Research Report
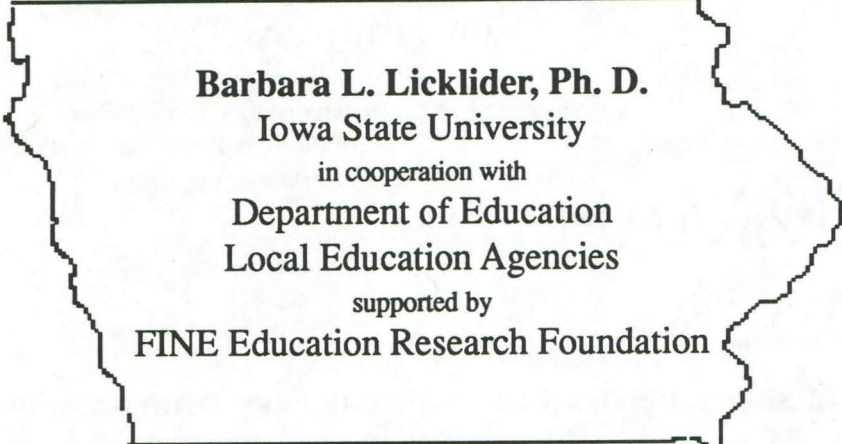
EFFECTIVENESS OF RURAL IOWA MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS AT RISK

by

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Examination of Effectiveness of Rural Iowa Middle/Junior High and High School Programs for Students at Risk

FINAL REPORT

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Summary

Part II - Summary of Completed Research Study (FOR PUBLIC USE)

The overarching purpose of this research project is to improve the effectiveness and cost efficiency of secondary school efforts in rural Iowa for students at risk of school failure or at risk of limiting their life options due to undereducation. The three studies of the first year of the project have distinct but interrelated purposes: (1) to determine the current status of rural Iowa programs for students at risk; (2) to assess the readiness of educators for meeting the needs of all students; and (3) to examine four selected programs to determine which components of those programs are most productive, appropriate and cost effective.

Study 1 resulted in a data base that describes the current status of rural Iowa programs for secondary school students at risk including district definitions of at-risk, number of students at risk, local district implementation of the nine components of the Iowa standard for programs for at-risk students, support, problems and effectiveness of programs. Study 2 revealed the readiness of rural Iowa educators for meeting the needs of students at risk including the extent of awareness of problems associated with failure to educate all children, individuals' personal senses of obligation and responsibility to educate all children, and educators' knowledge of how to assist students at risk. The outcome of Study 3 (to be completed in year two) will be detailed descriptions of four effective secondary school programs for students at risk.

The results of Study 1, from data provided by officials from 285 of the 502 rural secondary schools selected to participate, reveal that 10.4 percent of rural students have been identified at risk of school failure or at risk of limited life options due to undereducation; as many as twenty-five percent more students in some districts may be at risk but have not been formerly identified. It appears local school districts, in general, are making progress toward meeting the state standard for offering services to students at risk of school failure, but they need assistance. Most services are very traditional. There is little evidence that creative, innovative interventions or strategies are in widespread use. In fact, after the barrier of limited financial resources, the major barrier to success in meting the needs of students at risk is lack of knowledge of how to met the needs of at-risk students.

Data from 292 of 502 principals and 702 of 1263 teachers selected to participate in Study 2 indicate that educator readiness is not as high as may be necessary to meet with success with all students. There is strong evidence that educators feel inadequately prepared to use effective strategies and approaches with students at risk. They do, however, indicate a willingness to learn more about students at risk, to learn to use strategies and approaches to enhance their effectiveness with students at risk, and to change personal, professional practices to better meet the needs of students at risk. It appears that there is a pressing need to develop and test interventions that will help local educators effectively work with students at risk.

The results of Study 1 will be used by the Department of Education and AEA's to determine what needs to be done in local schools to help officials meet the state standard for offering services to students at risk. The questionnaire from Study 2 has been revised and will be available to local schools to use to assess the readiness of all their staff to meet the needs of students at risk. This research project provided the direction for future study that resulted in the award of a FINE grant to continue the efforts during the 1992-93 school year. The continued project will have two foci: (1) completion of Study 3 (case studies of effective programs) and (2) assessment of effectiveness of interventions designed to increase the readiness of educators to meet the needs of students at risk. After effective staff development has been determined and components of effective programs for students at risk have been outlined, the focus of the 1993-94 year of this research program will be to (1) train teachers and principals to deliver the staff development to teachers in their districts and (2) provide local districts with assistance they need to develop and implement school programs and practices that will meet the needs of all students.

Examination of Effectiveness of Rural Iowa Middle/Junior High and High School Programs for Students At Risk

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

The overarching purpose of this project was to conduct research to improve the effectiveness and cost efficiency of secondary school programs in rural Iowa for students at risk of school failure or at risk of limiting their life options due to undereducation. Rural middle/junior high and high school programs were chosen for this study for two reasons: (1) resources prevented the study of all schools in the state; and (2) most research conducted about schooling for students at risk focuses on urban schools or early elementary schooling. The three studies in the first year of the project have distinct but interrelated purposes: (1) to determine the current status of rural Iowa programs for students at risk including what is being done and the effectiveness of current efforts; (2) to assess the readiness of principals and teachers for meeting the needs of students who exhibit at-risk behaviors or who live in circumstances that increase their risks of school failure; and (3) to examine four selected programs, in detail, to determine which components of those programs are most productive, appropriate and cost effective. There are four important objectives for the overall research project: (1) to develop profiles of students in at-risk programs in rural Iowa, profiles of the staff involved with the programs, and profiles of the programs; (2) to report the findings to Iowa educators, the Iowa public, and other policymakers, practitioners, and researchers; (3) to recommend productive, appropriate and cost effective practices for officials in local districts to consider adopting, developing, and implementing; and (4) to develop hypotheses and make recommendations for further research on programs for rural Iowa students at risk of school failure.

Survey research design utilizing questionnaires was employed in Studies 1 and 2. Observational research design, utilizing the case study method, guides Study 3. Study 1 resulted in a data base that describes the current status of rural Iowa programs for secondary school students at risk including district definitions of at-risk, number of students at risk, local district implementation of the nine components of the Iowa standard for programs for at-risk students, support, problems and effectiveness of programs. Study 2 revealed the readiness of rural Iowa educators for meeting the needs of students at risk including the extent of awareness of problems associated with failure to educate all children, educators' personal sense of obligation and responsibility to educate all children, and educators'

knowledge of how to assist students at risk. The outcome of Study 3, to be completed in year two of the research

project, will be detailed descriptions of four effective secondary school programs for students at risk. These case

studies will result not only in identification of effective components of programs but also determination of why

those components promote effectiveness.

The final report which follows describes each of the three studies separately. Results of Studies 1 and 2 are

presented followed by a progress report for Study 3. Future directions for research in year two of the project as well

as future activities resulting from Studies 1 and 2 are discussed in an additional section. The final budget report is

presented in the last section of this report.

Study 1: Assessment of the current status and effectiveness of secondary school programs in rural Iowa for students at risk

Objectives

    (a)   identify local school district definitions of "at-risk" students;

    (b)   evaluate the extent of the problem by determining the numbers of dropouts, potential dropouts, and/or at-risk students in secondary schools in rural Iowa;

    (c)   assess the extent of local school implementation of the nine components required by the Iowa standards for programs for at-risk students: identification, school-based support services, counseling, instructional support, community support, parent involvement, all staff involvement/staff inservice, integrated/open access/nondiscrimination, and monitoring systems;

    (d)   determine degree of community support for the local school program for students at risk;

    (e)   determine degree of parental support for the local school program for students at risk;

    (f)   determine the degree of school staff support for the program for students at risk;

    (g)   determine the sources and extent of financial support for the local school programs for students at risk;

    (h)   record perceived concerns/problems associated with programs for students at risk;

    (i)   assess the degree of success of the local district program; and

    (j)   develop a taxonomic classification of rural Iowa programs for students at risk.

Procedures

1.   <u>Method</u>

A survey was developed, in cooperation with Ray Morley, Department of Education At-Risk Consultant,

designed to meet the above objectives (survey available on request). Principals and/or at-risk coordinators from each

school were asked to complete the survey describing the local school program. Data from the surveys were analyzed as frequencies and percentages for the schools, as a group, for whom completed surveys were received.

2.   Sample

The advisory panel for the research program (comprised of teachers, administrators, AEA consultants and DE consultant) assisted with determination of which schools in the state could be considered rural. The schools from all Iowa districts with fewer than 2500 students K-12, except for two districts that were determined by the advisory panel to be suburban rather than rural, were included in the population to be studied. Surveys were sent to the principals of the 506 schools in that population. Responses were received from officials of 285 schools. Although not complete at this time, data analysis will include disaggregation of data by school district size, economic resources of the community, adult education level in the community, socioeconomic status of the student population, and years of experience of the teachers in the school.

Results

A total of 81,740 students attend the schools from which data were received. Officials in those schools have formally identified 3,496 students as being at risk of dropping out of school and 5,009 as being at risk of limited life options due to undereducation, a total of 10.4 percent of their student populations. When asked to estimate the numbers of students who may be at risk but have not been formally identified, school officials responded that an additional 10 to 25 percent may be at risk.

Table 1 presents information about the definition and identification of students at risk. Although schools use any of nineteen **definitions of students at risk**, the most common definitions include high rate of absenteeism, poor grades, behavior problems, low achievement, and special home circumstances such as foster care or homelessness. All respondents indicated their at-risk plans/programs included methods for **identification** of students. The most common method of identification is referral by teachers, family, counselors, or self. The next most frequently used methods of identification of students included testing and analysis of data such as achievement, income level, attendance, suspensions, grades, homelessness, or extracurricular activity participation.

