School-based intervention programs for dropouts

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Abstract
The primary purpose of this paper is to provide an extensive review of the literature and research related to the dropout problem in the United States. It discusses some of the intervention programs in school settings that have been evaluated to date. The role of school psychologists in planning and implementing the components that make those intervention programs successful are highlighted. Chapter two describes the nature and extent of the dropout problem, and how the lack of a uniform definition and good data aggravates this problem.

Causes of dropping out and its consequences to the individuals and the society at large are presented in chapter three. As the causes are discussed, characteristics of dropouts that the schools could note as indicators of who will or will not drop out are also presented. Some of the dropout intervention programs that have been found effective are reviewed in chapter four of this paper. Chapter five concludes this paper with a discussion of the components that would make school-based dropout intervention programs successful and the relevance of that to school psychologists.
SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR DROPOUTS

An Abstract of a Research Paper

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

Mmamiki G. Kamanakao

University of Northern Iowa

April, 2000
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Mmamiki G. Kamanakao
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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATION

Introduction

The dropout phenomenon is a complex and multifaceted problem in America. This problem appears to develop early in a student’s life, has many individual and institutional causes and consequences, and is growing increasingly more acute each year (Rodriguez, 1997; Dierkhising, 1996; Morris, 1992). There are many personal, social and economic consequences for dropping out of high school. Dropping out has been associated with increased teen pregnancy and infant mortality rates, substance abuse, high unemployment, low wages, high crime rates, higher welfare costs and less tax-revenue (Stephens & Repa, 1992; U.S. Bureau of Census, 1994; National Education Longitudinal Study [NELS]: 88\94,1995; Dorn, 1996, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999). This problem therefore, is not only ominous to the individual but also to the society at large. As Sherman Dorn (1996) aptly puts it, “It is from this hard core of dropouts that a high proportion of the gangsters, hoodlums, drug addicted, government-dependent-prone, irresponsible and illegitimate parents of tomorrow will be predictably recruited” (p.3). As a result of concern for this problem, the school systems across the nation are searching for effective ways to counteract the high dropout rate, which current estimates put at 11.8 percent of youth who were high school completers in 1998 (U.S Department of Commerce, 1998; Dropout Rates in the United States:1998, 1999). Researchers who grapple with this problem encounter a multitude of difficulties pertaining to defining the term “dropout.” School districts and states define dropouts differently and collect data in different ways, making the dropout figures available today unreliable. Uniform and standard definitions of and formulas for calculating dropouts have varied over the years and have adversely affected dropout data (Oakland, 1992;
Presently, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity used for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. NCES also fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning and significance of such statistics; assist state and local agencies in improving their statistical systems; and review and report on education in foreign countries (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Three ways exist to define and calculate student dropout rates (Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998, 1999, U.S. Department of Education, 2000). These are: (a). *event* rates which describe the proportion of youths ages 15 through 24 years who dropped out of grades 10-12 in the 12 months preceding October 1998; (b). *status* rates which describe the proportion of young adults ages 16 through 24 who are out of school without a high school credential; and (c). *cohort* rates that measure the proportion of dropouts in a particular group over a specified period of time.

Cohort rates are based on repeated measures of a group of students with shared experiences and reveals how many students starting in a specific grade drop over time. Status rates are higher than event rates because they include event dropouts and many other dropouts, regardless of when they last attended school. Status rates therefore, are used as the estimator of the national dropout rates and determiner of dropout data across a variety of individual characteristics, including race, sex, region of residence, and income level.
The NCES activities are designed to address high priority education data needs; provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends; and report timely, useful, and high quality data to the U.S. Department of Education, the Congress, the states, other education policymakers, practitioners, data users, and the general public. Since the 1991-1992 school year, therefore, the NCES has been a valuable source in collecting counts of school dropouts through its common Core of Data (CCD) survey (NCES, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The U.S. Department of Education (2000) states that for the past seven years, the CCD has included a dropout statistic in the agency level data— an opportunity which has been used by the NCES to work with the states and school districts to develop a dropout data collection and encourage the growth of the CCD as a national database for public school dropout information.

Standardizing dropout data collection through the CCD, posed a challenge of adopting a common dropout definition for uniform reporting by all states. CCD therefore had to apply a collaborative effort in developing a standard definition for a dropout. NCES worked with state representatives, CCD coordinators, educational researchers, and the academic community to agree upon a common dropout definition. The statistical report *National Dropout Statistics Field Test Evaluation* (NCES, 1992) describes the development and field-testing of an initial definition. The methodology report, *State Dropout Collection Practices: 1991-92 School Year* (Hoffman, 1995) follows with the outcome and adjustments that were made after the first year of implementation.

The CCD dropout definition is based on a “snapshot” count of students at the beginning of the school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, appendix A-1). A
dropout is an individual who: (a) was enrolled in school at some time during the previous
school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year, or (b) was not
enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership
(i.e., was not reported as dropout the year before), and (c) has not graduated from high
school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program and (d) does not
meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:

Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-
approved education program,

Temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness; or

Death.

For the purpose of applying this definition, school year is the 12-month period
beginning on October 1 and ending September 30. Thus, it includes summer the
following year. Students who completed a school year and failed to return to school in
the subsequent year were counted as dropouts from the grade and school year for which
they failed to enroll.

The definition still leaves a few questions unanswered. For instance, should a
student who leaves school for prison be considered a dropout? What about a student who
leaves school but pursues education in the military? Of course these and other questions
are important to address but lie outside the scope of this paper. For the purpose of this
review, CCD's definition of "dropout" is adopted.

Several programs to combat the dropout problem have evidently mushroomed all
over the U.S. Although the NCES (1998) study shows that long-term dropout rates have
decreased, the continuing severity of this problem, and disturbing trends in defining who
the dropouts are, what to do with them and effectiveness of the programs, are still
evident. Although there has been some overall improvement in the past, Williams and
Wilkins (1992) state that some concern persists about the rates of improvement, the fact
that there are large racial and geographic disparities in the crucial markers of potential
dropouts, and the especially troubling increases in a number of urban communities.
Morris (1992) concurs and notes that “what schools can do to retain at-risk students is a
continuing problem, but an ever-larger problem for educators is how to provide
educational experiences appropriate enough to change the lives of at-risk students
(p.125).” The primary focus of this paper is both to examine the causes and
consequences of dropping out and to instigate the effectiveness of some school-based
dropout intervention programs.

Statement of the Problem

Dorn (1996) and Fossey (1996) suggest that a basic understanding of the magnitude
and the nature of the dropout problem and of the many factors and issues associated with
it, is a pertinent step in the development and implementation of effective programmatic
solutions. In the light of that, this paper will review the nature and scope of the dropout
problem, how dropouts are identified, their characteristics, causes of dropping out, its
consequences and implications. More focus will be on the description, rationale, features
and evidence of effectiveness for some school-based dropout prevention/intervention
programs that have been reported in the literature to-date. Finally, this paper provides
directions for future development of school-based prevention programs based on research
findings. Recommendations for preventing dropouts are offered through discussing what
factors constitute effective dropout programs. Implications for such programs for school
professionals; especially school psychologists will be discussed. The implications of this study for use in the country of Botswana are also noted.

Significance of the Problem

The dropout problem has engaged the minds and hearts of many Americans. Parents, educators, business executives, and policymakers all believe that leaving school profoundly handicaps the dropouts themselves and the entire nation. The media, congressional committees, state legislatures, and local school boards agree that something must be done. Developing nations recognize their continued progress and individual citizen empowerment depends on having an educated and productive workforce (Oakland 1992; Indiana Career and Post-secondary Advancement Center [ICPAC], 1998; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999).

