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Project Paper
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PROJECT PAPER
ON
PROMOTION OF
SUSTAINABILITY
PROGRAM
FOR THE
CLAREMONT PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Abstract

The City of Claremont has long had an educational funding problem. In the early 1990's the city sued the state government to obtain better funding for its schools, this was called the Claremont Decision. While the state of New Hampshire lost the law suit, it has not, as yet paid the monies to the city that it owes.

The Claremont school system suffers from a need of maintenance as well as the need for repairs and upgrades. In an effort to start to rectify the funding issue, this paper discusses the design and implementation of the Snow Day School program that will bring additional monies into the school system. This program will not affect the tax base of the city and should make the city more desirable as a place to live.

Snow Day School will be the first Fee Based program enacted in the Claremont School System.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the design and implementation of a self sustainable project known as Snow Day School for the City of Claremont School system.

Claremont is a former mill town. When the mills went out of business the people of the community stayed. There are a large percentage of people that live within the City that are from the low to moderate income bracket. In the state of New Hampshire, communities are responsible for paying for their own public education through real estate taxes. When a community is wealthy, it has good schools, when a community is poor, it has poor schools. Claremont is considered to be a poor community.

The current physical condition of the schools is below standard. At one point, Claremont lost its accreditation due to this factor. The community would like to be in a position in which all of the physical buildings that belong to the school system are in at least average condition and meet the state requirements for school buildings.

The most important objective was to introduce a 'Fee' based program that would have the ability to put money into the coffers of the school system without costing the tax payers money. The most important goal is to use the money that is made from the project to help improve the condition of the buildings in the school system. To date, we have been given approval by the school board for the Snow Day School project. The information was sent home with the students and flyers were put in the windows of several businesses.

On January 28, 2009, the program was enacted with the first snow storm since the completed program was put into place. The program was hailed as a success by Jacqui Guillette, Superintendent of Schools. In the spring it will again come before the school board to obtain approval as a permanent "Fee" based program in the school system.

As a final recommendation, it is suggested to the school board to allocate the first \$200 of monies received each time the program is run, to Family School Connections to defray the cost of running the program.

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Community Context: Claremont, NH (Sullivan County)

When a visitor comes to Claremont and looks over the Sugar River toward the mill buildings, it is easy to imagine a bustling time in history when the river powered the equipment that made the manufactured goods that were exported from the city. At present the buildings sit empty and the financial fortunes that were made from them are now long gone.

Claremont is the largest city in Sullivan County, with a population of 13,187. The second largest community in the county is Newport with a population of 6,343 and it abuts Claremont to the east.

Claremont is located on the west side of New Hampshire against Vermont. The Connecticut River separates New Hampshire and Vermont. The Sugar River travels from Lake Sunapee, through Claremont to the Connecticut River. The Sugar River falls 250 feet while traveling through the city which made it ideal for mill development.

Originally settled as a farming community in 1762, during the mid 1800's the community took advantage of the Sugar River and textile, paper as well as machinery mills were built. Within 15 years several downtown buildings were built within the city; almost all still exist today. The mills brought jobs and attracted workers from across the region creating wealth and contributing to its culture. With the expansion of the mills tenement housing and private housing was built for the increased population (City of Claremont, 2004-2005).

The mill buildings lost their market edge and slowly began to shut down. The buildings have stood largely empty since the 1960's. Federal money in the 1970's renovated some of the former mills into housing and office space.

The mills are gone now but much of the population is still in place. During the 1970's through the 1990's many of the retail establishments as well as numerous homes were left empty due to the recession caused by the closing of the mill buildings. Numerous homes and retail buildings went back to the city for taxes. In a bold move, the city of Claremont leveled the empty buildings that were in need of renovation and started to advertise the vacant sites for redevelopment. The success was slow, but with the decrease in the number of empty buildings, the city has slowly been rebuilding to its current state. In the past few years, companies such as Home Depot and Arctic Spring Water have come into the community bringing employment opportunities for the unemployed. Additionally, Crown Point Cabinetry has increased its workforce to meet the demand for its products.

Over the last 20 years I have appraised homes all over New Hampshire. The antique homes of Claremont, even the modest ones, show a time of prosperity in the woodwork within them, consistently more so than any other community in which I work. They speak of a time when even modest households had plenty. The architecture is often ornate with much more detail than is found in comparable housing in other communities.

The economic state of Claremont has improved dramatically over the years, but it is not enough to take care of the school system. New Hampshire relies on its property taxes to fund its school system.

The 1990 – 2000 Census Poverty Data states that in 1989 6.4% of the New Hampshire population lived in poverty. Sullivan County ranked 2nd in the state in poverty with 9.8%. In 1999, 6.5% of the New Hampshire population lived in poverty. Sullivan County ranked 3rd this time. Most of these people live in Claremont.

The Claremont lawsuit was brought on behalf of five school districts that could not afford to properly fund their schools based on local property taxes. This was the second suit of this nature against the State of New Hampshire. The first suit was brought in the early 1980's and was settled when the state agreed to contribute 8% of the cost of education to a fund targeted to aid poor districts.

The state never fully funded its promise and by 1989 Claremont's high school had lost its accreditation because the district could not keep up with needed repairs.

In 1993, the NH Supreme Court recognized for the first time that the NH Constitution guarantees students a right to a public education. In 1997, the NH school funding system was found unconstitutional and the legislature and governor were ordered to define the components of a constitutionally adequate education, cost them out and pay for them with taxes that were equal across the state. Four governors and their legislatures refused to comply with the Court's orders leading the NH Supreme Court to again find the school funding system unconstitutional in September of 2006 (Volinsky, 2007).

According to the Department of Revenue Administration, Municipal Services, Tax Rates – 2007, out of 241 communities in the state of New Hampshire only two have a tax rate over \$30/\$1000. Claremont is one of the two. 40 years ago the mill buildings supplied enough income to keep the school system up to date but, with their closure the city has been unable to keep up with the repairs/renovations required by the government. (Department of Revenue Administration, 2007)

In a personal conversation with Nancy Merrill – Community Development department with the City of Claremont, she said that at present the schools are physically failing and are in need of renovation. Claremont is considered to be a land poor community. This project [Grade schools and high school] is a priority for the city. (Merrill, 2008)

The following information on demographics is courtesy of the New Hampshire Census Bureau. (New Hampshire, 2008) The median household income for the state is \$57,575; for the county, \$40,938 and for the City of Claremont, \$42,849.

