

CARING ENVIRONMENTS FOR URBAN  
EDUCATION: A PLACE CALLED HOME

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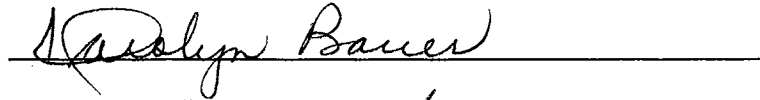
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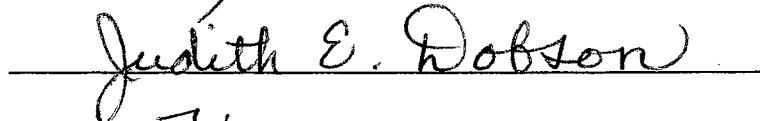
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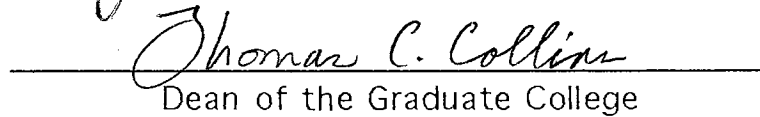
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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Few would argue that our urban areas and the institutions in them are in a state of "crisis" (Noddings, 1991, p. 166). Hospitals are inundated with the effects of poverty. Social service agencies are taxed beyond their resources. Police and penal institutions are overwhelmed with escalating violence. Urban schools and the educators in them are caught up in this web of social upheaval. Urban parents of school age children look out of the mecca of hopelessness and demand opportunities for their children and their education. They call for quality educational opportunities, for educators who communicate a sense of hope and responsibility amidst this "prevailing crisis" (van Manen, 1991, p. 123).

Former President Bush suggested school choice as a viable alternative to traditional school assignments. However, implementation has been a difficult task because of the manner in which most school districts are operated and financially structured across the United States. A sign post of the popularity of "choice" is reflected in the Gallop Poll. Over the last twenty years their figures show that a dramatic change in parental views regarding the school choice issue. In 1978 only 12% of the parents were in favor



of school choice. However in 1987, 71% of the parents polled expressed a desire to select their child's school (Elam,1990).

Many urban school districts have addressed the needs and desires of parents to select their child's school through in-district transfer policies. Parents make application or formal requests for their child's school assignment to be moved to another site in the district. Traditionally these transfers are granted based upon documented needs, such as: baby sitting, proximity to parents work, attendance of special programs, administrative or teacher disputes, etc. The granting of transfers is usually based upon the needs of the receiving school, such as: class size, behavioral issues, program availability, or parental commitment to support the educational mission of that site. Upon acceptance, the school district moves the allocated funds for that student to the transfer school. This process has become standard policy in most urban and suburban school districts.

These school districts have given little thought to the basic issue. Why are parents demanding the right to select their child's school? Proponents believe that parents are searching for a sense of "safety, support, stability and direction" in their schools and from their teachers (van Manen, 1991, p. 55) Van Manen proposes that "goodschools share certain features with the family, such as a

certain intimacy and security." He proposes that "students learn best, [when they] are willing to extend and risk themselves in an educational environment that is experienced as safe and secure" (van Manen, 1991, p. 58). Therefore there exists a need for educators and parents to share "a dialogue of possibility" for the sake of the children in today's urban schools (Giroux, 1992, p. 14). Van Manen, too, speaks of this need saying,

"The modern child is born into a world that can be experienced, within limits, as a life of possibilities - - though the possibilities are certainly not the same for all. Yet even children who are raised in situations affected by poverty, youth unemployment, alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, violence, crime, and other dangers of modern living nevertheless may be able to experience a certain openness of choice and possibility of life" (van Manen, 1991, p. 3)

### Background

Jonathan Kozol describes some urban schools as "extraordinarily unhappy places", reminding him of "garrisons" or "outposts" in a foreign land. He views them as "bleak", hopeless places, where "steel grates" cover the windows and "guards patrol the halls" (1991, p. 5). If this is an accurate representation of some urban schools, then there is little wonder that parents are demanding a voice in how schools operate and what they represent

to their children.

Unfortunately, some urban parents believe that schools and the teachers in them "don't care" (Comer, 1988, p. 35). In a number of articles, (Lewis, 1992, Gardner, 1992, Pigford, 1993, Oliver, 1990, Toch et al. 1993, Comer 1988) education observers have posited the belief that educators have become voiceless, powerless, and disconnected from their theoretical beliefs in the midst of this urban crisis. Rather than trusting their own knowledge and expertise, today's educators and in some cases curriculum theorists, have bowed to the weight of big business, state legislation, and popular perspectives (Brown, 1991, Reynolds, 1993, Macdonald, 1988, Theyer-Bacon, 1993, Driscoll, 1994). Reynolds summarizes this focus saying, "Our entire economic and educational system is based on profit, efficiency and control rather than terms of human justice and compassion" (1993, p. 2). A variety of other authors and theorists (Dobson & Dobson, 1993, Oliver, 1990, Sawada & Caley, 1985, Spring 1991) share these beliefs. Dobson and Dobson point out that our educational system has been shaped around the constructs of Newtonian science. They suggest that,

“a shift from a rational world view grounded in Newtonian mechanics to a nonrational world view would allow curriculum theorists to see schooling as an evolutionary, relational, networking, unfolding, dynamic unity as opposed to a state-oriented or fixed entity”

(1993, p. 11).

Newtonian science has guided our concepts about educational practice. Students have become products to mold or fine tune. These concepts can be attributed not only to Newtonian science, but also to turn of the century theorists such as Bobbitt (1918), Charters (1935), and Tyler (1949). David Brown, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education at Southwestern Missouri State University, expanded on this premise saying,

"Newtonian science does not offer answers or solutions to the complex social and cultural challenges faced by our youth today and in the future... educationally, we must approach the new circumstances of today and tomorrow with a new attitude, paying attention to the individual human needs of children instead of just the need to see that they perform on grade level" ( Brown, 1991).

The signposts for this misbegotten path have been before society for quite some time. Literacy rates, teen pregnancy, teen suicide, and school dropout rates have steadily increased while schools were purportedly made more efficient. Ray McDermott, Professor of Education at Stanford University, may have summarized it best saying,

"....kids in every culture on record learn what has to be learned and do what has to be done to live in their culture. How then could we have so many of our young unable or unwilling to do school, unless we are in fact, in ways unknown to our hard working parents and teachers,

organizing school as a place in which it makes sense to resist, a place from which it makes sense to drop out" (1993, AERA, p. 2)?

The outcry for school choice may well be a loving parent's attempt to express his or her frustration with the manner in which urban schools are organized. Gallop Polls over the last two decades seem to support this supposition. Twenty years ago only 38% of the parents polled by Gallop were in favor of school choice. Today that figure has nearly doubled, with 65% favoring the right to select the school their child will attend. The real issue, however, remains unasked and unanswered. Why do parents wish to select their child's school site? As a society and as educators, we must begin to listen to the concerns of parents. Without their voices we will only treat the symptoms and not the disease which is plaguing our urban schools.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the fundamental relationship which exists between schools and families, parents and teachers, educators and children. Nel Noddings believes that schools should be "more like families" (1991, p. 169). This relationship is also supported by Max van Manen when he speaks of the educators

responsibility in assuming the "in loco parentis" role in a child's life (1991, p. 21). According to van Manen and the actions of parents in our urban schools, this responsibility is not met with the attention it deserves.

Children come into this world as "curious, inquisitive, enterprising, cooperative, communicative and compassionate human beings" (Shor, 1987). However, based upon the experiences children encounter in schooling, their demeanor and receptiveness to education may dramatically change (Adan, 1991, Kozol, 1975, 1990, van Manen, 1992). According to Reynolds, our schools and the curriculums that educators support and teach, transform children into "sullen, alienated, rebellious, and withdrawn" [individuals] (Reynolds, 1993).

This study will attempt to uncover the meaning behind the school transfer issue. It will delve into the reasons that so many parents feel compelled to have a voice in the school site and the teachers who will educate their children.

The study will record the schooling experiences of parents who have chosen to select their child's school site. The research will relate parental experiences at schools in which their children have been previously assigned, in contrast to the schools of their choice. In addition, the study will explore the development of the

issues related to parental experiences, perceptions, and beliefs about urban schooling. Existing literature on educational pedagogy and praxis will be explored to determine their relationship to the themes uncovered in the parent interviews.

This study will also relate the schooling experiences and themes to urban educators. This research is intended to provide educators with information which may help them to compassionately communicate with parents and students. Van Manen summarizes this need saying,

"In everyday life parents look for certain qualities in the teachers of their children.... parents sense that a positive affective relationship may benefit the child's school experience and the child's success in school. Parents' particular expectations are usually more concretely tied to the daily experiences their children have in schools and classrooms. Often expectations become more clear when things have gone wrong at school, when the child has been let down, hurt, neglected, misunderstood, misjudged, or mistreated" (van Manen, 1991, p. 8).

### Study Rationale

The stories parents tell about their children's schooling experiences have the capacity to dynamically change our concepts of education and curriculum. Teachers tell children to "Stop, look and listen" before they cross the street but, overlook that same common

sense approach to their own praxis. Van Manen relates the importance of perspective to educators saying:

"An underlying metaphor for teaching suggests that, in order to come to school and learn new things, students need to cross barriers (for example, a street) to get over to the teacher's side (the school). But a teacher who is closed to the child's experience may not be aware that the student is still trying to understand things "from the other side of the street." Many teachers simply expect the students to come over to where the teacher stands.... However, students may have difficulties, lack interest, or simply not know how to cross over to the teacher's side. The teacher seems to have a certain view, passion, conception of the subject matter, and seems to expect that the student has the same experience of the subject as the teacher does. But what the teacher forgets is that learning is always an individual affair. A tactful educator realizes that it is not the child but the teacher who has to cross the street in order to go to the child's side" (van Manen,1991, p. 155).

The exploration of the perceived interactions or relationships between teachers and students, as well as parents and children may be referred to as "pedagogy". This is a thoughtfulness of intent which continually considers what is "good" and "not good for children" (van Manen, 1991, p. 16). Parents may be intuitively more attuned to these emotions because their intents are not legislated or governed by curriculum standards.

Therefore, teachers may be able to rely upon these parental perceptions to guide pedagogy and classroom praxis. This dialogue



should be open and ongoing between the school and the home, as well as between student and teacher.

"True dialogue is open; that is, conclusions are not held to be absolute by any party at the outset. The search for enlightenment, responsible choice, perspective, or means to solve a problem is mutual and marked by appropriate signs of reciprocity...." (Noddings,1991, p. 7).

Educators must begin to center their praxis around the individual child's and family's needs, emotions, and experiences. Schools must understand how their role impacts the child, the family, and society. Henry Giroux believes that educational pedagogy "must be linked not just to learning in the schools but extended to shaping public life and social relationships" (Giroux,1992, p. 21). Therefore, reshaping pedagogy to include the family and the community may reconnect learning to the child's knowledge of society. These implications are far-reaching for the reconceptualization of urban education.

### Study Assumptions

1) The pedagogical foundation for a home/school relationship is centered in law, charging teachers to take responsibility as in, "in loco parentis" (van Manen, 1991, p. 21). This charge vests teachers with the rights, responsibilities, and concerns of a parent. It is

therefore the duty of the teacher to see education/learning as a part of the child's lived experience. Certainly this must encompass a relationship with the significant others in that child's life in order to understand their "being-in-the-world" (Reynolds, 1993, p. 5).

2) Reflective educational praxis is fundamental to a compassionate pedagogy. Educators must envision what the child sees, listen to what they say, and teach based upon those insights. Parents are a vital part of this symphony of voices. Nel Noddings describes educational praxis as:

"Striving always to see the learning event from the standpoint of the student, the teacher teaches by actively pursuing the student's objective, an objective that teacher and student have together constructed" (Noddings, 1991, p. 7).

3) Assuming that many urban schools are in a state of "crisis" (Noddings, 1991, p. 166) and "are falling apart all over the country" (Giroux, 1992, p. 22), then the school choice issue has important relevance to today's educators. Who better to query this information from, than the parents who are demanding the choice and initiating transfers from specific urban sites? Parental stories and experiences may begin to assist educators in visualizing the problems and addressing their concerns. This dialogue may then form the basis for educational transformation in our urban schools.

"Real dialogue allows for the uniqueness of the other to be brought forth. Such openness to differences is an essential component of caring relationships like that of teacher and student or counselor and client" (Shabatay, Virginia, 1991, p. 136).

### Study Questions

- 1) How do common themes found in the research study impact today's schools and the educators in them?
- 2) How does a caring pedagogy impact urban classrooms and schools?
- 3) What are the implications of a compassionate curriculum to urban public schools?
- 4) What is the impact of a caring environment established between urban students and teachers/schools and homes?

### Organization of Study

This study will consist of 5 chapters. Chapter 1 will include a general introduction to the study, its aims and purposes. In chapter 2 the relevant literature, studies, and texts related to caring environments among urban schools, parents, and educators will be reviewed. Chapter 3 will discuss, define, and report the methodology. Chapter 4 will give voice to common themes and study

findings revealed in the lived experiences of urban school parents who have transferred their students to non-assigned schools. The summary of the findings as they relate to urban schools and educators, as well as, ideas for future study will be found in Chapter 5.

Urban schools were once the hope for the cities masses. They were the hub of community activity and family life. Today's urban schools are very different places. Many of these sites are dilapidated structures which are over 100 years old. Are public perceptions that urban schools are understaffed, over-extended, unsafe, and uncaring places for young minds and bodies impacting the school choice issue? Are these perceptions regarding urban schools spawning another urban flight? Is this flight now occurring across all racial lines with parents attempting to remove their children from specific urban schools via in-district transfer policies?

Could the standardized implementation of transfer policies fail to address basic ethical issues, such as: Why do parents want to leave their assigned urban school? How are these schools losing the trust and confidence of those they were established to serve?

This study will delve into these issues in an attempt to understand the parental needs and desires for urban students.

It will tell their stories just as they relate them, giving voice to their concerns, and attempting to uncover the meaning for urban education. This study will attempt to open a "dialogue of possibility" in urban schools and among urban educators (Giroux, 1992, p. 15).

## Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions should prove useful in developing a common understanding of the ideas discussed. These notions are defined as follows:

**Assigned School** - A designated residential or magnet school which a local school district assigns student attendance based upon a specified criteria. Each state designates funds for each child and apportions it to the designated site.

**Caring** - Webster's (1983) defines caring saying "to give close, serious attention, to protect, watch over, supervise. It continues describing the act of care as, "to look out for, be concerned about; to have a fondness, liking and affection for those in ones charge".

**Education** - Webster's (1983) describes this as "the art of teaching".

**In Loco Parentis** - Valente (1980) translates the phrases meaning as, "In place of parent."

**Nurturance** - Webster's (1983) says that this word means "to educate or to bring up with care.

**Pedagogy** - Van Manen (1991) defines pedagogy as "the excellence of teaching or parenting".

**Praxis** - Van Manen (1991) describes this word describing it as the convergence of educational theory and practice.

Secure - Van Manen (1991) defines “secura”, the Latin root of this word as meaning “free from care, free from worry”.

Teach - Webster’s (1983) defines the word teach as “to help to learn, as by example”.

Transfer School Parent - Jason, et al. (1992) describe parents who have made application to leave their resident school district, for a “transfer” to a school other than their assigned public school. Financial support for their child is formally “transferred” to the designated school site.

School - Webster’s (1983) defines school as a place or institution for teaching and learning.

Schoolhouse - Webster’s (1983) defines this as “a building in which school is conducted”.

School Choice - Former President Bush (1987) proposed this option for students to attend schools of their choosing. This selection may be made outside or across district boundaries and among private or public institutions. Financial support normally allotted to the student is transferred to the receiving school.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

A review of the current literature, including articles, books, and available dissertations reveals a wealth of information on school choice; however few publications specifically relating to in district transfers of public school students, and no articles or books focuses on the specific reasons for the desire to transfer to a different school within the district.

One particular book, Helping Transfer Students: Strategies for Educational And Social Readjustment, primarily studies children transferring from public to private schools. The authors noted a lack of research regarding transfer student data.

"Unfortunately, researchers have not yet described in detail why children move, nor have they empirically explored whether the reasons for the school transfer relate to subsequent school adjustment" (Jason et al., 1992, p. 66).

Jason et al. noted that low socio-economic students were much more likely to transfer than high socio-economic students. In addition, they found that low socio-economic transfer students were more apt to have problems adjusting. Jason reported, that when students moved due to a possible retention or low



performance, they found that the students did, in fact, enter with significantly lower achievement scores.

Although their study was devoted to helping schools make positive transitions for transfer students, it also contains some relevant information to this research project. For instance, many of the families cited a variety of problems with the old school as reasons for the transfer.

The authors in the Jason study (1992) noted that parents desire to have more open and on-going communication with their school. The parents reported dissatisfaction with schools who were cold and uninviting.

Examples of the parent comments regarding the assigned schools rated "moderately" or in "need of improvement", included one parent who said, "No one seemed very open or friendly at the whole school. The secretary is grim. The principal is grim." Another parent described her child's assigned school saying, "everything there is punishment." "teachers go for the academics and not for the personal relationship." Still another parent said, "Someone's always yelling at some kid for doing something." Echoing the voices of other parents, a mother described her child's assigned school saying, "you can hear teachers shouting at students in the hallway." Another parent said that at their assigned school, "the principal is ever

present, authoritarian, not warm. The parents would avoid her at all cost" ( Jason et al., 1992, p. 167-8).

Conversely, Jason et al. (1992) found that schools noted as "The Best Schools" had very different climates. Their staff's interacted well with each other and with the community. A great deal of pride and caring was exemplified within the school. These schools were characteristically bright and warm with various examples of student work and ethnic pride.

The researchers found consistently different comments regarding the transfer schools. They responded, "There is a support base ....and consistency." The parents described the transfer school saying, "There is a lot of warmth in the school....." They continued saying, "It is a word-of-mouth school--everyone's always talking about how great it is. It's like a family school--everyone goes there." Another parent said that "The principal is really involved. She goes into all classrooms every day and knows all the kids by name." Still another parent says, "It's one of those school buildings that never close. It's what a school should be" (Jason et al., 1992, p. 166).

Because of a general lack of reference material related to the subject of in-district transfer of students, I began researching the themes that parents and students indicated as important to their

transfer decision in the Jason study. They included:

1) Aspects of caring as it relates to public school teaching and learning: Ted Aoki, 1991, Nel Noddings, 1984, 1991, 1992, Diane Lee, 1991, and Max van Manen, 1991, Nelson Haggerson, 1991, David Purpel 1989, Sonia Nieto, 1992.

2) Theories and philosophies of educational pedagogy: Max van Manen, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, Sonia Nieto, 1992, Nel Noddings 1991,1993, Henry Giroux and Roger Simon, 1989, William Doll, 1993, Palma Suzanne George Millies, 1992.

3) The implementation and need for a compassionate curriculum in public schools: Louise Berman, 1991, Nel Noddings, 1984, 1990,1991, Jane Adan, 1991, Madeleine Grumet, 1991, David Purpel 1989.

4) The relationship between the teacher and student as it relates to learning: Jane Adan, 1991, Ted Aoki, 1991, Nel Noddings, 1984, 1990, 1991, 1993, William Schubert, 1991, Jonathan Kozol, 1981, 1993, Michelle Fine, 1989, Sonia Nieto, 1992, Ray McDermott, 1993, Max van Manen, 1992, William Doll, 1993.

5) The relationship between schools and the communities they serve: Madeleine Grumet, 1991, James Comer and Alvin Poussaint,1992, Michelle Fine, 1993, Miriam David, 1989, Sonia Nieto, 1992, Patricia Hulsebosch, 1992.

The relationship of these themes to the respondents in the Jason study provide important information regarding parental requests to transfer from public to private schools. As the authors noted, this is a subject which is greatly in need of research. Little information is available on why parents elect to change schools and what they are specifically looking for. Hopefully the topics and themes uncovered in the Jason research will lead this study to the underlying reasons for parental discontent regarding their assigned public school (Jason, et al, 1992).

Over the last ten years, according to public opinion polls, parental opinions about the right to select the school site of their choice has changed dramatically. A review of educational literature spanning the 1980's and 90's reveals a dramatic rise in articles both in favor and opposed to the school choice issue (Boaz, 1991, Chenoweth, 1991, Clinchy, 1989, Coons, 1991, Elam, 1989, Elam 1990, Glenn, 1987, Jones, 1987, Seeley, 1987, Warren, 1992). This appears to be caused by a number of issues which are deserving of our time and research. School choice, in relation to the research in this study, may be the battle cry for a new sociological movement which is challenging our views about traditional public educational systems and the control parents have over selecting those systems (American Association of School Administrators, 1988).

The assignment to designated public school sites and reasons for parental requests for in-district transfer of students were discussed in the random sample survey and the in depth interviews in this study. These tools were designed to explore the themes discovered in the Jason, et al. study.

Traditionally today's schools and their students have come from the population living within an area defined as a school district. That district is made up of residents who reside within the boundaries of that district. Those residents support the school district with local funds. These funds are collected through local taxation which is raised through the favorable vote of district residents on school bond issues. In addition, districts gain revenue through state aid and some federal support. The basic premise however, is that schools are locally supported and locally controlled by the people of that district. In addition, they fall under the regulatory laws of the state which are deemed appropriate by state legislatures. (Valente, 1980, Hartman, 1988).

Historically, the most significant criticism concerning the American public education system surfaced with the publishing of a study authored and chaired by a group of business professionals and government officials. Published in 1983, A Nation at Risk fueled a heated debate about the quality of the American educational system

(The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This study was the culmination of the growing conservative right in this nation. Michael Apple, a well known educational political theorist wrote,

All of this has led to an array of educational conflicts that have been instrumental in shifting the debates over education profoundly to the right. The effects of this shift can be seen in a number of educational policies and proposals now gaining momentum throughout the country: (1) proposals for voucher plans and tax credits to make schools more like the idealized free market economy; (2) the movement in state legislatures and state departments of education to “raise standards” and to mandate both teacher and student “competencies” and basic curricular goals and knowledge, thereby centralizing even more at a state level the control of teaching and curricula; (3) the increasingly effective assaults on the school curriculum for its supposedly anti-family and anti-free enterprise bias, its “secular humanism,” and its lack of patriotism; and (4) the growing pressure to make the needs of business and industry into the primary goals of the educational system” (Apple, 1989, p. 35-6).

The Nation at Risk raised serious concerns about student proficiencies and the ability of the schools to perform effectively. It proclaimed, that schools were not interested in educational excellence but in mediocrity. A number educational theorists (Apple, 1989, Giroux, 1989, Purpel, 1989, Reynolds, 1994) have taken issue with this publication as well as those which are based

upon similar suppositions such as Making the Grade, and the Paideia Proposal. One by one, politicians, school boards, churches, business leaders, and people of all sects have entered the debate about what is wrong with the public schools. A common thread in their criticism, seems to be that of a loss of local control over schools. Most frequently criticized, appear to be those schools in urban areas. An underlying distrust of all public schools, however, is quite evident (Gardner, 1992, p. 1-10,). Charles Glenn advocates school choice saying:

"Our educational system should be encouraged to offer real choices to poor and moderate-income families as well as to the middle class. This implies that school staff will be encouraged to develop distinctive approaches to instruction and school climate, and to communicate their vision for education to parents.... School choice is a powerful way to enhance equality of opportunity, and thus to promote justice...." (Glenn, 1987, p 54).

Former President Bush fueled the school choice issue with his introduction of the America 2000 goals. These goals were established by the National Governor's Association in association with government representatives. The goals were as follows:

- 1) All children will start school ready to learn;
- 2) High school graduate rate will be at least 90 percent;
- 3) Students will demonstrate competence in critical subjects;
- 4) U.S. students will be the first in the world in

- mathematics and science;
- 5) Every adult will be literate and have skills to compete in the economy;
- 6) Schools will be free of drugs and violence.

