

The Quality of Students' Knowledge - Aim of the Subjects in the Effective School

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Abstract

This work aims to come to data for the quality of students' knowledge in two primary schools, the knowledge that students get from their teachers helped by the parents. Through the assessment scales used in the research we realized the students' capabilities, the knowledge that can be used at the competitions, the knowledge of one subject to be related with the knowledge of another subjects, how this knowledge help the students at their independency and initiation. The research does a comparison of teachers' and parents and students opinions about the quality of knowledge students get within the school from their teachers. A special attention was paid on the relation student-teacher, the teacher's influence on the students accomplishments, the factors that influence the students' results and the possibilities of improvement.

Key words: quality of knowledge, effective school, subjects in the school

1. Introduction

The quality that schools offer nowadays has been inspected by the parents, the mediums, government, and the society. The effective school has always been a part of the everyday people's vocabulary. Whatever their opinions are, in the past years the quality of schools has intrigued many parents. Beside the other subjects in the school they have to give their opinion about the way of learning in the school and what has to be improved. Also, the hopes and the aspirations of the students should be considered as well as the teachers' contentment (personal and professional), the quality of the relationships, the possibilities and the equality. Many researches about the relationships between the students and the teachers, their communication and collaboration are done.

The qualitative teachers dispose of skills by which they effectively manage the classroom. Those skills include the capability of the teacher for using the time and the space, he's cautious and he presumes the negative aspects, he introduces good relations with the students, the colleagues, the principal, the parents, he makes rules to improve the work and the learning, and let the students to create the class work. The most important is to be self critic and to learn from the mistakes, to use a positive language, positive expressions in the communication with the students, to insist on positive atmosphere in the classroom. A linking factor between the student and the teacher are the parents. The parents and the teacher are both interested in the way the child is treated, the teacher in the school, the parents at home. Since before the child starts at school the parents ask themselves many questions: Will the teacher have a good or bad influence on my child? Will it help him in the studying? Will my child love the teacher? Will the teacher teach my child on good behaving? Will he teach him what he has to know?

The same happens to the teachers too. They are interested in what the parents do with their children at home. Do they help the children with the home work? Do the parents critique the teacher's work? What is the atmosphere in the home like? When we want to describe the school as effective we look at it as a whole. The effective school should be leader, it should have clear aims, good relationship with the students, it should be worried about the students' results, it should have a qualified personnel, adequate and respected atmosphere and good relation with the community.

This kind of school has the child in its focus, it encourages the children's participation and the active learning, it adjusts on the different conditions and it puts the children's needs in front of everything.

The effective school is everything that a parent wants, that every child deserves, as well as what the country needs so we can confront the global challenges of the 21st century. (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, p.3)

The effective school includes:

- Professional development of the teachers and the whole staff;
- Classification of the professional development of the teachers;
- Professional accomplishment of the teachers for mentoring and tutoring of their colleagues and the future teachers;
- Spacious, technical and every other kind of conditions for school hospitation;
- Forms and models for team work and collaboration within the school teams.

The effective primary school:

- Builds its own rating on high aspirations, clear goals and obvious achievements;
- Is a good example for a good organization;
- Realizes a good education;
- Creates beneficial socio-emotional climate for learning and work;
- Accepts and solves learning problems;
- Boosts individual development for the children with specific challenges in the development;
- Respects the different capabilities of the children;
- Boosts creative learning, competitions and creates climate of content;
- Measures the success by the children's accomplishments;
- Accepts challenges.

The effective primary school shows sensibility to:

- Family, generational and problems between peers;
- The needs of the children with specific development challenges;
- Personal dilemmas, preconceptions and attitudes of the children;
- The free time of the children;
- Realization of the rights and cultural needs of the children;
- The content of knowledge as a personal and mutual benefit. (Ministry of education and science of Macedonia, 2006, p.113)

2. Methodology

Defining the subject of the research In the research a special attention was paid to the relation teacher-student, the children's possibilities for improvement, the influence of the teacher on the students' results, the factors that influence the students' success etc.

The subject of this research was: The quality of knowledge that students get at the primary school.