In the NCES (1999), the most recent year for which data are available, it was reported that in October of 1998, some 3.9 million young adults were not enrolled in a high school program and have not completed high school. These youths accounted for 11.8 percent of the 33 million 16- through 24-year olds in the United States in 1998. Although there have been a number of year-to-year fluctuations in this rate, the dropout rate is considered to have fallen appreciably over the past decade. There has been a gradual pattern of decline that, on average, amounts to a 5 full percent (NCES, 1996). Having fallen more for blacks than for whites, the difference in dropout rates between the races has narrowed. The dropout rate for Hispanics remains relatively high at 25 percent, compared to 8 percent for whites and 13 percent for blacks (Mini-Digest of Education Statistics, 1999). However, the dropout problem may loom still larger in the future. This is particularly true for populations who traditionally have been poorly served by the
The Education Commission of States (1998) states that in 1994's dropout reading assessment, 29 percent of white 4th graders scored below the "basic" level in reading, but 69 percent of African-American students and 64 percent Hispanics scored this poorly.

For most of the students, dropping out will thwart dreams and frustrate expectations. Well-paying jobs for those failing to graduate have dwindled as the nation has moved from an agrarian to a manufacturing and a service economy. More sophisticated skills are needed in this increasingly complex technological age; thus consigning more dropouts to the low end of the economic ladder. According to the U.S Department of Commerce (1999), since 1980, the earnings advantage of youths with some college or a bachelor's degree or higher, relative to their counterparts who had not completed high school was generally greater. The annual earnings by educational attainment indicate that males who drop out are estimated to earn $441,000 less during their lives than male high school graduates (Department of Commerce, 1996). Lifetime differences may become even more striking in the future, particularly if current trends in the consumer price index continue. The Bureau of Census (1994) shows that when 1975 and 1992 are compared, average earnings for high school dropouts doubled for high school dropouts (from $6,014 to $12,809). This source discloses that the recorded earnings mean that the high school dropouts did not even keep up with inflation, and high school graduates barely managed to keep the pace. It further assumes that these estimates of 1992 lifetime earnings will stay in effect throughout one's worklife. High school dropouts would make (in 1992 dollars) around $600,000 during their lifetime while persons who attended some college might expect lifetime earnings in the $1 million range.
Statistics shows that GED (General Equivalency Diploma) certificate-holders do not fare as well as regular high school graduates in the labor market or at higher education, which may indicate that the two credentials are not equal. U.S Department of Commerce (1999) records that in 1996, the median annual earnings of young adults ages 25-34 who had not completed high school were substantially lower than those of their counterparts who had completed high school (31 percent and 36 percent lower for males and females respectively). Accordingly, young adults who had completed a bachelor's degree or higher earned substantially more than those who had earned no more than a high school diploma or GED (54 and 88 percent more for males and females, respectively). Although there is decline in percentages as dropout rates decrease, it is still evident that those young adults with fewer that 12 years of schooling compose a larger part of the long-term unemployed.

Leaving school can also take a devastating human toll. Although the analysis in the model of completion among dropouts (NELS:88/94, 1995) cannot reveal the unique relationship between each variable associated with a dropout's completion of high school, it is evident that some of the respondents with less than a high school diploma were dissatisfied with their personal lives. NELS:88/94 (1995) data shows that about one in four dropouts attended post-secondary education by 1994. Not surprisingly, many dropouts, even when surveyed shortly after leaving school, believed their decision to do so was a mistake. Many of the dropouts including those in prisons return to school to acquire a general equivalency diploma (Stephens & Repa, 1992). Stephens (1991) found that 51 percent of the school dropouts in prison attained a GED while incarcerated. NCES (1999) notes that during the 1990s, the percentage of youths not enrolled in high
school who have earned a high school credential has remained relatively unchanged; however, the percentage with an alternative certification increased from 4.9 percent in 1990 to 10.1 percent in 1998.

Dropouts cost American taxpayers billions of dollars in lost local, state, and federal tax revenues. The costs to society are considerable and occur in at least seven areas (Oakland, 1992): foregone national income, foregone tax revenues, increased demand for publicly supported social services, increased crime, reduced political participation, reduced intergenerational mobility, and lower levels of health. Nor are all the costs in dollars. A study of dropouts in a New York state prison (Stephens & Repa, 1992) recorded that 79 percent of convicted male felons are high school dropouts. Pare-Peters (1995) noted that as many as 90 percent of prison inmates in the U.S. lacked a high school diploma. Dropouts become heads of households, where the cycles of their own lives are repeated. Quite often those incarcerated cannot envision alternatives beyond their current lifestyle. They often feel caught in a cycle of helplessness and dependence (Pare-Peters, 1995). Characteristically, these youths become unskilled or semiskilled workers who cannot contribute fully in education, science, business and industry. Yet they cost the nation many dollars. In its early morning news edition on the 14th of February, the National Public Radio announced that Iowa state loses $32 000 per annum worth of tax on prison expenses. It also stated that the state spends about $18 000 per annum on each prisoner.

The dropout problem is a global one and nations around the world need to address it seriously. If taken lightly, it might hamper economic development throughout the world. The dimensions of this problem in the U.S. may not necessarily be parallel to the
situation in other countries. Undoubtedly, however the consequences are the same. This paper extensively explores dropout problem in the U.S. and draws implications for future research on the dropout problem in Botswana.

**Organization of the Paper**

This paper investigates the causes of the dropout problem, describes and evaluates some school-based intervention programs for high school dropouts. The paper is organized into five chapters. This chapter introduces the dropout problem by highlighting the major aspects of the dropout problem and stating its significance. Chapter two describes the nature and extent of the dropout problem in the U.S. and reports findings of several researchers and educators about this issue. Chapter three addresses characteristics of dropouts and how they are identified, causes and consequences of dropping out and implications for parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers. The fourth chapter, which is the main focus of this paper, briefly reviews some school-based dropout intervention programs that have been implemented and evaluated to date. The description, rationale, features and evidence of effectiveness for each program are given. The most effective dropout prevention program is discussed in more detail to specifically illustrate how it prevents the dropout problem. The final chapter briefly discusses what research views as basic premises of good dropout prevention programs and synthesizes previous chapters. The paper concludes with implications for helping professionals within the school system, especially school psychologists.
CHAPTER 2 – NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

Dropout rates among adolescents are alarmingly high and constitute a national concern. Estimates as to the percentage of students in the United States who reportedly did not graduate from high school in the last decade range from a high of 17 percent (Dropout Rates in the United States: 1990) to a low of 11.8 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 1998; Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998, 1999). When it conducted one of the most recent national reports on the dropout problem, NCES (1999) reports that in October 1998, some 3.9 million young adults were not enrolled in a high school program and had not completed high school. In total, these dropouts account for 11.8 percent of the 33 million 16-through 24-year olds in the United States in 1998.

Ethnic Variation

Proportions of dropouts by ethnicity are also reported. NCES (1999) data in consistency with the statistical analysis report of dropouts (1999) show that high school completion rates have increased for white and black young adults since the early 1970s, with rates of 90.2 percent for whites and 81.4 percent for blacks in 1998. It also reports a strong association between race-ethnicity and dropping out of school. In particular, cohort studies of national longitudinal data for American high school students, such as National Education Longitudinal Survey [NELS] 88/94 sponsored by NCES (1995), show that Hispanics and blacks are at greater risk of dropping out than whites, with Hispanics at a greater risk of dropping out than either white or black students. More recently, analyses of data from the NCES (1999) still confirm these patterns and show an
event dropout rate of 9.4 percent for Hispanic students, compared with 3.9 percent for white students and 5.5 percent for black students. The estimated event dropout rates for white students were not significantly different from those of black students.

