

**Port Angeles School District**  
**Life Skills Task Force Report**  
**June 23, 2008**

**BACKGROUND**

In response to concerns raised by community members, local employers, and the school board of directors, the Port Angeles School District included an objective in its strategic plan (Objective 2.7) that spoke to clarifications necessary in this area. The data analysis notes in the district Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) document that. "...the district does not have approved coherent K-12 life skills standards and supplementary curriculum in place to ensure that all students have marketable skills when they leave the district." The strategy outlined in the CIP directed that a district Task Force would "be established to survey existing life skills instruction, research life skills standards and material, and develop coherent K-12 life skills standards for school board approval." Objective, 2.7, states "...life skills will be included in curriculum to ensure that all students have marketable skills." This objective defines an aspect of the instructional program; perhaps one of the most publicly assessed and debated in the community.

**PARAMETERS**

The Life Skills Task Force was provided a specific charge (see Appendix A) by the superintendent. The task force was asked to review and respond to six target responsibilities: (1) define existing life skills instruction; (2) identify where currently life skills topics are being taught in the K-12 curriculum; (3) assign curriculum and grade level placement for identified life skills curriculum topics; (4) communicate life skills curriculum expectations internally; (5) review any curriculum materials thought to have merit; (6) grade level assessments.

The task force responded to each of these responsibilities with recommendations outlined in this report.

An additional parameter addressed a timeline for the Technology Instruction Task Force. The task force was requested to develop and present by the June 23, 2008 board meeting recommendations responding to the charge for superintendent and board of directors' consideration. The results and recommendations are being reported at the June board meeting. This task force may need to continue its work in the coming year.

**PROCESS**

In addressing the need to review the life skills instructional program of the district, the task force decided first on a meeting schedule. Given this task had a finite timeline for study and recommendations, the group agreed to meet in spring on five Tuesday afternoons from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Central Services Building.

The group divided into sub-committees that took various pieces of the charge for research and to bring information back to the whole group for discussion and recommendations. Consensus voting was utilized in the deliberations.

The task force began by researching the various iterations of 'life skills' definitions utilized across the state and nation. District standards, state and national web-sites were examined. Six major tenets of a life skills curriculum prevailed. The task force subsequently chose, for purposes of this work, to define the essential life skills categories into six broad categories. These are (1) citizenship; (2) communication; (3) economics; (4) employment; (5) health; and (6) job skills. These categories have more detail attached to them in the survey the task force designed for teachers (see Appendix C).

This survey was implemented to identify where currently life skills topics are being taught in the K-12 curriculum. The results of this survey are summarized in Appendix D. All grade levels in the district were surveyed, yielding interesting results from which the task force discussed recommendations. The life skills identified are not regularly or consistently being taught in the district.

As the task force looked at the available instructional time and the multiple competing tasks for this time, a decision was made to examine the core academic GLEs and identify where in these targets we might find overlap with the life skills targets. This work is summarized in Appendix B. The communication of these targets internally is necessary to allow seamless integration of the compatible topics. This would mirror "real life" in many ways.

The committee also spent a significant amount of time outside the regularly scheduled committee meetings with sub-group assignments. Committee members chose to work in smaller research groups which then reported to the whole group. This enabled the group to be more efficient.

The small group assessing life skills topics in instruction K-12 decided to survey the staff. They determined that one survey would be used for grades K-12. The results are summarized in Appendix D for both the elementary and secondary level.

While the results were mixed, it is evident that the life skills topics the task force identified are not consistently addressed in the classrooms across the district. Instructional targets, and likely materials, will need to be set, selected and reinforced for a coherent K-12 life skills instructional plan to be effective.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

At the high school level, the advisory time seems to be a vehicle for these topics. Teachers at this level are addressing many of the life skills topics, certainly more so than at other levels in the district. In particular, a supplemental curriculum aid is the finance text teachers in advisory are using. This text aids high school students in rudimentary finance instruction, thus connecting to the economic, job skills and employment life skills targets.

The small group researching and making recommendations on the assignment and grade level placement of life skills curriculum topics met several times and determined that this was such a broad topic that more work, a broader discussion, and research was necessary to do justice to this topic. The task force at large agreed with the small group recommendation and recommends that this topic be continue to be worked on in the coming year.

It is also clear that there are various community groups and community grants that will need collaboration and coordination. Several of these will likely inform the work on life skills instruction integration, particularly in the health arena.

At this time, the task force does not recommend any new assessments regarding the life skills topics. It was felt that the current physical education, health and fitness classroom-based assessment structure will suffice for the health topics. No other assessments have been reviewed or developed for task force review at this time.

The task force members believe it is helpful to have models and explicit targets for staff as well as students as this will also assist in planning the necessary professional development for any life skills curriculum uses it might envision both now and in the future.

The task force recommends that communication of expectations be assigned to the task force members and principals at this time. The current definition is intended only as a conversational guide at this time. This assists teachers, students and parents in their quest to understand the instructional implications of expected life skills instruction across the district. The task force understands that there may not be the fiscal capacity to sustain these expectations.

## **SUMMARY**

The Life Skills Task Force believes the targets in life skills proposed, implemented, evaluated and monitored will continue to positively impact student achievement in the Port Angeles School District as well as meeting the statutory requirements the district must address. The healthy life skills of our students, the children of this community are a paramount concern.

The work of this task force has been partially complete in that we have surveyed teachers as to where currently life skills topics are currently being taught. The Task Force has yet to review viable K-12 curriculum or supplemental materials that might be integrated seamlessly into the instructional program. Likely, the life skills topics will need to be integrated into the core curriculum through a continued analysis of the core academic GLEs and the relative time and attention we communicate is necessary for appropriate responsiveness to this directive. The high school level might be the exception in the use of the advisory time for discrete life skills topics.