There were estimated three instruments: scale for the students, scale for the teachers and scale for the parents. These scales of assessment enabled successful research of the condition of the students and their knowledge got from the teachers and acquired in the school. Through them we learned how the students are capable to use their knowledge in their everyday life, how this knowledge help them and how they relate the knowledge of one to another subject. These instruments helped us to compare the teachers' opinions with the parents' and students' opinions about the quality of knowledge students get in the school from their teachers.

Aims and tasks of the research: The aim of this research was to realize the quality of knowledge that students get in the school.

The aim is presented through the following tasks:

1. To examine the students' opinion about the quality of the knowledge the get in the school
2. To come to a data about the quality of the knowledge students get in the school through the teachers' opinions
3. To examine the parents' opinions about the quality of the knowledge their children get in the school;

Hypothesis: According to the subject and the aim of the research the following hypothesis were set:

1. The students think that the quality of knowledge is very low.
2. The students are not satisfied with the quality of the knowledge they get in the school.
3. The teachers think that their students get qualitative knowledge that enables them to befall in their future lives.
4. The teachers think they give quality knowledge to their students who can use them at competitions and exams.
5. The parents are not satisfied with the quality of knowledge their children get in the school.
6. The parents think that the knowledge their children get in the school are not enough to satisfy the needs of the exams and competitions organized by the school.
7. There is a difference between the teachers', parents' and students' opinions about the practical use of the knowledge in the everyday life.
8. The teachers, the parents and the students think that the students cannot be successful at the exams without extra classes.

Example of the research. In this researcher were included two primary schools from Bitola, Republic of Macedonia. The research was conducted in subject teaching within all seven grades in the two schools. There were examined 40 teachers from both schools, 204 seven graders and 97 parents at random. The results refer only to the example of the research (the students, the teachers and the parents) because this example is not representative.

Methods, techniques and instruments. In the research were used the following techniques and instruments:

1. Analysis of the pedagogical documentation
2. Check-lists
3. Scales for assessment

The research was conducted by specially constructed instruments for teachers, students and parents through which we got data about the students' knowledge.

The questionnaires were divided to two scales:

- Scale for importance of the claim that has three degrees: 1- not important, 2 - important and 3 - very important
- Scale for the accuracy of the claim that also has three degrees: 1- wrong/not present, 2 -partly correct/present and 3 - correct/ present at all.

Processing of the results The results gotten from this research are quantitative and qualitative processed. It was calculated the frequency, the percentage and the arithmetic mean.

1. Analysis and interpretation of the results

Table 1 – The results from the students’ opinions about the quality of the knowledge they get in the school

IMPORTANT									CLAIM	CORRECT								
1 – not important		2 - important		3 – very important		not answered		x̄		1 – wrong / not present		2 - partly correct / present		3 – correct / present at all		not answered		x̄
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	0,49	60	29,4	138	67,6	5	2,45	2,68	1. The knowledge got in the school help me to better live in the everyday life	1	0,49	73	35,7	128	62,7	2	0,98	2,62
2	0,98	96	47,0	102	50	4	1,96	2,5	2. The knowledge from the school I use in everyday situations	12	5,88	107	52,4	81	39,7	4	1,96	2,34
21	10,2	62	30,3	116	56,8	5	2,45	2,47	3. The knowledge from the school help me to be independent	24	11,7	86	42,1	89	43,6	5	2,45	2,32
11	5,39	89	43,6	100	49,0	4	1,96	2,44	4. I can relate the knowledge from one subject to another subjects	15	7,35	114	55,8	71	34,8	4	1,96	2,28
12	5,88	80	39,2	106	51,9	6	2,94	2,47	5. The knowledge I get in school help me to get along with new situations	17	8,33	89	43,6	95	46,5	3	1,47	2,38
15	7,35	71	34,8	112	54,9	6	2,94	2,48	6The knowledge get in school help me to be good at exams without extra classes	43	21,0	86	42,1	74	36,2	1	0,49	2,15
28	13,7	87	42,6	83	40,6	6	2,94	2,27	7. The knowledge I get at school are enough to compete at schools competitions	46	22,5	102	50	53	25,9	3	1,47	2,03
21	10,2	59	28,9	117	57,3	7	3,43	2,48	8. My grades are result of the great support I get from my teachers	33	16,1	85	41,6	82	40,1	4	1,96	2,24

