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## Crew as a Tool to Foster Belonging at School

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## Crew as a Tool to Foster Belonging at School

### Abstract

This research study evaluated the effectiveness of Crew as a model to cultivate a sense of belonging among high school students. Crew, as it was implemented at this school, involved the daily meeting of a group of approximately twelve students of different genders and grade levels with the goal of building a sense of community in the student body. The participants were students at a private Christian high school in Ontario, Canada. The study consisted of a closed-ended survey of the student body and semi-structured interviews with eight students. The results of the study revealed that students perceived Crew, as it was implemented at this particular school, to have a small yet positive impact on their sense of belonging at school. The study highlighted the need for increasing the fidelity of implementation of Crew and recommends further research into Crew as a potential model to foster a sense of belonging in a student body.

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Action Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

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Crew as a Tool to Foster Belonging at School

by

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Action Research Project  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Education

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### **Abstract**

This research study evaluated the effectiveness of Crew as a model to cultivate a sense of belonging among high school students. Crew, as it was implemented at this school, involved the daily meeting of a group of approximately twelve students of different genders and grade levels with the goal of building a sense of community in the student body. The participants were students at a private Christian high school in Ontario, Canada. The study consisted of a closed-ended survey of the student body and semi-structured interviews with eight students. The results of the study revealed that students perceived Crew, as it was implemented at this particular school, to have a small yet positive impact on their sense of belonging at school. The study highlighted the need for increasing the fidelity of implementation of Crew and recommends further research into Crew as a potential model to foster a sense of belonging in a student body.

*Keywords:* belonging, school culture, student-peer friendships, student-faculty relationships, Crew

Students are not “brains on sticks” or empty vats into which teachers pour knowledge. Students are multidimensional beings and educators have long wrestled with how to teach the whole child. Mahmoudi et al. (2012), in promoting holistic education as the approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, described several educational philosophies and approaches to education that seek to meet “different aspects of the individual” (p. 178). Although holistic education as a distinct movement emerged in the 1980s in North America, Mahmoudi et al. (2012) trace its historical roots as far back as the ancient Greeks, various indigenous educational philosophies, and, more recently, in the work of Rousseau, Steiner, and Montessori. Even within more mainstream educational contexts, scholars have given thought to reimagining what education should look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jacobs (2010), for example, questioned whether the pendulum to emphasizing standards may have swung too far. She acknowledged the need for standards but warned against the danger of standardization. Teachers, Jacobs argued, need room to adjust instruction to the needs of the individual students in their classroom. Prensky (2001), in addressing the impact the digital revolution was having on education, included “future skills” which address the ethical and moral dimensions of life. The content of the curriculum is not enough, particularly in a digital age where information is easily accessible. Costa and Kallick (2010), also acknowledging the need for change in a digital 21<sup>st</sup> century, identified habits of mind as essential curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Similarly, Murray (2014) argued that character education must be integrated into the curriculum, seeing it as crucial to avoiding the dissolving of the American republic. These and other scholars recognize that education cannot only be about intellectual knowledge but that the emotional and ethical dimension of students must be cultivated as well. If we teach for understanding by design, social, emotional, and ethical education must be considered as well.

One way in which this holistic view of the child has shaped the world of education is the development of social and emotional learning programs and curriculum. CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, developed and implemented their framework for social and emotional learning in nation-wide initiatives (CASEL, 2020). The framework identifies five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (Jagers et al., 2019). Developing these aspects of students through education is not only done to recognize a multidimensional view of human beings but is also motivated by a desire to prepare students for democratic citizenship. Jagers et al. (2019) proposed this framework as a tool for transformative social and emotional learning, focusing their analysis on the potential for dealing with racial inequalities. Education of a well-rounded student must develop the social and emotional aspects of students.

Another framework for integrating social emotional learning into schools has been developed by EL Education, formerly known as Expeditionary Learning. In a self-published work that highlighted its core practices, EL Education (2018) identified the curriculum, instruction, culture and character, student-engaged assessment, and leadership as key aspects of improving schools. The integration of social and emotional learning comes through the curriculum which “should reflect a commitment to developing character; and empower students to contribute to a more just and equitable world” (EL Education, 2018, p. IV). Integration of SEL is most clear under culture and character, where “the EL Education model fosters and celebrates students’ character development... [and] establish Habits of Character – qualities like respect, responsibility, courage, and kindness” (EL Education, 2018, p. IV). EL Education’s Dimension of Achievement requires teachers and leaders to “prioritize social and emotional learning, along with academic learning, across the school” (EL Education, 2018, p. VII). These are not just

learning objectives, but EL Education schools strive to have a transformative impact on students in the school climate.

The major tool for shaping school culture is Crew. In Crew, teachers “plan and facilitate Crew experiences that support building relationships, Habits of Character... and other activities that foster students’ sense of purpose, belonging, and agency” (EL Education, 2018, p. 57). For Crew to be effective, it must be an emotionally safe place where students have a sense of belonging. Although there are some differences in how Crew is implemented at different EL Education schools and other schools who are adopting some of the EL Education model’s core practices, Berger et al. (2020) reported that, generally, Crews are mixed-gender groups of 8-16 students who meet at least three times a week for twenty minutes or more. They also stated that Crew members stay together across multiple years and, if they are large enough, maintain groupings by age, since students are dealing with similar challenges (e.g. transitioning to high school or completing college applications). As with any program or intervention, setting goals by themselves will not create change, but “effective implementation is necessary to improve outcomes”; paying “lip service” is not sufficient, including with social and emotional learning (Jones & Kahn, 2017).

Further research into Crew as a model for SEL is required. A study by Chiatovich and Moulton (2018, cited in Clark et al., 2020) evaluated the impact of EL Education on five variables: growth mindset, social awareness, rigorous expectations, school belonging, and school climate. The report showed a clear positive impact of EL Education on growth mindset compared to non-EL Education students, but no significant difference in the other four categories. Chiatovich and Moulton (2018, cited in Clark et al., 2020, p. 13) suggested that this does not necessarily mean that no positive impact exist; it could be due to reference bias. Since

EL Education schools have higher expectations in those categories, students may self-report lower on measurement scales compared to non-EL Education students. This demonstrates the need for further study and empirical evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of Crew to create a sense of belonging as part of social-emotional learning and development.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of one small, private Christian high school's implementation of Crew practices in fostering a sense of belonging in the student body.

### **Research Question**

1. Is Crew, as it is being implemented at this particular school, creating a sense of belonging in the student body?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions will be used for the purpose of this study and are the definitions of the author unless otherwise noted.

*Belonging* exists when students “feel close to, a part of, and happy at school; feel that teachers care about students and treat them fairly; get along with teachers and other students, and feel safe at school” (Libbey, 2007, p. 52)

*SEL* is Social Emotional Learning as described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning framework. It includes self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (Jagers et al., 2019)

### **Literature Review**

The importance of developing the social and emotional aspects of students has gained increasing attention in recent years. As educators realize the shortcomings of an overemphasis on

standardization of curriculum and assessment, holistic education has been reemphasized. Calls for increased character education (Murray, 2014) and professional development on mental health in the classroom (Lazarus & Sulkowski, 2011) recognize this more holistic view of the student. Smith (2018) and Smith (2016) have explored the powerful impact that classroom routines, the organization of furniture, and all aspects of learning activities have in shaping the student. Costa and Kallick (2009, 2010) stressed the importance in educating students in ethical decision-making and interpersonal skills. Prensky (2001, 2010) identified these as “future skills” crucial for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Educators must consider how to intentionally create an environment where the whole student can flourish: intellectually, social-emotionally, spiritually.