While the current national estimates are put at 11.8 percent of those who enter high school, these estimates show a decrease from 1900 where the school dropout was 90 percent nationwide Grossnickle (1986). In the summary of the findings on characteristics of dropout program by (NCES, 1999), one realizes that long-term dropout rates have declined and stabilized. Yet, the continuing severity of the dropout problem and disturbing trends in the incidence of dropping out especially in minority groups have created a great deal of concern and a call of action among parents, educators, researchers, policymakers, and the public in general. Despite the dramatic decrease in dropout rates, the problem is still with us and it cannot be ignored.

Evidently, Hispanic youths have not shared in this improvement: 62.8 percent were reported as having completed high school in 1998. In addition, Asian/Pacific Islander young adults in 1998 were more likely than their white, black, and Hispanic peers to complete high school.

In the past, leaving school without a high school degree was both more common and less detrimental. Only 6 percent of eligible students received a high school degree at the beginning of the twentieth century (Oakland, 1992). They typically entered a workforce that required less academic preparation. Moreover, for many girls, a high school diploma was thought to be unnecessary because work outside the home was uncommon and knowledge for work at home was required through domestic training. Currently, the workforce increasingly requires people who are literate and technologically sophisticated
and who possess specialized skills and a strong work ethic. These requirements place many demands on educators who face a large number of school-age youth leaving school without high school credentials. Even the youths themselves recognize the need to attain higher education credentials. As already indicated, the percentage with an alternative certification increased from 4.9 percent in 1990 to 10.1 percent in 1998 (NCES, 1999).

Variation in Dropout Estimation

Oakland (1992) reported that local, state, and federal agency policies differed in locating and accounting for dropouts who later changed status by re-enrolling in a district's schools, attending night school, becoming married or incarcerated, receiving a GED, or entering another public or private school without requesting a formal transfer. A standardized definition and computation procedure therefore was needed to provide the measure of success and was the first step in encouraging local districts to confront the problem. Otherwise data on dropouts would continue to be deflated or inflated. A study of California schools (Matthews, 1991) found that dropout totals were inflated by 39 percent because of imprecise definitions, inaccurate record keeping, and lack of student follow-up. A study by Franklin (1992) found that problems imposed by imprecise methods for counting dropouts were particularly acute in urban areas, where as many as 40 percent to 50 percent of school-age youths failed to graduate from high school. Both researchers stated that the creative educational programming needed for the improved education of youth could not thrive until common, meaningful measures of success were accepted and input variables were controlled.

Other studies (NCES, 1996 and U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996) show that the incidence of dropping out among school-aged youth also varied according to the age, sex,
ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language background, and geographic location of the specific individuals and/or populations being examined. While this method provided basic sources for provision of dropout information in school districts, it is evident that it only provided general education progress information and data on samples of individuals and not any much reliable data per se. Frymier (1996) concurs that the surveys only gave a representative idea of what was happening in the nation in terms of dropouts. The school district dropout information and data provided was based on local school district attendance records, and indicate higher estimates of the dropout problem than national surveys. His view is that within some districts, one school might have had a dropout rate less than 5 percent while another school in that same district had a dropout rate 60 percent. In every instance in which such discrepancies were identified, it was determined that the discrepancies were actually the result of policies designed to create what might be described as “islands of excellence” within the districts to make a few schools, at least, especially attractive to parents as way to discourage movement out of the city to suburbs (Frymier, 1996, p.5).

Although this problem seemed rampant even in the 1980s (DePauw, 1987; Morrow1987, Williams, 1986), the studies mentioned previously under variation in dropout estimation, show there was still a consensus among researchers between 1990 and 1996 that the lack of standardized dropout definition and computational methods: (a) allowed reporting, collection, and methodological procedures and practices to vary widely among school systems and public agencies, (b) made it difficult to interpret and compare dropout information and rates’ which are based on different methodological techniques, (c) made it extremely difficult to ascertain why students left school, (d) made
it difficult to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs, and (e) had kept many parents, educators, administrators, and lawmakers from understanding the nature, scope, and dimensions of the dropout problem.

U.S. Department of Education (2000) agrees there have been serious discrepancies for the past seven years. It further confirms that data on the number of dropouts have varied due to inconsistencies in terms and definitions and in data collection and computing methods. These factors accordingly have accounted for most of the differences and discrepancies in the estimates of the number of dropouts and dropout rates.

Importance of Good Data

The CCD has since included dropout statistics in the agency level data. Through the National Cooperative Education Statistics, NCES continues to now work with states and school districts to develop a dropout data collection and encourage the growth of the CCD as a national database for public school dropout information. This indeed is a welcome move when one looks at the history of discrepancies that used to exist in calculating the dropout data.

Improvements in data collection and computing methods are noted as per NCES's annual reports on *Dropout Rates in the United States* (e.g. Mcmillen, Kaufman & Klein, 1997; Mcmillen and Kaufman, 1998; and Kaufman, Klein & Frase, 1999). These reports provide convergent data and statistics on high school dropout rates by academic year and summarize the national dropout situation by analyzing data from several sources including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the High School and Beyond Study (HS&B), the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988(NELS:88), and the CCD
(U.S. Department of Education, 2000). It has to be noted however, that, while the CPS data provide national and regional information about dropout, U.S. Department of Education (2000) states the sample is not large enough for reliable analysis at the state or school district levels. This means the CCD as an annual universe collection, so far is recognized as a much reliable source to provide a count of all public school dropout rates by state (Hoffman, 1995; Bose & Hoffman, 1997; Winglee, Marker & Webber, 1997, U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

In summary one notes that although data collection methods have been standardized, it is still a struggle to come up with ways to define dropouts. There are still evidences of variations in national dropout estimates and cohort group estimates. To school leaders, especially, there is no quick solution to this problem. This means solving the dropout problem requires a full-scale assault by committed school professional working cooperatively with parents and community agencies in developing strategies to collect good data for intervention purposes. If this is not done, solutions to the dropout problem seem remotely unrealizable (Rodriguez, 1997; Dierkhising, 1996; Frymier, 1996).
CHAPTER 3- CHARACTERISTICS, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF DROPPING OUT

In showing the nature and extent of the dropout problem, complications that researchers say prevail in collecting dropout data have been highlighted. Discussing the characteristics of the dropouts and reasons why they leave school is the focus of this chapter so as to appropriately choose and evaluate the programs applicable in most dropout issues. The impact that dropping out has on dropouts and on society is addressed.

Causes and Characteristics of Dropping Out

Evidence that the American economy can only compete in foreign markets through educated citizens has prompted scrutiny into its education system of public education. In response to this scrutiny, reform reports have then offered sweeping proposals to improve the quality of public education (Dorn, 1996; Dierkhising, 1996, Report on reaching the goals, 1993). Rodriguez (1997) critiqued these reports and stated that students have since been “exposed to this modality [of school reform] and are expected to model these ideological attributes [of high academic achievement] in order to graduate and to experience success in the world of work” (p.3). Many of the suggested changes have since proved unfavorable for some students as schools strive to educate and the youth in preparation for the challenges of the future (Rodriguez, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Amongst those changes are the rigorous courses of study and higher standards of achievement for students in the nation’s school (Report, 1993). To
educators who work with at-risk students like potential dropouts, transitions such as these have had serious repercussions for the growing number of students who have not succeeded under such stringent standards (Harrington-Lueker, 1998; At Risk Report, 1992). Such changes have alienated them from formal schooling (Rodriguez, 1997, McPartland and Schneider, 1996).