Age Distribution: Total Population: 13,151, Males: 6,323 Females: 6,828

There are 775 children under the age of 5, 2,605 school age children and 9,771 people over 19 years of age. The focus of this paper is on the school system.

Educational Attainment: According to Guillette, Superintendent of Schools, early intervention decreases the amount of discipline problems as well as the need for special education. In review of the current population of Claremont over the age of 25, there are 613 people with less than a 9th grade education, 1317 people with no high school diploma and 1,597 people with a High School degree or equivalency. (Claremont School System, 2007)

Ethnic Mix and Language: 97.7% of the Claremont population is white. The other 2.3% of the population is made up of African American, Hispanic and Asian background. Currently, the dominant language spoken at home in Claremont is English at 11,655 people. The other three main languages spoken at home are Indo European with 581 people, Spanish with 71 people and Asian and Pacific Island with 78 people. According to Research Connections (2004), emergent literacy and language acquisition skills precede the ability to read and write and influence later literacy skills development. The earlier the education process begins, the better equipped the children are to develop academically through the school system.

Designation of Target Population and Profile: The children of the School system of Claremont are the target population and the intermediate affects of the project will be felt by them and their parents, but the long term affects will be on the entire population of Claremont because it will eventually affect the tax base requirements of the city.

Literature Review

There are no need assessments available that pertain to the school, therefore, several other need assessments were considered for this review. The city of Claremont commissioned a needs assessment to determine the priorities and desires of the community. This was done by a citizen survey that obtained 512 respondents. The paper written by Leisure Vision (2002) noted that 89% of the citizens thought that the offerings of city programs were good to excellent. Most of the respondents visited the park and the recreational sections of the city with swimming ranking first place. 78% stated that they had visited the local parks within the last year.

The Snow Day School Program will begin a trend toward Fee Based Programs in the community. This needs assessment gives insight into how the people of the community feel toward programs in the city. It also gives an indication of family orientation toward new programs. Leisure Vision (2001) conducted a needs assessment for a proposed community center. This needs assessment was commissioned by the City of Claremont. The paper discusses that the parks and recreational programs in the City of Claremont are vital to the people of the community. Based on the information gathered by Leisure Arts, primary importance was the ability to have indoor track and a gymnasium. Secondary importance was a multi-purpose space. Additional information was given on the facility

size requirements as well as the amount of available parking required. Within the needs assessment is a concept design for the facility.

While the primary importance is the development of the Snow Day School program, it is important to know what people's choices and desires are for a community center as well. The funds that are raised through Snow Day School can be put toward a multi purpose facility that can be used for both the school system as well as the community. In the design phase of this project, these desires were considered. The rationale behind this was that there had to be a sustainability function within the program that could raise funds for construction without affecting the operation and atmosphere of the school.

There are a number of families that live within the community of Claremont that do not have health insurance. The Coalition for Community Health Improvement (2005) conducted a telephone survey to ascertain the level of need in reference to health care. Of the respondents contacted, 62% of the 629 households contacted within Sullivan County believe there should be affordable daycare for low-income families, 56% believe there should be funding for after school programs. A number of prevention programs such as obesity, anorexia, depression and suicide as well as substance abuse were all discussed. These items all received a rating of approximately 50% by the respondents. The largest percentage of approval for expansion came from the prevention of child abuse.

It is acknowledged that the Snow Day School program will not solve all problems, but putting a child in a safe and happy environment may be able to stop problems before they start. As Jacqui Guillette, Superintendent of schools has stated 'For every dollar spent on early education, there is a savings of twelve dollars that would need to be spent on such areas as special education and discipline problems later on.' This is a strong indication that early childhood education plays a significant roll in molding children. This was considered when designing the Snow Day School program.

There are many needs that our children have from education to physical activities as well as nutritional requirements. The schools in which we have our children need to take care of these needs. According to Baxter (2006), who completed 150 interviews, small facilities of less than 100 children or large facilities with over 500 children are less likely to have breakfast programs. The low income children within the school generally pay a smaller amount of money for their breakfast program. Almost half of the respondents state that their children eat breakfast at home. The needs assessment discusses the type of physical activity available for children in third grade and below. Exercise such as balls, jump ropes and hula hoops were the most popular with respondents.

Even though almost half of the respondents stated that their children eat breakfast at home, it is unknown if the breakfast that they receive is nutritional or something to get them through until lunch time. The Snow Day School Program has incorporated breakfast into its schedule. Exercise is important for our children. If this is the area that is enhanced in the future, it is important to know what the children use most often.

According to 'An Idea Book on Planning (1998) there is a specific way to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment. The article discusses a checklist for creating a school profile as well as family and community involvement. The article indicates that achievement data as well as classroom performance should be reviewed when writing the needs assessment. At the end of the article it discusses the analyzing of program needs and the setting of goals.

The project target community is broken down into two areas. First, the Snow Day School Program will be a direct benefit to the school system in the City of Claremont. It gives children a healthy and safe place to be while their parents are at work. The secondary target is the city of Claremont itself. The program has been started with no monies coming from the school system, the taxpayers will not have the burden of increased taxes to pay for it. Also, this program will make the city of Claremont more desirable as a place for businesses to be because they will not have to worry about their employees missing work due to a snow storm in which school is called off.

The survey was broken down into two groups. The first group consisted of in town merchants, bank employees, city employees, construction site workers, people in the local coffee shops and local real estate agents. There were 32 people within this group. The survey is located in Appendix – A, the zip codes for this group is located in Appendix – B. The second group consisted of people from within the school system, teachers as well as the students. There were 38 people within this group. Approximately 21 of the people within this group were students.

According to Zoll (2000) children's direct influence in spending in the United states, as of 1997 was at \$188 billion. Children influence everything from what cars to buy as well as toys, clothes, food and activities. With children having this much influence on parents over expenditures and activities, it is important that the children are also considered in the survey. To take it one step further, the activities that are offered need to be activities that the children want to take. If they do not want to be in this program, there is a good chance that the parents will not pay the money to have them there.