One aspect of this shift towards holistic education is a focus on fostering a sense of belonging in students at school. Belonging has been delineated in various ways, but Libbey (2007) defined belonging as when students “feel close to, a part of, and happy at school; feel that teachers care about students and treat them fairly; get along with teachers and other students and feel safe at school” (p. 52). In seeking to understand how belonging is created in schools, Allen et al. (2016) proposed a framework for understanding belonging. This framework has several analytical levels, ranging from the individual student, school policies and practices, education legislation, and wider cultural and geographic factors. To develop a sense of belonging at school, students must perceive their work as meaningful, that the school’s discipline policies and practices are fair, and must develop positive relationships with peers, family, and school faculty.

Empirical research has outlined clear benefits for increased belonging and connectedness. For example, a study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) observed that school connectedness and belonging not only contributed to improved academic performance but decreased at-risk behavior. Read et al. (2015) identified the importance of school connectedness

to students who belong to cultural and ethnic minorities, particularly recent immigrants. Similarly, Carter (2005) observed that caring relationships at school are essential for immigrant children in primary grades, particularly for those who speak a different language at home. Blad (2017) noted that an increase in a sense of belonging and school connectedness resulted in a decrease in the number of incidents of misbehavior at school. Blad (2017) and a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2017) observed the positive correlation between a sense of belonging and academic performance. Strong student relationships lead to decreased feelings of loneliness and anxiety (Bowker & Spencer, 2010). Despite these benefits of an increased sense of belonging, Allen and Bowles (2012) have argued that creating this sense of belonging has not been given the same degree of attention as a student's academic success.

Scholarship on how to intentionally create structures that lead to the development of positive relationships is growing. Laursen (2005) proposed regular group meetings as one intentional structure. Laursen posited that since peers have a large impact – both positive and negative – on each other, particularly during adolescence, two core principles must be intentionally enacted to develop a positive peer culture: “enlist youth as active agents and partners” and “teaching values rather than imposing rules” (p. 138). Laursen's recommendation was to hold group meetings where teens help one another solve conflicts and conduct various forms of social-emotional learning. Meetings should be frequent, “maybe once a week or daily and typically for 90 minutes” (Laursen, 2005, p. 139).

Grouping students with a variety in age was another strategy that has been implemented with the goal of intentionally creating structures at schools that lead to positive school culture. Hartup (1976, 1983), in working with younger children, noted that mixed-aged friendships can

provide several benefits, including providing models to emulate for younger children, developing help-seeking behavior in younger children, and developing help-giving and assertive behavior in older children. Allen (1989) tested the impact of age-mixing on friendship development in upper-middle school students. Allen concluded that although the number of mixed-age friendships increased, it did not change “overall friendship patterns” (p. 413). Building on the work of Allen (1989), Bowker and Spencer (2010) noted that another benefit of mixed-age friendships is the potential to decrease feelings of loneliness and anxiety. They observed that student “participation in reciprocated mixed-grade friendships may protect eighth grade same-grade friendless students and anxious-withdrawn boys from actual peer victimization” (p. 1326). The potential to restructure schools so that age-mixing is integrated into the very structure of schools was one of the keys to revitalize the education system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century according to Jacobs (2010), who argued that form must follow function and grouping learners by patterns that best meet their needs, instead of age, must play a part in our intentional effort to educate learners. Building positive peer-relationships is one key aspect of promoting a positive school culture and fostering a sense of belonging at school.

A second consideration in structuring schools to promote the development of positive relationships is focusing on student relationships with adults and school faculty. The importance of student-teacher relationships was identified in the research-based framework for belonging developed by Allen et al. (2016) who outlined what they termed the “micro-system.” Several factors impact students’ sense of belonging. The micro-system of school belonging involves peer, parent, and teacher support (Allen et al., 2016, p. 99). In other words, the way students interact with teachers and other school faculty has a significant impact on student sense of belonging. Tillery et al. (2013) also argued that adult connection is crucial to adolescent feelings

of connectedness and are key in developing self-determination, social capital, and improving mental health. This finding is supported by the 2015 PISA report (OECD, 2017) which concluded that positive student-teacher relationships are associated with a greater sense of belonging at school. The call on schools to develop belonging echoed Sojourner (2014), who argued that the school's responsibility in this area has increased since deep emotional nourishment is no longer happening at home. Parents are either "too connected" (e.g. helicopter parents) or "too disconnected" (e.g. absent, family breakdown) and are therefore not providing an environment which fosters healthy social-emotional development and character education. Sanders and Munford (2016) conducted a longitudinal study that analyzed the impact of student-faculty relationships as central to a sense of belonging in vulnerable youth. The researchers worked with the PARTH orientations model, which identified "recurring themes in youth interviews [of factors] that fostered a sense of belonging" (Sanders & Munford, 2016, p. 165). These orientations are perseverance, adaptability, relationships, time, and honesty. Perseverance was described as an "enduring commitment" (Sanders & Munford, 2016, p. 166). Adaptability was recognition on the part of faculty to "'bend the rules' in recognition of the pressures and challenges the student faced" (Sanders & Munford, 2016, p. 166). It was revealed that "relationships that were enduring, positive, encouraging, warm, and empathic were valued highly by the young people" (Sanders & Munford, 2016, p. 167). The PARTH model identifies factors that are crucial to developing a sense of belonging in students through positive student-to-faculty relationships.

Educational professionals are striving to create school structures, discipline policies and practices, and school climates that foster a sense of belonging through the development of positive student-to-student and student-to-faculty relationships. Berger et al. (2020) pointed out

that schools cannot avoid this responsibility: “You have no choice as a school but to teach character to students. You are already doing it all day long. The experience of schooling shapes the character of all students” (p. 6). Elias (2016) stressed the importance for schools to build infrastructure that supports social-emotional learning. The Aspen Institute published a report (Jones & Kahn, 2017) stressing the important role schools play in the social-emotional development of children, arguing for greater social-emotional learning to be implemented in schools. Intentionality requires great effort and potential restructuring of existing systems, for example, improving social-emotional learning professional development for in-service and pre-service teachers.

Current scholarship has emphasized the importance of developing structures to improve social-emotional development; speaking about the need to change is not effective. In recent years, schools have been experimenting with alternative structures to foster a sense of belonging and school connectedness. Many of these explored the possibility of working with mixed-gender, mixed-age, and small groupings where positive student-to-teacher and student-to-student relationships are built. Tillery et al. (2013) observed the “small schools movement” where cohorts of students are created within a larger school to create a sense of “smallness” and closeness. Similarly, Sedo & Hindle (2000) reported on a school’s efforts to transform the school culture into a caring school community. Part of the efforts included the organization of “school-wide families”, which are cross-grade groupings in which students interact, play, and work. Another example is the HomeBASE model that replaced homerooms in Concord Middle School (Cameron, 2019).

Crew is a model developed by Expeditionary Learning (hereafter EL Education) to accomplish transformation of the student through a “a three-dimensional vision of student

achievement: mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high-quality student work” (Berger et al., 2020, p. 7). This holistic view of student achievement meant, in part, the desire to increase a sense of belonging and positive school climate (Clark et al., 2020). The Crew model is not necessarily that different from other models but “embraces all of them” and is “more all-encompassing” because it “involves all students and all staff” (Berger et al., 2020, p. 12).

The effectiveness of EL Education’s core practices has been studied but more research is warranted. A study by Chiatovich and Moulton (2018, cited in Clark et al., 2020) measured growth mindset, social awareness, rigorous expectations, school belonging, and school climate in various EL Education schools. The report concluded that that although EL schools reported “significantly higher growth mindset scores than matched peers... no statistically significant differences were found between EL Education students and their peers on the other four included constructs”, which includes a sense of belonging (Clark et al., 2020, p. 13). Although the results seem to render EL Education as no more effective than other models, the Chiatovich and Moulton (2018, cited in Clark et al., 2020, p. 13) hypothesized that the scores might be reflective of the higher standards EL Education schools have in these categories.