Frequently, dropouts have been identified to be older than their classmates are (Roderick, 1993). Their problems range between anything from drug-abuse, pregnancy out of wedlock, poverty-related difficulties to underachievement (Rodriguez, 1997; Stanley, 1995; Persaud, Dushyanta, Madak & Paul, 1992). In fact, low academic achievement is a pervasive characteristic among dropouts and has been frequently singled out as the best predictor or precipitating cause for students from all racial groups (Oakland, 1992; Dorn, 1996; Jordan, et al., 1997). D and F students are more likely to leave than those earning A’s or B’s. The same applies to students who have repeated a grade - they stand a far greater chance of leaving school than those who proceed from grade to grade on schedule (Harrington-Lueker, 1998; NELS:88/94, 1995). Weak reading and math skills, often observed retrospectively among dropouts as early as the primary grades, tend to continue through the secondary grades and to attenuate academic performance in many subjects (Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992).

Students held back actually score worse on achievement tests than similar youngsters who are passed along to the next grade as they grow older (McPartland, 1996; Rumberger, 1995). Oakes et al., (1992) attributed this to the fact that such students are not offered as many courses and alternative track levels of the same course that cover different topics and use different teaching methods. Thus frequently, below-average
students are not offered as many courses in science and foreign languages or are enrolled in mathematics and English classes that deemphasize algebra and writing, which are prerequisite for advanced work in later grades. The probability of dropping out may increase 40 percent by being retained one grade and 90 percent by being retained twice (Oakland, 1992). Using data from NELS:88, Rumberger study (1995) found that grade retention was the single most powerful predictor of who will drop out. Unfavorable attitudes toward school also are commonly expressed during exit conferences. Teens in the vocational and general tracks are more susceptible to dropping out than those in the academic track (Jordan, W. J., Lara, J., and McPartland J.M. (1996).

Misbehavior while in school can also signal trouble. Students who have been suspended, are chronically truant, or have been in conflict with the law, have a higher-than-average chance of dropping out (Stephens & Repa, 1992; Robertson, 1997). Data from NELS:88/94 (1995) revealed that chronic truants are 40 times more likely to drop out of high school than regularly attending students, everything else being equal, and delinquent youth are 25 percent more likely to drop out than are comparable non-delinquent youngsters. Such students also experience difficulty negotiating the personal and social adjustments of adolescence (Williams & Wilkins, 1992). In the event that the schools fail to handle delinquent behaviors, the youth are bound to drop out. Jordan et al., study (1996) confirmed this by showing that some adolescents, particularly African American and Hispanic males, dropped out because their schools lacked the capacity and resources to handle their disruptive conduct.

Early transition into adult roles can cause students to drop out of school. Finding and pursuing work and forming their own families are adult roles assumed by many
youngsters while still in school. Jordan et al., (1996) study on dropouts states that 7 percent of the respondents indicate they left school because they needed to support their families. As adolescents assume more adult roles, their roles as students and the traditional influences of school wane. High School and Beyond survey data (NELS:88/94 1995) indicates that nearly half of those in high school work at a job, with slightly higher fractions of eventual dropouts than eventual finishers engaging in paid work. Research has also documented the increased propensity to drop out for those who work excessive hours, beyond 15 or 20 hours per week (Jordan, Lara, and McPartland, 1996; Berktold, Sonya & Kaufman, 1998).

Teenagers assuming adult family and work roles therefore are also more likely to drop out of school than youngsters who postpone those roles (Berktold et al.,1998). Substantial numbers of young women, for example, claim pregnancy or marriage as reasons for dropping out of school. According to a study by Jordan, et al., 1996 12 percent of all teenage dropouts cited parenthood as a reason for leaving. These records further showed that 18 percent left because they had to support a family, and because they were offered jobs and chose to work. Berktold, and colleagues (1998), explained how high school students who work might get influenced to drop out of school. They stated that working more than 20 hours per week may contribute to an increased likelihood of dropping out because of the drain on time and energy available for school work. Alternatively, working may teach youngsters the importance of persistence and dependability, traits critical for successful schooling as well. This may account for the fact that those who work less than 20 hours per week are less likely to leave school than those who work more hours or do not work at all.
Demographics also provide clues to who will drop out. Dropout rates differ by race, gender, and social class. According to Franklin (1992), most literature on dropouts indicates that the dropout rate is higher for low-income, low achieving, and minority youths than it is for middle and high income, high-achieving, and majority youths. Hispanics have the highest dropout rate in comparison to the whites and blacks. Gender by race differences may also provide a more detailed demographic picture of education attainment (Oakland, 1992). U.S. Bureau of Census (1998) showed 12.5 percent of black boys compared to 10.6 Hispanic boys graduated. 13.9 percent black females graduated compared to 10.1 percent of Hispanic females. Thus Hispanic males and females are likely to drop out compared to their black counterparts. NCES (1999) confirm these patterns and show an event dropout rate of 9.4 percent for Hispanic students, compared with 3.9 percent for white students and 5.5 percent for black students. As a whole, Hispanics drop out of high school at higher rates and attain lower levels of education than non-Hispanics (The Condition of Education, 1999). As will be noted later, the impact of living in families experiencing difficulties due to low income, lower adult education, and marginal adult employment significantly increases a student's likelihood of leaving school early. The impacts of being a minority and being raised in a lower class home are particularly critical.

Adolescents whose parents lack a high school diploma are at greater risk of dropping out than those from better educated families (NELS:88/94, 1995; NCES, 1998). Urban students are more apt to drop out than rural or suburban students are (Franklin, 1992; Fossey, 1996). Teens whose activities are not monitored, and with fewer study aids and opportunities for non-school learning, are less likely to graduate (Franklin & Streeter,
Students from single-parent households drop out more often than those with both parents present (Berktold et al., 1998). Students are more susceptible to dropping out if they lack consistent support and encouragement from family and community members who share common values and standards (Okey & Cusick, 1995). Teenage mothers (and fathers) leave school far more often than adolescents without children (Jordan et al., 1996).

A review of demographic factors (Coleman, 1991; Oakland, 1992; Franklin & Streeter, 1996) also reveals poverty as a major predictor of who will drop out; students from the bottom third in family income stand a far greater chance of leaving school than teens from middle class or affluent families. The statistical analysis report (NCES, 1998) showed that socioeconomic status (SES) was strongly associated with the proportion of dropouts who completed high school. Dropouts from families in higher SES quartiles were more likely to complete high school than others. For example, almost three-quarters (74 percent) of dropouts whose families were in the highest SES quartile finished high school, compared with 33 percent of dropouts whose families were in the lowest SES quartile. This confirms Dorn (1996) assumption that, poverty has proved to be a much more complex demographic phenomenon in predicting what might prove effective in getting students back to school than we can imagine. According to this author, it is when socioeconomic factors are controlled that, the differences across racial, ethnic, geographic, and other demographic lines could become blur.

