that they have better things to do."

"Because they come from a background with no motivation."

"They think they're unimportant, they're having a bad day and can't take the pressures of sitting in classes, they don't care about grades and school."

Among the other reasons for truancy ascribed to the students themselves were lack of homework preparation or not being ready for a test. Skipping because of stress, or to get high, or to get a drink were also cited several times, while some saw leaving school as simply a way to show "cool" or to take a risk.

"The sun's out, we didn't study for a test that hour or do our homework."

"Classes are boring, some like to go have fun, some like to get high, do drugs and come back."

"They don't like school and they think it's cool."

"[Classes] are boring, undone assignments, to show off."

"They are lazy, seem not [to] care, would rather have drugs and dope."

"Smoke cigarettes and bordism."

Having something better to do ("hanging out with their friends," "shopping," "involved in a relationship," "cruising," etc.) and/or succumbing to peer pressure were also familiar themes:

"They think it's cool, they get bored, friends want them to."

"Go fishin', they are bored, go huntin', smoke pot."

"Because one gets bored, release, nice day, personal reasons, track (500)."

"To go smoke or just to be with friends, or just don't want to be with the teachers, to go riding around."

"Some days are too nice to waste in school."

Two responses summed up many of the major reasons for truancy:

"To get high, get away from teachers, do things you can't do in school, get away from peer pressure, go drinking, be with girl friend, follow your friends, don't like class, don't like some of the students."

"Society trains them to, because [of] the idea that if you like school, you're a nerd; classes are boring, people don't see the relevance of school, teachers are not motivating, other things are more important to them, see no real purpose to learning books instead of learning life."

We went on to ask the students: "**What types of people tend to skip classes?**" Given the high level of consensus on the monotony of school, it was probably predictable that the most frequent response (36%) would be "anyone" or "everyone":

"Everyone who wants to; you cannot put them into classes or categories."

"This question sucks! Anyone who doesn't like class or whoever can skip."

"Anyone who thinks they can get away with it."

"Teenagers with short attention spans."

"All types except anti-social and over-achievers."

"No one in particular skips, but the majority of people are under-achievers who don't really care about their education."

However, the responses suggested that students make a distinction between occasional truants, for whom inclination and opportunity simply coincided, and those who habitually absented themselves from school. (See Table 8.) The latter formed the next most frequently identified categories: young people involved in drugs and alcohol (23.5%) or lacking motivation (16%), those with personal or family problems (7%) and/or those already doing poorly in school (6%):

"What types of people tend to skip classes?"

"Druggies, don't have good grades, insecure people."

"Skaters, pot smokers, head bangers."

"[Ones] who do drugs, who don't really care much, have better things to do."

"Lazy, hazy, just plain crazy."

"Druggies, delinquents, people with problems."

Table 8. "Types" of Student Likely to Skip School*

	(n = 391) %
Any, all, everyone	35.8
Drug/alcohol/smoking	23.5
Lazy, unmotivated, don't care	16.1
Hoods	10.5
Personal, family problems	10.0
Already doing poorly in school	5.9
Rebels, trouble-makers, delinquents	5.1

*Only categories named by more than 5% of groups are included.

The remaining responses were comprised primarily of epithets currently in vogue in the argot of the young. Most of these terms suggested habitual truancy: "hoods" (10.5%), "geeks," "head bangers," "losers," "preppies," "scum," "scags," "skaters," and "punkers."

Dropping Out Of School

The U.S. Department of Education reports that one in four Hoosier youths does not finish high school. Among the 50 states, Indiana ranks in 26th place.[8] Annual dropout rates in Indiana are reported for grades 7-12. The state as a whole had a dropout rate of 6.3 per hundred students in 1988-89. The figures vary considerably from county to county. In 1988-89, for

example, nearly 7 of every 100 Marion County high school students dropped out. For Lake County, the rate was 3.1, while for Vanderburgh County it was 7.36, but for DuBois County, the rate was only 1.87. When Indiana students leave school they are asked to give a reason. Those furnished by the 20,898 young Hoosiers who dropped out in 1988-89 are shown in the second column of Table 9.[9]

We wished to learn from the Youth Poll participants' viewpoint, "**Why do some youths decide to drop out of school?**" The answers to this question were markedly different from those describing why young people play truant. Overwhelmingly, the

Table 9. Why Students Drop Out of School

	Youth Poll Participants	Actual Reasons Given at Exit 1988-1989
	%	%
Disinterest in curriculum	33.2	47.4
Pregnancy	12.5	3.5
Marriage	1.0	1.2
Interpersonal problems	8.1 } 14.8	1.7
Low self-esteem, losers	6.7	
Poor home environment, family problems	7.5	3.5
Record of school failure	7.2	7.4
Want to work, want money	6.4 } 12.5	5.8
Need to work to support family	6.1	
Drug, alcohol problems	5.4	1.2
Rebellious, incorrigible	2.6	17.0
Friends, peer pressure	2.4	.7
Armed service enlistment	--	.2
To seek vocational training	--	.2
Other	1.0	4.1
Unknown	--	5.9
TOTAL NUMBER OF REASONS GIVEN	925	20,898

students seemed to regard school-leaving as a consequence of some characteristic or failure of the individual. In spite of the emphasis in previous commentary, problems with teachers were barely

mentioned, although this may be implicit in their major reasons, labeled "disinterest in the curriculum." This cluster of reasons also involved lack of motivation and goals for the future, other interests, and failure to understand the connection between education and future success:

"Why do some youths decide to drop out of school?"

"They are losers and have no desire to do anything in life."

"They think it's cool & that they can make it."

"They're losers, pregnancy, "love marriage," think they're cool--surprise!"

"Think they don't need it to get by in life."

"Don't like school, don't like hours, no education, feel they know enough."

"To rebel, they're stupid, don't think about the consequences of their actions."

"They find school useless, they think they can find a job anywhere, money's more important now, low grades, drugs/their brains [are] fried."

"Feel they don't need education to live their life, get tired of school, no goal in life, feel like failures."

"Because they have different values, they don't fit in."

"Cause they don't like it, have other things to do; wouldn't make no difference, if you graduate you still will work at fast food."