Another reason for further research, particularly action research, is that implementation of EL education and Crew practices in particular are not uniform. Berger et al. (2020) report that, despite the similar core practices, Crew is implemented differently in each localized setting, including the length and frequency of Crew meetings, the age and gender make-up of Crew groupings, and Crew activities. Even though similar Crew activities are being implemented, each Crew leader and individual Crew members shapes the climate of the Crew. Crew may be a potential tool to increase a sense of student belonging, but further empirical research is necessary.

## Methods

This mixed-methods study analyzed the impact of new Crew practices on students' sense of belonging at a private high school in Ontario, Canada. Data collection was a combination of closed-response surveys and semi-structured interviews. Conducting the survey in addition to the interviews provided the following three benefits to accurate analysis: it provided a broad base of data, allowing the researcher to check for patterns and correlations; it increased internal validity; and it provided the researcher greater insight about which areas to prod for further explanation during interviews. Due to the small student population, conducting the survey was convenient. Interviews were conducted to provide students the opportunity for more open-ended responses and to provide the researcher a greater understanding of the student experience of Crew and its perceived impact.

## Participants

The student population was relatively small and monolithic in character. The school draws from a broad, predominantly rural geographical location. The student population is ethnically and religiously uniform. Almost 90% of students have nearly-identical religious affiliation, with the remaining 10% representing a subset within the same faith tradition. Differences in the number of males and females in each grade are represented on Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Student Population Numbers by Gender and Grade Level*

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
Females	13	18	20	15	66
Males	10	10	7	14	41
Total	23	28	27	29	107

The survey was distributed to the entire student population. Selection of the eight participants for interviews was made to draw from the broadest range of student experience in several ways. First, an equal number of male and female students were interviewed. Second, the researcher selected one male and one female student from each grade (Grade 9-12). Third, the researcher selected one participant from each of the eight Crews at the school. A final criterion for participant selection for interviews was the researcher's expectation for student ability to provide thoughtful and useful information.

The range in participant grade level was not only important because of a variety of experience and maturity, but because of the progress the school has made in recent years with its culture-building initiatives. Crew practices were newly implemented during the school year, and the perspective of returning students provided helpful insight into student perceptions of the efficacy of Crew compared to previous models and structures.

## **Materials**

The survey (Appendix A) and semi-structured interview (Appendix B) were designed by the researcher. To ensure high reliability, the closed-response survey was developed by the researcher using the five-point Likert Scale. Participants of the piloted survey were asked to explain what the questions were asking, and their responses demonstrated high validity. Additionally, survey and interview questions were crafted based on previous scholarship relating to student belonging at school. Libbey (2007) and Allen et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of positive engagement with peers and faculty. Data relating to these factors was gathered in survey questions 1-3, 5, and 6. Survey question 4 gathered data on student responsibility and leadership which was identified by Laursen (2005) and Elias (2016) as contributing factors to a

culture of belonging. Finally, survey questions 7 and 8 gathered data on student happiness at school which Libbey (2007) identified as significant for creating a sense of belonging.

### **Procedures**

The research design was a mixed-methods study that examined the impact of Crew implementation at a specific school. Data collection was a combination of survey and interviews. Surveys were conducted at school during school hours. A video was shown to students in which the researcher, who is also a teacher at the school, explained the purpose and nature of the study. Students were told that participation was voluntary and that their individual responses would be kept confidential. Students completed the survey immediately after watching the video using Microsoft Forms. The reason for having the student population watch the explanatory video and complete the survey at the same time was to reduce interviewer effect or at least create a similar interviewer effect across the student body.

After the surveys were completed, eight students were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. These students and their parents were made aware of the nature and purpose of the interviews. Students were given the option to refuse participation and were informed that recordings would be destroyed once transcripts of the interviews had been made. Parents and students granted consent to be interviewed (see Appendix C). Students were given interview questions to consider ahead of time (see Appendix B). Interview questions focused predominantly on interviewee experience at Crew and how they thought Crew was impacting the school.

Interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions serving as the same basis for all interviews. The length of interviews varied between 10 and 25 minutes. Video recordings

were made of each interview so that they can be transcribed. To protect the privacy of participants, transcriptions were made under non-identifiable names (e.g. “Grade 9 Female Student”). All recordings were deleted.

Survey results were codified so that correlational analysis could be completed, with the hope of revealing potential trends or similarities in student experience. Interviews were analyzed to understand student perspectives on the impact Crew implementation was having on the school and why they thought that was the case. These analyses would reveal whether implementation of Crew was creating a sense of belonging.

## **Results**

The purpose of this study is to assess whether Crew, as it is being implemented at a particular school, is creating a sense of belonging in the student body. Data was collected by a closed-response survey and semi-structured interviews with eight select students.

### **Survey**

The survey had a response rate of 88% (95 out of 107 students). The survey was designed according to the 5-point Likert Scale. The mean response to “I feel that I belong at this school” was 3.92. Students generally believed Crew to have had a small but positive impact on their sense of belonging at school. The mean response was 3.21 and the most common response was “neutral or unsure.” Similarly, survey data showed Crew to have a small positive impact on the development of student peer relationships. However, students perceived a much stronger positive impact from Crew on the relationships they had with their Crew leaders (3.87).

**Table 2***Mean Response to Survey Questions*

Survey questions	Mean Score
1. When my Crew meets, we start with a Crew greeting.	4.04
2. I speak at Crew.	3.31
3. All members of my Crew speak at least once during Crew meetings.	3.24
4. At Crew, students are given responsibility to lead activities.	3.53
5. Crew has helped me develop positive relationships with other students.	3.54
6. Crew has helped me to develop a positive relationship with my Crew leader.	3.87
7. I enjoy Crew activities.	3.34
8. I like my Crew.	3.71
9. I feel a sense of belonging at Crew.	3.36
10. Crew has positively impacted our school culture.	3.37
11. I feel that I belong at this school.	3.92
12. Crew has helped me feel a sense of belonging at school.	3.21

The survey results also reported on core practices at Crew. On mean, students said their Crews “usually” begin with a Crew greeting (4.04). However, general discussion and conversation was not as common across various Crews. On mean, students reported that that it “sometimes” was the case that they personally spoke at Crew (3.31) or that all students spoke at Crew (3.24). Table 2 records the mean score response to all survey questions.

Although the responses were close to neutral, the majority of students felt positively about Crew practices and its impact. This is supported by the visually represented survey. Figure 1 contains the responses to the first four survey questions. The descriptors in the survey ranged from *never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *usually*, and *always*.

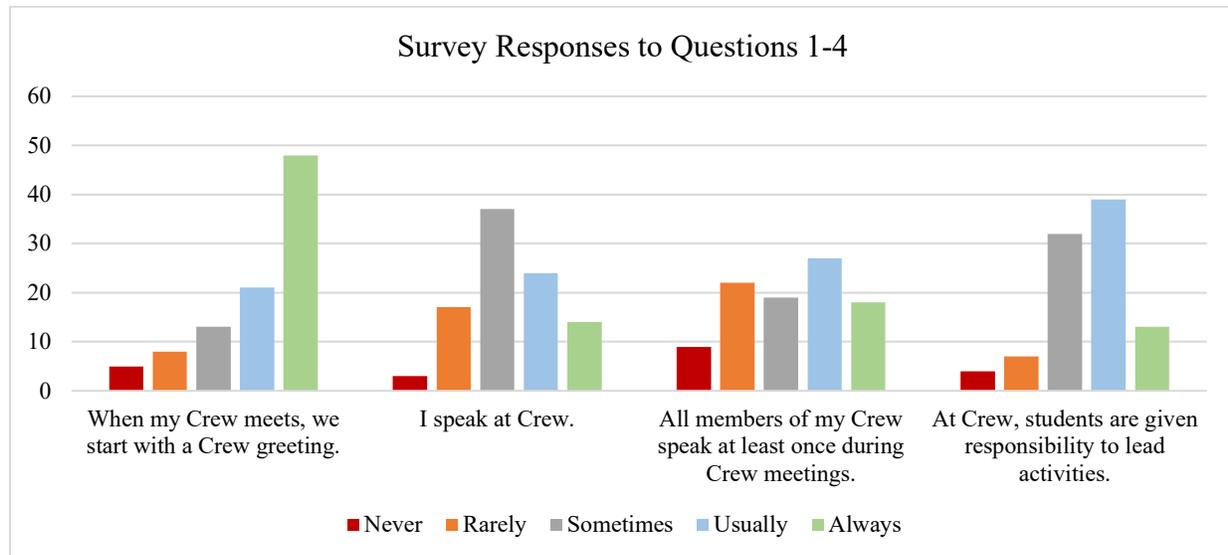
**Figure 1***Survey Responses to Questions 1-4*