Additionally, if a child does not want to be in a program, the learning experience will be lower. The courses that are offered in Snow Day School were developed in a manner that peaks a child's curiosity as well as teaches them. The comments from the survey can be found in Appendix – D. The goal is to turn the negative comments of the students into positive opinions so that they will be excited about the program. The program is being marketed to the children as well as the parents.

The survey was conducted in Claremont on two separate days. The responses to the questions were, 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – No Opinion, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree, 6 – Chose not to answer

The results of each question are located in Appendix C. **Survey Discussion – General Population section.**

All questions in the survey received better than a 50% approval rating. Question 5, which is on the usage of a new auditorium, received a 78% approval rating. This rating was the highest rating achieved in the survey.

The first benefit of this program is to enhance the safety, health and educational well being of the students while making life a little easier on the parents. The second benefit of the program is that businesses that are looking to relocate into the area may choose Claremont for their destination because of the program. With these new businesses coming into the community, the tax base of the City of Claremont will grow and lessen the current tax burden on those people that already live in the city.

Survey Discussion – School Section

In general, the lower response approval rating from the children in the school system, to the survey (It is assumed that the teachers were generally all positive, this was partially confirmed by the zip codes on the surveys) appears to be mostly due to the fact that they are not currently interested in spending more time at school.

Problem Analysis

Problem Statement

In the City of Claremont, the schools are overcrowded, but can not be enlarged because they are landlocked. New businesses are not attracted to the city because their employees that would transfer into the city will not want their children to go to overcrowded schools.

According to Giloth (1998, pg 19) communities have important economic assets that are often underused such as entrepreneurial abilities and skills of residents, buildings, location, land, waste, organizations and associations and financial resources. Claremont has many economic assets that are underutilized, but one of the effects of the overcrowding is that while the City of Claremont solicits new companies, it is unable to get some of them because of the problems with the schools (Nancy Merrill, Community Development, City of Claremont) According to Tim Bergeron, of the Facilities Investigative Task Force, nine of the 46 class rooms at Stevens High do not meet the minimum recommended class room size as set forth by the state of New Hampshire. <http://www.sau6.k12.nh.us>

According to Jacobs and Cleveland, (1999, page 1), “Society develops in response to the contact and interaction between human beings and their material, social and intellectual environment. The incursion of external threats, the pressure of physical and social conditions, the mysteries of physical nature and complexities of human behavior prompt humanity to experiment, create and innovate”. Jacobs and Cleveland (1999, page 6), also state: “Acquiring social behaviors requires gaining control over our psychological energies and channeling them into acceptable forms of behavior. Change the attitude and behavior changes”. According to Jacqui Guillette, Superintendent of Schools, Claremont,

“For every dollar spent on early education there is a savings of twelve dollars that would need to be spent on such areas as special education and discipline problems later on.

With the introduction of the Snow Day School program, there will be an opportunity for children in grades K – 6 to be able to go to school on a day that has been called for weather and have choices about what they will be doing during the day while their parents are at work. They will have interactive programs as well as play time. They will be watched over by the people from the Family School Connections. These are the professionals that already run the before and after school programs.

There are several benefits to the proposed project. The first benefit is that with the Snow Day School program, is an opportunity for parents to be able to go to work and know that their child is being taken care of by trained professionals. The second is that the school has implemented a fee based program that will enhance the child’s interest in education through fun activities. Third, the program does enable families to be more secure in their child’s activities, which does allow parents to have more flexibility in their own schedule, fourth, when businesses consider moving to the city, they will see the program being offered in the school system which will give the City of Claremont a better opportunity to solicit these companies. With every new business that enters the city, there are more monies that enter the city’s coffers which allows the city more flexibility in the use of their tax dollars without the need to raise taxes and lastly, with additional employment in the city, the merchants also make additional income, have the opportunity to expand, hire new people etc.

Stakeholder Analysis:

The key people involved in this project are Jacqui Guillette, Superintendent of Schools – Claremont, School Board – Claremont, Guy Santagate, City Manager – Claremont, Family School Connections – Claremont and Nancy Merrill, Community Development – Claremont. These people have garnered support from the boards and councils that they are on. This project is important to them because it enhances the lives of the children involved as well as adding a new dimension of opportunity to the City of Claremont.

SWOT Analysis:

The City of Claremont has several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

In reference to its strengths, Claremont is a community that is interested in upgrading their schools. When a way is produced that will not affect their taxes, they will happily move forward with a proposal that they consider feasible. The City itself welcomes the idea of working toward the goal of upgrading its school system and will help when possible. The community itself has low real estate prices and is an easy commute to many high paying jobs in the area. It has a number of weaknesses that must be overcome. The main weakness is its notoriety for the Claremont decision. This has left a stigma on the city. It takes time to overcome this stigma and as of today, Claremont has not completely freed itself from it. The opportunities within the city are great. The City

is open to new and innovative ideas and is generally willing to accept them. Claremont solicits new businesses regularly and with the Snow Day program, will have an additional enticement for new businesses looking to come to the city. The major threat is the potential of losing its accreditation. This would bring the stigma of the Claremont decision to the forefront again. Instead of coming to the city, the loss of accreditation could be the thing that makes people leave the city. If the exodus is too great, property values will start decreasing from the exodus.

“CEDness” of the Project

To consider the “CEDness” of the project, let us first consider what the letters CED mean. CED stands for Community Economic Development. I define it as developing the Economic base of a Community. In other words, if there is a community whose resources are undeveloped or underutilized or under funded, it is in need of assistance. The community is involved in several areas. The first area is the involvement in helping to educate the population. Residents are currently involved in groups such as The School Reinvestment Committee.

The economic component of the project is the ability to bring in additional funds to the school system that enhance the educational opportunities of its students without affecting the taxes paid on real estate. Additionally, with the new program, additional income will be generated by the city when a new business chooses to come to the city because they feel that there will be decreased employee absenteeism due to winter storms.

The development of the program will have a positive affect on the community. Instead of being known as the city that had the Claremont decision, it will be known as the city whose school system makes the working persons life a little easier because of the school programs. It will be known as the system that has Snow Day School. It will be the community that other communities want to be instead of the City that spawned the Claremont decision. The school system within Claremont is in need of assistance. This project addresses the first fee based program to be installed in the city. This program is a pilot program in the state that addresses the problem of snow days.

