

Running Head: SMILEY MIDDLE SCHOOL USER NEEDS ANALYSIS

Smiley Middle School User Analysis and Needs Assessment

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SL 5020

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## SMILEY MIDDLE SCHOOL USER NEEDS ANALYSIS

### Introduction

Smiley Middle School (SMS) in Denver, Colorado is a neighborhood fixture in the Park Hill community and currently houses 350 students and 40 staff members. Smiley is classified as a Title I school, but in spite of that status, offers many opportunities for its students. Smiley is a pre-International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB MYP) school and feeds primarily into East High School and George Washington High School (Smiley, 2009). The IB MYP process is in its second year at Smiley and is intended to create a stronger link and a direct support to George Washington High School's existing IB program. Smiley is a school "on watch" from Denver Public Schools (DPS), but is on the rise to greater academic success (Denver Public Schools, 2009). This growth in academic success is something a strong library media center could greatly facilitate. The purpose of this paper is to analyze Smiley's library users and calculate their collection needs for the future.

In order to obtain data to assess these needs, I interviewed librarian, Brett Head; 6<sup>th</sup> grade math and science teacher, David Acosta; 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher, Theresa Carson; 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher, Christina Shimrock; and 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade physical education teacher, Renee Talmich. In addition to these faculty members, I conducted a student survey of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders concerning their views of the library, their current use of the library and their collection needs.

### Community and District Characteristics

Smiley Middle School is located in the northeast corner of DPS and serves the urban neighborhoods of Northeast Park Hill and North Park Hill. In this area of Denver, the school is within walking distance of the Denver Zoo and the Museum of Natural History. Students at Smiley have high interest in zoology, biology, aerospace, and history as a result of growing up around these resources.

Denver Public Schools provides both public and charter schools in its system and in the Smiley building the library serves both kinds of school. Smiley's library is shared with Envision Leadership Preparatory, a charter school that just opened fall of 2009 (Smiley Middle School, 2009). For the library, this means funding for the librarian position and for the collection comes from two different budgets. DPS gives Smiley the opportunity to broaden its collection outside of the physical school collection with the interlibrary loan system within district schools and by working closely with surrounding public libraries. In addition to expanding the collection in this way, DPS has a system in place where materials from school libraries that are discarded can be picked up by other schools that may want them. This sharing of materials seems to save money for the district libraries and makes sure materials are reused if they can be.

Smiley's immediate community is a strong one, and according to the CDE School Accountability Report, "has strong parent involvement and a strong Parent/Teacher Association" (Colorado Department of Education, 2008). The community that Smiley serves has a population of just under twenty-thousand, but also has a pretty mobile population with 16% of North Park Hill, and 23% of Northeast Park Hill households living at their current address for less than a year (The Piton Foundation, 2008). This mobile community does present certain issues for the library media center, as students who are mobile often take materials with them.

The North and Northeast Park Hill neighborhoods have a composition of predominately African-American residents, 56% in N. Park Hill and 67% in N.E. Park Hill, and the second largest race population is Latinos, 11% in N. Park Hill and 24% in N.E. Park Hill (The Piton Foundation, 2008). For the school library, this community's racial makeup shows a need for materials that support the students in their sense of self—i.e. novels that have strong, positive African-American and Latino characters—and promotes role models that students can relate to—“not [just] a bunch of dead white males” (Head, 2010).

Students at Smiley come predominately from Northeast Park Hill, a neighborhood that has 51% of students born to unwed mothers, 40% of students living with single parents, and 20% of children born to teen mothers. Many students live in subsidised housing and 73% of students are on free and reduced lunch (The Piton Foundation, 2008). According to estimates by the Smiley social worker (name withheld on request), around 20% of Smiley students live or have lived in group homes, or have been removed from parental custody.

These demographics are just some of the reasons that the Smiley library is so important. For many of the children who attend our school, there are no information resources, computers, or even novels at home. These resources are essential to student learning and student growth. The Smiley library, then, becomes students' most convenient, and inexpensive, resource for learning information.

