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Improving Student Satisfaction and Wellbeing in an International Baccalaureate Program: An Improvement Science Study

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IMPROVING STUDENT SATISFACTION AND WELLBEING IN AN INTERNATIONAL
BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM:

AN IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE STUDY

By

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A Dissertation Presented to the George Fox University Guild of the

Doctor of Educational Leadership

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

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IMPROVING STUDENT SATISFACTION AND WELLBEING IN AN INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM:
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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to improve student satisfaction and wellbeing in an International Baccalaureate (IB) program, located in the US Virgin Islands, through the implementation of an improvement science dissertation in practice (ISDiP). The study utilized a framework of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) over the course of a 90-day improvement cycle. A networked improvement community (NIC) met throughout the cycle to develop a shared understanding of the problem of practice and context, develop a theory of improvement, collect data related to that theory, and make adjustments based on that data.

The NIC identified four primary drivers they believed would result in the desired increase in student satisfaction and wellbeing. Those drivers included consistent and effective communication aligned to shared values, choice, empowerment, autonomy, and agency for students, modeling of shared values, life balance, and wellness by faculty, and an increased sense of belonging through relationship building, making connections, and building authentic community. Each of these drivers led to improvement ideas that ultimately shaped the implementation of *The Wednesday Program* at the international school where the study took place.

Results from both qualitative interview and survey data as well as quantitative survey data indicated a marked increase in student satisfaction and self-reported levels of wellbeing after the implementation of *The Wednesday Program*.

Keywords: International Baccalaureate, Student Satisfaction, Improvement Science, Wellbeing

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This study was made possible by the dedication of a networked improvement community who saw the value in *The Wednesday Program* and committed a great deal of time to support the improvement science process. Their willingness to take risks and engage openly and honestly was foundational to the improvements that were made to the program as well as the overall success of the program.

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Chapter 1: Plan

Background

This study sought to explore the importance and impact of “learning outside the classroom” in a 6th-12th grade International Baccalaureate (IB) program on overall student satisfaction. An Improvement Science approach was utilized throughout this dissertation in practice in order to test the impact of an innovative program (*The Wednesday Program*) at an international IB school (*The International School*) that brings “learning outside the classroom” inside of the school day.

The International Baccalaureate (IB)

The 1950s marked the beginning of an upward trend of companies sending employees (and their families) overseas, both from the United States and other countries around the world (Culross & Tarver, 2007). An early challenge to working abroad was finding a quality and consistent education for the children of employees who were working abroad, outside of their country of citizenship. Families naturally sought quality education that would transfer between countries, and back to their home country, in order to have continuity of learning for their children. There was a general desire for internationally minded education programs that fostered global awareness and competencies, language acquisition, and critical thinking.

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) was founded to meet those needs, among others. Major influences in the development of the IB curriculum and framework included the need for international education that would prepare students for universities around the world, a desire to have a globally minded curriculum as opposed to the locally minded options expats experienced, and alignment with international ideals, such as those proposed by

UNESCO (Lineham, 2013). The IBO mission states, “The IB develops inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through education that builds intercultural understanding and respect (Our Mission, 2022).”

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program is a well developed and highly regarded framework for educating students in grades PK-12. The rigorous and externally moderated IB diploma is regarded by universities around the world as a top tier college preparatory program. The Primary Years Program (PYP), Middle Years Program (MYP), and Diploma Program (DP) are three elements of the IB program that work together to complete the framework. The PYP includes PK-5th grade, the MYP contains grades 6-10, and the DP includes grades 11-12. The three elements of the IB structure are aligned and work together to develop students as critical thinkers, problem solvers, and well-rounded global citizens. The PYP focuses on building habits of thinking and learning, and building a conceptual academic foundation. The MYP takes that foundation to further develop skills in students. Academic content is seen as a vehicle to develop transferable skills that students will use in the DP and beyond. Students culminate their IB experience in the DP, which is very academically focused and designed to prepare students for success in university and beyond (*International Baccalaureate*, 2005-2022).

There are now more than 5,000 IB schools worldwide in more than 150 countries (Dickson et al., 2018). The number of schools using IB programs is growing at a rapid pace throughout the world, especially in regions such as Asia where governments and families are seeking a more rigorous education that will provide access to Western universities (Park & Hong, 2022). IB programs have a strong reputation as the gold standard in college preparation, providing rigorous academics, global perspectives, and strong research skills (Dickson et al., 2018). Universities are attracted to IB Diploma Program (DP) graduates as their course grades

and GPA are highly predictive of their success in university (Vulperhorst et al., 2018). IB Diploma Program (DP) graduates have historically outperformed their non-IB counterparts in all areas of science and receive advanced placement in college courses (Culross & Tarver, 2007). Students and families often choose an IB program to gain an advantage in college admissions processes, especially at selective top tier universities. In addition to admissions advantages, students choose the IB program due to its track record of effectively preparing students for the rigors of college coursework (Culross & Tarver, 2007). University preparation, however, is not the only reason students and families seek out IB programs. Many families seek schools with an IB program due to the high value placed on international-mindedness (Jurasaitė-O'Keefe, 2022). International-mindedness reflects a paradigm of thinking that considers people, space, and time from an international lens as opposed to a local focus. Students who participate in the Middle Years Program (MYP) consistently reporting stronger levels of global-mindedness than non-MYP students (Wade & Wolanin, 2013).

While many would argue that the IB DP is among the strongest college-preparation programs in the world, it does not come without challenges. The benefits of an IB diploma, such as better preparation for, and success in post K-12 education, have been consistently contrasted to the challenges, like high workload and stress during grades 11 and 12 (Taylor & Porath, 2006). In their 2007 study, Culross and Tarver documented both positive and negative perceptions data from both students and parents. Parents with concerns about the IB program cited a fear for lack of balance in their child's life, with an overemphasis on academics at the expense of extracurricular activities and family time. In fact, one of their findings was that, “Open lines of communication with parents about their children's perceived stress are vital to balancing school and extracurricular activities (Culross & Tarver, 2007, p. 60).”

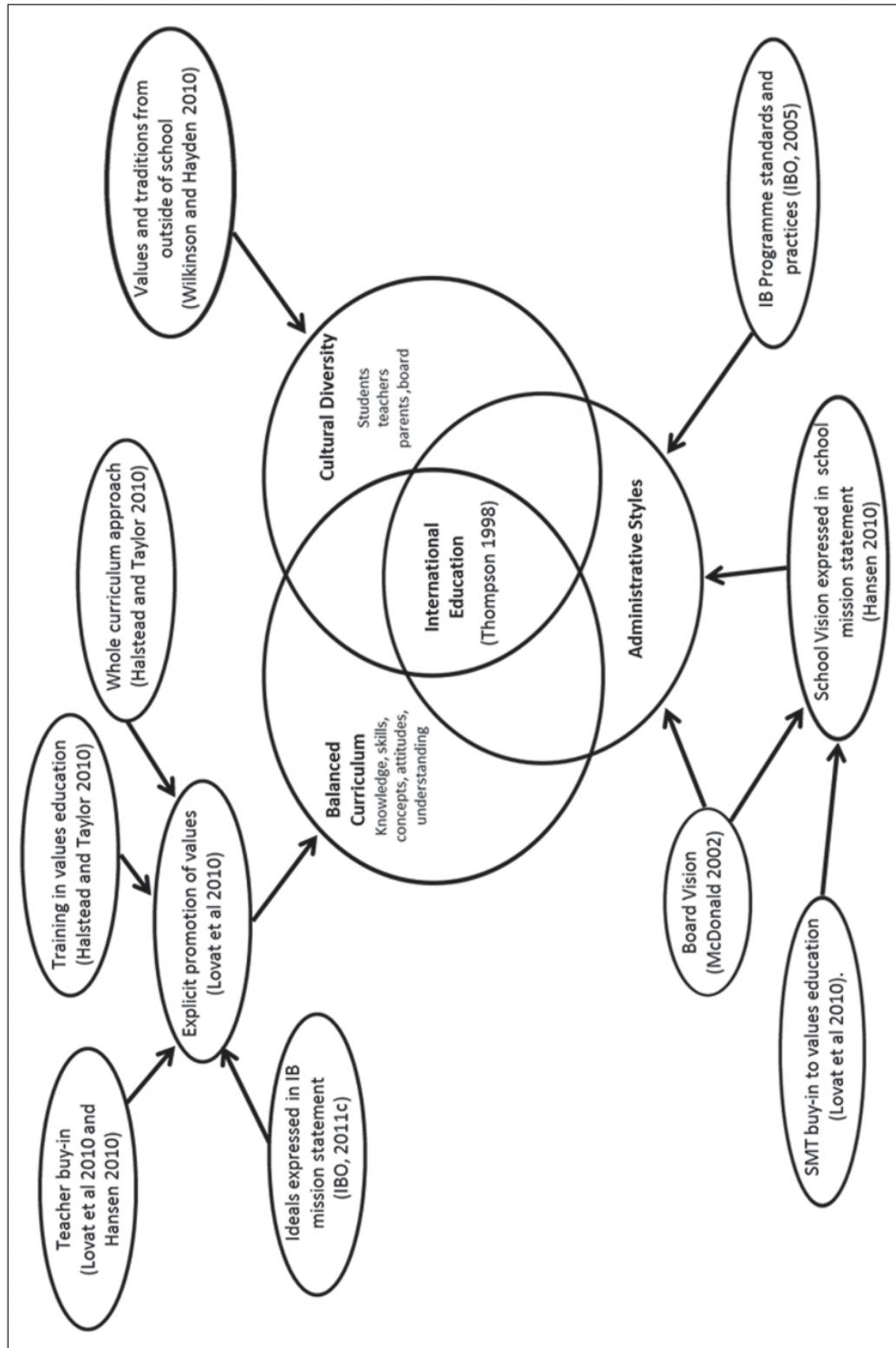
Again in 2009 these results were replicated in a study highlighting the cognitive advantages of the IB Diploma Program for gifted students contrasted with levels of stress and workload that were detrimental to the psychological well-being of those same students (Foust et al., 2009). In their 2018 systematic review of nearly 100 sources of literature, Dickson et al. found common themes of added stress for IB students compared to non-IB peers.

Holistic Education

While a large body of research highlights the need for a “whole child” education, schooling has looked largely the same for more than a century. While some curricular aspects have evolved, classes remain generally organized into same-aged groups where all students receive mostly the same instruction, regardless of their skills and interests. There have been many calls for dramatic education reform that personalizes learning for students and breaks away from the factory model of learning (Lauricella & Macaskill, 2015).

At its core, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and IB programs seek to develop dispositions such as inquiring minds and traits like caring instincts (Leek, 2022). While the academic core of the IB program leads to university preparation, the holistic aims of the overall program call for a balanced approach that places equal value on a variety of developmental areas (Lineham, 2013). Students report joining IB programs in order to have an expansion of possibilities, including both academics and other areas, such as service and learning outside of the classroom (Park et al., 2014). Developing an internationally minded and values driven approach to holistic education cannot be done in isolation or with a single program. Thompson notes that “international ideals are ‘caught not taught’ in schools where the

experiential learning of students exposed to an international educational environment is more important than the instructional learning that they experience (Thompson & Hayden, 1998, p. 287).” An all-school approach is necessary, including faculty, students, parents, and administrators (Lineham, 2013). Lineham (2013) expanded upon a visualization of a comprehensive IB program that was originally developed by Jeff Thompson in 1998 (see figure 1).

Figure 1*Visualization of a Comprehensive IB Program*

As you can see, a balanced curriculum is only one part of a well-rounded IB program. In fact, the IBO grounds itself in the core principles of communication, intercultural awareness and holistic learning (Wright et al., 2016). In their 2016 study of reasons schools select the MYP program, the emphasis on holistic learning was cited by 88% of respondents (Wright et al., 2016). The challenge that many IB schools face, including the school where this study is being conducted, is developing and building out what holistic education looks like in the local context. In theory, “IB programs take a holistic approach toward the education of children and youth, based on curriculums that are thematic and transdisciplinary, focused on learning experiences, foster achievement, open up opportunities for consideration of multiple perspectives and for affective development” (Leek, 2022, p. 477). The reality for many IB schools, however, is a disproportionate focus on academics at the expense of these other areas.

In a 2021 policy research paper, the IBO stressed the following:

Research has shown that an integrated, comprehensive school well-being policy is more likely to be effective than ad hoc measures in response to an individual student being overwhelmed with stress and anxiety. Likewise, embedding well-being into curriculum, practices and school life seems to be more effective than implementing well-being as an “add-on feature”. A whole-school approach ensures that all components of the school organization work coherently together, engaging the whole community, including pupils, teachers, parents and community stakeholders (Balica, 2021, p. 10).

If we are to truly embrace the idea of holistic education, we must be willing to think outside the confines of traditional grade-level structures and provide students with opportunities

to explore and pursue passions and interests with other students, regardless of age or grade level. Lauricella and Macaskill summarize this idea brilliantly when they state, “This broad, personalized, and exploratory educational design provides students with the opportunity to participate in innovative and well-rounded learning experiences in which they are provided with the necessary skills and tools to succeed in environments well beyond the confines of the classroom (2015, p. 55).”

Student Wellbeing

The World Health Organization concluded nearly two decades ago that positive school experiences are connected with greater life satisfaction. Further studies have linked low self-perceived psychological wellbeing with poor academic achievement (Jorring et al., 2020). It stands to reason that student wellbeing and happiness are foundational to high levels of academic success. While Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have become commonplace in schools, the effect size of such programs remains relatively low. Research indicates that SEL, as with so many other aspects of education, must be integrated throughout programs instead of being taught in isolation (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). “In many schools, SEL skills are not seen as a core part of the educational mission. As a result, there is little effort to apply the skills learned during SEL programming to daily life in the school (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 7).” This stands in contrast to the overwhelming belief of K-12 teachers that SEL skills are teachable and will benefit all students. In a nationally representative survey of K-12 teachers in the United States, for example, more than 95% of teachers acknowledged the need for and benefit of SEL for all students (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

Students across the US are also calling for increased, authentic, and meaningful SEL opportunities that are integrated and prominent in middle and high school programming. It comes as little surprise that students in schools with strong SEL programs report a more positive learning environment and feel better prepared for life (DePaoli et al., 2018). Terms like EQ (emotional quotient) are commonplace and parents and employers alike recognize the power of interpersonal “soft skills”. If we truly want our students to succeed in life, authentic opportunities to learn and apply these skills must be an integral part of our educational models. SEL and soft skills cannot be taught in isolation because they develop in authentic social contexts. There is a reason basketball players make more shots in practice, with no one guarding them, than they do while under pressure in game situations. Part of the mission of effective schools must be to provide authentic contexts for students to apply and practice the skills they are learning (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Just like basketball players must test their skills in game situations, so must our students take their soft skills out into the context of the world around them.

There is considerable evidence that suggests student learning outcomes and motivation improve when they report happiness and emotional security (Sousa, 2010). Lineham (2013) argued that this is not an issue for international schools alone. “The implementation of this model means that international education does not have to be restricted to a school with an international intake; in a national school, it can be a ‘state of mind’ (p. 262).” O’Boyle notes that “Research on student empowerment in international schools is sparse (2009, p. 31)”, yet it is obvious to school leaders that the best alignment between students’ lived experiences and improvement efforts can only be achieved by bringing their voices to the table (O’Boyle, 2009).

Unfortunately, IB schools have historically struggled to balance student wellbeing with academic rigor. A 2008 study sought to compare social acceptance with high achievement in IB

and Advanced Placement programs. Interestingly, the students in the study did not feel they had to choose between the two. The majority concluded that they could have both high achievement and social acceptance, but the cost was lack of sleep and high levels of stress (Foust et al., 2008). A comprehensive review of the literature related to the IB program by Dickson, et al. highlighted a series of studies by Tarc and Beatty (2012), Hertberg-Davis and Callahan (2008 and 2009), and Suldo, Shaunessy, Michalowski and Shaffer (2008), which consistently revealed a negative impact on wellbeing for IB Diploma Program students compared to non-IB DP counterparts (2018). Further studies exploring the psycho-social wellbeing of IB students by Shaunessy et al. (2006), Shaunessy, Suldo, & Hardesty (2008), and Suldo et al. (2008) revealed that IBDP students report higher levels of stress than their non-IB peers and that this stress is specifically related to the academic rigors of the program (Dickson et al., 2018). IB students consistently report stressors such as, “...the pressure to do well across the board [by scoring high in each subject area]” and “I kind of work myself to death in IB because I’m trying to be at the top” (Park et al., 2014, p. 144).

“IB programs are perceived by students in terms of time consuming and demanding of students’ free time” (Leek, 2022, p. 477). This is not to say that the academic rigor of the IB program is a problem, but rather to highlight the importance of student wellbeing within the program. For example, a 2022 study of IB schools in Poland noted specific responses from DP students related to their perceived imbalance within the program. Students noted that the focus on academic development in the DP led to insufficient preparation for the non-academic aspects of life they would encounter outside of school. They also emphasized a lack of relevance specifically due to missed opportunities to learn outside of the school environment and master non-academic skills (Leek, 2022). The IB organization itself has placed a high value on student

wellness. “The International Baccalaureate (IB) suggests that a well-being policy is one of the most effective means for improving students’ attainment outcomes (Balica, 2021).” Furthermore, as explained by Jorring (2020),

A key motivation for teachers to incorporate education outside the classroom as a part of their repertoire of teaching methods includes the potential to bridge the gap between academically low- and high-achieving pupils or pupils who find it difficult to meet the requirements of sedentary teaching activities and therefore may be more likely to report negative social and academic well-being, which is detrimental to their learning efforts (Jorring et al., 2020, 414).