School-based support services, presented in Table 2, include where students receive assistance, who provides assistance, how instruction is delivered, and what programs, policies or procedures

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TABLE 1. Definition and Identification of Students at Risk

CRITERIA USED TO DEFINE	n	%*
Poor grades	279	98
High rate of absenteeism	273	96
Behavior problems	264	93
Special home circumstances (foster, homeless)	232	81
Low achievers	208	73
Retention	182	64
Parent is substance abuser	179	63
Low family socioeconomic status	182	64
Lack of identification with school	175	58
Parent is child or spouse abuser	172	60
Functioning below chronological age	164	58
Limited or no extracurricular participation	132	46
Parent is chronically mentally ill	117	41
Parent is incarcerated	115	40
parent is illiterate	85	30
Born with birth defect	79	28
Parents not completed high school	78	27
Parent under age at child's birth	73	26
Other	42	15

METHODS/PROCEDURES USED TO DEFINE	n	%*
Referrals by:		
teachers	283	99
counselors	274	96
family	238	84
self	217	76
support staff	188	66
peers	160	56
outside agencies	141	49
employer	48	17
Testing	202	71
Centralized data analysis	189	66
Student assistant team	179	63
Career assessment	77	27
Peer helper systems	70	25
Student response checklist	49	17
Student learning styles	27	9
Other	17	6

n = number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom questionnaires were received checking this response

have been altered to meet the needs of students at risk. Students at risk primarily receive assistance in regular classrooms at the school site, in segregated classrooms or in a combination of both. A small percentage of the schools offer services to students in alternative settings. Regular education teachers, counselors, special education teachers and AEA personnel are the primary assistance providers for students at risk followed by peers, building support staff, and service agency personnel. Only 10% of the schools involved in the study have full time teachers

or coordinators who work primarily with students at risk. Most instruction is delivered in regular classes or in regular classes with tutorial support. Only 21 percent of the schools offer self-paced, individual programs of study. Thirty-five percent of the schools (99 schools) have made no alterations in their policies, programs, or procedures to meet the needs of students at risk. Fifty-six schools have altered attendance policies, thirteen have changed length of terms, seventy-five have altered the length or time of the school day, sixty-five have changed how they determine credit, and twenty-four have altered graduation requirements.

Table 2.   School-based Support Services for Students at Risk

	n	%*
LOCATION OF SERVICES		
In both regular and segregated classroom	219	77
In regular classroom	206	72
In segregated special class	153	54
Outside agency	111	39
Outside this building	60	21
In another school district	45	16
At local community college	38	13
Other	28	10
SERVICE PROVIDERS		
Counselors	271	95
Regular classroom teachers	264	93
Special education teachers	251	88
AEA personnel	241	85
All teachers	224	79
Peers	124	44
Building support staff	120	42
Service agency personnel	102	36
Volunteers	40	14
Full time district coordinator	31	11
Full time at risk teachers	28	9
Full time building coordinator	26	9
Other	32	11
METHOD OF INSTRUCTION DELIVERY		
Regular classes with tutor	180	63
Regular classes	172	61
Self-paced individual program of study	61	21
Other	28	10
ALTERED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
None	99	35
length of school day	75	26
determination of credit	65	23
attendance	56	20
graduation requirement	24	8
length of terms	13	5
other	62	22

n= number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom responses were received checking this response

As presented in Table 3, eighty-six percent of the 285 schools offer **counseling** programs for their students at risk. 154 schools offer career education, 118 work skills training, and 135 assistance with personal/social development. Only 181 schools provide special academic or **instructional support** programs for students at risk.

TABLE 3.   Educational Programs

PROGRAMS PROVIDED	n	%*
Counseling	244	86
Academic	181	64
Career education	154	54
Personal/social	135	48
Work skills	118	42
Other	21	7

n= number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom questionnaires were received checking this response

Table 4 presents data about parent involvement in programs for students at risk. Schools use several strategies to **involve parents** with the most frequently used strategies being parent-teacher conferences, telephone calls, letters sent home, and staffings to place students in the program. About half of the schools use individual parent meetings with staff of at-risk programs and counseling sessions along with the student. Staff in one third of the schools conduct home visitations. Only 28 schools offer parents special instructional sessions about how to help students at home, and only 21 schools offer parent support groups. Parents are contacted weekly in 72 schools, bi-weekly in 61, monthly in 93, and every nine weeks in 97 schools. Parents are contacted once a semester only in 13 schools and at the end of the year only in 4 schools. Only about 25 percent of the parents in most schools take advantage of the opportunities provided them for involvement in their children's education.

TABLE 4.   Parent Involvement

PARENT INVOLVEMENT	n	%
Parent/teacher conferences about programs	266	93
Telephone calls	249	87
Letters sent home	250	88
Staffings to place students in program	201	71
Counseling sessions along with the student	155	54
Individual parent meetings	152	53
Home visitations by staff	99	35
Attending sessions about helping students at home	28	10
Parent support groups	21	7
Other	13	5

NUMBER OF PARENTS WHO ARE INVOLVED

None	14	5
25%	117	41
50%	74	26
75%	46	16
All	8	3

FREQUENCY OF PARENT CONTACT

Every nine weeks	97	34
Monthly	93	33
Weekly	72	25
Bi-weekly	61	21
Once a semester only	13	5
End of year only	4	1
Other	112	37

n= number of schools checking this response

* % of 285 schools from whom responses were received checking this response

Table 5 presents information about support for programs for students at risk. 227 schools have offered

inservice education about students at risk to their staffs. The inservice is delivered primarily by the local school

district or the AEA. The inservice was rated effective by only 66 percent of the schools. Support for programs for

students at risk appears to be relatively strong from the district, the administrators and the regular classroom teachers.

This support is provided in numerous ways. Teachers, responding to open-ended questions, state they would feel

even stronger support if their classes were smaller and they had more time to devote individual attention to students

at risk.

TABLE 5. Support for Programs

DISTRICT ASSISTANCE FOR TEACHERS	n	%*
Staff development	227	80
Active encouragement from administrators	186	65
Student assistance team	181	64
Release time to attend conferences	165	58
Classroom resources	89	31
Time to plan and interact with other teachers	75	26
Time to conduct parent involvement activities	54	19
Time to interact with staff from other agencies	44	15
Other	9	3
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF		
Assistance with problem situation	231	81
Encouragement to try new strategies	212	74
Communication with other program staff	156	55
Frequent communication	153	54
Personal involvement with services to students	149	52

Clerical support	93	33
Protection of programs in lean times	77	27
Other	11	4

COLLEAGUE SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS AT RISK

Willingness to adjust assignments and courses	200	70
Verbal support	193	68
Involving at-risk students in other school programs	180	63
Student assistance team	168	59
Group planning/problem solving	124	44
Support for programs in lean times	82	29
Teem teaching	68	24
Other	15	5

AREA EDUCATION AGENCY SUPPORT

Inservice training	213	75
Materials	208	73
Non-school support services	187	66
List of resource people to contact	183	64
Research about students at risk	139	49
Information/assistance with program planning	134	47
Initiation of collaborative efforts of area agencies	99	35
Work with /assist local advisory committees	98	34
Gather local program descriptions/disseminate	65	23
Development of monitoring systems	54	19
Conduct research about programs	39	14
Other	11	4

AGENCIES OFFERING INSERVICE

Local AEA	191	67
Local school district	178	63
Governmental and/or community agencies	29	10
Colleges and universities	30	11
Department of Education	27	10
Other	19	7
No in-service has been offered	6	2

AGENCIES ASSISTING SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Substance abuse centers	182	64
Iowa Department of Human Service	174	61
JTPA	174	61
Law enforcement	149	52
Mental health agencies	120	42
Service clubs	82	29
Churches	74	26
Rehabilitation agencies	70	25
Iowa Department of Job Service	66	23
Family planning agencies	58	20
Iowa Department of Health	46	16
Business partnerships	34	12
YMCA/YWCA	9	3
Other	14	5
None of the above	14	5

HELPING STUDENTS GAIN ACCESS TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES

| School counseling services | 238 | 84 |
| Utilizing services to train educators | 159 | 56 |

Modification of schedule	117	41
Development of community service directory	115	40
Joint meetings and training	71	25
Field trips to agencies	53	18
Incorporate community services knowledge into ed. programs	49	17
Formal written plans	45	16
Housing community service personnel	13	5
Student assistance teams	10	4
Other	11	4
SUPPORT SERVICES		
School psychologist	246	86
Speech-language	215	75
School social worker	242	85
School nurse	212	74
Guidance consultants	·205	72
Consultant	155	54
Work experience coordinator	156	55
Substance abuse counselors	119	42
Breakfast programs	113	40
Mentors	78	27
Occupational therapist	61	21
Other	21	7

n= number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom questionnaires were received checking this response

As shown in Table 6, programs for students at risk are **monitored** primarily by the building principal and the staff responsible for the program. The most frequently used monitoring devices are report cards, attendance records, grades and discipline records. Drop out rates and standardized achievement tests are also used by about half the schools, and one-third of the schools use advisory committees. Surveys of stakeholder groups are used by only about 20 percent of the schools. Sixty-nine percent of the schools monitor their programs continuously. About 10 percent reported monitoring programs in each of these ways: beginning/end, end of year only, every nine weeks, every semester, weekly, or monthly.