"They think school is useless but in reality it is everything."

The next most frequently cited reasons for dropping out were pregnancy and/or the need for full-time work to support their families or children of their own. In both instances, the Youth Poll participants' responses were over-estimates of the exit-interview reasons given by dropouts themselves. However, the Poll participants greatly underestimated the proportion of students leaving school because of incorrigibility.

The inability to deal with the pressures of school, low self-esteem, stress, poor grades, personal problems, and drug use formed another set of reasons for dropping out identified by those polled:

"Can't take the pressure, want independence, they don't need school for what they want to do."

"They flunk, pregnancy, new job offerings, pressure for grades."

"Feel they can't make it through school, feel embarrassed 'cause of grades."

"They've been there over 5 years, bad grades, fail due to attendance."

"They figure they can't do the work so they give up They don't care."

"Involved in drugs and alcohol, having hard times, just don't want to do anything."

"Bored with it, to support habits."

"See no effects of education on their future, they don't succeed and get frustrated."

Several groups added "problems at home," or lack of parental support to their lists:

"Far behind, pregnant..., peer pressure, bad grades, parents, don't want anything for their life."

"Pressure--inadequate grades--no one seems to care if they continue or not."

"Don't feel like learning, can't handle challenge, lack of self-esteem, bad home environment, poor family, friends."

"Tired of harassment, family problems, found a job, drugs, not living at home."

"Give up because they feel they can't make it, bad homes or upbringings, rules that don't make sense."

"They don't think they can do it, little parental involvement, not interested, pregnancy, drugs."

"Ignorant on the importance of education--they get pregnant and have to work to support themselves--domino effect, if [their] parents dropped out, kids will."

We were unprepared for the degree of rejection and seeming lack of compassion for dropouts implied by much of the student commentary. Our post-Poll discussions suggested that the normative expectation is that students will stay in school until graduation, regardless of the tedium and stress. Dropouts are negatively stereotyped by many of those who continue to attend school. One group, for example, answered the question about dropping out: "We don't know because we don't associate with them."

Concerned about what dropouts might face should they decide to return to school, we included this as an issue in several of the small-group discussions. We discovered first of all, that students *perceive* many school systems to be placing nearly impossible procedural barriers in front of such youths (for example, they cannot return to day school, but must go at night; they must pay tuition if they wish to get a new

"Why do some youths decide to drop out of school?"

start at another school; they cannot take the examination for the GED until age 19. Many students admitted that in their own schools, there also would be social hurdles. One group suggested that acceptance would depend on how the student had been regarded by peers prior to leaving. If popular (the example given was a girl who had left to have a baby), the student could return and probably soon resume the life she had left. However, students thought to have "attitude" or other problems would have to "prove" themselves before being accepted back by peers, and probably by teachers, as well.

Several students criticized the lack of public alternative schools that can be entered by choice (rather than only following expulsion from a "regular" school). One lesbian student, who had dropped out of her high school because she could no longer tolerate harassment from fellow students, mentioned that she had graduated via the Indianapolis Public Schools' External Diploma Project. Others, who had never heard of this program before, expressed considerable interest. Generally, students showed strong support for the public school-choice legislation that has been enacted in some other states.

CHAPTER 5

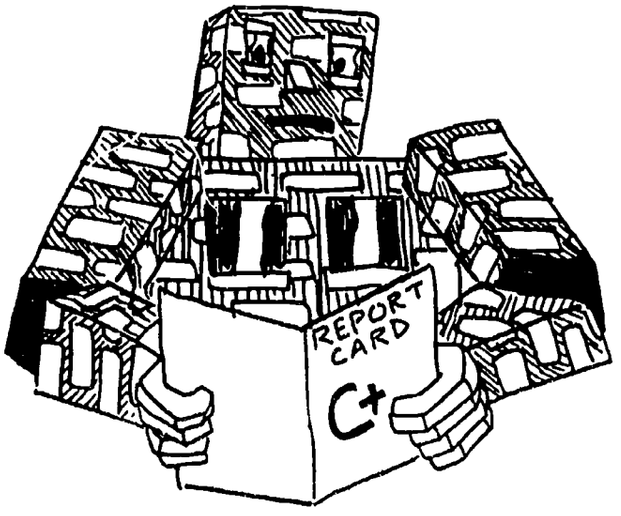
A REPORT CARD FOR INDIANA SCHOOLS

Young people are accustomed to having the quality of their own work graded on an A-F scale. We attempted to gauge their perceptions of the quality of their education by asking them to assign a grade to their own schools and explain the reasons for their choices. A total of 384 groups of students assigned grades to their schools as follows: A, 6%; B, 34%; C 44%; D, 11%; and F, 4%. Overall, grades averaged to about a C+.

The student leaders who participated in the Youth Poll attended public and private schools from around the state. Often several schools were represented in a single response group, making it impossible to identify which school was receiving which grade.[10] Therefore, we have presented the grade distributions for the leadership sample and the school/organization samples separately. Among the latter, students in a response group all attended the same school. We have also separated the distributions of grades assigned to public and private schools. (See Table 10.)

Table 10. Grades Assigned to Schools

Grade	Groups From Single School		Groups From More Than One School
	Public n = 171 %	Private n = 45 %	n = 168 %
A	6.4	13.3	4.2
B	28.1	60.0	33.3
C	45.0	17.8	51.2
D	14.0	6.7	8.3
F	5.2	2.2	3.0
I	1.2	0	0
Grade Average:	C	B	C+



The student leaders were somewhat more critical of their schools, assigning fewer grades of "A." The overall grade "average" for this mix of public and private schools was very much in line with the grades assigned by the school/organization sample. Public schools received an average grade of C, while private school grades averaged to a B.

The same themes prominent among the responses to other questions were present among the reasons provided for assigning grades. Assessments of the relationships between students and teachers and the quality of teaching were the key considerations in assigning grades. Characteristics of fellow-students ("clique-ish," judgmental, disinterested in school) were also issues. These criteria were followed by curricular issues--the availability, challenge, and quality of classes; physical facilities, the school schedule (hours, length of the school year, etc.), the extra-curricular options, and school rules and disciplinary practices. A number of the students assigned grades according to how they felt their school compared with others.