Wednesday Program at The International School

The solution to educational improvement is not to double down on academic rigor - the IB already boasts one of the most rigorous programs in the world. The solution must include a balanced and holistic approach, which sets students up for success in life while simultaneously increasing academic achievement (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Middle and high school students often lack clarity about their aspirations and goals beyond higher education. Programs that emphasize authentic learning outside the classroom expose students to opportunities and career paths they were not otherwise aware of (Lee & Dickson, 2010). Success in postsecondary education is not the only goal of IB programs. Academic rigor is important, however, students who are most successful post-college have also developed soft skills. Those soft skills are best learned in context as opposed to a controlled classroom setting (Lee & Dickson, 2010). There is not a great deal of research on the relationship between high academic test scores and people who are healthy, happy and thriving. There is, however, plenty of research on the connection

between low academic achievement and an unhappy life. Learning outside the classroom has the power to help this latter group of students find meaning and relevance and perhaps shift their trajectory in the direction of meaningful, healthy and happy (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006). In their 2015 study, researchers Lauricella and Macaskill found an overwhelming call from recent K-12 graduates for a more personalized and holistic education - an education that helps students learn more about themselves and their passions instead of forcing the same exact content on all students all of the time. This improvement effort intended to do exactly that.

We know that simply enrolling students in an international IB school does not guarantee the type of experiential learning that research calls for (Lineham, 2013). Lineham (2013) also highlights the “...importance of the administrators (leaders and managers) of the school in developing a bold vision that filters down into the school ethos and structure. When this bold vision includes the ideals of international education, it can help foster these ideals in the school (p. 265).” This improvement effort intended to engage the entire learning community and build a collective vision. For example, tapping into student voice and perspective during improvement efforts is not common among international schools, but is critical to the success of such efforts (O'Boyle, 2009). The research supports the value of multiple schools around the world using a common program, while at the same time “School-based decision making is understood to increase the chances of successful program adoption (Sperandino, 2010, p.140).” Successful school programs require buy-in from all stakeholders in order to ensure ownership (Sperandino, 2010) as opposed to a rigid adherence to programs that have been handed down from the state, national, or district level. The *Wednesday Program* that was implemented as a part of this research aimed to do exactly that - anchor the school in the common IB framework while

partnering with the community to develop a program that fits the unique needs of all stakeholders.

In their 2020 study, Jorring et. al noted that competencies that were learned in the classroom were being applied in the out of class settings. This transfer of skills, especially for academically low performing students, can have a positive impact on their self-esteem as well as academic success in the classroom (Jorring et al., 2020). These outside-the-classroom, authentic settings cannot be seen as separate elements of a school's programming, but rather should be integrated and interconnected as a part of the very ethos of the organization (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). This is not just a matter for the adults in the education system to address. Students from age 14-19 are clear that their academic success is directly linked to SEL and outside the classroom opportunities provided by their school (DePaoli et al., 2018).

Experiential learning is a key component to a balanced approach. "Students who participate in experiential learning programs report higher perceptions of learning outcomes in some areas related to the classroom experience (Lee & Dickson, 2010, p.27)." Learning outside the classroom allows students to practically apply the skills they are developing in authentic situations. Essentially, this provides students an experience to answer the question, "Why should I learn this (Lee & Dickson, 2010)?" It also holds true that students who learn outside the classroom find greater meaning in new learning within the classroom because they have a reference point with which to anchor the theories and concepts they are studying (Lee & Dickson, 2010). Additionally, learning outside the classroom often provides opportunities for students to work in varied and diverse groups, which has been shown to positively impact their social wellbeing (Jorring et al., 2020).

Place-based or community-based curriculum and learning has gained a fair bit of traction over the past 40 years. Essentially it is the idea that learning within one's local context has the potential to augment and significantly improve not only learning for students, but achievement outcomes as well (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006). "Place-based [advocates] argue that confining the ends of education to preparations for economic endeavors - for jobs - does a disservice to individuals in the education system and to the wellbeing of the larger society (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006, p. 272)." If our aim is to educate well rounded individuals who have both successful careers and have a positive impact on the world around them, it holds that we must get them out into the world around them during their formative years. Place-based pedagogy "...represents a school's greatest opportunity to help students achieve deep-level understanding of school subjects; at the same time, it greatly expands the opportunities for student growth across the spectrum of multiple intelligences (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006, p. 273)."

This improvement effort aimed to increase student satisfaction and wellbeing through the implementation of an innovative program. The *Wednesday Program* in this study aimed to get students out of the classroom. Participation in learning opportunities outside the classroom, especially those that take place outdoors, has been shown to improve self-esteem and academics for students (Hoffman et al., 2007). The work that students do outside the classroom often has a greater impact on their community than the work adults have done alone (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006). "Empirical data suggest that when students have become involved in a group effort designed to improve a school, community, or society, a sense of interdependency and loyalty to that institution develops (Hoffman et al., 2007, p. 403)."

Additionally, the *Wednesday Program* aimed to create opportunities for students to explore their passions and interests. Learning environments have a dramatic impact on outcomes

for students. Environments that promote the pursuit of passions and interests for teachers and students, and subsequently positive relationships, are the most productive (Hoffman et al., 2007). When teachers demonstrate the connection between their content and the real world, student engagement improves (Hoffman et al., 2007). This study aimed to take that a step further and provide students a guided opportunity to formulate those connections through experiential learning.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing holistic programming in a school. Successful schools must tailor their programs to meet the needs of the community (Sperandino, 2010). The IBO recognizes this and provides leeway in hours and other requirements in order to encourage schools to do exactly that. While many schools understand the value and importance of learning outside the classroom, most tend to address the need through extra-curricular activities that take place outside of the school day. This structure limits participation by students and creates challenges and barriers for teachers (Nielson et al., 2016). By embedding the *Wednesday Program* within the school day, this study intended to provide access to holistic learning experiences for all students and faculty. The *Wednesday Program* was not developed at a single point in time, but rather, was the cumulation of feedback from various stakeholders in the system. Each component of the program was designed to address a particular need and only after several months of compiling those needs did the structure of the program begin to emerge. The body of research, along with the lived experiences of stakeholders at *The International School* was the motivation for this Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice (ISDiP). This researcher also drew upon experiences and studies he conducted at previous schools related to the use of improvement science and distributed leadership.

Problem Statement

As reported by students in May of 2022 (CASEL Student Survey), the MYP and DP programs at *The International School* lacked sufficient opportunities for students to explore areas of interest and pursue passions that fell outside of the structure of the IB program. The Networked Improvement Community (NIC) that collaborated on this study identified the problem of practice for *The International School* as, “The [school] needs to prioritize creating & upholding the systems & practices that align with our value of success ‘to educate each whole child, within the local community’ (NIC Root Cause Analysis, August 10, 2022).”

Purpose and Aim Statement

The purpose of this ISDiP was to improve overall student satisfaction with the MYP and DP programs at *The International School*, located in St. Thomas, USVI, by 20% during the first semester of the 2022-23 academic year. This was achieved through the Wednesday Program by increasing opportunities for students to explore areas of interest, pursue passions outside of the standard academic groups of the IB program, by creating opportunities to build community across grade levels, and by providing social-emotional learning and support, all during the regular Wednesday school day, throughout the 2022-23 school year.

Significance

A cornerstone of the IB framework is learning outside the traditional classroom walls. This includes service learning, personal and community projects, and opportunities to transfer the skills and habits of mind from the academic program to authentic situations in students’ lives. While the academic portion of the IB framework is detailed and structured, the elements of

learning outside the classroom are not (Culross & Tarver, 2007). The IB Organization does this intentionally to allow schools to adapt these learning opportunities to their local context.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, opportunities outside of the IB academic core at *The International School* were primarily after-school activities, limiting the ability of students to participate. Students, parents, board members, university admissions officers, administration, and faculty all reported a need to provide opportunities for students to apply and extend their classroom learning to areas of passion and interest that lay outside of the traditional classroom setting. While the IB Diploma is recognized by universities throughout the world as a top-tier college preparatory program, research indicates a critical need for “whole child education” that includes opportunities outside of the IB academic core (Lauricella & Macaskill, 2015). When students report higher levels of engagement at school and can see the relevance of their learning, academic indicators like GPA and graduation rates improve (Sousa, 2010). This researcher believed that the improvements sought through this ISDiP would improve overall student satisfaction and in turn result in higher levels of engagement and academic success for *The International School* students.

This study is significant on both a local and international scale. As the study was designed to improve students’ overall school experience and satisfaction at *The International School*, faculty members and students benefited from any improvements to the programs the school offered. NIC members benefitted from the experience of conducting an improvement science cycle as well as the findings of the study that may have been applicable in their own context.

The need for “outside the classroom learning” in IB programs is not unique to *The International School*. There are thousands of IB schools around the world who stand to benefit

from this study by observing the lessons that this improvement effort undertook, and having a comparable evidence base by which to operate and scale their own improvement initiatives.

Definition of Terms

Community-Based Learning - Methods and programs used by educators to utilize the local community in order to develop learning opportunities for students.

Diploma Program (DP) - The 11th-12 grade component of the International Baccalaureate Program.

DP Academic Core - 6 subject groups that comprise the academic core of the Diploma Program.

Driver Diagram: An improvement science tool used to visualize and develop a theory of improvement.

Experiential Learning - The process of learning through experiences, generally outside of the classroom.

International Baccalaureate (IB) - An educational program whose framework includes the Primary Years Program (PK - grade 5), Middle Years Program grades (6-10), Diploma Program (grades 11-12) and Career Program (grades 11-12)..

International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) -An international education organization that oversees the IB programs.

Middle Years Program (MYP) - The 6th-10th grade component of the International Baccalaureate program.

MYP Academic Core - 6 subject groups that comprise the academic core of the Middle Years Program.

Networked Improvement Community (NIC) - A team that forms to work through iterative cycles of the improvement science process.

Place-Based Learning - Learning that engages students in their local environment, including the people, culture, physical environment and history from their community.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) - An improvement science visualization strategy designed to help a group develop a shared understanding of the problem of practice they are trying to address as well as the root causes of that problem.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Learning that focuses on the development of social skills, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation and strategies, and interpersonal skills.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) - A non-profit collaborative helping make evidence-based social and emotional learning an integral part of education from preschool through high school.

The International School Leadership Team - Department heads and team leaders from the MYP and DP program who meet regularly to provide leadership for the school.

Theory of Improvement: Unlike a theory of change, a theory of improvement assumes that not all change ideas will result in improvements. The theory of improvement works from an aim statement to primary and secondary drivers, and ultimately to improvement ideas. The ideas are tested in brief cycles and then revised based on data that is collected.

WIN Time: What I Need (WIN) time creates a flexible time for students to access the support or extension that they need in a variety of areas from academic classes, to clubs and extension activities.

Methodology/Overarching Plan

Design

This study was grounded in the principles of improvement science. As the name suggests, improvement science is a systematic scientific process designed to bring about improvement in identified areas within an organization or situation. Education systems, K-12 in particular, are notoriously prone to ‘solutionitis’. This phenomenon occurs out of a desire to improve schools and learning outcomes for students without taking the time to really understand the problem of practice to be addressed. For example, a new theory, curricular resource, or program becomes a buzz in the education world and suddenly schools are scrambling to adopt it without stopping to ask why or to understand what it is this new fad will actually do for students and the school. Large amounts of money are spent to purchase this ‘solution’ and time is invested to train faculty - all without pausing to ask why. This reactive tendency in schools results in lack of clarity around vision, inconsistent understanding of the problem that needs to be addressed, and an absence of mechanisms to measure, monitor, and adjust the strategy to ensure the desired outcomes are being reached.

There are many different strategies that can be utilized within an improvement science process, but the beginning of the process always includes the development of a shared understanding of the existing reality within an organization. A networked improvement community (NIC) is often the team that will engage in this work. NICs generally include stakeholders with a vested interest in the organization and can also include members outside the organization who have expertise and support to offer. A critical component to the early stages of an improvement science process is a root cause analysis (RCA). RCAs can be modeled through visualizations such as a fishbone diagram. The RCA essentially asks the questions, “What is our

current reality, how did we get here, and what is the problem of practice we are trying to address?” Clarity and shared understanding of these foundational elements allow the NIC to move forward in the same direction and also provide clarity in messaging to the broader organization regarding the ‘why’ behind the improvement efforts.

As soon as a clear problem of practice has emerged, the NIC moves forward with a theory of improvement. Theories of improvement differ from other improvement plans by acknowledging that not all change ideas lead to improvement. A common and effective visualization for theories of improvement is a driver diagram. Regardless of the visualization tool used, theories of improvement begin with a goal or aim, derived from the RCA. The NIC then generates drivers that are likely to result in the realization of that goal. Ultimately, mechanisms are identified that will cause the primary drivers to occur, followed by specific change ideas that the NIC agrees to implement, in an effort to reach the goal.

Just as the scientific process requires testing, data analysis, and adjustments, the improvement science process requires short, iterative cycles in which change ideas are implemented, data collected and analyzed, and adjustments to the theory of improvement are made. Ideas that lead to desired outcomes are kept and those that do not are adjusted or discarded. These iterative cycles continue until the goal or aim has been achieved. In the end, the NIC should be able to clearly state the problem of practice that was being addressed, why that problem is significant to the organization, the change ideas that were tried, and the overall improvement that was achieved. The beauty of improvement science lies with its simplicity, accessibility to a broad range of stakeholders, and replicability for other problems of practice. Once an organization becomes skilled at the process, they are able to use improvement science to proactively and effectively tackle new problems of practice that arise.

Population and Sampling Plan for Study Participants

The subjects of the study were students in grades 7-12 (ages 12-18) at *The International School*. All subjects attended *The International School* in 2021-22 and were enrolled for the 2022-23 academic year. The researcher was the incoming director (principal) for the 6th-12th grade program. Students were surveyed in May, 2022 using the “CASEL Student Survey: How I feel about my classroom and school”. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework for addressing SEL in schools has been widely used in recent years and has become a prominent resource in K-12 education. The student survey, in particular, has become a useful tool for schools who seek to understand and improve upon student wellbeing and satisfaction. Overall student satisfaction was measured through change in student responses to selected questions on the CASEL Student Survey: How I feel about my Classroom and School from May 2022 to November 2022. The student survey used in this study has been tested for appropriateness in normative adolescent samples, replicability, and validity, with the results supporting CASEL as a valid framework for adolescent research and practice, with slight modifications serving to increase its validity (Ross & Tolan, 2018). Another study “support[ed] the continued use of the student survey as a promising measure of distinct social and emotional competencies aligned with the CASEL framework” (Davis, 2020, p. ii).

This study made use of a Networked Improvement Community (NIC). A NIC is a group of practitioners who meet throughout the Improvement Science cycle to develop an understanding of the problem of practice, design the theory of improvement, process data as it comes in, and make adjustments to change ideas based on that data. The NIC was composed of 6 members who all work in the field of education and who were also subjects in the study. NIC

members volunteered and consented to participate in the study. The NIC composition can be found in figure 2.

Figure 2

NIC Composition

Professional Position	Gender	Age Range	Years of Experience
Head of School at The International School	Male	40's	20+ years experience in education
Social Emotional Counselor/Mental Health Therapist at The International School	Female	40's	20+ years experience in counseling and education
IB Coordinator at The International School	Male	Late 30's	15 years experience in education
University Counselor/Admissions Director at The International School	Female	40's	15+ years experience in education
Director of International Accreditation for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges	Female	50's	30+ years experience in education
Director of the IB program at The International School, who is also the principal researcher	Male	40's	20+ years experience in education

Qualitative data was collected every three weeks during the improvement science cycle through brief student interviews that were conducted by NIC members. This interview data was used to inform iterations of the *Wednesday Program* during the improvement science cycle.

Overall student satisfaction was measured through student responses to the CASEL Student Survey: How I feel about my Classroom and School. The survey was administered through Google Forms, which the subjects were accustomed to using. A subset of students who opted into the study and responded to the CASEL survey were invited to participate in 3 semi-

structured interviews, conducted by NIC members, lasting 15 minutes each, and spaced 3 weeks apart. The interviews focused on the nature of the subject's satisfaction with the MYP and DP programs, and how the *Wednesday Program* had impacted their overall school experience. The subjects were provided an assent form specific to the face-to-face interviews and their parents were provided a consent form. These interviews took place at school and during school hours, at a time agreed on by both parties.

Variables and Drivers that Provided the Data

The dependent variable (student satisfaction) was influenced by the independent variable, which was ultimately the *Wednesday Program*. The primary drivers within the *Wednesday Program* included consistent and effective communication of the purpose of the program, choice and empowerment of students, life balance and wellness, and opportunities to build community. The secondary drivers in the study were ultimately the components of the *Wednesday Program*. The theoretical framework of the *Wednesday Program* was underpinned by the following ideas:

- Student satisfaction improves when students are healthy, happy, and thriving.
- Student voice and choice in how they learn and what they learn improve engagement and satisfaction.
- Strong relationships and sense of community are foundational to students' happiness and satisfaction at school.
- Authentic opportunities to explore passions and extend learning outside of the traditional classroom improve engagement and satisfaction for students.

This researcher believed that addressing these ideas within the structure of the regular school day would have a positive impact on student satisfaction. The theoretical framework was operationalized through the following components of the *Wednesday Program* (see figure 3), which took place on each Wednesday of 5-day school weeks during the 2022-23 academic year.

Figure 3*Wednesday Program Components*

Component	Description
Timing	Students attend one full cycle of academic classes on Monday and Tuesday and a second cycle on Thursday and Friday. The Wednesday Program provides a break between those cycles.
Late Start	Faculty participate in 90 minutes of professional/collaborative learning in the morning and students have the choice to arrive 90 minutes later to school. Students who arrive at the typical time can choose from a variety of enrichment activities.
Advisory	Every faculty member meets with the same 6-7 students from a particular grade level at the start of the day during the Wednesday Program. These groups focus on building relationships, ensuring each student is seen and heard, and providing social and emotional support to students.
Houses	Each advisory is paired with one other advisory from a different grade level to form a house. Houses participate in a variety of activities during Flex Block.
Flex Block	All students and faculty participate in a 55 minute block designed to build community and sense of belonging. Flex block activities include assemblies, student and faculty performances, recognition of students and faculty who have been nominated by other students and faculty for representing school values, pep rallies, house competitions and activities, and WIN Time.
Student Life Courses/Clubs	Students choose from a menu of courses and clubs that take place during three (3) one-hour blocks (see appendix D for a full list of offerings). The courses and clubs are cross grade-level and led by faculty, students, or community members. Topics for the courses and clubs were based on student interests, faculty passions, and community members' expertise. There are no grades involved and the courses and clubs are intended to provide opportunities for students to explore and pursue passions and interests, while applying skills they learn in school to authentic contexts.

