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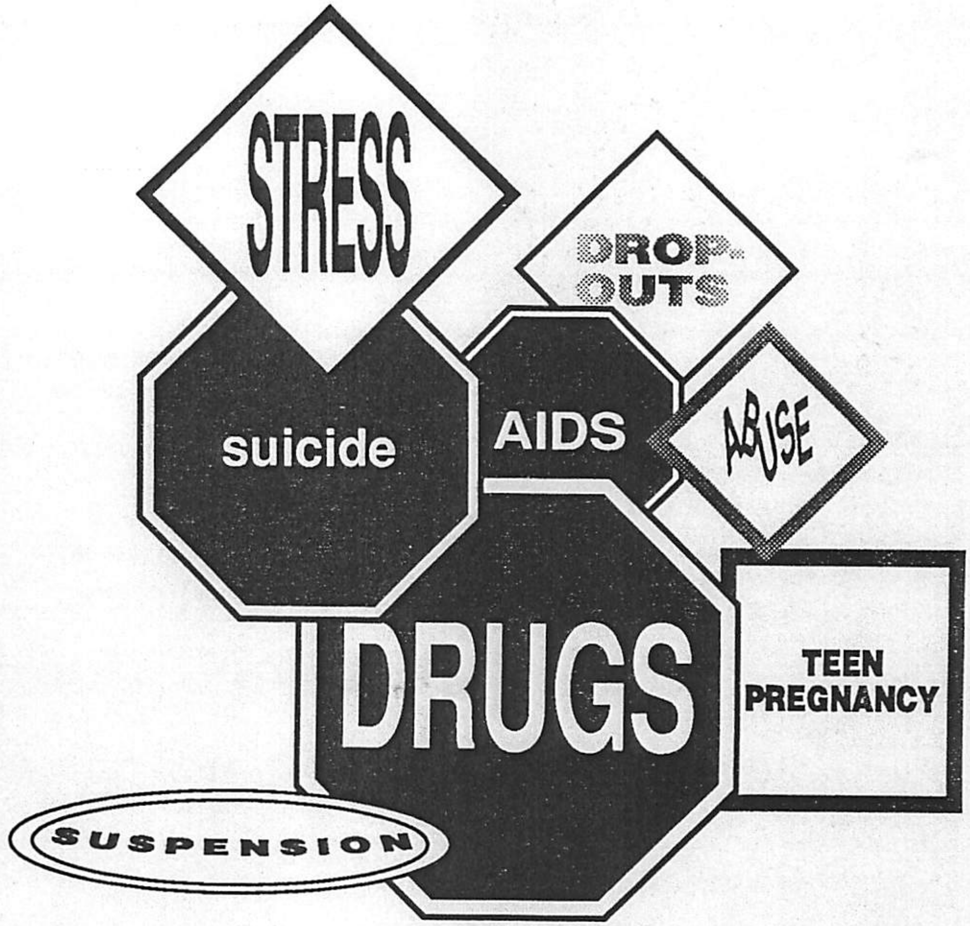

AT-RISK YOUTH

PART II

- Changing the System
- Utilizing Community Resources

Issue Editor: ROBERT C. MORRIS

THRESHOLDS IN EDUCATION

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Editor's Note

by Robert C. Morris

I began Part I of this 2 Part series dealing with "At-Risk Youth" by stating that "perhaps at no other time in the history of American education has it been more critical that understanding and working with youth at risk be not only encouraged, but focused and designed in such a way that many various segments of our communities can be brought together and used. I went on to describe how the idea for an issue of **Thresholds** had developed as an outgrowth of a two-day National Conference on "At-Risk Youth" held in Savannah, Georgia on February 2-3, 1990. This conference was co-sponsored by the Chatham County Schools of Savannah, Georgia, Armstrong State College, Georgia Southern College, and Savannah State College. Over 100 presentations were made during this 2-day conference, with educators and parents from throughout the United States attending.

Half of the twenty odd articles identified for each of the 2 issues were selected from a pool of 38 submitted articles. They were drafted by actual presenters from the At-Risk Conference. It was felt that by presenting a selection of those presentations made at the conference, readers of **Thresholds** would not only have a picture of the variety of problems and issues associated with At-Risk Youth, but that the broader representation of ideas, research, and solutions made at the conference could be examined.

As in any publication or endeavor, such as a major conference, certain individuals step forward to assist. Initial proposal reviewers included Otis Johnson, Director of the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority; Evelyn Dandy, Professor at Armstrong State College; Zelda Tenenbaum, Director of Human Resource Development and Sharon Darley, Administrative Coordinator for the Chatham County At-Risk Program.

Additionally, the assistance of Daniel Washington, from Savannah State College and the Chatham County School Board, along with Cecil Carter, Superintendent of Chatham County Schools and Judith Krug from the Savannah Compact of the Chamber of Commerce were likewise essential for both conference and follow-up activities.

Part I of the first concurrent issues of **Thresholds** contains a thoughtful introduction by Dr. Cecil Carter. For this 2nd Part I, asked Dr. Sue Phelps, one of the Conference's invited speakers to discuss the issues of At-Risk. I will leave you with a Jonathan Kozol thought concerning children At-Risk. He recently stated that: "Whatever the approach, for changes to be effective they must reflect genuine commitment to provide the same level of resources to all of our children - rich and poor alike. When such a commitment is made, 'at-risk' children thrive."

Robert C. Morris is the department head of Educational Leadership, Tehnology and Research at Goeorgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia.

Can We Gain the Market?

by C. Sue Phelps

What do you believe about what percent of the persons in the United States should be encouraged or expected to complete high school? Most of the experts believe that sixty-five percent of our dropouts are capable of being graduated. Some people believe that we need to retain an uneducated segment of the labor force to do the "dirty work;" if every one becomes too educated, they will become restless with the mundane tasks. Our best percentage of persons reaching graduation was about 30 years ago and then it worsened. Should we strive to gain 80? 90? or 100% of the market?

My intent is not to offer some simple solution explaining how to gain the market in a specific setting. I believe that specific knowledge of a community must be known before one can begin to design strategies to gain the market, but I do believe that there are 'threads that run true', guiding principles, and questions to be asked and answered. I will ask some of the questions and highlight the threads.

Why a marketing model or analogy? My reading and my business friends tell me that marketing and markets are keys to success. Access to education is the desire of the undeveloped countries of the world, yet we have not been successful at "selling" free education in the United States.

Is education in the marketing business? If so, what are we selling and to whom? Please consider that the product is learning and our customers are learners. Yes, we too have stockholders. CEO's, sales staff and product designers. In most states there is a guaranteed market from seven to sixteen. Do we need to extend that guaranteed or compulsory market? If so, one end or both? Do we need to shorten it?

Can you imagine a national multi-million dollar corporation losing 2500 customers per day?

- 2500 students will leave USA schools today!
- 2500 students left USA schools yesterday!
- 2500 students will leave USA schools tomorrow!

And they will continue to leave until we rethink our VALUE FOR EDUCATION and RESTRUCTURE our MARKETS AND MARKETING skills.

In the midst of one of the most dramatic change periods in the training of staff and demands of students, there has been no change in the requirements for serving on boards of education in the last fifty years.

Many schools and communities are looking for "quick fixes" for the loss of customers labeled dropouts, school leavers, pushouts and those who never really had access. Solving this dilemma is not a sprint: it is a marathon. We cannot expect to impact this statistic dramatically in less than a decade, but I believe that it is reasonable to enlarge our market to ninety percent (90%) by the year 2000.

Local and national leaders have focused on this problem for about seven years and the first positive outcome is that education, its direction and purpose is no longer the lone responsibility of educators.

Business, industry and politicians are becoming involved. National TV advertisements and documentaries are numerous and continual. Best selling novels and story lines on weekly TV shows carry themes of literacy and staying in school. A country music performer getting a GED is national news. Presidents, governors, their spouses, and politicians at all levels talk about literacy and schools. We are accomplishing first steps; the nation is becoming aware of a critical problem.

Let's look at some of our marketing techniques. Do public schools have to be open for business only from 8 to 3, August to June, 180 days with summers off? Does our position in the world market, the numbers of persons in poverty and ignorance, or the loss of productivity in the work place, justify our having educators unemployed 25% to 33% of the calendar year and its children unattended, youth on the streets, labor markets flooded in the summer with industry needing a labor force at other seasons, facilities in which we have billions of dollars invested, closed?? SHOULD or COULD schools become centers with opportunities to learn 18 to 24 hours per day year-round with child care, health care and available transportation? Can we continue to allow latch-key students to be without school literacy because of the absence of care and developmental experiences in the pre-school years? Seat time is neither necessary nor sufficient. Time cannot equal credit nor can credit be withheld because one lacks seat time.

Historically, we as a nation have done things in dramatically different

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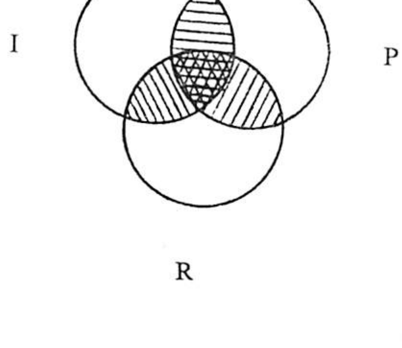
ways when persons saw the need. The church, early in our nation's history, saw the need and began to provide access to education to a much larger population. The list of these successful giants such as Alice Lloyd and Martha Berry, who struggled against tremendous odds to provide education to poor learners in remote areas is long. Rabun GapNacoochee School and the South Carolina Opportunity School provided learning opportunities to entire families for periods of time from short times between crops, "lay-by" schools, to entire families moving onto the campus for years. We changed the market and marketing with "lay-by" schools, "moon-light" schools, and "split terms" to allow learners to be available to the needed labor force.

Our country needs a labor force. This labor force needs to be very different: we will not only need to find jobs for people, but we will need to find people for the jobs. Joining the labor force for the '90's and the 'OO's will demand skills very different from even the 80's. The growth of the labor force for the 90's will be only one-half of the 80's, but the growth will be staffed with 82% female, minorities and immigrants. It is tempting to wallow in the "I wish it were the good ole days " or to follow the "reasoning" of a once famous Georgia Governor when concerned about how to improve the penal system, suggested that we get a better grade of prisoner. I sometimes hear conversations in teachers' lounges, principals' offices, PTA meetings, and board rooms that sound logically equivalent.

Effective programs must include strategies for prevention (P), intervention (I), and recovery (R). The needed inter-relationship of these programs can best be represented by a Venn diagram, (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Any program or practice that raises the probability of learner success is the best line of prevention, but additionally, there can be programming targeted for high-risk preschoolers.

Intervention strategies target students enrolled in schools but have additional needs to keep pace with the norm.

Recovery programs address the 27 million illiterates plus millions of others who do not have the basic skills needed to meet minimum standards such as a GED.

The urgency of the problem demands that we invest dollars and time in programs that address at least two of these priorities simultaneously. The programs that should have first priority for funding are those that address all three - - - prevention, intervention, and recovery (triple grid in Figure 1). Recovery programs that target parent education have the potential to address all three areas.

We have legions of problems with governance. We are debating whether schools should be governed at the Federal level (national curriculum), state level, system level or school. We need to avoid polarizing in camps, and instead look at some umbrella issues. How do we give ownership? How do we give a sense of pride in customer satisfaction and achievement? When a graduate walks across the stage, who can or does feel a sense of "that's my student (customer)" and likewise, who should or does feel a sense of responsibility when a student is AWOL or more importantly who knows (s)he is gone and where (s)he went? Is not a monopoly where finances are not impacted by learner outcomes a part of the problem? A young female dropout was asked what happened on your last day at school? What traumatic event took place? And her reply lives indelibly in my memory, "Nothing, no one knew I was gone".

Two phone calls from two parents can change the course of history. One board member can sabotage a program that an instructional staff has worked years to put in place. Yet, we do not hold board members responsible for student outcomes. That same board member's constant "haranguing" of a superintendent can cause him or her to feel threatened and vulnerable. Survival becomes more important than student success.

The average tenure in most southern states for superintendents is less than four years. Could any major industry survive that rate of change of its chief executive officer? A second problem in governance is the selection process and credential requirements for members of boards of education. In the midst of one of the most dramatic change periods in the training of staff and demands of students, there has been no change in the requirements for serving on boards of education in the last fifty years. Some states do not even require a high school diploma.

Some have offered "choice" as a solution to educational governance problems. This sounded partially helpful, but then I realized that a large population is already disenfranchised because they are and have been denied access because of poverty, literacy, missed opportunity, pregnancy, and inadequate health care. Can we give choice and guarantee that we don't widen the gap between "haves" and "havenots," creating a larger underclass without skills to make a contribution to our economy and participate in government?

There is very little if any, research to support the view that retention is an effective practice. A student that is placed behind his/her chronological age by two years is almost destined for continued failure.

The standard solution offered for another of education's dilemmas is merit pay for teachers. The delivery of education is at its best in a spirit of cooperation. Practices that create competition (win/lose) between educators serving the same students are very decisive. Plans that reward groups - -

grade levels, departments or total school could prove to be very effective.

My final question about the educational environment is "CAN WE CONTINUE TO TOLERATE THE USE OF THE F-WORD?" No, I am not talking about graffiti on the back walls or restroom stalls. The F-word to which I refer is failure. Checking state records reveal that about the same number of children experience enough failure to be retained a full year as the number of children in a given grade. For example, in Georgia, about 100,000 students initially enter school each year and 110,000 were retained a full year in 1987. I am not advocating social promotion as a solution. The solution must be student success. Teachers must TEACH, students must LEARN, parents must ASSIST, business and industry must SUPPORT. Failure is too readily accepted as an answer. Because it's June and I have not learned or mastered a concept cannot be final. Retention and recycling learners for a full year is an expensive and ineffective remediation. There is very little if any, research to support the view that retention is an effective practice. A student that is placed behind his/her chronological age by two years is almost destined for continued failure.