William Reynolds (1994) as well as other educational theorists (Giroux, 1992, Purpel, 1989) discuss Joel Spring's (1991) notions which are based upon the belief that these plans further the interests of big business and social efficiency, but fail to address humanistic issues such as "preschool preparation, lowering the dropout rate, and banishing illegal drugs from schools." Although Reynolds believes that parental voice in their child's school site may improve parent satisfaction, it may also create a climate for a nationalized curriculum. "This [Reynolds says] is precisely what the creators of the constitution hoped to avoid" (1994, p. 21). Ernest Boyer responds to the America 2000 goals saying:

"In searching for excellence in education, policy makers must look beyond the schoolhouse door and consider what is happening to childhood itself. The time has come to recognize that what children need is not just more assessment but more compassion and support" (Boyer, 1994, p 29).

Boyer continues suggesting that,

While focusing on outcomes, reformers must be equally concerned about the nation's first education goal, which declares that by the year 2000 all children will come to school "ready to learn" -which means successfully preparing all children for the opportunities of formal



schooling" (Boyer, 1994, p. 30).

Currently a number of states and cities have begun experimenting with the school choice plan, they include: Minnesota, Arkansas, Iowa, Massachusetts, Indiana, East Harlem, Buffalo, etc. (Clinchy, 1989, 289-294). These plans have met with mixed reviews. Those plans which included parent components on needs surveys and parental input on planning and implementation, however, appear to be the most successful.

Another indicator of the growing movement in favor of school choice is reflected in the Gallop Poll (Elam, 1989, p. 42-43, Elam, 1990, p. 43-44). Parents were initially asked in 1979 their feelings about the school choice issue. The over-whelming response indicated that nearly two thirds or 62% of those parents questioned responded that they would not choose to move their child to another school. However just a decade later, in 1989, 65% of the parents questioned were now in favor of school choice (Elam, 1989, 1990). The increase was a dramatic reflection of the growing dissatisfaction with the American educational system. This issue has become a hot bed of debate over a relatively short period of time and is continuing to gain momentum.

Throughout this historical analysis of the evolution of the school choice issue, there are repeated themes which can be found in

the concerns of parents surveyed and interviewed in this study. It appears that the heart of this controversy has more to do with the rights of individual parents to select a school location in which they feel comfortable. This comfort level is articulated within a very few articles. In Indiana and in Massachusetts, parent surveys attempted to poll parents desires. In East Harlem, parents were asked to share factors that would attract them to a particular school (Clinchy, 1989, p. 291). Gallop's poll, has asked parents a variety of question over the last 13 years regarding their feelings and desires about public education. Most parents polled appear especially concerned about drugs, discipline, the poor financial support, poor curriculum & standards, and the size of schools (Elam, 1989, p. 42-43, Elam, 1990, p. 43). The literature also indicates that parents would be in favor of a more personalized education that reflects the needs of the child and the beliefs of the family. School choice appears to be the vehicle which encompasses the parental desire to have more of a say about the over-all quality of the public education their students are receiving. The research also indicates that modern curricular theorists began to discuss the issues related to changing educational needs in the 1980's. Max van Manen clarified his theoretical views saying:

"....curriculum policy that is predominantly concerned with measurable learning outcomes, teachers who feel

compelled to teach toward the exam, schools whose policies do not help kids experience a sense of community -- these all tend to lose sight of the fact that all education is ultimately education of the whole person" (van Manen, 1991, p. 166).

Theorists and authors such as: Nel Noddings ( 1984, 1991, 1992), Max van Manen (1988, 1991, 1992), William Pinar (1988), Madeleine Grumet (1988), William Doll (1993), Jane Adan (1991), and Henry Giroux (1992), have lent their talents to propose the empowerment of educators, learners, and families. They suggest that teachers and learners should be entwined in an active quest for meaning, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Learning should not be other directed, but personal, compassionate, and exciting to both learners and teachers. Nel Noddings imparts that,

"Instead of depending entirely on programatic changes in curriculum, renewed emphasis on critical thinking, or new systems of discipline, educators must begin to face the social changes that have occurred over the last 40 years and to think in terms of providing care and educating for interpersonal reasoning" (Noddings, 1991, p. 166).

Many texts and articles have been published dealing with issues of educational pedagogy, caring learning environments, and emancipatory learning (Adan, 1991, Aoki, 1991, Doll, 1993, Giroux, 1992, Giroux, 1989, Grumet, 1991, McLaren, 1989, Noddings 1984,

1991, Pinar, 1988, Schubert, 1986, van Manen, 1991). As a response to these popular views, schools and the teachers in them are turning away from the functionalism teaching views popularized by Ralph Tyler in the early 1900's. His assembly line method of educating, was viewed as efficient to both government and industrial needs of the time. Today, however, educators are looking forward to a more individualized, caring approach to teaching and learning. These views are characteristic of those shared by William Pinar (1988) in his description of the "Reconceptualization" of the field of education. Pinar describes the curriculum fields need to rethink the issues which were impacting the field and shaping educational theory. Today's educational scholars focus their attention upon two major groups, those interested in economic and political perspectives or those theorists who center their philosophies upon humanistic views. Ted Aoki describes this reconceptualization of education saying: "...if schools were seen as places where people dwell compassionately and in communion, more fundamental ways of conceiving schools might emerge" (Aoki, 1991, p. 187).

The literature regarding caring school environments and educational pedagogy are extremely relevant to the findings in this study. For the purposes of this literary review, I have found the works of Nel Noddings and Max van Manen especially helpful. Both

theorists focus a great deal of attention to the relational experiences of schools and families, as well as teachers and learners. Noddings centers her beliefs on issues relating to caring environments saying:

"...I've suggested that schools should become places in which teachers and students live together, talk to each other, reason together, take delight in each other's company. Like good parents, teachers should be concerned first and foremost with the kind of people their charges are becoming" (Noddings, 1991, p. 169).

While van Manen focuses a great deal of attention toward care, he also centers his discourses upon the importance of educational pedagogy and praxis.

"...pedagogy may be defined as the "excellence of teaching or parenting" because it helps us to identify the essence of true child rearing and teaching. It orients us to the value, meaning, and nature of teaching and parenting... pedagogy orients us to the child, to the child's immanent nature of being and becoming" ( van Manen, 1991, p. 32).

Although the literature does not specifically address the question, "Why do parents wish to select their child's school?", or "What do parents specifically desire regarding their child's education?", there is a wealth of information regarding what is undesirable. Intermingled in the school choice controversy are several themes which will again emerge in the chapters to follow.

These include issues of school and/or teacher caring and compassion, open communication and interaction between the home and the school, as well as, a shared valuing of the intellectual and affective development of the child. Heard within this debate are debates about the "in loco parentis" role of teachers and its meaning to educators. Van Manen describes some of these emotions saying:

"...out of this primary responsibility of parents flows the teacher's charge as a responsibility *in loco parentis*. So what is relevant for the relation between parents and children may be informative for the pedagogical relation between teachers and students" (van Manen, 1991, p 5).

He continues affirming that,

"Schools too need to offer young people a caring and supportive environment, not only because caring teachers and caring schools tend to reproduce a caring orientation in the students themselves, but also because a caring school climate sponsors the conditions for personal growth itself" (van Manen, 1991, p. 34-35).

## Chapter III

### Methodology

The research conducted in this study followed the format of a descriptive methodology. This was accomplished through a technique commonly referred to as participant observation or field research. It hinged on the opportunities which arise from the observations of a elementary school principal. This participant observer made use of the opportunities available to study the choices of public school parents regarding school site selection for their children. Although the researcher was known to the subjects Lohman said, "...the sympathies and identities established through a close familiarity will reveal meanings and insights denied the formal investigator" (Lohman, 1937, p. 891). The participant observer employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies from which the researcher formulated a picture of the conceptual framework which encompasses this phenomena. A triangulation of methodologies (Denzin, 1970) was employed through the use of participant observation, random sample surveys, in-depth interviews, school district information, and a review of the literature. Narratives of lived experience personalized the investigation and underscored the validity of the research.

"Field method is more like an umbrella of activity beneath which any technique may be used for gaining the

desired information, and for processes of thinking about this information” (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973, p. 14).

The triangulation of methodologies provided evidence of the issues or themes. The random sample survey was sent to all parents of transfer students attending the designated school site. A percentage of the respondents, who represented different assigned school sites and different racial/ethnic groups were then asked to participate in in depth interviews. The interviews focused on parental perceptions of schooling both in their assigned school and their selected transfer school site. They delved into the issue of caring in both schools. Their responses were then compared to the available published information. After investigating the relationships uncovered in the study, the researcher attempted to describe these relationships and their meaning to today's inner city schools.

#### Research Bias and Methods of Field Study

The significance of this study lies in its ability to help schools better understand what parents perceive as "good" or "bad" in their schools. This attention to needs, may enable schools to work with students and parents in a more positive, collaborative manner regarding the educational goals and desires they have for



their children.

A bias of this study lies in its' selected participants. The parents interviewed consisted entirely of families who had transferred their children to the transfer school site. The parent participants consist of eight families who made the decision to transfer and two families who were transferred by the school district. These two families were transferred because of the need for their children to attend special programs. It should be noted that the study did not include participants or families of non-transfer parents. Their views of the transfer school site are not represented in this study due to the fact that it is their assigned school.

The research methodology was grounded in participant observation, however data was collected based upon the triangulation of research methodology. This matching of theory and data collection was described by Woods, who said: "Rather the theory provides guidelines for interpreting data. Characteristically, the theory helps so far, but no further, at which point one must refine or develop the theory" (Woods,1985, p. 62).

### Description of Data Collection

Random sample surveys were sent to 45 parents of transferred

students, representing all of the 79 transferred students at the assigned school. Seventy-nine transferred students out of the total school population of 592 were represented. Every attempt was made to retrieve the surveys, including: student incentives, personal notes and letters, phone calls, and self addressed return envelopes.

In all, 23 surveys were completed and returned out of 45; for a return rate of 52%. Among those who responded, 10 parents chose to give additional written information on the random sample survey regarding their reasons for leaving their assigned school, and 8 chose to volunteer information on their feelings or beliefs about their transfer school. The parent surveys provided information from a wide variety of respondents. These responses compared parental perceptions between assigned schools and transfer schools. The research collected provided data for a statistical comparison which was graphed to show the results.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with another group of 10 parent respondents. These families were included in the random sample surveys and volunteered their participation in the in-depth interviews. These volunteer responses were “coded” (Charmaz, in Emerson, 1988) in accordance with the terms of their participation. These responses were carefully transcribed and read back at the time of the interview to enhance views and reflect clarity of

perceptions. These participants represented the respondents to the parent survey or approximately 43% of the total sample of transferred students. The interviewees were asked probing questions about their underlying reasons for transferring. They were asked to expound upon the survey questions, revealing their feelings and emotions about both their assigned school site and their transfer school site as they related to educational issues. These interviews provided some key insights as to common parental desires and/or dislikes in their child(ren)'s educational settings.

Statistical data collection became a difficult process due to the problems associated with processing and verifying information in a large urban school district. However, a minimum of at least 6% of the districts parents have expressed a written desire for their children to transfer to another school site.

### Triangulation of Methodology and Data Collection

The strength of this research plan was its triangulation of methodology. Earl Babbie, in *The Practice of Social Research*, believes that,

“The use of several different research methods to test the same finding... triangulation... should always be kept in mind as a valuable research strategy. Because each research method has particular strengths and weaknesses, there is always a danger that research

findings will reflect, at least in part, the method of inquiry. In the best of all worlds, your own research design should bring more than one research method to bear on the topic” (Babbie, 1992, p. 109).

The quantitative components provided by the random sample survey are generalizable to the selected school transfer site population. Since 52% of the people sampled responded, it provided strong statistical reliability. Additionally, the sample provided indications of participant beliefs through the voluntary written response area. Of the respondents to the random sample survey, 43% chose to give additional information.

The in-depth interview portion of this study, conducted by the participant observer, provided the qualitative validity component to the study. The participant observer’s five year tenure at the school site added a richness of dialogue and personal knowledge to the in-depth interviews. Becker said that,

“Rich data are the product of the fact that the field worker spends a long period of time studying the particular setting, collecting a variety of observations on any particular topic, and using many different procedures (Becker, 1970, p. 53).

The 10 parent interviews revealed common patterns in their responses. These commonalties provide reliable information on how parents view schools and what they wish schools to be. Max van

Manen describes the development of themes saying,

“As we thus study the lived experience descriptions and discern the themes that begin to emerge, then we may note that certain experiential themes recur as commonality or possible commonalties in the various descriptions we have gathered. The task [of the researcher] is to hold on to these themes by lifting appropriate phrases or by capturing in singular statements the main thrust of the meaning of the themes” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93).

The statistical data, as well as, the review of the literature provided the information which gave the project another component of validity. At least 6% of the total district population of students which consists of 38,000 students, were concerned with where their students attend school. Due to a variety of factors, this represents only a portion of the students who transfer each year, these include: families who move without notifying the school district, families who list false addresses to attend the school of their choosing, and formal transfers that are processed daily. The documented transfer requests provided tangible evidence that a significant number of parents are willing to go to great lengths to designate the school site of their choosing.

This research project would not have provided a comprehensive review of available information without the use of the selected methodology. The participant observation combined

with the random sample survey, the in-depth interviews, the statistical review of district information, as well as the review of the literature, provided a strong case which can be validated both quantitatively and qualitatively. The methodology provided both components of reliability and validity, which could not have been achieved as effectively, without the selected methodology.

“The research process...is not a clear cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time” (Bechhoffer, 1974, p. 73).

### In-depth Interviews and Participants

#### Historical Review of the People, Places & Lifestyles

The 10 in-depth interviews were conducted in a variety of places. Some parents preferred to come to school, others were conducted in homes, and after several attempts at scheduling, one parent was interviewed during a two hour phone call. It should be noted that the participant observer had visited each house either during the interview process or as a part of a home visit conducted through the school.

The families are inclusive of: one Caucasian/white single parent mother, four Caucasian/white married families, two African American/black married households, one American Indian mother,

step father, and grandmother household, one Hispanic married household, and one Caucasian/white female homosexual couple.

Upon field testing, the in-depth interview questions were modified to accommodate the flow of conversation and appropriateness. The questions were restricted to those focusing on relationships and feelings of quality. A few parents indicated that they were not comfortable sharing some of their personal experiences at the assigned school. Other parents related that they did not know much about their assigned school because they had never allowed their child(ren) to attend it. However, the researcher continued the questioning process employing probing questions developed to expand the parental responses and enrich the data collected. This probing was accomplished while focusing on the parent perceptions of the assigned school and the transfer school.

Katz described the importance of this saying,

“...the negotiations of access is ongoing, continuing from situation to situation and from the beginning to the end of each interview, in the researcher’s efforts to establish and maintain rapport. Indeed, once the process to develop rapport is over and researchers with fixed questionnaires are ready to begin serious interviewing, qualitative researchers are often ready to leave. By this point they have realized which questions make sense to an interviewee and have found substitutes that do (Katz, 1988, p. 139).

## Chapter IV

### Report of the Data

It is important at the outset to explain the characteristics of the families who agreed to participate in the in-depth interviews. These families represented a wide variety of social and economic situations. They were extremely gracious and open in their responses to the questions posed. Although the subjects interviewed acknowledged the participant observers role at their transfer school site, they did not appear to couch their opinions or feelings. It is also important to note that family income, resources, race, marital status, gender, or educational need did not appear to hinder the parents' ability to transport their child(ren) to the transfer school site. This is supported by Jason et al. (1992) who found that low socio-economic income families were much more likely to transfer their children than middle to high socio-economic income families. The low socio-economic income parents expressed an active desire to plan and direct their child(ren)'s educational opportunities.

#### Family Demographics and Characteristics

The random sample survey was sent to 45 families who were documented as parents of the 79 known transfer students. Of these



families, 23 parents returned survey information. This was representative of 40 transferred students, for a return rate of 52% of the total sample.

Of the parents responding to the random sample survey, 10 families were asked to participate in the voluntary in-depth interviews. These families represented 17 students who were attending the transfer site and five students who were attending district middle schools or high schools. The family structures living with the transfer child(ren), included one single parent household, five biological parent families, one mother and step-father family, one female homosexual couple, and two non-married spousal households. The ethnic make-up of these families included, six Caucasian or White households, two African American or Black families, one Hispanic family for whom a translator served as an interpreter, and one American Indian household.

The affluence and skill levels of these families varies to a great degree. The parent employment information includes: one female professional position, three males and three females who are in skilled or technical trade positions, four unskilled males in blue collar labor positions, seven full time female homemakers, and one disabled male.

Among the family residences, one family lives in an out of

district housing addition, with homes in the \$60,000. to \$70,000. range. Another family lives out of district, in a neighborhood with homes selling in the \$20,000. to \$30,000. price range. One in district family lives in a neighborhood with homes valued at \$10,000. to \$20,000. Seven families live in school district neighborhoods with homes values in the \$2,000. to \$5,000. price range. It is significant to note that five of the families are known to be on public assistance. Of further importance, seven of these families qualify for free or reduced meal programs for their children attending the transfer school site.

The number of children represented by each family varied. Two of the families interviewed had only one child, five families had two children, two other families had three children, and one family had four children. The ethnic or racial classification for the children attending the transfer school site included, ten children who are Caucasian or White, two children who are African American or Black, two other children who have a Hispanic heritage, and three are American Indian children. The school programs attended by these transfer students also varies. Seven children attend regular education classes. The Indian Education and Gifted Education programs each serve the same three children from one family. The Special Education program provides additional resources to three

other children. Finally, the Prekindergarten classroom has one of the interviewed transfer student's in attendance. (This information appears in Appendix E.)

## Analysis of Data

### Random Sample Survey Responses

The 23 random sample survey responses were compared and contrasted graphically. These graphs revealed a dramatic difference in the responses between the assigned school and the transfer school. Upon reviewing these comparisons, it is important to note some of the outstanding differences.

When asked, "What is the primary racial or ethnic makeup of your child's assigned school and of your child's transfer school?", parent responses were as follows:

### Assigned School Responses

Twelve parents responded that the assigned school consists of a mixed racial group. Eight parents believed that it is primarily a Caucasian population. While three respondents believe that the assigned school site predominately consists of an African American population.

### Transfer School Responses

In contrast, fourteen parents reported that their transfer school consisted of a mixed racial group. While nine parents said that it was their belief that the school consisted of a Caucasian population.

Upon being asked, “How do you perceive the administration in meeting your family’s needs at your assigned school and your transfer school?”, parental responses varied to a great degree.

### Assigned School Responses

The parent sample responded saying that four found the administration’s ability to meet their family needs as poor, and six parents responded that it was fair. In addition, six parents found it to be good and five responded that this ability was excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

Of the parent responses to this question, zero parents perceived it to be poor, while three found this ability to be fair. However, thirteen parents felt that the administration’s ability to meet their family’s needs were good, and five believed them to be excellent.

When parents were asked, “How do you feel about teacher effectiveness at your assigned school

and at your transfer school?”, they gave the following responses:

#### Assigned School Responses

One of the parents responding to this question believed that the effectiveness was poor, and eight parents believed that it was fair. Whereas, another eight parents perceived teacher effectiveness to be good, and three assigned school parents believed it to be excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

Again, parent beliefs show a contrast in perceptions from the assigned school to the transfer school, with zero parents recording the poor rating, and only one parent feeling that teacher effectiveness is fair. However, nine respondents believed this indicator to be good and twelve reflect an excellent rating.

Then parents were asked, “How do you perceive the building conditions in your assigned school and in your transfer school?”, they responded as follows:

#### Assigned School Responses

Zero respondents felt that the building conditions were poor, however nine parents believed it to be fair. Whereas, twelve parents rated the building as good, and one felt that the conditions

were excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

Accordingly, zero parents believed the conditions to be poor, while five parents said that the building was in fair condition. However, sixteen parents rated the transfer school condition as good, and two felt that it was excellent.

When asked, “How do you feel about the teacher/principal interactions at your assigned school and at your transfer school?”, parent responses were as follows:

### Assigned School Responses

In response to the staff relations at the assigned school, three parents believed them to be poor, and seven perceived these relationships as fair. Seven of the parents responded to the question saying that they were good, and two felt that the relations were excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

Significantly, the responses to the perceptions regarding staff relationships at the transfer school recorded zero poor ratings, and two parents who believed them to be fair. The majority of parents gave staff relationship a favorable rating, with twelve parents believing they were good, and nine saying that they were excellent.

Upon being asked, “How do you perceive the principal/student interactions at your assigned school and at your transfer school?”, parental responses varied to a great degree.

#### Assigned School Responses

Three parents perceived these interactions as poor, and six recorded a fair rating. While six other parents believed the principal /student relations were good, and four rated them excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

The transfer parent responses showed that zero parents believed these relations were poor, and only one parent found them to be fair. In contrast, thirteen parents responded that these interactions were good, and nine felt that they were excellent.

Then parents were asked, “How do you feel about the principal/parent interactions at your assigned school and at your transfer school?”, they responded as follows:

#### Assigned School Responses

Four of the parents believed these interactions were poor, and five perceived these to be fair. An additional eight parents responded that the principal/parent interactions were good, and two

described them as excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

Zero transfer parents believed these relations were poor, and one parent responded that they were fair. However, twelve parents found these interactions to be good, while ten found them excellent.

When asked, "How do you perceive the principal/community interactions at your home school and at your transfer school?", parent responses were as follows:

### Assigned School Responses

Of the parents responding, three rated these interactions as poor, and four parents perceived the interactions as fair. Seven parents believed these relations to be good, and three felt that they were excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

In contrast, none of the parents perceived these relationships as poor, and only two believed them to be fair. However, eleven of the parents felt that the principal/community interactions were good, and nine believed they were excellent.

Upon being asked, "How do you feel about the community relations in your assigned school and in your transfer school?", parental responses



varied to a great degree.

#### Assigned School Responses

None of the parents perceived these relations as poor, however three parents believed these interactions were fair. Of the responding parents ten felt that these relations were good, and two believed them to be excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

Again, no parents recorded responses in the poor area of the sample, however two families did find these interaction to be fair. In addition, sixteen parents believed the community relations were good and three found them to be excellent.

Then parents were asked, “How do you perceive the resources and supplies in your assigned school and in your transfer school?”, they responded as follows:

#### Assigned School Responses

Zero parents believed these supplies or resources were poor, and six found them to be fair. Of those responding to the survey, nine parents perceived the resources as good, while four were recorded as excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

Again, no responses were recorded in the poor indicator, and

two parents described them as fair. Seventeen parents perceived the supplies and resources at the transfer school as good, while four believed them to be excellent.

When asked, “How do you feel about the teacher/student interactions in your assigned school and in your transfer school?”, parent responses were as follows:

#### Assigned School Responses

Four parents found these interactions to be poor and three perceived them as fair. An additional seven parents believed these relations were good and four recorded them as excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

In contrast, no parents perceived these interactions as poor, while only one found them to be fair. Nine of the parents sampled believed these relations were good and thirteen perceived them as excellent.

Upon being asked, “How do you perceive the teacher/parent interactions in your assigned school and in your transfer school?”, parental responses varied to a great degree.

#### Assigned School Responses

The assigned school parents recorded one poor rating and six

fair responses. Another six parents found these interactions to be good, while four parents felt that they were excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

Again one parent responded with a poor rating, with two other parents recording fair interactions. However ten parents believed these relations were good, and ten other parents rated these as excellent.

Then parents were asked, “How do you feel about the safety of your child at your assigned school and at your transfer school?”, they responded as follows:

#### Assigned School Responses

Four parents responded that they perceived their child’s safety as poor, and six believed that they were fair. Another five parents recorded good responses to the survey questions, while four others recorded excellent perceptions.