Instrumentation Used for Collecting Data

The CASEL Student Survey: How I feel about my classroom and school, is an 18-question survey designed to measure students' perceptions about various aspects of their classes and school experience. The first 17 questions asked participants to rank their perceptions on a 5-point Likert scale. The 18th question was an open-ended opportunity for any additional qualitative feedback.

Students took the survey in May of 2022, prior to the start of the study and again in November of 2022, at the conclusion of the study.

The study included three iterative cycles of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA). Toward the end of each of those cycles NIC members interviewed one student each, from different grade levels, for a total of three interviews. The same students were interviewed by the same NIC member during each of the three cycles. The students selected for the interviews were considered by the NIC to engage with a broad range of both same-grade and other-grade peers, had been at the school for several years, and therefore were likely to have a perspective that was representative of a large portion of students. The face-to-face interviews utilized a semi-structured protocol, framed by the following questions.

1. What do you think/feel about the Wednesday Program?
2. What do you think is the purpose of the Wednesday Program?
3. Has the Wednesday Program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?
4. What about the Wednesday Program do you like the most/find the most valuable?
5. Are there changes you would make to the program?
6. Do you see any connections between the Wednesday Program and your learning in your MYP/DP classes?
7. Has the Wednesday Program helped you build relationships with teachers or classmates?
How so?
8. Has the Wednesday Program had an effect on your life balance or wellness (explain life balance/wellness if needed)?

9. Do you think the Wednesday Program has had an impact on our school community (teachers, students)?

Administration of the Instruments

The International School embarked on a multi-year journey, beginning in the spring of 2022, to develop and launch a schoolwide social and emotional learning program. The initial phase of that journey included a three-hundred sixty degree set of surveys that were designed to gather system, process, and perception data from all stakeholder groups. Each stakeholder group completed a survey, unique to their group, that was based on the CASEL framework.

The initial student surveys were administered during academic classes in May of 2022. The 18-question student survey required about 15 minutes for students to complete. Students were informed that their feedback would be instrumental in the programs *The International School* would develop in the coming years. The May 2022 student surveys were completed prior to any work related to the *Wednesday Program*.

A second round of the same student surveys were administered at the beginning of November 2022. Those surveys were timed so that students had experienced at least 10 weeks of the *Wednesday Program*. Those surveys provided critical quantitative data for the purposes of this study, as well as formative data for the ongoing refinement of the *Wednesday Program*.

Procedures Used for Analyzing the Data

The quantitative survey data collected in this study were analyzed using Tukey's exploratory data analysis (EDA) methods utilizing statistical graphics and basic data visualizations. The visualizations were intended to provide a clear image of the pre and post

study data as well as a side-by-side comparison of the two data sets. The simplicity and clarity of the visualizations served to provide accessibility to a broad range of constituents.

Qualitative survey and interview data were coded, sorted, and analyzed to derive emerging themes and trends. Initial categories for coding were determined prior to data analysis in order to aid in the efficiency of the coding and sorting process. Additional codes were added based on trends that emerged in the data that did not clearly fit into a pre-identified coding category. The qualitative data was then displayed through basic visualizations to allow the NIC to make observations related to the change ideas in the theory of improvement. A summary of all three data sets from the student interviews was generated to provide a visualization of each unique data set as well as a comparison of all three data sets. That comparison allowed stakeholders to view the progression of student satisfaction from the beginning of the study to the end, in each of the three cycles.

A summary of the de-identified data, including visualizations, was shared with *The International School* faculty members, students, parents, and school leadership in pdf form via email. The data summary was accompanied by a description of periodic, iterative improvements that directly resulted from the study. The summary was intended to provide a synopsis of the research as well as a visualization of the improvements that ultimately resulted from the study.

The data were analyzed by the NIC and was also shared with *The International School* Leadership Team in order to gather feedback. The NIC made adjustments to the Wednesday Program based on their review of the data and feedback from *The International School* Leadership Team. Adjustments to the Wednesday Program were also be made at the beginning of semester 2 and again at the end of semester 2, based on 60-90 day PDSA cycles that occurred

at the beginning of semesters 1 and 2. For the purpose of this ISDiP, only the semester 1 PDSA cycle was reported.

The NIC met in November, following the administration of the student surveys, to review and analyze the data. The Data Dialogue protocol from NSRF was used to facilitate the analysis of the data by the NIC.

The qualitative interview data and the 18th question from the student surveys were coded and sorted by the NIC. The coded and sorted data was represented in multiple visualizations and Tukey's EDA was utilized to analyze the data. Overall trends and themes were identified by the NIC, along with suggestions for further exploration and refinement of the *Wednesday Program*.

The quantitative survey data was also represented through multiple visualizations and Tukey's EDA was again used by the NIC to analyze the data. While trends and themes were certainly explored, the quantitative data primarily served as a tool to evaluate the changes in students' perceptions and satisfaction from May, 2022 (pre-*Wednesday Program*) to November 2022 (after 10 weeks of implementation).

Ethics

As the director of the MYP and DP programs at *The International School*, the researcher's positionality was within the organization and he was working with others from within and outside of the organization. Some of the collaborators from within the organization were direct reports of the researcher. In order to maintain an atmosphere of open thinking, the researcher was mindful and intentional in establishing norms, particularly with the NIC. This was done to avoid NIC members deferring to the thinking of the researcher instead of freely sharing their own ideas.

The researcher had both power and privilege based on the researcher's position and ethnicity. The researcher was careful not to privilege his own perspective above marginalized voices within the community.

The first round of student surveys was collected by the institution prior to the start of this study and the plan for additional surveys had already been documented by the school. The researcher obtained IRB approval prior to initiating the study. The student surveys themselves were anonymous and no identifying information was collected during the administration of the surveys. Students who participated in the May 2022 surveys identified themselves as having taken the initial survey in May 2022 in order to disaggregate their data from that of new students in the November 2022 survey, without collecting any identifying information. Parents were informed of the surveys and provided consent for their child to participate. Students also assented to participate in the surveys. Parents and faculty completed their own version of the surveys (administered by the school in May 2022) and were aware of the research and program development that was taking place.

There was little to no risk for students in this study as the surveys were anonymous and asked about students' experiences at school. Students were accustomed to completing similar surveys and had done so multiple times in the past two years during accreditation processes. The potential benefits for students were great as the focus of the study was to improve their school experience.

Students who participated in interviews volunteered to do so and provided assent. Their parents also gave consent for their participation. The students knew their interviewer and expressed both willingness to participate and comfort in being interviewed by their interviewer.

At the beginning of every interview, the participating student was again asked if they wanted to participate in the study and provided an opportunity to cease participation without consequence.

There was minimal risk for the students who participated in the interviews as the interviews were semi-structured and driven by what the student chose to share. The primary risk to student participants was the possibility that sharing about a negative school experience could trigger an emotional response caused by reliving that experience. The questions asked were intentionally non-intrusive of their private lives and focused specifically on the Wednesday Program. All interviewers kept complete notes that were shared transparently with all NIC members.

Chapter 2: Do and Study

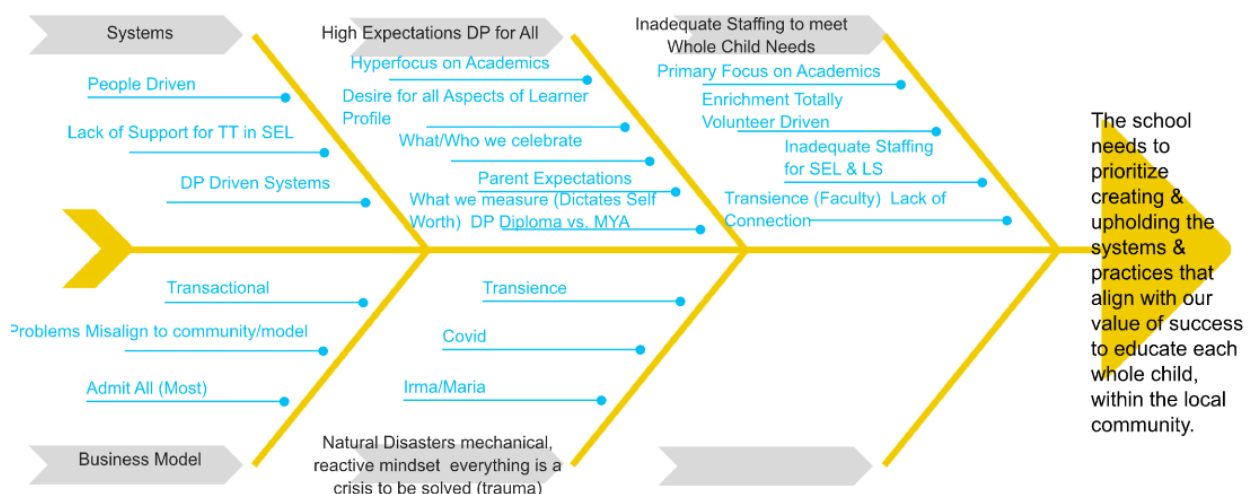
Rollout of the Plan

Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

The NIC met for the first time on August 10, 2022, and included 7 members. Those members were the head of school, social-emotional counselor, college counselor/admissions director, IB coordinator, elementary director, international accreditation lead for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and the director of the 6th-12th grade program at the school (also the researcher). In order to develop a shared understanding of the problem of practice, the NIC worked through a root cause analysis, more specifically a fishbone diagram (see figure 4).

Figure 4

Root Cause Analysis



At the beginning of the process, there was a general lack of clarity regarding the exact problem that needed to be addressed. Through structured dialogue, the NIC identified five areas they felt comprised the root of the issue at hand. Those areas were:

The Systems (or lack thereof) that Ultimately Drive the School Program

The international school itself was relatively small, with an enrollment of 330 students in pre-K through 12th grade. The 6th -12th grade IB program was launched only 15 years ago with 3 students in total. Understandably, the secondary program was very dependent on the people that were leading it. This person-specific dependence continued over time as opposed to systems being developed that would outlive individuals. As the IB program grew in enrollment, resources were spent to hire teachers and social-emotional supports, like a school counselor or specific training for faculty, were not able to be funded. Finally, the desire to produce strong DP scores in 11th and 12th grade drove the decision-making process and systems that were developed in younger grades. This led to an imbalance in systems, favoring academics over whole-child development.

High Expectations (all students enter the full Diploma Program)

The hyperfocus placed on academic outcomes in the 11th and 12th grade Diploma Program trickled down throughout the entire IB program at the school. Instead of identifying and celebrating students' strengths and the many important aspects of being well-rounded individuals, an almost exclusive focus was placed on academic achievement. With approximately 50% of students actually achieving the full IB Diploma, this diminished the value and self-worth of roughly half of the students.

Inadequate Staffing to Meet Whole Child Needs

With nearly 100% of tuition-based revenue being used to pay the salaries of academic faculty, the school had to be creative in order to address whole-child needs. Those needs were seen as ancillary to academics and attempts to meet those needs relied on “enrichment” programs that were staffed by volunteers and took place primarily outside of the school day. In addition to the lack of paid staff whose job description included areas outside of academic teaching, the transient nature of the island made it difficult for students to form meaningful relationships with teachers. The fear that staff members would leave in a year or less resulted in students being reluctant to form bonds.

A Business Model of School Operation

The school was historically run by people with experience in business, but not in education. Schools tend to rely more on human capital and relationships than businesses. The transactional nature of relationships between school leaders and faculty served to keep the focus on the financial bottom line, without sufficient attention to the non-financial outcomes for students and faculty. For example, there was a general practice of admitting every student who applied to the school, without consideration of their impact on the school community or the school’s ability to adequately support them. In general, the NIC observed that the stated mission of the school was misaligned to the day-to-day practices employed by school leaders.

Natural Disasters and a Mechanical Mindset of Reacting to Problems

In the 6 years prior to this study, the school went through two category-five hurricanes and the Covid pandemic. Those challenges were exacerbated by the day-to-day challenges of living on a Caribbean island. The school developed a culture and mindset of reacting to problems. This culture kept the focus on reacting to or solving current problems as they arose, at the expense of proactive or forward thinking. The NIC believed that this culture trickled all the way down to the students, increasing anxiety, stress, and uncertainty.

Some of the key observations that emerged during the root cause analysis were:

“The school has been more focused on academics, we want the school to be more focused on the ‘whole-child’.”

“The school’s motto is ‘Education for Life’ - prior to the Wednesday Program, we had enrichment to serve the purposes of giving time to explore a variety of things outside of academics and giving time to teachers to plan and process. This has been lost in the past two years.”

“The school has a reputation for being academically rigorous, students going on to be “successful”, and students being at their max - plus some. They wanted to be engaged in enrichment but did not have the time. They wanted to volunteer, for example, but they didn’t know when they could do that.”

“Having the space within the structure of the school day was a big ask from students.”

“There is the question of what else you did along with completing the diploma. Students are asked this question when applying to universities.”

“We are looking to develop systems that allow children to achieve whole-person success that is not just centered around academics.”

“Give the school, teachers, and administrators tools to be able to help achieve this “whole child” education.”

“There is tension with the IB organization, but there are no built-in structures to help with working outside of the academic areas. Many schools around the world struggle with this question of how to support the other elements of the learner profile.”

“How do we educate a student for life within an IB program?”

“What does it mean to educate the ‘whole child’?”

“At this school, we are not educating our students for life.”

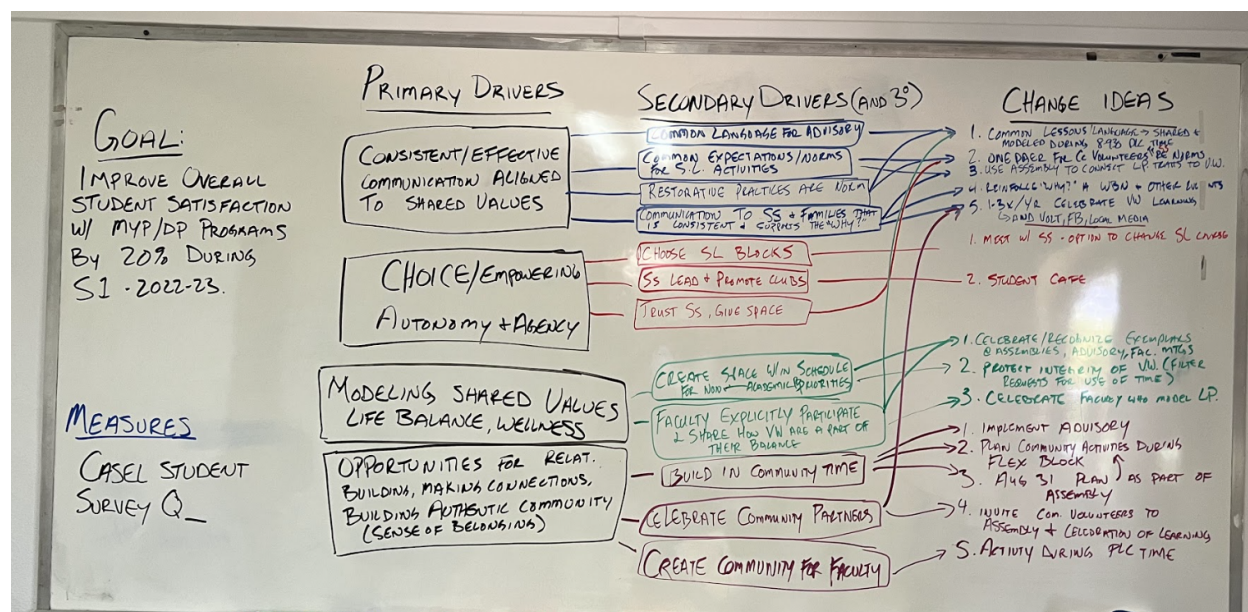
Throughout the process of dialogue and exploration of the root cause, the NIC tested several statements of the problem of practice and ultimately landed on, “The school needs to prioritize creating and upholding the systems and practices that align with our value of success, ‘To educate each whole child’, within the local community.”

Theory of Improvement

Following the generation of the RCA, the NIC met for a second time on August 25th, 2022 to develop a theory of improvement. A driver diagram (see figures 5 and 6) was utilized to help the team generate and visualize their theory of improvement. Figure 5 shows a digital version of the driver diagram, while figure 6 shows the initial work of the NIC, carried out on a whiteboard.

Figure 6

Original Driver Diagram



The primary drivers that the NIC believed would lead to the desired aim were:

1. Consistent and effective communication aligned to [the school's] shared values.
2. Choice, empowerment, autonomy, and agency for students.
3. Modeling the shared values of life balance and wellness.
4. Opportunities for relationship building, making connections, building authentic community and a sense of belonging.

The team then generated secondary drivers for each of the primary drivers. The belief of the team was that the secondary drivers would ultimately be the machine that caused the primary drivers to occur. Finally, in order to achieve the secondary drivers, the team developed a series of change/improvement ideas. While a few of the improvement ideas would span more than one PDSA cycle, the majority would be implemented and assessed throughout the first cycle, which

included the launch of the Wednesday Program, three Wednesday Program sessions, and the first round of student interviews. The improvement ideas were ultimately assigned to various members of the team, with dates for completion agreed upon.

The launch of the Wednesday program took place on August 31, 2022 (see figure 7).