TABLE 6.   Monitoring and Evaluation of At-Risk Program

PERSONNEL MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS		
	n	%*
Building principal	231	81
Teachers/counselors responsible for program	216	76
Superintendent	83	29
All teachers	77	27
Parents	47	16
District office personnel	28	10
Other	34	12
METHOD OF MONITORING AND EVALUATING		
attendance records	238	84
report cards	223	78

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grades	212	74
discipline records	204	72
drop out rates	172	60
standardized achievement test	156	55
advisory committees	111	39
surveys of students	65	23
surveys of all teachers	62	22
surveys of parents	46	16
surveys of community members	20	7
cost effectiveness	14	5
surveys of government and community agencies	9	3
other	21	7
MONITORING SCHEDULE		
Continuously	200	70
Beginning/end (pre-post)	32	11
End of year only	31	11
Every nine weeks	28	10
Every semester	21	7
Weekly	15	5
Monthly	10	4
Other	25	8

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Table 7 shows how schools define success for their programs for students at risk and what are considered to be major barriers to success. While most schools use improved behavior as a measure of success, nearly three-fourths of the schools also use improved grades, staying in school, improved achievement, and increased attendance. The major barriers, each reported by about half of the schools, to success of at-risk programs in rural schools are lack of financial resources, lack of knowledge of how to meet the needs of at-risk students, lack of support from parents and lack of qualified staff to teach and work with students at risk. Fifty-five schools report lack of support from teachers for programs for students at risk as a barrier, and 42 report apathy among educators in this district as a problem. Less than 10 percent report each of the following to be barriers: lack of support from district administrators, school board, community, Department of Education, and AEA's. Most schools report achievement for students at risk to be somewhat lower than that of students in their regular school programs, although 17% of the schools report that achievement of students at risk is very similar to students in the regular program.

TABLE 7.   Definition of Success and Major Barriers to Success

CRITERIA DEFINING SUCCESS	n	%*
Improved behavior	245	86
Improved grades	226	79

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Staying in school	223	78
Improved achievement	216	76
Increased attendance	209	73
Other	37	13
MAJOR BARRIERS TO SUCCESS		
Lack of financial resources	184	65
Lack of support from parents assistance	139	49
Lack of knowledge	138	48
Lack of qualified staff	120	42
Lack of support from teachers	55	19
Apathy among educators	42	15
Lack of support from department of education	27	9
Lack of support from community	24	8
Lack of support from school board	19	7
Lack of support from district administrators	17	6
Lack of assistance from AEA	15	5
Other	50	18

n= number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom questionnaires were received checking this response

As shown in Table 8, in general, **communities** are only "somewhat informed" about the efforts of the district to meet the needs of students at risk and are "somewhat supportive.' It does not appear that communities actively resist any programs, but it does appear that schools could be doing much more to garner community support.

TABLE 8.   Community Knowledge and Support

	n	%*
DEGREE TO WHICH COMMUNITY IS INFORMED		
Uninformed	57	20
Somewhat informed	209	73
Highly informed	14	5
COMMUNITY SUPPORT		
Nonsupportive	23	8
Somewhat supportive	194	68
Highly supportive	57	20
METHOD OF INCREASING COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE		
Newspaper/newsletter/radio	217	73
Parents	201	67
Other	52	17

n= number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom questionnaires were received checking this response

As shown in Table 9, seventy-four percent of the schools use district general fund money to support their programs for students at risk. Ninety-five have special grants, 73 use increased allowable growth, 20 have money from private sources, and 46 use an instructional support levy.

TABLE 9.   Resources to support at-risk students

RESOURCES	n	%*
District general fund	209	74
Special grant	95	33
Increased allowable growth	73	26
Money from private sources	20	7
Instructional support levy	4	16
Other	18	6

n= number of schools checking this response
* % of 285 schools from whom questionnaires were received checking this response

Conclusions

It appears that local schools districts, in general, are making progress toward meeting the state standard for offering services to students at risk of school failure. It also appears they need assistance. Most services are very traditional. There is little evidence that creative, innovative interventions or strategies are in widespread use.

Schools are using multiple indicators to identify students at-risk. The most frequently used indicators -- poor grades, high rate of absenteeism, behavior problems -- are easily spotted and are sources of discomfort and stress for school personnel. A second category -- special home circumstances and low achievers -- are also easily spotted, but cause less discomfort. The remaining indicators fall into two categories: 1) ranging from retention to functioning below chronological age and 2) limited or no extra curricular participation to parent underage at student's birth. The first of these two categories includes situations less easily identified which may or may not manifest themselves in academic or behavior problems. The second category contains situations which often require serious detective work to uncover, and their relationship to school problems may appear to be remote. Because their effects are frequently more subtle, these last two categories may not be receiving the attention that they need.

In order to be effective, it is important that services be offered in the regular classroom as often as possible, and in the child's home school whenever this is feasible. If a significant impact is to be made on the lives of these children, all school personnel should be involved in some way with creating the type of school that meets their

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needs. There is little indication that all school personnel are involved with meeting the needs of students at risk. Schools surveyed indicate some variety of instruction delivery options and some willingness to alter programs and procedures when appropriate.

Educational services include counseling at most schools, but attention to academic programs, career education and personal/social skills are receiving less attention at this time. Programs in these categories have a long-term payoff for the students as they become part of the work force, and also for schools, as these students begin families of their own. Most schools are employing multiple indicators at this time to define success of their programs; most schools report achievement for students at risk to be somewhat lower than that of students in their regular school programs. Barriers to success of programs include lack of: resources, parental support, knowledge of effective strategies to use with students at risk and qualified staff. Lack of support from the Department of Education, the community, the school board, district administrators, and the AEA were seldom seen as barriers. This may indicate that these groups are seen as having little potential impact on at-risk programs.

Parent involvement indicates heavy reliance on standard practices, such as parent/teacher conferences and staffings to place students in programs. Telephone calls and letters home are used, but contact is not as frequent as needed for many students at risk. Less attention is given to individual meetings, counseling sessions including the student, home visits, and parent support groups. Time may be a factor in not including these labor intensive activities, but, according to existing research about parent involvement and student achievement, the long-term payoff for students and for schools certainly would justify the expense in time.

Given the urgency of the problem of dealing with a rapidly increasing at-risk population, the number of schools offering support through staff development should be 100 percent. Time to plan and interact with other teachers, to promote parent involvement, and to interact with other agencies are the cornerstones of effective at-risk programs. Time to carry out these key activities is available in only 16-26 percent of the schools surveyed. Active encouragement from administrators was found in only 65 percent of these schools.

Support from Area Education Agencies includes some inservice training and materials. AEA's may need to provide more support to gather and disseminate lists of resource people, research about students at risk, and local program descriptions. More help is needed in program planning, collaboration with area human services agencies, development of monitoring systems, and local advisory committees. Local educators perceive that, in these areas,

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little assistance is provided by government or community agencies, colleges and universities, and the Department of Education. Some support is given through substance abuse centers, Iowa Department of Human Services, JTPA, law enforcement agencies and mental health agencies. Less use is made of other state and community resources such as service clubs, churches, Job Service, family planning agencies, Department of Health, business partnerships or YMCA/YWCA.

School counseling services are the primary source of assistance in helping students to gain access to outside agencies. Schedule modification and development of a community service directory have been used by only 40-50% of the schools to help students gain access to other agencies. These should be considered as front line strategies to help at-risk students access the support they need. Very little movement is shown toward tapping into training and knowledge of outside agencies by joint meetings and training, field trips to agencies, incorporating community services knowledge into educational programs, or housing community service personnel. School-based support is available primarily through school psychologists, speech-language teachers, school social workers, the school nurse, and guidance counselors. The survey did not investigate the amount of coordination between support offered by these professionals and other school personnel.

Programs for students at risk are primarily monitored by principals and teachers responsible for the program with little input from other teachers, parents, or district office personnel. Use of standard measures of academic success such as attendance, report cards, grades, discipline records, drop out rates and standardized achievement tests are the primary methods of monitoring and evaluating the programs. Little use is made of advisory committees or surveys of students, teachers, parents, community members or community agencies.

Many schools in rural Iowa have made a start toward meeting the needs of students at risk. In order to be effective in stemming the tide of school failure and undereducation, schools will need to shift their attention from crisis reaction to long-term and systemic planning. This will require that priority be given to the following:

1) Attention must be given to the identification of students who are at risk of undereducation, but are not displaying behavior that calls attention to this fact.

2) More attention must be given to school-wide systems of participation, communication and planning. All school personnel must have an awareness of the needs of students at risk and the commitment and strategies to meet these needs.

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3) Time must by allowed for conferencing and planning among teachers, the professional staff, parents, and staff of outside agencies. The effectiveness of in-school programs is severely handicapped when programs and services are not coordinated.

4) Parent contact and participation must be increased drastically if school efforts are to be effective. The increased contact will effect not only the child who has been identified, but other siblings in the family (who are or will be students in this school).

5) Schools need to understand the importance of building district and community commitment to ongoing school programs. Without this broad base of support and participation, in-school programs will have a limited effect on the quality of the work force and type of student the school will be serving in the future.

6) Resources must be built into the operating budget and must be protected when cuts are made.

7) After the barrier of limited financial resources, the major barrier to success with students at risk is lack of knowledge of how to meet the needs of at-risk students. There is a need to offer opportunities for educators to enhance their knowledge about and skills in using effective strategies to help students at risk meet success.

Study 2: Assessment of secondary principals' and teachers' readiness for meeting the needs of students at risk

Objectives

(a) determine the extent of local educators' awareness of the local, state and national statistics regarding undereducation of youth;

(b) determine the extent of local educators' awareness of the current and potential problems associated with failure to educate all children;

(c) assess the degree of educators' personal felt need to act to address the problem;

(d) assess the degree of educators' felt need for the district to act;

(e) assess the degree of educators' felt personal obligation to address the problem;

(f) assess the degree to which educators feel the district should act;

(g) assess the degree of educators' willingness to support changing school practices to address the problem;

(h) assess the degree of educators' willingness to change personal, professional practices to address the problem; and

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(i)   assess the degree of educators' support for commitment of district resources to address the problem.