Title I is another source of dollars currently being spent that could be more effective if the guidelines did not demand that we give students "more" in the same six hours of the school day. Equals applied to unequals will remain unequal in the same order. If the dollars could make it possible to extend the school day and/or year for these students, we could begin to reduce the inequality.

The constant mobility of the American culture demands that we search for strategies to bring stability and remove anonymity. Mobility further demands that we find more effective ways to grant "credit", especially at the secondary level. Twelve weeks can be a long period of time for some students to maintain residence in a school district and complete six to eight different subjects. Recent trends in education are moving to 18 or 36 week terms. These time frames become impossible for thousands of sixteen year-olds in a secondary school who may move twice or are shifted among two or more families. **Schools need** to consider new strategies for dealing with the constant mobility of its youth.

Schools are being accused of providing an education that does not educate. Schools have been on the front burner with the heat turned up for almost a decade. The continuing negative headlines are trying at times. I believe that it is time to apply the Noah principle: NO MORE PRIZES FOR PREDICTING RAIN; PRIZES ONLY FOR BUILDING ARKS! (Louis Gerstner, CEO, RJR/Nabisco).

Yes, I believe that the schools are important and should be held accountable. Their importance is at best, second place! Parents are the first teacher and they must never abdicate that role. We have allowed dissonance between home and school. Adolescents are masters at DIVIDE AND CONQUER. Peer pressure is overwhelmingly powerful when the significant adults in a student's life are not standing together - - Moma, Popa, school, church, courts, and employer.

Schools need *to consider new strategies for dealing with the constant mobility of its youth.*

Twenty-five percent (25%) of parents visit school. Calls from school are viewed negatively by the home! Calls from home are viewed negatively by the school! Parents must assume the leadership to see that the other 75% get to school, but parents and educators together must agree and implement real places in the operation of the school. Parents must be more than spectators in the education of their children.

What value do you give education and how do you communicate it? What was the value of education communicated to you as a child or as a youth? What value are you communicating and how? Are we brave enough to ask a student? Are they getting mixed messages from the same messengers not to mention multiple messages? Do you know a dropout? Ask him or her. What will we hear?

- My parents never asked about my day at school.
- My parents talked of hard days at work, but did not recognize that going to school is also a full-time job.
- My parents regularly made negative comments about school, teachers, principals and coaches.
- They did not offer help when I struggled.
- I never saw them read; we never watched a TV show together; we never talked.
- They helped me get hopelessly in debt with my car.
- They allowed or even encouraged me to date older boys or men.
- They encouraged me to get a job and I was strongly encouraged to make all the money that I could.
- Employers ask me to work long hours, but close food places at midnight or later.
- After sixteen, I was offered work on full shifts from 3 to 11.
- No, I was never asked my level of education or plans when interviewed for a job.
- Everyone knows that employers do not really ask to see your diploma.

I recently asked a young woman how she saw the value of education in her family. She shared this story. At age nine or so she was visiting her grandmother and was concerned about a wall in grandmother's living room, a wall with an array of pictures. Amy asked why her picture was not on the wall. A formally uneducated grandmother communicated and assured a nine year old that when she was graduated, her picture too would be placed on the wall. Subtle, but vivid in a young woman's memory.

Nancy considered dropping out of school. We had a customer that knew of her plan. Mr. Kidd was a car dealer, one of the more affluent persons in my poor community. He communicated, "You quit, I will never tip you again. She quit. He kept his promise. He communicated a value and kept his word. What are we communicating?

In the general assemblies of most states for the last three to five years, legislation to change the compulsory school law has been considered. As I registered concern and upsetness to a seventeen year old male who had decided to leave school - dropout, his dismayed reply to me was, "Lady, what are you upset about? It is legal to leave school; it is not legal to fail to make my car payment!"

What does it communicate, when a sixteen year old cannot sign a binding contract; cannot vote; cannot buy alcoholic beverage but can make the decision to leave school without parent's permission? We require exit exams to be graduated but require nothing but birthdays to exit school and run dramatic risk of forever being a liability to one's self, family and the total community.

If we are to gain the market of at least 90% graduation rate by the year 2000, we must recognize the roadblocks to education in each community and for each student.

The time and conditions in the market place are right for success. In the last forty years the question of denying access to education for all has moved from no concern, to a MORAL issue on to a legal issue and in the last decade education for all has become an ECONOMIC issue. Some industries have realized that an uneducated labor force is a liability and we are not and cannot be competitive locally, nationally, or globally without employees who are literate and can communicate. We must continue to strive for all to know that the world economic race will be won or lost in the arena of education.

Strong evidence suggests that as school dropouts are recognized as an economic issue, it becomes a POLITICAL issue. The subtle but critical difference is that politicians are now talking about education for all, not just education for a few.

As educators, we must be in the vanguards effecting the changes that are happening and need to happen. We must measure customer satisfaction, product design and effectiveness, and stockholder's willingness to continue to invest the capital. But as we hear the corporate world declare the standard of a skilled, adaptable labor force, we must demonstrate skill, flexibility and adaptability in the delivery of our product - learning.

I want to share a quote from Bernard Gifford, Vice President, Educational Computer, Apple:

> Making the transition from the industrial age to the Information Age requires a new way of thinking about the organization of intellect, knowledge, and human ability. It requires a decided shift in attitude and behavior. It requires accepting an educational model called a Learning Society. Where Learning takes place ANY TIME, ANY PLACE, FOR ANY REASON, ON ANY TOPIC, IN ANY SEQUENCE. Technological advances in the Informational Age make a Learning Society not only possible but an imperative.

The decade of the 90's affords educators the opportunity to gain the market, and we will be as successful as our ability to organize the people with passion about their belief that literacy in America can be 100% and access to education for all must not be denied for any reason.

I believe that such a group exists, and in the words of Margaret Meade:

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Utilizing Community Resources and Facilitating Parent Involvement

by Daniel Washington

The following five articles were selected for this issue of Thresholds on the basis of their insights, solutions and proposals. All deal with the common areas of community resources and parental intervention. Specifically, Stephen Jambor's article "The Technical Alternative High School" and Dorice Wright's article "Intervention into the School–To–Work Transition Process" both discuss successful school and community programs for dealing with Youth At–Risk. Successful intervention strategies are the heart of both articles with the goal of youth either making a smooth transition from school to work or heightening understanding and appreciation for alternative learning environments.

The articles written by Chapman and Laurel, and Ban ("Thresholds to Parent Involvement Education" and "New Bridges Over Troubled Waters of At–Risk Students") point directly to what parents and a community can do to help students at–risk. These articles point toward more family–centered, community–centered and student–centered solutions. The common thread in these strategies is a focus on the student rather than the program or curriculum.

Finally, this section of articles contains an article by Christopher Chalker titled "Intervention in the At–Risk Problem." Chalker's article gives an extensive overview of the needs of those involved in the At–Risk issues. It is a well documented analysis of research surrounding a successful Student Assistance Program designed at keeping students in school.

These articles suggest that the time has arrived for the locus of control to shift form the public school system and the traditional teacher to grassroots community organizations staffed with youth workers who are familiar with the norms and lifestyles of youths at–risk.

Daniel Washington is a professor of Psychology in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Savannah State College in Savannah, Georgia.

The Technical Alternative High School: Comprehensive Vocational, Academic and Counseling Support for At-risk Students

by Stephen O. Jambor

In Westchester County, N.Y., there has been an obvious and dramatic increase in the overall student drop-out rate. More disturbing has been a disproportionate increase in the drop-out rate among classified/or emotionally handicapped children. This, coupled with the fact that there is also an increase in the number of students being classified, has produced an alarming situation. At the same time, there has been a decrease in the number of students taking Occupational Education, as well as a corresponding decrease in trained workers available to join the workforce in the 1990's (McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1986). Therefore, in order to better serve the needs of these students, and to ameliorate the larger work force shortage, the Technical Alternative High School (TAHS) was established in September 1984. In July 1989, the U.S. Department of Education recognized this program as one of the "Top 10" in this country for drop-out prevention by designating it as a demonstration program and awarding a grant to support expansion and dissemination activities.

In 1951, Lewin proposed that Learning is a function of Person by Environment interaction (L=f (PxE)) . However, it has long been recognized (Glaser, 1977) that not all learners' needs can be appropriately addressed within traditional academic high school environments. A variety of person factors from cognitive to physiological to social-emotional can have an influential effect on the learning outcome. Nevertheless, three variables have been consistently identified (Nave, 1990) as being significantly correlated to the achievement of success in school: 1) positive personal relationship with the teacher; 2) student's level of self-esteem; and, 3) level of mother's education. The first two of these variables are accessible to intervention and can be used to effect positive changes in learning outcomes. Perhaps most critical is self-esteem and the poorer self-concept that accompany it for at-risk students.

The TAHS was created with the assumption that potential enrollees would be: a) identified as inappropriate for traditional high school due to individual learner differences; and

. . . the role defined for the TAHS in drop-out prevention was "to teach": teach competence and thereby enable identity building behavior through occupational training.

b) experiencing a negative reaction due to feelings of not fitting into that environment. The program's task was therefore viewed in the reverse order of these two characteristics: 1) to address the negative feelings and self-concept damage which accompanies the perception of not "fitting-in"; and, 2) to provide meaningful training experiences to challenge otherwise untapped or frustrated learner differences.

The idea of using Occupational Education for "turned-off" students is not at all novel (Hahn, Danzberger & Lefkowitz, 1987; Hayward, Adelman & Apling, 1988). Educators have intuitively felt that many of these students required a more hands-on or experiential approach to learning. The educated guess behind the Occupational Education choice for at-risk students has been the realization that not all learners learn in the same modalities, and that some are more sensorially oriented, tactile, or visual-spatial. Indeed, the recent work of Farley (1989) suggests that the rationale for non-traditional training approaches may have a more physiological or temperamental basis. Research into the "Type T Personality" patterns substantiates the long-held belief that some of us differ from one another because our neurochemistry and "internal clocks" have essentially different tempos. The theory maintains that not only are the temperaments different but more critically, so are the threshold for sensory stimulation/excitation. This perspective has helped to clarify the mission statement of the TAHS.

It provides the basis for appreciating that not all at-risk students' needs for alternative learning environments are identical (NAVESNP, Definitions & Recommendations for the Disadvantaged, no date). This program therefore should be viewed as a special approach to one kind of at-risk student, the student who is classified as behaviorally disordered or emotionally disturbed. While the challenge to keeping many of these students in school remains similar, particularly when the maladaptive behaviors which lead to dropping out are looked at, the TAHS approach views the basic problem for its sample of at-risk

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youth as one of competence and identity. When a student's basic aptitudes and temperament needs are not addressed and/or frustrated, turned off behaviors can occur. The failure cycle begins to take shape as the student chooses to remove him/herself from the arena of achievement and competence and the "failure identity" (Glasser, 1965,1969) emerges. Still, the public schools' posture is somewhat tenuous in so far as it faces what may be characterized for these students as a developmental adjustment crisis of identity (Erickson, 1950) armed only with its educational mission statement. The question then becomes one of how to develop a deeper understanding of a societal problem of which dropping out is only a symptom and yet provide intervention which conforms to the mandate of public schools?

The TAHS intervention design had to confront this question. A deliberate attempt was made to define the drop-out phenomena neither in the narrow terms of bottom-line attrition rates nor as causalities of broader societal dynamics, but to map out a middle road. This approach focuses primarily upon the student as a learner in the generic sense and stresses the school's role as educational as opposed to social service or mental health care. Simply stated, then, the role defined for the TAHS in drop-out prevention was "to teach": teach competence and thereby enable identity building behavior through occupational training. The underlying assumption here is that changing learner outcomes involves not only changes in the person but facilitative changes in the learning environment, as well (Bishop, 1988).

Dropping-out is viewed as a culminating dysfunctional behavioral choice which was probably preceded by other avoidance behaviors and choices. The Key to the TAHS methodology is the assumption that the behavior of dropping out cannot be addressed per se because it is a singular event. Instead, the program design assumes that there are incremental off-task behaviors which the student chooses that lead up to and thereby produce the end-choice of dropping-out. It is therefore those off-task behaviors which become the focus of intervention in the TAHS approach.

Throughout, the student is considered to be a person striving, as all humans do, to become competent and building an identity accordingly. The student, whose individual learner differences are not appropriately engaged, becomes frustrated, turned off, moves off-task, evidences behavioral disorders, receives negative feedback, experiences incompetence, creates a lower self-concept and eventually becomes a high risk of running away by dropping-out. The school's role therefore is to use education to "break this cycle" (N.D.P.C., 1990).

The cohesive link is the emphasis upon building an on-task attitude and a success identity.

The Method of Study

Comprehensive programming involves three components: Occupational Education, Academics and Counseling Support.

1) Occupational Education: If dysfunctional behavior and a failure identity can be shown to be learned, then on-task behavior and a success identity can also be taught. The key to this kind of teaching is more appropriately engaging the individual learner differences by creating meaningful opportunities to experience competence. This rationale views Occupational Education as more than just a geographic solution for problematic behavior. It is the fulcrum with which the student's doors of perception are wedged open and the motivation to achieve is reengaged. In the perspective of Hunter's instructional model (Russell & Hunter, 1977), this use of Occupational Education is directly analogous to the "Anticipatory Set". The student's motivation and interest is not only addressed but given a directional impetus toward the theme of the larger lesson: learning on-task behavior, competence and the success identity. "Instructional Input" for the lesson goes beyond the obvious technologies of the vocational trades and includes academic and counseling support. However, these components are aligned with the occupational piece which becomes the cornerstone for TAHS students. Wherever possible and relevant, academics are related to the trade area and used both to support training and capitalize upon the student's increased motivational interest. For example, the capacity exists to take an otherwise "boring" course in mathematics and make it relevant to Electrical Trades, thereby increasing both the chances of the student succeeding in that vocation and in passing math.