Figure 7

Wednesday Program Schedule

Time	Activity
8:00-9:30	Work from home OR Arrive at 8:00 and choose one of the following: Basketball, Fitness, Study Hall, Student Cafe Worker, Student Newscast
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-10:15	Advisory
10:20-11:20	Student Life Block 1
1:20-12:00	Lunch
12:00-12:55	Flex Block
1:00-2:00	Student Life Block 2
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:15	Student life Block 3

The NIC, along with the school leadership team, incorporated the improvement ideas that were generated into the planning and launch of the program. In addition to observing and participating in the Wednesday program, each member of the NIC identified one student who they would interview during each PDSA cycle in the first semester, for a total of three times. Each of those students and their parents were provided with an informed consent form prior to any interviews taking place.

The Wednesday Program began on August 31st with a 90-minute late start for students to allow professional learning time for faculty. During the late start, students chose to either work from home and arrive at 9:30 to school or arrive at the usual time of 8:00 and participate in enrichment activities. Those activities included basketball, soccer, fitness, study hall, planning for the launch of a student-run cafe, and developing a student newscast.

Following the late start, students participated in an advisory class with 5 or 6 other students from their grade and a faculty member. Students continued to meet with that same advisory group each Wednesday of the program. The purpose of the advisory class was to build relationships, develop a sense of community and belonging, support students with their unique needs, and establish a faculty member with a global perspective and interest in each and every student.

Following advisory, each student went to their first Student Life Block. Those blocks included courses and clubs led by faculty members, students, or community volunteers. Each student was able to choose their course or club from a list of roughly 15 options (see figure 8).

Figure 8*Student Life Block Course Offerings*

Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
DP HL Extension	DP HL Extension	DP HL Extension
Art Studio	Book Club/Library Mania	Badminton/ Volleyball
Business, Economics, and Investment	Coding	Dance Club
Campus Improvement/Gardening Club	CPR/First Aid Certification	Dungeons and Dragons
Fitness Club	Debate	Fitness Club
Knitting, Crocheting, Sewing	Digital and Film Photography: The Similarities and Differences	Humane Society Volunteers
Math Lab	Diversity Club	Lifeguard Training
Student Music Ensemble (e.g. jazz band, rock)	Japanese Club	Mechanics
Student Vocal Ensemble	Montessori Mentor	Montessori Mentor
Study Hall	MUN - Model United Nations	Robotics Club
Team Sports	Student Council/ Leadership	Snorkel/Marine Exploration
	Student Media Outlet: student news program, podcasts, etc.	Study Hall
	Student Yearbook	Surfing
	Study Hall	Tech Team
	Team Sports	Theater
		Yoga & Mindfulness

While learning was certainly taking place during the Student Life Blocks, grading of any kind was intentionally absent. The goal was for students to explore and pursue their passions and apply skills in authentic contexts - all without the pressure or focus on grades.

Students had a lunch block, just as they would during a regular school day. After lunch, the entire student body and faculty gathered for an assembly during the flex block. Student assemblies were regularly a part of the flex block, though it was also used for a variety of other activities designed to build community and support students' needs. Those activities included community games, WIN Time (What I Need), performances and presentations, and more. During the assembly on August 31st, students enjoyed an interactive performance from their principal,

jokes from faculty members, and the formation of houses. Advisory groups were paired with another advisory from a different grade level to form the houses. Each house chose a name and acted the name out, charades style, for the rest of the student body. Laughter, camaraderie, and cross-grade level relationship building were central to the first flex block. Students finished the day by participating in their second and third Student Life Blocks (refer to figures 6 and 7 above).

A key feature of the Wednesday program included extension time for 11th and 12th-grade students taking Higher Level (HL) DP courses. DP courses span two years and can be taken at a standard level (SL, 150 hours) or higher level (HL, 240 hours). All students take three of their six DP courses at the higher level. The extension time during the Wednesday program allowed for the HL students within each DP course to meet with their teacher to work toward the required additional hours, without students taking the course at an SL level being present. For 11th and 12th-grade DP students, 50% of their Student Life Blocks were HL extension time, allowing them to meet with their teachers for specific differentiation and additional course hours as required by the IBO.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two primary sources, the CASEL Student Survey, and individual student interviews. The CASEL Student Survey was administered in May 2022 and again at the beginning of November, 2022. 17 of the 18 questions were quantitative, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The 18th question was open-ended and qualitative in nature. The NIC isolated specific questions from the survey related to overall student satisfaction and wellbeing in

order to evaluate the impact of the Wednesday program (questions 1-9). All survey results are reported in table 1 below for reference.

Table 1

May 2022-November 2022 Survey Comparison

Question	May Mean	Nov. Mean	% Change
1 I like coming to school every day.	2.85	3.18	11.56%
2 I have friends at school.	4.28	4.62	7.94%
3 People care about each other in my class.	3.76	3.68	-2.32%
4 My teacher(s) likes and cares about me.	3.65	3.97	8.70%
5 Adults treat students kindly and fairly at this school.	3.33	3.88	16.47%
6 I'm interested in what I'm learning in class.	2.99	3.50	17.21%
7 I work and play well with people who are different from me.	4.01	4.35	8.45%
8 I sometimes get to choose what I want to study or do in class.	3.06	3.35	9.73%
9 I feel like I belong in my classroom and school community.	3.31	3.88	17.45%
10 I feel safe at school.	3.89	4.21	8.15%
11 I'm a good student and a strong thinker.	3.79	4.26	12.48%
12 I know how to be a good partner and friend.	4.25	4.29	1.04%
13 If I have a problem, I can solve it or find someone who can help.	3.97	4.26	7.36%
14 When I make mistakes, I learn from them.	3.83	4.18	8.95%
15 I can understand how other people feel.	4.07	4.09	0.46%
16 I can work well with anyone in my class.	3.46	3.68	6.31%
17 I like the way I am.	3.60	3.76	4.66%
18 What else would you like your teacher(s) to know about how you feel about your classroom and school?			

Of particular note were items 1, 5, 6, 9, and 11. Item one most directly related to student satisfaction and saw an increase of nearly 12%. This item was the lowest scoring in the May survey and was a significant driver of this research. The saying goes, “students do not care about what you know until they know you care.” Item five was very encouraging and a testament to the increased opportunities for positive interaction between adults and students. One might consider item six as a focus on student engagement. The 17.21% increase clearly demonstrated the

positive impact of the Wednesday Program on student engagement. As the item with the greatest increase, question nine naturally calls attention. As human beings, sense of belonging is fundamental to how we feel and most certainly influences our perceptions. The fact that this item increased so dramatically in less than three months of program implementation was cause for great celebration. Finally, while somewhat tangential to the focus of this study, item 11 merits discussion. It is quite possible that the opportunities students had to explore passions and interests during the Wednesday Program contributed to this increase in their perception of themselves as students and thinkers.

Three additional qualitative questions were added to the November survey in order to gather more actionable feedback regarding the Wednesday program. Those questions were, “Has the Wednesday Program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?”, “What about the Wednesday Program do you like the most/find the most valuable?”, and “Are there changes you would make to the Wednesday Program? If so what?”

Students were asked to indicate whether or not they participated in the May survey in order to isolate the data of students who participated in both surveys from that of students who only participated in the November survey. The November surveys were administered during class, following informed consent from both students and their parents. Of the 79 students in the overall population for this study, 34 provided consent. The sample, therefore, included 48% of the overall population and was adequate to be considered a representative sample.

Individual student interviews were conducted by members of the NIC. Each NIC member identified one student who they interviewed a total of three times during the study (once during each PDSA cycle). The students interviewed spanned grades 8-12 and represented a diverse cross-section of the student population (see table 2).

Table 2*Survey Participant Demographics*

Student	Age	Grade Level	Gender	Years at the School	Race
1	13	8	Male	2	African American
2	14	9	Female	8	White
3	13	9	Female	11	White
4	14	10	Female	12	African American
5	16	12	Male	3	African American

The semi-structured interviews lasted about 15 minutes each and utilized the following questions to guide the interview.

1. What do you think/feel about the Wednesday program?
2. What do you think is the purpose of the Wednesday program?
3. Has the Wednesday program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?
4. What about the Wednesday program do you like the most/find the most valuable?
5. Are there changes you would make to the program?
6. Do you see any connections between the Wednesday program and your learning in your MYP/DP classes?
7. Has the Wednesday program helped you build relationships with teachers or classmates?
How so?
8. Has the Wednesday program had an effect on your life balance or wellness (explain life balance/wellness if needed)?
9. Do you think the Wednesday Program has had an impact on our community (teachers, students)?

Each NIC member documented their interviews and at each subsequent NIC meeting, the team sorted and coded the interview data. That data, along with observations of the NIC team, was used to make adjustments to the theory of improvement for the next PDSA cycle. See appendix C for complete interview data. The following section details the themes that emerged from the interview data collected during each cycle as well as the change ideas that resulted from those themes.

Cycles of Study and Act

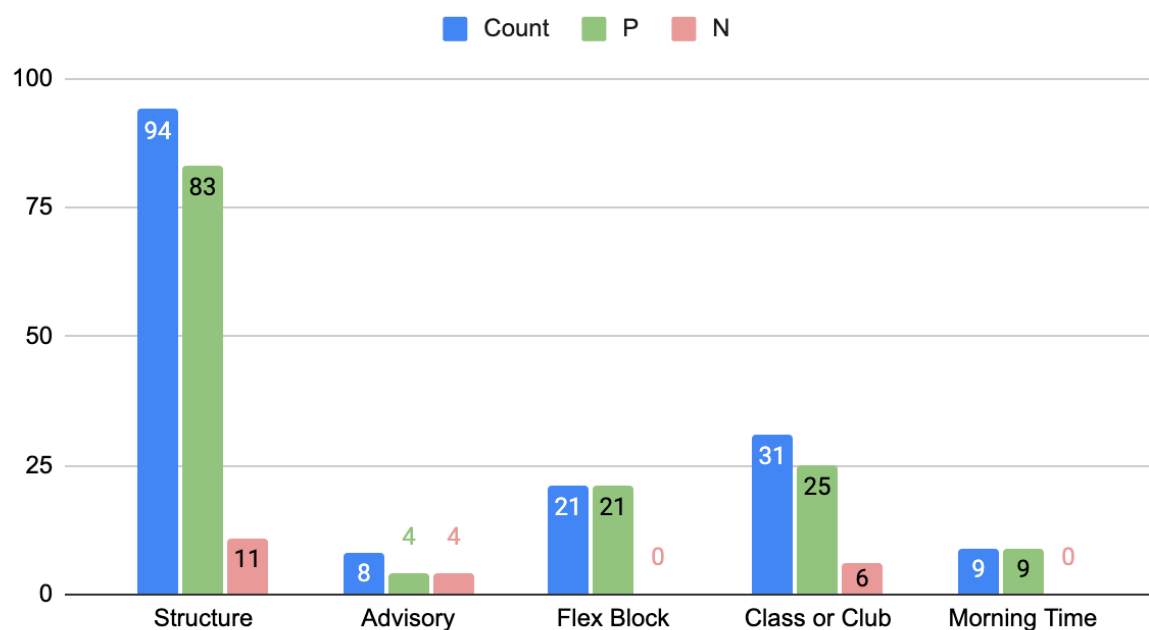
Data Analysis

During the first round of student interviews 163 pieces of qualitative data were collected. Those initial interviews took place after three (3) sessions of the *Wednesday Program*. The data were initially coded by the program component they referred to. Those components were overall structure, morning session, advisory, flex block, and class/club. Each piece of data was coded as either positive or negative. Subsequently, each of those data were coded based on the type of feedback or perception. Those categories included climate, engagement, satisfaction, choice, opportunity, wellbeing, autonomy, and others. The themes and trends that emerged from the initial interview data can be seen in figure 9 below.

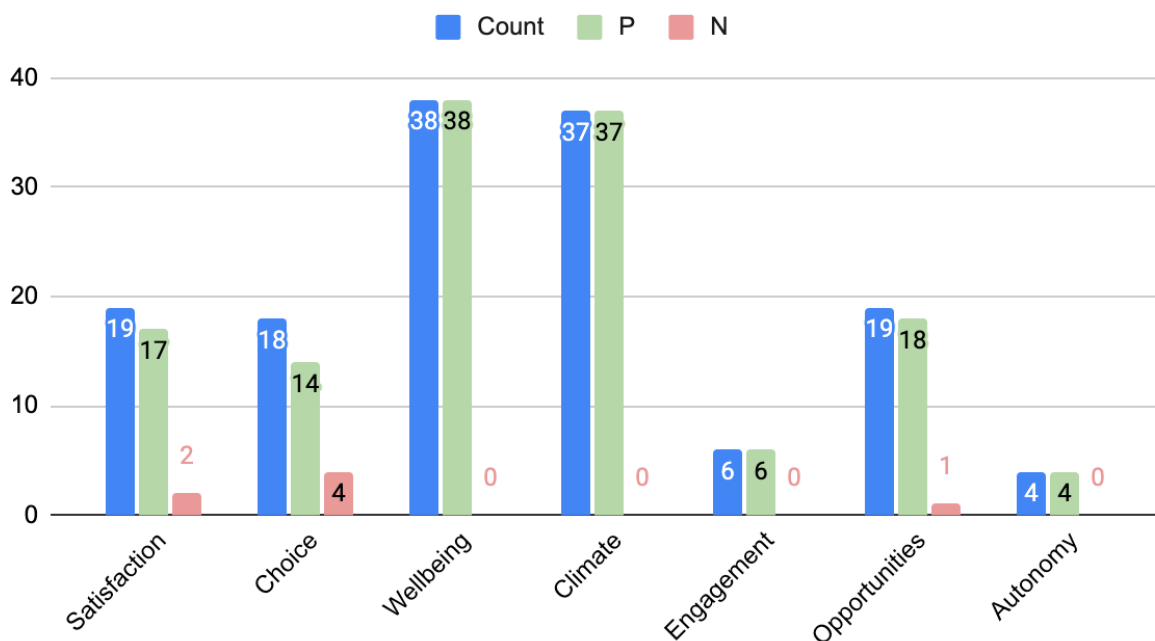
Figure 9*First Round Interview Themes*

Themes	
Advisory: Overall positive - deeper connections are being built.	Structure: Timing is key as it breaks up the regular class cycles and allows students to stay on top of work.
Courses and Clubs: Student choice is powerful and important.	Structure: Choice within the structure allows students to design their day to meet their needs.
Courses and Clubs: There are perhaps too many to choose from.	Structure: Cross-grade level interaction is important to students.
Courses and Clubs: Relationships are built across grade levels and with teachers students normally would not have.	Structure: Allows students to better manage their own life balance and wellbeing.
Courses and Clubs: Learning (that students value) is taking place.	Structure: Consider two Student Life blocks instead of three to allow for more time.
Courses and Clubs: Help connect learning to real life.	Structure: Student stress levels seem to be reduced overall.
Flex block: Assemblies build spirit and sense of community.	
Flex Block: Brings PGIA community together.	
Flex Block: Builds positivity.	
Mornings: Provides choice that allows each student to have their needs met.	

The structure of the *Wednesday Program* was referenced in 94 out of 163 comments, for a total of 58% of the data (see figure 10).

Figure 10*Total Count Program Components***Total Count (Program Components): Positive or Negative**

This coincides with the perception data, in which climate and wellbeing received a majority (23% each) of the attention (see figure 11). Both the morning time and flex block components received exclusively positive comments while advisory was split evenly between positive and negative feedback.

Figure 11*Total Count Perceptions***Total Count (Perceptions): Positive or Negative**

In all, the most consistent feedback from the first round of interviews was that the structure of the *Wednesday Program* helped students to manage their workload and achieve a more healthy balance in their lives. This appeared to be due to the fact that students attended a full cycle of classes on Monday and Tuesday, then had the *Wednesday Program* mid-week, and finished with another cycle of classes on Thursday and Friday. This mid-week respite allowed students to finish all of their work for their Monday and Tuesday classes and start fresh for their Thursday and Friday classes. The mid-week change of pace also seemed to improve students' overall wellbeing through the positivity of climate that was consistently referenced in regards to the *Wednesday Program*.

Based on the data collected during the first set of interviews, and the observations of the NIC, the following adjustments or edits were made to the theory of improvement (driver diagram).

- Simplify Flex Block offerings and focus primarily on assemblies and community building.
- Consider two (2) Student Life Blocks of 90 minutes instead of three (3) 60-minute blocks.
- Build a schedule of course and club offerings first, then allow students to build their own schedule based on when those courses and clubs are offered.

The second round of student interviews occurred after three additional sessions of the Wednesday Program. Interviewers used the same set of framing questions for the semi-structured interviews, but asked participants to specifically focus on changes since the first round of interviews took place. 52 data points were collected, coded, sorted, and analyzed by the NIC. The themes that emerged and the change ideas that resulted can be found in figure 12 below.