#### Transfer School Responses

No parents recorded responses in the poor indicator, however three perceived their child’s safety to be fair. In contrast, sixteen parents believed the safety of the transfer school to be good, while four perceived them as excellent.

When asked, “How do you perceive the fairness of

discipline at your assigned school and at your transfer school?”, parent responses were as follows:

#### Assigned School Responses

Four parents recorded responses in the poor indicator, and six perceived discipline to be fair at the assigned school. Six other parents recorded responses in the good range, while three believed the fairness of discipline to be excellent.

#### Transfer School Responses

In contrast, no responses were recorded in the poor area, and only three parents recorded fair ratings. However, thirteen parents recorded perceptions in the good indicator, and seven in the excellent area.

Upon being asked, “How do you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your assigned school and at your transfer school?”, parental responses varied to a great degree.

#### Assigned School Responses

Four parents responded that they believed the ethnic and racial issues were poor, while five parents perceived them to be fair. Eight other parents rated these issues as good, and four found them to be excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

Again, the responses of assigned school parents and transfer school parents were very different. No parents recorded responses in the poor indicator, while three perceived ethnic and racial issues as fair. However, thirteen parents responded that these issues were good, and six perceived them as excellent.

When parents were asked, “How do you feel about the overall quality of education in your assigned school and in your transfer school?”, they responded as follows.

### Assigned School Responses

Parents recorded three poor indicators and nine fair responses to the perception of educational quality. Another five parents perceived this issue as good and three found them to be excellent.

### Transfer School Responses

In contrast, zero parents recorded responses in the poor indicator, and only one parent perceived the educational quality to be fair. However, ten parents believed that the educational quality was good, and twelve transfer school parents perceived it to be excellent.

Finally when asked, “Are there perceptions about your assigned school which effected your

decision to transfer?”, ten parents responded affirmatively. They shared the following written responses:

### Assigned School

One mother wrote, “My son needed extra help and the assigned school could not.” While another parent said, “Teaching Spanish, highly stressed to teach it to young children. Not acceptable.” Still one other said, “Low test scores.” While another commented, “Far too many Blacks and Hispanics. Whites are the minority. Gangs from [the housing project] are in the elementary school.” While another simply said, “Moved.” One of the parents wrote, “Yes, I felt that education is more important and not the fact that the children were so much more culturally advantaged. The teachers and the curriculum and the atmosphere of school is very important in shaping a positive attitude about schooling.” Still another parent said, “The kids were going to be bussed to a different school.” One other parent wrote, “Son is in E.D. [Severely Emotionally Disturbed]. Assigned school did not offer E.D. program.” While another parent simply wrote, “Poor principal.” One of the others said, “Did not meet my son’s needs. My girls are not closer to my work in case of problems could not get there faster.”

## Transfer School Voluntary Responses

Of the thirteen who responded, several parents noted day-care issues, one wrote, "They [the children] liked the teachers and school last years, their day care is in this school area." Another wrote, "Babysitter lives in school district and will only deliver to [the transfer school]. One of the other parents said, "The closeness. The program of speech for my daughter. In walking distance of Day-care. Smaller school than some. Good teachers. My children have special needs especially two of them." A parent who was transferred by the school district said, "We had no choice but are very satisfied." Another wrote, "Closest school to home with E.D. program." While one of the other parents responded, "I have felt very comfortable with my children's education and I truly believe [our transfer school] is bringing out the best in my kids." Still another commented, "My child after his first year of being at the transfer school was so happy and positive about school until I decided to keep him in the same environment for just a little while longer." While one other parent simply wrote, "Because I like the teacher and Principal." Another said, "It's a small school, racially integrated very well. Great interaction between teachers/parents. The kids have gone to this school 2 years previously and brought their grades up from D's and F's to A's and B's. [The principal] is a fantastic principal who

cares deeply not only for her students welfare, but the parents also. She's concerned and will help in any way." A final parent responded simply saying, "Caring."

In summary, the differences in parent perceptions between the assigned school and the transfer school are dramatic. This represents 52% of the transfer parents at the designated site. In every case the negative or poor to fair ratings were greatly decreased at the transfer school site. In addition, the feelings and perceptions regarding care or caring issues were noted as important by several of the parents. It should also be noted, that this survey only reflects the views of transfer parents at the designated school, it does not represent the views of parents assigned to the site. (The graphic representations of these perceptions may be found Appendix C.)

#### Summary of Responses to In-depth Interview Questions

Ten parents who previously responded to the random sample survey agreed to voluntarily participate in the in-depth interviews. These parents knew the researcher's position in the school, however expressed no apprehension in participating in the interview. The researcher used the following questions to initiate conversation and probe participant schooling perceptions. The parents verbally



related their children's schooling experiences. Several parents commented that they had never enrolled their child at the assigned school, therefore they had no comment or limited knowledge of the assigned school site.

Would you explain how you feel about the teacher/student interactions in your assigned school?

One mother and father responded, "We've not been there since 1989, but we were not pleased. Our child sat in the front office a lot. One of his teacher's gave him a lot of candy and it hyped him up." Another parent said, "It was fair, I didn't see teachers and students interacting a lot. He didn't want to go to school." Still another mother related her experiences saying, "There was a personal conflict between my child and the teacher. Then when he acted up he was stigmatized."

However when asked, "Would you explain how you feel about the teacher/student interactions in your transfer school?", the parent responses were very different.

One mother said, "It's pretty good. Teachers really know the kids... they take time to know student backgrounds and kids are happy there." Another mother said, "We just liked this school so

much that I kept the kids here.” Still another parent responded, “It’s just different here. The children are different, more respectful. The teacher talks to them and work problems out... They like to go to school here.” Finally a parent said, she was “surprised with the daily interactions.... we really like that. The teachers are very accessible... when there are problems the teacher doesn’t give up on her.”

When asked, “How do you view the teacher/parent interaction in your assigned school?” the parents responded:

“It was a bad experience...” Another parent described the interactions saying, “I feel like they have their role and nobody crosses the line. It’s a real snotty atmosphere.” While one mother related her child’s teacher relations saying, “Rude, they didn’t and don’t care for my child at all. I disagreed in many ways, I had a right to my opinions. In their view it’s there way or no way...”

When asked, “How do you view the teacher/parent interaction in your transfer school?” the parents responded:

“Fantastic, good rapport with all teachers. They tell me when the kids are having a problem and how they’re dealing with problems at home...” Another parent said, “it’s pretty good. Especially this

year, she keeps us informed, work, behavior, etc.” One family discussed these interactions saying, “Excellent, she goes out of the way and she calls home. I have her home phone number and I can call and discuss things. The teacher is very open and lets us know problems.” Another parent said it was “Great. The teachers stops and talks to me, we discuss problems, she ask how our older student is doing...” Still another mother described her perceptions saying, “Good, the teachers will bend over backwards. My kids are getting a good education, you trust the teachers.”

Parents were asked, “Could you tell me how you feel about the teacher/principal interactions at your assigned school?”, they responded saying:

“The teachers were afraid to step out of line, they feared her[the principal]... they had to do things her way.” Another parent described these relations as “fine... The principal communicated with us a lot.” Still another mother said, “Last years principal, teacher, and I tried and hadn’t gotten anywhere with him. The teachers said I had to deal with the problem... The only interactions we had were when he was in trouble.” Another parent described these interactions saying she had heard “rumors, they do more of what parents want them to do, but it’s surface level... teachers have little input, it’s not personal.”

Parents were then asked, "Could you tell me how you feel about the teacher/principal interactions at your transfer school?" and they responded:

"Good, if I went to the teacher and couldn't get it solved I'd go to the principal." Another parent responded saying, "Almost anytime I've been up the principal has been walking around. The teachers talk highly of her, they seem close. The principal trusts the teacher instincts. They talk with the kids all the time." Still another mother related that these relations were, "Good, if I went to the teacher and couldn't get it solved, I'd go to the principal." One mother said, "I love it, it's a small close-knit school. It has an excellent communication system. I like it, it's real cheerful, an up mood, you never see a frown." Another mother said, it's "real good, the principal and the teachers are very close. They stay in communication with what's going on."

When parents were asked, "Would you tell me about the principal/student interactions at your assigned school?", they responded saying:

"Critical, I didn't feel like the principal wanted to work with me. There was trouble with the kids and [then the new principal] came in and tried to change everything. It was a big adjustment for everyone. It makes me wonder about the fear of teachers and

students.” Another mother responded saying, “The principal worked very well with students, he always knew the kids by their first name.” Still another parent said, “There was a personality change. The principal was different with kids when parents were not there. There was a difference from the kids, even the teacher said it was.”

In contrast, when parents were asked, “Would you tell me about the principal/student interactions at your transfer school?”, relating:

“I’ve been in the office when the principal talked to students. Two little boys were fighting, she had their attention, they listened and respected her.” Another mother said, “Wonderful, they know the principal means business, that she’s fair, and they know that she cares.” Still another parent reflected saying, “I like it, the kids are not scared of the principal. It’s more of a trusting relationship, they can come to her if they have a problem.” One family said, it’s “real good. The principal is involved in all sorts of programs and incentives for the kids. She’s always there participating and cheering the kids on.” Another mother responded saying, “Pretty good, she really likes the principal and we like what she’s doing for the school; taking interest in the community, and making the school better. Most principals are not that involved.” Finally a parent said, “Great, last year the principal helped us with our Special Education

needs. She found out what needed to be done.... she did great!”

When asked, “How do you feel about the principal/parent interactions at your assigned school?”, the parents responded saying:

Several parents did not have comments or opinions to this question. One parent related a “bad experience” saying, “One time I caught the principal sitting on my son, as I investigated the situation, the kid transformed from a monster to an angel. The principal’s story was completely different from the teachers. Attitudes changed dramatically in my presence.” Another parent described their experiences saying, “All right I guess...I went to the principal to request a different teacher, but he said he wasn’t able to move him. He said my child was a problem in class.” A final parent said, “The principal is very stern. I disagreed with the school often. They didn’t handle problems satisfactorily. The principal became prejudiced toward my son. He was pinpointed, once in trouble...”

How do you feel about the principal/parent interactions at your transfer school?

In contrast, one parent said, “Great, the principal listens. I may not always agree, but I listen because this school has helped my son.” Another mother reflected saying, “It’s Ok. We’ve not had

problems. The communication is ok. My daughter likes it that's all that matters to me." One other said, "The dealings with my son have been fine, we interact well. The principal doesn't talk down to parents. She explains situations to the parents and the child fairly... all the children are treated equally." Still another mother said, "I can approach the principal and I feel like I'm not infringing on her time, that's important to me." One other parent said, "I feel like if we came to the principal with a problem, we would leave with it pretty well resolved. The principal understands the situation and things are ok. She usually tries to solve the problems or help." While still another mother related the interactions saying, "The principal has worked miracles on us. We were angry when we walked in [because of a district initiated transfer] and she took us to see the class. The principal's door is always open, even when she's in meetings or busy." Finally a parent said, "I really enjoy it, parents can come in any time. The office is accessible, I enjoy being here."

When questioning parents they were asked, "Could you explain how you feel about the principal/community interactions at your assigned school?", they responded saying:

"The school is in the middle of the neighborhood, it's only two

block away, the principal never went to the Neighborhood Association Meetings or any community meetings. I don't know if he lived down the street, I saw his car parked in front of a house, but he never waved or anything." Another parent reflects upon the principal/community interactions saying, "Not really, I don't think she does [anything with the community]." Finally, one other mother related, "From what I understand ... it was nonexistent."

Again parent perceptions were different, when asked "Could you explain how you feel about the principal/community interactions at your transfer school?", they responded:

"The principal is concerned about the neighborhood, she attends City Council Meetings, Neighborhood Association Meetings, and a various other meetings. She is aware of the problems and tries to address them." Another parent said that the principal was "trying to help the neighborhood. People in the area are afraid to do it, but when the principal does it that's impressive to the community!" Still another mother commented, "For her not to live there she's pretty involved... trash and clean up days, community improvement, lighting the streets... I think that's pretty involved!"

When asked, "Would you describe how you feel about the safety of your child at your assigned



school?”, parents said:

“It’s an old neighborhood going through major changes. Two blocks away there’s gang painting, but the school has good security. The school is safe they seem to get to problems real quick.” Another parent said, “I might worry more there...” In contrast another mother said, “None! Whites are the minority, there are gangs from the housing projects. They gang up on whites. There’s still a lot of White/Black hate over there.” One parent reflected and said, “I wasn’t concerned when we originally transferred, but now I’m more concerned because of the gangs and the area.”

When asked, “Would you describe how you feel about the safety of your child at your transfer school?, parents responded saying:

“It’s fine. If one of my kids walked out or something the office would call immediately. But he won’t do that here, because the principal has control and the students respect her for it.” Another said, “It’s pretty good, everyone keeps a close eye on students, there are no problems.” One mother commented, “The school is pretty safe, the sign in and sign out policy is good, and the school is not easily accessible.” Still another parent said, “I’m perfectly comfortable, there’s good monitoring. In the mornings teachers are out in front of doors watching. I’m still scared he’ll

[dad] try to snatch them, but I feel like the principal and teachers protect them.” Another mother said, “Good environment... teachers good... he knows his limits and wouldn’t do anything dangerous. The mood at the school is real warm and safe.” One other mother related that she had “no concerns, I feel comfortable here... He’s watched well, I don’t worry about him getting hurt or anything.” Finally one other mother said, “This seems to be a quiet, problem free school, I feel comfortable with safety.”

Parents were asked, “How do you feel about the fairness of discipline at your assigned school?”, and they responded:

“It was not fair... they called the police on my child before they called me. We went to a counselor and he felt like the problem should be able to be resolved. But my child lost respect for the whole school. The teachers yelled, the principal pats Blacks and Hispanics, but Whites get nothing.” Another mother said, “It’s hard to say... it’s not fair. When there was a problem my child was suspended, but the other child was not. Both children should have been disciplined.” Still another parent described their experiences saying, “My friends say try time out or no recess... but they just call the parent. It’s hard to say if it’s fair, it’s more petty. It’s just the environment.” One other mother said, “There are personality

differences. My child was stigmatized. When things went wrong I felt like sometimes I was called to school and other parents weren't. Sometimes the other child even admitted they started it but my child kept it going."

Then parents were asked, "How do you feel about the fairness of discipline at your transfer school?", and they responded:

"It's good, the kids are treated fairly. The school goes through the steps to correct behavior." Another mother said, "He's never really gotten in trouble. It's fair and wonderful." One other mother related, "If anything it's a little too lenient. The detention policy seems minor, in comparison to my punishments." Still another parent said, "I've seen such an improvement! I've seen up hill instead of down hill. In class suspension is fair. If there is fighting, then others are in there [the office] too. We get notes home explaining how the kids had to handle problems and resolve it.... It's fair and educational." One other mother said, "Pretty fair, not many problems, not suspended, no major conflicts it's fair." Another mother summed up her feelings saying, "Fine, the other day my son got into a fight. The principal called me, and worked with the other mother to resolve the problem." A final mother said, "I think it's fair discipline. It doesn't have any respect to color or care [about

race], it's pretty fair and the kids know it. The kids know their boundaries and feel safe."

When parents were asked, "Could you discuss how you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your assigned school?", they answered:

"Hispanics and Blacks are the preference. Whites are discriminated. They celebrate Cinco De Mayo and Martin Luther King with big days. There's no day for the Whites. Learning Spanish is ok, but teach them what they're saying. There is no translation for parents at programs into English, so you don't know what's going on." Another mother said, "Awful, there's not many Black kids. They struggle to fit in... there's a lot of cultural stress... cultures are not even discussed, not strived for." One other parent related her experiences saying, "I know the school is mainly Black. I try not to be prejudice but it's hard when the principal steps around problems. The principal is not fast to call other parents." Still another mother said, "I haven't really noticed. The school is mostly White, but it's mixed. I've been scared because of the neighbors." Another parent related her feelings saying, "My son was denied registration in Pre Kindergarten and I wondered if it was based on racial status." While another mother said, "I'm scared to put my kids in that school. Whites are the minority, they're racist against

all others especially Mexicans and Whites. I think the administration of the school chooses to ignore the problems.”

Then parents were asked, “Could you discuss how you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your transfer school?”, they said:

“It’s real good, no problem. They teach my child that she needs to learn to get along. The school is accepting of all and teach that... its good.” Another mother said, “My child has several friends of different races, it’s ok.” Still another parent described her families experiences saying, “The gangs are not allowed to rule here. It’s an even mix of kids, there’s no problems. I observe a lot, there’s no clicks with gangs. They have a diversity of friends... Whites, Blacks, Mexicans, and Indians.” One other parent said, “I’m very satisfied with this school. I don’t have any complaints concerning racial matters. My children are Hispanic and do not feel discriminated.” While another mother reflected their on their experiences saying, “Hmmm, I really haven’t dealt with anything. He has a good friend who’s Black. We’ve shared and discussed some racial moments... one day my child said he was tired of being a White honkey... He wished he was Black. I told him we should all be proud of our color.” Still one other parent said, “It’s good. The kids don’t struggle to fit in.”

When parents were asked, “Would you describe

how you feel about the overall quality of education in your assigned school?”, they related the following memories.

“Poor, they didn’t learn anything.” Another mother reflected upon her children’s experiences saying, “My son was doing well, but his behavior... if they had understood the behavioral problem it might have been better. My daughter was behind in Kindergarten, her friends did her work. The teacher knew she was going to Transitional 1st so she was more interested in those making progress.” While another parent said, “I feel like teachers expect kids to know more because of the upper class environment. The teachers have preconceived notions... [The children] should be able to do it, if not it lands back on parents not on teachers.” Still another mother related her feelings saying, “It could use a lot of improvements. There are no special programs, no special help. The teachers even transfer out. There are not enough books, they didn’t even touch Social Studies.”

Then parents were asked, “Would you describe how you feel about the overall quality of education in your transfer school?”, and they responded saying:

“I’m really pleased... He’s doing well in reading, tested for the

Gifted program... It's really, really good over here. He comes home and reads stories I never thought that he could. I don't know how she gets them to learn that." Another thought a minute then said, "Very good, my daughter has had some problems but it's nothing serious." While one other mother reflected saying, "My boys struggle with math, they need more one on one... but they're not struggling like they were before in other schools." Still another mother said, "Satisfied. My daughter seems to be improving more this year." One of the other parents interviewed said, "It's not good, it's great! His grades are up. His general attitude... he doesn't dread it, he looks forward to school. He comes home with daily projects... He's doing much better." One other parent related her families experiences saying, "The teachers work harder because they know they might not get help at home. They have to work hard with the kids." While another mother said, "I'm very pleased. My daughter is having some trouble, but her teacher is pushing her along. She's decided she's good at math and she's already reading! My son feels better here. His strong points are being accentuated and his weak areas are ok. He doesn't feel uncomfortable saying he needs help." Finally one other parent commented, "Great! They're doing so much better, it's a big turn around. I feel like my kids are wanted and everyone gives them time."

When asked, "What were the other perceptions about your assigned school which effected your decision to transfer?", they responded reflecting upon their experiences saying:

"The teachers were not equipped to deal with a special needs child. They didn't understand... no patience." On reflection, another mother said, "I was concerned with getting him started right. They wouldn't enroll him for two weeks!" While one other parent commented saying, "I was scared to send my kids, the gangs are prevalent. I've watched it, the gangs cluster in ethnic groups. My kids were intimidated. You can even see it on the street." Still another mother said, "I didn't like the Kindergarten curriculum. I don't like the half day program. It was more of an educational decision. I also didn't want him to have to compete because of cultural differences." One other mother related her feelings saying, "The teacher/principal relations are real strange. There needed to be more value in what the teacher had to say." Finally one other parent said, "Every teacher knew there was a problem at the school. It had a reputation for a negative environment."

Then parents were asked, "What were the other perceptions about your transfer school which effected your decision to transfer?", they



responded as follows:

“I knew a student who had gone here and I wanted to come to this school. My cousin said that it was a good school.” Another mother reflected saying, “I have nothing but praise. My kids have thrived. We’ve gone through a lot, it was important to transfer... this progress would have been lost without it.” Still one other mother said, “This is the only school my kids have ever been to consistently. They know the teachers and principal. We are all comfortable with this school. We feel safe all the way around here.” Another mother said, “My son is in the Extended Day Kindergarten program and the teacher is very concerned about his progress.” Still one other mother commented, “I felt like I’d know what he could do, and he’d get a good education. He would have a chance to succeed. The curriculum is better, there are more resources, books, manipulative, ...” Another mother related her reasoning saying, “My daughter started here and I wanted to keep her here. Switching is hard.” While one other parent said, “This school treats my child like a normal student. Everyone accepts the needs of kids and there are no differences between students.”

When parents were asked, “What do you think your child feels about their assigned school?”, they gave the following responses.

One parent said, "We have lots of relatives there. My child wanted to go to play with them." Another commented, "She doesn't really know any of the kids who go there, all the kids around us are older." While one other echoed saying, "The only kids who love close is the boy next door, but it doesn't seem to bother him that they go to different schools." Still another parent responded, "They're scared of it, intimidated and threatened." While one other mother said, "My son has talked about it, but he's worried about the stigma he felt from teachers before. But my daughter wouldn't go to school there, we had many confrontations!" Finally another parent said, "They didn't liked it."

Then parents were asked, "What do you think your child feels about their transfer school?", and they responded as follows:

"They like it, the teachers are strict and stern." Another parent reflected saying, "My kids like going to school here. My son is very upset at the possibility of not being here next year. He does his homework without a fight. They both hug their teachers a lot. They walk down the halls smiling." While still another mother said, "They love it! They look forward to it. They even get antsy on vacation. It's excellent preparation." One other mother commented, "He likes it, he really does. I'm trying to decide about next year."

Another parent said, "My daughter feels more comfortable here than she did in the assigned school. My son never attended the other school." Still another mother commented saying, "He really likes it, never complains... he loves school." One other parent said, "She likes going here. It took her about two weeks to get organized and doing something. Now it's fine, she enjoys it." Another mother reflected and then said, "He likes it a lot! He talks about the teacher constantly... I've asked if he wants to change back and he says no!"

When asked, "If given the choice which school do you think that your child would choose to go to?", parents responded as follows:

"He'd pick the transfer school!" Another parent said, "I don't know, probably the transfer school." Still one other mother said, "They'd pick the transfer school!" While another parent reflected saying, "My daughter would choose the transfer school. She's much happier now. My son didn't go to the assigned school, he's in Kindergarten." Four mothers had the same response saying, "The transfer school." Another said, "The transfer school definitely!" While one mother commented, "The transfer school, they say they're not ever going back to the assigned school!"

When asked, "Could you explain how you feel

about the care that was displayed to your family by the assigned school?”, the parents responded with the following comments.

One mother said, “I don’t think they did care. The teachers couldn’t cross the principal’s path. They couldn’t even express their feelings for fear of disagreeing with the principal.” Another mother echoed, “Only one teacher and speech teacher cared about what was going on at home.” Still another mother responded saying, “None!” While one other mother said, “They were snobby. He probably would have been ok, but it was a real social atmosphere.” Another parent said, “I think they didn’t want to enroll my son!” Still one other mother said, “None, nothing!” While another parent related her families experiences saying, “It’s so different, they treated us like crap! It is a very undesirable school.” Another mother said, “They didn’t act like they cared. I got pushed around till you all accepted him.”

