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Exploring Alternative High Schools: Does Emotional Intelligence Matter?

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Lit Review

The impetus for this research study was the closing of Wavecrest, an alternative high school in Holland that was opened in 2006 and closed in 2014.

About Wavecrest

Wavecrest educated students who had not been successful in traditional public schools. This closing created a void for the students who attended Wavecrest to reach their fullest educational potential.



Background

The research team joined with dedicated community members working towards exploring the creation of a career focused school model that will provide students the opportunity to earn their high school diploma. By utilizing theories about emotional intelligence, holistic learning and providing out-of-school learning experiences, these youth will develop into adults that are able to contribute to their community and beyond.



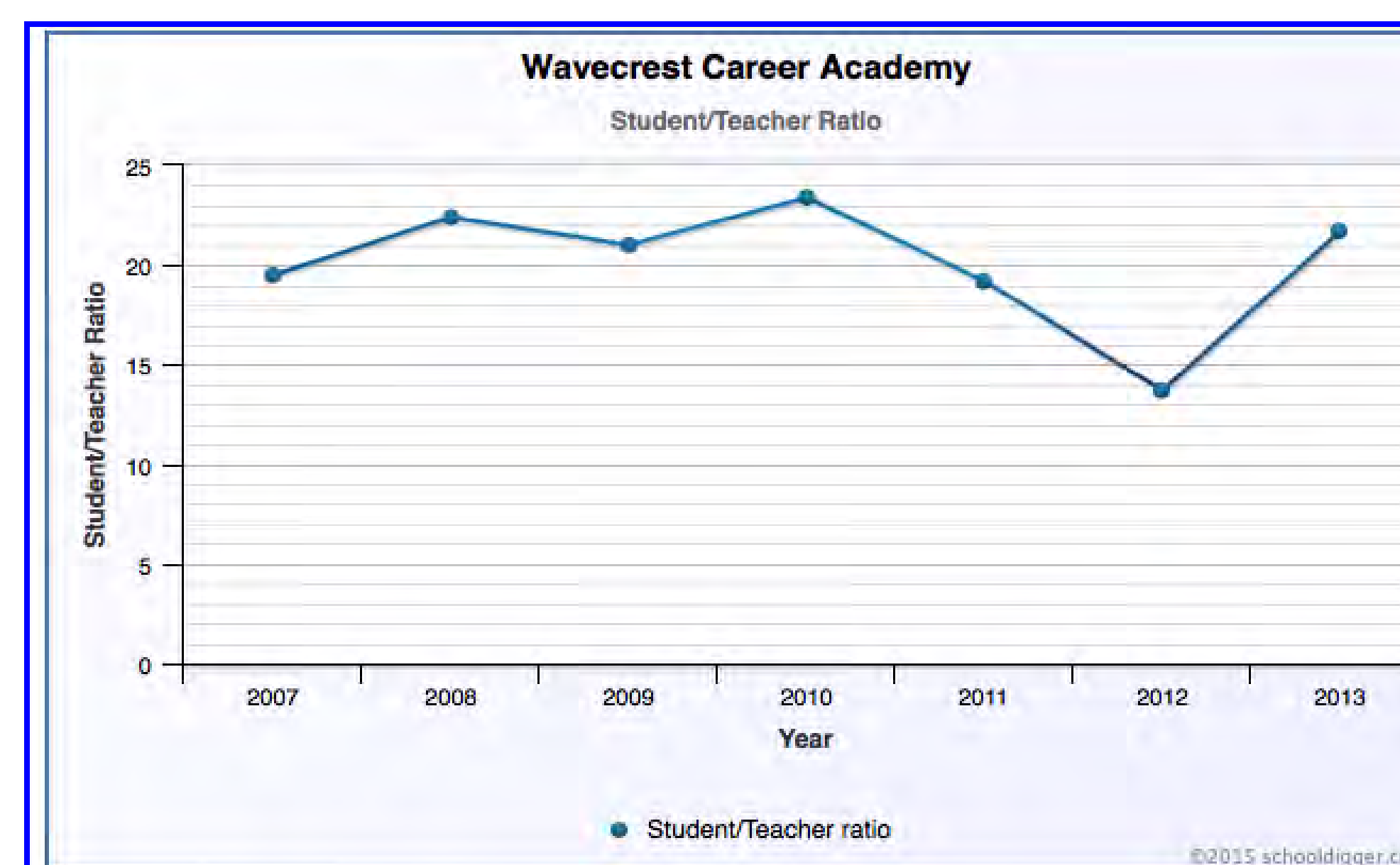
What were the effects on the Holland community upon the closing of Wavecrest?

Teacher responses

- Unfair image of students
- Issues of truancy / absences
- Family unity
- Motivation to learn in students

Student responses

- Wavecrest felt like a family
- Engaged and motivated learning (live interaction) preferred over E-2020 learning
- Future plans / goals
- Small class / school



Benefits of an Alternative High School

- Providing a different educational structure for under-resourced youth
- Helping youth earn a high school diploma
- Facilitate transitional services into the community
- Preparing the next generations' work force
- An increase in community tax payers

How does the literature inform the conceptual development of an alternative high school?

Objectives

- Provide youth with a career focused education
- Utilize emotional intelligence, holistic learning, and out-of-school community based projects for students to earn their high school diploma
- Research and gather data about under resourced youth and their education

Future Plans

- Designing a school and curriculum that focuses on emotional intelligence.
- Interview teachers, parents and students of Wavecrest.
- Implementing systems to measure success



A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to illuminate issues of alternative education

At Risk Students

- Drug and alcohol abuse, single parent households, poverty, teen pregnancy, slow learners
- Self esteem
- Dropout ages
- Preferable class structure
- Family lifestyle
- Why go to another school

Teachers As Mentors

- Counselor vs. mentor vs. friend vs. teacher
- Supportive relationships
- Humanistic approach to teaching
- Positive social and academic outcomes
- Preparing to go into the working world

Successful Alternative High Schools

- Self paced programs
- Resilience
- Relationships
- Goal setting
- Class Size:
 - Smaller class = stronger relationships
 - More academically engaged

Emotional intelligence

- Dealing with emotions, handling situations
- Increasing resiliency
- Social skills
- Academic success