This topic of life skills instruction is a crucial one. The needs for students and staff around this topic will only become more significant. The continued debate over which of the life skills are crucial to teach and assess, versus the time necessary to commit to the task competing with the 'core curriculum' will inform any future work in this arena. In many ways, it is impossible to conduct schooling without continuously examining life skills. The challenge may be in making these otherwise discrete skills more explicit to students, parents and staff.

Appendices to this report are:

Appendix A, Life Skills Task force Charge

Appendix B, Life Skills GLEs

Appendix C, Life Skills Survey

Appendix D, Life Skills survey Response

Appendix E, Life Skills Task Force Membership

**Appendix A****Life Skills Task Force Charge**

The district's Life Skills Task Force will be responsible for a broad range of review and recommendations to the superintendent to continuously improve the effectiveness of, responsiveness of, and value received from the Life Skills curriculum used by the district. The general scope of the task force's charge includes the following responsibilities:

- Define existing life skills instruction
- Identify where currently life skills topics are being taught in the K-12 curriculum
- Assign curriculum and grade level placement for identified life skills curriculum topics
- Communicate life skills curriculum expectations internally
- Review any curriculum materials thought to have merit
- Grade level assessments

**Appendix B**

**Life Skills GLEs**

**Reading**

**1. The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read.**

R1.1 use word recognition and word meaning skills to read and comprehend text

**2. The student understands the meaning of what is read.**

R2.1 comprehend important ideas and details

**Writing**

**1. The student writes clearly and effectively.**

W1.1 develop concept and design

**4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.**

W4.1 assess own strengths and needs for improvement

**Mathematics**

**2. The student uses mathematics to define and solve problems.**

M2.1 investigate situations

M2.2 formulate questions and define the problem

M2.3 construct solutions

**4. The student communicates knowledge and understanding in both everyday and mathematical language.**

M4.1 gathers information

M4.2 organizes and interpret information

M4.3 represent and share information

**Science**

**3. The student applies science knowledge and skills to solve problems or meet challenges.**

S3.1 identify problems and challenges in which science knowledge and skills can be applied

S3.2 research, design, and test a variety of ways to address problems and/or challenges

**4. The student uses effective communication skills and tools to build and demonstrate understanding of science.**

S4.1 use listening, observing, and reading skills to obtain science information

**Arts**

**1. The student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to create, to perform, and to respond effectively to the arts.**

A1.1 understands and applies arts concepts and vocabulary to communicate ideas

**2. Creative process with arts knowledge and skills to reason and solve problems.**

A2.1 use the senses to gather and process information

**3. The student uses at least one of the art forms (visual arts, music, drama, and/or dance) to communicate ideas and feelings.**

A3.1 use image, sound, action, and movement through the arts to express individual ideas for a specific purpose

Appendix B, cont.

Life Skills GLEs

**Communication**

**1. The student uses listening and observation skills to gain understanding.**

C1.1 focus attention

C1.2 listen and observe to gain and interpret information

**2. The student communicates ideas clearly and effectively.**

C2.1 communicate clearly to a range of audiences for different purposes

C2.2 develop content and ideas

**3. The student uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others.**

C3.1 use language to interact effectively and responsibly with others

C3.2 work cooperatively as a member of a group

**Health and Fitness**

**1. The student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain an active life: movement, physical fitness, and nutrition.**

F1.1 develop fundamental physical skills and progress to complex movement activities as physically able

F1.2 incorporate rules and safety procedures into physical activities

F1.3 understand the concepts of physical fitness and develop and monitor progress on personal fitness goals

F1.4 understand nutrition and food nutrients and how they affect physical performance and the body

**2. The student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a healthy life: recognize patterns of growth and development, reduce health risks, and live safely.**

F2.3 acquire skills to live safely

**3. The student analyzes and evaluates the impact of real-life influences on health.**

F3.1 understand how environmental factors affect one's health

F3.2 gather and analyze health information

F3.3 use social skills to protect health and safety in a variety of situations

F3.4 understand how emotions influence decision-making

**Social Studies - \*Civics**

**4. The student understands the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the principles of democratic civic involvement.**

V4.1 understand individual rights and their accompanying responsibilities

**Social Studies - \*Geography**

**3. The student observes and analyzes the interaction between people, the environment, and culture.**

G3.1 identify and examine people's interaction with and impact on the environment

G3.2 analyze how the environment and environmental changes affect people

G3.3 examine cultural characteristics, transmission, diffusion, and interaction

**Appendix C**

**Life Skills Survey**

Port Angeles School District

The Life Skills Task Force has been asked to identify where life skills are currently being addressed within our district. Please indicate below which of the following are presently being taught as part of your current curriculum.