Figure 2 shows the number of responses for the remaining survey questions which used the descriptors *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral or unsure*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. This visualization demonstrates that survey responses tended to towards the middle range, but the majority of students felt positively about Crew practices and their impact. For example, 58% of students agreed or strongly agreed that Crew helped them develop positive relationships with peers and 76% agreed or strongly agreed that Crew helped them develop positive relationships with their Crew leader. Additionally, although 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they enjoyed Crew activities, 46% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they did enjoy Crew activities. Similarly, although 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they like their Crew, 68% of students agreed or strongly agreed. Figure 1 and Figure 2 also demonstrate that on certain key questions, students perceived Crew to have a limited positive impact. This is especially noteworthy in their responses to whether they felt a sense of belonging at Crew (question 9) and

whether Crew has helped students increase in their sense of belonging at school (question 12).

The most common response was “neutral or unsure.”

**Figure 2**

*Survey Responses to Questions 5-12*

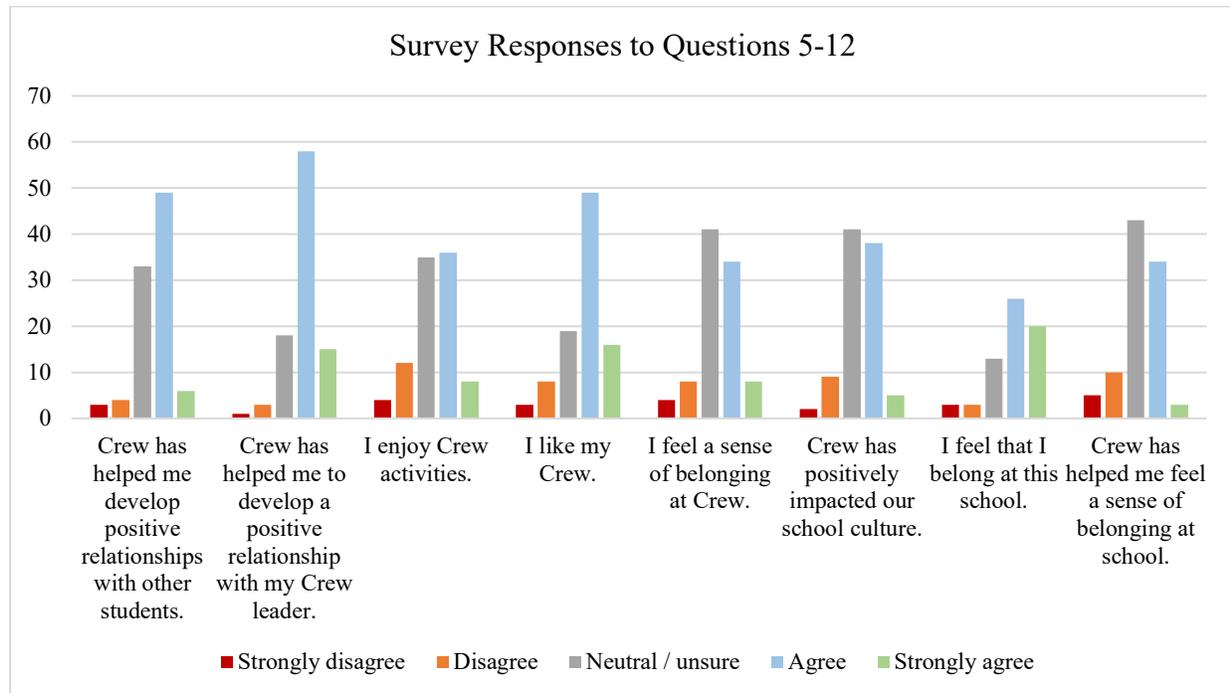


Table 3 contains a correlation matrix for each of the survey questions. The strongest correlation (0.71) was found between student responses to question 8 (“I like my Crew”) and question 9 (“I feel a sense of belonging at Crew”). The second strongest correlation (0.66) existed between student responses to question 5 (“Crew has helped me develop positive relationships with other students”) and question 8 (“I like my Crew”). The two questions most strongly correlated with student beliefs about whether Crew has helped them feel a sense of belonging at school (question 12), was question 5 (“Crew has helped me develop positive relationships with other students”) and question 8 (“I like my Crew”), both of which had a moderate correlation of 0.62.

**Table 3***Survey Response Correlation Matrix*

Survey Response Correlation Matrix												
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
Q1	1											
Q2	0.05	1										
Q3	0.05	0.37	1									
Q4	0.12	0.15	0.03	1								
Q5	0.23	0.34	0.13	0.33	1							
Q6	0.17	0.30	0.08	0.12	0.52	1						
Q7	0.21	0.23	0.20	0.20	0.52	0.60	1					
Q8	0.17	0.30	0.17	0.26	0.66	0.60	0.57	1				
Q9	0.13	0.34	0.20	0.18	0.53	0.49	0.52	0.71	1			
Q10	0.18	0.11	0.25	0.12	0.54	0.39	0.54	0.51	0.57	1		
Q11	0.20	0.31	0.10	0.19	0.44	0.33	0.46	0.43	0.36	0.43	1	
Q12	0.17	0.34	0.10	0.26	0.62	0.48	0.63	0.62	0.57	0.58	0.60	1

Further analysis was conducted to assess correlations between survey responses and student gender (Figure 3), grade level (Figure 4), and which Crew the respondent belonged to (Figure 5). The researcher focused this correlational analysis on survey questions 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12.

Figure 3 demonstrates that although female students were slightly less likely to speak at Crew meetings, they report higher scores in every other question which was part of the correlational analysis. The clearest difference in experience between the genders was in students' enjoyment of Crew activities (a difference of 0.31), student sense of belonging at school (a difference of 0.43), and perceptions about Crew's impact on creating a sense of belonging at school (a difference of 0.46).