The Occupational Education courses available to all students are structured into two levels: Basic and Secondary. This enables more adaptive programming for students whose personal-social needs require more developmental remediation. The Basic Occupational Education course is specifically designed, in fact, to address the "Employability Skills" of the student through a structured exposure to vocational activities. In this novel approach to training, the transferable aspects of on-the-job survival are given primary focus, while the actual trade skills are viewed as enabling activities. Students in the Basic program rotate through a variety of exploratory experiences while pursuing the core attitude and behavior objectives. Readiness for further training and specialization is determined upon a review of progress in "Employability Skills" and the assessment of vocational aptitude.

2) Academics: The purpose of the TAHS comprehensive programming design is to enable the impetus generated by Occupational Education involvement to be extended and reinforced further through the academic and personal-social components. While comprehensive schools have existed for decades, an active attempt is made here to relate the three components to the presenting learner style differences, and deficits. It is felt that more than these three "bricks" in scheduling are needed, but that a viable "mortar" is also important. The cohesive link is the emphasis upon building an on-task attitude and a success identity. Personal development and counseling become integral to achieving these goals. It critically involves a specific and structured training module, The Social Skills Curriculum (Bryne, Frommer, Hughes & Jambor, 1985), which is presented in group

counseling and integrated throughout the academic programming.

The personal-social theme that cements the bricks of the program is particularly important to supporting the success of the academic component. As noted earlier, these students' at-risk behaviors can be traced in large part to an aversion, frustration or inability to handle the academic requirements of a high school diploma. Yet, the TAHS is built on the premise that its students can and will be enabled to achieve that goal. To do so then requires not only the incentive provided through Occupational Education, and the personal-social support component, but a fully departmentalized and adaptive academic environment. Despite the fact that the TAHS is located entirely on an Occupational Education campus, a full range of high school curricula is available. In addition, realistic mainstreaming opportunities have been created whereby these special education students can participate in both academic and Occupational Education classes, where appropriate, together with their non-classified peers. This was a significant achievement which helped to distinguish the TAHS design from previous special education programs. Heretofore, E.H. students were segregated and/or given the kind of programming that could cause them to feel "wierd", rejected and different. The creative use of comprehensive programming at TAHS was intentionally designed to counteract those feelings and thereby be more conducive to building a healthy success identity.

3) Counseling Support: The psychologists assigned to the TAHS have responsibility for articulating, implementing and evaluating the personal-social support component. Insofar as this element is integral to creating the "therapeutic milieu" of the program, it includes several activities. To assure that the TAHS meets its goal of being a student-driven-system, needs assessment becomes the first and last of these activities. Students' behaviorial evaluations are completed within 30 days of placement and base line data are used to define points of-entry into the Social Skills Curriculum and Employability Skills continuum. Counseling goals are identified which will: 1) address the students' behaviors in regularly scheduled individual and group sessions; and, 2) provide an overall plan for Social Skills acquisition throughout the entire program.

The intervention model which is called "the Counseling Act" (Jambor, 1989) is designed to be a structured, generic approach to counseling that enables the psychologist to be both responsive to student needs and compliant to the N.Y. State Education Department guidelines for "Counseling as a Related Service" (NYSED, 1980) .

Results Obtained

The methodolgy of the TAHS will have been subjected to two stages of evaluation: pilot and full-study. In 1988-89, data were presented from a pilot-study in support of a Federal Demonstration Program Grant for Drop-Out Prevention. In the present 1989-90 school year, the project is being expanded to include a pre-post test, matched-pairs design. Students from the TAHS are being compared to similar students in a Special Education program that do not have an Occupational Education component. Behaviors that are identified as "at-risk" and therefore precipitous to dropping-out are being tracked for both groups, using The Behavior Evaluation Scale (McCarney, Leigh and Combleet, 1983). These behaviors correspond to the five critical categories identified by PL#94-142 in the definiton of emotional disturbance, and have also been shown (Hennessy & Jambor, 1988) to be critical determinants with programming for at-risk students.

In the pilot test, students were pretested in September and post-tested in May. Only those students who had complete sets of pre-post-test data were included in the analysis of results. The issue of student attrition is particularly relevant and problematic to a study such as this. The emphasis upon behavior factors over drop-out rate however allowed for a more qualitative review. Due to insufficient comparison group sample size, a rational analysis was employed instead. In terms of the mean level of Behavior Evaluations, the TAHS sample showed greater improvement than the non-Occupational Education sample. The improvement was most evident in the off-task category of Unhappiness/Depression and Physical Symptoms/Fears. When the TAHS sample was used as its own baseline, the results corroborated this finding. There were significant improvements in the levels of on-task behavior achieved in three of the five categories being tracked which were exactly those identified as most critical to the selection of TAHS students.

In additon to the outcomes noted in the area of student development, there was evidence of formative progress gained with staff development, as well. The methodology of systematic screening, programming and evaluation created a situation analogous to Cornelius Vanderbilt's systemization of the railroads in the United States. The individual styles and training backgrounds of staff members were given a common perspective, understanding of the student, and perhaps, most important, language for communicating about the task. With the staff alignment of resources produced by this integrated approach to the problem of dropping-out, a greater concentration and economy of effort was achieved. Less time was spent in team meetings on "re-inventing the wheel", debating terminology, psychology and treatment strategies. More time was spent debriefing the actual cases and attending to more programmatic issues. With the increased cohesiveness among the Special Education academic staff, the challenge of coordinating with the Occupational Education staff and environment became more focused. In fact, the Special Education staff came to be looked upon as a resource to the larger community for assistance and advice with other problematic students on campus who were neither classified nor enrolled in the TAHS.

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Intervention in the At-Risk Problem: A Contemporary Alternative to the Traditional "Band–Aid" Approach Used in Dealing With School Related Problems

by Christopher Scott Chalker

Experts across the country are questioning the effects of the educational reform movement on certain groups of students. Demographic data show growth in the at-risk population. More and more students are at–risk of school failure. In June 1986, a U.S. Department of Education conference intended to bring together the most influential researchers in regular as well as compensatory education reported that existing compensatory education programs were having only marginal effects on the achievement of students at–risk. Second, it was reported that educational research had few, if any, sure answers to the question of how compensatory education might be changed to make a substantial difference in the educational success of students at–risk (Lehr and Harris, 1988). Paralleling the sense of a need for new directions in compensatory education is a similar feeling in special education. In fact, more high-achieving students are experiencing school-related difficulties than ever before. What are the reasons?

Complicated economic and social forces may cause the problems. But the reality is that these hard-to-teach students exist in the schools - they are the ones who have unique needs and who require more and more support from the classroom teacher, school counselor, and administrator. The bottom line is that compensatory and special education programs are not enough. Until we begin to look at the at-risk problem from another perspective, academic improvement programs will continue to have only marginal effects on the achievement of students at-risk (Slaven, Karweit, and Madden, 1989).

Ogden and Germinario (1988) emphasize that the purpose of the school is to maximize learning for all students. Other than through compensatory and special education programs, the most obvious way in which schools attempt to carry out their mission is through direct instruction in the curriculum areas.

The bottom line is that compensatory and special education programs are not enough.

However, another way to maximize learning is to control or eliminate the effects of those factors which limit the learning and potential of children. For instance, "there are changing societal expectations of schools in dealing with issues that were traditionally addressed within the family. The parents of at least 40 percent of the children born this year will divorce. One in four girls will become pregnant at least once during her high school years. Only one in one thousand college freshman women plans a career as a homemaker" (Ogden and Germinario, 1988).

Frymier and Gansneder (1989) suggest that how young people cope with failure is another consideration in dealing with the effects of those factors which limit learning and potential. Inadequate coping strategies may lead to undesirable consequences. For example, "a young man with 'several strikes against him' might deal well with adversity, while another facing similar problems might drop out of school and move toward drugs or crime" (Frymier and Gansneder, 1989).

Increasingly, parents will look to schools for help. Their first concern will be provision for a secure environment for their children as parents continue to pursue their own family needs and interests. But, more importantly, schools will be asked to assume a direct role in the teaching of essential life skills and in helping students to deal with issues affecting learning.

Diversity in Response to the At-Risk Problem

While it is certain that virtually all students can learn, instructional methods and materials now in use are failing large numbers of students. Even under optimal instructional conditions, some students will require more resources, more time, or both to achieve an acceptable level of achievement, a requirement that exemplifies the need for diversity in response to differing styles of learning and individuality.

Dealing With the Causes of At-Riskness in Students

In the past, schools have been reluctant to involve themselves in issues that were traditionally addressed within the domain of family and church. It has been more common for schools to take an academic approach to school failure and drop-out rather than to deal with those issues related to the family and the society at large. More recently, the debate as to the extent of involvement by the school in societal and family matters has grown by leaps and bounds. One

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thing is certain; until the school begins to deal with the causes of at-riskness in students, they will continue to take a "band-aid" approach to controlling or eliminating the effects of those factors which limit learning.

Lack of Information About At-Risk Students

Another issue concerns teachers' lack of information about specific facts of their students' lives. Schools traditionally study at-riskness by collecting and analyzing information that is most readily available in schools: attendance figures, achievement scores, retention data, grades, and disciplinary records. But out-of-school factors affect at-riskness as well. To ignore out-of-school factors because they present difficulty puts professionals in the position of taking a "band-aid" approach by dealing with effects rather than with causes. Teachers and counselors often argue that they cannot help a student about whom they know very little; they are convinced that they need to know whether a child comes from a single-parent family, for example, or whether a parent is an alcoholic (Frymier and Gansneder, 1989).

The Need for At-Risk Student Identification

The lack of information provided to teachers and counselors concerning their students' lives has played a major part in the call for identification of at-riskness. Figure 1 depicts the characteristics of family dysfunction and social and school–related problems in need of personal, social, and academic adjustment by the student. A review of previous research has produced these 40 factors that supposedly contribute to at-riskness. Preliminary work with these factors has lead to the construction of an "at-risk student identification checklist" (Figure 2) for use by teachers in identifying those students in need of assistance in dealing with those factors which affect learning.

Improving methods for the identification of at-risk characteristics in students would definitely improve educational practice in respect to teaching and learning strategies and curricular decision-making, would contribute to existing knowledge concerning at-risk characteristics and behavior, and would have wide-spread implications for at-risk intervention and dropout prevention programs.

The Process of At-Risk Intervention

The above issues point to the desperate need for the school and society to find creative ways to keep at-risk children in school and to teach them at least basic life skills. Assistance offered to students at–risk must be in the form of support services and multi-disciplinary group intervention. Through group and individual guidance coupled with counseling interventions, parental involvement, and multi-disciplinary teamwork, we can determine strategies and appropriate referral agencies for helping students with their school, family, and socially related problems. In implementing a program of at-risk intervention, a Student Assistance Program seems to be an effective method for allowing flexibility in planning strategies designed to deal with previously identified factors affecting learning.

The Student Assistance Program (S.A.P.)

The Student Assistance Program (S.A.P.) (Chalker, 1989) is a school-based process that is designed to assist students who have become "unteachable" or distressed as the result of a number of issues. Ogden and Germinario (1988) recommend the following plans of action: (a) ongoing intervention by the school; (b) crisis intervention through agency referral; (c) referral/assessment to Special Education Team; and (d) drug assessment and school aftercare. In keeping with the helping philosophy, a Student Assistance Program is offered with the hopes of: 1) shedding light on why students become "unteachable"; and 2) reinforcing the belief that the cause must be addressed before the behaviors (effects) can be successfully redirected, alleviating the "band-aid" approach to controlling or eliminating the effects of those factors which limit learning without having considered the causes.

In addressing the causes of at-riskness in students, Ogden and Germinario (1988) maintain that "a Student Assistance Program is designed to help the school work effectively with problems arising from: drug and alcohol abuse, suicidal behavior, pregnancy, venereal disease, child abuse, weight problems, chronic discipline problems, absenteeism, low self-esteem, and dysfunction in the family." A Student Assistance Program can include one or more of the following: aftercare support groups, problem-solving groups, in-house suspension, peer counseling, life skills classes, parent and student information programs, and community and school cooperative programs.

In the past, schools have been reluctant to involve themselves in issues that were traditionally addressed within the domain of family and church.

