

**Bernards Township School District**

**Guidance Services  
Program Evaluation  
K-12**

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## **Program Evaluation**

Program under evaluation: Guidance K-12

Date of last evaluation: Unknown

### **Changes Since the Last Evaluation**

The Director of Pupil Personnel Services retired in 1999 and was not immediately replaced. An assistant principal and the building principal for a period of approximately two years supervised guidance counselors at the high school. A Director of Pupil Personnel Services was hired to supervise the guidance program from K-12 in 2002 and served the district until June of 2006. Due to budget constraints, the position was not filled in 2006. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Director of Special Education assumed the responsibilities for this position and supervised guidance counselors and guidance related services for the 2006-2007 school year.

A Student Stressors Task Force was formed in 2004 to determine the level of stress among students in the district and recommend a plan to support students who are experiencing high levels of stress.

Implications from Student Stressors Report (2005):

- The relatively high proportions of students with positive levels of Developmental Assets will make the identification of positive change in the future difficult.
- There appears to be a fair amount of alcohol use that may be occurring among students participating in athletic programs. This should be examined further, and if confirmed, programs targeting this group may be worthwhile.
- There was an identified relationship between thrill seeking and impulse control, and high-risk behavior. While students indicated being able to say “no,” they also indicated that impulses could reduce resistance. Developing programs that focus not only on resistance, but impulse control, may be worthwhile.
- The willingness of students to use school resources for support was relatively low, and diminished in the older grades. If additional outreach efforts are possible, they should be considered.

## **Current Status**

Staffing: Currently there are sixteen full-time guidance counselors.

- Each elementary school has one counselor.
- The middle school has four counselors.
- The high school has eight counselors.
- The program is directed and supervised by the Director of Special Education, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and building administrators.

## **Program**

At the elementary and secondary level, the guidance program interfaces with many aspects of the total school program. These include:

- **Social and Emotional Counseling:** Students are introduced to the counselor and his or her services at the earliest possible opportunity at the beginning of each school year in the classroom setting. Counseling sessions are held with pupils as deemed appropriate by the counselor, administrators, teachers, parents, and/or pupils. Counselors also serve as a resource for parents who may need information about developmental stages or needs of their children, referral sources for in-depth family or individual counseling needs, and facilitation in communication with teachers or school staff.
- **College and Career Counseling:** Counselors play a vital role in this area and begin this aspect of guidance early in middle school. The focus intensifies in high school.
- **Registration, Placement, and Orientation:** Counselors assist with the registration process for new students and interpret test scores and other data as needed.
- **Standardized Testing:** The guidance counselor is the site administrator for standardized tests. They coordinate with the district test administrator, implement and interpret the coordinated program of standardized testing, assist pupils and parents with the evaluation of student aptitudes and abilities, and assist with the identification of students eligible to receive additional services based on need and ability.
- **Collaboration with Professionals:** The guidance counselor collaborates with the Office of Special Services to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. The counselor also acts as a liaison between the administration, teachers, parents, and students to promote clear understanding and to unify all efforts in the best interest of the students.
- **Publications:** The counselors write and distribute a newsletter for parents. They also contribute to the school newsletters.
- **Curriculum:** The counselors develop and implement lessons on the identification and expression of feelings, self-esteem, appreciation of self

and of others, conflict resolution, responsible decision making and transitioning to adulthood. The curriculum is not available for parents to review on the website.

- Intervention and Referral Services: The counselors are integral members of the I&RS committees. At the elementary level, they chair the committees and assist with the development, implementation, and monitoring of Action Plans to meet the needs of at-risk students.

### **Comparison to Other Districts**

A recent comparison to other districts similar to Bernards Township revealed similarities and differences with regard to staffing at the elementary level. Three of the seven school districts in the comparative group had full-time counselors in their elementary schools. Three of the school districts shared counselors at the elementary level. All of the districts had either a Director of Guidance K-12 or a head counselor at the high school level. The Millburn school district did not have elementary guidance counselors. Although each of the school districts with elementary counselors has one counselor for each school, there is a substantial range with regard to the number of students per counselor. The chart that follows details the ratio of students to counselors.

#### **Elementary Comparisons**

<b>District</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Number of counselors</b>
Holmdel	Indian Hill	4 and 5	800	1
	Village School	K-3	978	1
Montgomery	Orchard School	K-2	1200	1
	Village School	3 and 4	853	1
Princeton	Community Park	K-5	372	1
	Johnson Park	K-5	350	1
	Littlebrook	K-5	350	1
	Riverside	K-5	320	1
Bernards	Cedar Hill	K-5	575	1
	Oak Street	K-5	597	1
	Liberty Corner	K-5	573	1
	Mount Prospect	K-5	737	1

There is less variation at the secondary level. The next chart details the student: counselor ratio at the middle and high school levels among school districts in the comparison group.