Project Objectives

The goal is to have a “Fee” based program that is run on days that are called due to snow storms. Measurement is based on the number of students that utilize the program. It is appropriate because parents need a place to take their children when it storms. It is realistic because the infrastructure that the program uses is already in place.

Literature Review

In today’s environment, it is not uncommon for parents to work outside of the home. While parents are required to go to work, the concern is what they will do for care for their children when there is a snow storm. According to CED IN BRIEF, (2002), it discusses the importance of two different areas of concern. The first area is that parents

do need to work and have a safe environment for their child during their work hours. The second area is a discussion of the importance of early education for children. The linkage between the two concerns is met through pre-k by improving school readiness and the support it gives for working parents. The article also discusses states acknowledgement of the pre-k need as well as the need for child care. It points out educational requirements of pre-k teachers versus the lack of educational requirements for day care providers. It sites funding problems and hints at solutions to be considered as well as the progress made by states. While it is acknowledged that the purpose of this project is to provide a Snow Day School program for the community of Claremont, the problems that affect parents and their children do not change, they still need competent providers for their children when they go to work.

According to Moyer (1999) Children need to be in an environment that fosters activities as the primary source of education in kindergarten children. She goes on to state that “the purpose of kindergarten is to ease the child’s transition from home to the more formal aspects of elementary school. The importance of a kindergarten is to enhance their learning through play and activities. Important areas of consideration are the physical learning environment as well as the programs that are put together for the children. Parents are a very important part of the learning cycle because they have the ability to reinforce what the child learns at school”.

The article also discusses the layouts of the rooms as well as hinting on the program content. Children need to be in an environment that fosters their curious as well as active natures. It is acknowledged that the program that has been implemented only takes place on days in which school is closed due to snow storms, but it is also noted that this is another opportunity for children to learn through programs that take place during that day.

The article by Hickey (2008) describes and discusses the number of snow days that have required school to be called off. It further goes on to discuss that one school district has had more school calls for snow than any other school district in the area with the reason being that it has a large quantity of rural area in its school district. There were five school districts discussed in the article. Each school had scheduled four snow days with the school that had the large rural area scheduling five days. The school districts put a specific number of snow days into the schedule based on past experience. The schools that were discussed in the article are from the state of Maine and as such, have weather patterns that are similar to the ones in Claremont, NH.

Thomas (2004) wrote an article for a newspaper in Sun Valley Idaho that states that the school districts have very few snow days during a year. The number of closings for school systems vary greatly by the type of terrain that they are required to drive on. The calling of school is based on road conditions. If the highway crews can keep the main roads open then school is not called off. The average number of closings in this area is one to two. The interesting thing about this article is that it discusses how the school district equips the school buses with all season tires and that because of that they are able to make it through the snow. While it is agreed that this is important, it is also noted that

in New England when the snow falls it is not only deep, but the roads are often icy due to our proximity to the ocean which often leaves our temperatures around 25 to 30 degrees.

Gootman (2004) had an article in the New York Times educational section on the problems caused by a snow storm. The closing of the schools in January 2004 due to a snow storm caused students to miss the Regents exam. The missing of the exam would keep some of the students from graduating because it is a requirement for graduation. Public officials requested that an alternate date be put forward, but education officials said that the same test could not be given for fear of children cheating on the test and the design of a new test would cost approximately \$3 million and take a year and a half to complete.

At this particular time and date some of the schools within the state were able to give the test while others, like New York City were not able to give the test due to the snow storm. The state department of education stated that there are no alternative tests available and that the students that missed the test would have to take it during the next testing period which would be in June. According to the article, the Regents exam is offered in January, June (their busiest test date) and August. Some of the students that needed the exam for graduation had not taken it previously because they needed to take certain classes before they qualified to take the exam. The largest groups of children that were unable to take the exam were special education students, students that failed the test before and students completing semester-length courses.

It is interesting that the state education commission did not have alternative tests available in case of emergency such as a snow storm or other incidents that could close the school for the day. Unfortunately, the schools within the NYC school districts also did not have alternative arrangements available that would allow the children to come in on a snow storm day. If they had, the children that could have made it in would have been able to take the tests in January and would have been able to graduate that spring.

Song (2006) wrote an article that discussed what happens to children when school is called due to inclement weather. It stated that while the snow storm 'wreaked havoc' on the Puget Sound area, it also wreaked an additional havoc on the parents of children that had to go to work. When both parents have to work, the children have to be brought to work with them. The area that suffered the least from having the children come to work was the local hospital because it has a built in day care in the facility. One of the options that are used by some parents is to take a storm day as a sick day or a personal day. Those that do not have the ability to stay at home with their child, have to bring their child to work. In many instances they find that a number of other parents have also brought their children to work with them. This article shows the necessity of having alternative care available for the children of parents that are required to go to work. When parents need to be at work they have only a couple of alternatives available for them. They can either take the child to work with them or they have to leave the child home alone if they can not find alternative care for their child. A last item that must also be considered is that the schools closed because it was not considered safe to have a

school day for the children. Yet, when parents need to go to work, it does not matter that the roads are bad or that the snow is coming down, they still have to go to work.

Brown (2004) discussed the affects of a snow storm in Delaware. The article actually showed a dual situation when it comes to a snow storm. There was one school that called school the night before due to the fact that there was going to be additional snow the next day. The other schools in the area were going to wait until the next morning before they made a decision on whether to call school or not. Either way, the parents of the children were scrambling to make arrangements for their children. The parents that had children in the school that was called for snow the night before had the advantage of making arrangements that evening. The other parents had to wait until the next morning, when it was going to be more difficult to make arrangements, before they were able to figure out what to do with their children.

The options that were noted were; that one of the parents stayed home, that their children were left with friends or relatives, parents worked from home on the snow day, that the parents took the children to a facility such as a YMCA or a religious facility that opened a day care for the event, or that the parents took the children to work. The employers had some choices to make also. In the case of DuPont, they put together a make shift child care facility, where as, other companies had children at work for the day with no one to watch over them except for their parents.

The fact that the schools were called due to the snow storm did not mean that the businesses were closed. The parents still had to go to work and their children still had to be taken care of for the day. The article stated that the school was shut down for the day, but that does not translate into the school being turned off. The electricity was still on, the heat was still on and the driveways were still plowed. The article was a statement of the burden that is on parents as well as the businesses when a school is closed for the day.