#### Student and Teacher Characteristics and Needs

Smiley houses 350 students in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In addition to the IB MYP status, Smiley also is home to four different center programs: a Gifted and Talented program, an Affective Needs program, a Mild Intensive program, and a Moderate Intensive program. All

students have access to a wide range of athletic teams, including volleyball, football, cross country, soccer, base/softball, tennis, and basketball. Students have many extracurricular activities, as well, including drama club, Jr. Optimist Club, MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science, and Aerospace) Club, Yearbook, Newspaper, AVID, Tutoring, Uplift, Wildlife, Semantics and Mathletics (Smiley Middle School, 2009). Students are also on a tracked system with two teams—one Honors track team and one Regular track. All of these opportunities for kids should be reflected in the collection of the library, as they are obviously interests of the school's population.

Students who participated in the Student Library Needs Survey showed high interest in athletic activities, when responding to, "What are your favorite activities outside of school," 30 responses out of 79 were athletic activities (Goetz, Student Survey of Library Use and Needs, 2010). This love of sports was also reflected when students were asked what kinds of materials they wished the library had for check out—many responded that books with sports themes were desired. Other top contenders for books students wanted to see in the library were ones that reflected or were about real life, mystery, horror, and romance (Goetz, Student Survey of Library Use and Needs, 2010).

Interestingly, when students were asked if they considered themselves 'readers,' 68% responded "yes," but only 21% had ever checked out a material from the Smiley library (Goetz, Student Survey of Library Use and Needs, 2010).

Besides the students, Smiley is also home to 21 teachers—most of whom have district prescribed curriculum that they teach to their students (Denver Public Schools, 2009). The prescribed district curriculum seems to present unique problems in obtaining materials to

supplement the curriculum. For example, the district's new Language Arts curriculum, Springboard, has every teacher in the district doing the same activities at the same time. For the 8<sup>th</sup> grade unit about the Holocaust and Literature Circles, teachers tried to supplement with documentaries on the Holocaust and extra books for student background knowledge. The problem Smiley teachers ran into was the fact that the SMS Library did not have, or had recently discarded, all of the materials we were looking for. When teachers then went to the public library or attempted to use interlibrary loan, we ran into the problem of every other 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in the district looking for the same materials.

Because of this lack of curricular materials, Smiley's library seems to be extremely underused and undervalued by teachers (Goetz, Teacher Survey of Library Use and Needs, 2010). Only one of the four teachers I interviewed used the library more than once over the course of the last 7 months. Two of the teachers had never set foot in the library this year, barring staff meetings, and the other teacher only had checked out a T.V. system from the library's collection. How can we expect students to value and utilize the library if they do not see the teachers doing so?

The teachers I interviewed were very strongly of the opinion that the library needed to offer better and more materials. They were looking for supplementary materials to use in class, professional journals, and resources detailing the latest teaching techniques. However, most of all, they were looking for the library to be more than just a room where they could spread out their classes. In their surveys, teachers and students alike were looking for the library collection to be a part of the school instead of a decoration in a seldom used room.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the library media center at Smiley Middle School needs to take a hard look at the collection and the needs of the users. Right now, the two do not seem to match up for the kids or for the teachers in the school. The following are my recommendations to make the library truly “the heart of the school” (Head, 2010):

1. Update the fiction section.

The students and teachers are clamoring for a fiction section that makes kids want to check out books. Students are looking for books at their reading level and that appeal to their desires for mystery, horror, real life, and relationships (Goetz, Student Survey of Library Use and Needs, 2010). Teachers are looking for a fiction section that makes students want to go to the library and that supplements their own classroom collections (Goetz, Teacher Survey of Library Use and Needs, 2010).

2. Continue close attention to having a diverse collection.

The community Smiley is located in is one that appreciates and needs a diverse reading and reference selection. Books that are only about suburbia or about predominately white characters will not fulfill the student needs. Continuing to strive for a mix of character backgrounds and making sure that our students are represented in what they are reading will instill a love of learning and seeing the library as a resource.

3. Align library resources with the current curricula.

A library that does not have materials to support the curriculum of the school and of the district is not going to be utilized. All of the school’s curricula need to be looked at to determine what resources the library should have for teachers and for students. Teachers

need to be consulted on what materials they want to use in their classrooms that the library does not have.

4. Promote the library as a positive resource.

Currently, the library is seen as a large room to spread your class out in, or a quiet room where books decorate the walls. Students and teachers alike need to see the library as a real resource. Every student should know what the inside of the library looks like and they should want to go there to check out materials for school and for personal use. The library is not a part of the total school program, nor is it being utilized much at all. The library should be the heart of the school—but if the heart isn't pumping blood the whole school will suffer.