## Secondary Comparisons

District	School	Level	Number of Students	Number of Counselors	Ratio
Holmdel	Holmdel High	High	1156	5	231:1
	William R. Satz	Middle	601	2	300:1
Montgomery	Montgomery High	High	1636	6	273:1
	Montgomery Upper Middle School	Middle	855	2	427:1
	Montgomery Lower Middle School	Middle	854	2	427:1
Princeton	Princeton High	High	1300	6	216:1
	John Witherspoon	Middle	630	3	210:1
Bernards	Ridge High School	High	1602	8	200:1
	William Annin	Middle	1275	4	319:1
Chatham	Chatham High	High	919	5	184:1
	Chatham Middle	Middle	794	3	265:1
Hillsborough	Hillsborough High	High	2361	10	236:1
	Hillsborough Middle	Middle	1200	3	400:1
Livingston	Livingston High	High	1700	7	243:1
	Heritage Middle	Middle	813	4	203:1
	Mount Pleasant	Middle	421	2	210:1
Millburn	Millburn High	High	1287	7	184:1
	Millburn Middle	Middle	1063	4	266:1

## Perception of Program

The most recent climate survey was conducted by NSSE (National Study of School Evaluation) in 2003. Items relevant to guidance are described in the charts and graphs that follow. Perceptions of the program are greatly influenced by the level of schooling under consideration. For example, 86% parents of elementary aged children agree or strongly agree with the statement, “Our school is doing a good job of helping students understand their moral and ethical responsibilities.” However, only 57.9% of the high school parents agreed with this statement and 67.6% of the middle school parents agreed. As children move from the elementary to the middle school and then the high school levels, they also move from one teacher to several. This variable can influence parent perceptions in this area. There was considerable agreement across the levels with the statement, “Our school’s programs help students to understand and get along with other people.” Although it is logical that parents of students at the high school level would have

more basis to make a judgment about the statement “School counselors give students the help they need in planning a vocation/career,” than elementary or middle school parents; it is a source of concern that only 27.6% of the parents of high school students agreed with this statement.

Student perceptions provide valuable insight into the guidance program. Older children report that “School counselors offer the help students need in program planning,” however, younger children are more neutral on this item or they report that they don’t know. Younger children agree or strongly agree with the statement, “A counselor is available if I need help in solving personal problems,” to a greater degree than older students.

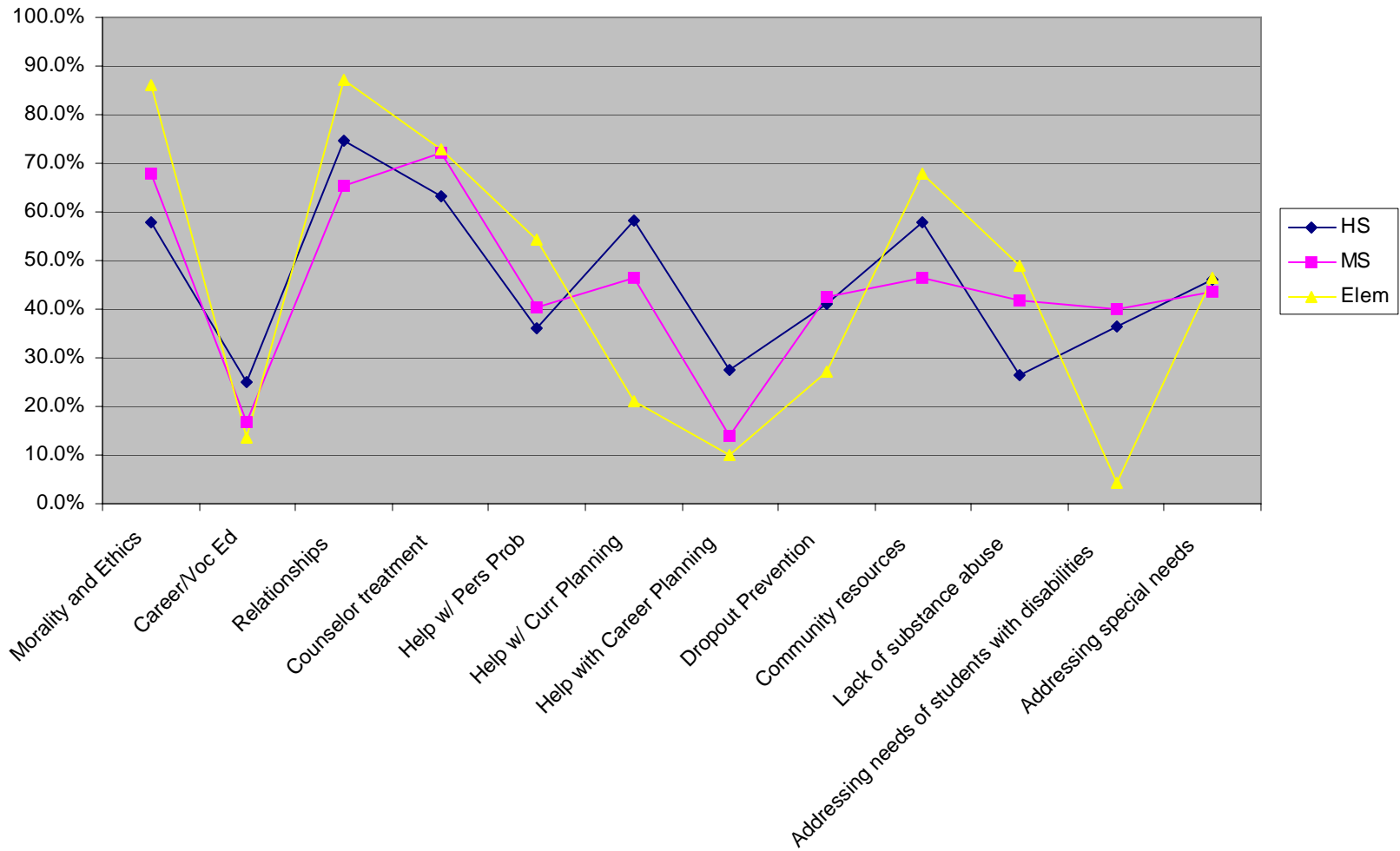
Teacher perceptions are fairly consistent across grade levels. It is interesting to note that many respondents from all three stakeholder groups answered either ‘neutral’ or ‘don’t know’ to several items.