Subject(s) taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade level (please circle):    Elementary    Middle School    High School

<b>Life Skill</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
Citizenship (voting, laws, geography, rights and responsibilities, etc)			
Communication (oral, written, non-verbal)			
Economics (budgeting, banking, taxes, money management, investments, etc)			
Employment (resumes, job applications, job search skills, vocational training, interviews)			
Health (personal fitness, nutrition, drug & alcohol awareness, stress management)			
Job Skills (attendance, attire, working with others, taking direction, self-management)			
Other: Please list _____ _____			

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

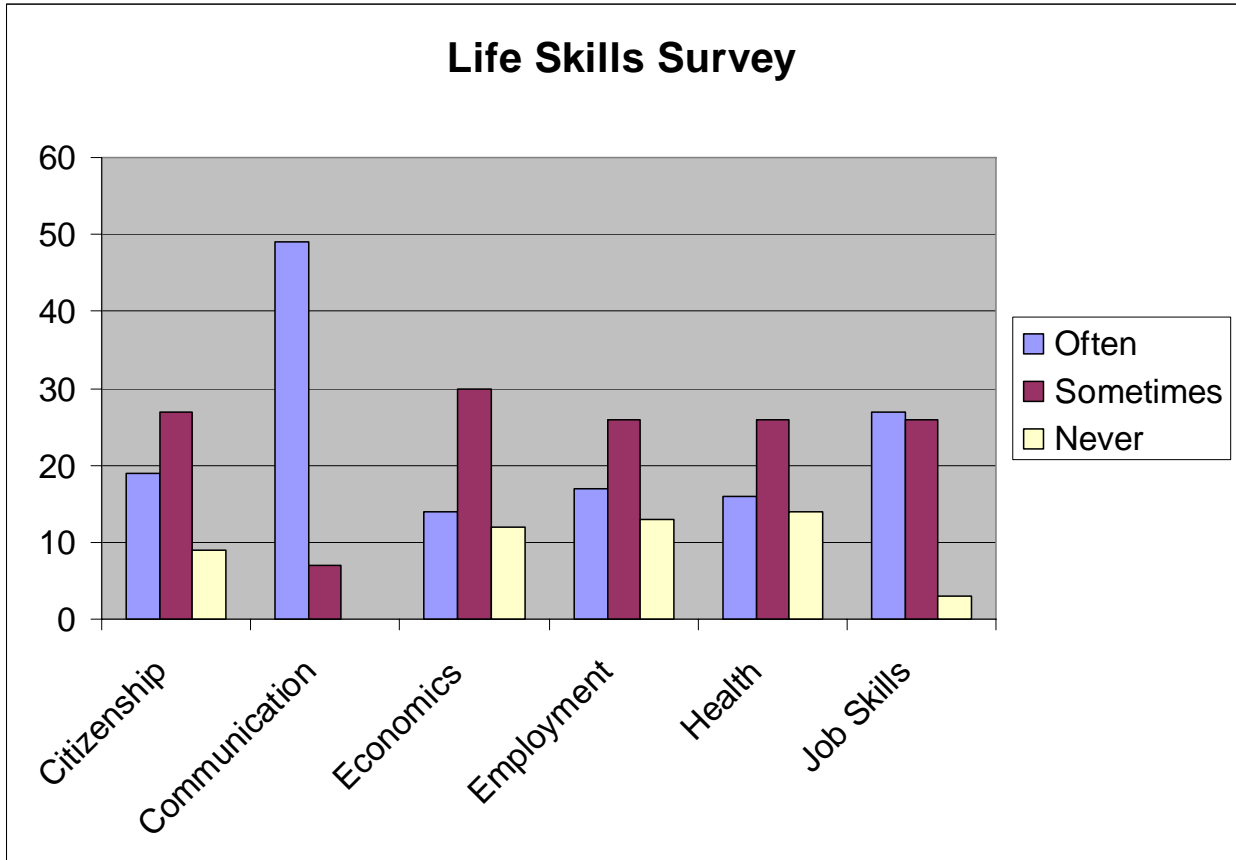
Thank you for your time,

Life Skills Task Force Committee

Appendix D

Life Skills Survey Response

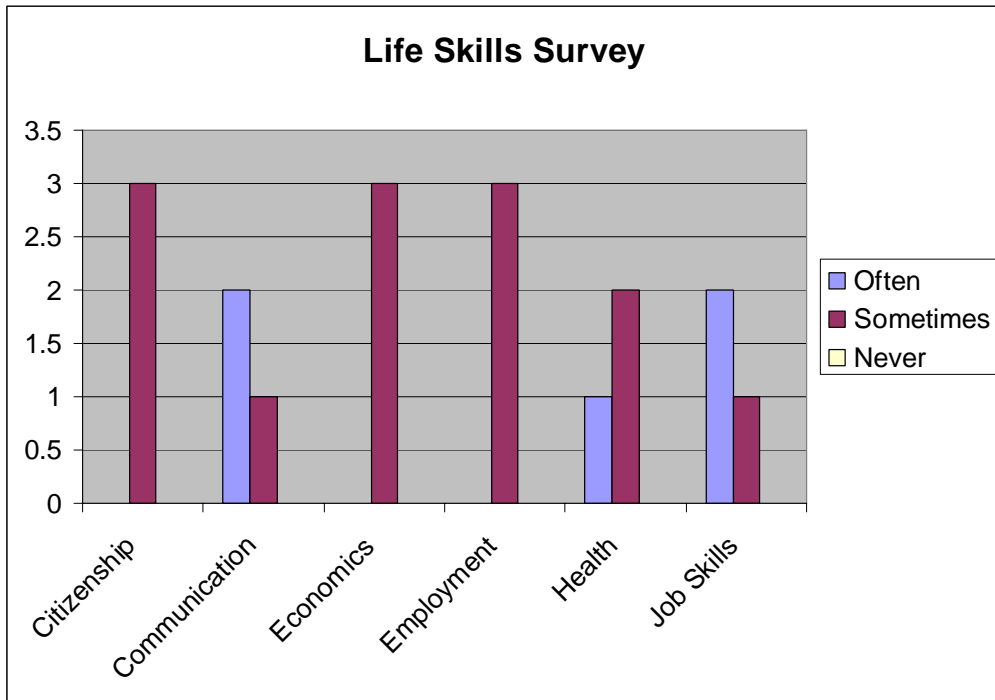
All Departments, PAHS



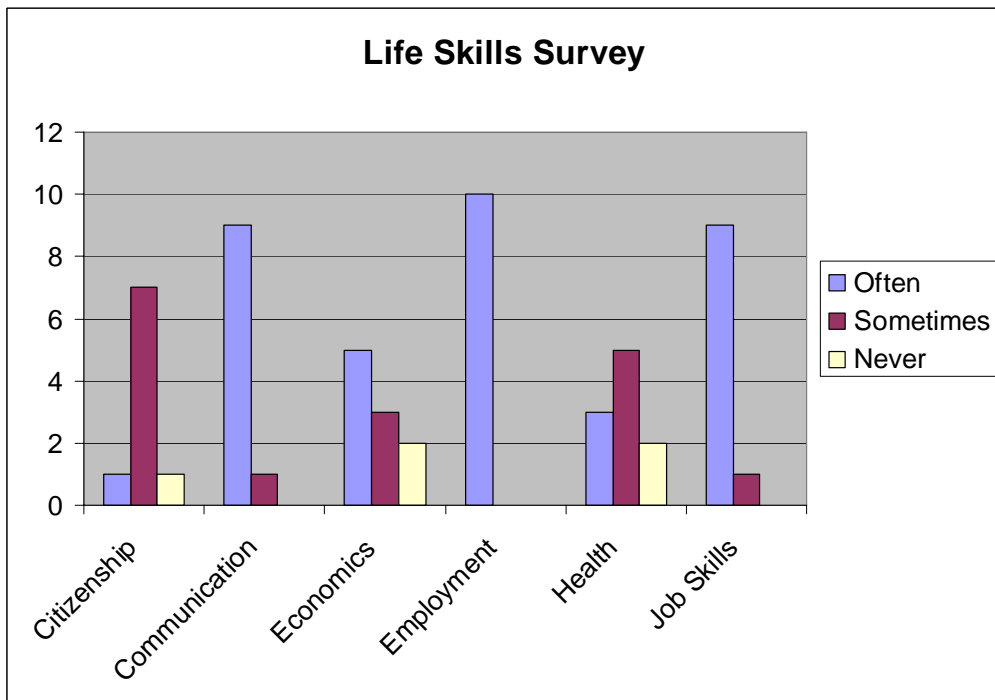
Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