Moore (2008) looked at a different aspect of a storm day. This article was about children with special needs. It was specifically about autistic children, but it could be related to any special needs child. Children with special needs often do not understand why school is being closed for the day. They have a routine and part of that routine is to go to school. School is where they learn to make sense of a world that is confusing to them. For autistic children, a change in their routine could be very confusing as well as upsetting.

The article discusses the work a parent needs to go through to prepare the child for a day home from school. Often parents have to follow a routine to help the child understand what is happening so that they can cope with the change of routine. There is also a discussion on what to do with the child on the day off, such as a 'storm day tub' that is filled with activities, snacks, puzzles etc... It is used only on the 'special' days when the child is not in school. While we discuss the dilemma that parents have when the day is called for a storm the parents of special needs children have a much more difficult time of coping than the parents of children that are not considered special needs. It is often much harder to place a child in a day care facility or with friends and relatives due to their condition. It is much harder to take a child to work for the same reason.

Prevention Action (2008) put forth a paper on the ugly side of a school day called for a storm. While many parents are scrambling to find day care for their child or taking their child to work with them, poverty stricken children are most often left home alone. School is a place not only for education, but also in the case of poverty stricken children, it is a place of warmth and nutrition.

Poverty stricken households often work in areas of retail or food service. They do not have the ability to take their children to work with them. They often can not afford to heat their homes or give their children nutritious meals so if there is not a relative to watch over them while the parents are at work they must be left home alone. Finding day care for these children is out of the question when there is little to no money to take care of the essentials of life. These are the people that suffer the most when school is called due to a snow storm.

Rocks (2008) discusses another side to the snow day. A number of parents bring their work home with them so that their child can stay home during a snow storm. This article gives us a good view of an area that can enjoy a day from work. The interesting thing is that the parents that can get by with calling into work due to the snow storm are the ones that can work from home. It is reasonable that many people do not actually have to walk through the companies' front door to be able to do work. They bring home their lap top and are able to work almost anywhere. These would not be people that are in the low to moderate income levels of society. The people that are in the lower income levels have to report to work and walk in the front doors at work to be able to do their work.

Watauga (2008) has a policy paper that was quite interesting. When school is called due to the storm or school holiday, there are a number of factors that are not issues on the normal school day. The policy paper discusses enrollment and the fact that "drop-ins" are not allowed. The parents must sign the paper stating that they have read it and understand it. They are also required to pay an application fee. The paper goes on to discuss the fact that if parents can not afford the cost of the snow day program, they can contact social services (phone number given) to get child care subsidies for the day that there is no school. It discusses several other areas such as days and hours of operation, discipline policy, lunch, snacks and materials, insurance, illness and medication as well as the schedule to pick up your child. This program gives a parent an advance notice of a place that their child can go on a snow day as well as other holidays that are taken by the school system, that are not common for industry. It fills a need within the community. It gives a phone number for low and moderate income households so that those that need it are subsidized for the day. Best of all, social services is set up to pay for day care for these children for the day.

The following items were not applicable for the literature review, but were included because they are relevant to the project.

YMCA (2008) This is an advertisement for a 'Snow Days Program'. It is a solicitation pamphlet that can be found on the internet. It is for the YMCA in the Brattleboro Region

of Vermont. The pamphlet states that all are welcome, but openings are on a first come, first serve basis. The time of operation is 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It also discusses that there is a scholarship available for those that need financial assistance. It was developed in 2001 from a forum hosted by the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce and Windham Child Care Association when the local employers stated that they needed their employees to come to work even when school was called. While it is good that the YMCA has this program, it leaves a lot to be desired because working families generally work outside of the range of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It is also interesting that no data considers extending the hours so that the parents are able to work for a longer part of their day. Also missing in this advertisement is that the parents do not have the ability to sign up in advance for this program.

In an article written by the local Claremont newspaper Osmun (2008) about my presentation to the school board on Snow Day School, it discusses the premise for the program and discusses the positive reaction of the school board to the program. This article made the front page of the newspaper, right below the fold. It should also be noted that this article was the reason that a number of parents contacted the school and gave them positive comments about the prospect of the program.

Jewish Community Center (2008) has an application on line for parents to fill out if they want their child to have a spot at the community center. This program is for the children of DC and operates during snow days as well as school holidays. At the beginning of the application, it notes the different school holidays, so that a parent can check off which holidays they will want child care. The people that belong to the organization get a discounted rate. The fee for members is \$60. There is no mention within the program of available subsidies. The only mention of payment is VISA, Check, MC or Amex.

Teachers Corner (2008) has kits that can be purchased for snow day programs. These are premade with instructions and information that is geared toward a day of education and learning. The kits are put together by an organization that solicits to the educational field. There are three basic programs that are available. Math and science, k-12 worksheets and educational movies and lesson plans. These kits are not put together for the benefit of the regular teaching day, but for the benefit of days that school is called off.

The Family & Workplace Connection (2008) has an interesting advertisement on the web. An employer has the ability to call up this organization and “order” a child care facility for the day. These orders are placed in advance. Snow days are also ordered in advance and go into usage when the local schools are closed due to the weather. This organization puts together a makeshift child care operation at the location of the business that is requesting the day care. The organization targets teachers for the staff positions because they are already trained in early child care and have the day off due to the snow storm. Parents pre-register for the program so the organization knows how many children to expect at each location. Parents like the program because it is very convenient and employers enjoy the program because it cuts down on the amount of absenteeism due to parents needing to stay home to take care of their children.

Chicago Sun Times (2008) has a four page list of museums and amusement facilities that are open to families on days that are called due to snow storms. The listings have location maps and phone numbers for the facilities as well as information about the activities available at the sites.

In conclusion, it has been noted throughout the literature reviews as well as the advertisements that even though the schools close due to the snow that is falling, most businesses stay open and many actually make money off of the school closings. The main reason that schools close is due to the inability of buses to run on the roads because of the ice and snow. Having a program available to parents that allows them to make the choice on whether or not to take a child out in poor weather is the best choice of all.

Project Design/Logic Model

The key to all projects are the people that are involved in them. In the **Inputs** section, the people that were involved are the school board, Family School Connections, volunteers and myself. The costs for this portion are negligible. The most important items are time and volunteers.