The tables and charts on the following pages detail the items used in the comparison and the results.

Perception of the Program: Parent Opinion Survey 2003

Statement	High School			Middle School			Elementary		
	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD
Our school is doing a good job of helping students understand their moral and ethical responsibilities.	57.9%	27.4%	14.8%	67.6%	21.1%	8.8%	86.0%	12.5%	1.5%
Our school is doing a good job in career/vocational education.	24.9%	57.6%	17.5%	16.8%	69.0%	14.2%	13.7%	82.6%	3.6%
Our school's programs help students to understand and get along with other people.	74.8%	23.1%	11.1%	65.5%	22.2%	12.4%	87.1%	10.2%	2.7%
I am satisfied with the way students are treated by counselors.	63.1%	20.0%	16.8%	72.3%	20.6%	7.2%	72.9%	24.4%	2.7%
I am satisfied with the help students get from school personnel in solving personal problems.	36.1%	52.3%	11.5%	40.3%	50.0%	9.7%	54.4%	41.4%	4.2%
School counselors give students the help they need in curricular planning.	58.3%	19.8%	21.9%	46.4%	40.2%	13.4%	20.9%	77.0%	2.1%
School counselors give students the help they need in planning a vocation/career.	27.6%	48.0%	31.3%	14.0%	69.3%	16.6%	9.9%	88%	2.1%
Our school does a good job in preventing students from dropping out by providing them with support and encouragement they need.	40.9%	54.2%	4.9%	42.6%	53.0%	4.4%	27%	72.8%	.3%
School personnel involve community services (mental health, law enforcement, etc.) to help meet students' needs.	57.8%	36.3%	5.8%	46.5%	37.4%	6.0%	67.8%	31.3%	.9%
There is not a significant problem with substance abuse among the students of this school.	26.5%	36.5%	37.1%	41.7%	45.2%	13.0%	48.8%	50.0%	1.2%
The school appropriately meets the needs of children with physical and mental disabilities.	36.6%	55.5%	7.9%	40.0%	55.6%	4.4%	45.4%	52.9%	1.8%
The school's programs meet the requirement of students with special needs.	46.1%	43.4%	10.5%	43.4%	48.0%	9.6%	46.4%	43.4%	10.2%