Finer examinations of home environments have also been conducted by some researchers (Franklin & Streeter, 1996; Jordan et. al., 1997), with results that are more important for dropout prevention than acknowledgements of general associations with
socioeconomic status. High School and Beyond analyses (NELS:88/94, 1995) suggested that reported parent practices in support of education, such as providing an environment suited to studying, active monitoring of children's activities, and devoting time to children for discussing their experiences, are associated with lower incidence of dropping out of school. This important research helps to explain differences of achievement and dropout within groups of similar social class, and suggests certain prescriptions for families concerned about the educational fortunes of their children. An important conclusion seems to be that although family background is an overriding measured factor in achievement and attainment studies, it is specific family practices that may underlie the relationship between family background and dropping out (Berktold et al., 1998).

Coleman, 1991; Oakland, 1992; Ochoa, and others, 1994; Okey & Cusick, 1995 provide a comprehensive review of family qualities that lead to dropping out. They noted that various family qualities increase the probability of becoming a dropout. Many families exhibit intergenerational dropout patterns. Often, one or both parents dropped out. Thus their jobs tend to be less stable and less rewarding financially. Their children tend receive less medical care, less individual attention from nurturing adults, and less cognitive and linguistic stimulation to prepare them from school. Thus the children often enter school less prepared to acquire basic reading and math skills. Because they have lower levels of education, the parents increasingly are less able to provide assistance directly to their children; and because they have little discretionary income, these parents typically are unable to purchase tutorial help, encyclopedias, computers, and other needed academic support. Older brothers or sisters may drop out, thus paving the way for the school departure of younger siblings. Lack of family traditions favoring education and
low family encouragement therefore, foster invitations to leave school early. In fact, Okey & Cusick (1995) described a more cultural connection that existed between families and school performance. They stated that compared with stayers, dropouts came from families who had less education, valued education less, expressed less concern with school progress, and had lower educational expectations for themselves and their children.

Moreover, students with family problems also are at greater risk for dropping out. Compared with those who graduate, students who drop out more likely to have been victims of physical abuse, incest, or other forms of sexual assault; to live in foster homes; to have divorced parents; or to have had one parent die (Franklin, 1992; Williams & Wilkins, 1992). The decision to drop out may be coupled with the decision to leave home or to seek relief in other ways from family-centered emotional and social trauma or other forms of disruption and turmoil (Franklin & Streeter, 1996).

The dropouts themselves provide telling insights. Their responses across research (NELS: 88/94, 1995; Berktold et al., 1998) seemed to culminate into one main primary reason: they are desperately trying to escape failure. Their decision never to return usually stems from an accumulation of school and home problems. They response in the survey showed they had simply “given up” because they were overwhelmed and “have had it”. In their mind, it was too late to get help (Jordan et al., 1997; Rodriguez, 1997; Franklin & Streeter, 1995). Seemingly, their repeated attempts to be successful in school had ended in failure. They felt no reason to care, especially when no one else did - parents, friends, or teachers! (Chow, 1996).
Most dropouts have experienced numerous difficulties adjusting to the various demands of the school program, resulting in resentment and hostility toward school in general and teachers in particular (Jordan, et. al., 1997; Rodriguez, 1997; Chow, 1996; Franklin & Streeter, 1995). Many of them maintain a lifelong grudge against the education system, which in their view has failed them. In Jordan et. al., study (1997) one third of the respondents reported they could not keep up with their school work, and one quarter of them reported that they did not feel they belonged in school. Such an attitude sometimes persists when their own children go to school, thus perpetuating the dropout syndrome into the next generation. Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, and Ritter (1990) stated that compared with stayers, dropouts came from families who had less education, valued education less, expressed less concern with school progress, and had lower educational expectations for themselves and their children. Okey and Cusik (1995) further explicated this issue. They describes a more general cultural connection between families and school performance where deviant males described themselves as behaving in school the way their families had behaved in school and the way their families expected them to behave in school.

Other dropouts claim to have outsmarted the system by escaping from an institution that they see as cruel, tedious, irrelevant, boring, and uncaring (Chow and others, 1996; Okey & Cusik, 1995). Still, others docilely succumbed to academic defeat and looked for some form of success and recognition outside of the school. Jordan et. al., (1996) reported that all the dropouts he interviewed reported extensive drug and alcohol abuse. Some indulged to escape, some for inclusion (Persaud et.al., 1992; Stephens & Repa, 1992; Jordan et. al., 1996). They reported they dropped out to leave behind a
history of humiliation, indignation, and repeated failures and frustrations. Some complained of lack of concern and individual attention, of an atmosphere of indifference, which led to alienation, loneliness, and loss of hope. They described school in terms of worthless game, not worthy of the time, frustration, pressure, or rewards (Jordan, et. al, 1996, U.S. Berktold et al., 1998).

Among other factors, peer pressure to do poorly in school particularly among black males, was also noted. The NELS:88/94 dropout follow up study (1995) suggested that peer pressure may push at-risk students out of the schoolhouse door. Those who dropped out reported that one or more of their close friends had also left school prematurely. Other researchers (Pittman, 1991; Berktold et. al., 1998) show that long before students decide to drop out, peers often discourage them from succeeding academically. These authors indicated that the dropouts themselves reported that their friends were less participating, less interested, less successful, and less inclined toward college. A study by Stephen and Claire (1997) that examined the environments of the friendship network for potential dropouts, found that students who were identified at-risk of dropping out, had more dropout friends, more working friends, fewer school friends, and fewer same-sex friends.

Given what we learn about the academic deficits of eventual dropouts, as a group, it is not surprising that negative attitudes about school prevail. Elements of social integration seem to surface as other causes of dropping out of school (U.S. Department of Education, 1998; Chow, and others, 1996). As dropouts express less interest in school, they also feel they are held in less esteem than others, and feel less positively about themselves. Unfortunately, researcher’s knowledge of underlying processes involved has
gaps similar to those revealed for early adult transitions. Research done by Franklin & Streeter (1996) and Chow and others, (1996) confirmed that researchers lack the analyses that help them to sort adequately among an important set of questions: does the apparent lack of social integration of the eventual dropout result from low academic success? Does poor school work lead to social disaffection? Do academic and social deficits fuel each other, and what independently contributes to each other? And finally, are these processes different for different youngsters and in different circumstances? Whatever the answers to these questions are, it is evident that school, family, behavioral, social, and personality variables all play an important part in predicting who will drop out (Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, Tremblay, 1997).

Consequences of Dropping Out

Without adequate training, dropouts face a grim vocational future. Unemployment rates for dropouts far exceed those of high school graduates (NCES, 1999). Oakland (1992) stated that compared with high school graduates, dropouts can expect to earn less: $266,000 for men and $199,000 for women. Bureau of the Census (1994) showed that while in high school dropouts could be expected to earn about $600,000 in 1992 dollars over a lifetime, completing a high school could add about $200,000 while completing a bachelor’s degree could add nearly half million dollars. The statistical analysis report (1998) stated that 16 percent of dropouts were looking for work while only 6 percent of their counterparts who had not dropped were also doing the same. Minority youth dropouts are at even a greater disadvantage in the workplace; Hispanic and black youth have twice the unemployment rate of white youth. According to report by ICPAC (1998) in 1990 high school dropouts earned only 46 cents for every dollar a high school
graduate earned. The Bureau of Census (1994) shows that when 1975 and 1992 are compared, average earnings for high school dropouts doubled for high school dropouts (from $6,014 to $12,809). Their jobs are likely to be low status and part time and to provide little opportunity for advancement.

ICPAC report (1998) contended that the income comparisons such as the one above still so much underestimate the cost of not finishing high school. The report stated that high school graduates who attend college earn even more, both annually and over their working careers, than do high school graduates who obtain no further schooling. It is stated in the report that with some college or training after high school, U.S. workers earned an additional $2,436 per year, or about 20 percent more than high school graduates. Those with a four-year college degree earned almost twice as much as high school graduates. When the cost of living was compared to these earnings, only those with post-secondary education had money for more than necessities for the year.