The activities that took place were based on the approvals that have been gained. The most important aspects are Family School Connections, whose department is running the program as well as the students. The school board is involved at this time because they granted approval for the project. As the activities have taken place, I have monitored the aspects of the program with the approval of Jacqui Guillette.

The Short-Term outcomes are the most evident in two areas, the success of the program as well as the number of students that sign up for the next year's program. Short-Term outcomes are hard to gauge for the first year. The knowledge and change in skills / resources changed within a few months and were much easier to monitor.

The Intermediate Outcomes and the Long Term Outcomes will be easier to gauge after the first five years of the new program.

Methodology ad Implementation Plan

Project “beneficiaries”

Claremont is already heavily taxed and can not afford the maintenance costs of the schools; therefore, the plan is to initiate a sustainable program that will bring additional monies into the school that will go toward the maintenance of the schools without additional taxes on the population.

Beneficiary	Benefit
City of Claremont	With the implementation of the Snow Day School project, the city will have a better bargaining position to obtain new businesses into the community because of a new program that helps parents.
Population of Claremont	They will have a new program and it will not cost them extra tax money
Parents of the children	They will know that their children are going to a safe and healthy school environment
The Family School Connections of the Claremont school system	They will have the ability to take part in the educational process of the ‘fee’ program which will allow them to bring in extra income.
The students in the Claremont school system	They will have the opportunity to take part in a school program that would not otherwise be available to them.
People from surrounding communities	They will have the opportunity to bring their children to the Claremont school system for this program after the first year, with the School Board’s approval.
Businesses in the city	They will not have their taxes going up and there will be potential for new customers coming into the city due to lower tax rates and a better school.

Host organization/group

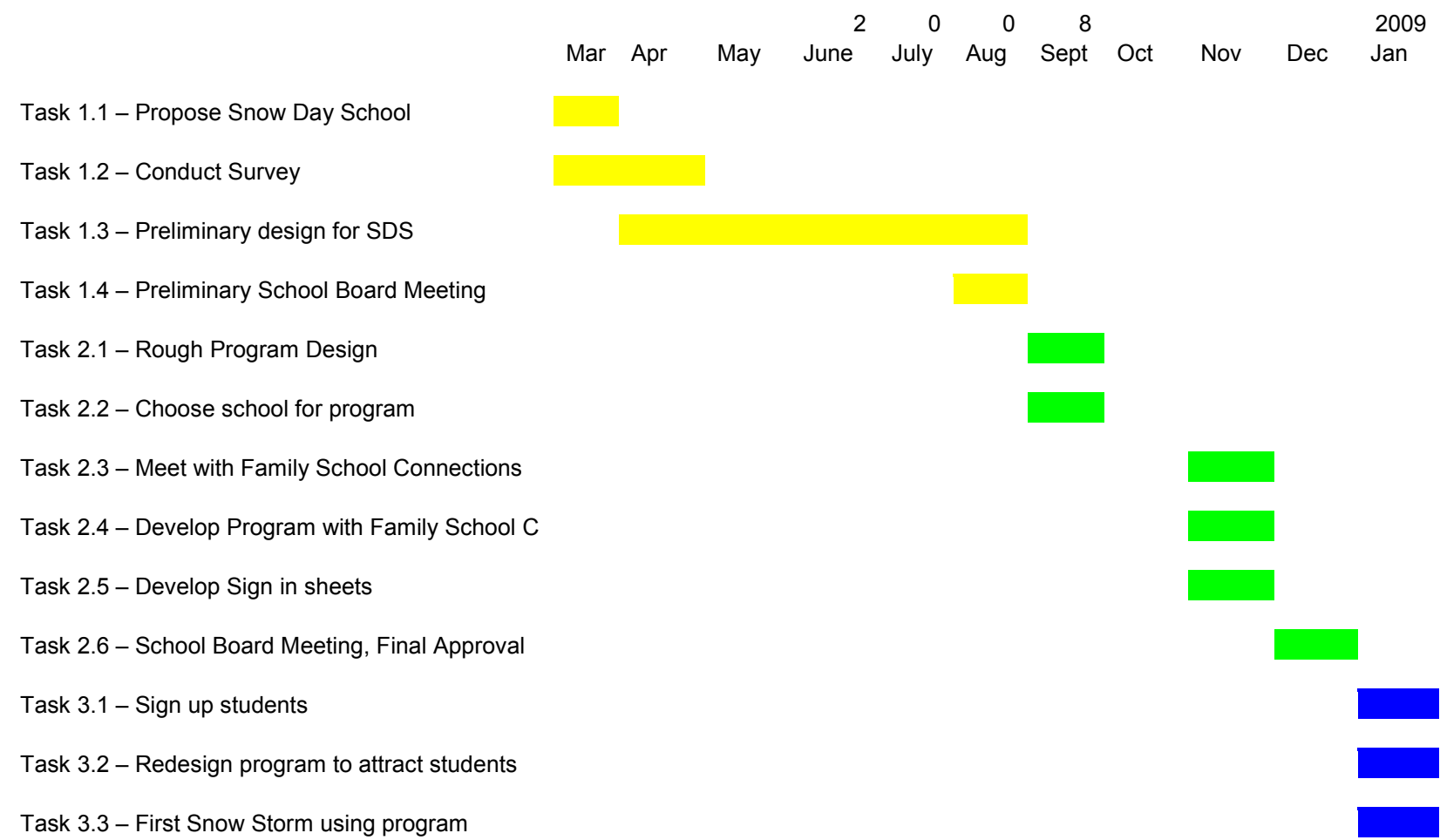
The primary host organization is The Family School Connections who is administering the program. Secondary host organization for the project is the school board and the administrators of the Claremont school system. The staff is comprised of those people that work for Family School Connections. The project has been monitored by me.

Other stakeholders:

There are several additional stakeholders to consider besides the ones mentioned previously.