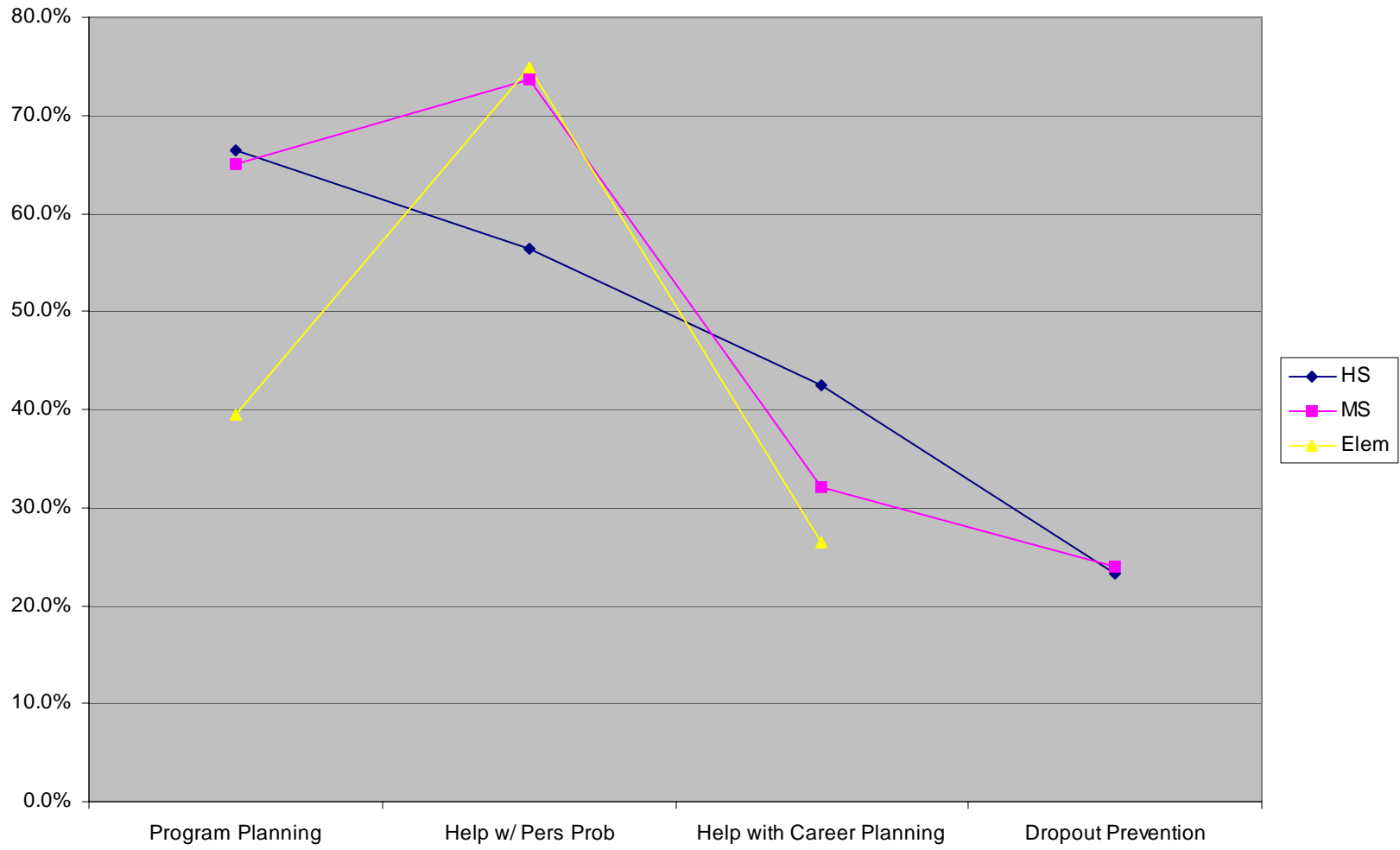
### Parent Perceptions



Perception of the Program: Student Opinion Survey 2003

Statement	High School			Middle School			Elementary		
	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD
School counselors offer the help students need in program planning.	66.4%	21.0%	12.6%	65.1%	21.6%	13.3%	39.5%	53.1%	7.4%
School counselors offer students the help students need in the selection of a vocation or career.	42.5%	37.6%	19.8%	32.1%	45.4%	22.5%	26.5%	61.8%	11.7%
A counselor is available if I need help in solving personal problems.	56.3%	29.6%	14.0%	73.7%	18.4%	7.7%	74.9%	16.8%	8.2%
Students feel that they fit in at our school.	33.8%	39.4%	26.9%	40.9%	34.8%	24.3%	60.3%	25.7%	14.0%
Students, teachers and administrators at our school demonstrate sensitivity to issues of racial and ethnic fairness.	55.6%	28.0%	16.5%	59.3%	27.0%	13.7%			
Sexual harassment is not a problem at our school.	52.9%	33.1%	14.2%	62.6%	24.3%	12.9%			
I look forward to going to school each day.	23.2%	30.8%	45.9%	23.9%	32.5%	43.7%			