Procedures

1.   Methods

A questionnaire was developed, in cooperation with the advisory panel, designed to meet the above objectives. The entire questionnaire was used to assess educators' readiness for meeting the needs of students at risk. Teachers and principals from all the schools asked to participate in Study One were invited to complete the questionnaire. Items on the questionnaire were divided into ten sets categorized as follows:

(a)   awareness of the problems associated with students at risk;

(b)   support for action by district leadership to deal with the problems of students at risk;

(c)   knowledge of strategies and approaches to use to effectively teach students at risk;

(d)   feelings about the abilities of all students to meet success;

(e)   feelings about personal obligation to act to address the issue of students at risk;

(f)   support for allocating district resources to address the issue of students at risk;

(g)   support for changing district and school practices to better meet the needs of students;

(h)   willingness to change personal, professional practices to better meet the needs of students;

(i)   personal teaching efficacy with students at risk; and

(j)   effectiveness in handling specific situations that arise with students at risk.

Respondents indicated their agreement with statements in the first nine categories by use of a 5 point Likert scale with 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. A 5-point Likert scale was also used in the situations with 1 indicating the respondent would be very ineffective in handling the situation, 2 ineffective, 3 neutral, 4 moderately effective, and 5 very effective.

Data were initially analyzed as group means on individual items, groups means on each of the ten sets of items, and overall group mean for readiness. Principals and teachers responses were analyzed separately. The data will be disaggregated to determine if there are differences between groups based on subjects taught, grade levels taught, age, years of teaching or principalship experience, education and gender.

2.   Sample

All principals of schools invited to participate in Study One were invited to complete a questionnaire. Two hundred ninety-two of the 506 principals invited to participate returned completed questionnaires. One teacher for every 100 students in each school was invited to participate. Teachers were selected at random from the staff roster excluding counselors and special education teachers. Questionnaires were sent to 1263 teachers and were completed and returned by 702 teachers. Preliminary data analysis indicates the sample was representative of rural secondary school teachers in Iowa.

Results

Preliminary data analysis has been completed. Groups means, listed by teachers and principals on each set of questions, are as follows:

		TEACHERS	PRINCIPALS
(a)	awareness of the problems associated with students at risk	4.05	4.20
(b)	support for action by district leadership	4.14	4.44
(c)	knowledge of strategies and approaches to use to effectively teach students at risk	3.42	3.64
(d)	feelings about the ability of all students to meet success	3.11	3.24
(e)	feelings about personal obligation to act to address the issue of students at risk	3.79	4.28
(f)	support for allocating district resources to address the issue of students at risk	3.56	3.81
(g)	support for changing district and school practices to better meet the needs of students	3.63	3.73
(h)	willingness to change personal, professional practices to better meet the needs of students at risk	4.19	4.28
(i)	personal teaching efficacy with students at risk	3.93	4.09
(j)	effectiveness in handling situations	3.02	3.25
(k)	overall readiness score	3.67	3.90

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Teachers' responses to each question are shown in Tables 10 through 20. At this time, the principals' responses to each question have not been analyzed. It was determined that teacher responses may be most important to consider because teachers are the front line interveners in students' lives.

As shown in Table 10, teachers appear to be generally well aware of the nature of students at risk and the problems associated with school failure and undereducation. Over 67 percent of the teachers who responded agree that "students at risk of school failure or limited life options due to undereducation are a problem in our district."

TABLE 10. Awareness of the Nature of Students at Risk and the Problems Associated with School Failure and Undereducation

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
1a. The number of students with characteristics that impede learning has increased over the past five or ten years.	4.20	.94	7.8	8.4	83.8
1b. Students at risk of school failure or limited life opportunities due to undereducation are a major national problem	4.26	.79	4.0	8.9	87.0
1c. The long-term cost of students dropping out of school far exceeds the cost of meeting the students' current needs so that they can continue their educations.	4.35	.80	3.8	8.2	87.9
1d. Students at risk of school failure or limited life opportunities due to undereducation are a problem in our district.	3.72	.96	13.7	18.6	67.5
1e. I know the life circumstances that put students at risk.	3.94	.75	4.9	15.7	79.5
1f. I can recognize the life circumstances that put students at risk.	3.87	.76	6.2	16.8	77.0
1g. I know behaviors students choose that put them at risk.	4.04	.72	3.7	11.8	84.5
1h. I can recognize student behaviors that put them at risk.	4.02	.69	3.6	11.5	84.9
Summary for the set:	4.05	.46			

N = 699
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree NA = Not Applicable

Table 11 reveals that, overall, teachers expect district leaders to address the issue of students at risk. A strong majority of the teachers agree that educating all students should be a primary focus of the district and that district administrators should lead efforts to educate all students, should lead the development of programs for

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students at risk, and should provide teachers with the resources they need to help all students succeed. Most also

believe district inservice offerings should be a useful source for learning strategies and approaches for working

effectively with students at risk. An area of concern, or at least worthy of further investigation, in this set of items

is that only 61.3 percent of the teachers agreed that district administrators should expect all teachers to accept

responsibility for educating all students.

TABLE 11.   Expectations for District Leadership in Addressing the Issue of Students at Risk

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
2a. Educating **all** students should be a primary focus of the district.	4.28	.95	8.8	6.6	85.7
2b. District administrators should lead efforts to educate **all** students.	4.24	.93	8.7	9.6	83.8
2c. District administrators should lead in the development of programs for students at risk.	4.05	.91	6.9	15.8	77.3
2d. District administrators should expect all teachers to accept responsibility for educating **all** students.	3.60	1.23	23.2	15.5	61.3
2e. District administrators should provide teachers with the resources they need to help **all** students meet success.	4.37	.79	3.8	5.9	90.4
2f. District inservice offerings should be a useful source for me to learn strategies and approaches for working effectively with students at risk.	4.26	.79	4.0	7.2	88.9
Summary for the set:	4.14	.69			

N = 700
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree   NA = Not Applicable

The mean score (3.42) of teachers' responses to items designed to assess their knowledge and skills for

working effectively with students at risk, as shown in Table 11, indicates that teachers may not possess the

knowledge and skills they need to be successful with all students. Mean responses to individual items reveal areas of

concern. Only 25.2 percent agreed that they know how to effectively teach at-risk students, and only 19.2 precent

responded that training and preparation prepared them to deal with students who have low motivation or history of

behavior problems in school. Few teachers, only 16.2 percent, agree that they know how to help students overcome

the life/home circumstances that put them at risk, and only 43.3 percent agreed they were effective in helping

students with their problems outside of class or school. Only 54.2 percent agree that they know how to design and

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use activities to match the individual interests and abilities of students in their classes, and only about half agree that heterogeneously grouped classes provide the best environment for learning. Most are, however, aware of the effects that parent expectations and parent involvement can have on students school achievement.

TABLE 12.   Knowledge and Skills for Working Effectively with Students at Risk

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
3a. I know how effectively to teach at-risk students.	2.88	.87	35.3	39.6	25.2
3b. The training and preparation I received prepared me to deal with students who have low motivation or history of behavior problems in school.	2.45	1.03	60.6	20.1	19.2
3c. My skills are best suited for students who are academically motivated and generally well-behaved.	3.86	.97	14.2	20.7	65.1
3d. I hold consistently high standards for all students.	4.00	.85	7.8	12.5	79.7
3e. I recognize students' strengths and weaknesses, both academic and social.	4.00	.68	3.3	11.9	84.8
3f. I know how to help students overcome the life/home situations that put them at risk.	2.60	.87	50.0	33.9	16.2
3g. I effectively design and use activities to match the individual interests and abilities of the students in my class.	3.45	.89	15.4	31.5	54.2
3h. Heterogeneously grouped classes provide the best environment for learning.	3.38	1.06	21.1	29.4	49.9
3i. I am effective in helping students with their problems outside of class or school.	3.24	.95	22.8	33.8	43.3
3j. I am aware of the effects that parent expectations and parental involvement can have on students' school achievement.	4.48	.60	.8	2.6	96.6
Summary for the set:	3.42	.42			

N = 699
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree NA = Not Applicable

Table 13 shows teachers' responses to items designed to reveal beliefs about the ability of all students to achieve, the set of items with scores second lowest of the categories examined. Only 53.6 percent of the teachers responding agree that every student is reachable, 38.5 percent responded that they assume all students are capable of learning at high levels given appropriate conditions, and only 28.2 percent agree that students who are not interested in education and who continually misbehave should be kept in school so that trained teachers can help them

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improve. While 90.5 percent of the respondents agree they feel positive about the students they teach, 66.7 percent

indicate there are students in their classes they feel should not be in school.   The mean score of 3.11 is lower than

would be expected for teachers to be most successful.