Intervention strategies such as those listed above allow the schools to intervene in the causes behind the school related problems of students, thus reducing the use of the "band-aid" approach to controlling or eliminating the effects of those factors which limit learning. The "band-aid" approach to helping students is relatively ineffective as a long-term solution to school failure, deficiencies in the basic skills, truancy, and misbehavior. The short-term effect of the "band-aid" approach to treating problems is best explained in the following scenario: "New wounds may not heal after treatment, old wounds may continually re-open despite treatment, and fresh wounds may appear unless something is done to deal with the causes behind the injury." Using compensatory, special education, pull-out, and disciplinary programs to remediate school related problems without treating the contributing causes resulting from family, social, and personal problems is similar in nature to the above scenario. As a result, the Student Assistance Program can facilitate academic, social, and personal adjust-

Figure 1. The Characterization of Students At-Risk

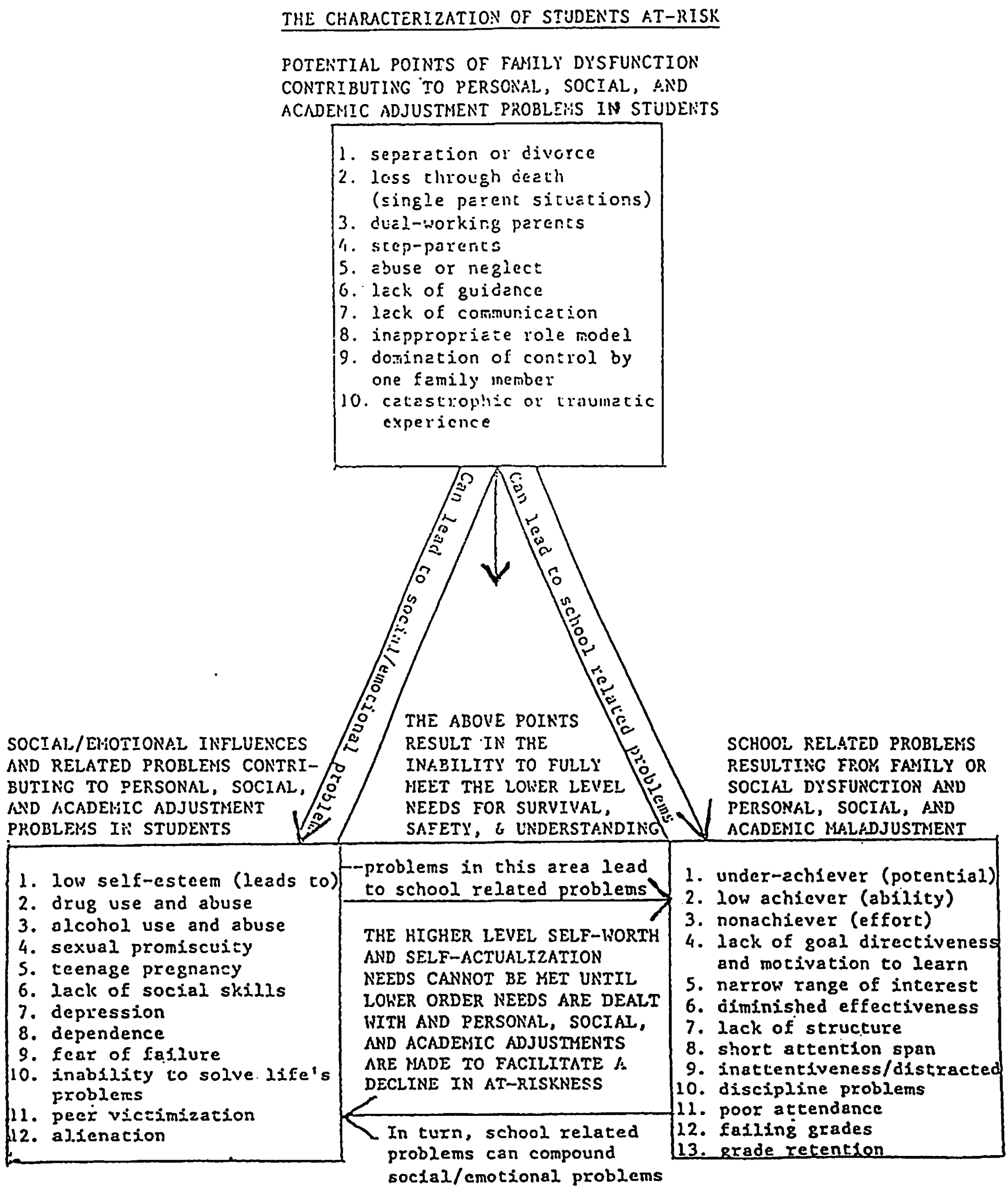


Figure 2

At-Risk Student Identification Checklist

Student ______________________________ Grade ________ Period ____________

Teacher ______________________________ Subject ______________________

* Please check ( ) all applicable factors in each area below as they pertain to the above student.

AREA #1 - School Related Factors
(requires academic adjustment)

*1_____Steadily declining grades
*2_____Currently failing
*3_____In remedial classes
**4_____Repeating required courses
**5_____Retention in grades
6a_____Non-achiever/no effort
b_____Low-achiever/low ability
c_____Under-achiever/low effort
*Must have one or more factors checked above to continue.
Note: * Formative; ** Summative

Attitudes and Behavior
(requires social adjustment)

1_____Lack of motivation (apathy)
2_____Short attention span
3_____Distractibility
4_____Inattentiveness
5_____Lack of structure (disorganized)
6_____Inappropriate behavior
*7_____Referrals for discipline
8_____Easily viotimized
9_____Victimizes other students

Attendance
(requires personal adjustment)

*1_____Excessive absenteeism
_____Unexcused absences
a____Suspension days
b____Cutting class
c____Truancy (cutting school)
d____Unapproved/no note
2_____Often misses class for ISS
3_____Excessive tardiness

Area #2 - Social/Environmental Factors
(contributes to Area #1 variables)

1_____Low self-esteem
2_____Dependence
3_____Inability to face pressure
4_____Narrow range of interests
5_____Lack of social skills
6_____Fear of failure
7_____Easily influenced
8_____Inability to get along with others

Area #3 - Health and Physical Factors
(contributes to Area#1)

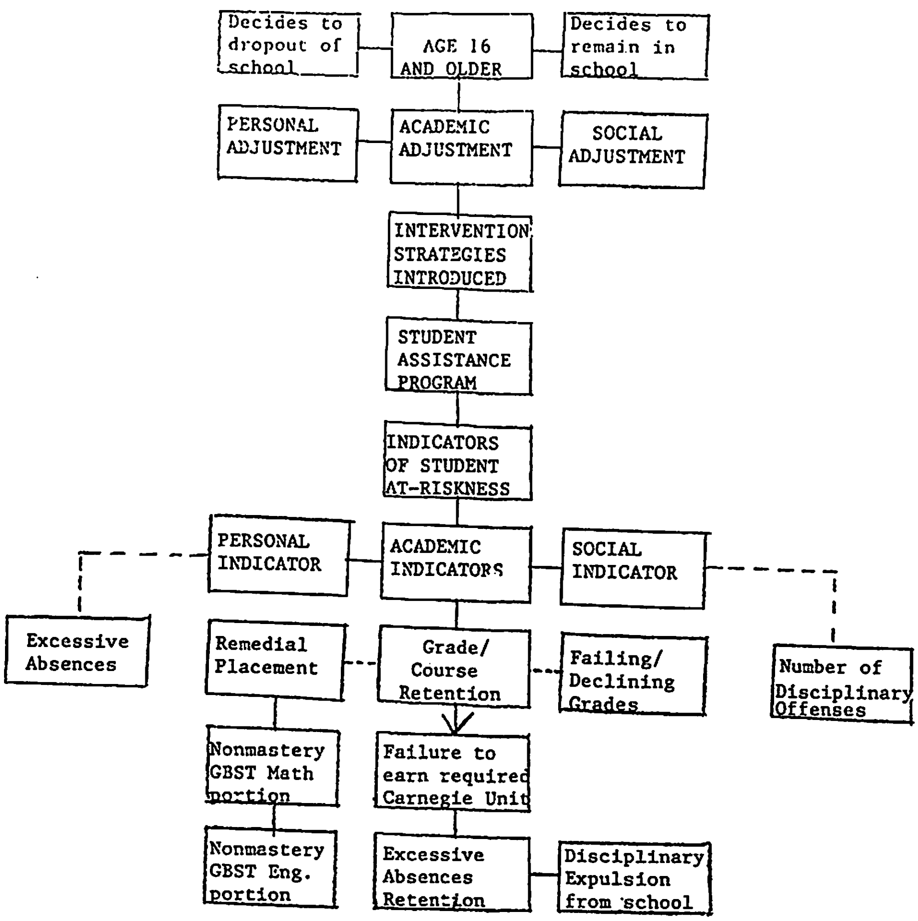
1_____Poor balance
2_____Glassy, BS eyes
3_____Tired/lethargic
4_____Slurred speech
5_____Physical complaints
6_____Works a late job
7_____Physical urges
8_____Changes in dress, hygiene or weight
9_____Is pregnant

Area #4 - Family Factors
(contributes to Area #1)

1_____Low socioeconomic
2_____Foster home
3_____Single-parent
4_____Step-parent
5_____Parents both work
6_____Married student
7_____Has children
8_____Other relative

ment while lowering the high school dropout rate. Figure 3 depicts the relationship between at-riskness and school dropout as well as between appropriately placed intervention and adjustment variables designed to keep students in school.

Figure 3. The Relationship Between At-Riskness and School Dropout and Between At-Risk Intervention and Student Adjustment Variables



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Intervention into the School -to-Work Transition Process

by Dorice J.G. Wright

A small majority of young people in the United States appear to complete the transition from school to work; however, a significant number especially from certain minority ethnic groups and from impoverished families do not make this transition. Their difficulties are dramatically illustrated by the phenomena of high unemployment and underemployment as well as the staggering number who each day drop out or are pushed out of school. This is a national catastrophe. Left unattended, that situation could undermine the entire United States society.

All human societies are confronted with their preservation, and crucial to their well-being is the nurturing and preparation of succeeding generations. Nurturing and sustenance need a new focus, one in my view that is aligned with prominent societal concerns and in particular that concentrates on the school-to-work transition phase.

This article is based on a study of an intervention strategy designed to assist in-school youth make a smooth transition from school to work. A review and assessment were undertaken of three school-to-work transition intervention programs generally regarded as "successful" models. The purpose of the assessment was to identify factors deemed critical for success in outcomes. Here, I shall one, identify the factors considered critical in these three programs; two, discuss the efficacy of the intervention strategy used in the models; and three, conclude with recommendations for policy formulation and program implementation.

The programs were:

1) The National Council of Negro Women, Incorporated (NCNW) Youth Career Development Project:
2) The National Urban League, Incorporated (NUL) Youth Career Development Project; and
3) Jobs For Delaware Graduates, Incorporated (JDG).

Each program provided services to junior and senior level high school students.

In spite of the difficulties that the notion of "successful intervention" connotes, program success in outcomes could depend on a number of factors. It could depend on:

1) Region of the country; type of location; expansion or contraction of jobs in the area; the employment condition reflected in the general unemployment rate of the area;
2) The intensity of effort expended by the program, e.g., per participant dollar value;
3) The availability of human and material resources utilized, e.g., quantity and quality of staff, curriculum, methods, learning environment; and
4) Whether follow-up of participants was a built-in aspect.

With the exception of program intensity, these and other dimensions were used in the assessment of the program models.

The Findings

The three programs comprised fifteen (15) site locations distributed throughout six geographic regions of the United States and fell within the following types of locations: urban, central city, rural, suburban county, and non-metropolitan. This mix of sites by region and type of location is illustrated in Table I that follows.

The Exogenous Factors

The evidence demonstrates that of the group of exogenous variables asserted to be linked to program success in outcomes, only long-term expansion and long-term contraction in jobs appeared to be so linked at the three sites with the highest job placement rate: NCNW San Bernardino (74 percent), NCNW Charleston (71 percent) and NUL Bergen County (81 percent). By contrast, the other variables--region of the nation, type of location, and the area general unemployment rate--did not influence program success in outcomes. The finding was that the most successful as well as less successful sites operated across diverse regions of the nation, in all types of locations, and

TABLE I

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN, NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, AND JOBS FOR DELAWARE GRADUATES

Program Site Locations

Site	Region of U.S.	Type of Location	Program Delivery Agent
Cambridge, MA	New England	Non-metropolitan	NUL
South Bronx, NY	Middle Atlantic	Urban	NCNW
Bergen County, NJ	Middle Atlantic	Suburban County	NUL
Wilmington, DE	South Atlantic	Non-metropolitan	JDG
Newark, DE	South Atlantic	Non-metropolitan	JDG
Smyrna, DE	South Atlantic	Non-metropolitan	JDG
Dover, DE	South Atlantic	Rural	JDG
Frankford, DE	South Atlantic	Rural	JDG
Georgetown, DE	South Atlantic	Rural	JDG
Winston-Salem, NC	South Atlantic	Non-metropolitan	NUL
Charleston, SC	South Atlantic	Non-metropolitan	NCNW
New Orleans, LA	West South Central	Central City	NUL
Saint Louis, MO	West North Central	Central City	NUL
San Bernardino, CA	Pacific	Non-metropolitan	NCNW
San Diego, CA	Pacific	Suburban County	NUL

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regardless of how high or how low the area general unemployment rate.

The Endogenous Factors

One of the central questions was whether the hypotheses could be confirmed within the set of "most successful sites." Some factors were adequate at all of the most successful sites. These included the following:

- Private sector involvement in program planning;
- Written contract with school site;
- Cooperation of school personnel;
- Staff:participant ratio;
- Information on work ethics;
- Information on social and personal competencies;
- Information on occupational implications of choices; and
- Information on psychological aspects of the work role.

Other factors were adequate more frequently than inadequate among the most successful sites. These included the following:

- Well-defined organizational and administrative authority structures;
- Private sector involvement in implementation;
- Use of the telephone for job development;
- Employer surveys for job development;
- Use of the "Yellow Pages" for job development;
- Use of the State Occupational Information System (S.O.I.S.); and
- Follow-up of participants.

What can we infer from these findings? The fact that the first mentioned group of factors were rated adequate in all of the most successful sites points toward confirmation that they contributed to success in outcomes. By contrast, the evidence is inconclusive that the second group of factors contributed to success in outcomes. However, it is also important to remember that these are trends based on analyses of fifteen (15) site locations, a sample too small to either confirm or refute the hypotheses.

The Question of Efficacy

At least two aspects are inherent to the issue of efficacy of the models of these programs. One is a theoretical understanding of the limits and possibilities of social innovations or interventions, and the other is the practical limitations of the models.

The understanding arrived at here of the limits and possibilities of any social innovation or intervention is explained by the theoretical principle of cultural materialism that grants primary importance to the infrastructure for causal determination of any sociocultural phenomenon (Wright, 1989). The implication of this principle is that the further distant from the infrastructure that any innovation or intervention occurs, meaning from the structure down through the emic-mental superstructure, the more likely the innovation or intervention will help to maintain the functioning of the existing sociocultural system. In this way, interventions serve to help persons mediate conditions that are consequences of the structure; interventions do not change the structure. Therefore, it should not be expected that the intervention strategy promoted in the three program models could either change or remove institutional, ethnic, and other forms of discrimination. It might be said of these program models that they simply help individual participants to mediate the structure.

In practice, the goals common to these programs were to provide participants in their last two years of high school, with job placement and follow-up services, as well as the following skills, knowledge, and abilities:

1) Employability skills, e.g., job search and interviewing techniques;
2) Interpersonal skills that lead to improved communication skills; and
3) Career and occupational information.