**Figure 3**

*Mean Survey Response by Gender on the 5-point Likert Scale*

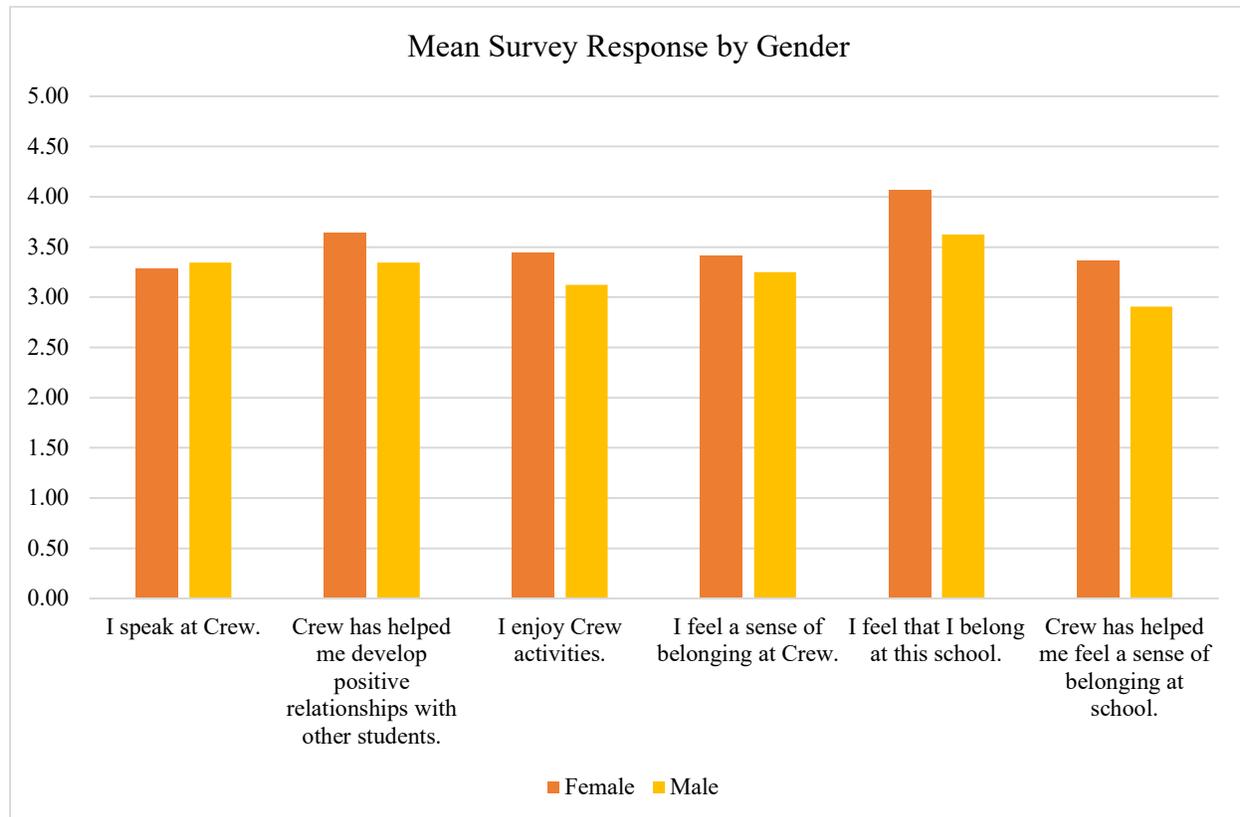


Figure 4 represents the correlation between survey responses and grade level. Students generally increased in their sense of belonging at school (question 11). This was clear in the steady growth from Grade 10 through 12. However, an exception to this trend was the Grade 9 students. In fact, The Grade 9 class reported the highest sense of belonging at school with a score of 4.04.

Although the Grade 12 students perceive themselves to speak more frequently than students of other grades, Grade 12 also reported the lowest sense of enjoyment at Crew (3.04). Similarly, Grade 12 students reported the lowest mean response to whether Crew has helped them develop a sense of belonging at school, sharing a 3.00 mean with the Grade 10 students.

Similarities between grade-level experiences emerged. Grade 9 and 11 are generally more positive than Grade 10 and 12. Grade 9 and 11 reported the two highest scores to whether Crew has helped them develop positive relations, whether they enjoy Crew activities, and whether Crew has helped them gain a sense of belonging at school.

**Figure 4**

*Mean Survey Response by Grade Level on the 5-point Likert Scale*

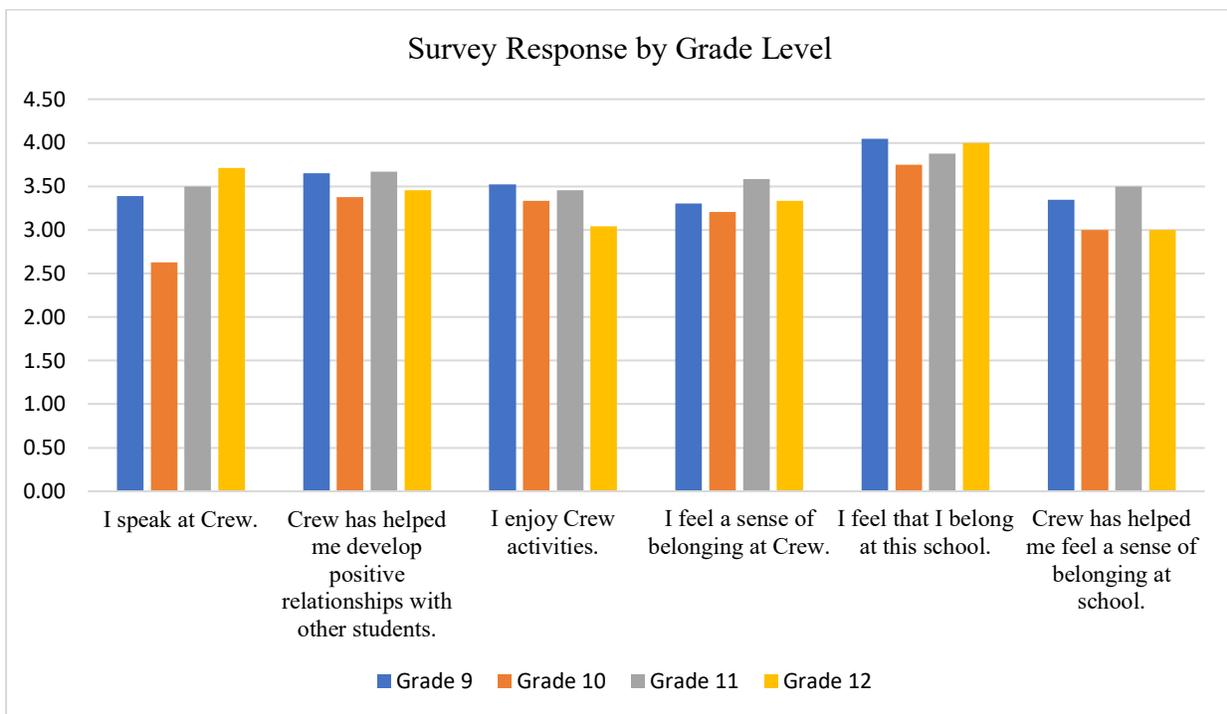
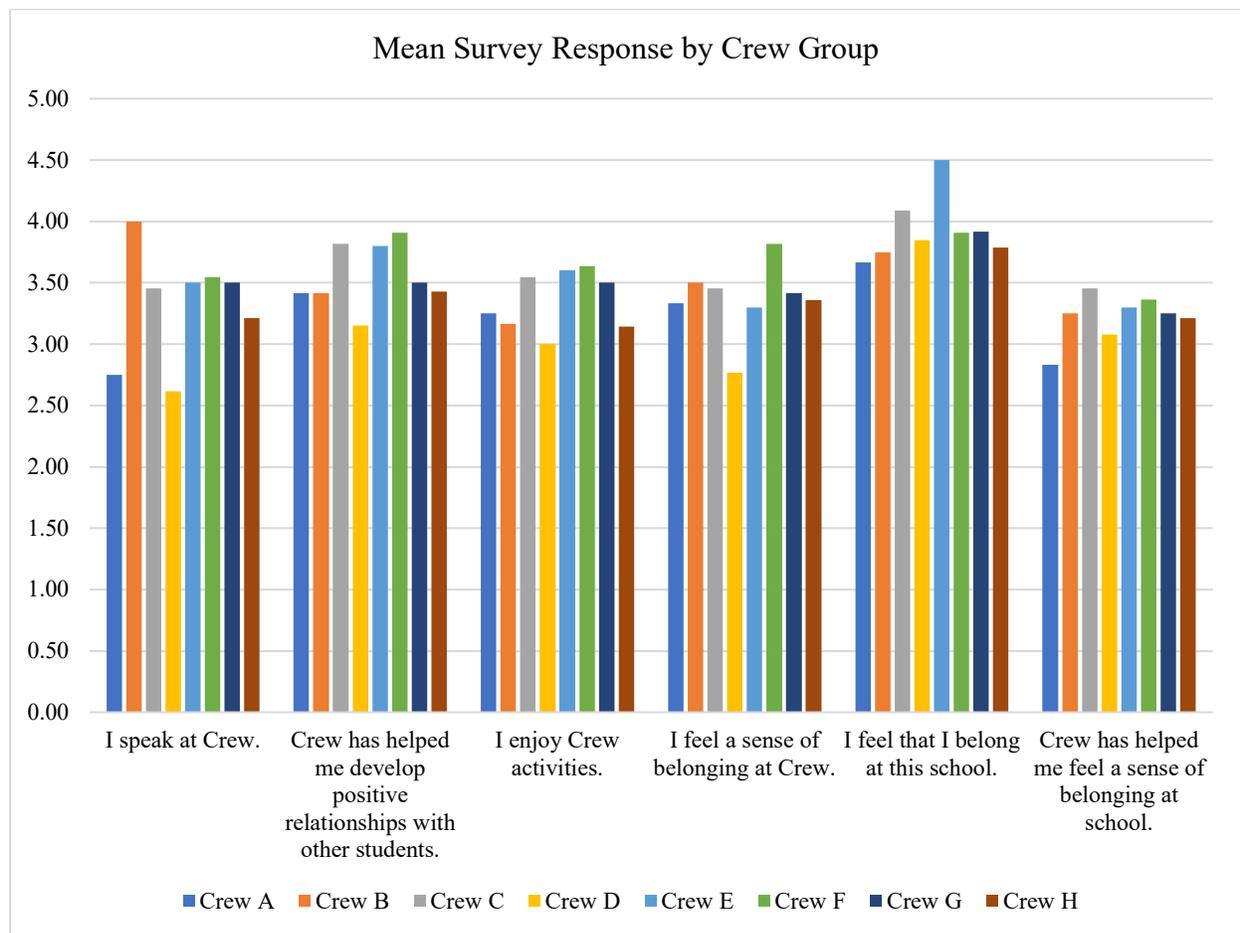