Interpretation of the students’ opinions

The students have high (positive) opinion about the role that the school has in their future private and professional development (first claim) so the most of them (about 2/3 from the examined) think that that claim is very important and present at all. More reserved are their opinions about the use of the knowledge in their everyday situations (second claim) and 25,98 % believe that with that knowledge they can compete at school level competitions.(seventh claim) About 1/3 of the students think that they are able to connect the knowledge of one subject with the knowledge of other subjects (fourth claim). The most of the students (55,88%) think that they are not capable enough to connect the knowledge from one subject with other subjects.

There are different opinions about the fact if the knowledge got in school help the students to become independent (third claim) and 43,62% think that is true, 42,15% think that is partly true and 11,76% think that the knowledge got at school doesn’t help them to become independent. About 1/3 of the students (36, 27%) think that the knowledge got at school is enough for them to answer the questions on the exams. Most of them have more pessimistic opinion about this (sixth claim).

According to the table we can say that the students’ opinions about the eighth claim are divided. 41, 66% have answered that it’s true, 40, 19% answered true at all and 16,17 % think that the teachers are not deserved for their success.

The data in the table show that 46, 56% of the students think that in new situations use those experiences they have got at school (fifth claim) and 43,62% are more reserved in their opinions. 8, 33% have negative opinion about this claim.

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From the analysis of the data in table 1 can be noticed that the knowledge students get at school is not enough for them to compete within the school or at the region. (on this claim we got the lowest arithmetic mean (2,00). Also it can be noticed that the extra classes cannot satisfy the needs of the exams and homework. Very small amount of this knowledge help the students to become independent and to get through new situations. Also, many of the students think that they don't get enough impetus and help from their teachers.

At the end we can conclude that the students think that the knowledge they get at school is with low quality i.e. the students are not satisfied with the quality of the knowledge they get at school, by which the first and the second hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2- The results from teachers' opinions

IMPORTANT									CLAIM	CORRECT								
1 - not important		2 - important		3 - very important		no answer		x		1 - wrong / not present		2 - partly correct / present		3 - correct / present at all		no answer		x
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	2,5	14	35	24	60	1	2,5	2,58	1. The knowledge students get at my classes help them to get through their present and future life	1	2,5	5	12,5	31	77,5	3	7,5	2,81
/	0,00	22	55	17	42,5	1	2,5	2,43	2. The knowledge students get at my classes help them in everyday situations	1	2,5	11	27,5	25	62,5	3	7,5	2,64
/	0,00	14	35	25	62,5	1	2,5	2,64	3. The knowledge students get at school help them to become independent	/	0,00	13	32,5	24	60	3	7,5	2,64
2	5	12	30	25	62,5	1	2,5	2,58	4. My students can connect the knowledge from one subject to other school subjects	1	2,5	17	42,5	19	47,5	3	7,5	2,48
1	2,5	16	40	22	55	1	2,5	2,53	5. The knowledge students get at school help them in new and unfamiliar situations	/	0,00	17	42,5	19	47,5	4	10	2,52
3	7,5	17	42,5	19	47,5	1	2,5	2,41	6. The knowledge students get at classes help them to respond to the homeworks, oral and written exams without extra classes needed	5	12,5	18	45	14	35	3	7,5	2,24
3	7,5	12	30	25	62,5	/	0,00	2,55	7. Students can compete at school competitions with the knowledge they get at regular and extra classes	5	12,5	14	35	17	42,5	4	10	2,33
1	2,5	18	45	20	50	1	2,5	2,48	8. Students' success are results from my work	1	2,5	23	57,5	13	32,5	3	7,5	2,32

Interpretation of teachers' opinions

From the teachers who participated in the research about 2/3 share the opinion that the students use their knowledge in everyday situations (second claim) and that this knowledge helps them to become independent and initiative (third claim)