In comparison, when asked, “Could you explain how you feel about the care that was displayed to your family by the transfer school?”, parents commented saying:

“We enjoy it. We can talk to the principal or the teacher at any time. Here they want you to get involved with your child at

school.” Another parent reflected upon their experiences saying, “It’s what you would expect out of your neighborhood school! They don’t talk down to us. They make time for us. We stay informed, communication is good. It’s what a school should be, rather than what’s happening in other schools.” While another mother commented, “It’s a really caring school. They’re always sending notes and work... I like to see it and it helps me. The cafeteria is good, grades are good,...” Still another parent said, “I’m very satisfied with the care displayed toward my little son by his teachers. They seem to really care about his needs.” Another reflected saying, “I think it’s caring. Learning, communication is open, every note comes home daily... parents know what’s going on... good communication. They see kids in need and they try to help out.” While another mother said, “I’m impressed with the caring. The principal made a home visit to my house just to tell me about the Christmas Connection. The care is very important to me. It makes me feel like I made a good choice. I like it. The teachers call when kids are sick, notes are sent home, that means a lot.” Still one other parent said, “Teachers check on kids year after year. They want to know how they’re doing. It makes them feel loved, bright, and capable! Real caring!” Upon reflection another mother said, “At this school there are open communications about what’s going on at

home... yelling at home and rushed... teachers cared enough to ask. The kids left their hats on day and I had to take them to their classrooms, both teachers welcomed and invited me in. With day-cares parents are told to observe and check out, them out but in most schools they act like you're not supposed to. At this school they talk to you... show you all the reports and everyone is happy. I went back over to the assigned school, it's not as excited. I tried to find one teacher who cared... This school [transfer school] is where it's at! It's been my choice not to go back to my assigned school. Here it's safe, comfortable, clean. The neighborhood is scary, but the halls of this school tell the stories. You can see they're comfortable in school. It makes parents more comfortable. It's surprising because our assigned school is in a better neighborhood. Before my son drew pictures of a jail cell and talked about killing himself. Now he talks about being an Air Force pilot."

When parents were asked, "Would you discuss how important a caring school environment is to you as a parent?", they said:

"It's definitely important. As important as the education and quality. It makes all the difference. There's good rapport with teachers, it makes it enjoyable and interesting and not as hard. You get a good feeling, it makes a difference." While another said, "It

really makes a difference in learning. If a teacher is just there for the pay, it's not good. At this school, they really care. The teachers are not here for the money. They give lots of extra time!" While one of the other parents commented, "It's very important to know that others care about my kids and their welfare. To know the school cares but doesn't push us, everyone respects us." Still another mother said, "A caring environment is 80% of it. Environment is everything. Where you live is part of it, the quality and the amount of caring is very important. This school is safe and a warm environment." While another parent said, "You want to trust the school during all those hours your children spend at school and away from home. A caring environment is very appropriate." One other mother reflected saying, "Yes, getting along with teachers and principal, as well as, students and teachers is important. Communication is good. We get happy notes and "Happy Grams", it's really neat. It makes my daughter feel good." Still another parent commented, "A good education depends on quality and care. Kids are not like a robot. It's real personal at the [transfer school]. The experiences today will reflect on his outlook on people, society, and life on a day to day basis." One of the other mothers said, "It's very important. I want to make sure he's comfortable. If he doesn't like it, he's not going to do good."

When asked “How do you feel school compassion impacts your child's education?” parents responded:

“It helps him a lot. He does better because of the caring. The teacher loves my son to death!” Another parent reflected upon their experiences saying, “If there’s compassion it helps with self esteem and behavior. A non-compassionate teacher makes him feel stupid, not worthy of being able to do it. Lost in the system, just another number.” Two mothers simply felt that it was the same as their response to caring. While two others said, “It helps a lot.” While another mother responded saying, “It is very important. Without compassion there will be no support towards the student.” Still another parent said, “He’s a real emotional kid. Compassion makes a big impact! It’s real important to him. He’s not insecure, he’s comfortable.” One of the other mothers responded, “It makes them comfortable with the fact that someone deeply cares. You can feel it it’s not lip service. The kids know the difference between positive praise and real care with praise.” While a final mother said, “It shows care, teachers show feeling and kids realize it. At the assigned school, they didn’t care. It takes a caring person for them to learn. At the assigned school their grades were different, they had behavior problems, communication was bad. The principal



really makes a difference in caring environment, her attitude sets the tone for the school.”

In conclusion when asked, “Curriculum and/or teaching has been described by some as a “Caring, critical conversation.” Who should that conversation include and what should it be about?”, parents summed up these feelings saying:

“It’s about the child. It should include the teacher, parent, principal, and the child. There should be communication about problems and notification. Parents must work with the school and the school with the parent. It’s a family relationship. There’s monitoring, communication sheets, calls, etc. Learning should be discussed, good education, better than what I had as a child. My childhood experiences effected my education. I can’t count how many schools I went to. I want my kids to go to one school and neighborhood.” Another parent said, “It should include the parent, child, and teacher. The conversation should be about what they need help in. Education is so important with me. I was shoved from one grade to the next without real competency. My kids like the After School and Saturday School programs. They have fun learning.” While one of the other parents said, “It should include the parents,

teachers, and the principal. It should critically discuss objectives and they should be spelled out. What's expected is basic everyday curriculum. Behavior and punishment should be spelled out. Parents should know about PTA, who's in charge, communication forms, calendar, etc. Care and knowing what to expect, open communication, notes, contacts,... procedures." Another mother simply said, "Family values and morality." Several others commented that the conversation should include the parent, child, teacher, and principal. In addition, they made comments such as: "It should be about what she's doing, lacking, how to help, improvement, future goals, etc." While another mother said, "The entire educational system is in dire need of help. The over-all public needs to be involved in the conversation. We must all decide on things that effect children, when we don't it's a messed up system. Parents must also care about getting a proper education. They need the basics, math, reading, writing, comprehension. If they don't have those, then they can't advance in life. Schools are conveyor belting kids out of school now. This is hard, it's been messed up for a long time... logic about decisions, finances, busing, 5th Grade Centers were bad. Now with mainstreaming back its much better. They closed a lot of schools, but now they're reopening them. The district also spent money poorly but now they're starting to correct past bad

decisions.” Another mother reflected then said, “It should include the child, teachers, and any other adult they have in class. The parents and the principal all have to do what’s right by the kids. We must focus on the kids needs, expectations, goals, attitudes, and emotional well being.”

### Review of Thematic Responses

Four basic themes developed related to the collection of information. The in-depth interviews, random sample survey, and the review of the literature focused upon:

Theme # 1 - Interpersonal Relations with Staff.

Theme # 2 - Safety and Student Interpersonal Relationships.

Theme # 3 - Educational Quality of School Site.

Theme # 4 - Family Perceptions of a Caring School

Environment.

Parental descriptions and responses, as well as, information found in the review of the literature, provide the tesserae for an interesting mosaic. These sources describe the best and the worst of educational experiences. In their own words or with their responses, parents described the impetus for their desire to transfer from their assigned school.

#### Theme # 1

#### Interpersonal Relations with Staff

One parent described her families experiences at the assigned school saying, "I didn't see teachers and students interacting a lot. My children didn't want to go to school." Another mother said her son's experiences at the assigned school relating, "The kindergarten teacher spent her time with the successful students. My child was failed immediately and if he acted up he was stigmatized." While one parent described the assigned school saying, "I feel like if you are a parent in the PTA the interactions were good, but if you couldn't be involved the teachers were real cold." Still another mother said, "Everyone has their place and no one crosses the line, it's a real snotty atmosphere." These feelings were echoed at other assigned school, with mothers reporting, "The staff was rude. They didn't seem to care about my children." Finally another parent described her feelings regarding the assigned school saying, "As a parent I had no input, it was their way or no way."

## Theme # 2

### Safety and Student Interpersonal Relationships

Again the research collected in this study was reviewed to address this issue. Parents responded to questions regarding their assigned school saying, "It is not safe, the school does not follow procedures which insure my child's safety from outsiders." Another

related, "I wasn't originally concerned, however now I'm more concerned due to a rise in the gang population and the decline of the area." One mother emphatically said, "My child is not safe. There are a lot of Black/White hate. Children do not mix outside of ethnic or racial lines. The gang problem is very serious. The school seems to ignore the problems and does nothing about it." While another described a similar problem at another assigned school site saying, "Whites and Mexicans are the minority, the Blacks form gangs that are out to get them." Still another mother related her families experiences at the assigned school saying, "There's not many Black kids, they struggle to fit in. There's a lot of cultural stress, ethnic and cultural appreciation is not even taught." Finally another parent summed up their assigned school experiences when she said, "Hispanics and Blacks are the preference. We supported the school projects but became very frustrated and left out when programs were presented in Spanish without translation. Our kids (Anglo) didn't even know what they were being taught."

### Theme # 3

#### Educational Quality of School Site

Parent responses to in-depth interview questions related to the educational quality at their assigned school were gathered to

address issues of educational quality. One parent responded to these issues saying, "It was very poor, my kids didn't learn anything." Another mother reflected on her families experiences at the assigned school and said, "The teachers have preconceived notions about what the kids should know. They leave extra help up to the parents. They don't think remediation is their job." While another parent responded, "The school didn't help my child with testing or interventions to address the emotional issues. The teachers only wanted to work with those making progress." While one parent's response specifically addressed the curriculum implemented and the materials used saying, "Curriculum and materials need a lot of improvement, the teachers didn't even cover Social Studies."

#### Theme # 4

##### Family Perceptions of a Caring School Environment.

Finally, the in-depth interview responses at the assigned school were reviewed to reveal their impact upon family perceptions of caring in a school environment. One mother described her families experiences at the assigned school saying, "They didn't act like they cared. They said that the school was full and wouldn't enroll my child. I had to find a school that would take him. They were no help at all and didn't care." Another parent flatly said,

“They treated me “like crap”. It was a very undesirable school.” While another mother described her disappointment at the level of care in the assigned school saying, “Only two teachers seemed to care that we were having problems at home.” While another said, “I don't think that they cared.” Still one other mother related her feelings saying, “It was a real social atmosphere. The staff is snobby.” Finally, another parent described her families caring experiences at the assigned school saying, “None, no care was shown to me or to my children by the school.”

As demonstrated by their responses to the in-depth interview questions, parental perceptions of schooling experiences at the assigned school site shaped their reasoning and dissatisfaction. The pairing of their voices to the basic themes, completes a dark mosaic of undesirable experiences.

## Chapter V

### Reflections

As I embarked upon this quest for information, I outlined three assumptions that were preconceived by this researcher. These notions framed my research within the boundaries of my beliefs and personal experiences as a teacher, reading specialist, counselor, administrator, and researcher. They included:

- 1) The pedagogical foundation for a home/school relationship is centered in law, charging teachers to take responsibility as in, "in loco parentis" (van Manen, 1991, p. 21). This charge vests teachers with the rights, responsibilities and concerns of a parent. It is therefore the duty of the teacher to see education/learning as a part of the child's lived experience.
- 2) Reflective educational praxis is fundamental to a compassionate pedagogy. Educators must envision what the child sees, listen to what they say, and teach based upon those insights. Parents are a vital part of this symphony of voices.
- 3) Assuming that many urban schools are in a state of "crisis" (Noddings, 1991, p. 166) and "are falling apart all over the country" (Giroux, 1992, p. 22), the school



transfer issue has important relevance to today's educators. Who better to query this information from than the parents who are demanding the choice and initiating transfers from their assigned urban school sites?

As I reflected upon my original study questions, I found it interesting that the voices of those interviewed so closely mirrored the views expressed by many curricular theorists, such as: John Dewey (1916), Nel Noddings (1984,1991,), Max van Manen (1988, 1990, 1991), James Comer & Alvin Poussaint (1975,1992), Bill Reynolds (1993, 1994), William Schubert (1986,1991,1992), George Willis (1991), Ted Aoki (1991), Madeleine Grumet (1988), Jonathan Kozol (1990, 1993), Sonia Nieto (1992), and James Macdonald (1988).

Working within a large urban school district has availed this researcher with the resources needed to study the school transfer issue. The aspirations and dreams that urban parents have for their children are clearly visible in the decisions made regarding their schooling experiences. The parents interviewed are assertive and opinionated. They have taken a stand, believing their instincts and perceptions. Listen to the voices of parents, who have transferred from their assigned school, as their responses to the in-depth

interview are paired with the original study questions.

1) How does a caring pedagogy impact urban classrooms and schools?

When responding to in-depth interview questions regarding her transfer school one parent said, "I'm impressed with the caring. The teachers and even the principal make home visits trying to help and showing they care." Another parent related that she was impressed with the level of care at the transfer school saying, "Teachers check on kids year after year, to see how they're progressing. You can tell the amount of care just by walking down the hall. Because of the real caring shown to students they feel loved, bright, capable! While still another parent related that the transfer school "is warm and safe. He knows the limits. He seems to be maturing and doesn't struggle to fit in." Finally, another parent reflected upon her feelings regarding the transfer school saying, "The teachers really know the kids, they take time to know their backgrounds and it makes the kids happy. The teachers and the principal will bend over backwards to help parents. You really trust them."

The pedagogical implications experienced in a caring school environment are issues which Max van Manen has spent a great deal of time discussing. His ardent belief is that educators must

recognize the impact of dwelling in a caring school. Van Manen focuses a portions of his research upon the law which charges teachers with “in loco parentis” responsibilities. Clearly he believes that many educators only deal responsibility on a surface level. Van Manen challenges educators to ponder the full implications of this charge and come to terms with the expectations it demands (1991, p 21). He clarifies some of these notions saying:

“To believe in a child is to strengthen that child... An educator needs to believe in children. Specifically he or she needs to believe in the possibilities and goodness of the particular children for whom he or she has responsibility. (van Manen, 1991, p. 167).

Van Manen continues by quoting a letter from Pestalozzi, which was written nearly two hundred years ago,

“The child wants all that gives it strength and that can make it say, “I can do it.” But this desire is produced, not by words, but by care for the child in every way and by the feelings and forces that are aroused in the child by this all-round care. Words do not produce the thing itself, but only a clear insight, the awareness of it” (1991, p. 167).

Nel Noddings and Carol Witherell address caring schooling relationships in their work entitled Stories Lives Tell, Narrative and Dialogue in Education. They expand upon van Manen’s notion of caring schooling environments, saying:

“A caring relation also requires dialogue. The material

of dialogue is usually words, but touch, smiles, affectionate sounds and silences, and glances may also be part of it. True dialogue is open; that is, conclusions are not held to be absolute by any party at the outset. The search for enlightenment, responsible choice, perspective, or means to solve a problem is mutual and marked by appropriate signs of reciprocity... Teacher and student must know each other well enough for trust to develop” (Witherell, Noddings, 1991, p. 7).

2) What are the implications of a compassionate curriculum to urban public schools?

As I reviewed the second study question, I was again reminded of the in depth interview responses of transfer parents and the way in which they echoed curricular theorists opinions regarding compassion. One parent described the transfer school saying, “The quality of education is not good, it's great! Their grades are up, attitudes are wonderful, and they actually look forward to going to school. Attention is not only paid to academics but to emotional need as well.” While another parent says, “I've seen a big turn around. They're doing much better. They feel like they are wanted and everyone gives their time.” Still another of the parent's responded to her families transfer school experiences saying, “My child is doing very well, he's even going to be evaluated for the Gifted or accelerated learning classes. I don't know how his teacher

does it, but he's reading stories you wouldn't believe! While one mother said, "I'm well satisfied. We have daily and weekly communications. The teacher seems to stick to a positive approach to correcting behavior. They don't let them slide and it works. The principal is always there, cheering the kids on, and she never talks down to parents." Another family responded to the in-depth interview questions regarding their transfer school saying, "It's really good! There is a lot of one on one teaching. The kids respect their teachers and they're not scared of the principal. It's more of a trusting relationship. The kids know they can come to her if they have a problem and the same is true of the parents." One mother said, "I just love the teachers, my child works harder too. Sometimes I come up just to visit, you can walk in any time." Another parent described her families at the transfer school saying, "I was surprised with the daily interactions with the teachers. I enjoy the accessibility of the teachers and principal. When there's problems they don't give up. The teachers and principal seem to trust each other and get along well. They talk highly of each other. The principal is very visible, smiling, walking around the building, ...her door is always open to parents." Finally one parent said, "Before coming to this school one of my children continually drew pictures about death. Now he's bringing home pictures of what he

wants to be when he grows up. Both of my kids self-confidence and trust levels have changes dramatically. They are now making good academic progress and are not afraid to ask for help.”

James Comer and Alvin Poussaint mirrored some of these feelings saying:

“...we know of schools that have been very successful in educating children from difficult circumstances, because the staff and the parents work together to support the development of the children, and in turn, learning. The goal of education should be learning, [school] choice or no choice. Focusing on choice prevents us from doing what is necessary to help all children learn” (Comer, 1975,1992, p. 188-89).

William Ayers, in the book Teacher Lore: Learning From Our Own Experience, summed up the choices teachers make in implementing an innovative, compassionate curriculum or a curriculum of mediocrity,

“Teachers are certainly shaped by their relationship to power and their role in a vast bureaucracy bent on reproducing social relations, but teachers also decide much of what goes on in the classrooms. Teaching can be conscious or unconscious, reflexive or reflective, insipid or insurgent. Teachers, like others, can choose to satisfy distant demands or not, accommodate established expectations or not, embrace the narrowest self-interest or not. Teachers can decide to pass on the lessons of conformity, mindlessness, and obedience, or they can decide to rebel when necessary, to interpret and invent when possible, to join with others, with students and parents perhaps, in creating something new and hopeful. Teaching can be miserable and cowardly, and

teaching can also be noble and heroic” (Ayers, 1992, p. 156).

In a paper presented at the 1993 Bergamo Conference, William Reynolds speaks directly to the issue of compassion in schools, saying:

“Compassion would allow us to re-turn to the original enthusiasm with which children greet the world. Compassion would allow the passion for knowledge and life to re-turn. Re-turn what has been lost as we travel the prescribed paths of a compassionless and disabling school system with its preordained curriculum. Compassion would allow us to support our children, believe in our children, endure for the sake of the children, and hope for the children” (Reynolds, 1993).

3) What is the impact of a caring environment established between urban students and teachers/schools and homes?

Finally in reflecting upon the final of the original study questions, I once again turned to the research for parent perceptions regarding these relationships. One mother responded to the in-depth interview questions saying, “Parents are told to check out day-cares but when we try to check out school we're not welcome. Teachers there, [at the transfer school], care about what's going on at home and are willing to offer support and suggestions. They have an open door policy, it makes parents feel welcome.” Another mother

responded, "It makes me feel like I made a good choice in schools. Teachers call when kids are sick, notes are sent home,... that means a lot." One parent reflected upon her families experiences at the transfer school saying, "The teachers recognize parents needs and try to accommodate with open forms of communication." While another mother said, "The teachers work harder because they know that they might not get help at home. A final response derived from the perceptions of transfer parents during the in-depth interviews, included one who said, "It's what you expect out of a neighborhood school. Everyone has time for you, they keep you informed and they don't talk down to you."

John Dewey, nearly 80 years ago, expressed his opinion regarding in the "moral" teaching relationship which should exist between home and school, when he wrote:

"...the school becomes itself a form of social life, a miniature community and one in close interaction with other modes of associated experience beyond school walls... All education which develops power to share effectively in social life is moral" (Dewey, 1916, p. 360).

Modern day curricular theorists and philosophers have also take issue with the importance of interpersonal relations and caring in the schooling experience. Over their professional careers, James Comer and Alvin Poussaint have taken issue with urban education.



They have stressed to parents and educators the importance of their responsibilities in their interactions with children. These authors and psychiatrists have encouraged the empowerment of parents, students and educators. They believe that collectively we must act responsibly for the sake of children.

“When parents, teachers, principals, and others convey to the child that we want you, like you, and would like to have you in this school and this classroom, but there are certain things we expect of you, the response is often miraculous” (Comer, Poussaint, 1975, 1992, p. 198).

They have also found it interesting,

“...that some teachers are successful even in some of the most troubled schools. We have seen chaotic schools become safe and successful through the cooperation of parents, teachers, students, and administration” (Comer, Poussaint, 1975, 1992, p. 215).

Nel Noddings, one of today’s most prolific writers regarding caring environments for children, describes the hesitancy of parents in trusting educators and schooling saying:

“Trust is not automatically conferred on those who present appropriate credentials. As parents, most of us begin to trust when we are convinced that a particular teacher really does have the best interests of our child at heart. As we see our child grow intellectually, socially and morally, our trust deepens” (Noddings, 1993, p. 138).

## Theme Development

The “themes” (van Manen, 1990) which developed from these responses included:

Theme # 1 - Interpersonal Relations with Staff

Theme # 2 - Safety and Student Interpersonal Relationships

Theme #3 - Educational Quality at School Site

Theme #4 - Family Perceptions of a Caring School Environment

In analyzing the data, several themes emerged. These are the beliefs held by parents regarding their perceptions of quality in the public school setting. In general, all parents rated or classified the transfer school as a positive setting where open communication exists and students are cared for both academically and emotionally. In contrast, the assigned school site is described as a place which does not demonstrate a caring environment and is felt to be significantly less effective in academic and behavioral needs. Francine Shuchat Shaw describes theme development saying:

...themes serve as windows for the way in which we see the world and define our purposes in it. They serve as filters, drawing us selectively to certain situations and causes rather than others, and they drive our conduct and actions (Shuchat Shaw, 1991, p 223).

George Willis also believes that these themes are important to program development in schools. He says that working from Freire’s

notion, these themes become even more relevant to educators and program development if they come from the “oppressed themselves” (Willis, Schubert, 1991, p. 137).

The interpretation of the data collected from the transfer parent responses have been pieced around these thematic constructs. The hope was to form a mosaic pattern of interconnected feelings, needs, and desires. The voices heard are those of parents attuned to the tesserae (Akin, 1994) of emotions needed to complete the schooling mosaic.

As participant and researcher, I have attempted to uncover the pattern of the mosaic which makes-up the schooling experiences of our young. I have not attempted to develop a diagram with precise intersects, but a mural of life experiences. The pieces include the fragments of in-depth interview accounts, in light of the random sample survey information, and with reflections from the review of the literature.

## Themes

### Theme # 1

#### Interpersonal Relations with Staff

#### Assigned School Responses to the In-Depth Interviews

One of the themes discussed by parents were interpersonal

relationships. Their concerns included relations between: school and staff members, students and staff members, as well as, parents and staff members. When asked to reflect upon the schooling experiences at their assigned school one parent said, "I didn't see teachers and students interacting a lot. My children didn't want to go to school". Another parent described the lack of help and support at his assigned school. She said, "The kindergarten teacher spent her time with the successful students. My child was failed immediately and if he acted up he was stigmatized." One mother said, "I feel like if you are a parent in the PTA the interactions were good, but if you couldn't be involved the teachers were real cold." Unfortunately, another mother described her children's assigned school saying, "Everyone has their place and no one crosses the line, it's a real snotty atmosphere." The responses to the questions continued to elicit responses from transfer parents, such as, "The staff was rude. They didn't seem to care about my children." Another parent summed up her families experiences saying, "As a parent I had no input, it was their way or no way."

#### Assigned School Responses to the Random Sample Survey

These perceptions were supported in the response patterns to the Random Sample Survey. Parents gave their assigned school a very poor rating in interpersonal relations. Nearly 40 to 50% of the

parents returning the survey perceived these relations as fair to poor!

Student and Teacher -	61% Excellent to Good 38% Fair to Poor
Teacher and Parent -	58% Excellent to Good 41% Fair to Poor
Teacher and Principal -	47% Excellent to Good 52% Fair to Poor
Principal and Student -	52% Excellent to Good 47% Fair to Poor
Principal and Parent -	52% Excellent to Good 47% Fair to Poor

### Assigned School Responses to the Review of the Literature

Nel Noddings declares that schools should be inviting places where students, parents and the community feel welcome to “attend, watch, and help” (1992, p 66). The book, Helping Transfer Students, by Leonard A. Jason (1992), gives us another perspective. The authors describe the following responses regarding parental reasons for transferring from the assigned school:

"Problems with teacher at old school (44)."

(11% of Sample)

"Problems with the principal at the old school (23)."

(6% of Sample)

Although these findings could use elaboration, they are supportive; with 51% of the respondents citing staff relations as a significant

factor.