A critical question that arises is whether the acquisition of such knowledge and skills is sufficient for "the neediest of the needy" youth to gain entry and mobility in a competitive labor market. Several research findings, here and elsewhere, suggest a negative answer. For example, recent research on the effect of educational experiences on employment and wages indicates 1) a strong relationship between academic performance and the number of weeks per year that youth are employed and their wage rates and 2) a strong relationship between early labor market experience and subsequent labor market attachment (Meyer and Wise, 1980). To the extent that these program models provided job placement service, they provided early labor market experience. However, in doing so the goal was limited to promoting social and personal competencies to the exclusion of general academic or literacy skills. The paradox was that the target population consisted of some students whose reading and math skills were low and others who lacked marketable skills.

Interestingly, the JDG model contained a component called "Special Remedial/Vocational Education" designed to bring students whose reading and math skills were low up to a minimum sixth grade level and to provide students who lacked marketable skills training in "entry-level skills." In practice some NCNW and NUL site staff and volunteers attempted to tutor participants, but the provision of this service as well as others was impeded by the structural design; the programs' activities and events were added to a student's regular school curriculum. The result was not only difficulty in scheduling training sessions, but also an approach that was educationally unsound to the extent that it provided for little, if any, coherency and cohesiveness to the learning experience. Even if the structural design had been complementary, there was no evidence to suggest that the programs sought staff with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach academic and literacy skills and who had more than superficial knowledge and information about jobs and the world of work.

Finally, one of the most severe flaws of these models was the exclusion of the most alienated of the school population, the school dropouts and pushouts. The students recruited and selected into the programs were those who attended school more or less on a regular basis.

In light of four limitations: 1) The goal of promoting social and personal competencies to the exclusion of literacy competency; 2) Staff who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach academic skills as well as provide labor market information; 3) The exclusion of school dropouts and pushouts; and 4) An inadequate structural design to support intellectual, social, and personal growth--the following recommendations are offered. The first group are presented as principles to guide the formulation of policy and the second group as suggestions for program implementation.

Recommendations for Policy Formulation

1) Efforts to assist youth in making the transition from school to work will require the linking of public and private institutional material and human resources.
2) Programs should receive multiple year funding to prevent disruption in rendering of services.
3) The criteria for identifying participants who are most likely to encounter problems in making the transition ought to be sufficiently comprehensive to include students tracked into the general curriculum, school dropouts, and school pushouts.
4) Structural barriers within the school that impede the school-to-work transition process and that impede the provision of services that aid in the transition should be removed. Two such barriers are the general curriculum and rigidity of the school schedule. The removal of these barriers will require much more than modification of what is taught in the general curriculum or adjustments in a student's daily class schedule. A new and different structure is necessary. One that not only supports the rendering of educational and career development services, but also one that minimizes the separation between work and learning and permits use of work experience as part of the curriculum.

Recommendations for Program Implementation

1) Objectives for a School-To-Work Transition Program Model. The primary goal of any model designed to assist youth in making the transition from school to work is to provide educational and career development services. To this end, the curriculum should be student-centered with a focus on acquisition of the following:

- Communication skills, particularly in the use of standard English;
- Computational skills; and
- Problem solving and decision making skills.

Career development services should include work experience opportunities as well as current and accurate labor market information and information on the characteristics and educational requirements of occupations. Coaching should be provided in the following:

- How to search for job openings;
- How to write a resume;
- How to obtain a job interview;
- How to prepare for and act in a job interview;
- How to understand the nature of employer/employee relations; and
- How to understand the rights of workers.

2) The Staff. A ratio of twelve (12) participants to one (1) teacher is a standard consistent with a mode of instruction designed to be adaptable to individual differences in learning without grouping by ability or tracking of participants. The full-time staff should consist of:

- A director with educational administrative experience;
- Certified teachers experienced in teaching older youth;
- A certified counselor/career development specialist who, in addition to providing personal and career development counseling, will be responsible for job development and placement;
- A parent/community relations specialist who will also assist in job development and placement; and
- Administrative support staff.

3) Recruitment and Selection of Participants. In addition to individual youth who personally make known their interest in participating, staff should seek referrals from schools, social service agencies, youth serving agencies, and from parents. The criteria to be used in the selection process should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Interest in becoming a program participant;
- Inability to negotiate the existing school setting;
- Lack of consistent school attendance;
- Poor academic record; and
- Problems of social adjustment.

Diagnostic testing for the sole purpose of determining the level of communications and computational skills should be part of the intake procedures. The test results should serve as a reference point for developing teaching strategies to improve skill performance.

4) Monitoring and Evaluation. Appropriate procedures should be developed and instituted for monitoring and evaluating the process components of the program model as well as for monitoring and assisting participants for at least twelve (12) months after high school graduation.

Although none of the above recommendations will alter the structural barriers that youth from certain ethnic groups and youth from impoverished families confront in attempting to gain entry into the labor market, the recommendations do point a direction for future policy making and implementation of models designed to improve the school-to-work transition process.

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Thresholds to Parent Involvement Education: A Solution to at-Risk Youth

by Jim C. Chapman and
Elva G. Laurel

Effective schools research highlights the pivotal thresholds to parent involvement education. Like revolving doors which open to solutions of at-risk youth, effective schools research defines parents and community members as key participants who play significant roles in school effectiveness (Westbrook, 1982). When parents and communities are involved, children do better in school and they go to better schools (Henderson, 1987). Rich, 1985 and Sattes, 1985, highlight a strong relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. These effects include increases in student attendance, decreased dropout rates, more positive parent-child communication, improved student attitudes and behavior, and increased parent-community support of the school. When parents and community members support schools, students stay in school. Therefore, the revolving doors toward solutions of at-risk youth become the force-field structures and infrastructures supporting guiding principles to parent involvement education.

The guiding principles toward solutions of at-risk youth include strategies which must be family-centered, student-centered, campus-focused, and must accelerate learning. Research based findings provide recommendations of strategies and strengthen parent and community involvement with local schools.

Family-centered strategies consider parent involvement as crucial and recognize the value and strength of the family and the power of positive parents. Comer (1986) reports on the success of the Yale Child Study Center Team with low income parents in the New Haven (Connecticut) Public Schools. By creating a meaningful participation program, the New Haven Schools improved dramatically. Comer suggests that Parents need clear mechanisms for involvement; he states that just inviting them to school is not enough. He indicates that the lack of well-designed programs for parent-teacher organizations may have very little impact. Comer recommends that parental involvement programs be structured to address local issues, including the involvement of uneducated parents who are reluctant to visit a school.

When parents and community members support schools, students stay in school.

Student-centered strategies focus on the student rather than on the program or curriculum; student motivation, engagement, and achievement become the measures of success and the power of positive students. Dornbusch and Ritter (1989) studied the link between parents and academic achievement at the high school level. Parental attendance at school events was consistently associated with higher student grades. More than 80% of all high school parents in this project reported that it was appropriate for them to be involved in the education of their children. In viewing polar opposites, high schools who may not be ready to encourage a high level of parent-school involvement should recognize that the students who often suffer most when this lack of parent involvement occurs include average-ability students, latch-key students, ethnic or racial minority students, and students from single-family or step-family homes. Montalvo (1984) reflects on parental involvement and high school education for ethnic and racial minority youth. He recommends that local schools build a bridge to the home and community, not overlooking the bridge over troubled waters; indeed Montalvo strongly recommends the bridging of cultural differences between the home and school.

Campus-focused strategies based on effective schools research become complementary frames of effective school-based campus improvement programs (Cohen, 1983). The unique characteristics of campus focused strategies include the overall guidance provided by leadership or planning teams consisting of the principal, teacher representatives, other professional staff and student representatives, as well as parent and community representatives. Research on effective schools and at-risk youth has defined goals, but creative implementation strategies are still needed. Epstein has conducted research on teachers' practices of parent involvement and the effect of family-school connections on students, parents, and teachers for over a decade (Brandt, 1989). Like revolving doors which open to solutions of at-risk youth, Epstein affirms that parents want to be more involved in their children's learning, especially at home, and that they need clear directions from schools. In working with administrators, teachers, policy leaders, and other researchers at the John Hopkins Educational Research Centers she identified

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five types of parent involvement: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, and 5) governance and advocacy. She further states that these five types occur in different places, require different materials and processes, and lead to different outcomes. Creative implementation strategies are still needed and the revolving doors continue to open through the utilization of community resources to upgrade the quality of educational programs.

Effective schools research also highlights campus-focused strategies through collaborative partnerships with local business and industry, labor, higher education, and other organizations based on community needs (King, 1986). In viewing school, business and industry partnerships, MacDowell (1989) stresses that these partnerships may not produce the results that businesses or schools want in the time they expect. In viewing polar opposites, corporations get involved because they believe local schools are not doing an adequate job of preparing students for the world of work and sometimes it is in the self-interest of business and industry to help schools improve the quality of education. MacDowell (1989) highlights the Boston Compact (an agreement between Boston Public Schools and area businesses) as a campus-focused business strategy which helps tutor students, provides summer employment, makes in-class presentations, and provides mentors for at- risk students. However, he expresses that schools often place a higher value on the survival of the partnerships than on the success of their students. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the thrust of partnerships working toward solutions to the problems of at-risk students.

Furthermore, like revolving doors between school rooms, living rooms, and business offices which open to solutions of at-risk youth, Chapman and Laurel (1990) strongly support the powerful collaborations between universities and school sites as a key to educational quality, demands, and needs. Universities working as partners with schools, coupled with parental involvement and business support can only enhance the thresholds of positive implementation strategies toward solutions to the problems of at- risk students. The key factor, though, in these partnerships is parental involvement education. This key factor is the pivotal point of a balanced scale of education between school and community. With its inclusion in the education of at-risk youth, fused with the other partnerships, this era will experience successful thresholds in education.

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New Bridges Over Troubled Waters of At-Risk Students: Parental Involvement

by John R. Ban

Surprise! This article starts in an unusual fashion. It presents the reader with a test. The purpose of the test is to trigger your thinking and fix your attention on the two core ideas of this article: at-risk students and parent involvement. Please respond with a true or false answer to the five items below. Good luck!

1. The home is the most influential factor in preparing at-risk students for success in school.
2. Schools cannot be improved unless parents of at-risk children actively, participate in their schools.
3. Parents hold vast potential to raise the level of education in the United States for at-risk children.
4. Parent participation in school affairs is one of the best ways to deal with the problem of at-risk children.
5. Parents of at-risk students must do more to help themselves and assume more responsibility in school programs for at-risk children.

If you answered true to the above items, congratulations. You are in line with the views of mainstream America. You are also dealing with subjects that are greeted with a yawn by many Americans. Then, there are others divided over whether to use a scalpel or axe in cutting through these juicy morsels.

Education's Troublesome Topics

In actuality, at-risk youth and parental involvement are two of the most troublesome topics facing the schools today. They may not rival sports or weather in an interest poll or popularity contest, but they rate high on the agenda of concerns for educators and policymakers everywhere. Furthermore, they are part of the same equation. One cannot be addressed without considering the other. Together, they form strong currents churning the already convoluted waters of public education. How educators bridge these rapids will shape the future of American schools.

Clearly, a good number of programs for at-risk youth have run aground on the absence of a vigorous parent role in such programs.

Educating at-risk youngsters in our country is a massive enterprise. It requires an army of workers and a ton of money. Increasingly, a wide assortment of resources has been used to mainstream the educationally disadvantaged. One that tends to be underutilized is the home.

Review of the test items above spotlight the tight connection between at-risk children and the home engagement in education. The later holds the key to reversing the student at-risk problem in our country. Clearly, a good number of programs for at-risk youth have run aground on the absence of a vigorous parent role in such programs. When parents are relegated to bit players rather than elevated to central figures in at-risk programs, such programs are doomed to fail.

There are 86,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Several million at-risk students dock there daily. These students come from a rich mixture of American households, many of which are eager to help their children do well in school. Many more do not know how. In these households, nonetheless, reside parents who constitute a valuable resource for the schools. For much too long, they have been treated like a lost ball in high weeds. Once properly energized and trained, parents of at-risk students can become a powerful boost to education in their communities.

Everyone is for parent involvement, but its track record is not impressive. While "parents as allies" is a slogan that has sparked enthusiastic support, the number of parents in such home-school alliances remains small. The fact of the matter is that most parent involvement programs are inconsequential, with little carryover value. Even in communities where site-based management programs and school reform laws have broadened lay participation, parent representation is limited to a few. Given that, it would not be inaccurate to say that most parent involvement programs especially in schools with large numbers of at-risk children, are afflicted with a disease common to many bureaucracies. One can label it LOT-LAC -- lots of talk, little action. If the "parent differential" is weak in the schools of non-risk students, it is even more so for those at-risk.

National Goals

Nationally, much has been written and spoken about the puzzle called education for at-risk students. Less has been said about where the parent involvement piece fits. In a landmark effort and unprecedented show of support, all the state governors recently adopted six education goals for the schools to promote excellence in education by the end of the next decade. These goals were endorsed by President Bush.

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What has not been factored into this national equation for excellence in our schools by the year 2000 is the parental role, that factor that almost everyone believes is the most single influential one in determining how well a child does in school.

In this vision of education's future, hardly any reference was made to at-risk students or parent involvement. Instead, it was proclaimed that by the year 2000, all students will start school ready to learn; be first in the world in math and science performance; and be literate, informed, responsible citizens. Moreover, schools will be expected to reduce the dropout rate to 10 percent and be free of drugs, violence, and misbehavior.

These are all laudable goals for the next decade. But there is a glaring omission. What has not been factored into this national equation for excellence in our schools by the year 2000 is the parental role, that factor that almost everyone believes is the most single influential one in determining how well a child does in school.

To remedy this oversight, it is proposed here that a national goal on parent involvement be added to the country's agenda on education for the next decade. Framed along the lines of the recently released, historic statement on educational goals by the 50 state governors, the goal should read: By the year 2000, the over 15,000 school districts in America will each have a comprehensive, parent involvement program which draws the home and school into a meaningful and respectful partnership in education, and that this partnership become the chief means for addressing the student at-risk dilemma in American schools.

Goals are important. They give a target to shoot for. But they need to be followed by a plan of action. Goals ring hollow if no specific strategy is designed for realizing them.