Some of the explanations for "A" grades were:

"A+, we do a lot of community service, we are very involved." [Private]

"A, they are preparing us for life, because of Mr. ___, teachers make you work." [Private]

"A, they really help the students put forth more effort." [State-supported]

"A, we work at our own pace." [State-supported]

"A, because it treats the students like people and individuals, well rounded." [Private]

"A, pretty good teachers help with things and help choosing a career and understand things better." [State-supported]

"A, teachers aren't mean." [Public]

"A-, good facilities and congenial teachers." [Public]

"A-, B+, we've got it really good at this school no matter how much we complain." [Private]

Grades of B were usually accompanied by reservations:

"B+, the teachers in honors have all been excellent teachers, yet there are some teachers that are awful. Yet, some are really good. There are no Black teachers. We don't argue on having sport coaches teach. We are lacking facilities. [Our school] spends

more time and money on education instead of sports." [Private]

"B+, half the teachers are nice and teach well, better than every other school in Indiana; B-, people graduate with a good education; B, fairly good school; B-, administration concerns itself too much with the politics of this school." [Private]

"B+, it has its ups with its down; the school sometimes puts on a front to impress people and is full of cliques." [Private]

"B+ because [of] the teachers. Most teachers really care and the people here are nice. You get to know everyone unlike a big public school." [Private]

"We would give it a B+ [because] we are getting a good education, but the politics suck." [Private]

"B+, because it's really not that bad of a place to be." [Public]

"B, the school needs to be cleaned, but it gets the job done." [Public]

"B, it is a good school, but a lot can be improved like teachers' and students' attitudes, extracurricular activities." [Public]

"B, we are treated mostly as adults, education is fair, everyone is equal." [Public]

"B, most teachers are experienced; good programs but good students are dragged down by bureaucratic red tape; they are making progress there." [Public]

"B, because it's better than most, but teachers' attitudes stink and such; also there is not much violence and drugs." [Public]

"B, because sometimes it's not the teachers' faults, it's the students' attitude." [Public]

"B, school is mildly O.K." [Public]

"B-, some bad teachers; students don't always have the opportunity to voice our opinion." [Public]

"B-, the main reason being not enough black teachers and not enough motivation of black kids." [Public]

"B-, too many skanks and scrugs, mean teachers, teachers unwilling to spend time, some teachers unqualified." [Public]

"B-, because it's clean, new, lots of extra machines, but we need a napkin disposal machine and better quality teachers." [Public]

"B-, education is good but activities are limited for fear of racial/religious problems." [Public]

Those who assigned grades of "C" or lower tended to be much more critical of their schools.

"C+, it doesn't do all it could do for students; some students can't take class they want." [Public]

"I give it a C because it is average, just like all other schools." [Public]

"C, lunches, teachers--they pressure us." [Public]

"C, not enough choices and the dress code stinks." [Private]

"C, low % attend college; people are slipping through the system." [Public]

"C, because my school tried giving me an education but then, I didn't want it, so it's not their fault." [Public]

"C, doesn't have half the stuff you need; teachers are boring." [Public]

"C-, too many get kicked out for insufficient reasons." [Public]

"D+, it sucks, but at least my friends are here." [Private]

"D+, athletics are more important, some incompetent staff." [Public]

"D, 'cause they aren't working hard enough and aren't accomplishing their goals." [State-supported]

"D, they don't treat everyone the same and they judge on how much money you have." [Private]

"D, because sports are encouraged more than academics." [Public]

"D, it sucks; they aren't the worst school in the world; it's not very good and rules are stupid." [Public]

"D, doesn't completely fail; D---, just passing. Gang related, teachers don't care." [Public]

"D-, counselors are no good, no confidentiality." [Public]

"D-, Most teachers always give their point of view and never let the students give their point of view." [Public]

"D-, abnormal school; we don't have real walls; days are too long." [Public]

"F, teachers are narrow minded and judge people too easily." [Private]

"F, it stops teaching after a certain age." [State-supported]

"F, 'Cause there are gangs, drugs, no one takes it seriously." [Public]

"F, for lack of good, enthusiastic teachers." [Public]

"F, hate faculty and administration; policies do not coincide with the vital teachings of the school. Too many games are played." [Private]

"F, racism." [Public]

"F-, Sanatorial [sic] conditions." [Private]

A few students refused to assign a grade, one stating that "grades are no indication of personal growth and true learning." "Incomplete" appeared among the grades assigned by students in groups from public schools:

> *"I, incomplete 'cause they're not doing very well and finishing their job."*

> *"How can you grade a prison, I'd give it an incomplete."*

In addition to asking them to assign grades to their schools, we asked directly, **"Do you think you are getting a good education? Why or Why not?"** After reading page after page of commentary that ranged from condemnation by faint praise, to outright scorn for their schooling, we were surprised to find that just over half the student groups felt that they were receiving a good education. (See Table 11a.) Another third of the groups disagreed among themselves or provided qualified answers ("it depends on what you want to do"). Only 17% stated outright that they were *not* receiving a good education. The major reasons given for their various conclusions are presented in Table 11b.

Table 11a. Are You Getting A Good Education?

	Yes %	No %	Disagree Within Group; Qualified Answer %	No Answer %	Total
Public Schools (n=189)	46.0	22.2	30.7	1.1	100%
Private Schools (n=47)	87.2	4.3	8.5	0	100%
Leadership Groups (Mixed School)(n=155)	44.5	13.5	41.9	0	99.9%
TOTAL (n-391)	50.4	16.6	32.5	.5	100%

Table 11b. Explanations Offered for Quality of Education

Yes, receiving a good education	%	%	No, not receiving a good education
Teachers good, caring, skilled	23.3	20.5	Teachers poor, uncaring
Good course selection opportunities available	6.4	9.5	Course offerings too limited
Challenging, high demands	11.5	3.8	Low demands, repetitious
Students' grades high; external recognition of school	4.3	1.0	Red tape, too strict
School classes, small, personal	3.3	1.3	School classes, large, impersonal

"Do you think you are getting a good education? Why or Why not?"