### Transfer School Responses

In contrast, it was interesting to hear the differences in parental perception at the transfer school. These parents piece together a completely different picture. One parent describes her families experiences at the transfer school saying, "I just love the teachers, my child works harder too. Sometimes I come up just to visit, you can walk in any time." Another parent describes teacher and principal interactions with her children when she said, "The teachers really know the kids, they take time to know their backgrounds and it makes the kids happy. The teachers and the principal will bend over backwards to help parents. You really trust them." Still another parent talks about the open communication and team work atmosphere, saying, "I was surprised with the daily interactions with the teachers. I enjoy the accessibility of the teachers and principal. When there's problems they don't give up. The teachers and principal seem to trust each other and get along well. They talk highly of each other. The principal is very visible, smiling, walking around the building... her door is always open to parents." On the subject of communication, behavioral and academic concerns, another parent says, "I'm well satisfied. We have daily and weekly communications. The teacher seems to stick to a

positive approach to correcting behavior. They don't let them slide and it works. The principal is always there, cheering the kids on, and she never talks down to parents.” Another parent summed up the perceptions of transfer parents regarding the interpersonal relations at the school saying, “It's really good! There is a lot of one on one teaching. The kids respect their teachers and they're not scared of the principal. It's more of a trusting relationship. The kids know they can come to her if they have a problem and the same is true of the parents.”

#### Transfer School Responses to Random Sample Survey

A close view of parental perceptions regarding the assigned school to the transfer school shows a dramatic difference. Negative parental perceptions or feelings about these interpersonal relationships at the transfer site dropped in the majority of cases below 5% and the “Poor” rating was reduced to just one area.

Student and Teacher -	96% Excellent to Good 4% Fair
Teacher and Parent -	87% Excellent to Good 13% Fair to Poor
Teacher and Principal -	91% Excellent to Good 7% Fair
Principal and Student -	96% Excellent to Good 4% Fair
Principal and Parent -	96% Excellent to Good 4% Fair

## Transfer School Responses to the Review of the Literature

Jason, et al., contrasted these findings in a question related to the staff at the transfer school. The parents in their study related that part of their attraction to the transfer school site was the staff.

"Attracted to personnel at new school (31)" (8% of Sample)

Nel Noddings reminds us that, "Good parenting or teaching starts with the construction of trusting relationships and works continually to build on the foundation of trust (1992, p xii). These threads or bits of information weave a tightly woven tapestry regarding the importance of interpersonal relations in schooling. Parents desire an atmosphere of mutual respect. They expressed the belief that each person (students, staff members, and parents) should be valued for their knowledge and abilities. Clearly when these parents are not comfortable with interpersonal relationships they tend to select alternative schooling sites for their children. Noddings summed up some of these emotions saying:

...you [parents] should not accept having your child with a bad teacher [or school] for even one year. When we do not like or trust our physicians, lawyers, or dentists, we find new ones. Within reason, we ought to be able to do that with teachers [schools], too (Noddings, 1992, p. 68).



## Theme #2

### Safety and Student Interpersonal Relationships

#### Assigned School Responses to the In-Depth Interview

Another theme which developed, related to safety and interpersonal relationships between students. In responding to the interview, several parents related a sense of insecurity at their assigned schools, saying, "I might worry more there." Another parent said, "It is not safe, the school does not follow procedures which insure my child's safety from outsiders." These perceptions of their child(ren)'s safety at the assigned school continued with this parents account, she said, "I wasn't originally concerned, however now I'm more concerned due to a rise in the gang population and the decline of the area." Another said of their assigned school, "My child is not safe. There are a lot of Black/White hate. Children do not mix outside of ethnic or racial lines. The gang problem is very serious. The school seems to ignore the problem and does nothing about it." This was echoed by another interview in which a mother said, "Gangs write all over the neighborhood. The school does seem to have good security and gets right on the problems. The neighborhood has experienced major economic changes because it's in an older, inner city area."

In addition, it was interesting to note that many of the parents

interviewed felt their children were treated unfairly due to a lack of ethnicity, cultural, or racial appreciation. Nel Noddings says that, some schools “preach” more than “teach” issues related to race, gender and religion. She says that, “Dialogue is required here, and dialogue ends in question or in great sadness as often as it does in solutions” (Noddings, 1992, p. 120).

When describing racial and ethnic issues at the assigned school site one parent said, “Whites and Mexicans are the minority, the Blacks form gangs that are out to get them.” Another parent described her feelings and saying, “There's not many Black kids, they struggle to fit in. There's a lot of cultural stress, ethnic and cultural appreciation is not even taught.” Still another mother told a story which demonstrated her feelings of exclusion when she said, “Hispanics and Blacks are the preference. We support the school projects but became very frustrated and left out when programs were presented in Spanish without translation. Our kids (Anglo) didn't even know what they were being taught.”

#### Assigned School Responses to the Random Sample Survey

These perceptions about safety, as well as, racial and ethnic issues were supported in the Random Sample Survey. The results of the parents sampled regarding their assigned school are as follows: When questioned regarding student safety, 47% of the parents

returning surveys found them to be excellent to good, while 52% found these issues as fair. When asked about ethnic and racial issues, 57% of the parents felt that these relationships were excellent to good, while 42% believed that they were fair. Nearly half of the parents believed that their children were unfairly treated or were concerned about their child's safety in their assigned school.

Safety of Student - 47% Excellent to Good

52% Fair

Ethnic & Racial Issues - 57% Excellent to Good

42% Fair

#### Assigned School Responses to the Review of the Literature

The research resource, Helping Transfer Students (Jason, 1992), describes the following similarities in responses to parental reasons for transferring from their assigned school:

"Trouble with kids from the old school (29)". (59% of Sample)

"Other reasons involving peers (18)". (36% of Sample)

Although the report does not specify what those "other reasons" may have been, it relates the fact that 96% of the sample respondents felt that there were problems related to peer relationships. Clearly, parents are very concerned about issues related to safety and interpersonal relationships between students. These parents appear

to be searching for schools where a variety of ethnic groups work together in supportive relationships. Although Noddings does not agree with forced school busing, she does believe that,

“The basic guiding idea is to make the school into a family-like center of care. We must stop moving children from place to place in order to solve social problems or “satisfy their developmental needs.” One of their greatest needs is stability--a sense of belonging” (Noddings, 1992, p 67).

### Transfer School Responses to the In-Depth Interview

The differences in parental responses between the assigned school and the transfer school are dramatic. One of those parent’s interviewed gave the following response regarding their perceptions of safety and student interpersonal relationships at the transfer school, she said, “The mood at school is warm and safe. He knows the limits. He seems to be maturing and doesn't struggle to fit in.” Another parent responded saying that, “If anything happened I know the principal would phone immediately. She has control of the children and they respect her. I've never seen any racial or ethnic problems.” One of the mothers who had a district instituted transfer said, “I wasn't real comfortable at first, their father lives real close and it's a poor area - but now I'm comfortable with it. My son has some Black friends, he says it wouldn't bother him to be Black too.” Another parent described her feelings about safety and student

relationships saying, "It's pretty safe, there are policies regarding safety and they're followed. There's an even mix of races. I observe a lot and there are not gangs or group problems. My children have White, Black, Hispanic, and Indian friends, it's no a big deal." While another mother said that she had "no real concerns, I feel comfortable here. He's well watched, I don't worry about him getting hurt or anything."

### Transfer School Responses to the Random Sample Survey

The difference in responses related to the assigned school and the transfer school are like two completely different mosaics. The concerns are the same but the perceptions about these relationships are entirely different. William Schubert discussed some concepts which relate to these feelings, he says,

...cooperative curriculum development is a kind of integration that joins interest and effort, personal knowledge and the disciplines, and school and life...Such integration can be facilitated by an artistry of teaching that taps familiar experiences in the culture, engages students in playfulness of drama and story, builds upon the curricula to nonschool experiences in student lives... (Schubert, in Willis, Schubert, 1991, p. 292).

The parental responses to the transfer school survey questions show a significant difference. This sample response reinforces the reliability of the interviews and adds quantitative validity. It showed that 87% of the parents felt that the transfer school was in

the excellent to good category, while 13% were in the fair range. Again, 87% of the parents felt that the transfer school was in the excellent to good rating, while 13% were considered as fair.

Safety of Student - 87% Excellent to Good  
13% Fair

Ethnic & Racial Issues - 87% Excellent to Good  
13% Fair

### Theme #3

#### Educational Quality at School Site

#### Assigned School Responses to the In-Depth Interview

The issue of school quality is a pervasive issue or buzz term with the public at large. This was a major theme with the respondents to the in-depth interview. Noddings reflected on Ruddick's ideas related to these parental issues, saying, "...mothers want to preserve the lives of their children, foster their growth, and shape them according to some ideal of acceptability" (Noddings, 1992, p. 45). Perhaps this under-pins the reason for so many parents taking the initiative and control of their child's school site. Of those interviewed, one parent said that the quality of education at the assigned school "was very poor...", she continued saying, "my kids didn't learn anything." Another mother said, "The teachers have

preconceived notions about what the kids should know. They leave extra help up to the parents. They don't think remediation is their job.” Still another mother related that their assigned school “didn't help my child with testing or interventions to address his emotional issues. The teachers only wanted to work with those making progress.” While a final parent summed up some of the feelings saying, “Curriculum and materials need a lot of improvement, the teachers didn't even cover Social Studies.”

#### Assigned School Responses to the Random Sample Survey

The random sample survey indicated that the majority of parents responding had serious concerns relating to the educational quality of the assigned school. Nearly two thirds of the of the parents gave this important perception a negative rating:

Educational Quality - 40% Excellent to Good

60% Fair to Poor

These responses demonstrate a significant level of dissatisfaction regarding perception of educational quality at the assigned site.

#### Assigned School Responses to the Review of the Literature

The review of the Jason et al. research, indicates that this area was also of considerable concern to the parents in their study. A review of the literature (Jason, 1992) gives the following supportive information:

- "Problems with old school (44). " (34% of Sample)
- "Avoiding retention in grade (7)." (5% of Sample)
- "Wanted more of a challenge (50)." (38% of Sample)
- "Other academic problems (30)." (23% of Sample)

This is reflective of 100% of the sample respondents who specifically cite academic quality deficiencies as a factor in their decision to change schools.

### Transfer School Responses to the In-Depth Interview

The parental responses to the in-depth interviews and the random sample surveys reflected significant differences between the perceptions of the assigned school and that of the transfer site. One parent responded that, "The teachers work harder because they know that they might not get help at home." Another mother said that she had "seen a big turn around [in her children]. They're doing much better. They feel like they are wanted and everyone gives their time." Still another parent said, "Before coming to this school one of my children continually drew pictures about death. Now he's bringing home pictures of what he wants to be when he grows up. Both of my kids self-confidence and trust levels have changes dramatically. They are now making good academic progress and are not afraid to ask for help." Another parent discussed her boys educational issues saying, "My boys struggle with Math, but they're



not struggling like they were before in other schools.” One parent described this saying, “The quality of education is not good, it's great! Their grades are up, attitudes are wonderful, and they actually look forward to going to school. Attention is not only paid to academics but to emotional need as well.” While another parent summed up her feelings saying, “My child is doing very well, he's even going to be evaluated for the Gifted or accelerated learning classes. I don't know how his teacher does it, but he's reading stories you wouldn't believe!”

#### Transfer School Responses to the Random Sample Survey

The stories told in the in-depth interviews reflect the significance of the parent perceptions regarding educational quality at the assigned school site. As the parent respondents to the random sample survey rated the selected transfer school site, they entirely negated the “Poor” rating and only 4% responded that the educational experience was “Fair”.

Educational Quality - 96% Excellent to Good

4% Fair

The great majority appear to believe that the change in schools has made a significant impact on the quality of their child(ren)'s education.

## Transfer School Responses to the Review of the Literature

The Jason study (1992) had no applicable references regarding educational quality at to the transfer school. All responses were directed toward to the assigned school site.

### Theme #4

#### Family Perceptions of a Caring School Environment

#### Assigned School Responses to the In-Depth Interviews

The final indicator and theme, is concerned with the care that was felt by the family from the school personnel. This indicator was added to the in-depth interviews after it became a response in the voluntary answer section of the random sample survey. One mother described her experience at the assigned school saying, "They didn't act like they cared. They said that the school was full and wouldn't enroll my child. I had to find a school that would take him. They were no help at all and didn't care." Another mother said, "They treated me "like crap". It was a very undesirable school." Still another parent believed that "only two teachers seemed to care that we were having problems at home." One parent said, "I don't think that they cared." Another mother described the school saying, "It was a real social atmosphere. The staff is snobby." One mother summed up the feelings regarding the issue of care at the assigned

school saying, “None, no care was shown to me or to my children by the school.”

All parents interviewed expressed a lack of caring in their assigned school which was unacceptable. Some parents expressed passionate emotions about their children never returning to the assigned school.

#### Assigned School Responses to the Review of the Literature

The review of the Jason study (1992) did not specifically address this issue. Author and psychiatrist, James Comer, does address this issue saying that the single greatest complaint directed at teachers is, “They don’t Care!” (Comer, 1988, p. 35).

#### Transfer School Responses to the In-Depth Interviews

In contrast to the perceptions related in the assigned school interview, the transfer school feelings about the demonstration of caring expressed to the family was very different. One mother described these perceptions saying, “The teachers recognize parents needs and try to accommodate with open forms of communication.” While another parent said, “It’s what you expect out of a neighborhood school. Everyone has time for you, they keep you informed and they don't talk down to you.” Still another mother described her feelings saying, “I’m impressed with the caring. The teachers and even the principal make home visits trying to help and

showing they care.” While one mother said, “It makes me feel like I made a good choice in schools. Teachers call when kids are sick, notes are sent home,... that means a lot.” Another mother summed up her feelings saying, “Parents are told to check out day-cares but when we try to check out school we're not welcome. Teachers there [at the transfer school], care about what's going on at home and are willing to offer support and suggestions. They have an open door policy, it makes parents feel welcome.” One parent commented on her perceptions of caring in the transfer school saying, “Teachers check on kids year after year, to see how they're progressing. You can tell the amount of care just by walking down the hall. Because of the real caring shown to students they feel loved, bright, capable!”

What a powerful contrast these parents paint. Their perceptions of the assigned school and the transfer school reflect strong feelings and elicit emotional responses to their families experiences.

#### Transfer School Responses to the Review of the Literature

The Jason study (1992) did not reflect specific responses to the issues of care in the assigned school or in the transfer school. However, Nel Noddings has written a wealth of information on the need for care in our schools. She believes, just as these parents

relate, that children will not have successful schooling experiences without a caring environment. She says,

“We must take public responsibility for raising healthy, competent, and happy children. I will argue that the school must play a major role in this task, and I will argue further that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for students” (Noddings, 1992, p. 14).

Nel Noddings also attempts to put some perspective on the negative emotions and observations made by parents. She believes that,

“Many of our schools are in what might be called a crisis of caring. Both students and teachers are brutally attacked verbally and physically. Clearly, the schools are not often places where caring is fulfilled, but it is not always the failure of teachers that causes the lapse in caring. Many urban teachers are suffering symptoms of battle fatigue and “burn-out.” No matter what they do, it seems, their efforts are not perceived as caring. They themselves are perceived, instead, as the enemy, as natural targets for resistance” (Noddings, 1984, p. 181).

Max van Manen adds to this dilemma, stating that schools and the teachers in them who do not recognize individual needs and adjust teaching accordingly only add to this resistance. Each student must be seen as a unique individual who should be recognized for their abilities and needs. Van Manen further states that attempting to treat all students the same, in the misbegotten

notion of equality will not meet all children's needs or provide for their positive emotional support. He refers to these teachers as "tactless" (1991, p. 169). Furthermore, he believes,

"When pedagogy is no longer concerned with the unique person, then education is reduced to an enterprise in which the school has become "the market," the children and their parents its "customers" and "consumers," the teachers "classroom managers," and the principal "the school executive" (van Manen, 1991, p. 191).

James Comer and Alvin Poussaint describe some of the challenges facing inner city schools and the teachers in them saying:

[A withdrawn or timid child] "...fares badly in chaotic classrooms with a great deal of confusion, scapegoating, or mutual abuse. These children do best when a teacher is able to create an environment in which each child feel safe, believes that his rights and needs will be respected, and feels that he will not be ridiculed and put down" (Comer, Poussaint, 1975,1992, p. 221).

They continue stating that,

"...the culture of the school is so very different from the culture of the community. This problem can be solved by involving parents or people from the community... in the school program... when they are good examples and support the goals of the school, [they] can bridge the gap between the community and the school for many youngsters" (Comer, Poussaint, 1975, 1992, p. 228).

Poussaint and Comer have commented not only on cultural issues, but also on issues related to economic class. It is their belief that the difference in income levels between teachers and

inner city, low socio-economic families is an additional barrier which must be crossed. They believe,

“Many parents are intimidated by the jargon and mannerisms of middle-class teachers. This is true in spite of the fact that many of the professionals have come from backgrounds similar to those of the parents. In some cases parents feel that they have very little to offer the professional school staff. In others, they feel inferior because they did not achieve professional status. In some cases, they have somehow received a message from the staff that they are unimportant and are not wanted in the school” (1975, 1992, p. 191).

As demonstrated through their responses, inner city parents are willing to go to great lengths to place their children in a school environment which they believe to be supportive and nurturing. In comparing the transfer school responses, which were paired with the original study questions, to the assigned school responses from the in-depth interview themes, two very different perceptions of schooling environments emerge. Further comparisons are visible in the random sample survey responses, leaving little doubt as to which school environment parents are most satisfied. A look at the graphic representation of these responses adds data to the perceived differences between the assigned school and the transfer school.

Upon reviewing these graphic representations of parental responses to the random sample survey, it is important to note the

shift in parental opinion between the assigned school and the transfer school. In addition, it is significant that in every comparison there is a significant difference in the “fair to poor” ratings of the assigned school, as opposed to more favorable ratings of the transfer school.

### Summary and Conclusions

Several years ago, I happened to sit and watch an artist carefully place tesserae into a mosaic. Later that same day, I crossed the street and entered St. Paul’s Cathedral. There to my amazement, were huge mosaic vestiges of religious scenes. The individual tesserae were completely invisible, causing onlookers to believe that they were viewing a mural. However, upon close examination, one could clearly see the tesserae and lose sight of the complete picture.

Like the mosaic, this study has many pieces. Each of the pieces add color, light, and perspective to a larger picture. Though it is only a snap shot of parental views in a single school during a single year, it is a mosaic of their perceptions regarding two different schools, one to which they were assigned and one to which they transferred. The mosaic that their perceptions formed, depicts one side of the picture as dark, frightening, and foreboding, while



the other is bright, cheery, and hopeful.

These parents talk about the very different administrative tones among school sites. In the assigned school they talk about administrators who are cold, unfair, controlling, and unapproachable figures. Whereas in the transfer school, these same parents speak of an administration style which is open, supportive, and caring.

Clearly administrators and teachers must recognize the impact they have upon the lives of their students and take responsibility for children's positive or negative schooling experiences. John Dewey (1916) stated that:

“Expressed in terms of the attitudes of the individual the traits of good methods [in teachers and administrators] are straightforwardness, flexible intellectual interests or open-minded will to learn, integrity of purpose, and acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's activity including thought”(Dewey, 1916, p. 179).

I have not attempted to break down this information into a formula for success or failure, because I do not believe that schools can replicate feelings of trust and care through a formula or recipe. As demonstrated through the references and literature, many of today's curricular theorists have voiced beliefs which echoed the remarks of parents. Ted Aoki summed up the study assumptions related to creating positive schooling environments, when he said:

“The themes and issues which emerged from our being

together are appropriate for consideration in curriculum development in elementary, [and] secondary [schools]... The themes we would consider in developing [a] curriculum for being are the following: the person as significant, education as journey, language as meaning, knowledge as constructed, and teacher as pilgrim” (Aoki, 1991, p. 7).

He continued with a particularly meaningful statement which captures the tone of this study, saying:

“...if schooling is seen as dwelling its structure may be changed. Schools may be characterized by small classes where teachers can enter the world of students and where both have time and concern for each other. Communities are places where broken lines exist between home and school. Administrators are basically persons who dwell with teachers, enjoying more being with them than having authority over them” (Aoki, 1991, p. 188).

Aoki’s statement may have touched upon a pattern to the mosaic. Time after time, the parents studied noted the mood or atmosphere within the school dwellings. Parents commented that they were uncomfortable, insecure, and that their children were uncared for in the assigned school. In contrast, these same parents describe a completely different perception in the transfer school. They speak of warmth, safety, and care prevailing above all else. Haggerson (1971) wrote of these feelings saying:

“The oneness of it all is  
A house of many mansions,  
Multiple levels of consciousness,

Numerous degrees of caring and  
Infinite individual personalities...  
Juxtaposed in dynamic relationships  
called a  
UNIVERSE”  
(Haggerson, 1971, 97, in Willis, Schubert, 1991, p. 254).

The relationships uncovered in this study between school and home are extremely complex. Nel Noddings (1991) said that, “schools should function more like families” (p. 168). Likewise, Max van Manen suggested that the charge “in loco parentis” requires schools and the educators in them to treat students as their own children (1991).

Therefore, when we think of schools we should think of a place like home. Less than a century ago, schools were called “schoolhouses”(Stephens, 1990, Dugger, 1994), which were the center of many community activities. Parents in this study appear to be searching for a schoolhouse which offers a sense of compassion, support, and care for their children. Clearly these parents are searching for a home in which they feel welcome, and secure entrusting their child(ren)’s safety and nurturance to valued professionals.

### Thoughts for Future Study

Although this research has met the requirements outlined in

the study proposal, it is far from a completed project. In the future, the scope of the study should be expanded to include other schools and grade levels. It would be noteworthy to compare this research to studies of other elementary schools, middle schools, and secondary schools. This expansion would not only avail a comparison to other sites, but also distance the researcher as an anonymous figure to other respondents.

Another topic of study for future research, would include the administrative tone or mood set by the building principal. These tones may shed light on the caring perceptions of parents and students in today's schools.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEY



## Anonymous Transfer Students Parental Survey

Dear Parents:

This survey has been developed in an attempt to understand the various reasons that parents choose to transfer their children from one elementary site to another. Your help and assistance in gathering this information is crucial. Please do not put your name on the survey. The information gathered will remain confidential and will be compiled as a part of a college research project. In an attempt to gather indepth information, some of the transfer parents will be contacted and asked to participate in personal interviews.

Please circle your answers to the following questions based upon your personal feelings or perceptions related to your transfer experience.

1. Your transfer is currently classified as:  
a) Child care   b) Administrative   c) Access Ease   d) Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. How many children are transferred to this site?  
a) 1            b) 2            c) 3            d) 4
  
3. What is your child(ren)'s race?  
a) American Indian   b) Asian   c) Black   d) Caucasian   e) Hispanic
  
4. What is your child(ren)'s gender?  
a) Female            b) Male
  
5. What level of educational did you last complete?  
a) High School   b) GED   c) Vo-Tech   d) College Degree   e) Masters   f) Other
  
6. What level of education do you wish for your child(ren) to receive?  
a) High School   b) GED   c) Vo-Tech   d) College Degree   e) Masters   f) Other

Please answer the following questions first for your designated assigned school, then about your selected transfer school.