A Parent Training Program

Tied to the new goal above, therefore, is an action plan for deepening parent involvement in communities with large numbers of at-risk children. Presently, parent involvement, like earth shadows, takes many forms. It ranges from helping children with their school work and functioning as volunteers and teacher aides to serving on school committees, parent councils and school boards. What is presented here is not parent involvement, but parent empowerment. Parents are in control and are the main actors. This action plan calls for training parents to train other parents.

This plan is in keeping with the school restructuring or educational reform movements in the country. It is also a neighborhood-based leadership training program for parents of at-risk youth. It drops on parents themselves responsibility for training other parents in their community. It is based on parents of at-risk children meeting together, talking together and learning together.

This program is predicated on five premises:

1. That education can be influenced most by those closest to children -- their parents.
2. That schools cannot educate kids alone but need outside assistance, particularly the home.
3. That, if they are often the root of the at-risk student problem, parents can also be the source for solving this problem.
4. That parents constitute a large, untapped reservoir of man/woman power and have the capability of "educating" themselves and other parents.
5. That a neighborhood, grassroots approach using parents to train other parents within a peer support system stands the best chance to deepen parent engagement in the student at-risk problem.

This parent involvement program is different from others in several ways. First, it places the initiative for immersing parents in education issues on parents themselves. It focuses on developing a large parent leadership pool within each school community that can function as a catalyst in addressing all school matters. This program puts parents in charge of parental involvement activities, not the school. Besides, it turns on communication between parents, not parent and school. Lastly, it recruits its leadership material from the local neighborhood. All parent involvement programs are organized at the grassroots level and around neighborhood schools.

Pivotal to the success of this parent education program is selecting parent leaders. Much will be expected of them. Thus, there should be care taken in their selection. Criteria for selecting parent leaders should include: dependability; vigorous work ethic; a record of community involvement; interpersonal skills; reading and writing ability; knowledge of their community; recommendation by building principals and a team of teachers.

At this point, it should be noted that parent leaders should actually be called co-leaders because no one parent should conduct a parent workshop. Expecting a single parent to guide the learning of a large group of parents is unreasonable. The task is inherently demanding and intimidating for even experienced presenters. Instead, several parents will share responsibility and run workshop sessions together. Using the team approach, they can take turns and cover for each other, draw on each other's strengths and supply a support network.

In each single school neighborhood, parent leaders will go door to door to encourage parents to attend study sessions. A convoy, or buddy system will be utilized to encourage parent participation in study sessions. Parents will be encouraged to come together to learn and socialize. Church ministers, social agencies and the news media will be enlisted to drum up interest in these parent education sessions. Babysitting service should be available at these sessions, along with music, snacks and fellowship. Study sessions should be social occasions as well as learning opportunities. They should be portrayed as a special neighborhood event and provide incentives for participation.

To keep workshops on a personal level, they should be limited to 30 parents to a study session. The numbers should be kept small to allow for interaction. To give all parents of a neighborhood the opportunity to attend, workshops should be scheduled in cycles. For example, during the year, parent leaders will split up and be assigned to a three-month cycle of workshops. These workshops, then, should be repeated so that each parent study group can be kept small.

The entire training program is organized in a step-by-step format, featuring abundant opportunities for reflection, interaction and follow-up. At each single school, parents with leadership potential should be identified jointly by the PTA leadership (or other parent group) and the school administration. Since there is to be no one parent chief or parent leader, several parents will function as leaders, 2 or 3 working together at each parent study session. Parent leaders will meet periodically as a team to schedule workshops, select topics to study, recruit participants and evaluate parent study sessions.

A Curriculum for Parent Trainers

All parent co-leaders should undergo intensive training. The content of their training should aim to widen their knowledge and skill in five major areas. These are outlined below:

Major Area 1: Leadership: Training to be Leaders

- Leadership is Learned
- Skill in Communication
- Knowledge of Leadership Style and Types
- Skill in Motivation
- Skill in Organization/Managing Meetings
- Incentives for Adult Learning
- Networking and Working Nets

Major Area 2: Public Education: Organization and Structure

- PublicOpinion and the Schools
- Unique Features of American Education
- Organization and Structure of American Public Schools
- Structure, Climate, and School Security
- School Finances
- School-Home Cooperation

Major Area 3: Gangs and the Schools

- Gangs as Subcultures
- Gangs as Structures, Rites, Symbols
- Gangs in Urban Areas
- Schools and Gangs
- Anti-Gang Programs
- A Parent Primer on Gangs

Major Area 4: Behavior Dynamics and Conflict Management

- How Behavior is Learned
- School Discipline: Causes and Effects
- School Discipline Plans
- Aggression and Bullies
- Ways Parents Can Shape Proper Student Behavior
- Home Discipline Plans
- Sources of Conflict in School Conflict Resolution Strategies

Major Area 5: Developing/Refining People Skills

- Communications, Trust, Tact
- Principles of Human Relations
- Self-Improvement
- Temper Control
- Bridge-Building Between School and Community

Parent leadership training will concentrate on helping parent co-leaders to learn how to present material to be studied, lead discussions, set parents at ease, make them feel important and sustain parent attendance at the workshops.

As can be seen, emphasis in this training is on behavior and student discipline. Amid so many subjects that warrant parent attention today, the question may arise: why student discipline. Several reasons. First, the behavior of children is a burning issue in the country. At-risk students often are associated closely with the school's discipline problem. Moreover, behavior is related to the larger, more explosive topic of law and order in American society. Few others send the same shivers down the public spine.

Lastly, student discipline is related to student learning. Students who behave well tend to get more out of school than those who do not. Quality learning springs from orderly school environments. The centrality of the home in teaching children proper behavior is the focal point in this training program. What is more, parent leaders must be discipline literate so that they can train other parents to become discipline literate.

Once trained, parent leaders can guide study sessions in following years on other topics of interest to parents of at-risk children. These topics can include helping parents with study skills, homework, reading, writing and conferencing with teachers.

Parents are important people in the scheme of public education. This program moves them to center stage where they should be. It scaffolds a parent leadership program, shored up by the twin pillars of self-help and neighborhood service. It relies on people drawn from parent ranks to train larger numbers of parents in those skills that, if used wisely, will make the job of the school easier in meeting the needs of at-risk students. Parent empowerment, blueprinted above, can become the strongest bridge over today's troubled waters of public education.

AT-RISK YOUTH

Changing the System: Strategies and Programs

by Otis S. Johnson

There is a common saying that goes: "If you keep on doing what you are doing, you will keep on getting what you have."

It is generally agreed that if we continue the present system of public education in our country, we will continue to fail to adequately educate a significant portion of our youth. Presently, we are losing nearly one million dropouts a year. Nearly two million high school graduates will leave school without the basic skills necessary to obtain a decent paying entry level job (MDC, 1988).

What is it about the present system of public education that contributes to these dismal statistics? What is it in this system that turns bright, eager to learn, kindergartners into so many school-hating 4th graders? Are the schools designed to promote success or failure? The answers to these questions are being hotly debated at the national, state, and local levels. However, there is general agreement that fundamental institutional change in the system of public education in this country is necessary.

State level reform efforts have been heavily top-down initiatives designed to raise academic and teacher performance standards, and increase teacher salaries. State spending for schools has increased 26% beyond inflation since 1980. Local spending increased 29% during the same period. However, about 30% of the students who are low income, minority students are still not being effectively educated (MDC, 1988). More money may be a part of the solution, but it is not the silver bullet.

Gary Wehlage, et al (1989), thinks that there is a lack of knowledge about the kinds of initiatives and reforms that will keep youth in school and properly prepare them for participation in adult life. He suggests that effective strategies for educational reform must include: (l) local accountability, (2) school by school regeneration and reform, (3) longitudinal strategies, and (4) horizontal coordination. Local accountability is needed so schools can be responsive to the particular conditions of a community. Present school policies and practices must be examined to determine why some students succeed and others fail. Finally, reform effects must recognize that the process of improving schools will be long term and require involvement of the other youth-serving institutions and the business sector of the community.

The articles that make up this section are examples of attempts by local school districts to seek an answer to the question about what kinds of initiatives and reforms will reduce the at-risk population in our schools.

Beverly Irby Davis and Elaine M. Haney report on how a rural school district reformed its educational system for at-risk students by "stretching dollars" and sharing existing funding resources. They found that "by changing the delivery system, the district would not only save (or re-direct money), but would provide better on-site supervision and coordination of services for its targeted at-risk population."

Many students who enter post-secondary education can also be at risk of dropping out or failing. Gravina and Martin present the "Supplemental Instruction" (SI) model, developed by the University of Missouri-Kansas City as a non-traditional approach to helping college students pass the "freshman killer" classes. The SI model is a well tested model (150 institutions) that is now being piloted on the high school level at an intercity school in Kansas City. Results from this pilot will be anxiously awaited. SI is a way to prevent failure and is proactive rather than reactive.

A clinical model of "experiential learning" by Dan N. Martin has advanced as a way to improve the social skills and attitudes of the at-risk student. The thesis of Martin's article "A Television Talk Show/Group Therapy Model for Clinical Intervention with the At-Risk Child" is when traditional family values break down, media values take over and the at-risk child is born. The television talk show/group therapy model is supposed to counteract the "televalues" which influence children in a negative way. The article did not give any data on how many students participated in the pilot. Only teachers were polled about the pilot project. The author recognized the need for further study before any conclusions about the model's validity can be made. This is a "fix" the student instead of a fix the system approach.

What to do about students with a history of academic failure, discipline problems, and chronic absenteeism? Rochelle S. Friedman, Principal of Murray High School, Albemarle County, Virginia, presents a model which is the first accredited non-traditional high school in Virginia. The Murray model is presented as a school that does not teach subjects, but facilitates the learning process for students. It is structured "as a community of learners rather than an institution of learning." The key to student success is the belief of the faculty and staff that "success can best be achieved through student empowerment." Students are full participants in all aspects of operating the school. Success of this approach is documented and the model deserves serious consideration for use in other districts.

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Stretching Dollars: Sharing Resources for an At-risk Program in a Rural District

by Beverly Irby Davis and Elaine M. Haney

During the 1988 and 1989 spring evaluations of our excess cost Chapter I classes, the decision was made to restructure not only the Chapter Program for at-risk youth, but also the other special programs. The premise for restructuring was based on lower achievement scores, parent and teacher expectations, lowered self-esteem, and financial considerations. (The then current model for providing for the Chapter students alone could not continue to be funded without providing a large portion of the funds through the local budget as opposed to the use of federal funds.) By changing the delivery system, the district would not only save money (or redirect money), but would provide better on-site supervision and coordination of services for its targeted at-risk population. The newly developed program is research based and is functional. The curriculum has been changed and test scores have improved. There are observed better student morale and better classroom instruction. When this program was presented at the Southeastern Conference on At-risk students, one superintendent from Michigan stated the concept very well, "**You have not asked for more money, instead you have taken the money that you have and been creatively wise in the use of it. Through the sharing of the funding sources you are better able to serve more of the at-risk population.**" We took the money we had and stretched those dollars to the maximum.

Structure of the Program

The lowest scoring eleven students eligible for Chapter I (at each grade level) receive Direct Instruction (the teaching methodology) through pullout classes in reading and/or math. This is a highly structured program which requires frequent teacher-pupil interaction in which all students actively participate. Emphasis is placed on modeling correct responses by the teacher, sufficient student practice to criterion, and distributive review. The reading curriculum was implemented during the 1988-89 school year, and our local scores improved significantly. No improvement plan was required by the federal authorities. Corrective math has also been implemented this school year.

One of the biggest on-going tasks is developing appropriate material that is challenging and at the same time, not a watered down version of instruction.

The phrase "send that student to the Learning Lab" is new this year throughout the district. The Learning Lab is a content mastery center, an on-campus, educational facility designed to modify and enhance classroom instruction. Identified at-risk students (compensatory, Chapter I, and mainstreamed special education students) remain in the regular classroom throughout the guided instruction part of the lesson cycle. If they are having difficulty at that point, they may go to the learning lab for additional instruction and modifications. The methods and techniques used to present and assess information in the regular classroom can be modified to accommodate the students' particular deficit areas without altering the curriculum content of the regular classroom. By thus compensating for the students' handicap, s/he is provided with an equal opportunity to succeed in the mainstream.

Each campus has a consulting teacher who assumes the major responsibility for integrating the student with learning disabilities into the regular class. This teacher conferences with the regular teacher informing him of the incoming student's particular strengths and weaknesses. These two teachers then review the demands of that particular class and determine specific accommodations that will compensate for the student's deficits. Two aides are also available for assistance in a consulting or content mastery situation.

The Lab's goals can be broken down into four categories. First, concrete and abstract thinking relative to the student's classroom assignments are sought. Second, a diagnosis is made that realistically demonstrates to the student his/her academic weakness. Third, self-esteem is addressed by implementing a variety of learning styles, i.e., tactile, visual, auditory, etc., that specifically address the scholastic deficit. And fourth, the students receive a strong level of personal support and encouragement. All these goals work

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together to help the kids realistically see themselves. We want the at-risk students to not only receive quality remediation, but to develop a sense of success and purpose.

Instructional Components

All students can learn and it is our responsibility to teach them. If they can't learn the way we teach, let's teach the way they learn. Appropriate methods for instruction and learning styles are provided through the following: direct instruction, learning styles inventories, textbook modifications, cassette tapes of texts, study skills, calculators and manipulatives, alternative test techniques or formats, tutorials, etc. Instructional materials are restructured to make content more meaningful for students. One of the biggest on-going tasks is developing appropriate material that is challenging and at the same time, not a watered down version of instruction. In addition, a Write-to-Read Lab is being implemented under the at-risk program. It is a preventative program for all kindergarten students and a remedial program for all first grade at-risk students. A student management system is being implemented in reading--MMICRO. In addition, a locally developed Intervention System (Texas Education Agency recognized as an exemplary program, 1988-89) aids teachers in developing intervention strategies prior to a referral to special education.