Additional Stakeholders	Stakeholders interest in Project	Assessment of Impact	Potential strategy for Obtaining Support
Students of Claremont school District	A place to go when school is called for snow that will allow them access to class room activities on a non school day	High – Additional time available to be spent on educational activities at school and a decrease in behavioral problems	Let them know that the program is meant as a day of fun learning.
Businesses in town	Better schools mean a better environment for business and their taxes do not get raised	High – If the schools do not keep their accreditation than people will move from the community and business will decrease	The business community has always supported the educational system within the city.
People that live in surrounding communities that have children in a school system	An opportunity to obtain daycare in a safe and structured environment while they are at work	High – The larger the number of students that are interested in the program, the larger the number of program slots that can be offered.	Will need to contact the families with children through the newspaper as well as through the surrounding school systems.

Implementation schedule/time frame



The breakdown of the tasks is noted in Appendix E. The Gantt Chart for the tasks is noted above. Yellow section is for before the start of school. Green is for before start of snow day school and blue denotes sign up through first day of Snow Day School.

Budget

The budget is on a cash basis. The education of the population about the program has taken place through an announcement of the program in the newspaper as well as sending home flyers with the children. Additional information was installed into the community through flyers that were put in the local businesses within the community by a volunteer.

The announcement in the newspaper was done as a 'release' and was free. The costs associated with copying the flyers that went home with the children were absorbed by the school system. The cost of the additional flyers that were made for the store windows was done for free by a volunteer.

Variable Costs:

According to Family School Connections, the breakeven point for them to do the program is 8 students; the program will generate profit after that point. Family School Connections will require additional staff for every 20 students. This will cover the materials used to run the program as well as the staff needed. There will be no overhead requirements because the school is already heated, the electricity is already on and the parking lot is already plowed. The cost per student will be \$25 per day.

Cash Flow Analysis

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
Assumptions					
Snow Days	4	5	4	5	4
Students Enrolled	40	60	70	80	90
Cost to Parent for Student	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25
# Staff required	4	5	6	6	7

Cash Flow

Income Per day	\$1000	\$1500	\$1750	\$2000	\$2250
Expenses Per day	\$400	\$500	\$600	\$600	\$700
Total profit Per day	\$600	\$1000	\$1150	\$1400	\$1550

Profit per School year From program	\$2400	\$5000	\$4600	\$7000	\$6200
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While there are 1041 students that fit into the K – 6 age frame, the program will be capped at 40 students the first year to work out any bugs in the program. The number of snow days is a rough estimate based on historical data.

All amounts are approximate due to the lack of historical data.

Monitoring Plan

Management Information System:

The monitoring information was gathered by creating a list of goals. Within each goal, were a number of objectives. These objectives were given timelines. The timelines were broad so as to be able to react to problems as well as inclusions of unforeseen objectives that were needed. As long as the original timelines were being met or exceeded, the project was on schedule.

Project performance was achieved/monitored through benchmarks at the end of each goal. The Monitoring table indicates the original timeline of the project as well as the date that the objective was met. Items that were included in the project performance included obtaining preliminary as well as final approvals from the different areas within the school system as well as making the deadlines to present in front of the school board.

One of the items that worked particularly well was the ability to schedule meetings with decisions to be made in small groups that were then incorporated into the final plan that went before the school board. The other item that went better than anticipated was the meetings with the school board. They were pleased with the program and very pleased with the idea of having a pilot program in the state.

There were two items that did not go as well as anticipated. The first item was the survey. I was not aware of the number of surveys that have been put before the population in the last few years. Fortunately, I had the backing of people in authority and was eventually able to get a reasonable number of surveys returned. The other item that did not work as well as anticipated was the original signup for the program. While I had knowledge that children influence their parents, I underestimated the amount of influence. The parents were for the program, but the children were not. Only one person signed up for the program. The original flyer is found in Appendix F. With the help of Family School Connections and a volunteer, the program was redesigned and called Snow Day Camp. The new flyers were placed in the local business windows and within a week, 6 additional children had been signed up for the program. The new flyer is found in Appendix G.

Monitoring Tables:

GOAL 1: Introduce Snow Day School to the Claremont Educational System.

Objective	Planned Outcome	Actual Outcome	Anticipated Date	Actual Date
1.1 Meet with Jacqui Guillette (Superintendent of Schools) and Alan Damren (Assistant Superintendent to discuss proposal for Snow Day Schools	Discussion of project to find out the amount of interest in the project	Are interested in project. Gave comments on preliminary design request for project.	March 2008	March 2008
1.2 Conduct Survey	To obtain 50 surveys from the general public and 50 surveys from the school system	Obtained 30 surveys from the general public and 36 surveys from the school system	March – April 2008	March – April 2008
1.3 The preliminary design of Snow Day School was created using the input from the meeting with Jacqui Guillette and Alan Damren as well as my own original concept plans	Completed	Completed with a number of changes based on input from the survey	April – August 2008	April – August 2008
1.4 School Board Meeting	Preliminary Approval	Preliminary Approval	August 2008	August 2008

Benchmark: With the preliminary approval of the school board, goal 1 had been met.

GOAL 2: Prepare Snow Day School Program for School Board Approval.

Objective	Planned Outcome	Actual Outcome	Anticipated Date	Actual Date
2.1 Rough Program Design	Design Completed	Design Completed	September – December 2008	September 2008
2.2 Choose School to be used	Maple Ave. School	Disnard School	December 2008 – January 2009	September 2008
2.3 Meet with Family School Connections who will run the program	Meeting	Meeting – found out that all school supplies that are needed for the program are already available	January 2009	November 2008
2.4 Develop program with Family School Connections	Accomplish	Met with the individuals that will actually be monitoring the program.	February – March 2009	November 2008
2.5 Develop sign up sheets	Finish Sheets	Sheets are completed	February – March 2009	November 2008
2.6 School Board Meeting	Approval	Approval – Positive comments	March 2009	December 2008

Benchmark: All items were completed ahead of schedule. All approvals are in place to start the program.

GOAL 3: To Start Snow Day School Program.

Objective	Planned Outcome	Actual Outcome	Anticipated Date	Actual Date
3.1 Sign up students	10 sign up	1 signed up	Winter 2009-10	January 2009
3.2 Redesign Program	6 sign up	7 signed up	Winter 2009-10	January 2009
3.3 Snow Storm	Snow Storm	Snow Storm	2009-10	01/28/09

Benchmark: Obtain enough students to run the program.

Evaluation Plan

Performance Indicators:

The summative evaluation aspect that was met on the first goal was to educate the school population (faculty, staff and school board) to the idea of Snow Day School. The indicator of success of the activities was the preliminary approval by the school board. The formative aspect is to continue the educational process so that the general population is more aware of the program.