According to the U.S Department of Commerce (1999), since 1980, the earnings advantage of youths with some college or a bachelor’s degree or higher, relative to their counterparts who had not completed high school was generally greater. The report by ICPAC (1998) concluded by stating that in addition to the dollar value of education, there were other less tangible but no less important reasons for getting education. While at work, an education will help one make better decisions, learn how to learn, appreciate and understand more things, cope better with change, attempt more things, use abilities and talents, and provide more job security. Regardless of what adjustments are proposed, estimates of the economic consequences of not completing high school are substantial.
Most dropouts who find work are in low-skill jobs—jobs that rapidly are disappearing from the workplace. The 1990 Census reports reflected in the ICPAC (1998) showed that the areas of machine operators (usually factory positions) and household service jobs declined in the past ten years. Jobs which grew less than 5 percent in the past ten years, included laborers, precision production, and farming. The greatest increase in job areas were in positions which require additional training and education after high school. This means school dropouts are less likely to participate in the labor force than high school graduates.

Frightening statistics from juvenile courts indicate that dropouts are more likely to engage in criminal activities. In a study of dropouts in prison done by Stephens & Repa (1992), 79 percent of convicted male felons were high school dropouts. There are non-monetary consequences of dropping out of school as well. While still in school, dropouts score considerably lower than stay-ins on standardized tests of cognitive performance (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). There now is growing evidence that dropping out is associated with a further widening of the gap in achievement between dropouts and stay-ins. When a battery of cognitive tests that tapped general knowledge was administered to High School and Beyond, Alexander, NELS:88/94 (95) showed that all else being equal, the students who had stayed in school improved their test performance during the 2-year period more than students who had dropped out. U.S. Department of Education (1998) contended that students who drop out show less cognitive growth than students who persist to graduation do. Non-completers and graduates differ in many ways, with graduates showing more persistence, dependability and ability than stay-outs and drop-ins. Other non-monetary consequences of dropping out include poor health,
decreased political participation, and lessened social mobility (Franklin & Streeter, 1996).

Most dropouts, even when surveyed shortly after dropping out, believe that leaving school short of graduation was a poor decision. Many return to school at some point. Ironically, even inmate dropouts often accomplish in prison what they were unable to accomplish when free. Stephens & Repa study (1992) documented that 51% of the school dropouts in prison attained a GED. The U.S. Department of Education report (1998) also reported that 51 percent of high school dropouts completed a GED. Based on data from the High School and Beyond study (NELS:88/94, 1995), generally the same groups of students who are most prone to drop out are the ones least likely to return and complete high school or receive an alternative credential within two years of the time most of them would have graduated from high school. Most of those who go back to school register to take GED tests -- the results of which recently have become questionable. According to NCES (1996), in recent years, research into the outcomes of GED credential holders has fueled a debate over the value of GED credential. This source disclosed that there is still conflicting evidence in the research literature concerning the effects of a GED credential on labor force participation, employment, earnings, wage rates, post-secondary program participation, and persistence in post-secondary programs. As a result, alternative programs have become more prevalent in the last three decades to try and address the dropout problem. There are formal programs that are federally funded like: Adult Secondary Education (ASE), secondary vocational education programs, and some school-based programs serving at-risk youth (NCES, 1996).
Based on the foregoing discussion, it seems that researchers have done a better job of identifying who is at the risk of dropping out, when and with what stated reasons. This information in turn, can be utilized by schools to provide good and appropriate education, both academic and vocational, for all young people within a democratic environment. Some research (Stanley, 1995; Franklin & Streeter, 1996; Fossey, 1996) showed that in many respects the schools have failed to achieve this task. According to Fossey (1996) the American society has not realized the American ideal of a free public education for all. The nation is still clearly at-risk when large numbers of students leave before taking advantage of the opportunities schools have to offer (Fossey, 1996). It is evident that the dropout problem requires a community campaign to combat it. Consequences of dropping out of school are severe and dire for both the individual and society.

Society needs an educated and trained work force capable of competing in the world market place. Education is necessary to ensure a decent quality of life and to develop responsible citizenship. Surely, a high school education should be considered the minimum survival kit for coping with today’s world. Youth who fail to graduate from high school are therefore at a greater disadvantage in this complex and demanding world. Generally, non-graduates do worse than high school graduates in the labor market and in overall economic well being. Neither lists of characteristics of dropouts nor scholarly analyses of reasons of dropping out are sufficient for understanding the true nature of the problem (Fossey, 1996). There is no panacea for eradicating the dropout problem, but there are abundant ideas and proven programs that can be adapted to local needs and resources. School officials must deal with each dropout case individually and conduct a thorough investigation of the student’s home background, school performance, and a
detailed assessment of personality factors before interventions can be implemented. The next chapter examines some of the effective school-based intervention programs that have been evaluated to date in dealing with the dropout problem.
CHAPTER 4- SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

This chapter describes and evaluates the few programs that have been reported to be effective and replicable across a broad range of elementary and middle schools. Most of the programs discussed have been frequently applied to schools serving many Latino students. However the choice of programs in this review was based on their potential applicability and relevance to the dropout problem in general. Although the programs have been implemented mostly with Latino students, they seem to have implications for any other group. After a brief discussion of some programs, The Comer School Development Program is discussed in detail. Each program review includes an examination of the program's rationale, features and evidence of purported effectiveness.

Fashola, Slavin, Calderon & Duran (1997) have provided a concise and informative review that applies consistent standards that can be used to evaluate the potential effectiveness and replicability of programs available to educators, or any personnel committed to transforming schools and classrooms to meet the needs of Latino students. Their work will therefore be used extensively in this chapter.

The programs reviewed in this chapter are arranged in the following categories: (a). Classroom instructional programs (which include cooperative methods and curriculum specific programs); (b). tutoring Programs; (c). title VII academic excellence award winning programs and (d). Schoolwide reform programs.
Classroom Instructional Programs

Cooperative Learning methods

Cooperative learning methods refer to a broad range of instructional methods in which students work together to learn academic content. Fashola et al., (1997) stated that research comparing cooperative learning and traditional methods has found positive effects on the achievement of elementary and secondary students, especially when two key conditions are fulfilled. First, groups must be working toward a common goal, such as the opportunity to earn recognition or rewards based on group performance. Second, the success of the groups must depend on the individual learning of all group members, not on a single group product.

Cooperative learning methods are widely used throughout the United States and other countries with all kinds of schools and children, and the research on these methods has equally involved a broad diversity of all schools and students.

Three cooperative methods – STAD, TGT and Jigsaw are evaluated under this category. Although these programs were not specifically designed for Latino students, they have been researched and used in schools serving many Latino students and are currently available to schools for replication.

Student Teams-Achievement Division (STAD) and Teams-Games Tournaments (TGT). These two related cooperative learning programs were developed at Johns Hopkins University. They are among the most thoroughly evaluated of all cooperative methods, and have been extensively disseminated in schools with Latino children (Slavin et al., 1994).
Teams can earn recognition or privileges based on the improvement made by each team member over his or her own past record. Both programs emphasize the use of group goals (in this case recognition) in which teams can only achieve success if each team member can perform well on an independent assessment. This motivates team members to do a good job of teaching and assessing each other.