Once again, an assessment of their teachers was the primary reason presented:

"Yes, great, because the teachers are really good and help us with problems we have. They really understand."

"Yes. We have good teachers that care about us and spend time with us. All of the homework they give us, helps us."

"Yes and No, because some teachers don't want to be here and some are not qualified to teach here.

"No, certain classes, few good teachers. Teachers are well-educated but don't know how to share it with students, prejudiced teachers, inconsistency."

"No, teachers are not up to date on subject, and don't try to create an interest in subject."

"Yes, we have very good, intelligent teachers who are willing to spend time (with pay) to show us and teach us things."

"No, you never have any labs or fields trips, or never had anything to do in class but book work."

"Yes, more strict, determined teachers (some of them), smaller school, smaller classes."

"No, because teachers get paid whether they teach or not."

"No, because the teachers don't teach, they embarass you. It takes up your whole day, you have to get up early."

"No, 'cause teachers don't care. They [are] too busy worrying about their paycheck and us breaking their stupid rules."

"Yes and no. Some teachers aren't open-minded enough to believe that we have opinions."

"Yes, independent living program. [Teachers] have gone out of their way to help me to get where I am. They are willing to go out of their way to help us."

Again, some recognized the part that student attitudes play:

"Yes...depends on your attitude toward learning."

"Yes, kind of. The system sucks, but the teachers make the difference. I'm learning more & more every day. I am grasping all that I am offered. I am pushing myself to try hard and take advantage of all of my opportunities."

"Yes, because if [we] hate school, something is right."

The caliber and content of the courses available and the level of challenge offered were also important criteria in evaluating whether they were receiving a good education:

"No, the teachers don't push you hard enough; what they teach us somewhat is not effective."

"Somewhat. No money for it. It's all going to football and tv."

"Yes, they offer many courses."

"No, because we feel like we can be taught more that we will apply in our later life."

"Yes, because my mom said so, and because our education is more accelerated than other schools."

"Not really. [They] offer courses we really don't need and there aren't courses we do need."

"Yes, at this school one is prepared for college; good staff and faculty, learn to plan out our own time, therefore being more responsible."

"No, because it's too strict--they make you not like it. There aren't enough choices or extracurricular activities."

"No, classes are too easy."

"Yes, we will be ready for college when the time comes."

"No, the honor students and slow students get the most attention. What about the average kids?"

Some felt that the school's test scores or their own grades demonstrated a good education; others pointed to recognition from outside agencies of the excellence of their school ([Our school] "is recognized by the United States Department of Education as a 'School of Excellence'"). Others liked self-paced education and the small size of the school and/or classes. Discipline was also an important aspect to 12 groups:

"No, teachers are dense, not strict enough. One goofball messes everyone up."

"No, too many bad kids, not enough time for good kids."

"No. I believe that strict rules should be laid down to keep the system running efficiently and controlled."

"Definitely, because we have an adequately controlled environment where not many problems occur."

Compulsory Education Laws

We asked one final set of questions related to the importance that young people place on education: **"Should there be laws forcing those under 16 to be in school? Should this age limit be raised or lowered? To what age? Why?"** (See Table 12.)

Table 12. Should There Be Laws Keeping Youth in School (n = 391)

	%
Yes, but age raised	46.7
Yes, age remain at 16	26.4
Yes, but age lowered	3.7
No, there should not be laws	13.6
Group members disagreed	5.5
Don't know, no answer	4.2

More than three fourths of the students gave unqualified support to compulsory education. ("If they let kids quit anytime, they would all be dead or into trouble.") Even more startling was the fact that more than 4 in 10 felt that the age for voluntary school-leaving should be raised to 17, 18, or until graduation from high school. A smaller number (4%) felt that there should be laws, but that the age should be lowered, while 26% felt the age should remain where it is, at 16. However they may describe their own schooling when asked for details, a majority of Indiana's young people clearly place a high value on education, agreeing that they should be compelled to do what is good for them.

Some of the reasons given by those who felt that the age should be raised were:

"Yes, raised to finish high school. America is starting to suck because of apathetic SOB's starting to believe that they will never succeed."

"Raised to 18 because that's the legal age of 'adult.'"

"Yes, raised, 18. Education is too important at young ages because they are being formed as people."

"Yes, should be raised to 18, so at least they can get an education they need but may not know it now."

"Yes, raised to 18. They're not legal adults, so they can't make a dime, so they should do time in school."

"Yes, raised to 18. [Our] government is comparing [us] to other countries where education is enforced and we are continually rather low. Try to help get rid of those dependent on welfare. [Sixteen] is not a very responsible age and [they] aren't sure what they want and end up regretting decision."

"Yes, raised to 18. The two years' difference adds to knowledge. More educated people are needed in society."

Those favoring lowering the age for permitting school-leaving suggested that younger people are "smart enough to know what we want" or that 15 "is old enough to know right from wrong and I think they have learned enough to get to get by in life." Others thought the present law fine as it is, because 16 is the "age of responsibility," or "from 16 on, you tend to discover your independence."

A much smaller number (14%) recommended abolishing compulsory attendance altogether, nearly all because they felt that it should be a personal decision:

"No, some teenagers will rebel. It is their choice if they want an education."

"I think it is a waste of taxpayers' money to make kids go to school that don't want to be there. Let them make their own decisions."

"There shouldn't be a law on age. It should be your decision, not anyone else's."

"No [law], because if they don't want to be here they're just going to make it bad for everyone else, cause trouble."

"There should be no law. It all boils down to motivation."

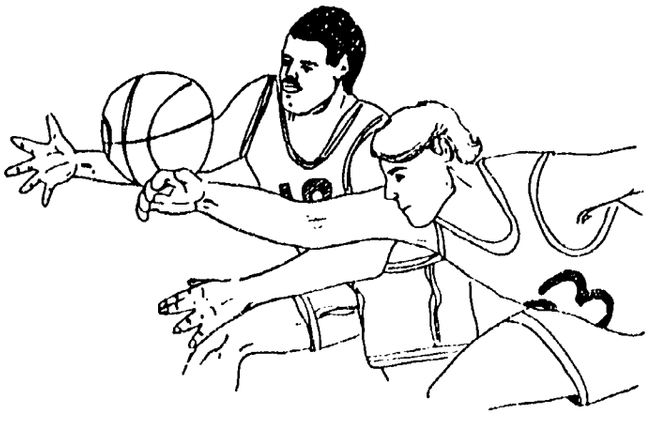
"They'll get out anyway."