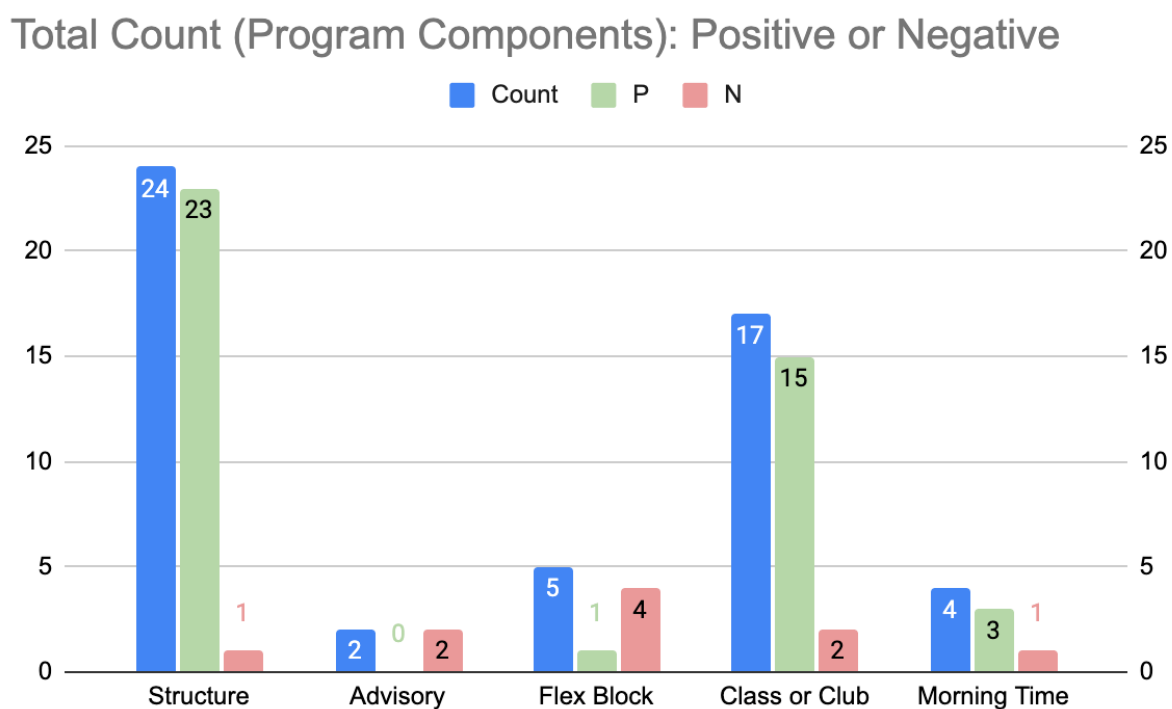
Figure 12*Round Two Interview Themes and Change Ideas*

Round Two Interview Themes	Change Ideas
The midweek break is very beneficial to student health and wellbeing.	On 4-day school weeks when there is not a Wednesday Program session, adjust class rotations so students do not have the same class on consecutive days.
The Flex Block requires more variety in the type of activities.	Develop different community activities and consider bringing in a speaker for a unique topic.
Students have a positive perception overall of the structure of the Wednesday Program.	Consider adjusting the schedule on Wednesdays to allow for longer Student Life classes.
Student satisfaction continues to improve.	Build in more house time with get-to-know-you activities, followed by a game or competition. Note. Houses are a combination of two advisory groups from different grade levels and include 12-14 students.
Students value choice and would like even more of it.	Consider different ways to recognize students during assemblies.
A break from assignments with an opportunity to catch up on work is key to improved student wellness.	Ask teachers to be on the lookout for kids who have not been recognized already at an assembly.
Student perceptions about advisory vary significantly.	Survey facilitators of courses and clubs regarding the amount of time needed.
	Get feedback from teachers regarding their preference of 60 or 90 minute blocks for courses and Higher Level extensions.
	Develop more structure and tools for advisory teachers in order to build consistency.
	Work with teachers to develop a shared vision for advisory time.
	Survey all students with qualitative, open-ended questions regarding their perceptions and suggestions for the Wednesday Program.

As with the first round of interviews, the program structure was the most frequently mentioned component by the interviewees, with 24 out of 52 data points (46%) referencing it (see figure 13). The remaining program components received similar attention in the second-round interviews as they did in the first round.

Figure 13

Total Count of Program Components in Second Round Interviews

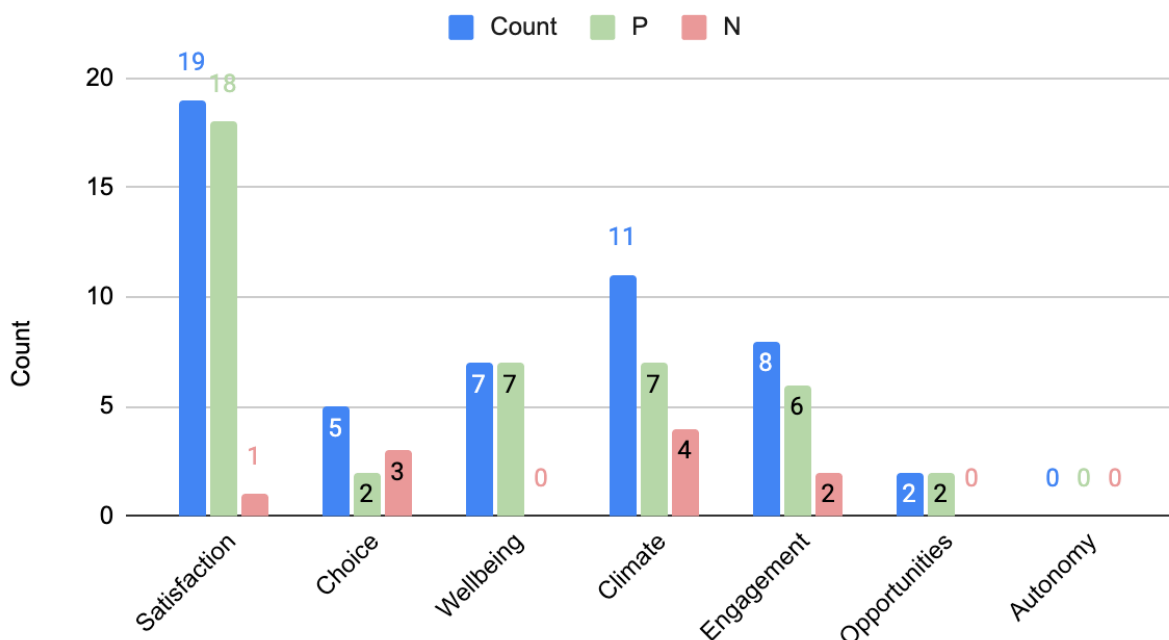


The perceptions data from the second round of interviews varied significantly from that of the first-round interviews. Satisfaction, climate, engagement, and wellbeing received the most attention from interviewees, with satisfaction data points almost doubling that of climate (see figure 14). In the first round of interviews, wellbeing and climate received the most attention, doubling the data points of the next closest categories of opportunities, satisfaction, and choice.

Figure 14

Total Count of Perceptions Data from Second Round Interviews

Total Count (Perceptions): Positive or Negative



The first round of interviews included overwhelmingly positive comments (87% for program components and 95% for perceptions). In the second round of interviews, subjects offered more critical feedback, with 81% of comments being positive for both program components and perceptions.

Qualitative Findings

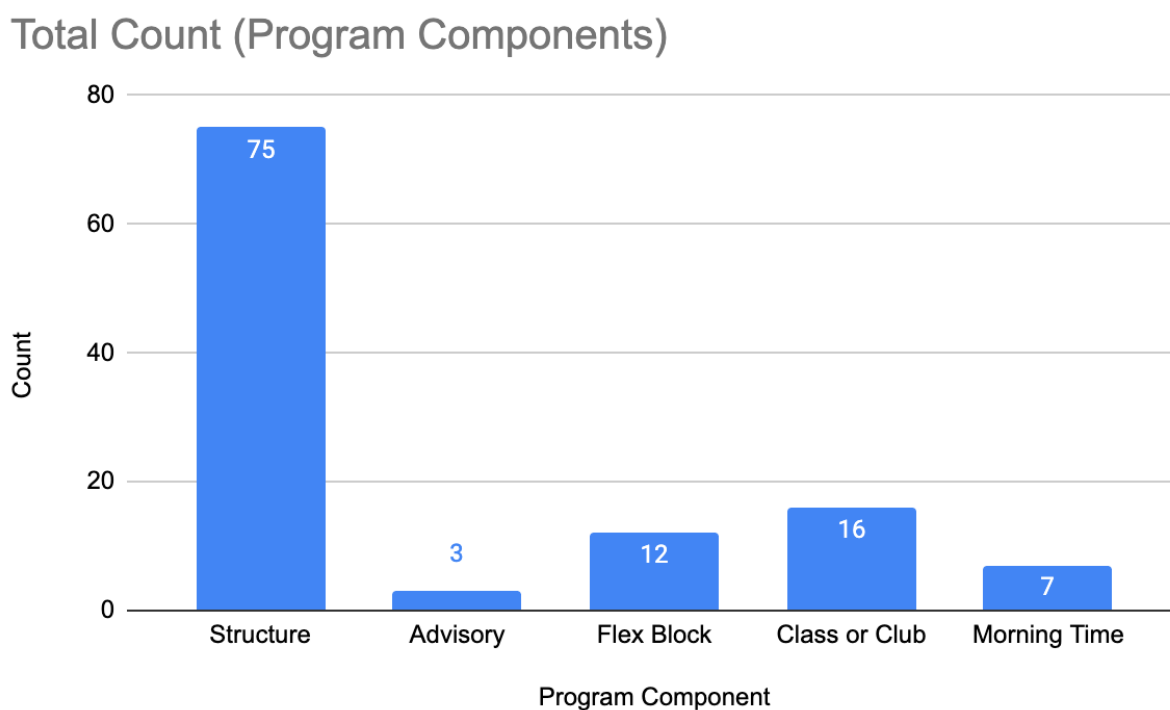
The three qualitative questions on the November survey, along with the student interviews conducted throughout the study, comprised the qualitative data for the research. The qualitative data from the November survey largely mirrored the data collected during the student interviews with a couple of exceptions noted later in this section. 88% of respondents answered

that the Wednesday Program had a positive impact on their feelings about school. That data aligned with the quantitative data in which there was an increase of 11.6% in the average rating for the question, “I like coming to school every day.”

Similar to both rounds of interview data, the program component that received the most attention on the November survey was the overall structure of the Wednesday Program (see figure 15).

Figure 15

Total Count of Program Component Comments in November Survey

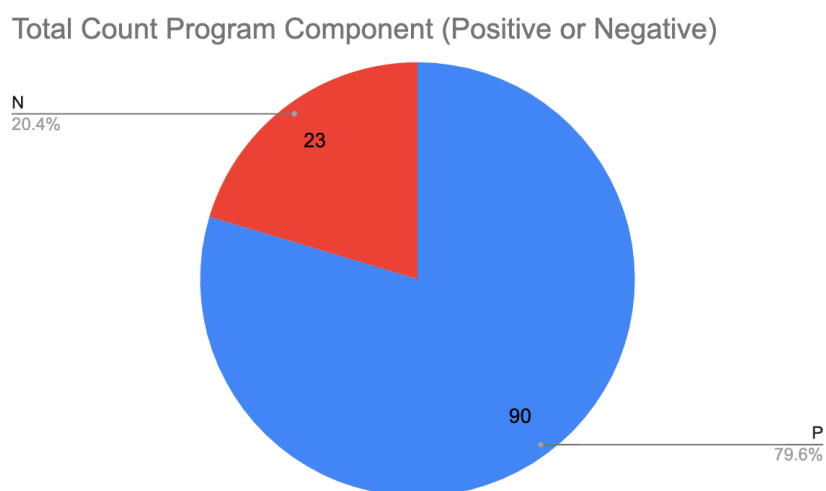


The second and third qualitative questions in the November survey asked respondents what they liked most/found most valuable about the Wednesday Program and what changes they would make to the program. The third question sought to solicit critical feedback. The nature of

that question increased the number of comments that were coded as negative, and was intentional. Despite the invitation for critical feedback, 80% of comments related to program components were positive (see figure 16).

Figure 16

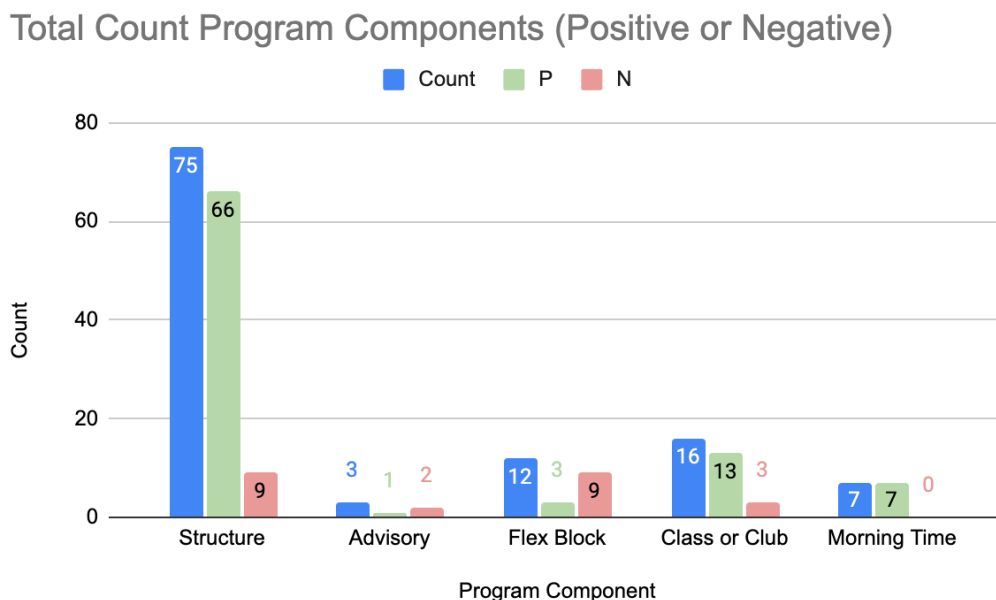
Total Count of Comments Related to the Components of the Wednesday Program



Two program components received proportionally higher critical comments than the others. Those components were advisory and flex block (see figure 17).

Figure 17

Total Count of Positive and Negative Comments by Program Component in the November Survey

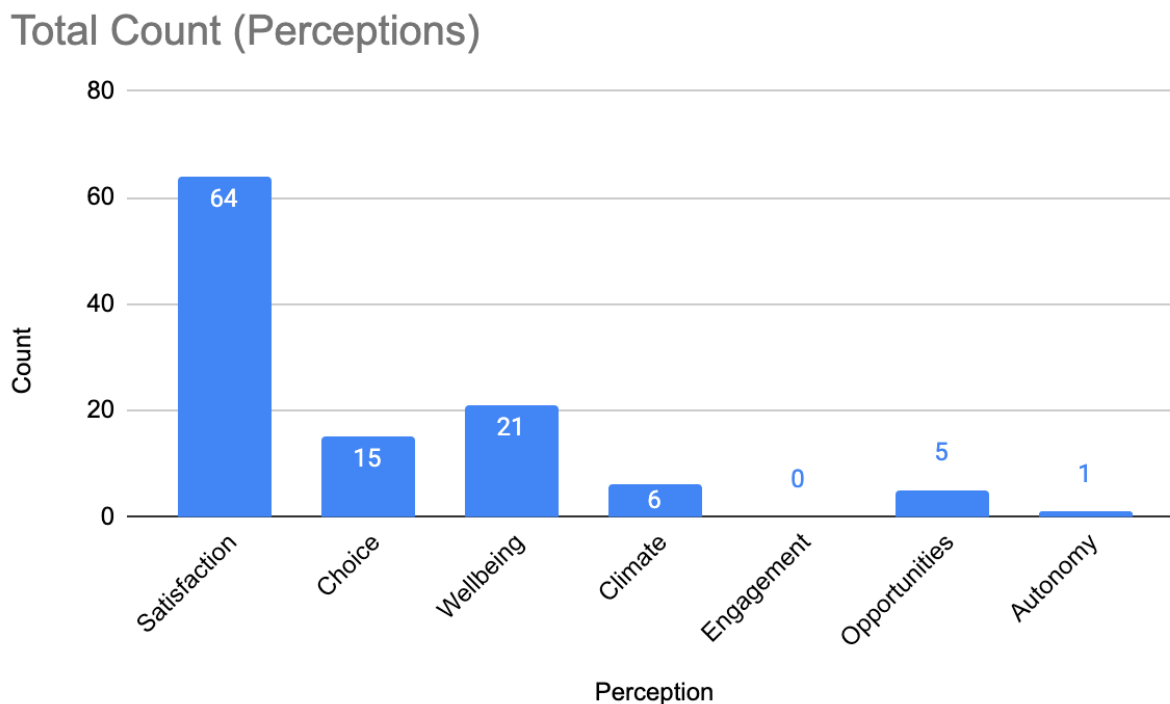


The themes that emerged for the advisory component were a lack of consistency from one advisory class to another and desire for more time in advisory. The data regarding the flex block showed a preference for more diversity in flex block activities as well as choice for students regarding how they use their flex block time.

The perception data from the November survey showed 76% of comments being positive and 24% being critical in nature. As with the second-round interview data, the perception category that received the most attention in the November survey was satisfaction, with more than three times the number of comments of the next closest categories of wellbeing and choice (see figure 18).

Figure 18

Total Count of Perception Data on the November Survey

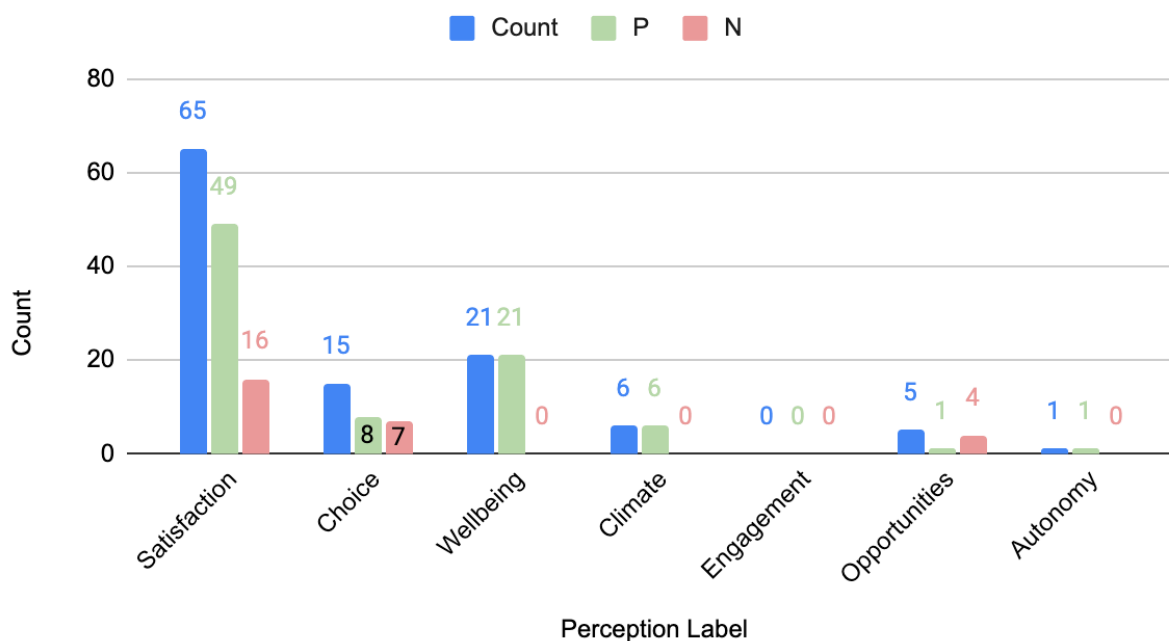


The themes that emerged related to satisfaction were consistent with the interview data and were largely positive (75%). Students appreciated the structure of the program because it broke up the demands of the regular class schedule. They also favored the choice they had throughout the Wednesday Program and the improved climate on campus. The critical feedback related to satisfaction surfaced three common themes. Some students wanted more variety in flex block activities, asked that assemblies take place inside due to the heat, and were concerned about the loss of time in their regular academic classes due to the Wednesday Program. Figure 19 shows a full breakdown of the perception data from the November survey.