7. What was the primary racial or ethnic makeup of your child's  
....assigned school?  
a) American Indian b) Asian c) Black d) Caucasian e) Hispanic f) Mixed Racial  
.... transfer school?  
a) American Indian b) Asian c) Black d) Caucasian e) Hispanic f) Mixed Racial
8. How do you perceive/feel the quality of the administration in meeting your families needs at your.... assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
....transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
9. How do you feel about the teacher effectiveness at your  
....assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
....transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
10. How do you perceive the building conditions in your  
....assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
....transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
11. How do you feel about the community relations in your  
....assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
....transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
12. How do you perceive the resources and supplies in your  
....assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
....transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor

13. How do you feel about the teacher/student interactions in your  
....**assigned school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor  
....**transfer school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor
14. How do you perceive the teacher/parent interactions in your  
....**assigned school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor  
....**transfer school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor
15. How do you feel about the teacher/principal interactions at your  
....**assigned school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor  
....**transfer school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor
16. How do you perceive the principal/student interactions at your  
....**assigned school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor  
....**transfer school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor
17. How do you feel about the principal/parent interactions at your  
....**assigned school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor  
....**transfer school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor
18. How do you perceive the principal/community interactions at your  
....**assigned school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor  
....**transfer school**?  
a) Excellent    b) Good    c) Fair    d) Poor

19. How do you feel about the safety of your child at your  
...assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
...transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
20. How do you perceive the fairness of discipline at your  
...assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
...transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
21. How do you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your  
...assigned school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
...transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
22. How do you feel about the overall quality of education in your  
...home school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor  
...transfer school?  
a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor
23. Are there other perceptions about your assigned school which effected  
your decision to transfer?  
a) Yes b) No  
If yes please briefly explain.
24. Are there other perceptions about your transfer school which effected  
your decision to transfer?  
a) Yes b) No  
If yes please briefly explain.

**APPENDIX B**

**RESPONSES TO RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEYS**

Transfer Students Parental Survey

	Total
1. Your transfer is currently classified as:	
(6) Child care (5) Administrative (4) Access Ease (8) Other	23
2. How many children are transferred to this site?	
(10) 1 (10) 2 (2) 3 (1) 4	
3. What is your child(ren)'s race?	
(3) American Indian (0) Asian (16) Caucasian (3) Black (1) Hispanic	
4. What is your child(ren)'s gender?	
(14) Female (17) Male	
5. What level of educational did you last complete?	
(9) High School (4) GED (3) Vo-Tech (2) College Degree (2) Masters (4) Other	
6. What level of education do you wish for your child(ren) to receive?	
(3) High School ( ) GED ( ) Vo-Tech (13) College Degree (7) Masters ( ) Other	
7. What was the <u>primary</u> racial or ethnic makeup of your child's	
.... <u>assigned school</u> ? (3) Black (8) Caucasian ( ) Hispanic ( ) Indian (12) Mixed Racial	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? ( ) Black (9) Caucasian ( ) Hispanic ( ) Indian (14) Mixed Racial	
8. How do you perceive/feel the quality of the administration in meeting your families	
needs at your... <u>assigned school</u> ? (5) Excellent (6) Good (6) Fair (4) Poor	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? (6) Excellent (13) Good (3) Fair ( ) Poor	
9. How do you feel about the teacher effectiveness at your	
.... <u>assigned school</u> ? (3) Excellent (8) Good (8) Fair (1) Poor	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? (12) Excellent (9) Good (1) Fair ( ) Poor	
10. How do your perceive the building conditions in your	
.... <u>assigned school</u> ? (1) Excellent (12) Good (9) Fair ( ) Poor	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? (2) Excellent (16) Good (5) Fair ( ) Poor	
11. How do you feel about the community relations in your	
.... <u>assigned school</u> ? (2) Excellent (10) Good (3) Fair ( ) Poor	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? (3) Excellent (16) Good (2) Fair ( ) Poor	
12. How do you perceive the resources and supplies in your	
.... <u>assigned school</u> ? (4) Excellent (9) Good (6) Fair ( ) Poor	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? (4) Excellent (17) Good (2) Fair ( ) Poor	
13. How do you feel about the teacher/student interactions in your	
.... <u>assigned school</u> ? (4) Excellent (7) Good (3) Fair (4) Poor	
.... <u>transfer school</u> ? (13) Excellent (9) Good (1) Fair ( ) Poor	

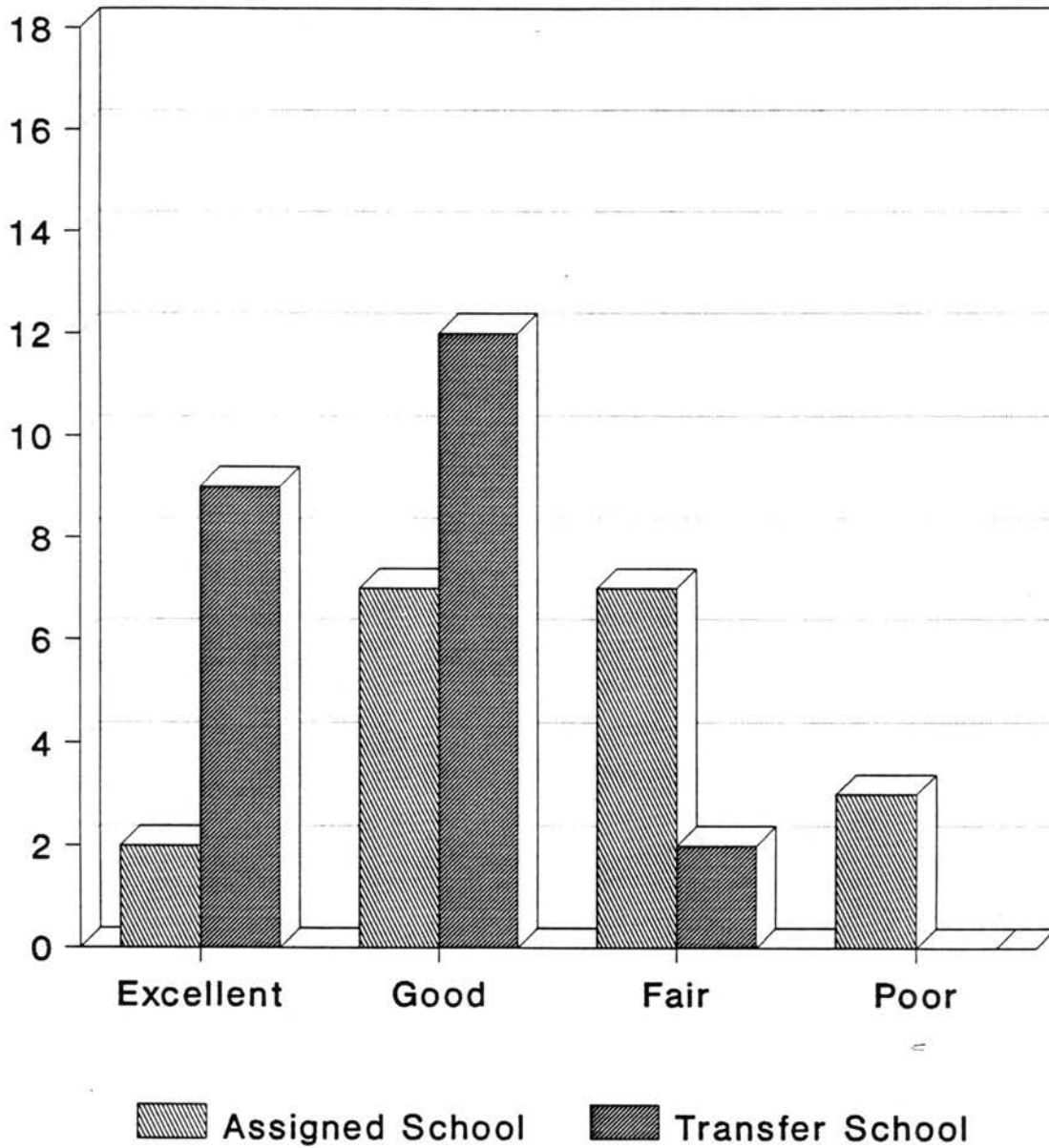
14.	How do you perceive the teacher/parent interactions in your					
	...assigned school?	(4) Excellent	(6) Good	(6) Fair	(1) Poor	
	...transfer school?	(10) Excellent	(10) Good	(2) Fair	(1) Poor	
15.	How do you feel about the teacher/principal interactions at your					
	...assigned school?	(2) Excellent	(7) Good	(7) Fair	(3) Poor	
	...transfer school?	(9) Excellent	(12) Good	(2) Fair	( ) Poor	
16.	How do you perceive the principal/student interactions at your					
	...assigned school?	(4) Excellent	(6) Good	(6) Fair	(3) Poor	
	...transfer school?	(9) Excellent	(13) Good	(1) Fair	( ) Poor	
17.	How do you feel about the principal/parent interactions at your					
	...assigned school?	(2) Excellent	(8) Good	(5) Fair	(4) Poor	
	...transfer school?	(10) Excellent	(12) Good	(1) Fair	( ) Poor	23
18.	How do you perceive the principal/community interactions at your					
	...assigned school?	(3) Excellent	(7) Good	(4) Fair	(3) Poor	17
	...transfer school?	(9) Excellent	(11) Good	(2) Fair	( ) Poor	22
19.	How do you feel about the safety of your child at your					
	...assigned school?	(4) Excellent	(5) Good	(6) Fair	(4) Poor	19
	...transfer school?	(4) Excellent	(16) Good	(3) Fair	( ) Poor	23
20.	How do you perceive the fairness of discipline at your					
	...assigned school?	(3) Excellent	(6) Good	(6) Fair	(4) Poor	19
	...transfer school?	(7) Excellent	(13) Good	(3) Fair	( ) Poor	23
21.	How do you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your					
	...assigned school?	(4) Excellent	(8) Good	(5) Fair	(4) Poor	21
	...transfer school?	(6) Excellent	(13) Good	(3) Fair	( ) Poor	22
22.	How do you feel about the overall quality of education in your					
	...assigned school?	(3) Excellent	(5) Good	(9) Fair	(3) Poor	20
	...transfer school?	(12) Excellent	(10) Good	(1) Fair	( ) Poor	23
23.	Are there other perceptions about your <b>assigned school</b> which effected your decision to transfer?					
	(10) Yes	(13) No				23
24.	Are there other perceptions about your <b>transfer school</b> which effected your decision to transfer?					
	(7) Yes	(14) No				21

APPENDIX C  
RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEY GRAPHS



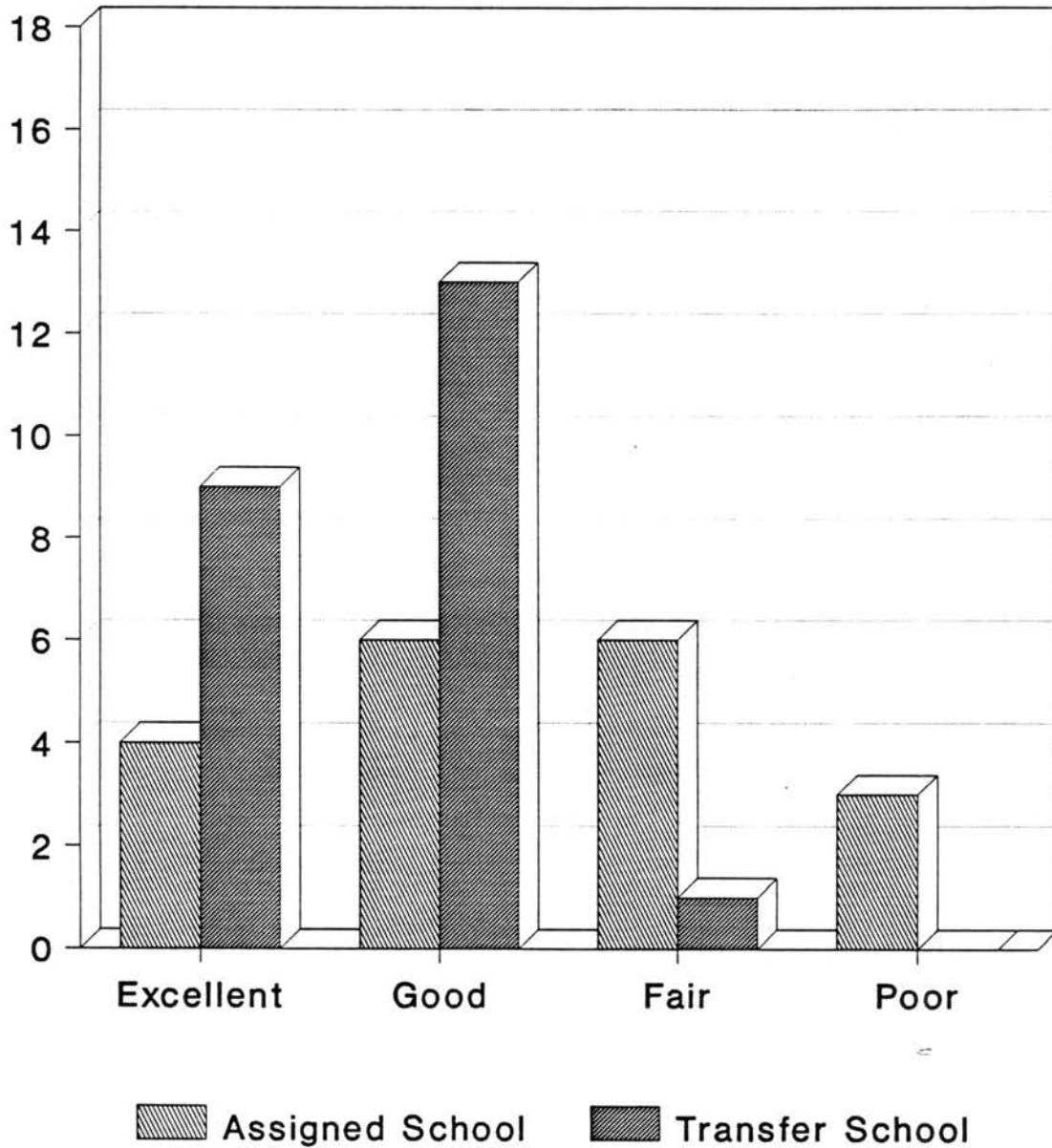
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 1

How do you feel about the teacher/  
principal interactions at your assigned  
school and at you transfer school?



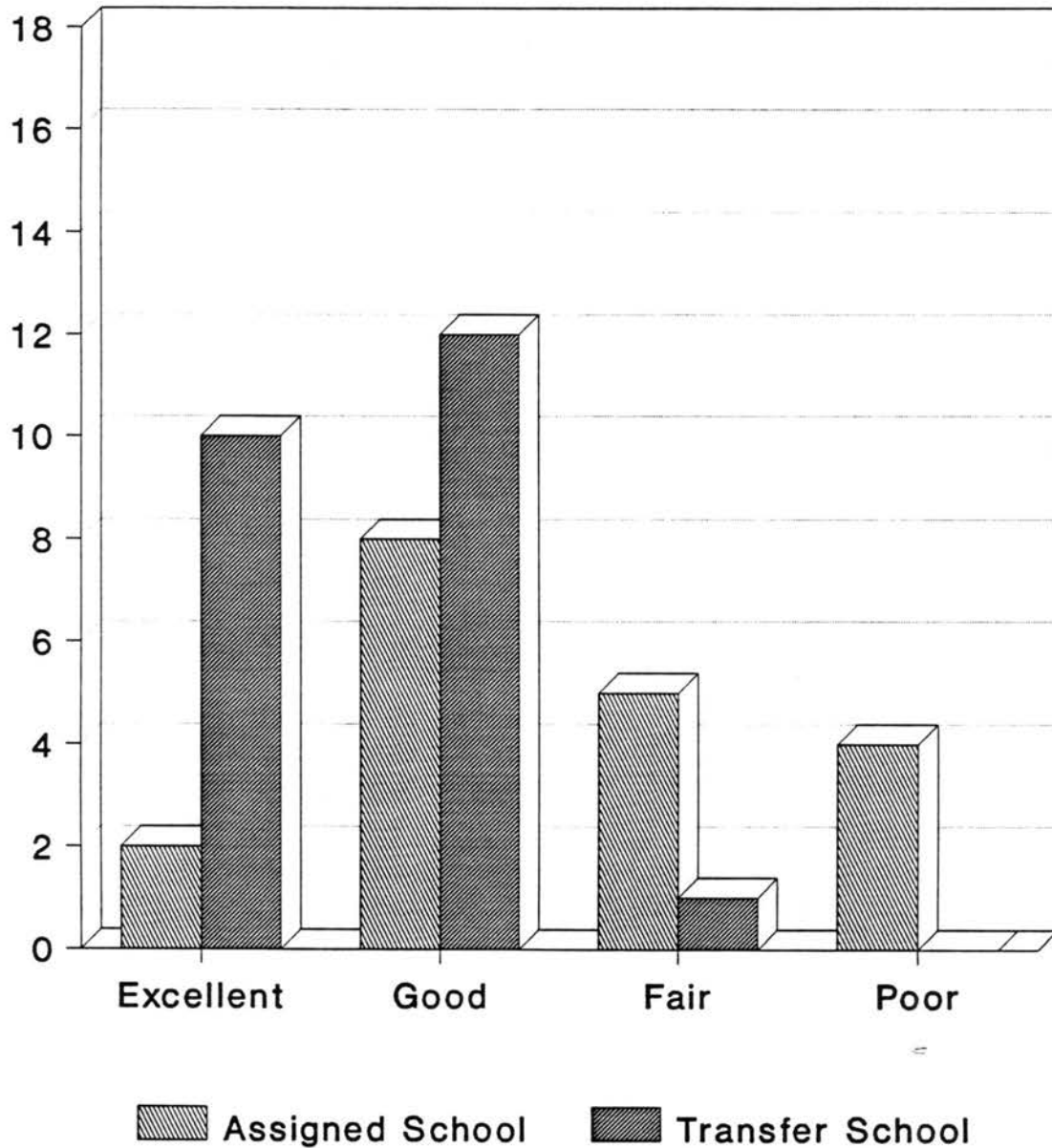
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 2

How do you perceive the principal/  
student interactions at you assigned  
school and at you transfer school?



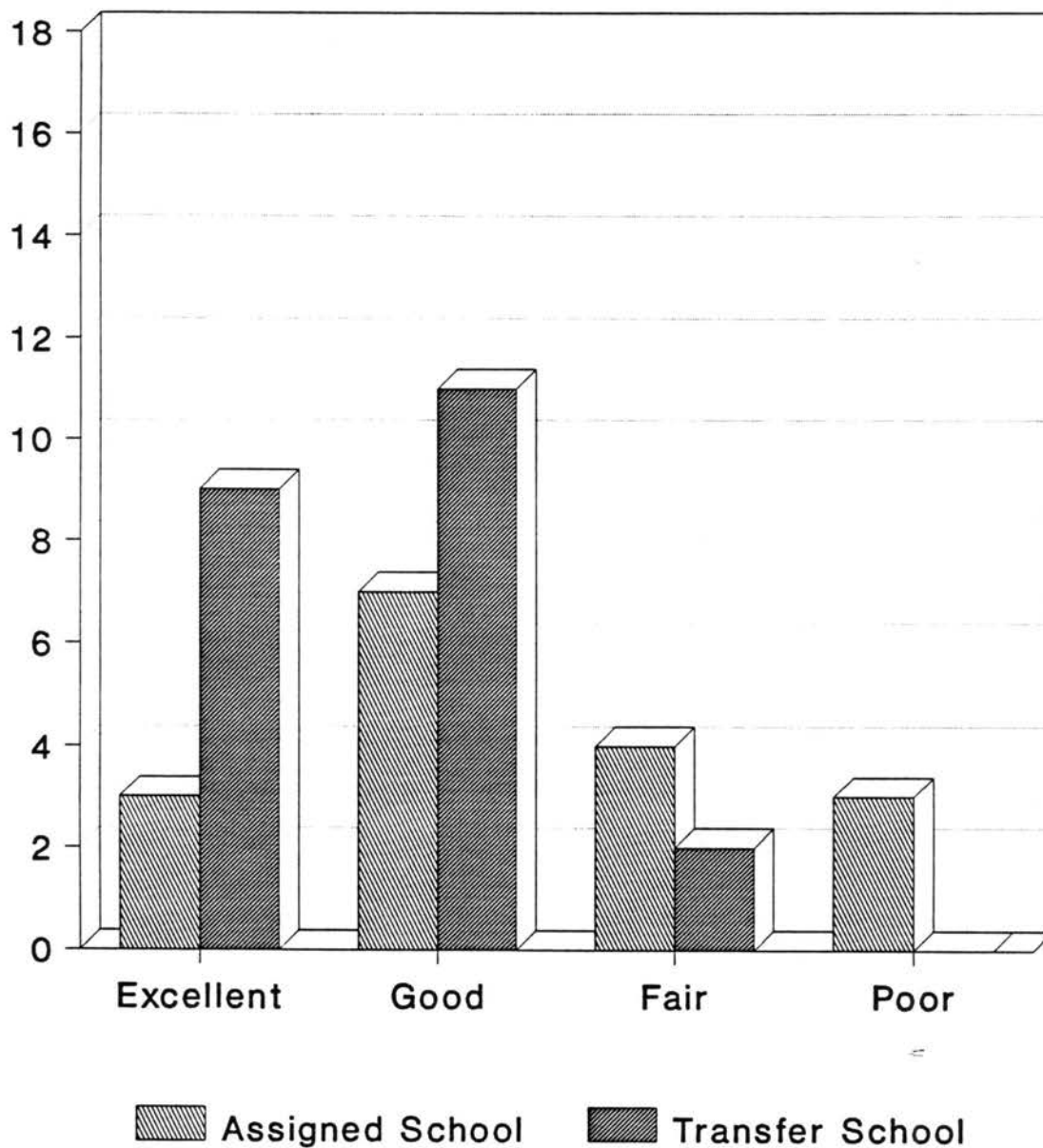
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 3

How do you feel about the principal/  
parent interactions at you assigned  
school and at your transfer school?



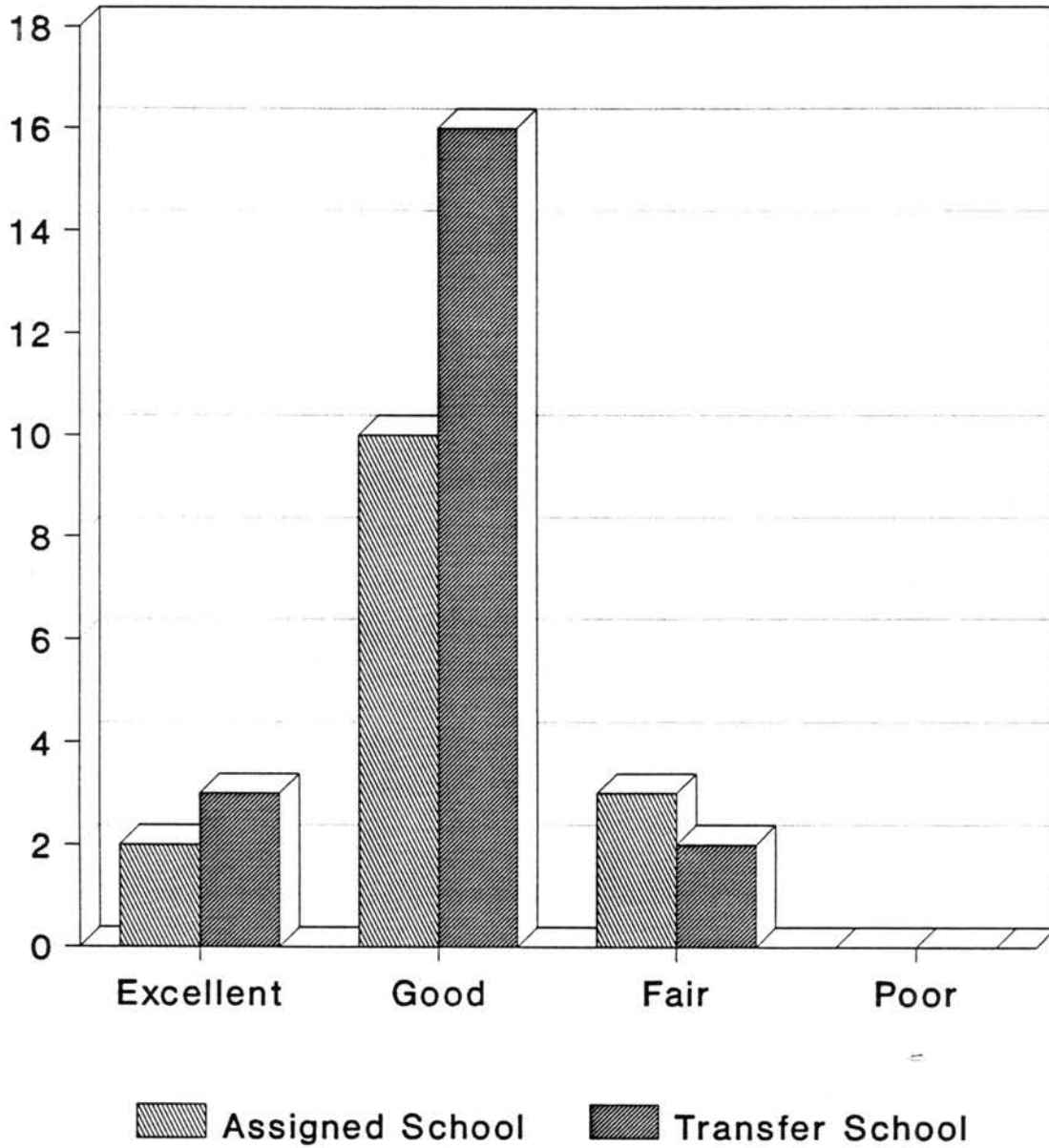
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 4

How do you perceive the principal/  
community interactions at you assigned  
school and at you transfer school?