CHAPTER 6

AFTER SCHOOL

Since colonial days, adult Americans have taken a dim view of youths with free time on their hands. About a century ago, such concerns reached new heights when rapid urbanization created a lot of street corners, and social and economic changes left large numbers of young people, who were neither at work nor at school, to stand about on them. Churches, communities, and schools quickly began to fill the time-gaps with organized societies, park and recreation programs, informal educational organizations, and numerous clubs, athletic teams, and contests within the schools themselves. These in-school activities became known and justified within educational circles as an *"extra curriculum"* that would translate adolescents' "natural" proclivities to form peer groups, into opportunities to reinforce classroom experiences and promote the "worthy use of leisure."[11] Many of these activities were also expected to serve as substitutes for the disciplinary and character-forming aspects of full-time work no longer available to young people.

Young people themselves, for the most part, joined in such activities because they found them to be fun, as well as the key to the high school social structure. The roster of literary and debating societies, foreign language clubs, baseball and football teams, present in most large urban high schools by 1915, has expanded to include dozens of diverse extra-curricular options in most high schools today. National research has found that most high school students participate in at least one organized program either in or out of school. More typically, students belong to from two to four, with some joining many more. Further, benefits do appear to accrue from such participation. In the *High School and Beyond* study, the number of activities in which young people reported participating was directly related to measures of self-esteem and to a sense of efficacy (internal locus of control). The greatest difference on these measures was found between the scores of students who participated in no activities, and those who listed one.[12]



In the past decade, school and community sponsors have reported increased difficulty in retaining the

interests of young people, once they reach "working age." It is ironic that the system of activities designed to replace work in young people's lives in an earlier period of broad economic change, now seems to be losing out to a massive return of teens to the work force. New demographic and economic changes have created whole industries that now depend on their part-time labor. Many Indiana high school students are working from 30-40 hours weekly--well beyond the 15- to 20-hour maximum that research suggests can be beneficial for healthy development.[13]

It was not the purpose of this Youth Poll to explore fully the out-of-school worlds of Indiana youth. However, we did ask them to specify their extra-curricular activities and to estimate the time spent weekly in these ways.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Four out of five students reported participation in at least one in- or out-of-school extra-curricular activity.

Table 13. Extra Curricular Activities*	
Sports	55.1
Religious youth group	29.9
Community service volunteer	14.2
School subject matter or hobby	19.8
Vocational Student Organization (e.g. Future Farmers, Future Homemakers)	19.8
Cheerleader/Pep Club/Dance Line	9.8
Music Group (band & chorus)	23.8
School publications (yearbook, paper)	3.8
Debate/Drama	7.8
Social club, sorority, fraternity	4.2
Community youth group (e.g. Scouts, 4-H)	23.9
Honor society	5.3
Student government	8.1
Other	14.1

*Multiple responses coded, 1,560 students responding.

Just over half said that they were involved in one or more sports, and about a fourth belonged to a church or temple youth group. Band, chorus, and other music activities were listed by 15% of the students. (See Table 13 for a full list of the activities reported.) Indiana students are very similar to those in other states in their patterns of participation. Students put in varying amounts of time on their activities, with a range of one to over 30 hours (Table 14). One-third of the students reported spending between 10 and 20 hours per week, suggesting that these activities are a very important part of many young lives.

Table 14. Hours Per Week Spent on Activities In and Out of School (n = 1,560)

None	16.9
1 - 9	29.5
10 - 20	37.9
21 - 30	7.1
31 - 40	2.3
Greater Than 40	1.7
No Information	4.6

Summary

Indiana has some 305,000 students in its public and private secondary educational systems. For the most part, these students get up in the morning and walk, drive or get on a bus to go to schools where they remain for the better part of the 180 days each year that the law requires of them. With these young people come individual blends of material, social, and personal resources that over the course of 12 years are "converted into the credentials that govern their future life chances."[14] What students find in their schools and how they feel about them varies, but it appears that for a large majority, the climate of relationships among students, faculty, and administrators is critical to their appraisals. Students consistently placed higher value on the social and personal skills that they derived from being part of the school community, than on what they felt they gained from the formal curriculum.

Adolescents are naturally absorbed with the processes of discovering, exploring, and coming to terms with themselves as emerging adults. They look both to older adults and peers for challenges and standards against which to test their own beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior. Not surprisingly, students find much to criticize. We may argue that their views of reality are untempered by experience, biased or incomplete, and that may be so. However, we must also remember the sociological dictum: "What is believed to be real, is real in its consequences."

A recent commentary on American education from youths' perspective summarized their views in two words: boredom and pressure. We wish that we might say the situation is different in Indiana, but it is not. Boredom and pressure are the two dominant themes that run throughout the responses that young people gave to the Indiana Youth Poll questions. They identified both the school structure and the formal curriculum as sources of apathy and frustration.

Relationships

The social systems that exist within high schools tend roughly to parallel those of the larger community. More privileged young people, whose families can provide them with material resources and academic and social supports, tend to occupy positions of leadership

in school organizations and to be members of the "leading crowd." Sports programs generate another status system that may or may not overlap with the academic and social hierarchies. Although social and athletic elites are formed outside the classroom, their prestige may carry over into academic arenas. Students expressed considerable resentment of perceived "favoritism" shown in the demands placed on elite groups by teachers; they also expressed indignation toward administrators whom they felt allocated resouces more generously to certain favored extracurricular groups. However, this was not the most frequent area of commentary about school personnel. Teachers clearly make the difference for Indiana youth.

We heard many reports of highly regarded teachers whom the students felt really respected and cared about them. Young people appreciated teachers' willingness to share opinions and experiences, to help with academic and personal problems, and to go the "extra mile," to do something for which they were not being paid. Perhaps most of all, students appreciated a challenging, engrossing classroom experience accompanied by fairness in grading.