Figure 5 visualizes mean student responses by Crew grouping. The rationale for this analysis was that interviews indicated a substantial difference in Crew practices, environment, and student enjoyment of Crew. Figure 5 reveals that in some cases, survey responses followed a similar pattern. For example, Crew A and D reported significantly lower scores in “I speak at Crew” than the other Crews. They similarly reported lower scores than most other Crews on developing positive relationships with peers, enjoying Crew, a sense of belonging at Crew, and

their perception about Crew’s impact on their sense of belonging at school. Conversely, Crews whose response-mean was comparatively high, consistently reported higher mean scores. For example, Crew B reported the highest score on “I speak at Crew” and the second highest score on student sense of belonging at Crew. The three Crews with the highest scores in response to the development of positive peer relationships (Crew C, E, and F) also reported some of the highest scores in response to whether students enjoyed Crew, felt a sense of belonging at school, and perceived Crew to have had a positive impact on their sense of belonging at school.

**Figure 5**

*Mean Survey Response by Crew Group*



## **Interviews**

The interviews took place during the week following the survey. The interviews provided the researcher the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of student experiences in their Crews and their perceived impact of Crew on their own sense of belonging at school. Students were also able to elaborate on their survey responses. Interviews were transcribed and coded for recurring themes in student experiences and opinions of Crew. The three overarching themes that emerged were that Crew practices and their related impact varied significantly between Crews, COVID-19 had a substantially negative impact on implementation, and students recommended improvements for Crew to become more effective and enjoyable.

### ***Crew Practices and Perceived Effectiveness Vary Significantly from Crew to Crew***

All Crews reported the uniform pattern of doing devotions at 10-minute Crew meetings on Tuesdays through Fridays while doing community building activities like games during the 20-minute Crew meetings on Mondays. However, the practices and environment within Crews varied greatly. This included some core Crew practices like the Crew Greeting but extended to the general atmosphere as well. These differences had a large bearing on student feelings about Crew and their perceptions about Crew's value and effectiveness in creating a sense of belonging.

Two of the eight students that were interviewed spoke very highly of their Crew. The Grade 9 male student attributed success in his Crew in large part to the democratic leadership style. The Crew made decisions together about which topics to discuss and which activities to do. The Crew Greeting, where students are greeted by name and are asked to respond to a question of the day, took place at the start of each Crew meeting. Although the Greeting was

awkward for him the first few occasions, he quickly saw it as a valuable tool to build community. In his Crew, students are invited but not pressured or forced to participate. He believed this was especially important for those who are scared to participate at first, saying that “it’s nice to feel safer” and to see others participate before joining in (Grade 9 Male Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). The games and team building activities at Monday Crew meetings were one of the most valuable Crew-building activities for him. The Grade 12 male student attributed success in his Crew to three main components: strong student leaders, splitting into small groups for discussions, and positive and enthusiastic leadership from the Crew leader. He said that younger students see the example set by strong and engaged senior students. Once the younger students see that “there’s no judgment and we’re just [in Crew] to talk,” then “everyone else joins in” (Grade 12 Male Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). In his Crew, the Crew Greeting is a daily practice. The daily devotions provided the most value for the Grade 12 male student.

By contrast, some students described the atmosphere in their Crew as awkward or uncomfortable. The female Grade 12 student said, “It’s really awkward... not every time, but most of the time” (Grade 12 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). She added that this was largely due to the quiet personalities in the group who are “very shy people in general.” This was the tone set at the beginning of the year and now “nobody wants to talk... it feels weird now if people *do* contribute.” In fact, “it’s almost like we bond more over the fact that our Crew is really quiet” (Grade 12 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). The Grade 10 male student also stated that his Crew saw little student engagement. Students were tasked with leading which the student thought was counter-productive to building a safe and comfortable environment. The student felt pressure from his Crew leader to participate

and lead. On one occasion, he got so anxious that he had to leave the Crew meeting. Although, he enjoyed some of the games during Monday Crew meetings, he “wouldn’t miss [Crew] if it was gone next year” (Grade 10 Male Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). The Crew Greeting was only done a few times early in the year. A female student from Grade 11 reported disappointment with the lack of student engagement in her Crew. Students in her group are “not quiet in the hallways; they’re just quiet when it comes to [Crew]” (Grade 11 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

The remaining interviewees felt content with their Crew and saw Crew as an effective tool to building peer-to-peer relationships. The Grade 10 female student reported that the daily Crew Greeting caused her to build positive relationships with students she would not otherwise come to know, particularly older students. Similarly, the Grade 9 female student said that although she had pre-existing friendships from elementary school and church connections in her own grade, she valued developing relationships with older students through Crew. She valued the fact that leadership opportunities that was shared amongst all Crew members as well as the team-building games and activities during Monday Crew meetings.