Funding Component

The shared funding approach to this total program is one of the major innovations. The personnel for this program are paid with shared resources: federal Chapter I funds, state categorical special education funds, state compensatory funds, and local funds. Due to this approach, more students are served and the local budget in this area actually was reduced. Funds are not comingled, but shared. Percentages of costs are figured based on the type of students receiving the service. The staff keeps time and effort sheets, as well as other documentation on students served, subject areas, time spent in the lab, etc. Since there was compensatory money left in the budget, the district was able to fund a Modification Management Institute scheduled for this summer. We are training 30 of our teachers and paraprofessionals in the learning strategies for the slower learners and learning disabled, learning styles, higher order thinking skills, and self-esteem. This project has a $20,000 budget. State and national consultants have been secured to provide instruction and motivation. Some actual work on curriculum will be done in preparation for fall classes. This institute is possible due to stretching dollars by sharing resources.

Counseling, Supervision, and Parental Involvement Component

In addition to the consulting teachers and aides, the district also employs an at-risk counselor, parent facilitator, and special programs coordinator. This is in addition to a special education director, supervisor, and school psychologist. The counselor spends half of his time with elementary pre-K (also preventative program)-2 and the other half with counseling activities for the district at-risk students. He assists the parent facilitator and may make home visits with her. He assists with an at-risk group at the junior high and at the high school.

The district is developing more parental involvement through this program and through the Director of Public Information. The parent facilitator conferences with parents either at school or in the home. She provides training for parents to assist students with homework and offers any other assistance deemed necessary. She works with teachers and includes them whenever possible when conferences are scheduled for school. She plans PTA programs and parent support groups in various parts of the 416 square mile district.

The shared funding approach to this total program is one of the major innovations.

The parent support group is another split funded effort through adult education. Two parent dinners are planned for the spring. Six weeks updates are sent to parents through public information.

It is the responsibility of the special programs coordinator to strengthen the coordination efforts of all those involved in the program. She assists in inservice, with materials, instructional planning and modifications, and conducts conferences with teachers to encourage and support them in working with the at-risk students. The support allows personnel to work hand-in-hand for student success.

Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD has reformed its educational delivery system for at-risk students. It has reduced the student/teacher ratio in areas where the students need additional assistance in classroom instruction and yet has allowed these students to be mainstreamed as much as possible. It has incorporated counseling services and a parental involvement component. It has improved coordination between Chapter I, special education, compensatory education, regular education, and the home while utilizing funding sources in shared way. Because the students are experiencing greater academic success, they are also experiencing a heightened self-esteem. The at-risk program offers a new set of opportunities to students and teachers that was previously unavailable. This has been possible because through sharing resources, we have been able to stretch those dollars to get the most for our money.

Serving At-Risk Students Where They Fail...In Class

by Mary E. Gravina and Deanna C. Martin

Post-secondary students are designated as at-risk based on their predicted performance in class. The purpose of identifying these students is to intervene in their academic career in order to facilitate their success in school. The objectives of this intervention are twofold: to help these students succeed in their coursework and to retain them in school. The Supplemental Instruction model, developed at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, is a non-traditional approach to resolving retention issues. Identification of at-risk students is the first issue that must be resolved. Traditional retention programs seek to identify at-risk students using a variety of criteria. Institutions may use the student's score on a standardized entrance exam such as the ACT or SAT. The high school record, GPA, curriculum, and class rank, are often used as predictors of academic success. Some institutions use pre-screening tests to identify weaknesses in basic skills of students. Occasionally, a student will self-identify as needing assistance.

Research from UMKC suggests that pre-admission analysis of these criteria does not always identify at-risk students. Certainly, we can recall students who have performed well on the college level despite a marginal pre-admission record. On the other hand, we probably know students who seemed well prepared for college level work but experienced difficulties leading to academic probation and dismissal. Pre-admission screening will not identify students whose at-risk characteristic is subject specific. A student may do well in the social sciences but be at-risk in a natural science class. A student whose basic skills are appropriate for college level work may experience difficulty with the integration and analytical skills needed to respond to an essay question in history.

Pre-admission screening will not identify students whose at-risk characteristic is subject specific.

Based on research, we can predict where students will be when they experience academic difficulty. They will be in the 'freshman killer' classes. Generally, these are required general education or 'gatekeeper' courses. For instance, economics is a required course for all business majors and will also fulfill a social science general education requirement for arts and sciences majors. These required classes are the first hurdles the at-risk student must overcome.

Various reasons contribute to the academic difficulty facing students in these courses. Often these classes have: large lecture sessions with limited opportunity for discussion; abstract and unfamiliar course content; class assignments that are general, without specific daily expectations; and exams that are given only three or four times, failing to provide frequent feedback on learning comprehension. Rather than target at-risk students, Supplemental Instruction (SI) targets these high-risk courses. A high-risk course is defined as having an unsuccessful enrollment rate, (the number of D or F grades and withdrawals) in excess of 30% of the total class enrollment. These high-risk courses can form a significant roadblock to any student, despite their academic preparation level.

Overview of the Model

The campus SI program is supervised by an on-site professional staff or faculty person. This person is responsible for identifying the targeted courses, gaining faculty support, selecting and training SI leaders, and monitoring and evaluating the program.

Assistance begins the first week of the term. During the first class session, the SI leader, a fellow student who has already successfully completed the particular course, describes SI and surveys the class to determine when students are most likely to attend SI review sessions. From these surveys, the SI leader schedules three 50-minute SI sessions per week. These sessions take place in classrooms in close proximity to the targeted classroom. All students enrolled in the targeted course are encouraged to participate on a voluntary basis. Since SI leaders have already successfully completed the target course with the professor involved, they are content competent and enjoy the support of the instructor. SI leaders attend all class sessions, take notes, read all assigned material, and conduct the SI sessions.

All SI leaders take part in an intensive two-day training session one week before the beginning of the term. Conducted by the SI supervisor, this training session covers such topics as proactive instructional strategies, how students learn, theories of student develop-

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ment, and management details. SI leaders are given the opportunity to practice the organization and delivery of an SI session. Continued training occurs throughout the semester as SI leaders meet with the SI supervisor individually and as a group.

The SI sessions integrate 'how to learn' with 'what to learn.' Students who attend SI sessions discover appropriate application of study strategies, e.g., note taking, graphic organization, questioning techniques, vocabulary acquisition, and test preparation, as they review content material. All enrolled students have the opportunity to become actively involved with the course material as the SI leaders use the text, supplementary readings, and lecture notes as the vehicle for learning how to study. The SI leader is not an authority figure who supplies the group with right answers, but rather, a facilitator who acts as a model student. The SI leader models how successful students study.

The SI program is evaluated through collection of student satisfaction surveys and analysis of course grades and re-enrollment data for three groups: students who participated in SI; students who never indicated intent to participate in SI; and those students who initially indicated intent to participate, but who were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. Most frequently, these conflicts were identified as other classes or work.

Development of the Model

Supplemental Instruction was developed by the Center for Academic Development at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1971 to address rising attrition in the School of Medicine. After successfully being piloted there, SI was expanded throughout the university. In the early 1980's the SI model, after undergoing a rigorous evaluation procedure, was certified as an Exemplary Educational Program by the U.S. Department of Education. Since that time, the university has received grants through the National Diffusion Network, a division of the U.S. Department of Education, to help other colleges implement the model.

Other Retention Issues

One problem that traditional retention programs have is that high-risk students hesitate to participate because of the remedial image associated with such services. There are several reasons why SI is able to avoid the remedial image. First, SI is proactive since it provides assistance from the first day of class. Too often traditional intervention strategies react to students who display academic difficulties. By the time identification takes place, it may be too late to help the student. According to many experts, the first six weeks of the freshman semester is the most critical time for students to withdraw from college.

Students who attend SI sessions discover appropriate application of study strategies, e.g., note taking, graphic organization, questioning techniques, vocabulary acquisition, and test preparation, as they review content material.

Secondly, since the program is conducted on an open-to-all voluntary basis, SI attracts students with differing abilities. During the description of SI given to students in the first class session, SI leaders ask how many students think they would attend SI if it fit into their schedule. Experience suggests that most students indicate an interest in attending SI. Once students agree that SI is universally accepted, they realize it is definitely not remedial. Students feel comfortable with the small group setting and learn from each other. Both traditional-aged students and older, returning adults benefit from the exchange that occurs in SI. Additionally, SI sessions are offered in classrooms located close to the targeted class, away from the remedial stigma often attached to offerings in the learning center.

The organization of the SI session and the training of the SI leader are designed to promote the development of the students' skills in comprehension, analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving. Educators agree that the goal of enrichment programs is to transform poor learners from passive recipients and reproducers of information into active generators of new information. These are transferable skills students can use in all disciplines.

However, the benefits of SI do not apply only to at-risk students. All participants will benefit from the collaborative learning experience. In a March 1990 study, Richard Light from Harvard University suggests that their students thrive when they do at least some of their studying in small groups rather than relying on solitary studying.

Results

Data collected from UMKC (1987) indicate that the average course grade of the SI group is one-third to a full letter grade higher than the average course grade of students not participating in SI. These results fluctuate across semesters depending on a number of variables; however, the mean difference across courses targeted by SI rarely falls below one-third letter grade difference. These performance differences are still evident when the Si group is compared to a motivational control group--those students who wanted to attend but were unable to because of scheduling conflicts. Differences in performance patterns between SI and non-SI students are also apparent despite the students' past academic performance. Research further indicates SI is as effective for at-risk students (those scoring at the bottom quartile on college entrance tests) as it is for students scoring in the top quartile. Minority students participate in SI at the same rate and with the same grade deferential as non-minority students.

More than 150 institutions of higher education (both two and four year) are currently offering SI to their students. While these institutions represent different types of organizational structure, student profiles, socioeconomic and geographic areas, their data consistently show results similar to data collected at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. SI has been proven to be effective on the post-secondary level for a variety of student groups at a variety of locations. It is being used in several programs for medical students at institutions around the country. Currently, it is being piloted on the high school level at an inner city school in Kansas City. The success of the SI model across different age groups will be an even greater validation of the model. For more information about the SI model, contact the authors at the University of Missouri, 5100 Rockhill Road, 210 SASS Building, Kansas City, Missouri, 64110-2499, telephone 816/276-1178.

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A Television Talk Show/Group Therapy Model for Clinical Intervention with the At-risk Child

by Dan N. Martin

The term at-risk in the fields of education and government covers many categories of American youth--those who fail academically, those who are truant from school, those who are involved in alcohol and drug abuse, those who commit street crimes, those who attempt suicide, those who drop out. Generally, students are referred to as being at-risk for one or more of these behaviors. Generally, these outward signs of distress and failure are in the process of threatening personal, academic and economic futures. It is clear, particularly to educators, that there is an unraveling deep in our society which is manifesting itself in the young and in our public schools. This systemic national problem is now termed the at-risk problem.

Flaws in Current Programs

From the perspective of the educator in the public schools, the processes of government designed to remedy this problem produce compensatory education programs with muddled, varied and abstractly defined goals. The political and social coalition that supports these programs includes academic researchers and policy analysts. This well meaning coalition has no uniform view of whom they are trying to help, what their problems are and how to determine success. Thus, the complexity and imprecision of current compensatory programs tends to compound the problem of figuring out how to help students at-risk (Ralph, 1989).

Presented with the problem of executing vague programs for a large and heterogeneous at-risk student population, educators generally proceed in a managerial fashion. Since legislative leadership for in-depth clinical analysis is not in evidence, management of the problem in a somewhat superficial manner is the logical alternative. Generally, true to the legislative lead, educators discuss the categories of students at-risk.

It is clear, particularly to educators, that there is an unraveling deep in our society which is manifesting itself in the young and in our public schools.

Programs are set in motion to try to manage the behaviors of distress and failure in these categories. Goals are increasingly set for improving academic performance and reducing the drop-out problem. But the at-risk statistics keep going up.

Educators who still have the strength to care, try to give of themselves. They try to impact, if only in some small way, each young and struggling life. In the past, when stable and favorable conditions existed in home and community, these well meaning efforts were sufficient to promote social development and positive citizenship. But, today, as many of our most vital cultural structures, and in particular the family, continue to unravel, the public schools are being called upon to intervene in a more comprehensive way for the good of society (Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1987). Thus, the inadequacy of governmental leadership has made the at-risk problem the mandate of the public schools.

Asking the Essential Questions

Educators who, by necessity, are dealing with at-risk students must begin to ask the in-depth clinical questions so necessary to designing effective programs. The primary question is: Is there a cultural common denominator underlying the lives of the majority of at-risk students? Is this common denominator undermining and destabilizing the families from which most of these students come? Can the educator go after what ails our nation's families and the children of these families by addressing this common denominator? In other words, is there a socio/psychological root cause accessible to intervention by the public schools? Is it possible to design a clinical, macro-cultural program that precisely addresses the major common denominator, the root cause, of the at-risk problem?

Formation of the Thesis

The 1988-1989 pilot project in Carteret County, North Carolina was an attempt to do just that. The project was based upon a simple answer to the primary question. Thesis: when traditional family values break down media values take over and the at-risk child is born. This idea is not new. Dr. Mark Evans in a 1987 article in the New York Tribune states:

"Discussions about education have focused recently on the teaching of values. Certainly our values, the things we believe and pass on from one generation to the next, are of paramount importance. In recent years, a new type of

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teacher has appeared to gain dominant influence in the teaching of values. Stepping into the void left by busy parents and inept teachers is an instructor with a new and highly dubious curriculum: the television set. The subjects being taught, values through television, merit a new world, 'televalues."

...today, as many of our most vital cultural structures, and in particular the family, continue to unravel, the public schools are being called upon to intervene in a more comprehensive way for the good of society (Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1987).

Today's at-risk child is a new phenomenon in our society. Products of disordered families, they are unprotected from the barrage of information produced by a consumer society they are too young to understand. They have been exposed on all levels to experiences, both interpersonal and media generated, that children should never be exposed to. In addition, they tend to be painfully undereducated in terms of many basic, realistic human values. They tend to believe the shallow values presented in media while rejecting deeper values associated with their struggling parents and the overburdened educational system. A common denominator emerges: when family values weaken, media values move in.