TABLE 13.   Beliefs about Abilities of All Students to Achieve

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
4a. Every student is reachable.	3.32	1.21	32.5	13.9	53.6
4b. I assume all students are capable of learning at high levels given appropriate conditions.	3.02	1.11	40.6	21.0	38.5
4c. Students who are not interested in education and who continually misbehave should be kept in school so that trained teachers can help them improve.	2.86	1.02	38.6	33.2	28.2
4d. I feel positive about the students I am assigned to teach.	4.27	.71	2.3	7.2	90.5
4e. When it comes right down to it, a teacher can't do much because a student's motivation and performance depends primarily on his/her home situation.	3.69	.91	12.1	18.4	69.6
4f. Teachers can help most students overcome the home life circumstances that put them at risk.	2.93	.92	34.1	36.2	29.7
4g. I am able to control and even change my false beliefs, assumptions and stereotypes about students.	3.86	.68	3.7	19.6	76.6
4h. There are students in my classes whom I feel should not be in school.	3.67	1.19	21.2	12.1	66.7
Summary for the set:	3.11	.40			

N = 698
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree   NA = Not Applicable

The responses to items about personal obligation to act to address the needs of all students, shown in

Table 14, reveal some concerns. While 85.5 percent of the respondents indicated they can be counted on to help

students achieve, even if it inconveniences them, only 75 percent agree they need to do more to address the needs of

students at risk, 73.7 percent agree it is their obligation to make sure every one of their students achieves, and only

78.1 percent agree that it is part of their responsibility to keep students from dropping out of school. Fortunately,

only 6 to 14 percent of the teachers who responded disagree with those statements. That significant numbers of

teachers feel neutral about these issues may be cause for investigation of reasons; additional investigation may also

be warranted to determine why only 46.1 percent of respondents agree that they feel they have let students down

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when students fail to achieve at high levels in their classes. The mean score for this set of items (3.79) may also be

lower than desired for teachers to meet with the most success.

TABLE 14. Personal Obligation to Act to Address the Needs of All Students

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
5a. It is my obligation to make sure every one of my students achieves.	3.85	.99	13.1	13.2	73.7
5b. I need to do more to address the needs of students at risk.	3.83	.83	8.4	16.5	75.0
5c. It is part of my responsibility to keep students from dropping out of school.	3.90	.83	7.2	14.6	78.1
5d. When my students fail to achieve at high levels in my class, I feel that I have let them down.	3.23	1.05	29.5	24.5	46.1
5e. I need to encourage the development of effective alternatives to traditional school for students who are not interested in education or who often misbehave.	3.90	.86	6.5	19.9	73.5
5f. I can be counted on to help students achieve, even though it may not be part of my official assignment, increases my workload, or causes me inconvenience.	4.06	.68	2.5	11.9	85.5
Summary for the set:	3.79	.54			

N = 701
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree   NA = Not Applicable

Teachers' support for allocation of district resources to meet the needs of all students, as shown in

Table 15, is not strong. While 82.4 percent of respondents agree the district should support training and

development to help all staff work more effectively with students at risk and 65.7 percent agree the district should

allocate more resources to ensure that all students make academic progress, only 44.6 percent agree meeting the needs

of students at risk should be a district priority during time of scarce financial resources. Support becomes even

weaker (33.4 percent agree) for the district funding of alternative and experimental programs for students at risk if it

reduces resources for the individual teachers' classes.

TABLE 15.   Support for Allocation of District Resources to Meet the Needs of All Students

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
6a. The district should allocate more resources to ensure that all students make academic progress.	3.78	.87	7.1	27.3	65.7
6b. The district should fund alternative and experimental programs for students at risk, even if it reduces resources for my classes.	3.04	1.01	31.8	34.7	33.4
6c. The district should support additional training and development to help all staff work more effectively with students at risk.	4.07	.77	3.7	13.9	82.4
6d. In times of scarce financial resources, meeting the needs of students at risk should be a high district priority.	3.35	.89	16.1	39.3	44.6
Summary for the set:	3.56	.66			

N = 700
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree   NA = Not Applicable

Support appears to be stronger for changing some district policies and school practices to meet the needs of all students, as shown in Table 16. The vast majority of respondents agree that practices and procedures should be constantly examined to determine if they need to be changed and that more promotion of parent and community involvement needs to be done. Over seventy percent of the respondents agree that scheduling and teaching methods should be examined and changed where needed to help meet the needs of students. There is some support for examining and considering changing grading practices, grouping practices, educational programs/requirements, and course offerings/content to help meet the needs of students. The least support, 28.4 percent of the respondents, is indicated for examining and changing attendance policies to meet the needs of students.

TABLE 16. Support for Changing District Policies and School Practices to Meet the Needs of All Students

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
7a. In our district, we should constantly examine practices and procedures to determine if they need to be changed to meet the needs of students.	4.26	.69	2.3	6.3	91.4
7b. In this school, we should consider more flexible **scheduling** if it will help meet the educational needs of more students.	3.91	.95	9.6	17.8	72.6
7c. In this school, we need to examine and consider changing our **attendance** policies to help meet the educational needs of students.	2.95	1.17	39	28.9	28.4
7d. In this school, we need to examine and consider changing teaching **methods** to help meet the educational needs of students.	3.79	.91	9.6	20.0	70.4
7e. In this school, we need to examine and consider changing **grading practices** to help meet the educational needs of students.	3.23	1.07	27.4	29.4	43.2
7f. In this school, we need to examine and promote more **parent and community involvement** to help meet the educational needs of students.	4.13	.83	4.7	14.1	81.2
7g. In this school, we need to examine and consider changing **grouping practices** to help meet the educational needs of students.	3.48	.95	14.8	35.9	49.3
7h. In this school, we need to examine and consider changing **educational program /requirements** to help meet the educational needs of students.	3.44	.98	18.2	30.0	41.8
7i. In this school, we need to examine and consider changing **course offerings/content** to help meet the educational needs of students.	3.53	1.01	18.7	22.4	58.9
Summary for the set:	3.63	.60			

N = 700
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree NA = Not Applicable

Teachers' willingness to change personal/professional practices to meet the needs of all students is shown in Table 17. Eighty percent of the teacher who responded agree they need to change their professional practices as the needs of their students change. To better meet the needs of students, over ninety percent of the teachers agree they are willing to collaborate with administrators and colleagues, to learn more about what puts students at risk, to learn more about effective strategies and approaches to teaching , to examine and change teaching methods, to examine and change course content, and to examine and change assignments. Nearly as many are

willing to learn more about parental and community involvement to help meet the educational needs of students.

Fewer (70.6 percent), but still an encouraging number, are willing to individualize instruction to better meet the

needs of students. The mean score to this set of items (4.19) is encouraging; it indicates teachers are ready to learn

more and do more to help all students succeed.

TABLE 17.   Willingness to Change Personal/Professional Practices to Meet the Needs of All Students

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
8a. I need to **change my professional practices** as the needs of students in my school change.	3.92	.82	8.1	11.0	80.2
8b. I am willing to **collaborate** with administrators and other teachers to make changes where necessary to better meet the educational needs of students.	4.34	.58	.7	3.0	96.2
8c. I am willing to learn more about **what puts students at risk** of school failure or undereducation.	4.25	.64	1.8	4.9	93.3
8d. I am willing to learn more about teaching **strategies and approaches** make changes where necessary to better meet the educational needs of students.	4.33	.62	1.1	4.3	94.6
8e. I am willing to examine my **teaching methods** and make changes where necessary to better meet the educational needs of students.	4.35	.58	.8	2.3	96.8
8f. I am willing to examine **course content** and make changes where necessary to better meet the educational needs of students.	4.27	.63	1.6	4.2	93.3
8g. I am willing to **individualize instruction** to better meet the educational needs of students.	3.87	.89	6.9	22.4	70.6
8h. I am willing to examine **assignments** I give and make changes where necessary to better meet the educational needs of students.	4.23	.62	1.3	5.9	92.8
8i. I am willing to learn more about **parental and community involvement** and make changes to help meet the educational needs of students.	4.11	.65	1.3	12.1	86.6
Summary for the set:	4.19	.48			

N = 700

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree   NA = Not Applicable

The responses to the set of items designed to gather information about teachers' sense of personal

teaching efficacy are shown in Table 18. While most responses are encouraging, it is disquieting to consider that

only 65.1 percent of the respondents know their students will make sufficient academic progress for them to be

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successful at the next level of education or on the job, only 47.5 percent agree they can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students if they make a sincere effort, only 63.3 percent have confidence in themselves as teachers when students have low motivation or exhibit behavior problems, only 59.2 percent have tangible evidence that they are effective in increasing the academic achievement of all students in their classes, and only 67.7 percent agree they are effective in persuading student they can be successful in school. It is encouraging that small percentages of respondents disagreed with most of these statements but disturbing that 20 to 30 percent of the teachers were neutral about these issues. That only 70.8 percent of the respondents agreed that if they had it to do over again they would still choose to become a teacher may be cause for concern.

TABLE 18. Sense of Personal Teaching Efficacy

Question	Mean	S.D.	Percent Disagree	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree
9a. If I had it to do over again, I would still choose to become a teacher.	3.97	1.12	11.1	18.1	70.8
9b. There is room for me to improve as a teacher.	4.49	.61	1.0	.3	98.7
9c. I expect all students in my classes, including those with low ability and/or poor motivation, to complete high school.	4.17	.91	7.9	7.6	84.5
9d. I am certain that I can make a difference in the lives of my students.	4.22	.73	1.9	11.6	86.6
9e. I know my students will make sufficient academic progress for them to be successful at the next level of education or on the job.	3.69	.79	7.7	27.2	65.1
9f. If I make a sincere effort, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	3.29	1.01	25.8	26.7	47.5
9g. I have confidence in myself as a teacher when my students are academically motivated and generally well-behaved.	4.49	.60	1.0	1.6	97.4
9h. I have confidence in myself as a teacher when my students have low motivation or have a history of behavior problems.	3.59	.93	15.3	21.3	63.3
9i. I have tangible evidence that I am effective in increasing the academic achievement of all students in my classes.	3.62	.84	8.8	32.0	59.2
9j. I am effective in persuading students that they can be successful in school.	3.75	.68	2.8	29.4	67.7
Summary for the set:	3.93	.47			

N = 699
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree   NA = Not Applicable

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Teachers' ratings of their effectiveness in intervening in typical classroom situations involving students at risk, presented in Table 19, resulted in the lowest mean score of any set of items. Overall, teachers perceive themselves to be only moderately effective in handling these situations. They feel least confident in their ability to help a student with reading problems, designing activities to match the interests and abilities of students, dealing with chronic absenteeism, helping students with drug problems and convincing a student that school achievement is more important than an evening job.