Art Department, PAHS



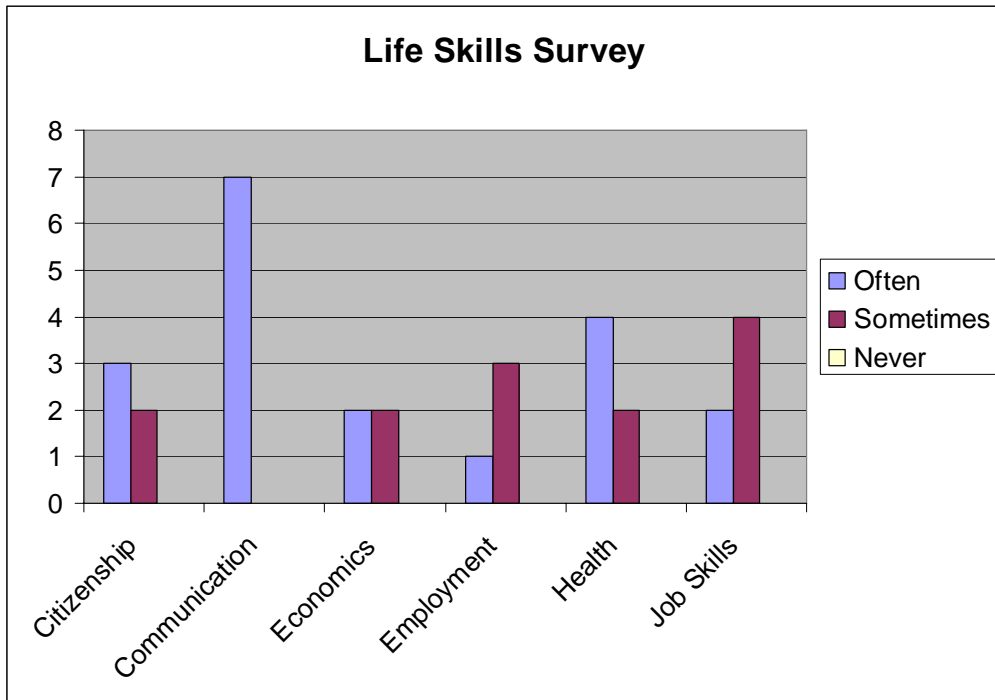
Business/CTE Department, PAHS



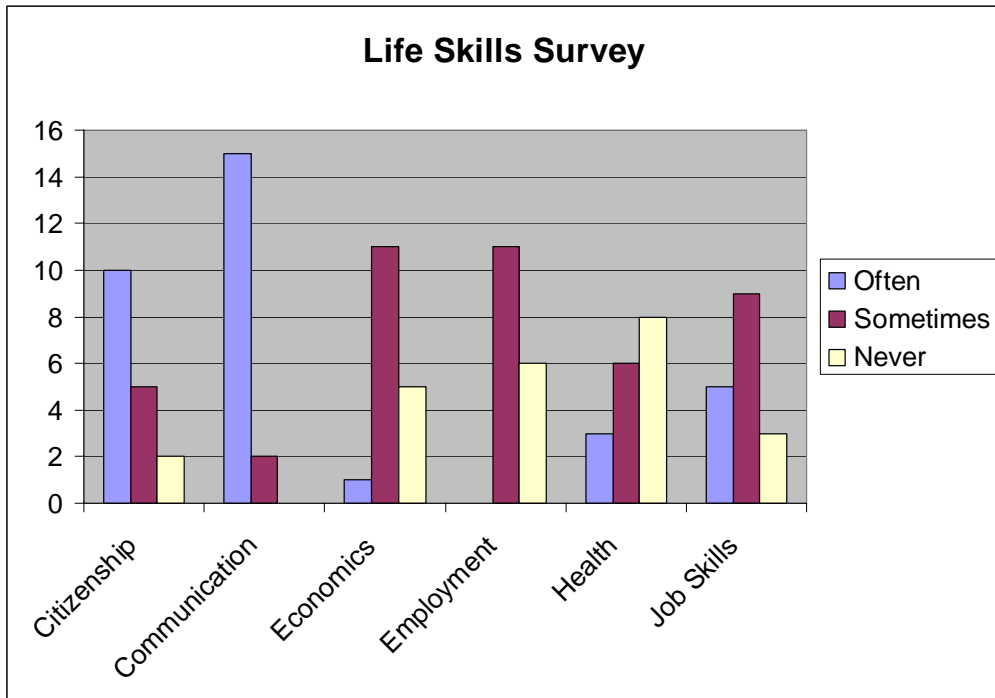
Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