The Youth Poll commentary revealed the importance that their own perceptions of teacher competence held for high school students. Time after time they told of the frustration of being in classrooms where they felt the teachers' presentations were inadequate. They found it "boring" when lectures lasted for entire periods, or when the only change in teaching style was the use of "work sheets." They asked instead, for teachers who had thorough understanding of their fields and who could communicate this information at a level that was neither confusing nor condescending. They wanted more opportunities to explore and discuss issues from their own points of view, without the threat of down-grading if their views differed from those of the teacher. Students also asked for a variety of options in learning methods, and that "hands-on" experiences not be limited to science labs and vocational courses.

Even more critical to students' dissatisfaction with schools, however, were their perceptions that teachers did not view them as young adults. They resented deeply being treated like children, or as powerless vessels needing only to be filled with adults' notions of truth and knowledge.

Young people also resented being subject to school policies, including codes of dress and conduct, that made little sense to them and which they had no part in creating. For example, many reported "passing periods" between classes so short that there was no time for a visit to a restroom during the entire day. Depending on the school, students felt that certain dress restrictions were unfair either to males or females (and occasionally to both). Generally the students wished to have a larger and more meaningful role in the governance of the school community. It is of more than passing interest that the changes Hoosier youth say they would make in the structure and climate of their schools are directly in line with the ideas of many contemporary educational reformers.

Curriculum

While much of their commentary was reserved for school structure and climate, the respondents did not overlook the curriculum. Students often found their coursework fragmented and many seemed to lack a "big picture" of what education is all about. In one discussion, for example, a group of student leaders complained about the irrelevance of their science courses. We asked if they did not feel that basic scientific knowledge was necessary if they were to be intelligent and informed voters. This seemed to be a new idea to them, and they replied that they only talked about voter responsibility in social studies classes. Students also told us that they found very little relevance in their coursework to what they were currently experiencing in the "real world" or to what they imagined their adult lives would be. While some of this failure may be attributed to adolescents' normal level of cognitive development, we cannot help but agree with Hedin and associates who obtained similar results when polling Minnesota high school students. Hedin noted:

It appears that much of the academic course work in high school assumes that students are capable of abstract thinking, while most are still at concrete levels of functioning. What is needed is to design materials and methods that promote rather than assume higher levels of cognitive development. The good news is that this can be done.[15]

The additional good news is that Indiana's students are ready for such education. Young Hoosiers have

overwhelmingly accepted the need for at least a secondary education, and almost half of them would compel students to remain in high school until they have finished. The epithets with which they labelled school dropouts suggested that they may even see remaining in school as a moral issue. *It is the right thing to do.* What an opportunity such attitudes provide!

Notes:

1. The philosophy and methodology of the youth polls are explained in "The Minnesota Youth Poll," by Diane Hedin and Howard Wolfe in *The Center Quarterly Focus*, Spring 1979, and "The View from Inside: The Minnesota Youth Poll," by Diane Hedin in *New Designs for Youth Development*, 8, 3 (Summer 1988) 32-39.

2. Many of the questions in this poll were drawn directly or adapted from two Minnesota Youth Polls: D. Hedin, P. Simon, and M. Robin, *Youth's Views on School and School Discipline*, Minnesota Report 184-1983, St. Paul, MN, Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota, 1983; and D. Hedin, J. Erickson, P. Simon, and J. Walker, *Aspirations, Future Plans, and Expectations of Young People in Minnesota*, Minnesota Report AD-MR-2512, St. Paul, MN, Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota, 1985.

3. *The State of the Child in Indiana*, Indianapolis, Lilly Endowment, Inc., 1989; and *Status of Education in Indiana: An Overview*, Bloomington, Indiana University Consortium on Educational Policy Studies, 1990.

4. Participants in the Teen Institute were teams of students from across the state, enrolled in grades 10-12, who had made a commitment to "use their positive energies and leadership abilities to get others involved in drug prevention programs and drug alternative activities." Members of the Black Expo Youth Corps were selected by the 13 chapters of Black Expo in cities throughout the state. The participants attended "symposiums and lectures addressing topics such as: self esteem, spiritual awareness, substance abuse, teen parenthood and responsible decision-making" and experienced a number of educational opportunities in Indianapolis. The Junior Leaders of 4-H, also from across the state, are young people who have made a commitment to take year-round leadership roles in their clubs. IYI Youth Conference participants represented out-of-school youth-serving agencies and organizations.

5. The 1988-89 distribution of minority students in Indiana high schools was as follows: African American, 10.9%; Hispanic, 1.8%; American Indian and Asian, .7%. The distribution of Youth Poll participants is very similar.

6. In reporting the student comments we have made corrections in spelling for purposes of clarity; however, the words and the grammar have been left as written.

7. K. Engelke, "America's Number One Health Problem?", *New Designs for Youth Development*, vol. 7, 1986, pp. 9-12; G. Kolata, "Obese Children: A Growing Problem," *Science*, vol. 232, April 4, 1986, pp. 20-21.

8. KIDSCOUNT Data Book; State Profiles of Child Well-Being, Washington, DC, Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1990, p. 20.

9. Figures supplied by the Indiana Department of Education.

10. Where multiple grades were assigned by group members, a "within-group" average was calculated. These averages and single grades were then averaged for the entire samples.

11. This issue was widely discussed in education textbooks of the day. See, for example, W.R. Smith, *Principles of Educational Sociology*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928.

12. These conclusions are based on the author's secondary analysis of the 1980 base data for the *High School and Beyond* study conducted at the Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development, Boys Town, Nebraska, in 1982. Luther Otto's research, using other longitudinal data, concluded that extra-curricular participation is a better predictor of adult success than either school grades or labor-force participation. See L.B. Otto, "Extra-Curricular Activities," in H. Walberg, (ed.), *Improving Education Standards and Productivity: The Research Base for Policy*, Berkeley, CA, McCutchan, 1982.

13. One of the best-known studies of youth and work is that of E. Greenberger and L. Steinberg, *When Teenagers Work: The Psychological and Social Costs of Adolescent Employment*, New York, Basic Books, 1986.