Figure 19

Breakdown of Positive and Negative Perceptions Data from November Survey

Total Count Perceptions (Positive or Negative)



Wellbeing and choice also received significant amounts of attention on the November survey, which was a divergence from the patterns in the interview data. The wellbeing data was entirely positive, consistently referencing the structure of the Wednesday program as positively impacting students. In particular, respondents noted the midweek break to the academic cycle, which allowed them to stay caught up on work, reduced their stress levels, and allowed them to get more rest. The comments related to choice were split evenly between positive and critical feedback. The critical feedback focused on increasing choice for students in how they used their time on Wednesdays and whether they should be allowed to switch between courses and clubs at will instead of having to wait for the end of the semester. The positive feedback related to choice

highlighted students' ability to choose what they do in the morning and to select their courses and clubs.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data collected in the November survey showed improvement in the average rating for eight of the nine questions related to satisfaction and wellbeing (see table 3).

Table 3

May 2022-November 2022 Quantitative Survey Comparison

Question	May Mean	Nov. Mean	% Change
1 I like coming to school every day.	2.85	3.18	11.56%
2 I have friends at school.	4.28	4.62	7.94%
3 People care about each other in my class.	3.76	3.68	-2.32%
4 My teacher(s) likes and cares about me.	3.65	3.97	8.70%
5 Adults treat students kindly and fairly at this school.	3.33	3.88	16.47%
6 I'm interested in what I'm learning in class.	2.99	3.50	17.21%
7 I work and play well with people who are different from me.	4.01	4.35	8.45%
8 I sometimes get to choose what I want to study or do in class.	3.06	3.35	9.73%
9 I feel like I belong in my classroom and school community.	3.31	3.88	17.45%

Questions 1, 6, and 8 related to student satisfaction and all saw significant increases from the May survey to the November survey. While question one still had the lowest score, the increase of 11.56% is worthy of note. The increase of 17.21% in students' interest in what they are learning in class was significant and also was the second highest jump of all the questions.

Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9 were associated with wellbeing for students. The increases in sense of belonging (question 9) and students' perception of how adults treat them (question 5) were significant and aligned with the qualitative theme of improved school climate. While there was positive growth in students' perceptions of how adults treat them at school (16.47%), there

was a slight drop in their perception of whether or not their classmates care about each other (-2.32%).

As a whole, it was evident that the implementation of the Wednesday Program had a positive impact on student satisfaction.

Chapter 3: ACT

Discussion of Findings

This study sought to explore the importance and impact of “learning outside the classroom” in a 6th-12th grade International Baccalaureate (IB) program on overall student satisfaction. An Improvement Science approach was utilized throughout this dissertation in practice in order to test the impact of an innovative program (*The Wednesday Program*) at an international IB school that brought “learning outside the classroom” inside of the school day. While each IB school around the world is unique, they all share similar challenges. Student satisfaction, wellbeing, and engagement are concerns of every school as they seek to continually improve. This particular study was specifically designed for *The International School*, but the components of the theoretical framework can be studied, modified, and applied at any school around the world.

The theoretical framework for this study utilized a series of evidence-based practices in an effort to improve overall student satisfaction. Students were empowered with *autonomy* by having the opportunity to design and lead courses, clubs, and campus initiatives. They were provided significant *choice* by being allowed to design the first 90 minutes of their day to meet their needs and through the opportunity to select each course or club for themselves. In each of those courses or clubs, students had a chance to *master* a skill or knowledge without the pressure of grades and assessments. Each student was placed in a small advisory group with one faculty member in an effort to increase their *sense of belonging*. Finally, the structure of the Wednesday Program was designed to provide a *break* in the academic cycle for students, allowing for rest, recuperation, and processing of their learning.

The findings of this study aligned with the literature in identifying high stress levels for IB students. The Wednesday Program was designed to increase student satisfaction, which it did, but not necessarily for the reasons the researcher anticipated. While student wellbeing has been a concern in education for some time, the national and global mental health crisis that emerged over the course of the COVID pandemic brought the level of concern and attention to the forefront of the conversation. The student subjects in this study focused on improvements to their wellbeing at such an alarming rate that it became a major focus for the NIC. The structure of the Wednesday Program had the greatest overall impact by providing a mid-week break in the academic cycle.

That mid-week placement allowed students to focus on one cycle of classes, then have a break in their workload on Wednesdays. Students used that break to complete work, study, get support from teachers as needed, tend to their individual health through fitness and other outlets, and to rest, among other things. Students reported personal changes such as increased sleep, reduced stress and anxiety, not skipping meals, being able to focus on extracurriculars and school simultaneously, and spending more time with their families.

There are significant amounts of research and conceptual frameworks related to the impact of taking breaks on performance. For example, a recent study utilized attention restoration theory to research the benefits of short breaks on performance (Packer, 2021). Packer's findings "demonstrated that taking a break increases the ability to focus attention and improves restorative well-being" (Packer, 2021, p. 100006). Furthermore, when Finesi et al (2018) investigated the impact of taking breaks during a class period on learning outcomes, students who took short exercise breaks ultimately outperformed those who did not. Additionally, the results mentioned here are likely an instantiation of the effects of spaced

practice, which has been shown in hundreds of studies to benefit learning outcomes and overall retention for students. In one recent example, Latimier et al (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of 29 studies on the benefit of spacing out retrieval practice episodes on final retention and found significant evidence to support spaced practice. It is likely that students' reports of reduced academic stress in this study, at least in part, stemmed from the spacing of their courses due to the structure of the Wednesday Program.

In the case of the Wednesday Program, the restorative value for students was consistently cited. While the midweek placement of the program received the most attention, other structural elements of the theoretical framework had a positive impact on student satisfaction. Student voice and choice was a strong contributor to increased levels of student satisfaction. We have long known in education that choice for students in what and how they learn is positively associated with engagement. This finding aligns with existing research, such as Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, which highlights the power of choice in education (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The flexibility of the morning time on Wednesdays allowed students to make choices that met their individual needs. For some students this took the form of extra sleep. Others came to school and exercised or worked on homework. Students' ability to use that 90-minute block of time however they saw fit was a consistent and positive theme of the study. In addition to the choice students had for how to spend the first 90 minutes of the day, the Wednesday Program allowed students to identify classes and clubs that would be of interest to them, lead a course or club if they desired, and ultimately choose which courses and clubs to participate in. Students consistently cited choice as a contributor to increased satisfaction and at the same time requested even more choice.

While student choice was generally a positive contributor to overall satisfaction, there were instances of too much choice. The sheer quantity of course offerings had a negative impact on student satisfaction. This was likely due to the phenomenon of diminishing outcomes when too many choices are presented. This idea of diminishing returns from volume of choices has been explored by behavioral economists such as Richard Thaler (2018) and explained through frameworks like Nudge Theory. It is likely that the age and maturity of students informs the ideal number of choices. In the case of this study, the choices presented for courses and clubs were too many and led to paralysis and second-guessing from students.

This study attempted to balance the presence of choice for students with limitations that encouraged healthy choices. For example, students in grades 6-10 were only allowed to choose one study hall out of their three available courses or clubs. That use of Libertarian Paternalistic Policy was intended to ensure all students had at least some degree of personal and cognitive stretch during the Wednesday Program. While most students and parents appreciated this forced balance of choices, there were a few who resisted. This mirrors current research, such as that of Arad and Rubinstein (2018), which shows that there are always some who would prefer to have the information and make all choices for themselves. In the couple of instances during this study where students or parents requested multiple study halls, for example, the researcher met with them and handled each situation on a case-by-case basis.

School climate and community emerged as being highly important to the research subjects. For the most part, the Wednesday Program was designed around student interests and avoided age-based groupings. The two exceptions to that were the advisory time and HL extensions for DP students. Students consistently reported satisfaction due to the opportunity to interact with students across grade levels throughout the day. It seems likely that this factor

contributed to the large increase in students' sense of belonging at school. In addition to cross-grade level opportunities, students cited the assemblies that took place during flex block as increasing positivity and overall climate at the school. Those findings underscored the importance of building community and sense of belonging for students. In the case of this study, the feeling of being a part of something bigger, instead of just coming to school to attend classes, was key to increased satisfaction.

The critical feedback from students was almost entirely related to minor elements of program design that could be easily tweaked. Some examples included increased variety of flex block activities, adjustments to how students sign up for courses, and the length of courses and clubs. Most of the adjustments suggested by students were quickly made to the program or were made over the course of that academic year. The improvement science framework of Plan, Do, Study, Act allowed the NIC to gather that feedback and make timely adjustments to the Wednesday Program. The value of that approach to improvement in a school cannot be overstated.

Limitations

Research in educational settings can be challenging as it is seldom possible to eliminate all extraneous variables. This study was certainly no exception. To begin with, this study was conducted during the first return to 'normalcy' following almost three years of Covid related interruptions to typical school routines. Student satisfaction was the dependent variable in this study and was undoubtedly impacted by the simple fact that students were able to return to in-person classes with little to no restrictions, such as social distancing and wearing masks. The initial survey data was collected near the end of the 2021-22 academic year when students were

more likely to be fatigued. Given those variables, it is likely that student satisfaction would have improved in the absence of the improvement efforts implemented during this study.

The members of the NIC were an additional variable as they each brought their own perspective and experiences to the improvement science effort. A NIC with a different composition of stakeholders may have developed a different goal or aim along with a different theory of improvement altogether. While all students completed the initial survey and the final survey, the adjustments to the change ideas during the study were largely influenced by the students who were interviewed during each cycle of the improvement process. Those students were identified by the NIC as likely to bring a perspective that was representative of their grade level peers. Had the NIC identified different students for the interviews, it is entirely possible that different adjustments to the change ideas would have been made. *The International School* is a small school with a unique student population. It is entirely possible that a different set of students from a different school, representing a different set of demographics, would have responded differently than the subjects of this study.

The Wednesday Program was ambitious in nature and included several different components, such as overall structure, late start, advisory, HL extension time, flex block, and various courses and clubs. Due to the volume of program components, it was difficult to determine the true impact of individual components. It is entirely possible that some of the program components had little to no impact on student satisfaction, while others may have had a significant impact.

The Wednesday Program was limited by the human resources available to the school. There is a logistical reality with the amount of time and organization required to implement a structure like the Wednesday Program. In addition to the design and planning work, the program

requires physical attention and presence each Wednesday to coordinate volunteers, run assemblies, and otherwise manage the logistics. The design of the Wednesday Program required involvement from parents and community members. The International School was limited by the availability of those volunteers and their willingness to participate in the program. A larger school situated within a larger community would have access to a broader volunteer base. In addition to the limitation of volunteer availability, the Wednesday Program was limited by the fact that volunteers were exactly that - volunteers. There were several occasions in which a volunteer canceled at the last minute, which required an on-the-fly adjustment to the course or club that person was leading. These limitations were by no means insurmountable and this researcher believes the benefits of the Wednesday Program outweighed the challenges and limitations at the International School. In another situation or locale, the logistical and economic demands could make the program unfeasible.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Perhaps the greatest implication of this study for the field of K-12 education is the significance of a truly well-rounded program. Classroom learning is foundational to the mission of education but is only one piece of the puzzle. Happy, healthy, and thriving students learn better and schools have the ability to influence these factors for students. In IB programs in particular, attention to student stress and wellbeing is critical. While the Wednesday Program was designed to meet the specific needs of students at the International School, the ideas and learning process can readily be adapted to meet the needs of students in other schools around the world. The concept of a strategically placed break in the middle of weekly learning cycles for students merits consideration from the field of education. While the amount of time students

have in a particular class over the course of an academic year certainly matters, students' readiness to learn in those classes also matters. This researcher believed that the net learning gain for students would be greater due to the mid-week restorative nature of the Wednesday Program, even though total minutes in academic classes were reduced.

There is a general consensus among educators that students do better when they are happy and feel like they belong at school. The positive feedback from students regarding opportunities to interact and learn alongside different-aged peers is worthy of note. The vast majority of K-12 educational structures group students by age or grade level. While this is convenient for the adults who manage school systems, it may be limiting the experience and satisfaction of students. The idea of having at least some structures that are interest-based as opposed to age-based merits consideration from other schools. Additionally, structures like the flex block that target positive climate and culture within a school can be replicated and adapted in any K-12 school.

This study utilized the skills, knowledge, and passion of local community members to improve experiences for students. Other schools would benefit from considering what could be gained from these types of partnerships that could not otherwise be offered at their school. This is especially true for smaller schools who are limited by the number of faculty members they have. Learning from community members not only provides access to opportunities that would be otherwise missed, but also helps students see the relevance of what they are learning in the classroom. In this study, students made connections in both directions. They identified the application of classroom skills in their Wednesday courses and also were able to take new learning from their Wednesday courses to apply in their regular classes. I previously used a basketball analogy in which players make more shots in practice than they do when those same

shots are contested in a game situation. Students need game situations. Authentic audiences and work that feels purposeful contribute to students' belief that classroom learning matters.

The significance of choice and autonomy in this study merit consideration and attention from the field of education. These elements of the theoretical framework can be easily isolated and replicated in a variety of ways, which may or may not relate to the Wednesday Program. Many schools, for example, utilize a late-start or early-release structure to facilitate professional development and collaboration for faculty. The ideas and model for using that time to create opportunities for choice and autonomy for students could be studied, adapted, and implemented in a variety of schools in a manner that matches their local context and resources.

In general, each individual component of the Wednesday Program could be isolated and studied by K-12 and other educational institutions. The Wednesday Program in its entirety certainly could be viewed as a model worth studying and replicating, but the implications for the field of education more likely lay with individual components of the program. In that sense, this study has something to offer just about everyone in education.

Recommendations for Further Research

A long-held belief in education has been that more minutes in class equates to greater learning outcomes. While research has supported this theory, further research is necessary to understand the impact of the quality of minutes on learning outcomes (Lee et al., 2019). Specifically, how reduced stress levels and improved wellbeing impact learning outcomes for students.

While the Wednesday Program succeeded in improving satisfaction for students, further research is needed to understand diminishing returns of such a program. For example, the Wednesday Program utilized a full day on each 5-day school week. It is possible that similar

improvements to student satisfaction could have been achieved with a half-day program or even with the late start alone. It is important for schools to feel confident that the benefits of a structure like the Wednesday Program outweigh the costs of lost class time.

In order to better understand the benefits associated with each component of the Wednesday Program, further research is needed that isolates each component and accounts for confounding variables. For example, this study was conducted during the first academic year following the Covid pandemic in which there were no Covid-related restrictions at The International School, such as mask mandates or social distancing requirements. It would be important for the findings of this study to be replicated during a time of greater consistency and less upheaval. This study utilized multiple components in its theoretical framework, such as student choice during a late-start, advisory, and student-led courses and clubs. The effect size of any one component could be more accurately identified through empirical research on each individual component. Finally, local context likely impacted the outcomes of this study. To increase confidence in the effectiveness of the Wednesday program, it should be replicated in a variety of locations and schools around the world.

This study intentionally focused on student satisfaction. Any program, structure, or change to a school has the potential to impact teachers and other stakeholders. Further research is necessary to understand both the positive and negative impacts of a structure like the Wednesday Program on teachers, parents, and community members. Any deviation to a teacher's workload and job assignment has consequences. It would be important to understand both the positive and negative consequences of something like the Wednesday Program on teachers' wellbeing and satisfaction.

Spaced practice within a particular course or class has been widely researched and shown to improve learning outcomes (Latimier et al., 2021). The Wednesday Program achieved this by dividing the school week into three distinct chunks. One cycle of classes occurred on Monday and Tuesday, followed by the disruption of that cycle on Wednesday. The second cycle of classes followed on Thursday and Friday. This model created a structure, through the class schedule, in which there were at least two days between class sessions for a given class. For example, a student would attend an English class on Monday and would not attend that same class again until Thursday. Further research is necessary to explore the possible impacts of spaced practice through schedule design as opposed to simply spacing practice within a particular course.

The framework for this study focused primarily on systems and structures. Further study into the pedagogical framework of a program like the Wednesday Program would be of great value. The structure of the Wednesday Program was critical to this study but did not speak to *how* learning should occur within the program. It is quite likely that student satisfaction and wellbeing could be further improved by incorporating a well thought out pedagogical framework in a study like this. Additionally, this research focused on overall wellbeing for students and did not drill down to academic excellence and wellbeing. While some of the data speaks to the idea of academic wellbeing, further research is needed to connect academic and overall wellbeing for students.