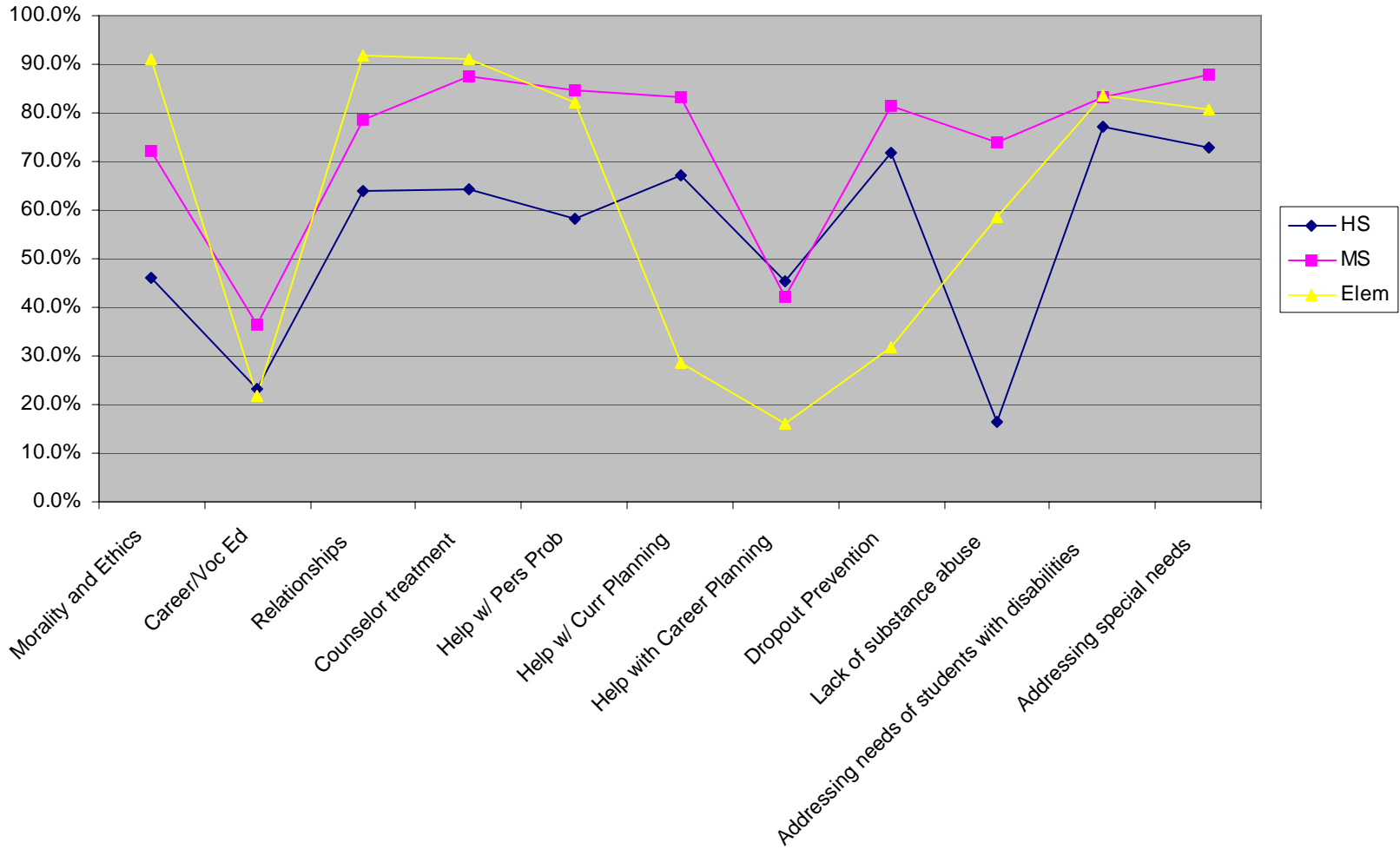
### Student Perceptions



Perception of the Program: Teacher Opinion Survey 2003

Statement	High School			Middle School			Elementary		
	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD
Our school is doing a good job of helping students understand their moral and ethical responsibilities.	46%	22.4%	31.4%	72.3%	13.8%	13.8%	91.1%	4.5%	4.5%
Our school is doing a good job in career/vocational education.	23.1%	44.6%	32.3%	36.5%	46.0%	17.4%	21.8%	72.2%	6.0%
Our school's programs help students to understand and get along with other people.	64.1%	19.4%	16.4%	78.5%	10.8%	10.7%	91.8%	5.2%	3.0%
I am satisfied with the way students are treated by counselors.	64.2%	26.9%	9.0%	87.6%	7.8%	1.6%	91.0%	4.4%	4.5%
I am satisfied with the help students get from school personnel in solving personal problems.	58.2%	31.4%	10.5%	84.7%	12.3%	3.1%	82.2%	10.4%	7.4%
School counselors and advisors give students the help they need in curricular planning.	67.2%	25.4%	7.5%	83.1%	16.9%	0%	28.4%	67.9%	3.7%
School counselors give students the help they need in planning a vocation/career.	45.4%	33.3%	21.2%	42.0%	51.6%	6.4%	15.9%	82.5%	1.5%
Our school does a good job in preventing students from dropping out by providing them with the support and encouragement they need.	71.7%	22.3%	6.0%	81.5%	18.4%	0%	31.9%	68.2%	0%
School personnel involve community services to help meet students' needs.									
There is not a significant problem with substance abuse among the students of this school.	16.6%	25.7%	56.1%	73.8%	23.1%	3.1%	58.5%	40.8%	0.7%
The needs of children with physical and mental disabilities are appropriately met by the school.	77.3%	15.1%	7.6%	83.1%	10.8%	6.2%	83.7%	9.6%	6.7%
The school's programs meet the requirements of students with special needs.	72.7%	19.7%	4.5%	87.7%	9.2%	3.1%	80.6%	9.7%	9.7%