14. D. R. Entwisle, "Schools and the Adolescent," in S. Feldman and G. Elliott (eds.), *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 197-224.

15. See D. Hedin et al., op. cit., 1983, p. 31, note 2 above.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

The results of the Youth Poll raise many more questions that were not asked. We urge that young people and adults use this Poll to stimulate further discussion about life in your high school. For example, the Poll offered students a chance to vent their feelings about teachers, facilities, and curriculum, but provided little opportunity for students to reflect on what might be a teacher's point of view on school life. Students might meet with a group of teachers and/or administrators and ask them some of the same open-ended questions that were asked of groups participating in the Youth Poll.

Some other questions that might be used to provoke discussion are:

1. Many Youth Poll respondents talked about school being boring. What does the word "boring" mean to you? Do you think that teachers would also say that school is boring? Why? What would be the opposite of "boring?" What could be done to make school less boring for students and teachers?

2. Many students expressed a rather low opinion of young people who drop out of school. If a student dropped out of your school, but after a couple of months decided he or she wanted to come back, what kind of a welcome would he or she get? Why would it be this way? Are there things that students and/or teachers could do to help a "drop-back-in" feel better about being in school?

3. How should teachers treat students in school? What are the qualities of a good teacher?

4. How should students treat teachers in school? What are the qualities of a good student?

5. How might teachers and students work together to make school a better community for all?

6. Most adults think the biggest problem in schools is the lack of student discipline and order. Do you agree or disagree? If discipline is not the biggest problem from your point of view, what is? How might this problem be overcome?

7. Many students felt that school rules were an insult to their maturity. Do you feel this way about any of the rules in your school? How would you change these rules? How could students, teachers, and administrators work together to bring about these changes?

INDIANA YOUTH POLL

Individual Questionnaire

Sex: Male _____ Female _____

Age: _____

Would you describe yourself as:
African Am.___ Asian___ White___
Hispanic___ Am. Indian____
Other _____

Name of School: _____

Grade in school: 9___ 10___ 11___ 12___

Zip Code for where you live: _____

Which of the following people live in the same household with you?

I live alone	____	Mother	____	Own Child	____
Father	____	Stepmother	____	Grandparents	____
Stepfather	____	Foster Mother	____	Aunts/Uncles	____
Foster Father	____	Brothers/Sisters	____	Other	____

What kind of work or job has each of the following done most recently?

Father _____

Stepfather or male guardian _____

Mother _____

Stepmother or female guardian _____

How far did each of the following go in school?

	Mother	Step-Mother	Father	Step-Father
Grade 8 or less	____	____	____	____
High school				
1-3 years	____	____	____	____
4 years or GED	____	____	____	____
Vocational or Business School	____	____	____	____
College				
1-3 years	____	____	____	____
4 years	____	____	____	____
Post Graduate Education	____	____	____	____
Don't know	____	____	____	____

What kind of work for pay do you do after school?

About how many hours do you work each week?

What do you do with the money you earn?

How do you think that the work that you are doing now relates to the work you want to do as an adult?

Some people think that working too many hours after school interferes with school work. Should the government restrict the number of hours young people are allowed to work while school is in session? No _____ Yes _____ Don't Know _____

If you said yes, how many hours a week should youth under 18 be allowed to work? _____

What kinds of extracurricular activities are you involved in? (Include both in-school, such as band, sports, etc., and out-of-school such as church or synagogue youth group, Scouts, etc.)

About how many hours per week do you spend on extracurricular activities? ___

Do you want to finish (check all that apply):

High School	___
Military duty	___
Vocational or Business School	___
College	___
Graduate or Professional School	___

If you do not plan to finish high school, why not?

If you plan to finish high school, but do not intend to go on to school, why?

What do the following people think you <u>ought</u> to do right after you leave high school?

	Go to college	Get a full-time job	Go to vocational school	Don't know	Other (please list)
You	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Father	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Stepfather	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mother	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Stepmother	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Guidance counselor	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best friend	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Most Americans are working by the time they are about 30 years old. What kind of work would you <u>like</u> to be doing at age 30?

What kind of work do you think that you <u>actually will</u> be doing at age 30?

Where do you think that you will be living at age 30?

In the town where I live now _____
Somewhere else in Indiana _____
Outside of Indiana _____

If you do not expect to be living in Indiana, why not?

What does your mother <u>expect</u> you to be doing at age 30?

What does you father <u>expect</u> you to be doing at age 30?

To what extent do you think the things listed below might prevent you from getting the kind of work that you would like?

	Not at All	Somewhat	A lot	Dnt Know
Lack of money for education	_____	_____	_____	_____
No college or place to get training near home	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lack of transportation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parents/family disapprove	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family or home responsibilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Not enough motivation to succeed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Racism	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sexism	_____	_____	_____	_____
Didn't take the right courses in high school	_____	_____	_____	_____
Don't get high enough grades	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lack of knowledge about career possibilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Don't have the necessary skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lack of intelligence	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lack of jobs/bad economy	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job I want doesn't pay enough	_____	_____	_____	_____
Not knowing the right people	_____	_____	_____	_____
Not wanting to work hard	_____	_____	_____	_____

Think about kinds of responsibilities you will have in your adult life in addition to your job or career. How well prepared do you think you are in the following areas:

	Extremely prepared	Fairly prepared	Somewhat unprepared	Very unprepared	Don't know
Running a household	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Maintaining a long-term, intimate relationship	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Raising children	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Staying healthy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Managing finances	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Maintaining good friendships	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Enjoying leisure time	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Deciding what is right and wrong	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Being involved in public affairs (voting, working for a political party)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Providing volunteer service in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Being able to support myself well	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Understanding how to prevent unwanted pregnancy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Balancing work and home responsibilities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Which of the following best describes your grades so far in high school?

Mostly A's	_____	Half B's, half C's	_____	Mostly D's	_____
Half A's, half B's	_____	Mostly C's	_____	Below D's	_____
Mostly B's	_____	Half C's, half D's	_____		

Is there anything about your future plans that we didn't ask, but you would like to tell us?

GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions for the Recorder

The recorder's job is the most important. Without clear, accurate and complete notes of the group discussion, we will not have a good understanding of your group's opinions.