Most of them, or 77,5% of the teachers think that the knowledge students get at their classes help the students to manage better their personal and professional life in future(first claim)-this claim has the highest arithmetic mean in the table (2,6), but only 35% of the teachers think that this knowledge is not enough for students to answer to the homework, oral and written exams.(sixth claim)

The teachers' opinion about the fourth and the fifth claim are divided. 47,5% think that the students are capable to connect the knowledge they get from one subject with other school subjects, but 42,5% are not sure about that. In the column "not important" 2/3 of the teachers think that it is very important for the students to be capable to connect the knowledge they get from one subject with other school subjects and only 5% of them think that it is not important.

A same number of teachers (47,5%) consider that the knowledge students get at school help them to manage in new and unfamiliar situations, and 42,5 % are not sure about this claim.

According 42,5% of the teachers the knowledge got at the regular classes and extra classes are enough for the students to compete at school competitions (seventh claim). 3,5%are not sure about this claim and 12,5% said that this claim isn't true(this claim has the lowest arithmetic mean (2,1).

As it can be seen from the table 2 the last claim has lowest results. Only 1/3 of the teachers think that the students' grades are result of their work, and the others don't share this opinion.

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From teachers' opinions in table 2 we come to conclusion that the knowledge students get at their classes enables them to manage better their present private and professional life, by which the third hypothesis is confirmed.

According to the grades we come to conclusion that the knowledge students get at regular and extra classes they can answer to the home works, the oral and written exams. This knowledge isn't enough for them to compete by which we come to a conclusion that the fourth hypothesis: "The teachers think that they give quality knowledge to their students that are enough for them to compete and do their home works" falls out.

Table 3- The results from the parents' opinions

IMPORTANT									CLAIM	CORRECT								
1 - unimportant		2 - important		3 - very important		no answer		x̄		1 - incorrect / not present		2 - partly correct / present		3 - correct / present at all		no answer		x̄
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	1,03	33	34,02	63	64,94	/	0,00	2,63	1. The knowledge got at school help my child to manage better in his present and future private and professional life	3	3,09	38	39,1	56	57,7	/	0,00	2,54
2	2,06	44	45,36	51	52,57	/	0,00	2,50	2. My child uses the knowledge from school in everyday situations	4	4,12	49	50,5	44	45,3	/	0,00	2,41
1	1,03	38	39,17	58	59,79	/	0,00	2,58	3. The knowledge got at school help my child to be initiative and independent	4	4,12	42	43,2	51	52,5	/	0,00	2,48
2	2,06	46	47,42	49	50,51	/	0,00	2,48	4. my child is capable to connect the knowledge from one subject with other subjects	5	5,15	51	52,5	41	42,2	/	0,00	2,37
1	1,03	46	47,42	50	51,54	/	0,00	2,50	5. This knowledge from school help my child to manage in new and unfamiliar situations	4	4,12	52	53,6	41	42,2	/	0,00	2,38
14	14,43	31	31,95	52	53,60	/	0,00	2,39	6. The knowledge from classes help my child to answer to the homework and to the written and oral exams	30	30,9	40	41,2	27	27,8	/	0,00	1,96
13	13,40	45	46,39	39	40,20	/	0,00	2,26	7. The knowledge my child gets at regular and extra classes enables him to compete	23	23,7	51	52,5	23	23,7	/	0,00	2

Interpretation of parents' opinions

From the analysis of the data according to the first claim 57,73% from the parents consider that the knowledge their children get at school help them to manage better in their private and professional lives(from eight claims this one has the highest arithmetic mean 2,54). This number is lower at the second claim. 45,36% of the parents think that this knowledge is used by their children in their everyday situations, and ½ of them are not sure about that.

About ½ of the parents think that the knowledge from the school help the students to be independent and initiative (third claim). 43,29% think that it's partly correct.

The attitude: " The knowledge students get at school help them to manage in new and unfamiliar situations" (fifth claim) is supported by 42,26 % of the parents, and the rest of them have more pessimistic attitude.

The results from the fourth claim show that more than ½ of the parents (52,57%) are not sure if the students can connect their knowledge from one subject with other school subjects.