5. Grants or donations need to be obtained.

Because the issue of finances holds back many of the changes and revitalizations that I have suggested, grants or additional funding must be found in order to turn things around. Smiley is a Title I school and there are many grants out there to help get students and teachers the materials that they need to be successful, especially at schools that are in need or are classified as Title I.

Looking at total renovation is hard whether it is taking place in a school library or elsewhere, but in order to create a positive space where learning happens and is supported, renovation of the Smiley Middle School library collection is absolutely needed and necessary.

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## Interview with Librarian Brett Head

1. What do you see as the strengths of your library collection?

The biography section in my library is very diverse (not a bunch of dead white males).

2. What do you see as the weaknesses of you library collection?

The fiction section (not current enough).

3. What is your current goal for fitting the collection to student and teacher needs?

Utilizing the new district curriculum as a guide will allow me to be a greater asset to the teachers and the students.

4. How does your budget effect what you can do in the Smiley library?

The impact of my budget allocation determines the goals that I set for my library (lack of funding has been the driving force in the deterioration of my collection).

5. How do teachers utilize the library?

Teachers use the library in many ways (to borrow materials, study space, class assignments, reading space, research, and even to bounce questions around with other professionals).

6. How do students utilize the library?

Students use the space to checkout books, read, study, research, and sometimes to relax.

7. How do you see the library as a part of the total school program?

The library is the heart of the school.

Teacher Interview Questions

1. How do you currently utilize the library?
2. How does the library's collection cater to the needs of your curriculum?
3. How could the library better support the needs of your curriculum?
4. Have you brought your class to the library this year?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, what activities did you do there?
5. Have you checked out materials from the library for your classes this year?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, what types of materials were they?
6. What kinds of materials would you most like to see added to the library's collection?
7. What kinds of professional development materials would you like to see in the library?

Teacher Responses to Teacher Interview Questions

Interviewees:

David Acosta, 6<sup>th</sup> grade math and science

Theresa Carson, 8<sup>th</sup> grade math

Christina Shimrock, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts

Renee Talmich, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade physical education

1. How do you currently utilize the library?

**Acosta:** I don't. I used to have my kids go down and do a short research paper on a famous mathematician, but I don't do it anymore because the materials aren't there anymore. Oh wait, I use it for staff meetings!

**Carson:** I do not use the school's library except, on occasions, to test students.

**Shimrock:** Well, staff meetings. And sometimes I use it as a place to have kids silent read.

**Talmich:** I seldom use the library, I will do so next trimester though for a health project. We mostly just use the internet on the computers for it though.

2. How does the library's collection cater to the needs of your curriculum?

**Acosta:** It doesn't. There aren't really any things to check out that support what we are learning.

**Carson:** It doesn't. For math, I would need math videos or sometimes I get art books from the public library to look at proportions and geometrical shapes, but we don't have any of that here.

**Shimrock:** To check out the TVs and DVD players. I also checked out the DVD that came with the Springboard curriculum from the library and those picture books that we are using with the [8<sup>th</sup> grade] Holocaust Literature Circle unit. Oh! And there were those mythology books at the beginning of the year. The ones for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade myth unit.

**Talmich:** It doesn't.

3. How could the library better support the needs of your curriculum?

**Acosta:** By bringing back the things I used! I still don't know why we got rid of those...

**Carson:** Having math videos or books that I could reference.

**Shimrock:** I wish that they had better novels for my kids to check out for independent reading. My classroom library is just not enough and they complain that there is nothing in the library for them to read!

**Talmich:** Incorporate more information regarding my curriculum.

4. Have you brought your class to the library this year? If yes, what activities did you do there?

**Acosta:** No.

**Carson:** A couple of times to take a unit test. It gives them more space to spread out than my room does.

**Shimrock:** Twice. Both times to do group reading. They could get farther away from the other groups in there.

**Talmich:** No.

5. Have you checked out materials from the library for your classes this year? If yes, what types of materials were they?

**Acosta:** No.

**Carson:** A TV.

**Shimrock:** All of the things I just mentioned: the TV and DVD player, the Holocaust picture books, the mythology books, and the Springboard DVD.