In STAD, students work in four-member, heterogeneous learning teams. First the teacher provides the lesson content through direct instruction. Then students work in their teams to help each other master the content using study guides, worksheets or other material as a basis for discussion, tutoring, and assessment among students. Following this students take brief quizzes, on which they cannot help each other. TGT is the same as STAD except that students play academic games with members of the other teams to add points to an overall team score. Both STAD and TGT have been extensively evaluated in comparison to control groups in a wide variety of subjects. Across 26 such studies of at least four weeks duration, there was a median effect size of +.32 for STAD; in 7 studies of TGT, the median effect size was +.38 (Fashola et al., 1997). STAD and TGT are used in thousands of classrooms nationwide. A training program at Johns Hopkins University and certified trainers throughout the U.S. provide professional development in these methods.

**Jigsaw.** This is a cooperative learning technique in which students work in small groups to study text, usually social studies or science. Each group member is assigned to become an “expert” on some aspect of a unit of study.

After reading about their area of expertise, the “experts” from different groups meet to discuss their topic, and then return to their groups and take turns teaching their topics.
to their group mates. In a variation of Jigsaw called Jigsaw II students are given topics in a common reading, such as text chapter, biography, or short book. After they have read the material, discussed it with their counterparts in other groups, and shared their topics with their own group, they take a quiz on all topics, as in STAD. Jigsaw was first used with Latino students, and much the research on this topic has involved schools in the Southwest serving many Latino students. The first brief Jigsaw evaluation found positive effects of the program for minority students (Latino and African American students analyzed together). But not for Anglos. Although outcomes for Jigsaw II have been more positive for school dropouts, Fashola et al., (1997) stated that the studies have involved few Latinos. During the process of teaching, this method can also “socialize” potential dropouts and make them feel as part of their classroom communities.

Curriculum-Specific Programs

These are the many well-evaluated and replicable programs designed for use in specific grades and subjects. In reading, one program described later in the chapter, *Success for All*/*Lee Conmigo* has documented positive effects with Latino as well as non-Latino students. In writing and Language arts, effective methods generally include some from process of writing in which students work together to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish compositions. One curriculum-specific program (childhood) and one in math are also reviewed in this section.

**Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI).** This program emphasizes such reading related skills as word recognition, study skills, spelling, penmanship, proofing, and writing skills, leading to improvement in decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary. The goal of ECRI is to improve elementary students’ reading ability.
ECRI teachers expect all students to excel. The lessons for ECRI are scripted, and incorporate multi-sensory and sequential methods and strategies of teaching. In a typical lesson, teachers introduce new concepts in lessons using at least seven methods of instruction, and teach at least one comprehension skill, one study skill, and a grammar/creative writing skill. Initially, teachers prompt students for answers. As the students begin to master the information presented, fewer and fewer prompts are provided until students can perform independently.

Even though ECRI was not originally developed for dropouts, it has been used among Spanish-speaking and bilingual students who according to dropout statistics have higher chances of dropping out. Evaluations of this program have included a variety of students, but its effectiveness has also been measured specifically among Latino bilingual students in Oceanside, California, Killeen, Texas, and Calexico, California. Fashola and his colleagues (1997) documented gains that ranged from +6.4 to +25.7. ECRI is used in hundreds of schools including many Latino students. Having learned that academic underachievement can cause students to drop out, this program will especially be effective for those students who are non-English speakers and therefore have language barriers. It would be make them better readers and improve on their reading strategies like word recognition and decoding.

Multicultural Reading and Thinking (McRAT). This is a writing program that trains teachers to improve students' academic achievement by adding multicultural themes to all areas of the curriculum in grades 3 through 8. The program is intended to make students better readers and writers by adding multicultural and problem-solving components to all areas of the curriculum.
McRAT does not exist as a stand-alone program, but works with the existing curriculum. It strives to teach children to think critically about what they read in class, so that they can apply these critical processes to their writing and to real-life situations in which people of different backgrounds have to learn to work and live together. Specific skills that the children are taught include analysis, comparison, inference, interpretation, and evaluation, and these skills are used in all areas of the curriculum.

A study was done that evaluated the effects of McRAT on achievement, students represented a range of socioeconomic status backgrounds, achievement levels, and ethnic backgrounds (Arkansas Department of Education, 1992). This evaluation studied the effects of McRAT on achievement scores in the specific cognitive areas that the students were taught in the program. The McRAT students, who were mainly minority outperformed the control students in the areas of analysis (ES = +.41), inference (ES = +.57), comparison (ES = +.65), and evaluations (ES = +.45). McRAT joined the National Diffusion Network in 1993, is currently used in 44 schools in Arkansa, and is also being disseminated nationally. It has not been used extensively with Latino students as yet (Fashola et al., 1997). Since students who dropout are from minority groups, the program will be helpful to keep them in school because as already stated in the introductory paragraph of this program, it teaches specific skills that are needed in all areas of the curriculum.

**Maneuvers With Mathematics (MWM).** MWM was founded at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It was designed to teach students in grades 5 through 8 advanced mathematics problem solving. The goal of MWM is to motivate students to use mathematics in a creative manner, while still learning basic arithmetic skills.
MWM emphasis is on training both teachers and students to use calculators to solve both simple arithmetic and complex geometry and advanced mathematics problems. Students are shown how math is used every day. For example, in cooking, traveling, building houses, and using money. They use specific books created by MWM which stress problem solving, rechecking answers, and using mathematics in real life situations. Teacher guides provide alternative ways of presenting topics and concepts to the students.

The main evaluation of this program was done in 1991. The evaluation included 617 MWM students matched with 223 control students (MWM, 1991). During adjustment for pretest differences, the MWM students outperformed the students in the control group (ES = +.47). At each individual grade level, MWM students made better gains than the students in the control groups (ES = +.12, +.54, +.59, and +.86 in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades respectively). This program was not originally developed for Latino students, but has been used with this population. It is validated by the NDN, and is currently being used in all fifty states nationwide. MWM trainers attend training sessions in summer institutions (Fashola et al., 1997).

MWM (1991) study showed that students groups used exceeded the state norms in mobility and in the number of low income, limited English proficient students. So the study had participants who potentially could drop out of school but were only prevented from doing so by implementing this program.

The Perry Preschool/ High Scope Childhood program. One of the best ways to ensure that students succeed in school is to provide them with high quality experiences before they enter school. Although studies of long-term impacts of early childhood
programs have a long history, there is relatively little research on the effects of such programs on Latino students. In the 1960s, when most of this research was begun, the main populations studied were African American and Anglo students (Fashola et al., 1997). This section discusses only one curriculum-specific childhood program which was shown among others, to be effective for preschool students in general – The Perry Preschool/ High Scope Childhood program.

The program was part of the consortium for Longitudinal studies; and has become one the most frequently cited and extensively researched curriculum-specific early childhood education program. Children from low-income families participated in an intensive 2-year preschool when they were ages 3 and 4 (Durlak, 1995). It is a part of Success for All/ Lee Conmigo, discussed later in the chapter.

The creators of the Perry Preschool Curriculum believe in empowering the family, the child, and the teacher, as in Head Start programs. The program has specific academic goals for participants in the program and its developers have created a specific curriculum to accomplish these goals. Based on Piaget's theories of cognition, the Perry Preschool Curriculum seeks to increase academic achievement and reduce students' chances of being placed in special education classes by teaching them to become active learners. The teacher acts as the facilitator of knowledge who sets up the classroom in such a way that the student is provided with the opportunity to learn math, science, reading, art, music, social studies, and movement very day. Students choose what they wish to study or work with, but the teacher is expected to be available to answer any questions and clarify any misunderstandings that students may have.
The Perry Preschool model has been evaluated to investigate both short and long-term outcomes with at-risk preschoolers. As with other preschool programs, the Perry Preschool program has shown immediate (year end) positive effects on cognitive measures such as intelligence, but these effects do not maintain into elementary school.