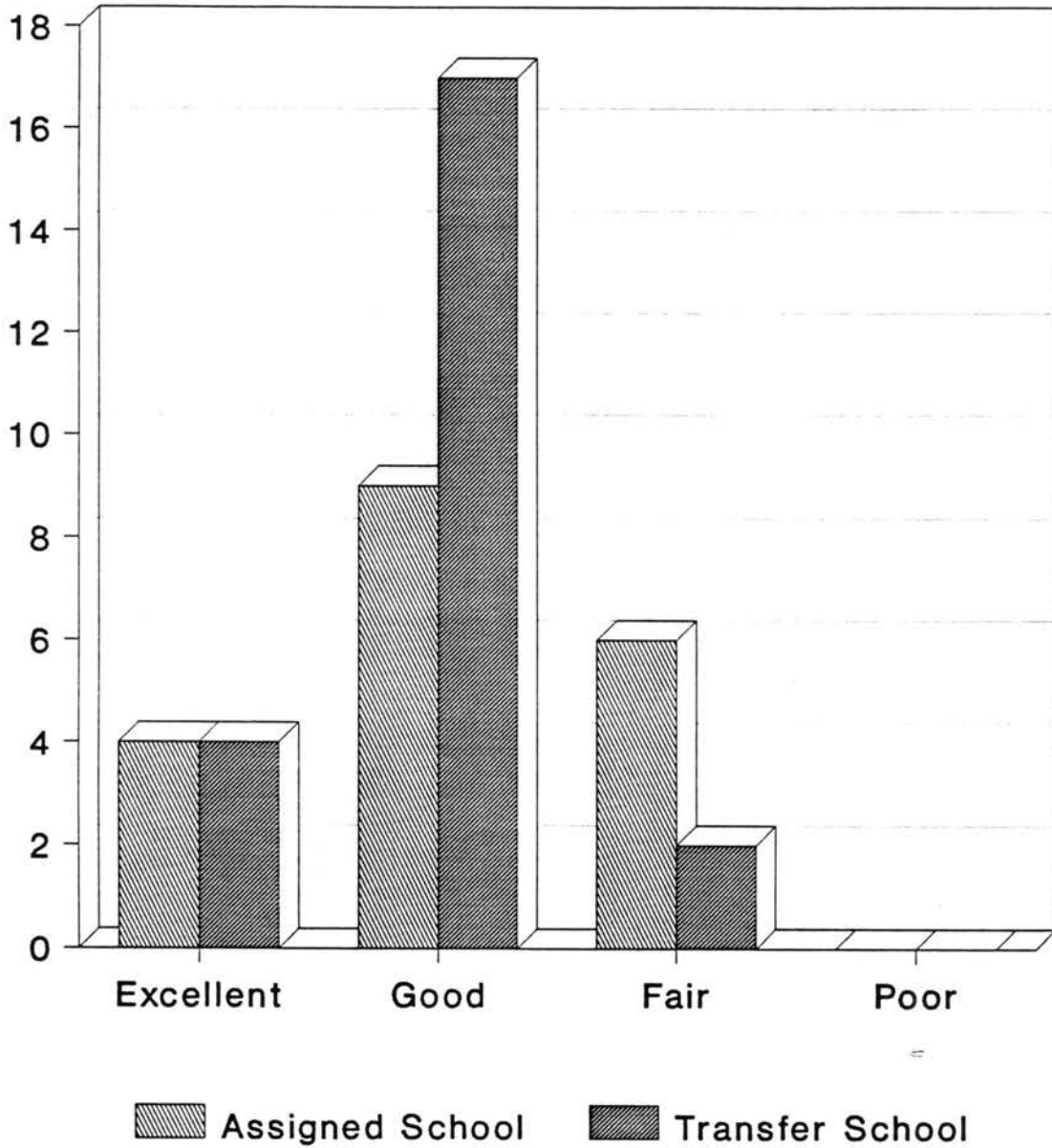
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 5

How do you feel about the community relations in you assigned school and in your transfer school?



Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 6

How do you perceive the resources and supplies in you assigned school and in your transfer school?



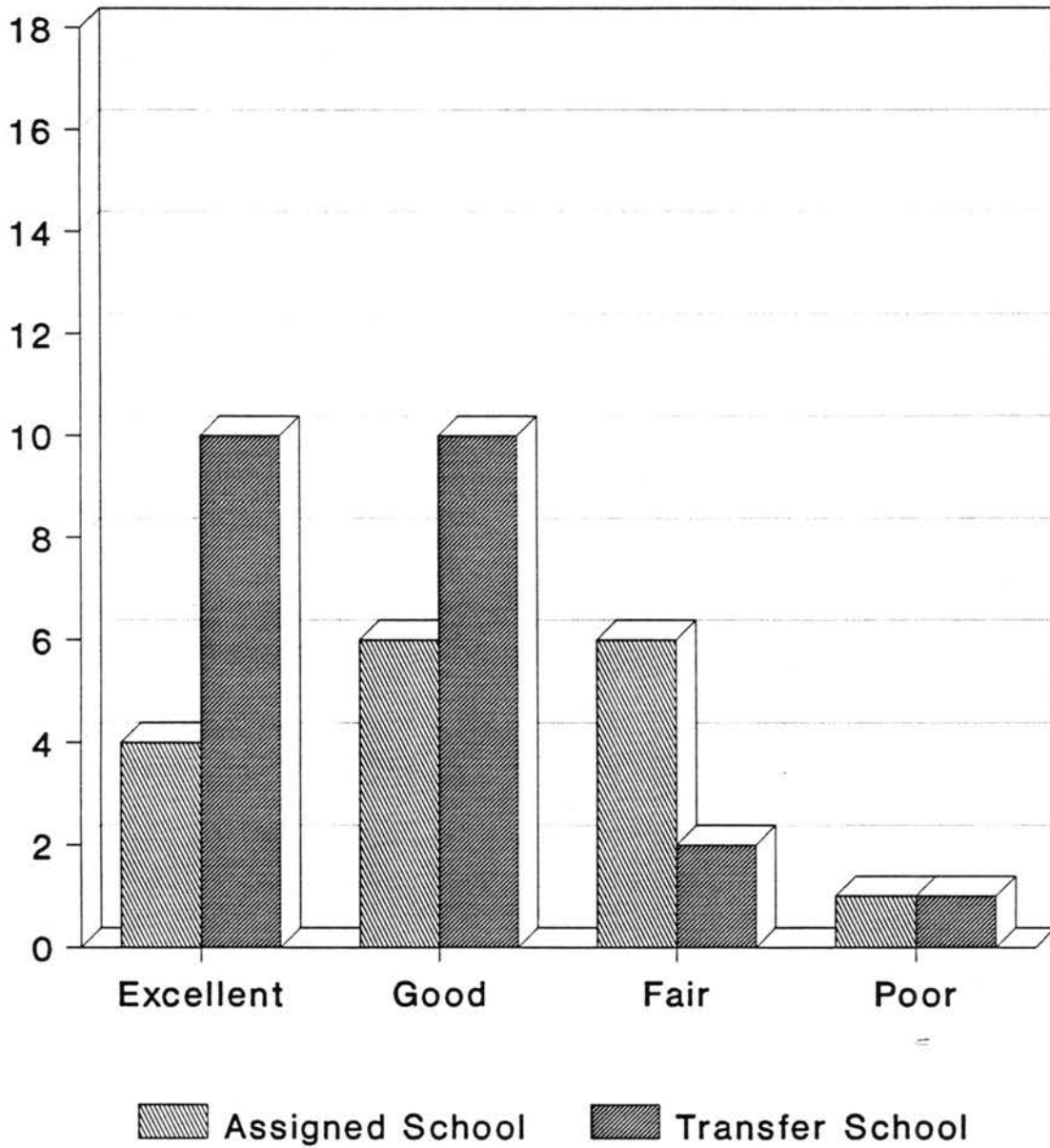
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 7

How do you feel about the teacher/  
student interactions in your assigned  
school and in your transfer school?



Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 8

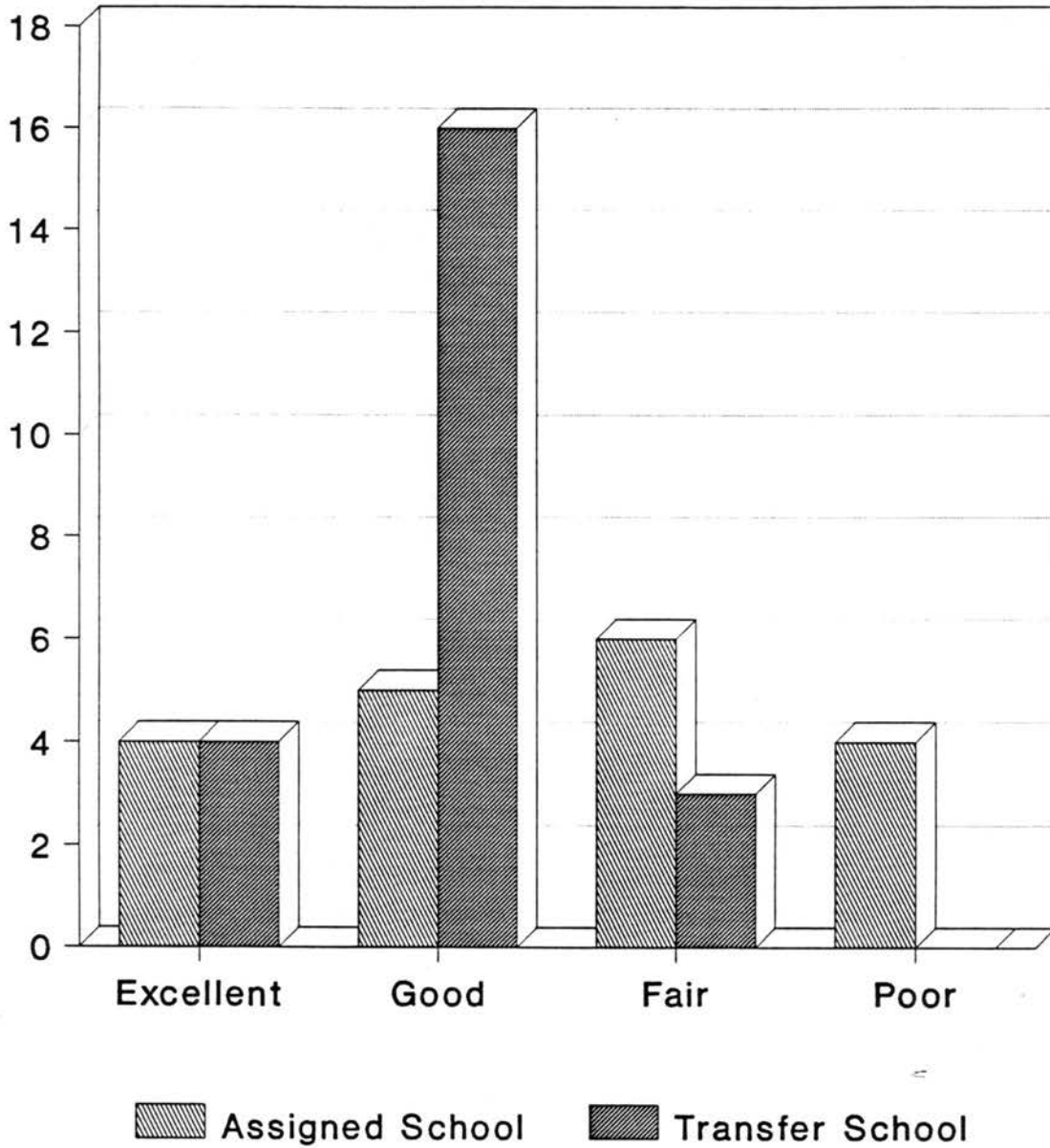
How do you perceive the teacher/parent interactions in your assigned school and in your transfer school?





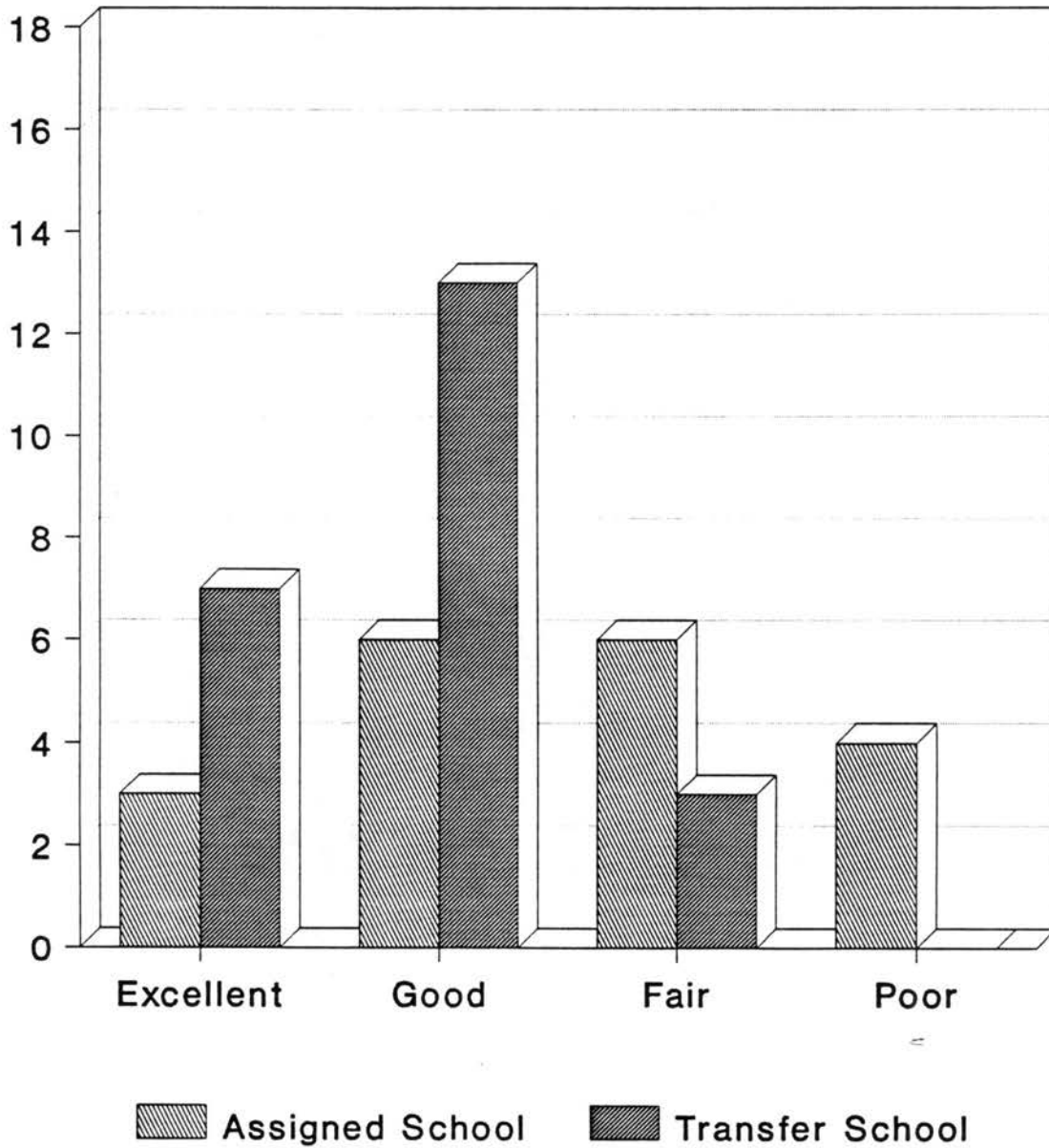
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 9

How do feel about the safety of  
your child at you assigned school and  
at your transfer school?

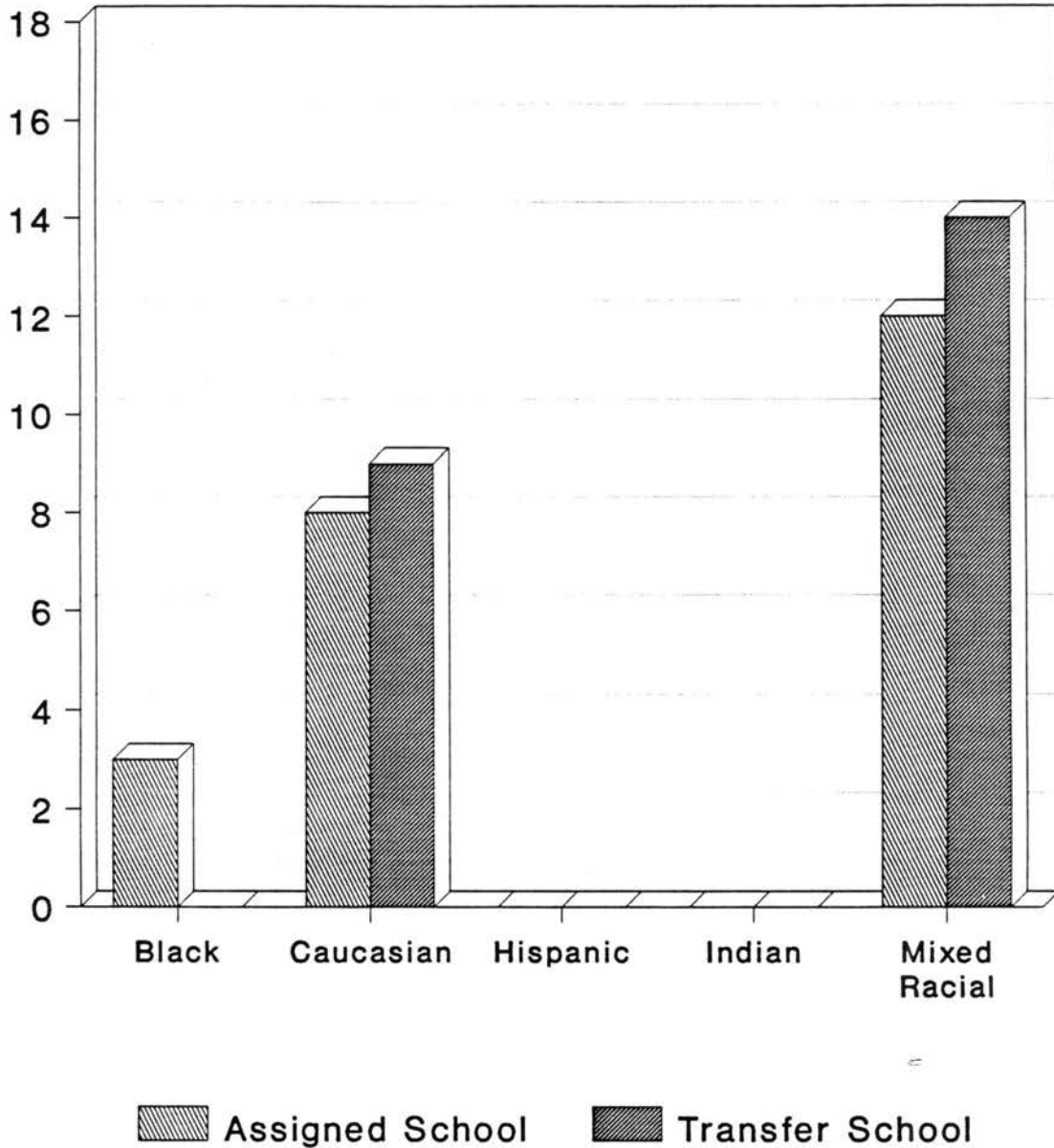


Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 10

How do you perceive the fairness of discipline at you assigned school and at your transfer school?

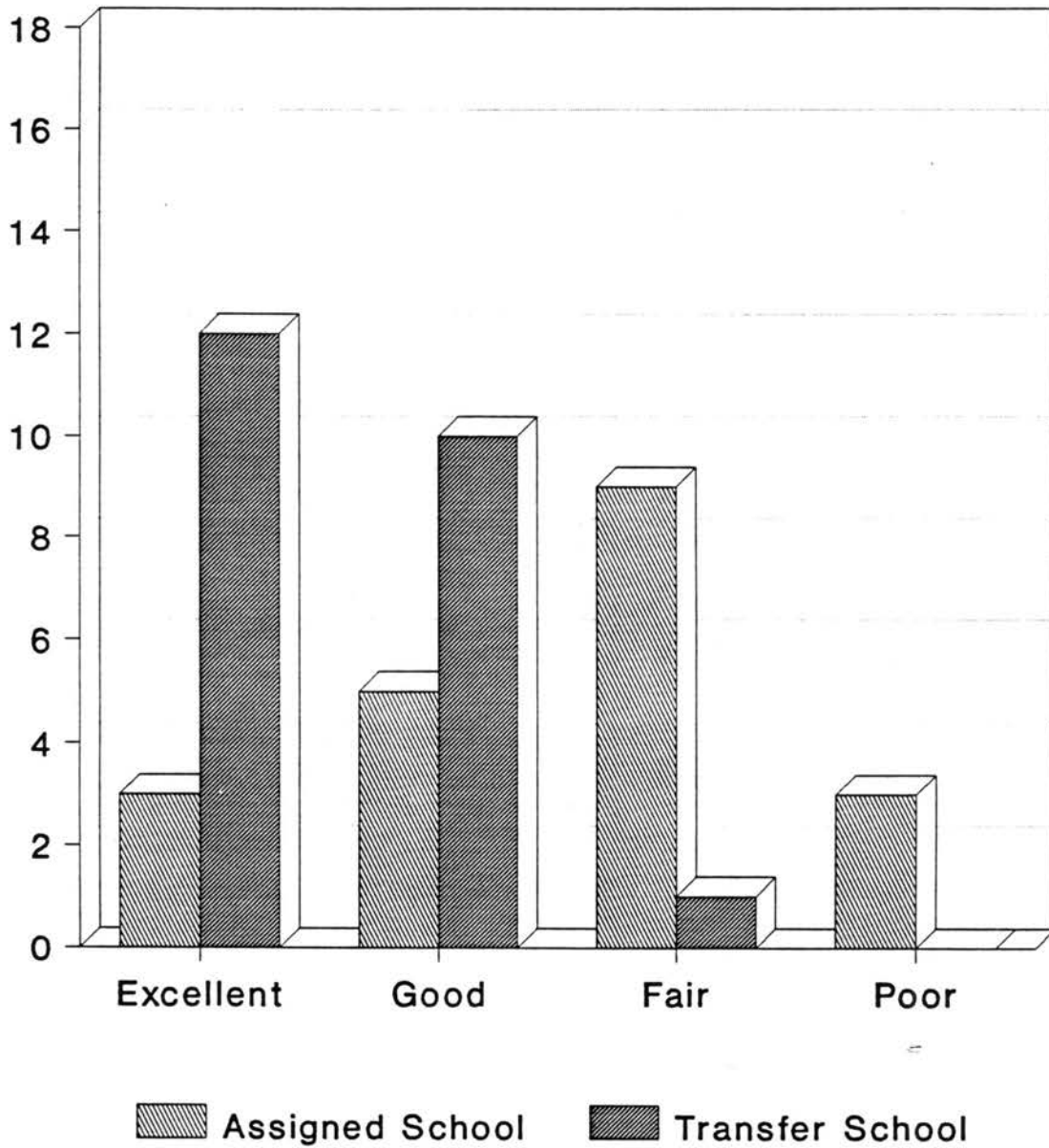


What is the primary racial or ethnic makeup of your child's assigned school and of your child's transfer school?