12,37% from the parents think that the students don't get enough support and encouragement from their teachers (eight claim), and 1/3 of the parents don't agree with them and have a positive attitude about this claim. The most interesting are the facts that come out from the sixth claim. The parents are pessimistic about this claim. Around 1/3 or 30,92% of them think that without extra classes the students can't answer to the needs of their homeworks, oral and written exams. The fact that it's arithmetic mean is 1,96 proves that. The attitudes are similar with the seventh claim. The percentage of the parents' opinions is the same. Namely, 23,71% answered incorrect/not present and 23,71 answered with correct/present at all. Most of the parents 52,57% are not sure about this claim.

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The results from table 3 lead us to conclusion that the knowledge students get at school are not enough for them to manage in new and unfamiliar situations. This knowledge is not enough for students' independency and they rarely use them in everyday situations. The students are incapable to connect their knowledge from one subject with other school subjects. Also, many parents think that the students' grades are not result of the teachers' help and support. According to that we come to a conclusion that the parents aren't satisfied with the quality of knowledge their children get at school by which the fifth hypothesis is confirmed.

The knowledge students get at school don't help them to answer to the needs of the homeworks, the oral and written exams and they aren't enough for the students to compete, by which the sixth hypothesis is confirmed.

Comparative analysis of the teachers', students' and parents' opinions

Table 4

"The knowledge students get at school help them to manage better in their present and future private and professional lives"								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at all	&
Students	0,49%	29,41%	67,64%	2,68	0,49%	35,78%	62,74%	2,62
Teachers	2,5%	35%	60%	2,58	2,5%	12,5%	77,5%	2,81
Parents	1,03%	34,02%	64,94%	2,63	3,09%	39,17%	57,73%	2,54

From the data in table 4 we can notice that most of the teachers, parents and students agree that the knowledge students get at school help them to manage better their private and professional lives.

By comparison of their opinions and the comparison of the arithmetic means we can conclude that the teachers are the most sure about this claim. (Table 4)

Table 5

"The students use the knowledge from the school in their everyday situations"								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at all	&
Students	0,98%	47,05%	50%	2,5	5,88%	52,45%	39,70%	2,34
Teachers	0%	55%	42,5%	2,43	2,5%	27,5%	62,5%	2,64
Parents	2,06%	45,36%	52,57%	2,50	4,12%	50,51%	45,36%	2,41

From table 5 we can conclude that most of the students and the parents aren't sure if the knowledge students get at school help them in their everyday situations, on contrary 62,5 % of the teachers think that it is true.

From the claim set in table 5 : "The students use the knowledge from the school in their everyday situations" we set the seventh hypothesis.

By analyzing and comparing the opinions of the students, teachers and parents about the above mentioned claim we come to a conclusion that their opinions differ. Most of the teachers think positively, and the parent and the students are more pessimistic.

If we look at the arithmetic means we can see that their opinions differ, by which we get confirmation of the seventh hypothesis

Table 7

"The students are able to connect their knowledge from one subject with the knowledge from other school subjects"								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at allst	&
Students	5,39%	43,62%	49,01%	2,44	7,35%	55,88%	34,80%	2,28
Teachers	5%	30%	62,5%	2,58	2,5%	42,5%	47,5%	2,48
Parents	2,06%	47,42%	50,51%	2,48	5,15%	52,57%	42,26%	2,37

From the analysis of the data in table 7 we cannot come to some important conclusions.

About the claim: **"The students are able to connect their knowledge from one subject with the knowledge from other school subjects"** we can say that the lowest results are noticed within the students and their arithmetic mean is the lowest.

Within the parents the opinions are divided. More than half of them are not sure about this claim. The arithmetic mean is 2,37.

The results from the teachers' opinions are also different. (Table 7)

Table 8

„The knowledge students get at school help them to manage in new and unfamiliar situations“								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at allst	&
Students	5,88%	39,21%	51,96%	2,47	8,33%	43,62%	46,56%	2,38
Teachers	2,5%	40%	55%	2,53	0%	42,5%	47,5%	2,52
Parents	1,03%	47,42%	51,54%	2,50	4,12%	53,60%	42,26%	2,38

51,96% of the students, 55% of the teachers and 51,54% of the parents think that it is very important "The knowledge students get at school to help them to manage in new and unfamiliar situations".