**Talmich:** No.

6. What kinds of materials would you most like to see added to the library's collection?

**Acosta:** Better DVDs for the curriculum we have. Those are really hard and time consuming to find on your own.

**Carson:** The math videos.

**Shimrock:** I was really upset to hear that we got rid of the cd players last year—I used those all the time for kids to listen to books on tape. I'd like to see those come back and the same with the Diary of Anne Frank DVD. For some reason we ditched that and we have a unit on the Holocaust? It doesn't make much sense.

**Talmich:** Health related material.

7. What kinds of professional development materials would you like to see in the library?

**Acosta:** Professional journal subscriptions. It'd be nice to have access to those for free.

**Carson:** Supplementary math resources. Then I wouldn't have to make up my own problems.

**Shimrock:** Something on writing workshops.

**Talmich:** Honestly I don't care about having that in the library. I can get stuff on my own. I want to see more information for students, students seldom use the library.



## Student Responses to the Student Library Needs Survey

8<sup>th</sup> grade responses—207<sup>th</sup> grade responses—8

Total responses—28

\*\*Note\*\* Student spelling and grammar were not changed.

**What are your favorite activities outside of school? (write up to 3)** Total of 79 responses

Read books	4	Play sports	5
Play baseball	1	Dance	2
Play on the computer	2	Drama	1
Play basketball	6	Staying after school	1
Go to the mall	7	Go to the rec center	1
Movies	9	Play outside	1
Play Football	3	Extreme biking	1
Hang out with friends	8	Urban running	1
Skate City	1	Tennis	2
Listen to music	2	Choir	1
Jets	1	Playing video games	2
Riding bikes	1	Watch TV	3
MESA club at school	1	Writing in my diary	1
Cooking	1	Sleep	1
Eat food	1	Go boxing	1
Play soccer	2	Party	1
Have fun	1	Softball	1
Talking on the phone	1	Playing Volleyball	1

**Do you consider yourself a reader?**

	Number out of 27	Percentage
Yes	19	68%
No	8	29%
No response	1	3%

**Why or why do you not consider yourself a reader?**

(yes,) Because I've been liking reading since I little

Yes, because I only read books that interests me.

(yes,) I consider that because I can read at least 100 pages a day if the book is interesting enough.

(yes,) because I read a lot at home.

(yes,) cause certain books I like to read depending on what it is

Yes because I learn better reading

(yes,) why because I like to read drama books so I read about it

Yes, because I like to read.

Yes, because I sometimes read books that there interesting  
 (yes,) because I like to read and learn new things  
 (yes) Kinda both because I don't mind reading it just has to be a really good book  
 Yes but sometimes I like to read and sometimes I don't because I tired  
 Yes because if the book is interesting then I like to read  
 (yes,) I like to read and I'm good at it and if I read a good book, I read it over and over.  
 (yes,) if the book is good, I read  
 (yes,) because I always have a book that I read with me either James Patterson or somebody else  
 (yes,) because some books are really good like twilight!!  
 (yes,) because I follow my reading control in readin.  
 (yes,) cause I have to read books for quests and test.  
 (no,) because reading is very boring and their only certain kinds of books I like  
 (no,) I really don't read a lot, but when I'm bored I do read for a little bit.  
 (no,) cause it's not very often when you see me read a book and be very into the book  
 (no,) I do like reading but I don't read that much  
 (no,) Because I don't read very often  
 No, because I don't read every day I spost to.  
 (no,) I don't like it that much and after awhile I start sleeping  
 (no,) because to me most books are boring if the book is good I would read it.  
 (no response) ???

**Do you check out books from the public library?**

	Number out of 27	Percentage
Yes	16	53%
No	12	47%

**Do you check out books from the Smiley library?**

	Number out of 27	Percentage
Yes	6	21%
No	22	79%

**If you have checked out books from Smiley's library, what type were they?**

Horror	2	Books about relationships	1
Mystery	3	Fantasy	1
Drama	2	Poetry	1
Romance	1	Drawing books	1
Nonfiction	1	Fiction	1
History books	1		