### Teacher Perceptions

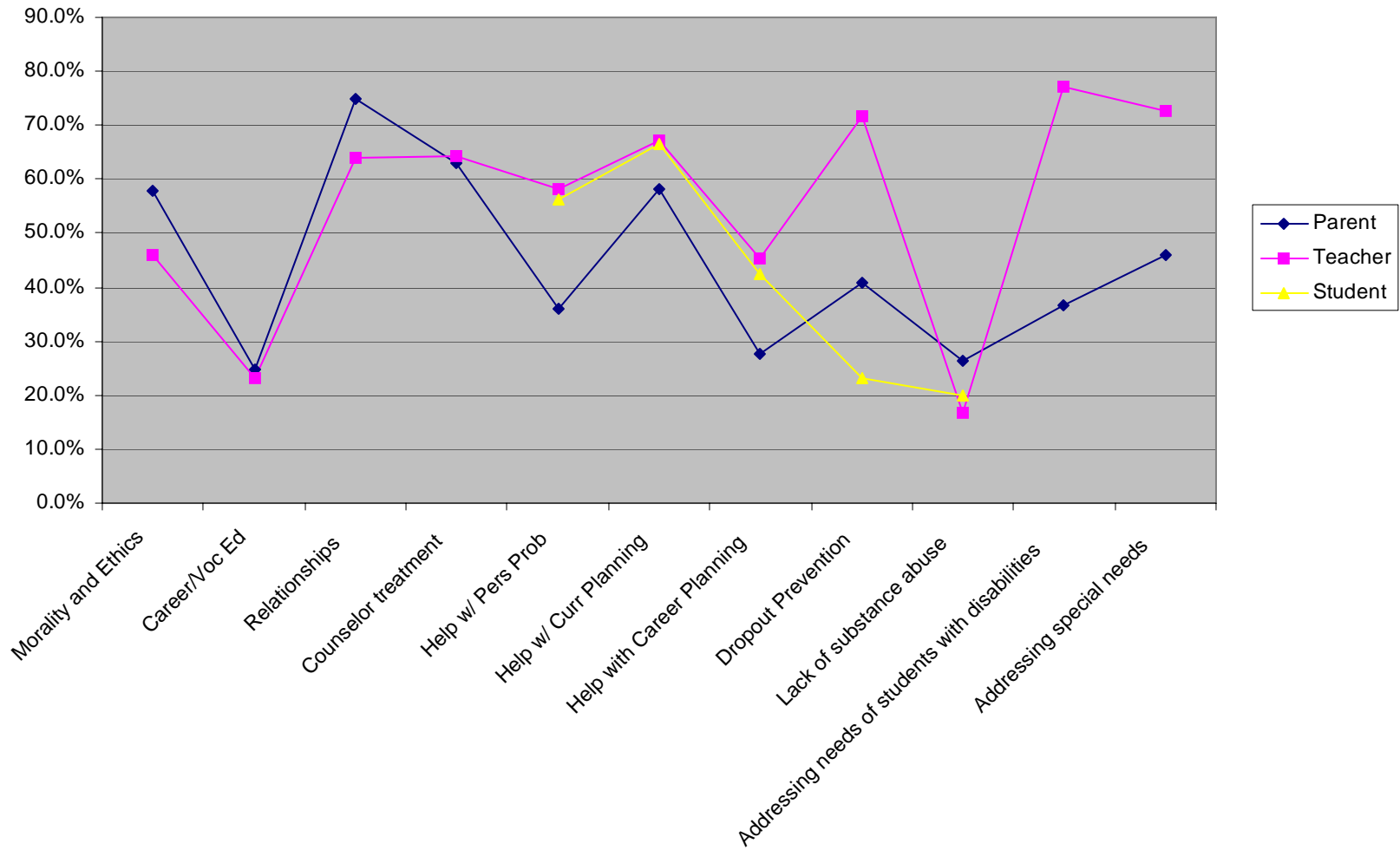


### High School Comparisons 2003

Statement	Parents			Teachers			Students		
	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD
Our school is doing a good job of helping students understand their moral and ethical responsibilities.	57.9%	27.4%	14.8%	46%	22.4%	31.4%			
Our school is doing a good job in career/vocational education.	24.9%	57.6%	17.5%	23.1%	44.6%	32.3%			
Our school's programs help students to understand and get along with other people.	74.8%	23.1%	11.1%	64.1%	19.4%	16.4%			
I am satisfied with the way students are treated by counselors.	63.1%	20.0%	16.8%	64.2%	26.9%	9.0%			
I am satisfied with the help students get from school personnel in solving personal problems.	36.1%	52.3%	11.5%	58.2%	31.4%	10.5%	56.3%	29.6%	14.0%
School counselors give students the help they need in curricular planning.	58.3%	19.8%	21.9%	67.2%	25.4%	7.5%	66.4%	21.0%	12.6%
School counselors give students the help they need in planning a vocation/career.	27.6%	48.0%	31.3%	45.4%	33.3%	21.2%	42.5%	37.6%	19.8%
Our school does a good job in preventing students from dropping out by providing them with support and encouragement they need.*	40.9%	54.2%	4.9%	71.7%	22.3%	6.0%	23.2%	30.8%	45.9%
School personnel involve community services (mental health, law enforcement, etc.) to help meet students' needs.	57.8%	36.3%	5.8%						
There is not a significant problem with substance abuse among the students of this school.	26.5%	36.5%	37.1%	16.6%	25.7%	56.1%	19.8%	33.8%	46.4%
The school appropriately meets the needs of children with physical and mental disabilities.	36.6%	55.5%	7.9%	77.3%	15.1%	7.6%			
The school's programs meet the requirement of students with special needs.	46.1%	43.4%	10.5%	72.7%	19.7%	4.5%			

\*Student item: I look forward to going to school each day.

