The “Investigation” stage (figure 2) of the Stripling Inquiry Model was scheduled over seven Capstone periods. Students acquired background knowledge from both print and online resources, recorded notes in a journal, and cited sources.

A distinguishing component of our Capstone Projects was a field study requirement. The objective was for students to realize they were capable of contributing new information to the topic they were exploring. There were several field study options.

*Interview an expert.* A student investigating penal reform, for example, solicited the views of a parent who was employed as a prison guard.

*Conduct a survey.* The student questioning the value of homework polled classmates to ascertain how much time they spent on homework each night.

*Visit a museum, historic site, laboratory, business, etc.* The world was their classroom.

Next was the “Construct” stage in which students drew conclusions and constructed new understandings. They were making the inquiry their own. We used the visual metaphor of “connecting the dots” to explain the concept. A graphic organizer guided students to review their notes, to identify the most important thinking, and to ask “What does all this mean?” and “What ties together all your thinking?”

In the next stage, “Express,” the student presented what was learned. At Hommocks Middle School, the Dream Team named the public exhibition Hommocks-Con, a play on words of the popular Comic-Con event. Hommocks-Con took place over two mornings in June: the first morning for seventh graders and the second morning for eighth grade parents. In viewing eighth graders’ Capstone Projects, seventh graders were exposed to the type of work they were expected to complete the following year. Hommocks-Con took place in classrooms, with individual student desks arranged in a horseshoe pattern around the periphery of the room, an eighth grade presenter behind each desk, equivalent to a booth.

Striving for authentic presentations, eighth grade students considered the audience and the essential message they sought to convey. There were tri-fold poster boards, PowerPoint slide shows, and models.