**\*\*Note\*\*** One response said, "I didn't check out any books the teacher wouldn't let me."

**What types of books do you wish the Smiley library had to check out?**

Mystery	4	Space books	1
Horror	2	Extreme biking books	1
Rick Riordan books	2	Twilight	1
Sports	3	History	1
Adventure	2	Drama	2
True books about a real problem (nonfiction)	4	The series from TV shows	1
Romance	2	Books that can help you understand class work and homework	1
Comedy/humor	5	Books that interest me	1
Cooking books	1	Fantasy	2
Teenagers books	1	James Patterson	1
Walter Mosley	1	Twilight	1
Poetry	1	Books about other countries	1

**What types of books do you prefer to read? (circle as many as you wish)**

Type	Number of responses	Percentage
Science Fiction	8	9%
Historical Fiction	8	9%
Horror	13	15%
Mystery	15	17%
Biographies	8	9%
Romance	13	15%
Adventure/Action	3	4%
Sports Fiction	8	9%
Nonfiction	0	0%

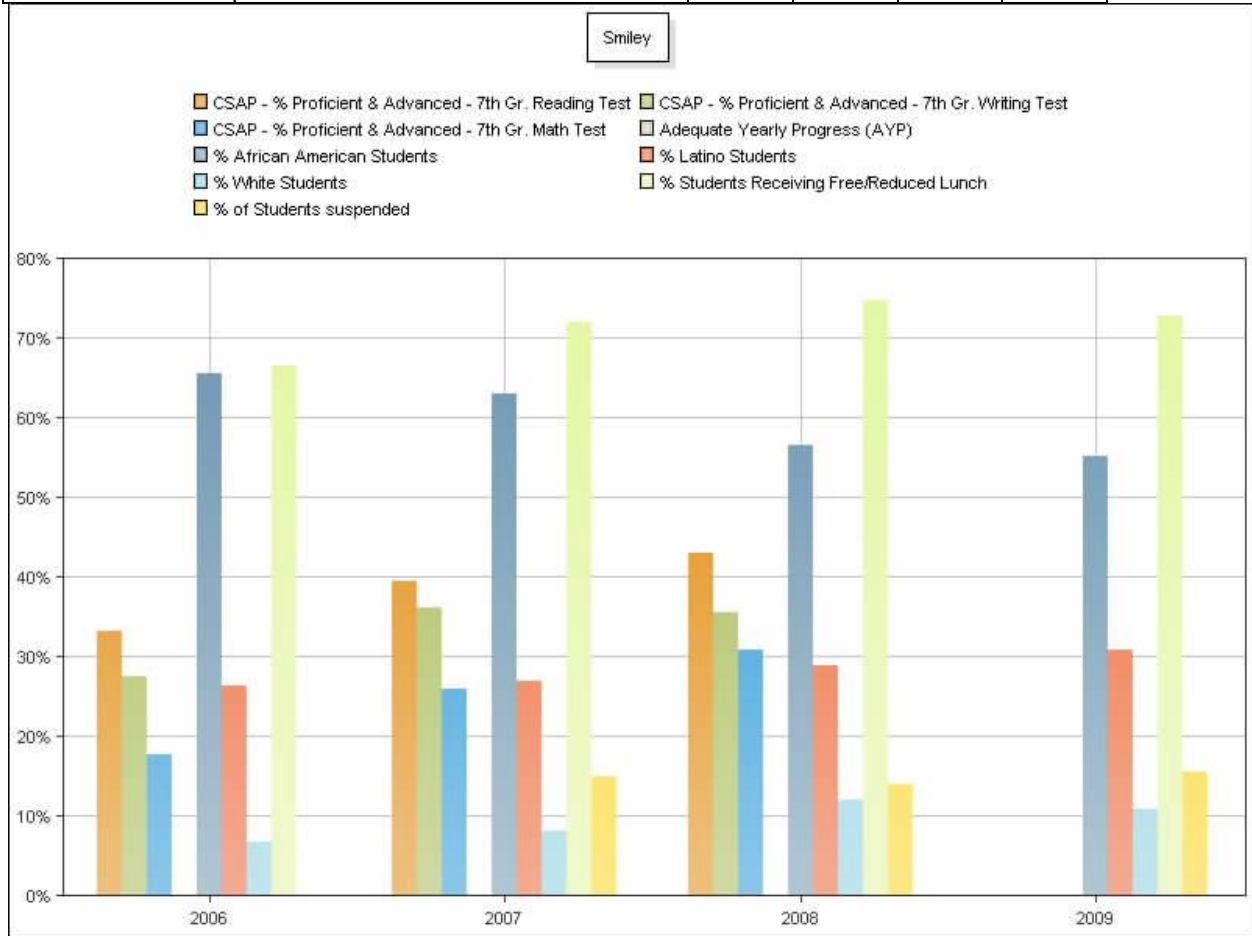
**Other:**

Fiction	1	1%
Autobiographies	1	1%
Cars	1	1%
Drama	3	4%
Poetry	2	3%
Girly books	1	1%
Comedy	1	1%
Reality	1	1%