### High School Perceptions

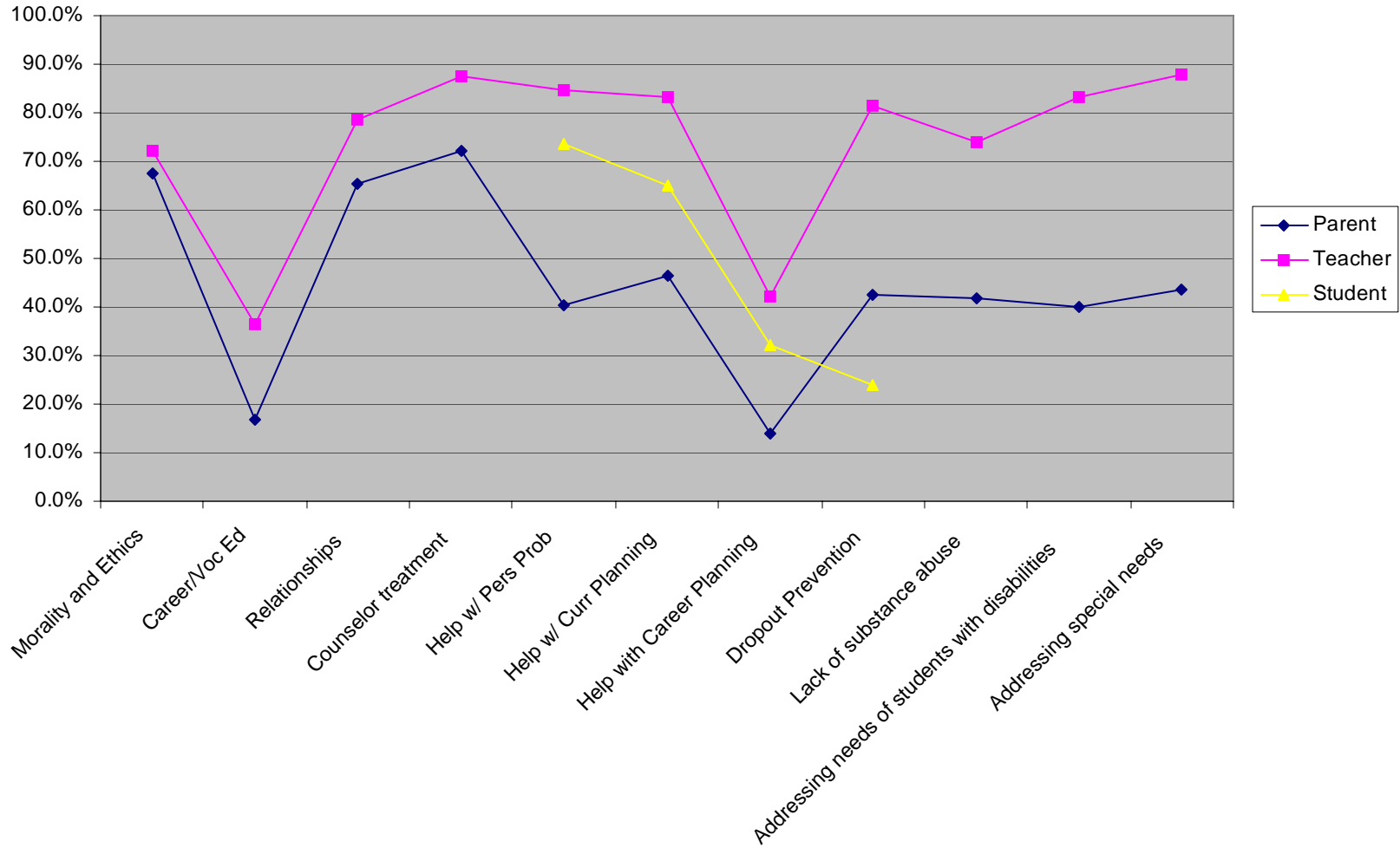


Middle School Comparisons 2003

Statement	Parents			Teachers			Students		
	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD
Our school is doing a good job of helping students understand their moral and ethical responsibilities.	67.6%	21.1%	8.8%	72.3%	13.8%	13.8%			
Our school is doing a good job in career/vocational education.	16.8%	69.0%	14.2%	36.5%	46.0%	17.4%			
Our school's programs help students to understand and get along with other people.	65.5%	22.2%	12.4%	78.5%	10.8%	10.7%			
I am satisfied with the way students are treated by counselors.	72.3%	20.6%	7.2%	87.6%	7.8%	1.6%			
I am satisfied with the help students get from school personnel in solving personal problems.	40.3%	50.0%	9.7%	84.7%	12.3%	3.1%	73.7%	18.4%	7.7%
School counselors give students the help they need in curricular planning.	46.4%	40.2%	13.4%	83.1%	16.9%	0%	65.1%	21.6%	13.3%
School counselors give students the help they need in planning a vocation/career.	14.0%	69.3%	16.6%	42.0%	51.6%	6.4%	32.1%	45.4%	22.5%
Our school does a good job in preventing students from dropping out by providing them with support and encouragement they need.*	42.6%	53.0%	4.4%	81.5%	18.4%	0%	23.9%	32.5%	43.7%
School personnel involve community services (mental health, law enforcement, etc.) to help meet students' needs.	46.5%	37.4%	6.0%						
There is not a significant problem with substance abuse among the students of this school.	41.7%	45.2%	13.0%	73.8%	23.1%	3.1%			
The school appropriately meets the needs of children with physical and mental disabilities.	40.0%	55.6%	4.4%	83.1%	10.8%	6.2%			
The school's programs meet the requirement of students with special needs.	43.4%	48.0%	9.6%	87.7%	9.2%	3.1%			

\*Student item: I look forward to going to school each day.