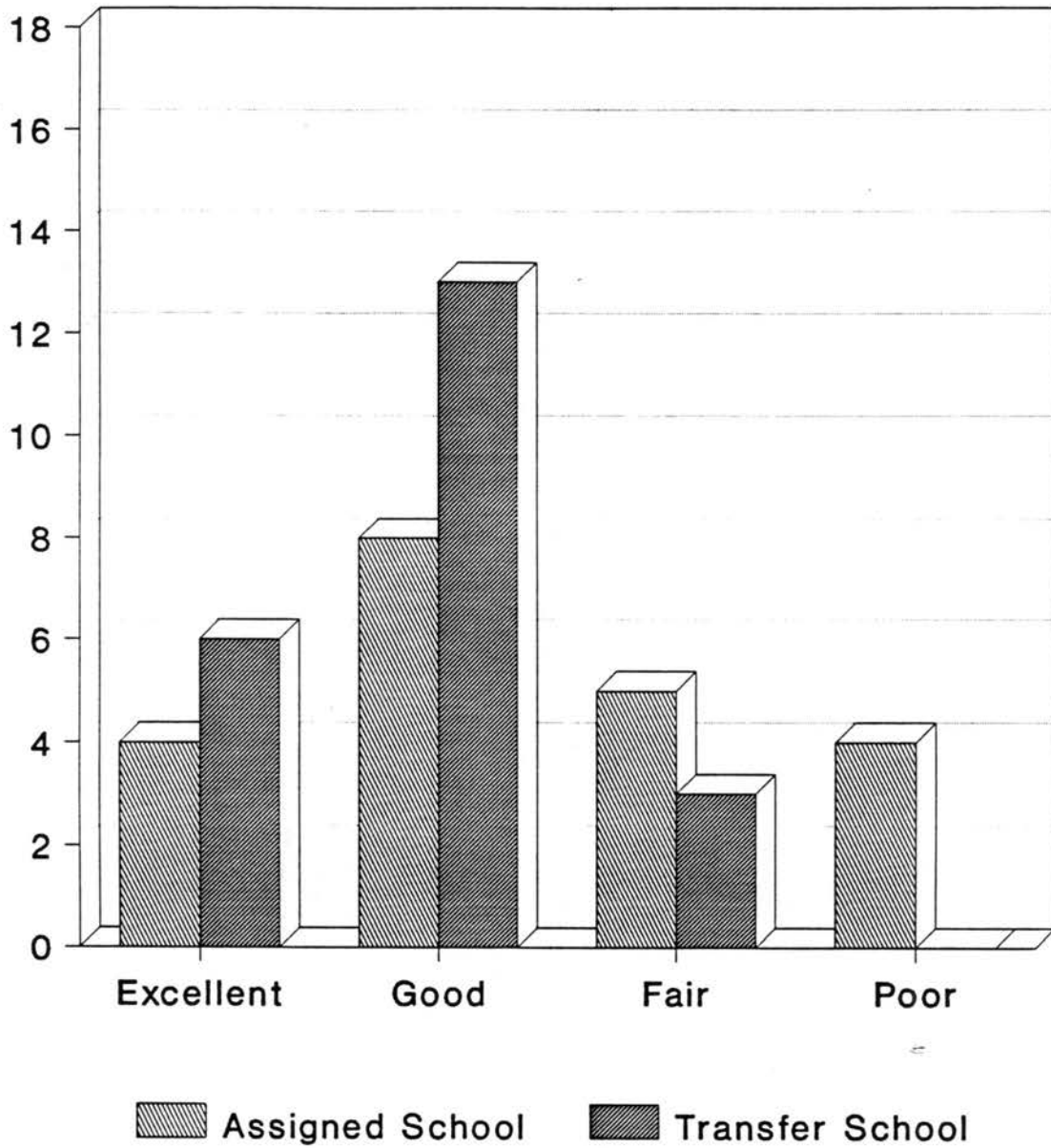
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 12

How do you feel about the overall quality of education in your assigned school and in your transfer school?



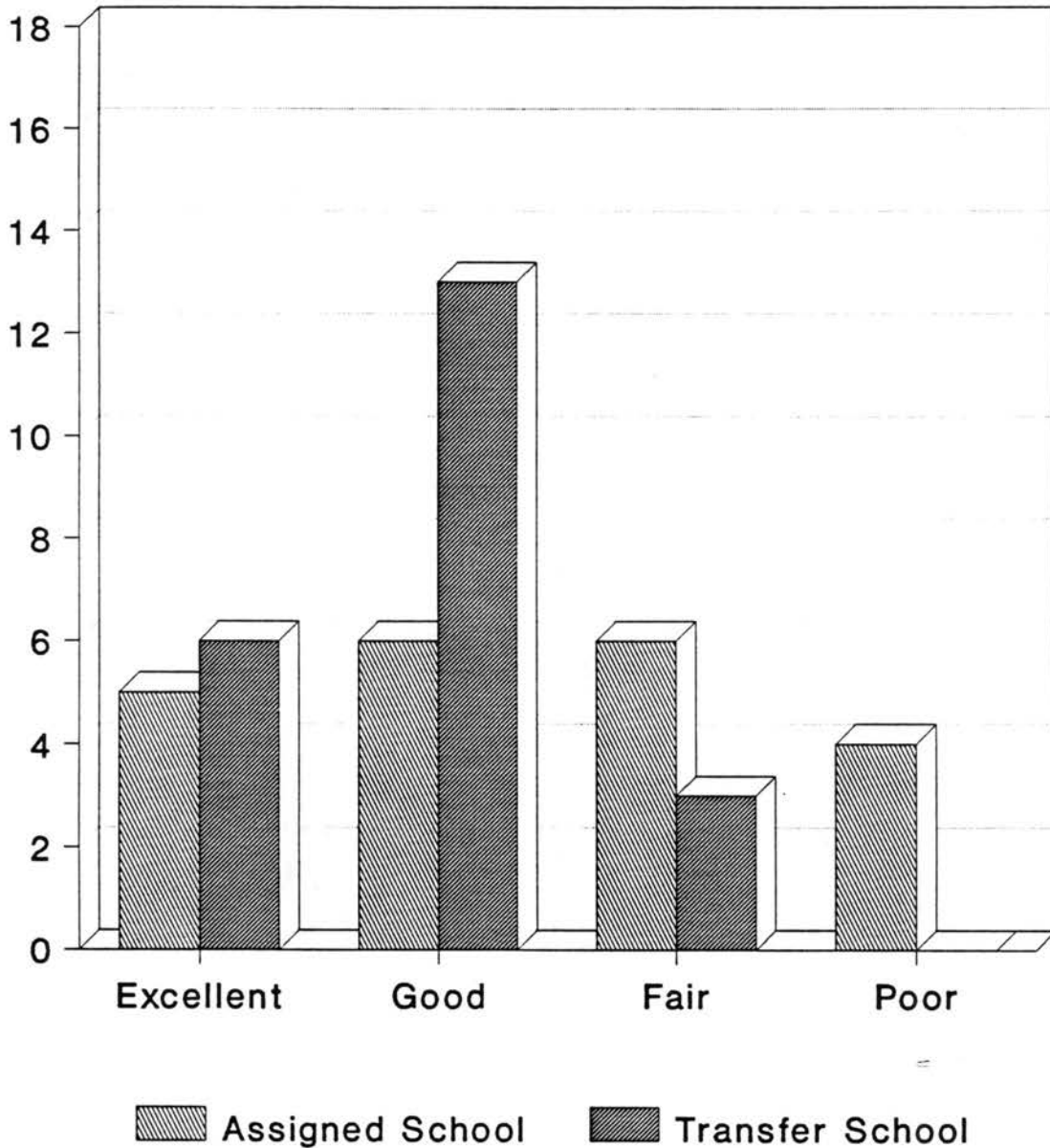
Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 13

How do you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your assigned school and at your transfer school?

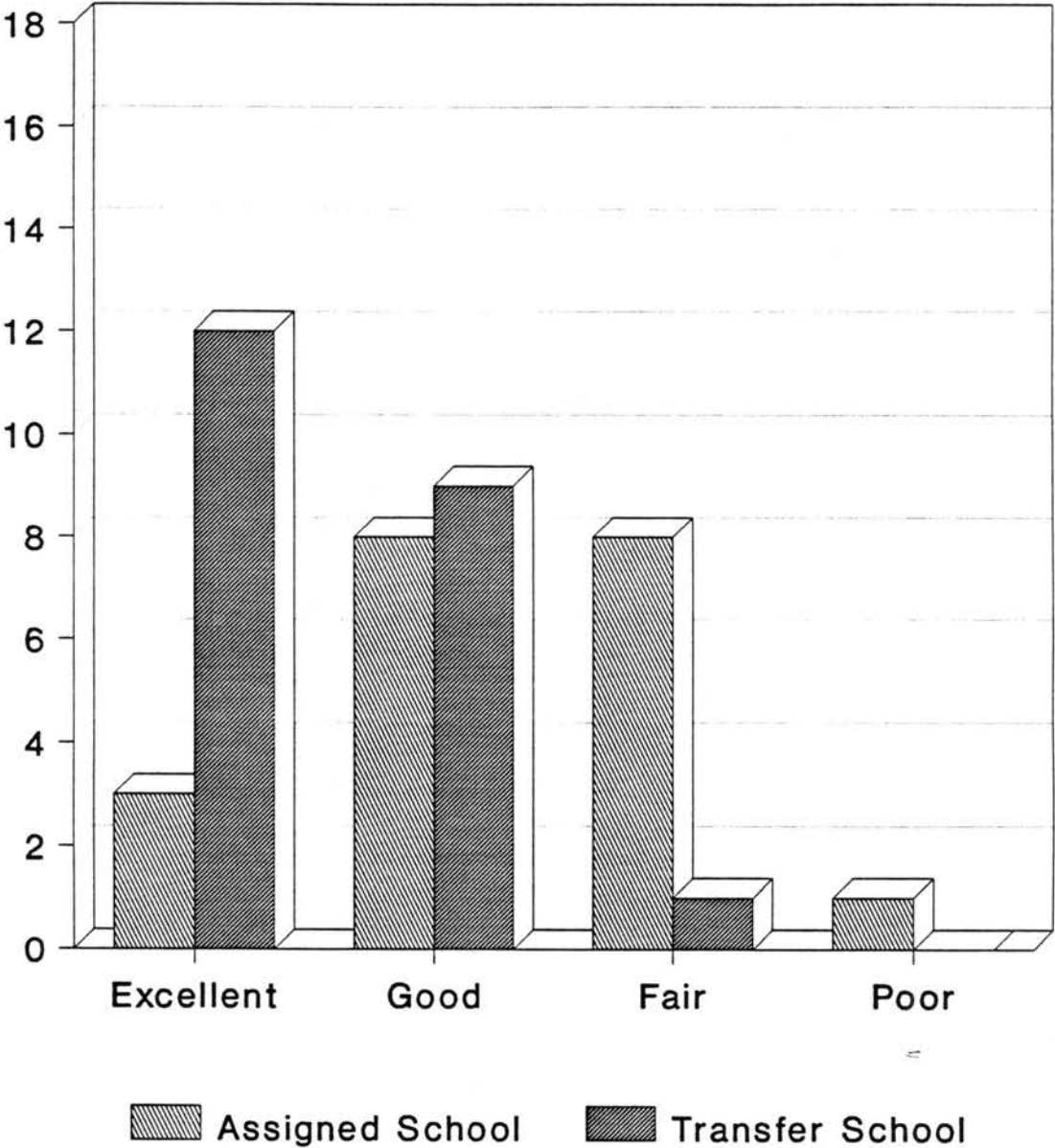


Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 14

How do you perceive the administration in meeting your family's needs at your assigned school and your transfer school

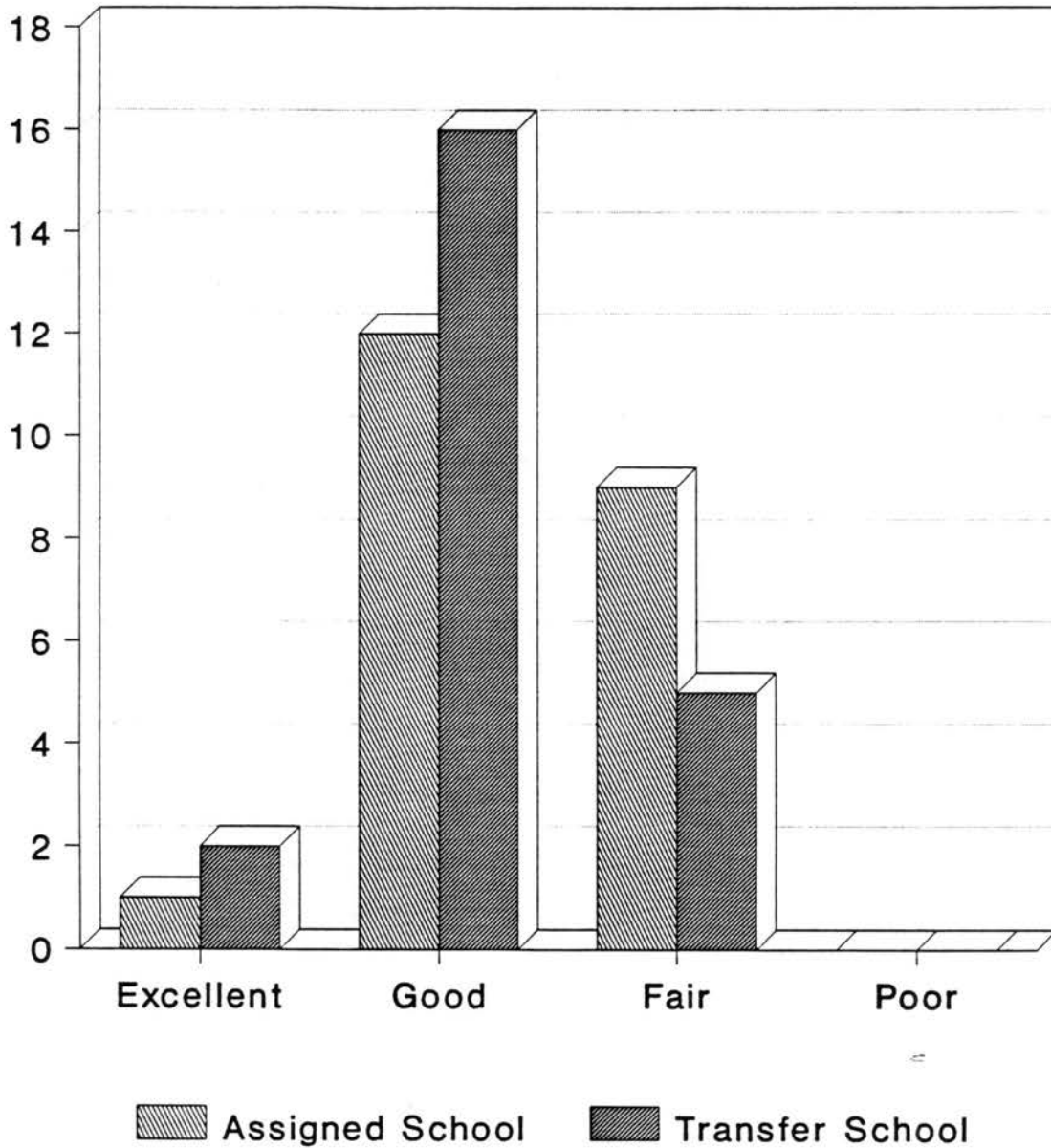


How do you feel about teacher effectiveness at your assigned school and at your transfer school?



Random Sample Survey  
Graph # 16

How do you perceive the building conditions in your assigned school and in your transfer school?





APPENDIX D  
ANSWER SELECTION SPREAD SHEET

Question #	Answer Selection						Total Responses
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
1	6	5	4	8			23
2	10	10	2	1			23
3	3	16	1	3			23
4	14	17					24
5	9	4	3	2	4		22
6	3		13	7			23
7a	3	8			12		23
7b		9			14		23
8a	5	6	6	4			21
8b	6	13	3				22
9a	3	8	8	1			20
9b	12	9	1				22
10a	1	12	9				22
10b	2	16	5				23
11a	2	10	3	6			21
11b	3	16	2	1			22
12a	4	9	6				19
12b	4	17	2				23
13a	4	7	3	4			18
13b	13	9	1				23
14a	4	6	6	1			17
14b	10	10	2	1			23
15a	2	7	7	3			19
15b	9	12	2				23
16a	4	6	6	3			19
16b	9	13	1				23
17a	2	8	5	4			19
17b	10	12	1				23
18a	3	7	4	3			17
18b	9	11	2				22
19a	4	5	6	4			19
19b	4	16	3				23
20a	3	6	6	4			19
20b	7	13	3				23
21a	4	8	5	4			21
21b	6	13	3				22

22a3	5	9	3	20
22b12	10	1		23

Question #	<u>Answer Selection</u>		Total Responses
	A	B	
23	10	13	23

**23aResponses**

- Racial mix, gangs.
- Low academic performance.
- High stress, Spanish language.
- Did not offer special class. (SED)
- Babysitter does not deliver to home school.
- Moved.
- Poor principal.
- Did not meet son's needs. Girls are closer to work in case of a problem.
- Kids were going to be bused to a different school.

24	7	14	21
----	---	----	----

**24aResponses**

- Positive integration, great parent/teacher and parent administrator interaction. Brought up grades. Fantastic principal who cares deeply not only for students welfare, but the parents also. Principal is concerned and willing to help in any way.
- Caring.
- Children like the teachers and the school. The day care is in the area.
- Parent likes the teachers and principal.
- Very satisfied.
- Closest school to home with SED program.
- Closeness. Offers speech program. Walking distance to daycare. Good teachers. Special needs programs.
- Very comfortable with children's education and believe transfer school is bringing out the best in the children.

APPENDIX E  
FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS

## Family Demographics and Characteristics

Number of Families Participating in:	Random Sample Survey	23
Number of Children Represented:	Attending Site	40
Number of Families Participating in:	In-Depth Interviews	10
Number of Children Represented:	Attending Site	17
	Not at Site	05
Family Racial/Ethnic Membership:	Caucasian/White	06
	African Amer./Black	02
	Hispanic	01
	American Indian	01
Family Structures in Home:	Single Parents	01
	Biological Parents	06
	Step Parent	01
	Non-Married Spouse	02
Parental Work Demographics:	Male - Skilled/Technical	03
	Male - Unskilled Laborer	03
	Male - Disabled	01
	Female - Skilled/Technical	03
	*Female - Homemaker	07
	Female - College Degree	01

(\*Additional Female representative of Homosexual Couple)

Cost of Neighborhood Housing:	\$2,000. - \$5,000.	07
	\$10,000. - \$15,000.	01
	\$20,000. - \$30,000.	01
	\$60,000. - \$70,000.	01
Number of Children in Family:	One Child	02
	Two Children	05
	Three Children	02
	Four Children	01

Racial/Ethnic Demographics of children attending site:		
	Caucasian/White	10
	African Amer./Black	02
	Hispanic	02
	American Indian	03
Number of Families Interviewed:		
	Recd. Free/Reduced Lunch	07
	Recd. Public Assistance	05
Schooling Experiences of Children:		
	Regular Education Classes	07
	Special Education Classes	03
	Bilingual Educ. Classes	02
	*Indian Education Classes	03
	*Gifted Education Classes	03
	Pre-Kindergarten Classes	01
(*Attending two programs.)		

APPENDIX F  
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

I authorize Deborah Lobdell to perform the following indepth interview. This is done as a part of an investigation entitled Caring Environments for Urban Education: A Place Called Home!

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time after notifying Deborah Lobdell.

I may contact Dr. Bill Reynolds at (405) 744-7125. I may also contact University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences Ease, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK. 74078; telephone: (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting their signature.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX G  
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

## Indepth Interview of Parents of Transfer Students

This interview has been developed in an attempt to understand the various reasons that parents choose to transfer their children from one elementary site to another. Your help and assistance in gathering this information is crucial. The information gathered will be compiled as a part of a research paper for a college project.

1. Would you explain how you feel about the teacher/student interactions in your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

2. How do you view the teacher/parent interactions in your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

3. Could you tell me how you feel about the teacher/principal interactions at your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

4. Would you tell me about the principal/student interactions at your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

5. How do you feel about the principal/parent interactions at your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

6. Could you explain how you feel about the principal/community interactions at  
your....assigned school?

....transfer school?

7. Would you describe how you feel about the safety of your child at your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

8. How do you feel about the fairness of discipline at your  
....assigned school?

....transfer school?

9. Could you discuss how you feel about the ethnic and racial issues at your  
....assigned school?

**....transfer school?**

10. Would you describe how you feel about the overall quality of education in your  
**....assigned school?**

**....transfer school?**

11. What were the there other perceptions about your **assigned school** which  
effected your decision to transfer?

**... transfer school**

12. What do you think your child feels about their **...assigned school?**

13. How do you think your child feels about their **...transfer school?**

14. If given the choice which school do you think that your child would choose to go to?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Could you explain how you feel about the care that was displayed to your family by the ....assigned school?

....Transfer School?

16. Would you discuss how important a caring school environment is to you as a parent?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. How do you feel school compassion impacts your child's education?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
18. Curriculum and/or teaching has been described by some as a "Caring, critical conversation." Who should that conversation include and what should it be about?

2

VITA

Deborah Renee Lobdell

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: CARING ENVIRONMENTS FOR URBAN EDUCATION:  
A PLACE CALLED HOME

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Albuquerque, New Mexico on October 26, 1957, the granddaughter of Stratford B. and Josephine M. Duke. Married to Herb Lobdell on November 23, 1986 and step mother to Mindy and Tally.

Education: A 1975 graduate of Putnam City High School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; recipient of a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from the University of Central Oklahoma in 1981; recipient of a Master of Education Degree, as a Reading Specialist from the University of Central Oklahoma in 1983; recipient of a Master of Education Degree in Administration and School Guidance from the University of Central Oklahoma in 1989; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education Degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1994.

Professional Experience: Classroom teacher, Yukon Public Schools, September 1991-May 1984. Reading Specialist, May through August 1984. Guidance Counselor, September 1984-August 1985. Guidance & Administration, September 1986-1988. Administrator, McLoud Schools, August 1988-July 1989. Administrator, Oklahoma City Public Schools, August 1989-present.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 02-23-94

IRB#: ED-94-063

Proposal Title: CARING ENVIRONMENTS FOR URBAN EDUCATION: A  
PLACE CALLED HOME

Principal Investigator(s): Dr. Bill Reynolds, Deborah R. Lobdell

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

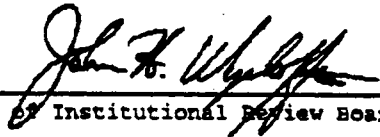
APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT  
MEETING.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR  
RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS  
TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for  
Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: February 24, 1994