Finally, the use of improvement science in K-12 education merits further research. The NIC that participated in this study reported that the improvement science process helped to surface and understand broader issues and challenges at the International School that otherwise would have remained hidden. The NIC also noted that their participation in this study equipped

them with an understanding of improvement science that they will be able to apply on an ongoing basis. Continuous improvement is a fundamental goal of educational institutions. This researcher believes that the use of basic improvement science practices in education can help to ensure that change efforts actually produce the improvements they seek.

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Appendices

Appendix A: GFU IRB approval

2213017

Title: Increasing student satisfaction through opportunities outside the classroom: An improvement science dissertation in practice

Principal Researcher(s): Michael Fisher

Date application completed: July 24, 2022

(The researcher needs to complete the information above on this page.)


COMMITTEE FINDING:

☒ (1) The proposed research makes adequate provision for safeguarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

____ (2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the HSRC on a _____ basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

____ (3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

____ (4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved.



Chair or designated member

7/28/22
Date

Appendix B: Interview questions and protocols

Student Interview Protocol

1. Conduct your first interview after September 14th, 2022 (following three instances of the Wednesday Program).
2. The interviews are intended to be semi-structured, meaning we all use a set of guiding questions to frame the interview, but allow the student to take it where they want (as long as it is related to the interview topic). You are free to ask any follow up questions based on the flow of the conversation. Ultimately, we need to be able to gauge whether our change ideas are leading to improvements, so you may want to review those prior to your interview in order to aid in your follow up questions. It is important to remember that the change ideas are intended to cause the primary and secondary drivers to happen (refer to driver diagram). Your follow up questions do not necessarily have to be at the level of specificity of the change ideas as long as you are getting some information related to the primary and secondary drivers.
3. Please document your interview notes digitally and upload them to the “interview notes” folder in our shared drive.
4. Use these guiding questions to frame the interview:
 - a. What do you think/feel about the Volts Wednesday program?
 - b. What do you think is the purpose of the Volts Wednesday program?
 - c. Has the Volts Wednesday program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?
 - d. What about the Volts Wednesday program do you like the most/find the most valuable?
 - e. Are there changes you would make to the program?

- f. Do you see any connections between the Volts Wednesday program and your learning in your MYP/DP classes?
- g. Has the Volts Wednesday program helped you build relationships with teachers or classmates? How so?
- h. Has the Volts Wednesday program had an effect on your life balance or wellness (explain life balance/wellness if needed)?
- i. Do you think Volts Wednesdays have had an impact on our PGIA community (teachers, students)?

Appendix C: Interview Data

First Round Interviews, September 23, 2022

Appendix C: Interview Data

First Round Interviews: September 23rd, 2022

Interviewer	Question	Comment	Code	P or N	Code	P or N
1	a	Choosing classes is helpful and important	CC	P	CH	P
5	a	<i>I'm doing fitness but planning to change to photography club.</i>	CC	P	CH	P
1	a	Morning allows me to come in later	M	P	CH	P
2	a	<i>Can do stuff in the morning like homework.</i>	M	P	CH	P
3	a	nice to have the morning for study hall, and uses it to get work done and not have to take home.	M	P	CH	P
2	a	<i>I play volleyball and it is an easy transition to practice after the assembly and student life blocks.</i>	ST	P	CH	P
5	a	<i>Everyone has time to do their work and everyone has time to pick and choose what they want and learn different trades and skills along the way.</i>	ST	P	CH	P
5	a	<i>I am doing study halls for IAs, EE and extensions...gives a lot of time to prepare myself and stay on track.</i>	ST	P	CH	P
1	a	Flex block is so important - the amount of school spirit it generates - I have not seen that at this school before	F	P	CL	P
2	a	<i>The assemblies are nice, it gathers everyone together to talk about what is happening in the school.</i>	F	P	CL	P
3	a	Assemblies are fun,	F	P	CL	P
1	a	Debate is fun because I love to argue	CC	P	E	P
1	a	Not just the day itself, but midweek something to look forward to	ST	P	E	P
1	a	Different classes and the fact we get to choose them are helpful	CC	P	O	P
1	a	I have debate which is academic then end my day with humane society - service and fun	CC	P	O	P
2	a	<i>There is a wide variety of classes, I would like to take more.</i>	CC	P	O	P
3	a	Likes the student life blocks and explore what I am passionate about.	CC	P	O	P
4	a	"It's[clubs] learning something new...not just class work, learning more life skills, which is really cool."	CC	P	O	P
1	a	I love ending the day with animals	ST	P	O	P
4	a	"I enjoy doing the clubs a lot"	CC	P	S	P
4	a	"Being a part of robotics is really cool, and I love every part of it."	CC	P	S	P
3	a	I think it is really good,	ST	P	S	P
4	a	She reports enjoying the structure of the A,B days because it's easier to remember and keep track of.	ST	P	S	P

Program Component Codes: AD: Advisory, CC: Courses and Clubs, F: Flex Block, M: Morning Time, ST: General Structure of the Program

Perceptions Codes: AU: Autonomy, CH: Choice, CL: Climate, E: Engagement, O: Opportunities, S: Satisfaction, W: Wellbeing

4	a	She notes the novelty aspect as helpful.	ST	P	S	P
5	a	<i>It's a good program.</i>	ST	P	S	P
5	a	Good addition to the school.	ST	P	S	P
1	a	It has increased ss satisfaction	ST	P	S	P
1	a	VW is very well rounded - lots of aspects to increase satisfaction	ST	P	ST	P
		WIN time will be helpful because she has teachers to talk to. Last year, spent 30min-1.5 hours after school everyday to do work, changed this year and she feels more productive and spend her time more efficiently this year. Feels like she has more time to relax.				
3	a	Previously, not much time during the school days or school week to relax.	F	P	W	P
		<i>I think is nice because it gives me time in the morning to get to class. I live far away. Gives me time to get ready, buy a lunch.</i>	M	P	W	P
2	a	Opportunity to get work done midweek and not have to stress	ST	P	W	P
1	a	Everyone gets what they want and need on Wednesday	ST	P	W	P
		Like that on Wednesday cause no school work is due, so can sleep longer on Tuesday evening.	ST	P	W	P
3	a	We look forward to wednesdays	ST	P		
1	a	VW definintey has improved my satisfaction	ST	P		
1	b	Student run projects	CC	P	AU	P
4	b	"I chose my clubs to help me get into colleges."	CC	P	CH	P
2	b	<i>It gives us choice to be a part of something.</i>	ST	P	CH	P
3	b	To give students a break, , and to get work done in other classes.	ST	P	CH	P
4	b	"It's educational but in a different way."	CC	P	CL	P
1	b	To bring positive change to the school	ST	P	CL	P
1	b	Opportunities to work with each other	ST	P	CL	P
		Opportunity for clubs that are across grade levels so you can be with whoever and meet new people	ST	P	CL	P
1	b	Classes that are not part of the curriculum, but are just as important - there are a lot of students who want to learn about that stuff	CC	P	O	P
1	b	It is a nice way to introduce students to more of what life will be like in the future	CC	P	O	P
3	b	and allow them to explore things they are passionate about	CC	P	O	P
		She reports that clubs are really important for the future, because you can put starting a club on college applications.	CC	P	O	P
4	b	She reports it's also important to learn life skills.	CC	P	O	P
1	b	To introduce students to different activities, experiences and opportunities	ST	P	O	P

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2	b	<i>Have a different experience.</i>	ST	P	O	P
3	b	Feels like the whole day is dedicate to students, choices were fewer than this year (referring to previous enrichment), more diversity with activities	ST	P	O	P
2	b	<i>I think it is probably to give students leisure from everyday school life.</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	b	<i>It helps for easing our mind from the academics.</i>	ST	P	W	P
3	b	Thoughts about changed once it started, she thought it would be like enrichment in grade 7, but is a lot different because they still ahd classes the first part of the day/	ST	P	W	P
1	b	It feels like a model to connect us to real life	ST	P		
3	c	likes to mentor during study hall - gives her a sense of helping others.	M	P	AU	P
4	c	She says this is because students are able to add back to the school (fundraising through student cafe, campus improvement club) and the late start.	ST	P	AU	P
3	c	through advisory able to build deeper connections.	AD	P	CL	P
3	c	How has this changed? : we are more collaborative in advisory,	AD	P	CL	P
3	c	I feel like I get into the school spirit at the assembly,	F	P	CL	P
1	c	Its like the same energy you gfet for a Friday, but the middle of the week	ST	P	CL	P
1	c	I actually want 5 day weeks now because I would prefer to have a VW than a day off	ST	P	E	P
3	c	she likes be able to feel like she is really a part of the community and feels more united with classmates, and	ST	P	E	P
3	c	Feels like I have better relationships.	ST	P	E	P
3	c	Feels good to help others like learning how to teach others, and learn more about herself and how she communicates with others, and it is just nice to be able to help.	M	P	O	P
3	c	Previously did not feel like she had those opportunities, other than CAS/SA, that opportunity to help was never there.	ST	P	O	P
2	c	<i>I do like the activities, it makes the day better.</i>	CC	P	S	P
2	c	<i>Not necessarily, i still have the same feeling towards school in general.</i>	ST	N	S	N
2	c	<i>I think school is alright. I would rather be at home.</i>	ST	N	S	N
1	c	Yes - positive	ST	P	S	P
1	c	When we had a monday off and didnt have VW I was disappointed	ST	P	S	P
2	c	<i>It does give me excitement on Wednesdays.</i>	ST	P	S	P
4	c	She reports that it impacted her positively.	ST	P	S	P
4	c	"I enjoy waking up later because I go to bed later and live far away from school."	M	P	W	P
1	c	It is like a reset while learning stuff then I am ready for thursday and friday	ST	P	W	P
1	c	It is really nice to have a break between homework to stay on top of it	ST	P	W	P

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5	c	<i>Wednesdays make my life better in general.</i>	ST	P	W	P
5	c	<i>Now I have time to relax while doing my work.</i>	ST	P	W	P
5	c	<i>Last year, when I went home I had a lot of work to do. Now, I can either take the day easy or focus more on work - lessens stress and it helps others with their stress too.</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	d	<i>I think the most valuable part is the Student Life Blocks. It's classes you want to do and you get to choose. Instead of a class that you didn't choose.</i>	CC	P	CH	P
1	d	The most valuable thing is the school spirit	F	P	CL	P
1	d	When we come together as a school community and support each other - I have never seen it like this at school	F	P	CL	P
1	d	The Volts Points - I thought it might be intense competition, but it really just brings us all together - it is having the intended effect	F	P	CL	P
4	d	"VOLTS points are really cool, it's really positive."	F	P	CL	P
4	d	"I like how everyone is contributing...and seeing how people are doing acts of kindness and other cool things...It impacts me to do more good things. I want to earn VOLTS points."	F	P	CL	P
4	d	"I love how people are creative to do the performances."	F	P	CL	P
2	d	<i>Student life blocks can help you in the future with a career.</i>	CC	P	O	P
1	d	The classes are very valuable	CC	P	S	P
4	d	"I really enjoy assembly, every time I'm looking forward to it."	F	P	S	P
3	d	Late start, because she never has used it, waking up later helps her to feel more refreshed and ready to engage activities.	M	P	W	P
3	d	Friends like the other time to do things like eat breakfast. She plans on using it sometime.	M	P	W	P
4	e	She reports there were too many choices for the clubs.	CC	N	CH	N
4	e	She reports it was hard to choose.	CC	N	CH	N
4	e	She suggests that we communicate which clubs will be meeting at which times to help students make an informed choice.	CC	N	CH	N
4	e	She notes feel sad to miss opportunities to be in other clubs.	CC	N	O	N
1	e	Advisory - I feel it could be shorter almost. If we need help, we would go to a specific teacher, but probably not an advisor. If we need mental support, we would go to Ms. Rowe. Not seeing a big value to it right now.	AD	N		
3	e	Advisory should be longer, we get there and time passes too quickly, 45 minutes minimum.	AD	N		
3	e	Longer times able to be more close to students,	AD	N		
3	e	more time to do fun stuff with advisory group.	AD	N		
2	e	<i>I would change the weeks in which the Volt Wednesday program are canceled. I would move the schedule to an A-B-A-B schedule over the 4 day week.</i>	ST	N		

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4	e	She asks if there is a way to have longer clubs.	ST	N		
4	e	She suggests less time in flex block or only have 2 clubs a day.	ST	N		
4	e	She notes feeling like there is not enough time to complete the robot in robotics club and that the time goes by so fast.	ST	N		
4	e	She suggest that we show the clubs that will be for the coming semester rather than for the whole year.	ST	N		
		<i>The schedules. Some people are still lost (including me). Example - I have Fitness Club but I'm not always sure where it meets or what time it meets, there are still a lot of people running around.</i>	ST	N		
5	e	The rotation for clubs vs extension time every other week for DP kids is still confusing.	ST	N		
3	f	Helps to manage what she has to do, she makes lists in study hall to organize and figure out what to get done.	ST	P	AU	P
1	f	It is more of motivation - it is like a reset - midweek refresher, we are not as tired, anxious - we are in a better place to continue classes and finish the week.	ST	P	W	P
3	f	Feels like she is managing things better, and staying ahead.	ST	P	W	P
2	f	<i>No, not necessarily. It depends on the classes you are taking or who you are talking to.</i>	CC	N		
4	f	She reports that it depends on the clubs, and while some clubs connect but others do not.	CC	N		
3	f	Since she has less homework, she gets more sleep, which helps her to focus in first block classes, but later classes not so much.	ST	P		
5	f	<i>I think everything is connected in that sense. It all goes together as far as students getting to work with teachers - practically the same as doing work for study halls.</i>	ST	P		
3	g	Teachers: advisory teacher yes, likes being with advisory teacher, other teachers not so much because she does not see them.	AD	P	CL	P
3	g	Student: less people in advisory, gets to know them more.	AD	P	CL	P
4	g	She reports that it has "definitely helped", and that she got to know a peer better through similar interests in robotics.	CC	P	CL	P
4	g	"I'm building more of a relationship with the teacher who is leading the club."	CC	P	CL	P
3	g	Assemblies, because they are fun and interactive, and Volts points .	F	P	CL	P
3	g	She likes nominating because she likes seeing people happy.	F	P	CL	P
3	g	She likes getting to know the character of others she does not know through volts points, and	F	P	CL	P
3	g	likes the competition for volts points,	F	P	CL	P
3	g	she likes competitions, feels like she is not favorite class, but gaining lots of points so nice to not feel like they are in last place as a class.	F	P	CL	P

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1	g	I am with 12th grades, 10th graders, 7th graders - I am with everyone. I feel like VW could make students, especially younger students, feel more comfortable. When I was in 7th grade I was scared of the older kids, but VW makes you realize they are just nice students and makes you feel more comfortable.	ST	P	CL	P
2	g	<i>It has, i have more interactions with people i usually wouldn't.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
2	g	<i>Volts wednesday allows you to interact with students in different grades and helps build relationships across the school.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
2	g	<i>You get to see teachers in different views.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
2	g	<i>You get to see another side of the teachers and interact with them more.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
5	g	<i>I guess it is helpful for us getting to know the new teachers.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
2	g	<i>You find out their interests and that helps connect us in class.</i>	ST	P	E	P
1	g	Yes, definitely - I am placed with new people.	ST	P	S	P
1	g	Teachers I do not have for other classes	ST	P	S	P
5	g	<i>Not really any change, same as before since I've known my classmates the whole time.</i>	ST	N		
1	h	Yes - mostly stress. Last year I was very frustrated with teachers who would preach life balance, but then not give us a chance to have balance. I did not get a lot of sleep because I spent so much time on work.	ST	P	W	P
1	h	Having a study hall on Wednesday mornings allows me to stay caught up . I am way more balanced. I have less stress and am getting more sleep.	ST	P	W	P
2	h	<i>It has impacted me alittle bit, i get to play more sports than i usually would.</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	h	<i>I have the time to do my work.</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	h	<i>Each class meets twice a week and it is pretty helpful to have that day "off" to complete academic work. (This is a reason I would like to change the AB schedule during 4 day weeks.)</i>	ST	P	W	P
3	h	Yes, makes me feel like I am balancing school work and passions.	ST	P	W	P
3	h	Feel like I am more productive because there is a mix of opportunity.	ST	P	W	P
3	h	Likes being able to go to study hall, get stuff done and then jump off into the fun activities for the day.	ST	P	W	P
3	h	Study halls prepare her well for the rest of the week.	ST	P	W	P
3	h	She can get stuff done already assigned, offers more time to complete assignments assigned later in the week.	ST	P	W	P
3	h	Feels prepared for end of week.	ST	P	W	P
3	h	Impacts her weekends because she gets all of her work done on Wed. and during the week.	ST	P	W	P
4	h	"The gap on Wednesday helps me a lot so that I can do all of my homework."	ST	P	W	P

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4	h	"My mindset is more relieved."	ST	P	W	P
4	h	"I was really stressed last year."	ST	P	W	P
4	h	"It has kind of impacted my life wellness"	ST	P	W	P
4	i	"I think it's impacting the community positively because more people can talk about subjects that they want."	CC	P	CH	P
2	i	<i>some students don't like their student life blocks because they were forced to take some student life blocks.</i>	ST	N	CH	N
2	i	<i>Yes, i think it does. Students are able to make their own choices,</i>	ST	P	CH	P
1	i	The community is not divided by grade levels now - flex block especially has brought us together and grade level divisions are almost disappearing. We are meshing. Everyone is spreading happiness.	F	P	CL	P
1	i	It is not just less stress. I cannot emphasize enough the flex block and how much sprit and excitement that creates. Everyone cheers, everyone claps - it makes everyone so happy.	F	P	CL	P
4	i	"The assemblies are more interactive and it's more enjoyable."	F	P	CL	P
1	i	I believe so - when I have talked to my sister, her friends, my friends - school is more exciting.	ST	P	CL	P
3	i	Seems like everyone is happier.	ST	P	CL	P
4	i	She states there are more opportunities for students to be part of clubs because after school clubs are difficult because of sports (sailing, etc.).	ST	P	O	P
3	i	Yes, everyone seems happier because they have a break during the middle of the week...	ST	P	W	P
3	i	lots of peers say they look forward to it because they need the break in the middle of the week.	ST	P	W	P
3	i	She feels better because she needs the break too.	ST	P	W	P
3	i	Many students seem to be getting stuff done during study halls.	ST	P	W	P
2	i	<i>I know a lot of people like Volts Wed and the point system. I want to see what happens with the points at the end of the year.</i>	F	P		
4	i	"Oh, definitely."	ST	P		