TABLE 19.   Effectiveness in Intervening in Typical Classroom Situations Involving Students at Risk.

Question	Mean	S.D.	% extremely ineffective		% moderately effective		% extremely effective
1. One of your students misbehaves frequently in your class and often is hostile. You have discovered his father is an alcoholic and quite likely abuses him and his mother. The family has little money. Today in class he began roughhousing with a friend. You tell both boys to take their seats and quiet down. He turns from you, says something under his breath, and swaggers to his seat. How effective would you be in responding to this student in a way that would win his respect so you could begin to help him with his problems at home?	3.15	.75	1.9	13.8	53.2	29.2	1.9
2. Several low-achieving girls appear to be getting very little from your class. They have begun to disrupt your lessons and occasionally "talk back." When you attempt to involve them in class work, they either make jokes or sit sullenly. How effective would you be in eliminating the disruptive behavior?	3.43	.83	1.6	9.5	41.2	39.9	7.8
3. You have a student who never hands in assignments on time, seldom gets to class on time, and nearly always forgets to bring his materials to class. Although he is very bright, perhaps even gifted, he is barely passing in most classes. You have discussed this with his parents, but they don't seem to understand the importance of school achievement. How effective would you be in motivating this student to take his achievement seriously?	3.14	.74	1.7	14.3	54.4	27.6	2.0
4. A new student has been assigned to your class. Her records indicate that she seldom does her homework and does not seem to care about her education. Her IQ score is 97, her achievement scores have been below the 30th percentile, and her reading ability is four years below grade level. How effective would you be in helping her increase her achievement scores?	2.94	.8	4.0	21.8	51.7	20.5	1.9

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	Mean	SD					
5. The student-teacher ratio in your class of lower achieving students is 20 to 1. You want to plan your lessons to meet the individual needs of the students. How effective would you be in designing activities to match the individual interests and abilities of the students in your class?	3.01	.96	6.2	23.0	38.7	28.0	4.0
6. Because of repeated absences, one of your students is failing in most classes. She confides to you that she has given up and will drop out of school as soon as she is old enough. How effective would you be in persuading her to stay in school?	3.05	.80	2.3	19.4	52.6	22.3	3.5
7. Some of your students have been sleeping in class, and their absences have been increasing. They do poorly on in-class assignments and seldom turn in homework. You learn that they may be taking drugs. How effective would you be in helping the students with their drug problems?	2.73	.94	9.1	31.2	39.1	18.4	2.2
8. A student has started to miss your first period class more than once a week. On days when he is there, he sometimes falls asleep. When you investigate, you find that his achievement is falling in most of his classes. When you talk to him about it, you discover that he has taken a late evening job in a fast-food restaurant to earn enough money to pay for his new car. How effective would you be in persuading him that doing well in school is more important than a late evening job?	2.71	.81	7.1	29.3	49.9	12.8	1.0
Summary for the set:	3.02	.55					

N = 697

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree NA = Not Applicable

Table 20 presents the overall readiness scores. The mean score of the teachers on the nine sets of statements was 3.76. The lowest overall mean score was in dealing effectively with situations that arise with students at risk (3.02). When responses to all nine sets of items are averaged with the responses to the situations, the mean is 3.68. Item sets 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9 ask teachers to respond to statements that revolve around the teacher as an individual. The mean rating for those items was 3.74. Item sets 2, 6, and 7 ask teachers to respond to components of readiness that focus on the district or school rather than the individual. The mean rating for those items was 3.77. The researcher proposes that a mean readiness score of at least 4.00 may be necessary to meet with success with students at risk.

TABLE 20.   Readiness for Meeting the Needs of Students at Risk

Mean: all sets except situations	S.D.	Mean: all sets including situations	S.D.	Mean: personal (sets 1,3,4,5,8,9)	S.D.	Mean: school (sets 2,6,7)	S.D.	Mean: situations	S.D.
3.76	.34	3.68	.33	3.74	.33	3.77	.52	3.02	.55

N = 701
Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree NA = Not Applicable

Conclusion

The 700 teachers who responded to the questionnaire rated their agreement with sets of items lowest on "beliefs about abilities of all students to achieve" (3.11 on a 5.00 scale) and on "knowledge and skills for working effectively with students at risk" (3.42). Teachers rated themselves even lower (3.02), on the average, on their ability to effectively intervene in specific situations that arise with at-risk students. The overall readiness score, including 10 categories of readiness and responses to the specific situations was 3.68. An average score of 4.00 is expected for readiness for educators to meet with success with students at risk.

Individual items revealed specific areas of concern for teachers. Only twenty-five percent of the teachers responding to the questionnaire agreed with the statement "I know how effectively to teach at-risk students." Only nineteen percent reported they had adequate training and preparation to work effectively with students at risk, only fourteen percent agreed their skills are best suited for working with students at risk, and only sixteen percent agreed they had the ability to help a student overcome the life home circumstances that put him/her at risk. Only fifty-four percent of the respondents indicated they believe every student is reachable.

Responses to other items are encouraging. Eighty-nine percent of the teachers who responded agree that district inservice should be a source of support for them in learning to work successfully with students at risk, and eighty-two percent indicated the district should support training and development to help all staff work more effectively with these students. Seventy-five percent agreed with the statement "I need to do more to meet the needs of students at risk." Ninety-three per cent indicated a willingness to learn more about what puts students at risk, and ninety-five percent said they need to learn and apply strategies to meet the needs of students at risk.

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In general, readiness of educators to meet the needs of students at risk is not as high as may be necessary to meet with high success. (Although the specific tables are not included in this report, principals, in general, rated themselves higher in all areas than teachers rated themselves; principal readiness appears to be higher than teacher readiness.) Both group means and responses to individual questions indicate that educators feel inadequately prepared to use effective strategies and approaches with students at risk. They do, however, indicate a willingness to learn more about students at risk, to learn to use strategies and approaches to enhance their effectiveness with students at risk, and to change personal, professional practices to better meet the needs of students at risk. It appears that there is a pressing need to develop and test interventions that will help local educators know how to work with students at risk.

The numbers of students at risk of school failure or undereducation is increasing nationwide. The time for action has arrived. "There must be better assurance that all children receive an excellent and appropriate education without leaving significant segments of our student population behind. Schools (and all school staff) need to recognize the magnitude of the situation and their roles in some areas once assumed solely by the parents. The concentration of efforts presently on excellence must include greater attention to those students who need a safety net" (FINE , 1991).

Districts and schools can afford to lose no time in moving ahead with plans to increase parent involvement, coordinate community services, and adjust school programs. At the same time, it is important to realize that the impact will be limited by the readiness of principals and teachers to deal with beliefs concerning the ability of all children to succeed and strategies that make this success possible for children at risk. "Traditionally most of our country's efforts in this regard have been short-term and primarily remedial in approach. We need to focus much more on prevention and long-term approaches" (Davis, 1991). Such long-term approaches require comprehensive plans for teachers and principals to increase understanding of the problems of students at risk and to master teaching and learning strategies that are successful with students at risk. All students will benefit.

It appears that the timing for intervening with teachers at risk of failure with students is right in Iowa-- educators seem ready and willing to enhance their readiness and increase their effectiveness with students at risk.

Study 3: Case study analysis of selected rural Iowa secondary school programs for students at risk

Objectives

(a)   select four effective school district programs to study;

(b)   examine and describe the context within which each program operates including, but not limited to the history of the program development, culture of the community and school, and teacher, student, parent, administrator, and community support for the program;

(c)   examine and describe components of each program including, but not limited to, philosophy, grades/ages served, identification and placement of students, staffing, inservice, educational support and delivery of instruction, counseling, parent involvement, and involvement with community and community helping agencies;

(d)   examine and describe the processes used to develop a school and community culture supportive of students at risk;

(e)   identify any factors that appear to be key for effective program implementation;

(f)   determine effects of the program on the regular school program;

(g)   describe the resources that ;support the program;

(h)   determine the extent of effectiveness of the program and/or components of the program;

(i)   determine the influence of each program component on the overall effectiveness of the program.

Progress

This study was to be initiated during the first year of this research program and completed in the second year. Information from Studies 1 and 2 was used to select four programs representative of the various approaches used in rural Iowa for assisting students at risk. Schools chosen included those at Estherville Middle School, Pella High School, Iowa Falls Middle and Senior High Schools, and Boone Junior High and Senior High Schools.

Structured interviews were developed to be used with parents, students, community members, teachers, and administrators at each school. Initial interviews have been conducted at each school. Additional interviews will be conducted in the fall of 1992, and data will be analyzed during the 92-93 grant year.

Future Efforts

Continued Research

Studies 1 and 2 revealed a need to provide local educators with skills and knowledge to use to achieve success with students at risk. With the support of a FINE grant for the 92-93 school year, staff development

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programs are being developed that will help local educators gain the skills and knowledge they need to work effectively with students at risk. In addition, several other agencies conducting staff development to help teachers meet the needs of students at risk will collaborate with this researcher to use the revised questionnaire, originally developed for Study 2, to assess the effectiveness of various staff development efforts. The longer term intent of this research project is to determine which staff development programs are most effective and then to train local educators to deliver the inservice in their own districts.

Revised Questionnaire

The questionnaire to determine educator readiness has been revised and pilot tested. It will be used not only in the current research efforts to assess the effectiveness of staff development, but is also being made available to local schools. The researcher has received requests to use the instrument so that local school districts can assess the readiness of their own staffs and develop plans accordingly.