### Middle School Perceptions

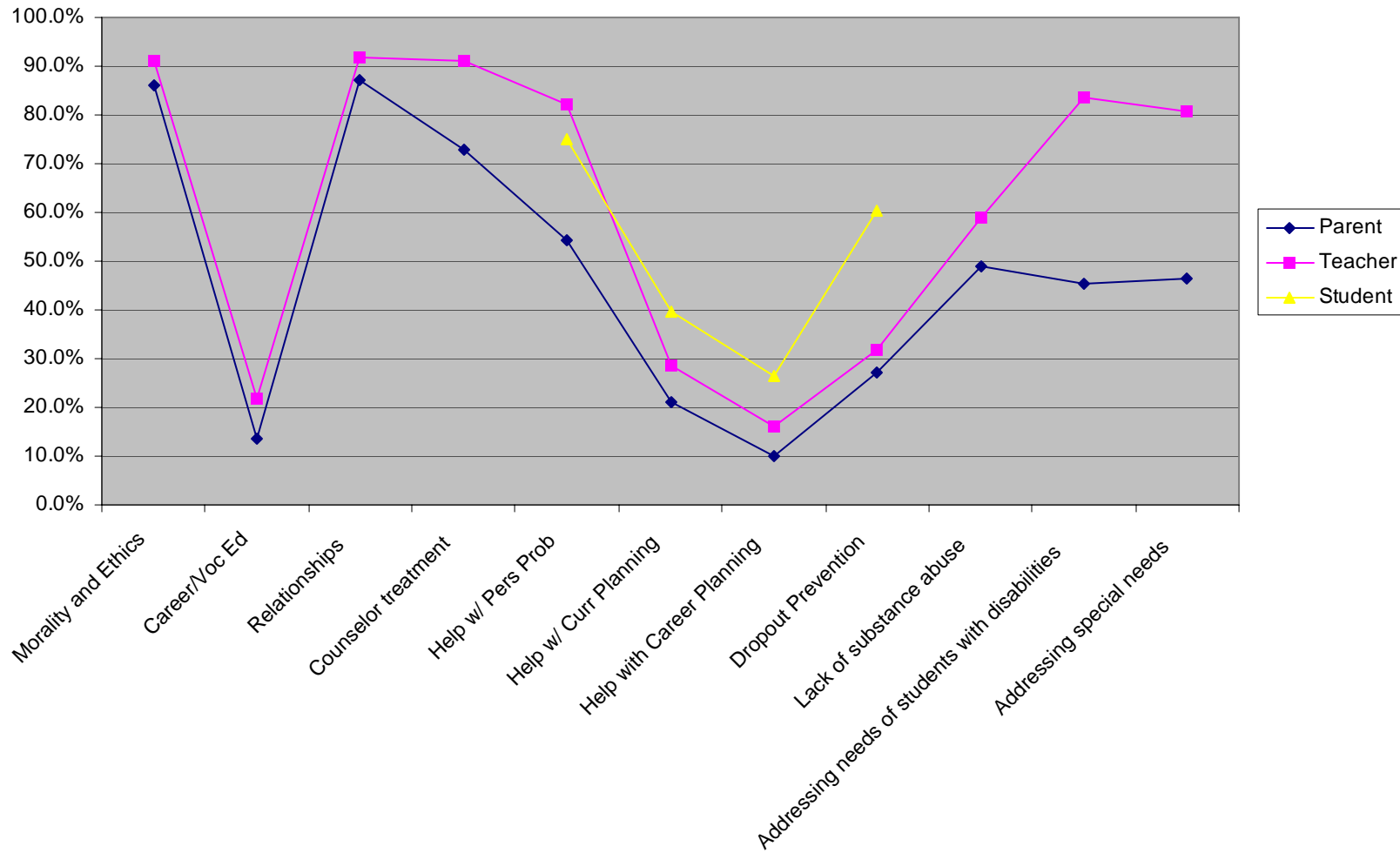


Elementary School Comparisons 2003

Statement	Parents			Teachers			Students		
	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD	SA or A	N or DK	D or SD
Our school is doing a good job of helping students understand their moral and ethical responsibilities.	86.0%	12.5%	1.5%	91.1%	4.5%	4.5%			
Our school is doing a good job in career/vocational education.	13.7%	82.6%	3.6%	21.8%	72.2%	6.0%			
Our school's programs help students to understand and get along with other people.	87.1%	10.2%	2.7%	91.8%	5.2%	3.0%			
I am satisfied with the way students are treated by counselors.	72.9%	24.4%	2.7%	91.0%	4.4%	4.5%			
I am satisfied with the help students get from school personnel in solving personal problems.	54.4%	41.4%	4.2%	82.2%	10.4%	7.4%	74.9%	16.8%	8.2%
School counselors give students the help they need in curricular planning.	20.9%	77.0%	2.1%	28.4%	67.9%	3.7%	39.5%	53.1%	7.4%
School counselors give students the help they need in planning a vocation/career.	9.9%	88%	2.1%	15.9%	82.5%	1.5%	26.5%	61.8%	11.7%
Our school does a good job in preventing students from dropping out by providing them with support and encouragement they need.*	27%	72.8%	.3%	31.9%	68.2%	0%	60.3%	25.7%	14.0%
School personnel involve community services (mental health, law enforcement, etc.) to help meet students' needs.	67.8%	31.3%	.9%						
There is not a significant problem with substance abuse among the students of this school.	48.8%	50.0%	1.2%	58.5%	40.8%	0.7%			
The school appropriately meets the needs of children with physical and mental disabilities.	45.4%	52.9%	1.8%	83.7%	9.6%	6.7%			
The school's programs meet the requirement of students with special needs.	46.4%	43.4%	10.2%	80.6%	9.7%	9.7%			

\*Student item: "I look forward to going to school each day," or "Students feel that they fit in at our school."

### Elementary Perceptions



### **Program Strengths**

- The college-planning component of the high school program is very well developed and student success in college admissions is testimony to its strength.
- Counselors are extremely professional and dedicated to the students of Bernards Township.
- Counselors are well-prepared and work closely with teachers, administrators, parents and students to deliver the program.
- Administrators are cognizant of the stressors affecting students in the community and are proactively addressing these concerns through the guidance program.

### **Program Weaknesses**

- The program is lacking consistent implementation of modules at each grade level
- The parents, teachers, and students seem unaware of many of the services provided by counselors.
- The curriculum is not available to the parents in the same way as in academic areas.
- There is insufficient attention given to career planning.
- The use of Naviance and Family Connection is limited and thus not used to maximum potential
- Lack of planning amongst entire staff as two counselors deal exclusively with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

- Post curriculum guides for guidance modules at each grade level on the website.
- Hire a head counselor at the high school and middle school to provide leadership, to serve as a liaison between counselors and administrators, and to add cohesion to the program.
- Investigate ways to inform the parents, community, teachers, and students of the role of counselors and ways in which they serve the students of Bernards Township.
- Increase attention to career planning and post-secondary transition that extends beyond college planning.
- Eliminate the position of 9<sup>th</sup> grade counselor and assign all guidance staff a 9-12 caseload
- Support move to online based transcript submission program which is supported by the Family Connection system.
- Increase the number of on site college “instant decision” days offered to seniors.