Experts in adolescent psychology are already aware of this alarming phenomenon. Dr. John W. Greene, director of adolescent medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, states in an article in the Nashville Banner (Bailey, 1989):

"Television probably preys on the most vulnerable individual, for example, people that do not have a positive family environment." Evelyn Frye, a Nashville psychologist, warns in the same article, that young people are the most severely affected if they spend too much time watching television. "If it occurs early, the individual does not have the life experiences to be confident, nor develop necessary social skills. They have no real-life adventures but (instead) live through the television programs they watch."

As a result, at-risk children have an emotional block to all that is not 'TV like,' to all that is 'the system.' They are convinced they have all the information they need to be adults. Peer pressure in which media has a considerable hand, cements this position. Information learned on television is impacting the social and academic climate in the public schools (Manzl, 1990). This renders the vulnerable, at-risk student even more unreachable. Educators are dealing with damaged and programmed children who are not effectively dealing with reality. In this, they are beyond the reach of reason and even the most basic of human values, love.

Structure of the Solution

The project in Carteret County, after isolating the common denominator of 'media contamination of the at-risk child,' developed a television talk show/group therapy model designed to counteract this contamination and its effects. In the talk show format the students are the audience, the psychologist is the moderator and professionals from the community are the guests. The talk show format was chosen to get the attention of the media responsive student. The group therapy possibilities of such a format were seen as a new and potentially powerful modality for achieving clinical goals.

The project was thus designed to deliver precisely focused and clinically sound 'experiential learning.' This type of learning is essential to improving the social skills and attitudes of the at-risk student (Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1987). Learning was divided into three phases. Each phase was to last three months and have a specific therapeutic goal. Success in the first phase contributed to success in the second. Success in the second contributed to success in the third. 'Experiential learning' was broken down into sequential, manageable steps.

In a further effort to focus the program, one category of at-risk students was selected--students who were labeled Behaviorally/Emotionally Handicapped. Approximately 80 students, the most unmanageable, were selected from grades six through nine by resource teachers throughout the county. Teachers were informed of the philosophy and goals of the program and asked for periodic feedback. The 80 students were then divided into four groups of 20 each. Each group was scheduled to meet one Friday morning per month. The students were bussed from their various schools to a conference room donated by the owners of a local hotel. Other community professionals offered to donate their time and become guests on the 'talk show.' Finally, plans were made to video tape one or two sessions in each phase to enhance the 'television talk show' feeling and for the purpose of review.

The television talk show/group therapy format proves itself to be an efficient modality for handling at-risk intervention in the schools.

Phase I of the program was entitled Let's Out Media the Media. The overall theme of the television talk show developed around the personal stories of a panel of guests who had all grown up and gone to school in Carteret County and become successful in life. Questions covered childhood and adolescent experiences. The purpose of Phase I was to introduce students to the television talk show/group therapy format and begin to short circuit and gain control of their media-based value systems. The final goal was to establish the guests as new, more realistic role models.

Phase II was entitled Let's Scare Them Straight. Professionals invited from the community were involved in the criminal justice system. Guests included a district court judge, a superintendent of prisons, a chief of police, a probation officer, a detective and several police officers. Their task was to present to the students in the audience the other side of life--what it is really like to lose in life, what it is really like to have no job skills or to be convicted of a crime or to go to prison. The guests, as a part of a group of newly accepted, adult role models tried to show the students a reality they would never see on television. The goal was to burst the 'media bubble' and force the students to take a sobered look at the real lives they were creating for themselves.

Phase III was entitled Let's Provide Economic Information. Guests were locally prominent professionals such as lawyers, stockbrokers, realtors, military personnel and owners of small businesses. Parents of the assembled children with interesting careers also became guests. Questions called for personal stories of professional success as well as specific information--on the academic preparation necessary to the profession, on what it is like to work in the profession, on what kind of money can be made. The goal of the final phase was to motivate the students to associate successful participation in school with their personal survival in the real world.

Results of the Project

Most of the adults who participated in the pilot project in Carteret County, both school personnel and community volunteers, described the experience as meaningful. Only the resource teachers were polled. They are, as a group, highly trained in dealing with at-risk students and they were involved with the students in the project on a day-to-day basis. One hundred percent of the teachers polled wanted to see the project continued the following year. One hundred percent felt that the students derived emotional nourishment from the project. One hundred percent indicated positive feedback from participating students. Eighty percent felt that the project would be more effective if sessions were more frequent. And finally, one hundred percent of the teachers wanted the project expanded to include other categories of at-risk students.

In the final analysis, the positive feedback indicates that the original thesis of the project with its emphasis upon values and media, merits further study. Furthermore, the project, in approaching the at-risk problem clinically, demonstrates the potential of precisely focused intervention. The television talk show/group therapy format proves itself to be an efficient modality for handling at-risk intervention in the schools. It also provides an excellent vehicle for motivating and organizing community participation in the public educational process.

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AT-RISK YOUTH

Success for At-risk Students Through Empowerment

by Rochelle S. Friedman

Theresa came to Murray High School with a history of substance abuse and disaffection with school. She had been absent a total of 54 days at her last high school and was working considerably below grade level. Since coming to Murray in 1988, Theresa has missed only one day and experiences academic success. She is highly recognized as a class leader and genuinely cares about the Murray community. She has set personal goals and is now looking at college as an option after graduation.

Joseph was successful academically, but was unable to deal with conflict without fighting. Since attending Murray, Joseph has become a 'team player,' participating in group projects and working on conflict resolution. He has provided leadership in the development of a student-teacher court system and a Murray Community Handbook. In addition to these accomplishments, Joseph has established a credible reputation as a mature thinker and is highly sought after to mediate conflict resolution.

Michael came to Murray because he was not succeeding at his previous school. He had earned only .5 credit for his ninth grade work. Michael's accomplishments at Murray have been reflected in his academic work. He currently earns As, Bs and a few Cs. In addition to his improved academic performance, Michael appears to be accepting responsibility for his own learning.

Paul's mother told the school board that Murray has given her back the son she remembered as eager to learn but quickly discouraged by the system. These students and 75 others are enrolled at Murray, a non-traditional accredited high school in Albemarle County, Virginia. Murray provides an alternative to the conventional high school for students who are at-risk to drop out or graduate below potential.

This year 96% of the students at Murray have a documented history of academic failure, discipline problems and chronic absenteeism. The remaining 4% indicated feelings of alienation and frustration with the structure of traditional schooling. Thirty-eight percent have participated in mental health counseling services in the community, and at least 40% have been involved with the juvenile court system. Forty-four percent are living in one parent families, 7% are or have been wards of the state, about 45% are from low income families and 9% are minority students.

Governance is a process of shared decision making rather than administrative mandate.

Murray is like other public schools in some ways. Students are provided transportation, a breakfast and lunch program. Students must master the same standards of learning as other high school students. It is also different from other high schools in many ways. You don't see rows of students completing worksheets or teachers lecturing for the better part of a class period. Coursework is neither textbook nor teacher driven. At Murray we don't 'teach' subjects, we help facilitate the learning process for our student clientele. Murray is structured as a community of learners rather than an institution of learning. The faculty and staff share a pervasive belief that success can best be achieved through student empowerment. Experiential learning opportunities are designed collaboratively by students and instructors who have restructured the curriculum to reflect areas of interest within the disciplines. Governance is a process of shared decision making rather than administrative mandate. The role of the learner is changed in this community where students become agents instead of mere pawns (de Charms, 1977) in the educational process. This transformation of roles and relationships heightens student engagement and commitment and ultimately enhances academic success.

Admissions

Students are not 'sent' to Murray, they choose to apply and are invited to interview and tour the facility (when classes are in session). The interview process provides an opportunity to discuss how Murray differs from traditional schooling. Prospective students are encouraged to talk about what wasn't working for them in a conventional high school. Anger, self-doubt and frustration are feelings commonly expressed by young people who believed that the learning environment focused on their weaknesses rather than their strengths. The student with indecipherable handwriting complained that teachers sought him out to criticize the appearance of his work. He commented that it was obviously legible enough for the teacher to decipher his name and embarrass him in front of his peers. He took control of the situation by refusing to complete assignments and in his struggle for power, he felt a sense of 'winning' by failing the grade thus proving that the teacher could not force him to write or to exhibit evidence of learning.

A disorganized student explained that he started skipping class when it became evident that missing homework assignments and maintaining a shabby notebook would negate the value of ex-

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cellent test grades. He rationalized that the teacher controlled course expectations and grading, and the only thing he controlled was his attendance pattern.

During the interview, these students hear that Murray's personalized approach to education provides choices that accommodate a variety of learning styles. The interviewer (principal or guidance facilitator) acknowledges that the learner is in control of his fate. No one can force another individual to participate or to learn. The program's mission is not to remediate and mainstream. Murray students were not 'broken' prior to enrolling at Murray. Students cannot be 'fixed' and sent back. Instead these students are offered an opportunity to become partners in the educational process and to accept responsibility for maximizing their learning potential. Those who express an interest in becoming part of this innovative community of learners are requested to agree, in writing, to assume the following responsibilities:

1. attend school regularly;
2. actively participate in the learning process; and
3. allow peers to learn and instructors to facilitate the process.

Upon acceptance at Murray, students participate in an assessment component that includes a learning styles inventory, a self concept scale, interest survey and reading inventory.

Experiential Learning

The instructional program at Murray continually evolves as faculty and students work together to structure learning opportunities where the needs of both the individual and society are considered. Individual course schedules are designed cooperatively by the student, guidance facilitator and career education coordinator. Virginia Standards of Learning are mastered in creative, non-traditional classes developed to complement student interest and learning style rather than grade level. At the center of the curriculum is a career education component that encourages students to view education as a life long process and schooling as a part of the cycle. Murray students graduate with a diploma and a resume in hand. All students enroll in Ready, Set, Go! (an integrated language arts/business education course). Here they develop keyboarding and written and verbal communication skills necessary for both the career and college bound. Students select a possible career option and participate in a two-week shadowing experience as part of this course. The flagship of the career education program is **Hire Education.** This 12-week senior intensive includes both employment seminars and a 10-week career internship. Architects, educators, business executives and computer analysts are among those who mentor potential employees. Students have an opportunity to reaffirm career goals and contemplate plans for further education or employment after graduation. Everyone benefits from the community/school partnership.

Students actively participate in the educational process with teachers acting as facilitators.

When it became apparent that a traditional six-period day created artificial barriers to successfully implementing quality experiential learning activities, the administration, faculty and students worked together to design an intensive trimester schedule. Students could earn 6 credits per academic year-2 each trimester. The time frame would provide structure without sacrificing flexibility or creativity. Applied learning could thrive in a schedule that facilitated field trips, encouraged interdisciplinary teaming and cooperative learning. Initially there was some concern as to the length of classes in this expanded schedule with one student commenting that it would benefit students but could place additional pressure on an already overworked faculty. Faculty and student representatives decided to pilot a trimester schedule for one year and to evaluate the impact on learning, flexibility and personal satisfaction (both student and faculty). Preliminary evaluative data supports the decision to move to a trimester plan.

Students learn best when instruction and learning context match their learning style (Dunn & Dunn, 1987). Individual differences and preferences are discussed with incoming students and a learning styles inventory is administered in the fall. As a result, students are able to make choices that work to their advantage in the learning environment. Murray students may choose to work individually, in groups, at desks, on the floor, however and wherever they believe they can be most successful. Students who 'hate writing' may choose to work on a computer. Several students listen to music while working, others may incorporate music or art into projects and presentations.

Murray teachers implement non-traditional instructional approaches that build on the strengths our students bring to Murray. Cooperative team projects, video production, field trips, guest speakers and opportunities for inquiry learning replace traditional pencil-paper tasks in courses where learning does not begin and end in the classroom. Students in an interdisciplinary language arts/science course write and produce a play that reflects hours of careful scientific research. Math becomes relevant when used as a tool rather than taught in isolation and Murray students prepare Lego/Logo lessons to present to elementary students who may require concrete examples of math at work. Government classes observe at Virginia General Assembly Meetings and at the United States Supreme Court in Washington, DC and participate in local public hearings regarding public education. Students actively participate in the educational process with teachers acting as facilitators. Active learners are easily motivated and success is imminent.

School as Community

Every student who interviewed at Murray expressed a need to belong that was not fulfilled at school. Many students perceived themselves as victims who were forced to attend and follow someone else's rules. By structuring Murray as a community of learners rather than an educational institution, we have empowered students to assume a pivotal role in governance as well as instruction.

Community government consists of an executive branch, family group representatives and a faculty advisor. All of these positions are elected ones and everyone (students and faculty) have a vote. Our elected officials make the rules, staying within school board guidelines, and determine appropriate punishment for infractions. Community members who feel they have been unfairly accused or punished may appeal to the community court. The system serves as a constant reminder to students that they do have a voice and in fact can make a difference at Murray.

Student representatives from each family group meet informally with the principal to discuss instructional issues, support services; any concerns that their family group members may have. The principal in turn brings these issues to the faculty who share in developing policy. Decisions that affect the entire community are not made in isolation by the principal. In addition to providing opportunities for leadership, family groups provide an additional outlet for self expression and a cohesive support system. Each family group has a faculty advisor and an agenda that includes societal issues, team building and group support.

Outcome--Success!

The fact that students choose to come to Murray, choose to participate and choose to succeed is what makes Murray work. Absences for first year students number fewer than half the days missed at the previous school. The concept of community and respect for the individual has resulted in a significant decrease in discipline problems. One hundred percent of the students who attend regularly are actively involved in instructional activities and master no less than 80% of their instructional objectives. We have empowered the individuals who felt most constrained by the system. When students feel both a sense of ownership and belonging, they open themselves to the learning opportunities available. At Murray, students and faculty work together to create an environment that nurtures positive self esteem and academic success. We know that traditional schooling is accepted as the norm and works for many students but what about students who experience failure and those who in fact drop out of school?

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Note:

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