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Second Round Interviews, October 27, 2022

Appendix C: Interview Data

Second Round Interviews: October 27, 2022

Interviewer	Question	Comment	Code	P or N	Code	P or N
1	a	SH time is very useful still	CC	P	CH	P
4	a	She reports that advisory needs more one-on-one time. "Most of the time we're just talking about service to others." She notes it's been focused on service hours. She reports that other advisors have activities that are more personal and give snacks/cupcakes. She notes her advisory is combined with another one.	AD	N	CL	N
4	a	She reports she would like more get-to-know-you activities.	AD	N	CL	N
2	a	<i>Include younger kids.</i>	ST	N	CL	N
1	a	Other classes remain fun outlets and cool simulation of the real world	CC	P	E	P
5	a	<i>DP extension rotation feel better.</i>	CC	P	S	P
1	a	Opinion has stayed the same (positive)	ST	P	S	P
2	a	<i>Still like the program and it should move forward the next few year.</i>	ST	P	S	P
2	a	<i>It's a bummer that we won't have Volts wed these next two weeks.</i>	ST	P	S	P
5	a	<i>Feel similar but it's gotten better because everyone knows where they belong now.</i>	ST	P	S	P
2	a	<i>It allows me to relax a bit more in my schedule</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	b	<i>Completely different from my other schedule.</i>	ST	P	S	P
2	b	<i>No big projects, tests, hanging over me.</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	b	<i>I can relax</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	c	<i>Get to interact with other students and parts of the school.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
4	c	Student cafe had drama but it seems more resolved now. Some of the students wanted others to work over break which caused drama. The concession stand is disgusting. Student cafe feels like they're cleaning up after someone else's mess. "I feel not quite disappointed but it hasn't met my expectations" There has been too much drama and chaos around it. Everyone should be equal and be able to add their own ideas.	M	N	E	N
1	c	Getting deeper into content in courses and clubs	CC	P	E	P
1	c	More opportunities at humane society as I have volunteered more	CC	P	O	P
1	c	Meeting more people from the community and gaining new experiences	CC	P	O	P
1	c	Even more positive now.	ST	P	S	P
2	c	<i>Made me view improve.</i>	ST	P	S	P

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2	c	<i>Overall I have a better view of the school.</i>	ST	P	S	P
4	c	It still impacts me positively.	ST	P	S	P
5	d	<i>The clubs and activities are good and everyone gets a choice,</i>	CC	P	CH	P
1	d	Same - school spirit and community	F	P	CL	P
4	d	"I like the clubs a lot too."	CC	P	S	P
2	d	<i>Best thing now is the 1.5 hours in the beginning of the day.</i>	M	P	S	P
5	d	<i>concept is good in general.</i>	ST	P	S	P
2	d	<i>I can take my time in the morning especially as it gets later into the school year.</i>	M	P	W	P
2	e	<i>For the flex block we could do more stuff just for ourselves. Have time to work on anything you want to.</i>	F	N	CH	N
5	e	<i>Some people have a problem with the assembly. Why is there one every Wednesday?</i>	F	N	CH	N
5	e	<i>Consider an extra study hall for everyone.</i>	F	N	CH	N
5	e	<i>Concept of volts points is fun but G12 doesn't think so because we are losing. Also some students are just pumping each other up for prizes but maybe not for totally genuine real things since it's just about getting a prize.</i>	F	N	CL	N
1	e	Lengthen the time in the courses/clubs	CC	N	S	N
4	f	No because the clubs she's in don't match her classes.	CC	N	E	N
1	f	Debate - I am forming better arguments quicker in my regular classes	CC	P	E	P
1	f	I am using more logic	CC	P	E	P
2	f	<i>I see connections because i chose classes that relate to my studies- music and getting in shape.</i>	CC	P	E	P
2	f	<i>It does correlate with my classes.</i>	CC	P	E	P
4	g	"I'm getting to know 6th/7th grade students better through the campus improvement club." She notes she wouldn't have gotten to know them otherwise.	CC	P	CL	P
1	g	Because of the diverse (non-grade specific) structure, I am spending more time with younger students - it has been nice.	ST	P	CL	P
2	g	<i>I get to talk and interact with more students and teachers that I don't usually get to interact with.</i>	ST	P	CL	P
2	h	<i>It has improved it.</i>	ST	P	S	P
1	h	The study hall is so helpful	CC	P	W	P
2	h	<i>I don't have anything assigned on Wednesdays it gives me balance in my life.</i>	ST	P	W	P
2	i	<i>Yes, a lot of students come early and meet up and do things they usually wouldn't do. People appreciate that.</i>	M	P	CL	P
1	i	Increases positive energy and collaboration	ST	P	CL	P
4	i	"I've seen a lot of people who enjoy doing their clubs."	CC	P	S	P
4	i	"It's new for everyone, and I think it's different from what other schools are doing"	ST	P	S	P
1	i	People would rather have a VW than a day off	ST	P	S	P
2	i	<i>It's a fine program. Just the minor things i mentioned I would like to change but overall it is a great program.</i>	ST	P	S	P
5	i	<i>Overall, volts Wednesday is still a good decision. It provides a break from the week.</i>	ST	P	W	P

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Appendix D: Qualitative Survey Data from November 1, 2022 Student Surveys

Appendix D

Qualitative Survey Data from November 1, 2022 Student Surveys

Question	Response	Component	P/N	Perception	P/N
1	I like the idea of Volts Wednesday because it gives some time outside of class to be able to have more self independence and join in on groups that interest you.	ST	P	AU	P
1	both positively and negatively. i like getting a day where i have a study hall, and the choice of what to do, i enjoy getting the choices that come with volts wednesday. but i think that in some cases, this does not really apply to me as of right now but, last year the curriculum was not completed by some teachers so students had to learn it on their own and volts wednesdays might make that even more prominent.	ST	P	CH	P
1	It has made me realize how much people help out around the school.	ST	P	CL	P
1	It's been entertaining, better than having regular class schedule. I do think it does help bring students together.	ST	P	CL	P
1	both positively and negatively. i like getting a day where i have a study hall, and the choice of what to do, i enjoy getting the choices that come with volts wednesday. but i think that in some cases, this does not really apply to me as of right now but, last year the curriculum was not completed by some teachers so students had to learn it on their own and volts wednesdays might make that even more prominent.	ST	N	O	N
1	it has both negatives and positives. There are definitely a lot of improvements that need to be made but its not too bad	ST	N	S	N
1	no	ST	N	S	N
1	It has had a both positive and negative impact because of the increased work load because of a lack of classes as well as allowed me to relax more.	ST	N	S	N
1	It makes me not want to come to school on Wednesdays, it is not worth the entire day, there is not enough value in it, if I am going to go to school it should at least be worth it, no point if we are just going to sit in study hall, we can do that at home, we come to school to learn.	ST	N	S	N
1	It has been pretty positive I'd say. Although I only look forward to one club, Business and Economics is pretty boring.	ST	P	S	N
1	It's nice to have another study hall.	CC	P	S	P
1	Yes, I like how I can sleep in. It's like a mini weekend. I enjoy the break from regular academics	ST	P	S	P
1	The Volts Wednesday program had a positive impact on how I feel about school.	ST	P	S	P
1	positive	ST	P	S	P
1	Its definitely caused a positive effect on my view of the school.	ST	P	S	P

Question 1: Has the Wednesday program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?

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1	Yes Volts Wednesday has made me enjoy school more.	ST	P	S	P
1	Positive	ST	P	S	P
1	Yes it has gave me a more positive impact towards school in general.	ST	P	S	P
1	yes, positive impact	ST	P	S	P
1	It has positively affected my school, but we haven't had that many volts wednesdays so it hasn't changed much for me. But when we do have volts wednesdays I think its very helpful to have a study hall and they also add some fun to school.	ST	P	S	P
1	it has a positive impact on how I feel about school.	ST	P	S	P
1	I think that it's been really good for my mental health and definitely made me more excited about coming to school.	ST	P	S	P
1	The Volts Wednesday program has had a positive impact on how I feel about coming to school as I am more excited to get through the week especially since we have a break now.	ST	P	S	P
1	Yes positive, I enjoy school more.	ST	P	S	P
1	it has both negatives and positives. There are definitely a lot of improvements that need to be made but its not too bad	ST	P	S	P
1	I think that it's been really good for my mental health and definitely made me more excited about coming to school.	ST	P	W	P
1	A little. They are a nice break in the middle of the week and a good day to get work done.	ST	P	W	P
1	It has had a both positive and negative impact because of the increased work load because of a lack of classes as well as allowed me to relax more.	ST	P	W	P
1	It has had a positive impact wakeing up t 8:45 has given me lots of sleep and I come to school more awake and ready.	ST	P	W	P
1	Yes because the late start allows me to get some of my homework done and better prepare for the rest of the week	ST	P	W	P
1	Volts Wednesday has been positive for me because I now have a day where I can study for my classes and do extracurricular activities.	ST	P	W	P
1	I like the volts wednesdays because it gives us a chance to focus on extracurriculars. It's nice to have that break from school work.	ST	P	W	P
1	I really appreciate the Wednesdays because it feels like a break from the stressful week, especially because we can sleep in	ST	P	W	P
1	it is relaxing	ST	P	W	P
1	Very positive! I love them, its a great break and makes me feel better about the week instead of me at the end being burnt out	ST	P	W	P
1	yea i like volts wednesday because is usually helps me relax or lets me finish y homework.	ST	P	W	P
1	It has been able to give me a break from the constant stress that this curriculum can cause.	ST	P	W	P

Question 1: Has the Wednesday program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?

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1 I greatly enjoy the new volts wednesday program that we introduced it helps me destress a lot. With the later starts it means that I can focus better throughout the day.	ST	p	W	P
2 I enjoy that we are able to chose our classes	CC	P	CH	P
i like the option in the morning to do what you want: studyhall, socccer or fitness. i like that i got to choose my my classes.	CC	P	CH	P
I like that we get to choose our own classes allowing me to actually be interested in the topic that we are talking about and not be bored the entire class.	CC	P	CH	P
2 Having the option to come in later, at 9:30	M	P	CH	P
i like the option in the morning to do what you want: studyhall, socccer or fitness. i like that i got to choose my my classes.	M	P	CH	P
2 free time and study halls	ST	P	CH	P
2 The choice	ST	P	CH	P
The extra sleep, the school spirit that comes from the assemblies, and the mixing of grades in some of the clubs	CC	P	CL	P
2 I enjoy the assemblies mainly because we can reflect and focus on core values and morals.	F	P	CL	P
The extra sleep, the school spirit that comes from the assemblies, and the mixing of grades in some of the clubs	F	P	CL	P
I like that I get to do things other than my regular classes and I think that it brings the school community together just a little bit more	ST	P	CL	P
2 The real life experience we are gaining while having fun and helping our community.	CC	P	O	P
2 advisory and study hall	AD	P	S	P
2 DnD	CC	P	S	P
2 the classes	CC	P	S	P
The first block where we can go to study hall or play sports. I think it's really fun and helpful when I have a lot of work. I am also having fun in all the "classes" I chose like fitness.	CC	P	S	P
I like the different blocks because I'm enjoying learning all the new things. It's really nice to have a day that's focused on things outside school subjects. I'm loving exploring all of these new topics and am super excited for next semester when we switch our blocks.	CC	P	S	P
2 The HL extension blocks.	CC	P	S	P
2 the assembly	F	P	S	P
2 The 1:30 time we get before the day starts	M	P	S	P
The first block where we can go to study hall or play sports. I think it's really fun and helpful when I have a lot of work. I am also having fun in all the "classes" I chose like fitness.	M	P	S	P
2 all of it	ST	P	S	P
2 The study hall	ST	P	S	P

Question 1: Has the Wednesday program had an impact on how you feel about school (either positive or negative)?

Question 2: What about the Wednesday program do you like the most/find the most valuable?

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2 The fact that we are still in school but get to do fun things such as the different clubs.I also like the study hall as it lets you have some needed time to do work.	ST	P	S	P
2 Getting a break from our other classes	ST	P	S	P
2 It allows me to have a break.	ST	P	S	P
2 advisory and study hall	ST	P	S	P
2 Study Hall	ST	P	S	P
2 Being able to arrive later in the morning and not having to have another A day.	ST	P	S	P
2 getting to learn more life skills and getting to know more people that we usually wouldn't talk to.	ST	P	S	P
2 It has positives and negatives. I like the idea of having extra time for our HL's and also coming to school late.	ST	P	S	P
2 I find the coming to school at 9:30 the most valuable it gives students more time to sleep and wake up for the school day.	M	P	W	P
2 My favourite thing about volts Wednesday is getting to school at 9:30 because that helps me sleep more in the morning and recover from homework the night before.	M	P	W	P
2 The extra sleep, the school spirit that comes from the assemblies, and the mixing of grades in some of the clubs	M	P	W	P
2 I think the break from super strenuous academics and the extra time to do work helps the most.	ST	P	W	P
2 I find the most valuable that there is a mid way break in all of our hard learning and test taking	ST	P	W	P
2 It's a fun and welcome respite from classes and school in general.	ST	P	W	P
2 The fact that we are still in school but get to do fun things such as the different clubs.I also like the study hall as it lets you have some needed time to do work.	ST	P	W	P
2 The time to decompress and get rid of the regular school schedule.	ST	P	W	P
2 I am not sure yet				
3 The ability to switch between programs	CC	N	CH	N
3 I would like to be able to change one of my clubs when I want to, not wait for the whole semester.	CC	N	CH	N
3 I think there should be more flexibility towards the courses you take so you have different variety	CC	N	CH	N
3 I feel that the Flex block on Volts Wednesdays is not currently being used in a productive way. I wish that it was a time for students to choose what they want to do instead of sitting in an assembly for an hour. We could provide different areas for students to go, but the assemblies are just like sitting in a class for an hour. Maybe it could be a homeroom time with the whole class or a study hall period. I just feel that we can use that time more effectively.	F	N	CH	N
3 An assembly every time isn't necessary, a study hall for the upperclassman could be useful during that period.	F	N	CH	N
3 I would like to go back to my first block fitness but I'm not sure if I am forced to be in study hall	CC	P	CH	N

Question 2: What about the Wednesday program do you like the most/find the most valuable?

Question 3: Are there changes you would make to the Volts Wednesday program? If so what?

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I would like to make the big meetings that are in the middle of the day in the science pod instead of outside so i don't sweat as much and so i can have a experience. i would also like to switch my team sports to study hall so i can get more work for classes done.	CC	P	CH	N
You should rotate the advisory groups and who they are with because I feel like I never really do anything in advisory and it kind of feels like a waste of time that I could be using to do something productive like homework or classwork.	AD	N	O	N
I think that we should do more fun activities during flex block instead of just a regular assembly. We could have grade relay races or other fun races or obstacle courses.	F	N	O	N
I have two changes that I'd make to the Volts Wednesday program: I think that it would be more enjoyable if we were able to switch our blocks every quarter (when we get progress reports) rather than every semester. This is so that we can explore even more topics and learn even more. The second change is less drastic. I think that the flex block should not be a assembly everytime. I like the assemblies, however, it is extremely hot that time of day, and I'd like it more if we had it in the science pod (I know space is limited) or if we only had an assembly once a month and the three other Wednesday's we split up into our grades and did some form of community building activity.	ST	N	O	N
3 More advisory time	AD	N	S	N
3 make the assemblies shorter or non existent	F	N	S	N
3 Shorter assembly	F	N	S	N
3 Have the assembly at a different time of day or location because of the heat	F	N	S	N
I would like to make the big meetings that are in the middle of the day in the science pod instead of outside so i don't sweat as much and so i can have a experience. i would also like to switch my team sports to study hall so i can get more work for classes done.	F	N	S	N
I have two changes that I'd make to the Volts Wednesday program: I think that it would be more enjoyable if we were able to switch our blocks every quarter (when we get progress reports) rather than every semester. This is so that we can explore even more topics and learn even more. The second change is less drastic. I think that the flex block should not be a assembly everytime. I like the assemblies, however, it is extremely hot that time of day, and I'd like it more if we had it in the science pod (I know space is limited) or if we only had an assembly once a month and the three other Wednesday's we split up into our grades and did some form of community building activity.	F	N	S	N
3 I would get rid of the assemblys.	F	N	S	N
3 not having the schedule changing for HL extensions	ST	N	S	N
3 More time in the clubs cause 1 hour is very little.	ST	N	S	N
I do feel if we are not going to spend the whole day on school things like a normal A or B day we shouldn't even come to school. For me having study hall and surfing, I feel I could get so much more work done at home if I didn't go to school in the first place.	ST	N	S	N
im not sure, there is not that much i can think of, maybe it could happen every other week, this would just allow for a little more class time.	ST	P	S	N
3 no	ST	P	S	P
3 Not really	ST	P	S	P
3 No changes	ST	P	S	P
3 no	ST	P	S	P
3 No there is no changes i would make to the program.	ST	P	S	P
3 no	ST	P	S	P
3 I like how the day is organized. I wouldn't change anything.	ST	P	S	P
3 not really	ST	P	S	P
3 Nope!	ST	P	S	P
3 nothing	ST	P	S	P
3 well i wish it was everyday but that's not how that works	ST	P	S	P
3 no I love it	ST	P	S	P
3 I wouldn't make any changes	ST	P	S	P
3 nothing.	ST	P	S	P
3 Not really!	ST	P	S	P

Question 3: Are there changes you would make to the Volts Wednesday program? If so what?

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