
WORK/ACHIEVEMENT SURVEY

Glenmary School

Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Glenmary School wants students to have a healthy balance between work, school, and extracurricular and social activities. The school's academic goal is that all twelfth-grade students graduate with a minimum of four twelfth-grade-level courses in order to be prepared for postsecondary programs. However, there was growing concern among administrators and educators that students who work part-time jobs work too many hours a week to complete homework, get adequate rest, and/or prepare for mid-terms and final exams. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) designed a survey to find out the relationship between work and achievement for Glenmary students. They also reviewed research literature about the relationship of work and achievement to inform students, parents, teachers, and the business community.

Ninth- through twelfth-grade students completed the survey. The ATP tallied and analyzed the results for any pattern of relationships between work and achievement. The District Coordinator located the relevant research and summarized the results for the school. Glenmary's results were compared with the research, and these results along with the school's concerns were published in the school newsletter mailed home to 325 families. The school mailed a letter including the same information and an exam schedule to eighty businesses in the community who employed or might employ students. The ATP created a poster and gave it to each teacher to discuss with students and post in classrooms. They also presented the survey results and relevant research at parent information evenings for tenth and eleventh grades.

The research reviewed by Glenmary showed that part-time work that does not exceed 15-20 hours per week could be an academic advantage for students. Survey results showed that 32% of Glenmary students who do not work and 31% of students who work less than 20 hours per week maintained an 80% or better grade point average (GPA). This was a 6% increase of students over those students who work 20 or more hours a week. Forty-six percent of Glenmary students who work 20 or more hours per week have a 60% or lower GPA. Analyses also showed that at least 80% of students spent their earnings on wants, not needs. For those working 20 or more hours per week, decreased academic achievement is a high price to pay for employment that is not needed to pay for necessary expenses.

Students benefited from this practice by gaining important information to help them minimize the effects of working on their academic progress and futures. A ninth-grade student who had seen the poster said she would use the information when making decisions about working during the school year.

Parents expressed an interest in the survey and its findings. Parents found the information valuable in setting limits for their teens who work or are thinking of getting a part-time job. Parents commented that the information promoted discussions with their teens about finding a balanced lifestyle that might not have taken place if the newsletter article had not been written.

An employer responded to the letter stating, "As an employer of high school age youth and a strong supporter of education, I take the results of your survey very seriously. I will be sure to keep the hours worked by students to fewer than 20 hours per week. I hope all employers take this information seriously, as working while in school affects us all."

The Work/Achievement Survey was inexpensive to conduct. The greatest challenge was tallying the results from the survey because it was time consuming. Student, parent, and community business response has been so positive that the Action Team for Partnerships will attend a Chamber of Commerce meeting in September 2002 to go over the information again and to hand out exam schedules for the 2002-2003 school year. It has also been proposed to write an article for the newspaper. Glenmary School intends to administer the survey again to see if results have changed, and write an article about the findings for the local newspaper.

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