Guidance Department, PAHS



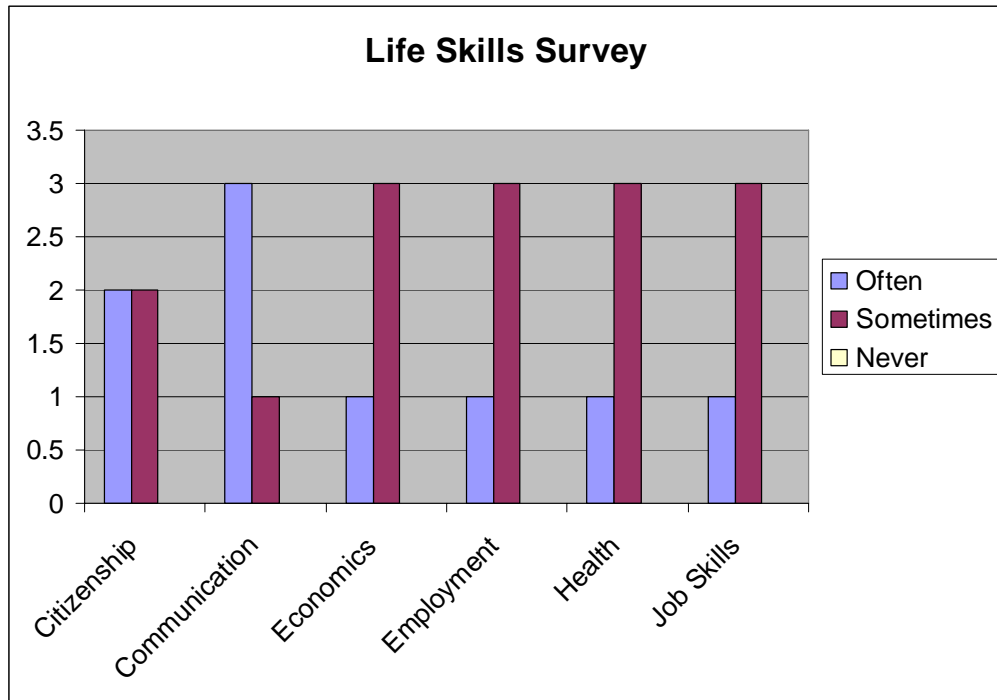
History/Soc Sci/English Department, PAHS



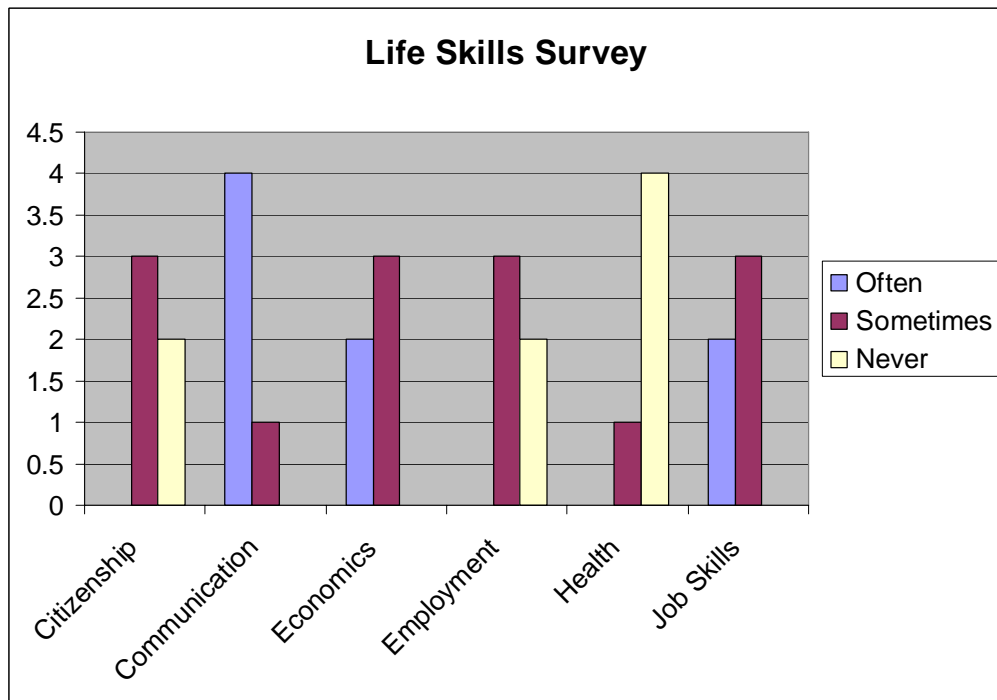
Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