Collaboration

As a result of efforts to date, the researcher is working collaboratively with others interested in meeting the needs of all students. The researcher is working with other university researchers who are administering a Drug-Free Schools Grant in rural Iowa middle schools. Those researchers will utilize the revised questionnaire to assess their effectiveness. This writer and those researchers have plans for collaboration to develop a proposal for a major Drug-Free Schools grant that will build on the results of the individual efforts of each of their respective projects. In addition, this writer is working with Ray Morley of the Department of Education to determine the best ways to utilize the results of the work to date on this FINE grant to help local educators and AEA's. Continued collaboration among the university, local schools, DE, and AEA's will be necessary as the new research develops and the project advisory committee meets.

Dissemination

The primary investigator for this project has a series of articles planned as a result of the first year of the project. She will present the data a at least two statewide conference for educators of students at risk and has submitted proposals to present at three national conferences. Dr. Ray Morley has plans to place this final report in the hands of all superintendents in the state of Iowa. In addition, he will work with this researcher to disaggregate

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the data by AEA and prepare reports for each AEA. He and this researcher will present this information to officials

from each AEA in October, 1992.

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Lisa Koester, Teacher South Tama County High School	Sue Bish, Assistant Principal Estherville Middle School
Jim Quarnstrom, Principal Gilbert Junior-Senior High School	Jean Peterson, Assistant Principal Saydel High School

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Ralph Woodard	Karen Krogman	

APPENDIX   D

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

The Costs of Dropping Out of School

And

The Productivity Benefits of Returning and Graduating

Adapted From

November 1990 Executive Summary of

"The Costs of Dropping Out of School and The Productivity
Benefits of Returning and Graduating: A Survey of Iowa's
Alternative School Graduates"

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Administrative Summary
of
The Costs of Dropping Out of School
and
The Productivity Benefits of Returning and Graduating

During the 1990 school year the Department of Education, in cooperation
with the Department of Economic Development and Dr. James Veale (a private
consultant/researcher), conducted a study to : a) assess the costs of
dropping out of school and (b) survey the productivity benefits of
returning and completing a high school education in an alternative school.
From 20 Iowa alternative schools, 206 students who graduated between
1987-89 were randomly selected and surveyed by telephone to study
productivity benefits. In addition, employers of a small subsample (30) of
these graduates were surveyed by questionnaire regarding the graduates'
productivity.   The costs of dropping out of school were computed utilizing
information from the U.S. Bureau of Census, Iowa Department of Revenue and
Finance, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Employment
Services, Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Department of
Corrections, National Center for Educational Statistics and the U.S.
Department of Labor.

IOWA ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS SAMPLED
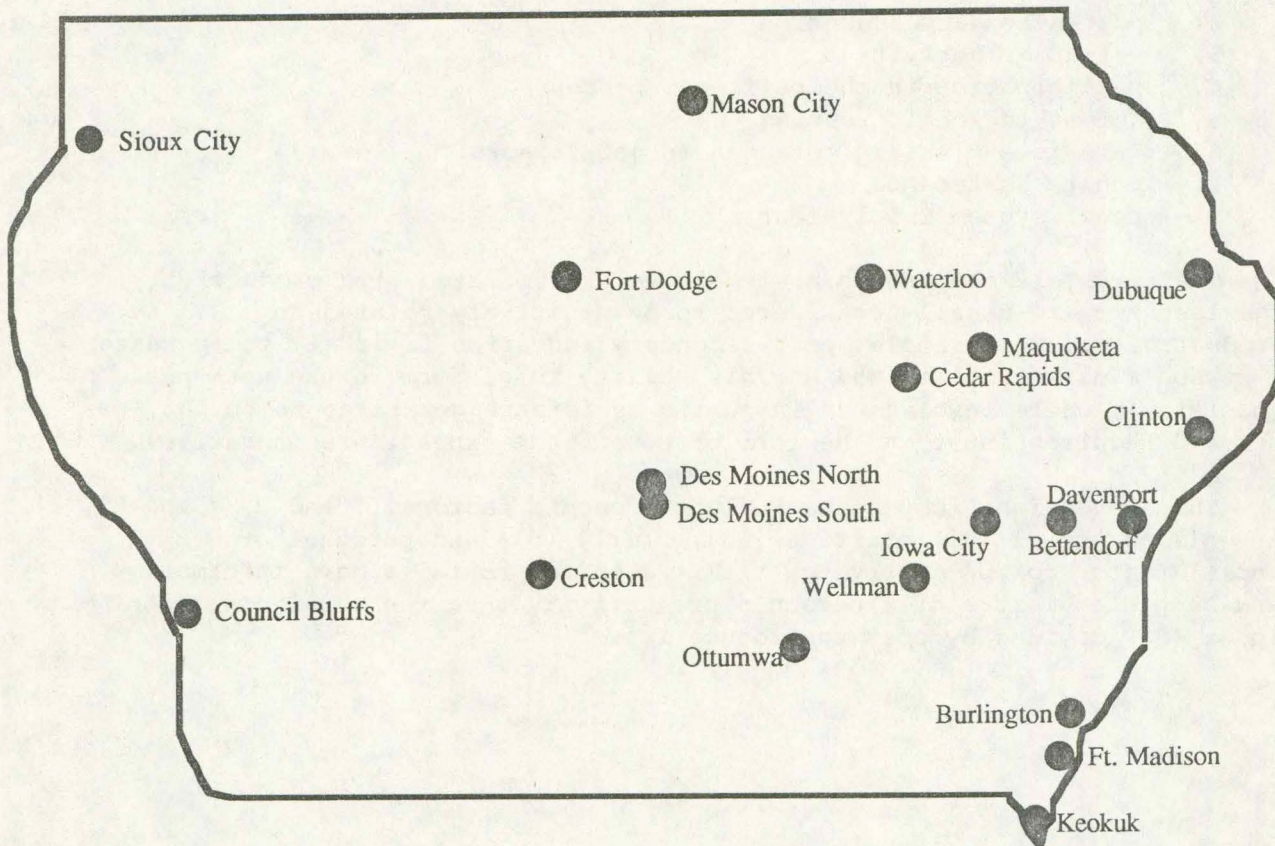
The reasons for the study included: a) a need to provide policy makers and area and local planners and practitioners with accurate up-to-date cost data involved in the issue of school dropouts; b) to identify the contribution of alternative schools in Iowa's system of public education; c) to probe the issue of the "productivity" of high school graduates on a broad-based scale believed to be most consistent with the broad-based goals of education; and, d) to provide a baseline of information on productivity that can be used in setting goals or outcomes for education.

The issue of productivity benefits has special significance because of the criticism of public education by business, industry and labor. For example, some company leaders claim that about half their applicants lack basic skills in math and English necessary to take advantage of their training programs. Private companies have started their own "schools" to remediate new employees in these basic skill areas. American business reportedly spends 30 billion annually on remedial and skills training programs. However, the concept of "productivity" by business, industry and labor is narrow in scope and doesn't totally coincide with the broad goals of education which prepare students for a broad role in society.

Productivity was defined in this study as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of "output" of an individual in various activities. This is an extension of the common economic definition - the state of being engaged in the creation of economic value, i.e. the production of goods and services - to activities other than those purely economic.

The definition of productivity used in this study included eight **components** which are:

1. income generated by employment
2. post-secondary education
3. volunteer activity
4. participation in the political process
5. homemaking/child rearing
6. talents and skills not used in job/leisure
7. public assistance
8. penal system involvement

The first six components are positively associated with productivity; the last two are usually considered to be negatively related to productivity. For example, post-secondary education is likely to increase a person's marketability and her/his ability to perform in the work place (positive), while involvement in public assistance generates no output, per se, and requires input in the form of government expenditure (negative).

The above eight components include economic factors (1 and 2, 7 and 8), as well as social (3), political (4), family (5), and personal growth (2 and 6) factors of productivity. It is seen to provide a more informative and complete picture of a person's productivity than the usual government index (GNP divided by cost to produce it).

The following behaviors were determined to be critical in assessing the productive propensity of individuals:

1. punctuality
2. work attendance
3. responsibility
4. quantity of work
5. quality of work
6. customer orientation
7. initiative
8. flexibility
9. cooperation
10. ability to learn
11. potential for advancement
12. verbal communication skill
13. written communication skill
14. nonverbal communication skill

Although these behaviors were developed with the work place in mind, they are also appropriate for assessing productive propensity with respect to the positive, non-employment components of productivity (components 2 through 6). For example, with regard to participation in the political process, e.g., voting in elections, punctuality is important in order to get to the polling place before it closes, responsibility is important in making the decision to vote, initiative is required to register to vote, ability to learn is important for educating oneself about candidates and issues, and verbal communication skill is required for discussing these issues with others, as well as communicating with the person in charge at the polling place.

The above 14 behaviors should be useful in assessing the development of productivity in all students. Presently, these behaviors are believed to be assessed in schools but perhaps without the consistency, the magnitude, or the openness needed to communicate the message to parents and students, which is necessary for behavioral development. Of course, the key issue here is defining goals and outcomes that are important and that can be assessed. Productivity in eight separate areas including 14 specific behaviors are reviewed for consideration in planning for excellence in education.

Results:

The costs of dropping out of school in Iowa include:

1) A loss of personal income averaging about $340,000 over a lifetime (45 years) of work or approximately one-third of potential earnings.

2) A loss to the state treasury of over 2 million dollars per year in tax revenues and over 91 million dollars over a lifetime of reduced earnings for any group of dropouts for a given year.

3) Increased welfare burdens up to 2.4 million dollars per year due to unemployment, the need for Aid to Dependent Children, health care, and food stamps.

4) Increased risk of incarceration, three to nine times that of
    graduates resulting in care costs of at least six times that
    of education ($18,506 incarceration costs per year vs. $2,978
    education costs).