The recorder's job is to write down as much as possible of what is being said in response to the questions. Don't decide what would be important for us to know; just write down whatever people say. Encourage everyone to participate and give opinions.

1. Read each question out loud to your group.

2. On the lines provided, indicate the question number and begin writing everything and anything people say in response to the question.

3. After everyone has spoken, go on to the next question.

4. Before you begin, please read this paragraph to your group:

   As group members, please try to make it easy to record your comments by talking slowly and clearly. This does not mean that your answers have to be well planned or carefully worded, although clarity would certainly help. You can be assured of confidentiality since no name will be recorded.

5. **Clip all the Individual Questionnaires for your group to your Group Questionnaire when you are finished.**

1. *What do you like about going to school?*

2. *What do you dislike about going to school?*

3. *When you think of your typical day in school, what words best describe it?*

4. *Do you think you are getting a good education? Why or why not?*

5. *Suppose you could give your school a report card. What grade would you give and why?*

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1. *What are the most important things you learn in school? The least important?*

2. *What kinds of things are you learning in school that you think will help you later on in your life?*

3. *What things are you learning in school that help you now, as a teenager?*

4. *If you could change your school, what three things would you do?*

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1. *Why do some youths decide to skip classes?*

2. *What types of people tend to skip classes?*

3. *Why do some youths decide to drop out of school?*

4. *What types of people tend to drop out?*

5. *Should there be laws forcing those under 16 to be in school? Should this age limit be raised or lowered? To what age? Why?*

1. *America has been thought of as the land of unlimited opportunity where anyone can become successful. What is your reaction to this statement?*

2. *Do young people growing up in Indiana have more, or less, or about the same opportunities as young people growing up in other parts of the country? Why?*

3. *If there are things that keep people from reaching their goals, what are they?*

4. *Are the obstacles that prevent people from achieving their goals different for young men than for young women?*

1. ***What kind of things would you consider to be signs of success in adult life?***

2. ***Would the same things be signs of happiness, or would they be different? Why?***

3. ***What does it mean to be a failure when you are 30 to 40 years old? Would this be the same for men and women? Why?***

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It is our hope that many other high schools and youth groups will conduct the Youth Poll among their own constituents. We have included a Copy of the full 1989-90 Youth Poll that may be duplicated without further permission. The Indiana Youth Institute regrets that it cannot provide data analysis services for other groups using the questionnaires. However, we will supply instructions for conducting a youth poll and instructions for coding the data, free of charge.

Additional copies of the Indiana Youth Poll may be obtained from the Indiana Youth Institute. The cost is $7.50 per copy, plus $2.50 postage and handling.

Indiana Youth Institute • 333 N. Alabama • Suite 200 • Indianapolis • Indiana • 46204
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10 Blueprints For Healthy Development

The Indiana Youth Institute's blueprint for healthy development of all Indiana's children is based on the premise that every child in Indiana -- regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, handicapping condition, geographical location, or economic status -- deserves an equal opportunity to grow up in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.

Building A Healthy Body

Indiana's youth will be born at full term and normal birth weight to healthy mothers. They will receive a well-balanced diet in adequate supply to grow strong bodies to acceptable height for their age. They will be provided a balance of physical activity and rest in a safe and caring environment. They and their families will have access to good medical care and educational opportunity which will teach them how to abstain from activities that would be detrimental to their health. They will engage their minds in positive activities that will enhance their health.

Building Positive Relationships

Indiana's children will experience love and care of parents and other significant adults. They will develop wholesome relationships while learning to work collaboratively with peers and adults.

Building Self Acceptance

Indiana's children and youth will perceive themselves as lovable, and capable; they will act with self-confidence, self-reliance and self-direction and control. They will take pride in their accomplishments. As they develop self-esteem, they will have positive feelings about their own uniqueness as well as that of others.

Building Active Minds

Indiana's young people will have stimulating and nurturing environments that build on their individual experience and expand their knowledge. Each young person in reaching his or her own potential will gain literacy and numeric skills that empower the lifelong process of asking questions, collecting information, analyzing information, and formulating valid conclusions.

Building Spirit and Character

Indiana's young people will grow up learning to articulate and inculcate values upon which to make ethical decisions and promote the common good. Within safe boundaries, children and youth will test limits and understand relationships between actions and consequences.

Building Creativity and Joy

Indiana's young people will have diverse opportunities to develop their talents in creative expression (e.g., music, dance, literature, visual arts, theater); to appreciate the creative talents of others; and to participate in recreational activities that inspire constructive, lifelong satisfaction.

Building A Caring Community

Indiana's communities will encourage their young people to see themselves as valued participants in community life. In addition to being recipients of services that express the communities' concerns for their safety and well-being, young citizens will become resources who will improve their surroundings and support the well-being of others. A caring community insures young people's safety and well-being and offers the opportunity for children and youth to participate in decisions that affect community life.

Building a Global Perspective

Indiana's children and youth will learn to see themselves as part of the global community, beyond ethnic, religious, state and national boundaries. In formal and informal educational experiences, they will have opportunities to become familiar with the history, political issues, languages, cultures, and ecosystems that affect global life and future well-being.

Building Economic Independence

Indiana's young people will be exposed to a variety of educational, learning and employment experiences that will contribute to vocational and career options. Their formal and informal educational experiences will prepare them to make the transition from school to work, to contribute to the labor force, and to participate in an economic environment that will grow increasingly more complex and will require lifelong learning.

Building A Humane Environment

All children will have access to a physically safe environment, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of violence. They will have adequate housing and living conditions; safe neighborhoods; clean air, food, and water. Their environment will be free from toxins, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. All children will have an opportunity to learn how to protect their environment for the future.

The Associated Group, a family of insurance, employee benefits and financial services companies, is pleased to help provide Hoosier youth this opportunity to voice their own concerns about issues that affect their lives.

We believe this Youth Poll will offer policymakers, educators and youth workers important information about the development of young people and can lead to more effective youth service delivery.

Junior League of Indianapolis is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism and to improving the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

The Indiana Youth Institute is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities and employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, handicap, age or veteran status.