On the second goal, the summative evaluation aspect is that the project received final school board approval. The school board was equally pleased that it was going to have a pilot program in the state. From a formative point of view, the program could be enhanced by increasing the number of activities that the students have available to them.

On the final goal, 7 students were signed up for the program. Breakeven is 8 students. By the next snow storm it is anticipated that the breakeven point will be realized. Additional good news came from Family School Connections. They indicated that the students did not want to leave at the end of the day. An email from Jacqui Guillette stated that Claremont made history, on January 28, 2009 with the successful operation of the Snow Day School Program and that the program was also covered by WMUR TV News. The formative point will be to allow the project to grow as time moves on. By the next storm it is anticipated that the program will break even and may even make a minor amount of profit. If the program is allowed to grow to its potential, it will start making money for usage by the school system.

Summary Evaluation Table:

Goals and Objectives	Performance Indicators	Expected Outcomes	Actual Outcomes
Goal 1. Introduction of Snow Day School to Educational System	Preliminary approval by School Board	Approval	Approval
1.1 Meet with Jacqui Guillette and Alan Damren to discuss Snow Day School	The amount of interest that is showed in the project	Interest in project	Excited about project, put forth some of their own ideas on project.
1.2 Conduct Survey	Number of Responses	To obtain 100 responses	Obtained 66 responses
1.3 Preliminary design of program	Completion of program design	Completion of program design	Completed program design with changes based on survey
1.4 School Board Meeting	School Board Approval	School Board Approval	School Board Approval

Goals and Objectives	Performance Indicators	Expected Outcomes	Actual Outcomes
Goal 2. Prepare program for School Board approval	School Board Approval	School Board Approval	School Board Approval
2.1 Rough Program design	Program design completed	Program design completed	Program design completed
2.2 Choose school to be used	School choice approved	School choice approved	School choice was approved
2.3 Meet with Family School Connections	Meeting takes place	Meeting takes place	Meeting takes place ahead of schedule.
2.4 Develop program with Family School Connections	Program design is completed	Prepare program for snow day	Put together a list of people that need to be contact by such as DPW are aware of school usage on a snow day. Activities for program were reviewed and modified.
2.5 Develop sign up sheets	Sign up sheets are approved by Jacqui Guillette	Sign up sheets are approved	Sign up sheets are approved
2.6 School Board Meeting	Approval	Approval	Approval with questions as to usage of monies earned.

Goals and Objectives	Performance Indicators	Expected Outcomes	Actual Outcomes
Goal 3. Start Snow Day School Program	Number of students that will use program	Breakeven is 8 students. Hope for 10	7 students attend the program
3.1 Sign up Students	Number of students signed up	10 students to sign up	1 student signed up
3.2 Redesign Program	Increase number of students that are signed up	6 students to sign up	7 students signed up
3.3 Snow Storm	Program functions as planned	Program will function properly	Program functioned well. Students did not want to leave school at end of day.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Sustainability Elements:

The original design of the project was to be self sustainable from the start. The program fell short on self sustainability by \$25 on the first snow storm day. It is anticipated that this amount will be made up in the next snow storm. The program is still in its infancy and will have few political ramifications. As it grows, it will have the affect of making Claremont a more desirable community. This program has also opened the door to allowing more 'fee based' programs into the school system. It is considered a success and it is very possible that the school board will allow it to continue into the next school year. From a social aspect, there were 7 families that took advantage of the program during the last snow storm. One of those children was a special needs child that had an opportunity to enjoy a program that considered her needs. Snow Day Camp Schedule – Appendix H.

Sustainability Plan:

The plan should be self sustainable by the next snow storm. The children that were in the program did not want to leave at the end of the day and they will tell their classmates about the fun they had. This should bring in additional applicants to the program. After the approval by the school board to run the program during the next year, the next step would be to obtain approvals from the child welfare department so that the costs are covered by child services. Any shortfall would be absorbed by the program through the use of its profits.

Institutional Plan:

The school board is happy with the program, as are the parents that used it and the staff that ran it. As long as the program is run it will be self sustainable and bring a minor amount of profit into the school system.

The vision for the project is that it will be accepted as a standard program within the school system. One day it is expected that this program will be the norm in the school system and in that way it will have become institutionalized.

The three main evaluation indicators will be the number of students that sign up for the courses, the evaluation forms at the end of the courses and a review of the monies that were made for the school system. This will allow us to obtain information on many levels. We will be able to run a cost/benefit analysis as well as a goal-based analysis. The evaluations will let us review not only the effectiveness of the programs, but the efficiency in which they were run. With this data we will be able to develop a more effective program for the next school year.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

The primary goal in this project was to introduce a “Fee” based program into the school system in the form of Snow Day School. The goal did not change over the course of the design process, but the number of objectives increased significantly as additional steps in the process came to light.

All objectives were met with complete success with the exception of the number of students that finally ended up enrolling in the program. While it was always known that children influence their parent’s decisions, the amount of that influence was underestimated. The schedule for the day was originally designed to help children in the educational process. Only one child signed up for the program in a one month time frame. It was quickly redesigned as a ‘camp’ day and within a week an additional six children were signed up for it.

The operation of the program is based on snow storms so additional monitoring and evaluation can not take place on a regular schedule. The breakeven point of the program is 8 students. On the first day of operation, 7 students were in it. They enjoyed the day and are looking forward to the next ‘camp’ day. The program has been hailed as a success and it is likely that it will be picked up again for the next school year.

While it is not anticipated that this program will bring in large quantities of money to the school system, its success has opened the door for other new “Fee” based programs to be brought forward to the school board. As the program develops, there is the possibility that parents that can not afford the \$25 for the program will be able to obtain funding from state programs as well as employer contributions.

Recommendations:

For any one that is interested in starting a Snow Day School program in their school, the steps have been set out in the goals and objectives section of the report. The time line will vary based on the school system so it is important not to put the approval process on to tight a schedule. No models were found to help in the design process of the program. To my knowledge, this is the first program of its type in the state. The basic outline can be used in designing other “Fee” based programs in school systems. Lastly, do not underestimate the influence that children have on their parents decisions. Their influence has the ability to make or break a program.