School and Community Data from the Piton Foundation (The Piton Foundation, 2008)

SMILEY MIDDLE SCHOOL INFORMATION

Smiley	2006	2007	2008	2009
Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009
CSAP - % Proficient & Advanced - 7th Gr. Reading Test	33.3%	39.5%	43.0%	n/a
CSAP - % Proficient & Advanced - 7th Gr. Writing Test	27.6%	36.1%	35.5%	n/a
CSAP - % Proficient & Advanced - 7th Gr. Math Test	17.7%	26.1%	30.8%	n/a
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)	No	No	No	n/a
% African American Students	65.6%	63.1%	56.6%	55.2%
% Latino Students	26.3%	27.1%	29.0%	30.8%
% White Students	6.7%	8.2%	12.2%	10.9%
% Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch	66.6%	72.1%	74.9%	72.8%
% of Students suspended	n/a	14.9%	14.0%	15.6%



**NORTHEAST PARK HILL COMMUNITY INFORMATION**

General			
Indicator	Northeast Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
Total Population	8794.0	592052.0	2007
Households	2760.0	259169.0	2007
Race/Ethnicity			
Indicator	Northeast Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
% Population Non-Latino White	4.7%	51.9%	2000
% Population African American	68.5%	10.8%	2000
% Population Latino	23.8%	31.7%	2000
% Adults Non-English Speaking	11.4%	9.2%	2000
% Births to Foreign Mothers *	46.1%	38.1%	2006
Families and Households			
Indicator	Northeast Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
% Children Living with Single Parents	39.7%	28.0%	2000
% Births to Teen Mothers (19 and under) *	20.6%	11.2%	2007
% Births to Unwed Mothers *	51.3%	33.2%	2007
Mobility			
Indicator	Northeast Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
% Households Living at Current Address Less than 1 Year	22.9%	28.7%	2000

**NORTH PARK HILL COMMUNITY INFORMATION**

General			
Indicator	North Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
Total Population	10329.0	592052.0	2007
Households	3953.0	259169.0	2007
Race/Ethnicity			
Indicator	North Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
% Population Non-Latino White	27.6%	51.9%	2000
% Population African American	56.0%	10.8%	2000
% Population Latino	10.9%	31.7%	2000
% Adults Non-English Speaking	4.0%	9.2%	2000
% Births to Foreign Mothers *	14.7%	38.1%	2006
Families and Households			
Indicator	North Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
% Children Living with Single Parents	32.5%	28.0%	2000
% Births to Teen Mothers (19 and under) *	7.8%	11.2%	2007
% Births to Unwed Mothers *	30.1%	33.2%	2007
Mobility			
Indicator	North Park Hill	Denver	Data Year
% Households Living at Current Address Less than 1 Year	16.1%	28.7%	2000

SL 5020—User Analysis and Needs Assessment  
Self-Evaluation

Part 1—Data Gathering

- Thoroughness and completeness—(15) extensive data collected in each area of the grid
- Evidence of thoughtful interviewing/surveying—(15) examples of data gathered and questions asked are included
- Recorded and documented appropriately—(15) data shown in summary form including charts or graphs

Part 2—Data Synthesis

- Student needs clearly described—(14) clear summary of student needs; thoughtful
- Teacher/staff/curriculum requirements sufficiently detailed—(14) clear summary of both curriculum and staff influences; thoughtful
- District and community influence discussed—(13) clear summary of influence of district and community; thoughtful

Part 3—Data Analysis

- Curriculum Implications evaluated—(13) curriculum implications clearly discussed
- Implications of personal needs discussed—(13) personal implications discussion is clear
- District and community impact addressed—(12) some discussion of district and community impact

Writing Style

- Well organized, APA correct presentation, including self-evaluation—(14) clearly organized with no technical errors.

Self-Evaluation Total points: 138