### ***Students Believe COVID-19 has Limited Opportunities for Fostering Student Belonging Through Crew***

Students experienced a mid-year lockdown-induced transition to asynchronous online learning. Student activities, including Crew, were limited by health regulations when at school. These included limitations on the number of students in classrooms, the cancelling of school activities, and the wearing of face masks to prevent transmission of the virus. The Grade 12 female student stated that although she had come to know students in her own Crew, “our Crew

feel super isolated” from other Crews (Grade 12 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). She believed that the school’s yearly “Fall Retreat” and intramural activities that were cancelled could be a large factor in creating fun and community within and between Crews. The Grade 12 male student stated that he “missed Crew games and those competitions, but, yeah, there's COVID.” He added that “the masks give you a reason to be quiet” (Grade 12 Male Student, Personal Communications, February 10, 2021). Likewise, the Grade 10 female student stated that beginning the year with their Fall Retreat would have given her Crew a “stronger connection” and that allowed her group in previous years to “not be awkward” from the start of the school year (Grade 11 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). The Grade 11 female student stated that the Monday games were useful in letting students relax, “especially [this year] when everybody is confused and where people are out with COVID and everything being weird” (Grade 11 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

### ***Students Like the Concept of Crew but Desire Improvements in Implementation***

Most of the interviewed students mentioned that they felt a sense of belonging at school prior to the implementation of new Crew practices. Many attributed their sense of belonging to pre-existing friendships and found that although they like the concept of Crew for creating a sense of belonging at school and saw potential for Crew being a positive practice, their own sense of belonging and connection at school did not increase due to Crew practices. The clear exceptions to this were younger students who stated that Crew allowed them to develop relationships with older students in a way that would be unlikely without Crew. However, even students who had negative experiences in Crew spoke positively about the potential of Crew.

Students expressed the desire for changes in how Crew was implemented. The Grade 12 female students stated that “we all get the idea of [Crew]; the concept is a good idea.” She also added, “If we keep everything exactly the way it is and then expand it, that will not go well. I pretty much guarantee that” (Grade 12 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). Student suggestions for improved implementation identified several key areas.

**Time.** The first consideration related to the amount of time Crews spent together. The Grade 11 female student believed ten-minute meetings on Tuesdays through Fridays to be too short, saying, “sometimes I wish [Crew] was longer. We have to cram stuff in, and it reminds you that you’re on a schedule. If we had an extra five or ten minutes every day to just actually hear what people have to say instead of rushing... I think that would actually make a big difference” (Grade 11 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). The Grade 11 male student also recommended increasing the daily meeting time to twenty minutes so that there is enough time to “share and discuss” (Grade 11 Male Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). On the contrary, the Grade 9 female student suggested reducing meeting frequency to three times a week. The Grade 12 female student suggested scaling back to once a week or even once a month. The Grade 9 male student stated that “[the amount of time we meet as a Crew] is pretty perfect the way it is” (Grade 9 Male Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

**Fun and Engaging Activities.** The second factor students repeatedly spoke about related to specific practices. Students were clear about practices that worked well and those that did not. All students enjoyed the Monday Crew Meetings where students played games or participated in activities that were not based around discussion or daily devotions. Several of the interviewees

suggested expanding Monday Crew activities as a way to improve Crew. For example, the Grade 12 female student stated that Tuesday-Friday meetings were becoming repetitive and “there just has to be more variety and more things to look forward to” (Grade 12 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021). She recommended meeting up with other Crews and competing against other Crews through intramurals and other games as a way to build excitement.

**Splitting Into Smaller Groups.** Besides the Monday Crew activities, several students identified splitting into smaller groups within Crews as an effective way to stimulate engagement and discussion within the Crew during Crew Meetings. The Grade 9 male student stated that splitting into groups of three or four allowed all students to contribute. The Grade 10 female student responded that “I am kind of shy in larger groups, so having the small groups just feels more personal” (Grade 10 Female Student, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

**Shared Leadership.** Students from Crews where decision-making was shared expressed greater feelings of safety to participate and a greater sense of belonging to their Crew. Conversely, students who were pressured or forced into a structure, resisted participation. For example, the Grade 12 female student stated that “it's hard for teachers to appreciate and understand teenagers,” especially the urge to resist top-down structures (Grade 12 Female Student, Personal Communications, February 10, 2021). The Grade 10 and Grade 11 male students expressed discomfort and anxiety due to pressure to lead and participate. These contributed to negative experiences at Crew.

## **Discussion**

### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate Crew practices as they were being implemented at a small, private high school in Ontario, Canada. More specifically, the study analyzed whether Crew impacted students' sense of belonging at school. A review of relevant literature revealed that key factors in creating a sense of belonging in students include the development of positive relationships between students and their peers, positive relationships between students and school faculty, student responsibility and leadership, and student happiness at school. To answer the research question, the researcher conducted a mixed-methods study where students completed a closed-response survey and eight students participated in semi-structured interviews. Students were asked about their experience at Crew meetings and the impact they believed Crew practices were having on student sense of belonging.

### **Summary Observations of Findings**

The data collected through surveys and interviews revealed that students generally believed Crew to have a positive but small impact on their sense of belonging at school. The mean response to the statement, "Crew has helped me feel a sense of belonging at school" was 3.21 on a five-point Likert scale (Table 2). Students who were interviewed believed that the main reason for this was that students already felt they belonged at school without Crew. Eighty percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of belonging at school (Figure 2). Most of the students who were interviewed stated that the major contributing factor in their own sense of belonging at school was pre-existing friendships. Seeing friendships as the key

ingredient to belonging was confirmed in Libbey (2007), who identified positive peer-to-peer interactions as a key ingredient to a student's sense of belonging.

An interesting trend observed in the survey data was a steady increase in student sense of belonging in Grades 10 through 12 (Figure 4). This trend is somewhat expected. The more time students spend together, the more opportunity exists for friendships to develop. The Grade 12 class reported high feelings of belonging (4.00) but also reported the lowest mean score (3.00) in response to the question concerning whether Crew has positively impacted their sense of belonging (Figure 4). Since Grade 12 students have been at the school the longest and have had time to develop relationships over four years, they perceived limited benefit from Crew in terms of developing relationships with peers. This was confirmed by the interviews where students attributed friendships that existed before Crew implementation for their sense of belonging. Students with pre-existing friendships at school benefitted less from Crew. This notion is supported by the fact that the Grade 9 class is the remarkable exception to the pattern of a steady yearly growth in feelings of belonging at school. Despite only being in their first year at the school, the Grade 9 class reported the highest mean sense of belonging at school at 4.04 (Figure 4). In their interviews, both Grade 9 students stated that Crew has helped them develop relationships with students of other grades, which they did not think would happen without Crew. The significance of developing mixed-age friendships to creating a sense of belonging was noted by Hartup (1976, 1983) and Allen (1989). Bowker and Spencer (2010) noted other benefits, including a decrease in feelings of loneliness and anxiety. The data here suggested that students who are new to the student body may receive the greatest benefit from Crew to developing positive peer relationships and a sense of belonging at school.

A clear benefit of Crew was the avenue it provided for the development of positive student-teacher relationships. Existing scholarship by Allen et al. (2016), Tillery et al. (2013), and the 2015 PISA report (OECD, 2017) highlighted the significance and varied benefits of positive relationships between students and faculty. In a small school like the one observed in this research study, students typically interact with the same teachers more often in classes and the hallways than at a larger school. Despite that, nearly 77% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that Crew has helped them develop a positive relationship with their Crew leader. Since students report that Crew has improved their relationship with their teacher in their small school, Crew may be an especially effective tool for developing healthy student-teacher relationships, particularly in larger schools where students do not interact with the same staff and students as frequently.

The experience of students at Crew suggests that developing a safe environment within a shared leadership model is important. Students appreciated when participation in activities were optional or were decided by the group. Students greatly disliked occasions where participation in activities was forced, either explicitly or implicitly, and when leadership responsibilities were forced upon them. This is supported by existing literature. Laursen (2005) encouraged the enlistment of youth as “active agents and partners”, and “teaching values rather than imposing rules” (p. 138). Students perceived invitation to participate in leadership as safe and encouraging. Conversely, in contexts where leadership responsibilities were imposed upon students, participation became intimidating and induced frustration, anxiety, and an atmosphere of discomfort and awkwardness.

## **Recommendations**

The primary recommendation for the school in this particular study is to improve implementation. Students who had positive experiences at Crew were very optimistic, but even those with poor experiences acknowledged liking the concept of Crew but recommended changes. Two main recommendations for the local school follow. First, school faculty would benefit from professional development related to Crew. EL Education's model for Crew involves elements of character development and social-emotional learning. Resources and curriculum for Crew meetings have been developed. Some students saw Crew as redundant or an insignificant part of their daily schedule, instead of something that is meaningful and impactful. Professional development for staff and greater support for Crew leaders during implementation would aid in fidelity of implementation of Crew so that it may be the transformative tool EL Learning designed it to be.