Language Department, PAHS



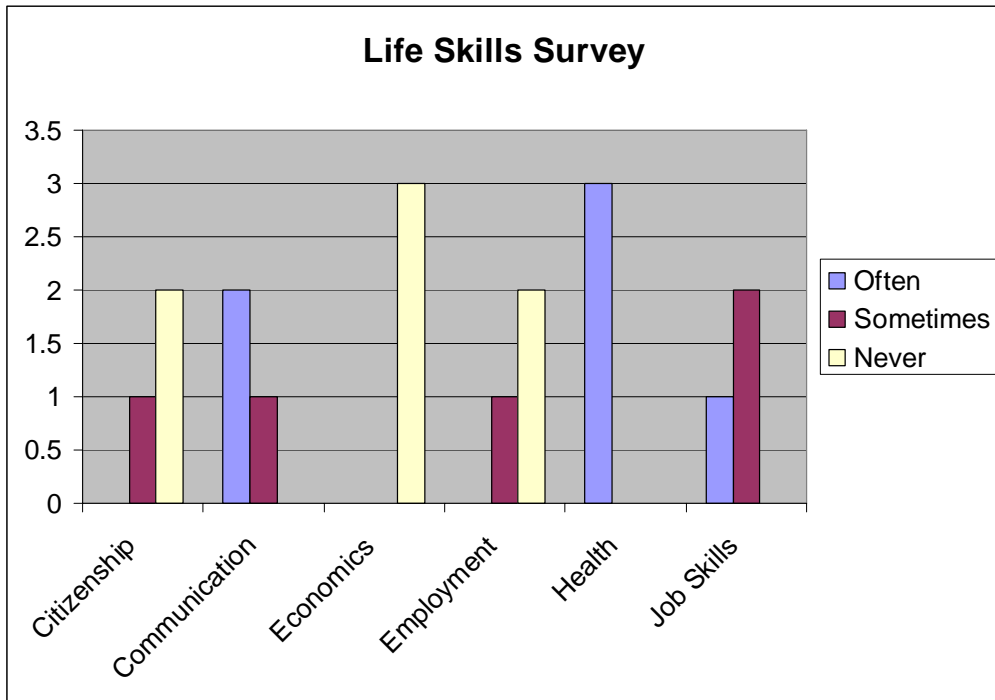
Math Department, PAHS



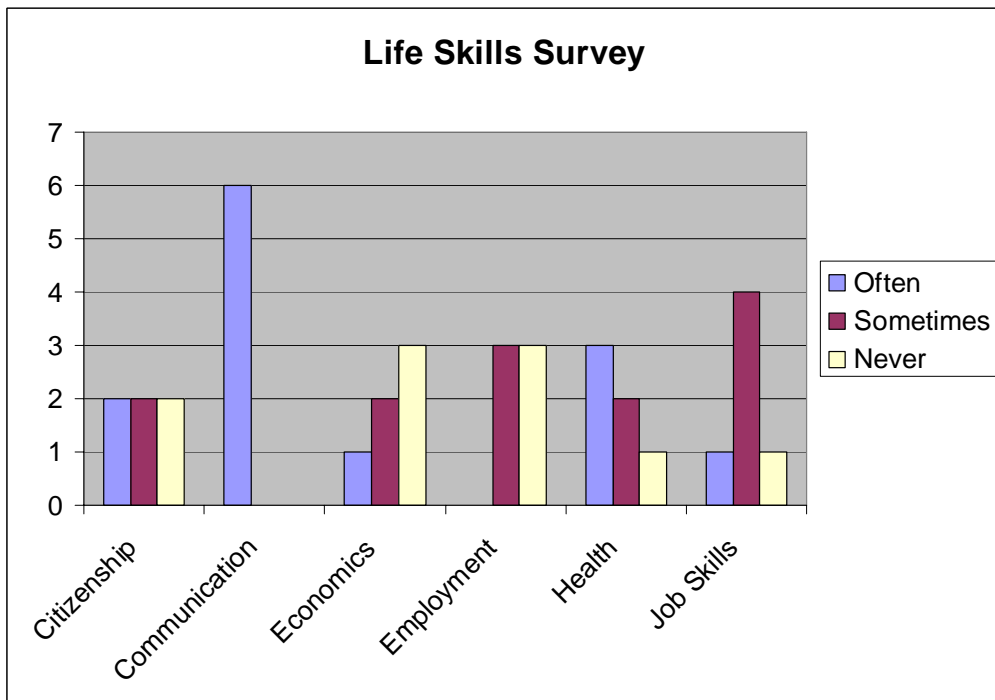
Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