46,56% of the students, 47,5% of the teachers and 42,26% of the parents think that it's true/present at all.

There are 8,33% of the students who think that the knowledge gained at school don't help them to manage in new and unfamiliar situations. More than half of the parents aren't sure about this.

In the scale of accuracy we can notice that the arithmetic mean among the parents and the students is the same 2,38. The arithmetic mean among the teachers is higher. (Table 8)

Table 9

"The acquired knowledge at school help the students to answer the requirements of the tests, oral and written exams without extra classes"								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at allst	&
Students	7,35%	34,80%	54,90%	2,48	21,07%	42,15%	36,27%	2,15
Teachers	7,5%	42,5%	47,5%	2,41	12,5%	45%	35%	2,24
Parents	14,43%	31,95%	53,60%	2,39	30,92%	41,23%	27,83%	1,96

Many parents 30,92% and many students 21,07% think that the claim “**The acquired knowledge at school help the students to answer the requirements of the tests, oral and written exams without extra classes**” isn’t true/present.

The arithmetic mean among the parents is very low (1,96). Also, the number of teachers who think that the claim is true/present is very low (35%). The analysis of the data lets to be set a few questions: Why do the students need extra classes to be prepared for the test and oral and written exams (Table 9)

According to the data from the table we come to conclusion that the teachers, the students and the parents think that the students can’t answer the needs of the test by which the eight hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 10

“The acquired knowledge at school is enough for the students to compete on school and municipal level”								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at all	&
Students	13,72%	42,64%	40,68%	2,27	22,54%	50%	25,98%	2,03
Teachers	7,5%	30%	62,5%	2,55	12,5%	35%	42,5%	2,33
Parents	13,40%	46,39%	40,20%	2,26	23,71%	52,57%	23,71%	2

As in the previous claim here are also present many parents (23,71%) and students (22,54%) who think that the claim : “**The acquired knowledge at school is enough for the students to compete on school and municipal level**” isn’t true.

The examined teachers had the following opinions: 1/3 of them think that this claim is partly true and 42,5% think that is true at all.

Here arises the question: “ Why do the knowledge that students acquire at school isn’t enough?

From table 10 we can see that the arithmetic mean among the parents is low (2) as well as among the students (2,03). (Table 10)

Table 11

“The students’ success (grades) is a result of the teachers’ impetus and help”								
	Important				Correct			
	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	&	Incorrect/not present	Partly correct/present	Correct/present at all	&
Students	10,29%	28,92%	57,35%	2,48	16,17%	41,66%	40,19%	2,24
Teachers	2,5%	45%	50%	2,48	2,5%	57,5%	32,5%	2,32
Parents	7,21%	39,17%	53,60%	2,46	12,37%	49,48%	38,14%	2,25

From the data analysis about the claim: “**The students’ success (grades) is a result of the teachers’ impetus and help**” 16,17% of the students, 13,37% of the parents and 2,5% of the teachers said it’s not true.

About 2/3 of the teachers aren’t sure about this.

The parents’ and students’ opinions are divided. There are very low arithmetic means in the three groups. The teachers should think why they don’t impetus the students so they can have better results? Where is the help that students should get from them? (Table 11)

Conclusion

There were noticed many weaknesses that the teachers should pay more attention at. They are:

- The knowledge students acquire at school, they don't use them enough in their everyday situations;
- The knowledge students acquire at school don't help them enough to be independent and initiative;
- The students aren't able enough to connect the knowledge from one with the knowledge of other school subjects;
- The knowledge that students acquire at school don't help them enough to manage in new and unfamiliar situations;
- The knowledge acquired at school don't let the students to answer on the tests and oral and written exams without extra classes needed;
- The knowledge acquired at regular and extra classes aren't enough for the students to compete on school and municipal level;
- The success (grades) that students achieve at school isn't always a result of the big impetus and help that students get from the teachers.

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