Second, school faculty should develop greater consistency in Crew practices. Crews varied greatly in practice and, consequently, in their impact. With improved and more consistent implementation, Crew would likely be more effective. Part of the professional development surrounding Crew should consider ways to focus activities more directly on accomplishing the purpose of Crew. In interviews, students with negative experiences expressed stress surrounding awkward atmosphere in discussions and leading devotions. Although they understood that Crew could be a tool to foster a more vibrant sense of community and belonging among students, their Crews did not focus on achieving this goal. This gap between expectations and reality was the cause for disappointment in some students. A more focused implementation of Crew across the

school would provide guidance for how much time to allocate to Crew, what kinds of activities to participate in, and strategies for cultivating the appropriate atmosphere.

Further research on Crew is strongly recommended. Although the perceived impact of Crew on student sense of belonging at this particular school was relatively small, there is good reason to remain optimistic about the potential for Crew to be a model for developing a high sense of belonging among students. First, as was discussed above, the implementation of Crew at this particular school was new, could be improved, and needed greater fidelity in implementation with EL Learning's Crew model design. Second, as most of the interviewees stated, COVID-19 related physical distancing measures dramatically impacted student experience at school. The school transitioned to online distant-learning for six weeks midway through the semester in which the study was conducted. Even during the time at school, many extra-curricular activities were cancelled or drastically altered to accommodate health regulations. These measures, along with mandated face-masking, were perceived by students to have decreased student interaction and damaged the potential impact of Crew. It is likely that Crew would have had greater impact in a school year without these restrictions. At minimum, the study did not serve as a fair assessment of Crew as a model for improving students' sense of belonging at school, let alone the specific implementation of this particular school. The researcher, and most students who were interviewed, still sense great untapped potential in the concept of Crew.

Further research is necessary in order to evaluate the effectiveness of Crew as a model, and not just as it has been implemented at this particular school. Crew was originally developed by EL Education and implementation at this particular school differed significantly from the EL Education design. Implementation at this school was in its infancy. A repeat study at this

particular school may be beneficial. Once implementation has been improved, once health restrictions have been removed, and with increased time to impact students, the effectiveness of Crew may become clearer.

In any future research, it would be valuable to measure student sense of belonging before and after implementation. In the current study, students attributed their sense of belonging to pre-existing friendships. It would be useful to measure student perceptions before and after implementation because students may be unaware about how Crew has impacted their belonging. A before-and-after study may also attribute greater clarity about which school activities were instrumental in creating a sense of belonging. Building positive relationships with peers and faculty also occurs through clubs, sports, and other extra-curricular activities.

### **Limitations**

Results of this study are limited by the fact that the school in the study was small and non-diverse. Students identified pre-existing friendships at school and through the other communal connections like church as reasons for a strong sense of belonging before Crew was introduced. It is possible that Crew may have a different impact in a student body that is more diverse and less interconnected outside of school. Another limitation is the relationship between the researcher and the participants which may have prevented some students from sharing certain opinions or observations through interviews. The results of the study are limited due to a lack of data from a control group. More accurate and conclusive data could be gathered in a before-and-after research design. Finally, a major limitation on the study is the impact of COVID-19 related physical distancing measures which dramatically impacted student experiences and Crew activities.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Survey

#### Crew Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about how Crew is impacting our school.

Please read questions carefully and select the option that most accurately describes your experience. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Throughout the survey, "Crew meetings" refers to any time you meet with your Crew and does not distinguish between Monday Crew Meetings and Crew Devotions.

1. When my Crew meets, we start with a Crew greeting.

Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Usually          Always

2. I speak at Crew.

Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Usually          Always

3. All members of my Crew speak at least once during Crew meetings.

Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Usually          Always

4. At Crew meetings, students are given responsibility for leading activities.

Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Usually          Always

5. Crew has helped me develop positive relationships with other students.

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral/ Unsure      Agree      Strongly Agree

6. Crew has helped me to develop a positive relationship with my Crew leader.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

7. I enjoy Crew activities.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

8. I like my Crew.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

9. I feel a sense of belonging at Crew.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

10. Crew has had a positive impact on school culture.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

11. I feel that I belong at this school.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

12. Crew has helped me feel a sense of belonging at Crew.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral/ Unsure    Agree    Strongly Agree

**Appendix B – Semi-Structured Interview Questions**Interview

Remind interviewees that they are free to not answer any of the questions they are asked. They may stop the interview if they wish to discontinue.

1. Tell me about your Crew.
  - a. What do you do at Crew?
  - b. What's been your favorite part / experience? Least favorite?
  - c. What has worked well? What hasn't?
  - d. How would you describe the vibe?
2. In your view, what's the point of Crew?
  - a. Is Crew doing a good job of meeting those goals?
3. Do you feel a sense of belonging at Crew?
4. Do you think Crew impacts other parts of school?
  - a. Has Crew impacted your interactions with other students?
    - i. Consider interactions during and outside Crew meetings.
  - b. Has Crew impacted your interactions with or view of teachers?
    - i. Consider interactions during and outside Crew meetings.
    - ii. Consider interactions with Crew leader and other faculty at the school.
5. Do you feel that Crew has helped you feel a sense of belonging at our school?
6. What would make Crew effective in creating a sense of belonging for all students at school?
  - a. Feel free to think outside the box!
  - b. How does Crew compare to other activities we've done at our school to create a sense of belonging? (e.g. BBQ lunches, theme days, discussion groups of previous years, etc.)
7. Do you want to add anything else about Crew?

## **Appendix C – Interview Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent Crew as a tool to foster belonging**

I, Lennart de Visser, am asking you to provide consent for your child to participate in a research study titled “Crew as a tool to foster belonging”. I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is part of my Master of Education studies at Dordt University. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Pat Kornelis, Ed. D., Dordt University.

#### **What the study is about**

The purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of our school’s implementation of Crew in fostering a sense of belonging in the student body.

#### **What we will ask you to do**

I will ask students questions about their experience of Crew this year. Participants will be asked what usually happens at Crew meetings, what they enjoy or dislike about Crew, and whether it has impacted the way they relate to other students and teachers. All students will complete a survey, but I am asking your child to participate in an interview at school, during school hours, to provide more a more in-depth understanding that surveys can give.

#### **Risks and discomforts**

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research. The only foreseeable drawback of participation is missing about 30 minutes of classroom instruction.

#### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to your child, but the information they provide may be useful in improving the school’s current and future Crew practices in creating a sense of belonging at school and fostering a positive school culture.

#### **Compensation for participation**

There is no compensation or reward for participation in this study.

#### **Recording of Interviews**

A recording will be made of the interviews. Interviews will be transcribed so that information provided by participants can be analyzed. All recordings will be destroyed after the research project is completed.

#### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

Although I foresee no reason for any sensitive information to be shared during interviews, confidentiality of participants will be protected by transcribing interviews under non-identifiable names (for example, “Student A”).

**Taking part is voluntary**

Each participant's involvement is voluntary. The participant may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that may make him/her feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to him/her, and no effect on the compensation earned before withdrawing, or their academic standing, record, or relationship with the school.

**If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this study is Lennart de Visser, graduate student at Dordt University. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Lennart de Visser at [ldevisser@providencerc.com](mailto:ldevisser@providencerc.com) or at 519.471.0661. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Dr. Luralyn Helming at [irb@dordt.edu](mailto:irb@dordt.edu) or 712.722.6038.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to allow my child to take part in the study.

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your child (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person obtaining consent (printed) \_\_\_\_\_