5) Deceleration in human growth resulting in continued lowering
    of cognitive skills, reduced options to economic progress and
    restricted social networking.

6) Reduced sense of control over one's life resulting in few
    initiatives taken to enter work or volunteering for community
    services.

The productivity of our alternative school graduates indicates:

a) Employment

    a-1) About two-thirds are employed either full time or part-time,
         17% are homemakers, 3-4% are college students and 3-4% are in
         the military. Approximately 8.3% are unemployed. The
         unemployment rate of alternative school graduates is not
         significantly different from that of the same age group
         projected for the state of Iowa including all high school
         graduates.

    a-2) Graduates who participated in JTPA work experience programs
         were more likely to be employed for longer periods of time
         than those who did not participate in such programs.

    a-3) Over 85% of the graduates perceive that they have obtained
         jobs that provide opportunity for advancement in wages,
         higher level positions, or education. Nearly 75% are
         satisfied with their wages and over 80% are satisfied with
         their working conditions.

b) Post-Secondary Education

    b-1) Forty-five percent of the graduates complete some part of a
         post-secondary education, and over 78% have plans for some
         type of post-secondary education.

c) Volunteer Work - Services provided freely without financial
    renumeration

    c-1) Twenty-three to 24% of alternative school graduates are
         involved in volunteer organizations or voluntary service
         activities. More females (28.1%) than males (16.9%) are
         involved.

    c-2) Graduates who are involved in volunteer work are in church
         related activities (21.7%), school related activities (8.7%),
         and in various other activities (69.6%) including Red Cross,
         Big Brother/Sister, fixing up buildings for the poor, etc.

d)   Participation in the Political Process

   d-1) Thirty-two percent of those alternative school graduates who
        are old enough do vote. This is comparable to 34% of the
        peer group of 18-24 year olds in Iowa. Of those not voting,
        the most frequent reason is "not registered."

e)   Homemaking and Child Rearing

   e-1) Seventeen percent of alternative school graduates are
        homemakers. All are females.

   e-2) The average number of children living with nearly 83% of the
        homemakers is 1.3.

   e-3) Seventy-five percent are content with homemaking while 25%
        have sought employment outside of homemaking.

f)   Talents and Skills Not Used in Job - Evidence of human development
     beyond that required by the market place, family, society or
     political process

   f-1) Over 83% of alternative school graduates indicate that they
        have talents or skills not being used in their jobs such as
        mechanical ability, musical, writing, math, computer skills,
        cake decorating, sports, etc. Nearly 75% are continuing to
        develop these skills. Sixty percent feel that these skills
        may now be marketable.

g)   Public Assistance Involvement

   g-1) Twenty-three percent of alternative school graduates now
        receive public assistance, and 18% of their parents at some
        time received some type of public assistance. Among
        graduates whose parents were receiving some public assistance
        while the graduates were in school, over 72% "broke the
        cycle," i.e. were not themselves receiving public assistance
        at the time they were interviewed.

   g-2) Among graduates whose parents were not receiving any public
        assistance while the graduates were in school, nearly 22%
        "entered the cycle," i.e. were receiving public assistance at
        the time they were interviewed. In particular, females are
        "entering the cycle" with much greater frequency (35.6%) than
        males (4.3%). The difference may, in part, be explained by
        the problems of teen pregnancy and out of wedlock births.

h)   Penal System Involvement

   h-1) Dropouts who return to school and graduate are no worse off
        than other graduates relative to incarceration. About 1.4%
        of alternative school graduates are incarcerated. This is
        very close to the percent of the U.S. population in 1987
        either in prison, on parole, or on probation for criminal
        activity (1.4%). Dropouts who do not return and graduate are
        3 to 9 times more likely to be incarcerated.

Productive Propensity of Alternative School Graduates Based on 14 Behaviors

In terms of the 14 behaviors in productivity, the graduates of alternative schools rate themselves fairly high and are rated by their employers respectably high but somewhat lower. Overall there is a general congruence between graduate self-assessments and employer assessments. Agreement is fairly high on some behaviors and low on others. For example, there is good agreement on punctuality and flexibility but some disagreement on responsibility, cooperation, and initiative.

Response distributions for graduates and employers on items assessing the graduates on the 14 behaviors of productivity. ("--" denotes not applicable for this group.)

Behavior	Diagnostic Choices	Graduates	Employers
Punctuality	often late	0.7%	0.0%
	occasionally late	25.9	34.5
	never late	73.4	65.5
Attendance	often miss	0.0%	0.0%
	occasionally miss	5.0	31.0
	never miss	95.0	69.0
Responsibility	often break rules	0.0%	3.4%
	abide by rules; do job	15.8	48.3
	can be depended upon	84.2	48.3
Work Quantity	below average	1.5%	3.4%
	average	34.3	51.7
	above average	50.0	27.6
	well above average	14.2	17.2
Customer Orientation	don't know customers	11.5%	3.7%
	little or no concern	1.5	3.7
	some concern; friendly	16.9	55.6
	considerable concern	70.0	37.0
Work Quality	many defects, errors	1.4%	0.0%
	some defects, errors	10.8	10.3
	few defects, errors	28.1	55.2
	very few defects, errors	59.7	34.5
Initiative	do as little as possible	0.7%	11.1%
	work fairly hard	6.5	33.3
	work hard; look for more	61.9	48.1
	will "go the extra mile"	30.9	7.4
Flexibility	can do only one type of job	2.2%	3.4%
	some ability to do more than one job	18.0	34.5
	can do many types of jobs	79.9	62.1

Behavior	Diagnostic Choices	Graduates	Employers
Cooperation	likes to work alone	14.1%	0.0%
	cooperates when asked	8.1	24.1
	cooperates even when not asked	41.5	62.1
	helps to build cooperation	36.3	13.8
Ability to Learn	lacks basic skills	1.4%	0.0%
	has basic skills	28.1	67.9
	much skill, ability	70.5	32.1
Potential for Advancement	will stay at same level	17.0%	7.1%
	potential advancement in pay	17.8	39.3
	potential advancement in and responsibility	43.0	50.0
	excellent potential for advancement in company	22.0	3.6
Verbal skills	poor	1.4%	6.9%
	good	98.6	93.1
Writing skills	poor	11.7%	3.4%
	good	88.3	55.2
	can't tell	--	41.4
Nonverbal skills	poor	2.9%	10.7%
	good	97.1	53.6
	can't tell	--	35.7

[Note: The graduates' percentages were based on 130-140 graduates (numbers vary somewhat due to irrelevance of options or nonresponse in some cases). The employers' percentages were based on, at most, 29 responses.]

How Graduates Feel About the Alternative School Experience

Graduates of alternative schools feel that alternative schools make a positive difference in their lives. Most graduates (92.4%) have a very positive view of their alternative school experience. Some examples of comments are as follows:

"I was a mess when I started (at the alternative school)...they helped me to grow up and learn responsibility."

"They helped with everything from getting to know people to working with people."

"The teachers cared more about the students and took more time with you..."

"They just didn't shove me off as another number. The school made me more independent...I looked forward to going to school. I called teachers by their first names. They cared."

"They helped me to feel good about myself."

"The school helped me to work harder and to stick with it."

"They taught me not to give up - best school I ever attended."

"It turned my life around...gave me a reason to go on."

"They taught you that you have a future."

"It provided a place to explore things I was interested in...helped me to learn who I was."

Discussion

Existing alternative education schools are indeed having a positive impact on our dropouts. They are succeeding in helping students become productive who otherwise may never have found success in the public school environment and in our communities. Alternative school graduates are in varying degrees productive in all aspects of life including competitive employment, post-secondary training, volunteer work, participation in the political process, homemaking and child rearing, and in developing talents and skills beyond the existing demands of their jobs. Moreover, graduates are breaking the cycle of poverty by not staying in public assistance programs and are not represented more than any other population with regard to incarceration and penal system involvement. The success is remarkable and indicates that having an alternative for students to complete a high school education is a reasonable and workable consideration for future planning. Alternative schools represent a factor in public education that necessarily has to be considered to achieve excellence in education for all students. As well, the methods and practices utilized in alternative schools need to be examined within the realm of benefiting our conventional schools. Our best information to date indicates that alternative schools are helping students to gain a sense of control over their lives which is increasing their potential for social and human development.

It appears that alternative schools need to be improved and supplemented by other alternatives in local education agencies. This is evidenced by the fact that not all students are successful graduates of alternative schools as well as the fact that not all graduates are reaching their true potential of productivity. Existing information indicates that more assistance may be necessary to: (a) improve participation in volunteer work and in our political process; and (b) to reduce public assistance involvement especially among female students who are parents or prospective parents. Productive behaviors which could be targeted for improvement include punctuality, responsibility, cooperation and initiative. Graduates of alternative schools recommend higher level courses such as math, science and high tech (e.g., computer programming), and teaching practical skills like filling out applications and interviewing for a job.

Further research regarding the productivity of all our graduates is needed to substantiate and to do comparative analysis of outcomes and goals for education. Moreover, a "multi-factor" measure of productivity is needed to be congruent with broad-based human development including no less

than personal/social, career/vocational, and academic development. As
well, existing information indicates that data collection must be done on
an individual basis to account for individual gains within our diverse
systems and diverse populations. Data on individual successes is not being
consistently determined through existing group measures. In many
situations, case studies of individual graduates is the only way to grasp
the impact of public schools. This is especially true when considering the
dropout and the multitude of outside influences which contribute to a
student's success or lack of success. Individual student comments indicate
that public schools are positively influencing students far beyond what
they are being given credit for in existing broad-based comparative
assessments. Moreover, it appears public schools have the potential to do
even more via implementing alternatives in the educational process.