PE-Health Department, PAHS



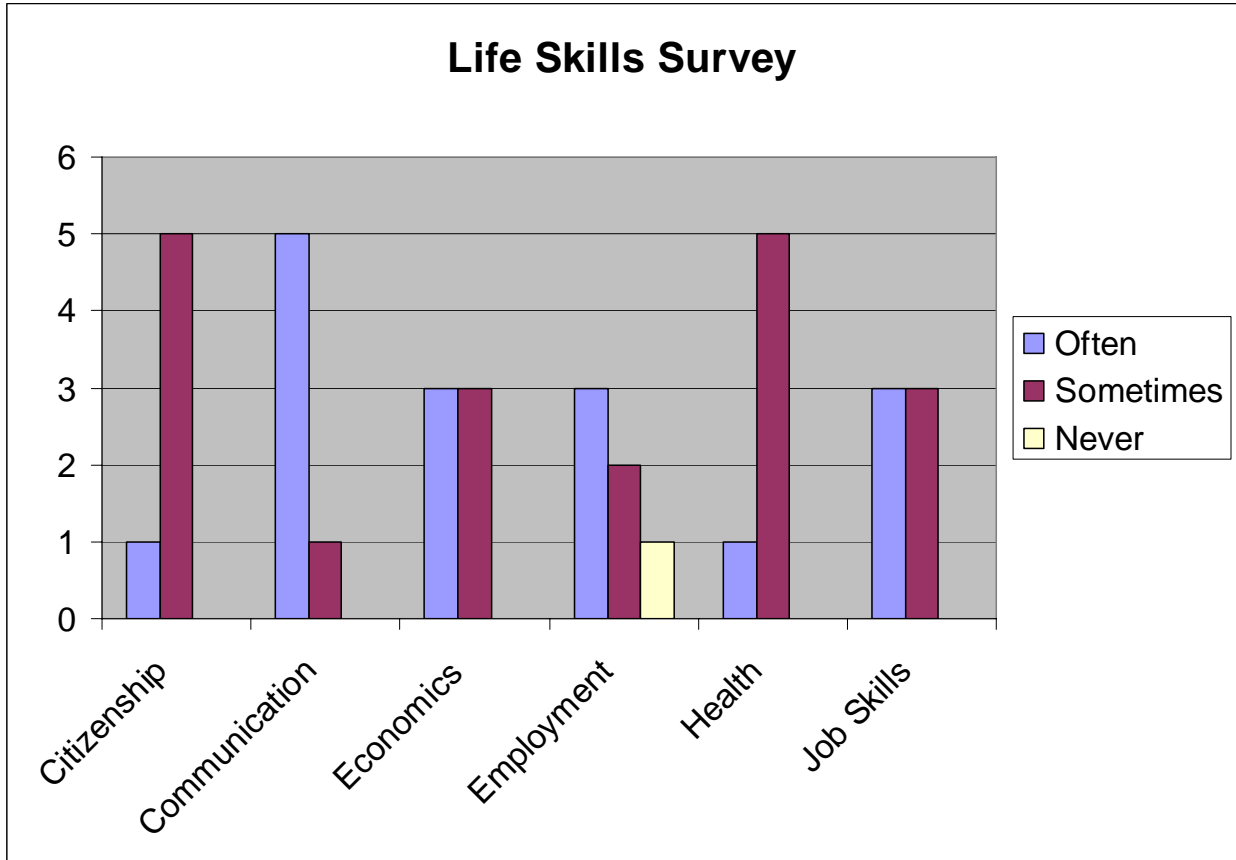
Science Department, PAHS



Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

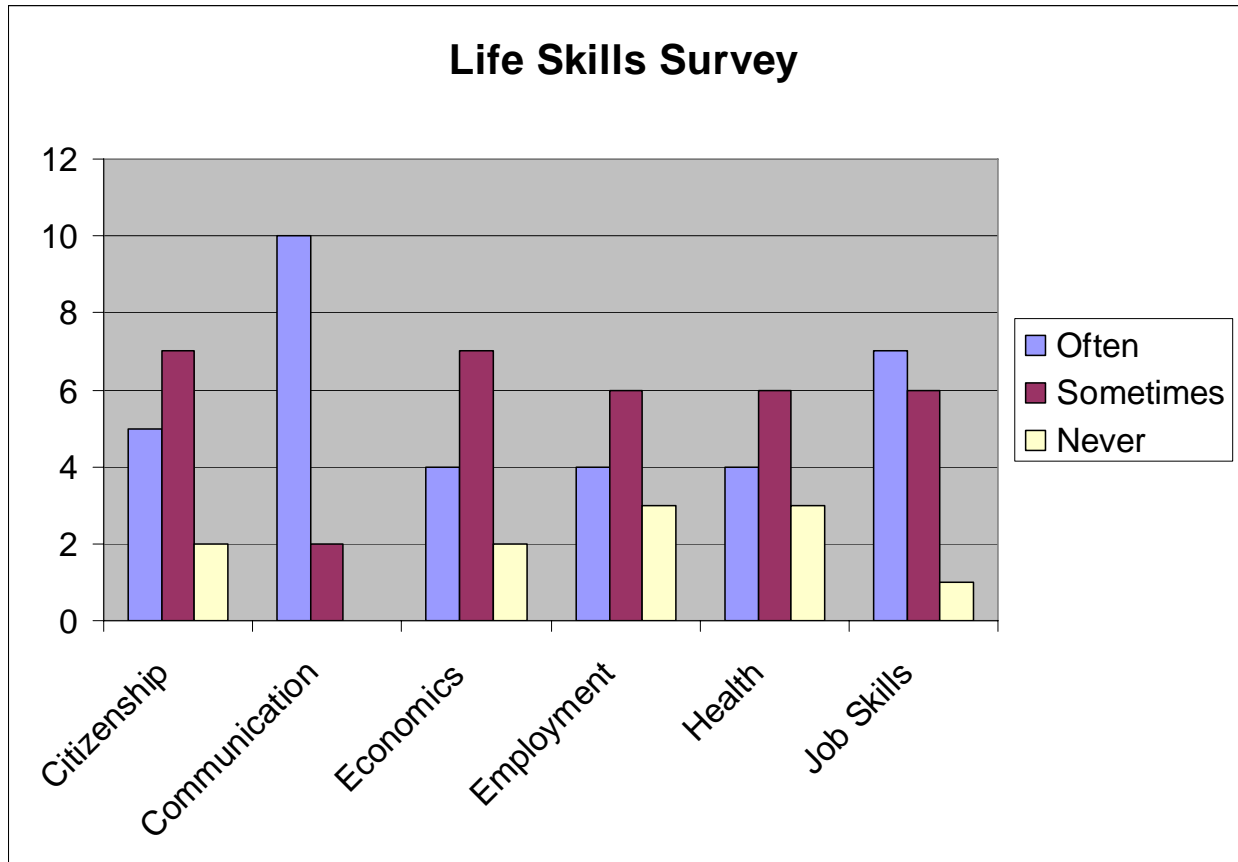
Special Ed Department, PAHS



Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

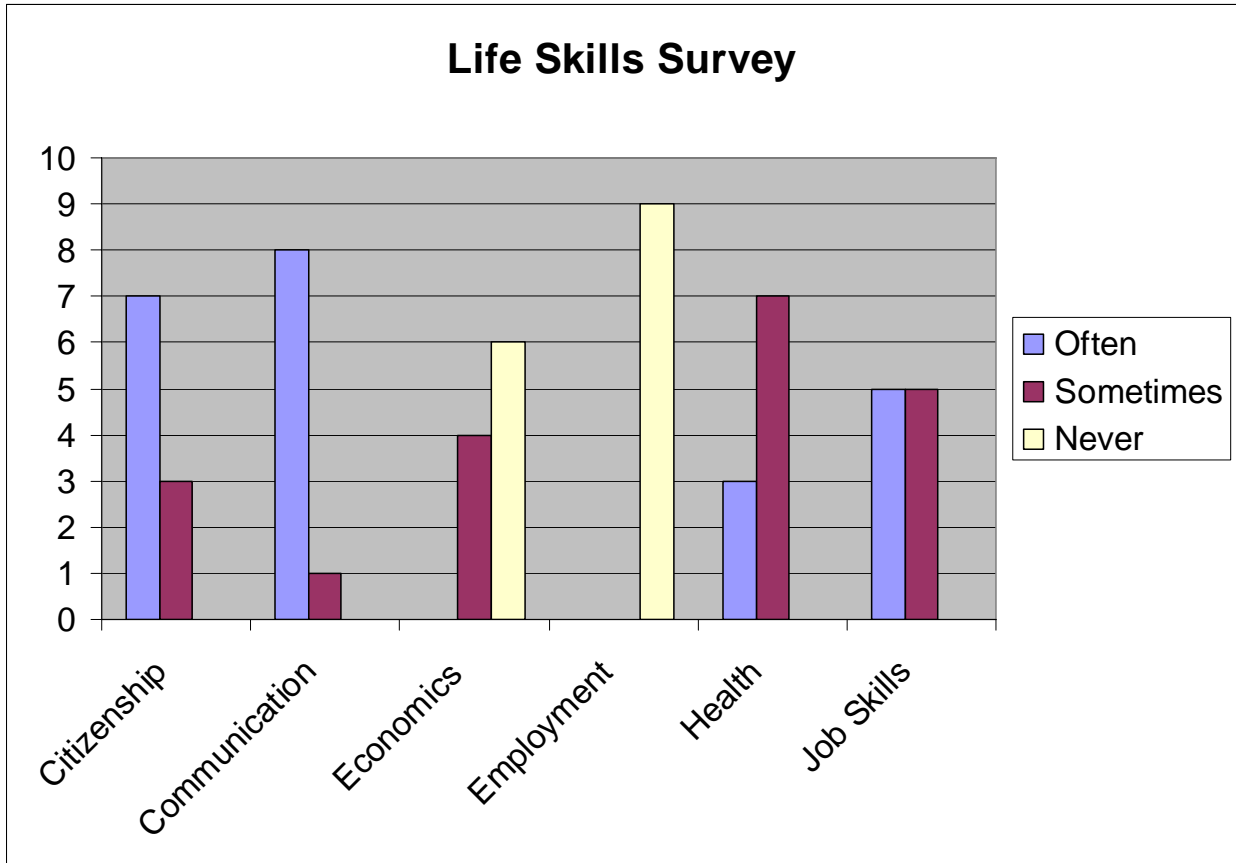
Middle School



Appendix D, cont.

Life Skills Survey Response

Elementary Schools



**Others:**

- Responsibility
- Empathy
- Self-control
- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Cultural awareness

**Appendix E Life Skills Task Force Membership**

	<b>Task Force Composition</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>
1	Jefferson Elementary School Certificated Staff (1)	Hilka Hamalainen
2	Franklin Elementary School Certificated Staff (1)	Margaret Carlson
3	Fairview Elementary School Certificated Staff (1)	Erica Kuch
4	Hamilton Elementary School Certificated Staff (1)	Gailen Steichen
5	Dry Creek Elementary School Certificated Staff (1)	Kim Davis
6	Stevens Middle School Certificated Staff (1)	Shirlene Fitzwater
7	Elementary School Principal (1)	Nancy Pack
8	Middle School Principal (1)	Chuck Lisk
9	High School Principal (1)	Mary Ann Unger
10	Secondary Student (1)	
11	Secondary Student (1)	
12	High School Certificated Staff (1)	Bernie Brabant
13	High School Certificated Staff (1)	William Young
15	Chairperson (1) – non-voting	Michelle Reid

✓ Board-approved: September 24, 2007