In addition to the cognitive gains made by students who had attended Perry Preschool programs, a longitudinal evaluation of the effects of this program on at-risk students showed that children involved in these programs tended to stay in school longer, had fewer cases of teenage pregnancies and juvenile arrests, were retained less, were less likely to drop out of school, were more literate, more likely to be employed, and were more likely to attend college or vocational school than students in control groups who had no preschool experience.

Although the model has not been studied in schools serving many Latino students, it has been disseminated to such schools since this group stand higher chances of dropping out (Fashola et al., 1997). It is interesting to note how a 22-year follow-up study conducted on 95 percent of the participants involved in the original High/Scope study (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993) showed the relevancy of their study to the effects that dropping out of school usually has. The High Scope graduates still had a smaller chance of being arrested than the control group (35 percent); earned approximately $2,000 per month more than non-program participants (13 percent); and a high rate of high school graduation (71 percent) than the control group students (54 percent). All the characteristics of control group in this study match those of school dropouts. It will therefore be a good program to curb the dropout phenomenon. The High/Scope curriculum exists today in all 50 states.
Tutoring Programs

**Helping One Student To Succeed (HOSTS).** This is a model that helps schools create tutoring programs for at-risk students using a mentoring approach. HOSTS helps school staff choose curriculum materials that are especially tailored to the individual needs of the child receiving services and aligned with what is being taught in the classroom. HOSTS schools provide one-to-one, usually after-school tutorial services to Title 1 students in elementary through high school who are performing below the 30th percentile. This includes limited English proficient students who have been retained or are in special education. HOSTS trains community volunteers from businesses and the community, as well as peers and cross-age mentors, to serve as tutors. Schools involved in HOSTS have access to thousands of learning materials that have been designed to help the targeted population. The tutor follows a carefully designed lesson plan generated by the Title 1 teacher from a comprehensive database that aligns the curriculum of the schools to local objectives or state frameworks.

HOSTS was not created specifically to serve Latino students, but some of the school districts that have been inundated with high dropout figures, have used it. So far HOSTS has been most successful in districts that have large numbers of Latino students, such as Pasadena, California, and Houston, Texas. The evaluations have not included pre- and post-experimental and group control studies. They have measured their student participants’ success by looking at NCE scores, NCE gains, and the number of students who pass at grade level. In a multi-state study of HOSTS done for Title 1 national validation (HOSTS Corporation, 1994), the students in grades 1, 2, and 3 made substantial NCE year to year gains (15, 25, and 25 respectively), while the students in
other grades also made significant NCE gains. In a California evaluation that had a 95 percent population of Hispanic students, students in second, third, and fifth grades had NCE gains of 11.4, 9.5, and 9.9 respectively. These NCE gains exceeded those of the school and the state. Since its inception in Vancouver, Washington, in 1972, HOSTS has involved over 150,000 students and 100,000 mentors in more than 400 programs nationwide (Fashola et al., 1997). The documented success of this program shows that it can be used nationwide to solve the dropout problem; especially where there are high dropout rates.

**Title VII Academic Excellence Award Winning Programs**

In this section, two of the many title VII academic excellence award winning programs are described. Although evidence of effectiveness for both of them does not exist, Fashola et al.; (1997) notes that despite the fact that these programs lacked control groups, they show promise and are worth mentioning as alternatives for schools serving many English Language learners. All of them have staff development programs capable of working with schools nationally or in their regions. Depending on the needs of the district these programs can exist as either bilingual or English as a second language models. The programs include:

**Project ACHIEVE.** This is an elementary school English as a second language program developed in Urbana, Illinois in 1994. It provides instruction for students in science, language arts, social studies, and reading. Students entering the district with very little or no English language skills are assisted to learn English in an effective way. Students entering the district with very little or no English language skills are identified, tested, and assigned to daily two-hour classes where English is taught using a
whole language approach. Students in first, second, and third grades receive reading instruction in an English as a second language room while their peers receive science and social instruction in the regular classroom. The English as a second language science program uses many hands-on experiences and cooperative learning groups.

The Alaska Writing Project. This is English as a second language program developed in Fairbanks, Alaska (1994). It provides instruction in science, language arts, and social studies to elementary and secondary school students. The goal of the program is to provide a writing process emphasizing computer applications, using a sheltered English approach to writing across the curriculum. Students engaged in the writing process learn to plan, draft, revise, proofread, and publish stories, newspapers, letters, and reports. Language barriers have caused some students’ academic performance to be low. In exploring what causes students to drop out, low academic performance has been singled out as the single predictor of who will drop out of school. Being English as a second language programs, these two programs will be helpful in keeping students with little or no English language skills in schools.

Schoolwide Reform Programs

Some of the most promising programs for Latino students are programs designed to reform the entire school, touching everything from curriculum and instruction to school organization and assessment. Most of these are adaptations or applications of national programs not originally for Latino or LEP students but modified or redesigned for this purpose in schools with many such children. In this section two such programs will be reviewed as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that one program will be reviewed in detail. That program falls under this category and will be reviewed last.
**Success for All.** Success For All is a multi-component, comprehensive, schoolwide program that combines preschool and kindergarten programs with one-on-one tutoring in the early elementary grades plus family support activities and other services. As a comprehensive program, Success for All bridges the gap between primary and secondary prevention efforts. The idea is to prevent academic problems before first grade through intensive, high-quality preschool and kindergarten programs (primary intervention), to tutor first graders who have early reading problems, and to continue tutoring and offering other academic services until children’s academic achievement is at grade level (secondary prevention).

As is true with any large-scale, multi-site intervention, the program varies somewhat from site to site, depending on local resources and needs but has been most extensively in schools serving many Latino students. The prototypical first-grade program places from 2 to 6 tutors in each classroom to provide individual 20-minute daily tutoring sessions to each child and to assist the regular classroom teacher in small-group reading instruction using principles of cooperative learning. Children are grouped according to reading performance levels within Grades 1 to 3, but formal reading instruction begins in the second semester of kindergarten.

There is a half-day preschool and/or a full-day kindergarten using curriculum emphasizing language development and balancing academic readiness activities with nonacademic music, art, and social activities. One-to-one tutoring, usually from certified teachers, is provided to children who are having difficulties in learning to read, with an emphasis on first graders. Family support teams also work in each school to involve parents actively in the education of their children. These support teams offer parent
education and stress the importance of such topics as proper sleep and nutrition, eye and hearing tests, and regular school attendance as well as home-school relations. A program facilitator works with all teachers on continuing professional development and coaching, manages an assessment program to keep track of student progress, and ensures close coordination among all program components.

In schools with Spanish bilingual programs, Success for All uses a beginning reading curriculum called *Lee Conmigo* which applies instructional strategies similar to those used in the English program (Reading Roots). It uses a curriculum sequence and materials appropriate to Spanish language and Latino culture found in elementary schools serving many children placed at risk (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996). Beginning in late first grade, students use an adaptation of Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC)- Spanish novels or basal in a comprehensive cooperative learning approach to reading, writing, and language arts are used. BCIRC also uses cooperative learning activities to help students' transition from Spanish to English reading at the point of transition mandated by district policies.

The findings for Success for All are impressive. Research on the Success for All program in general has taken place in 23 schools in nine districts throughout the U.S. (Durlak, 1995; Fashola et. al., 1997). The major reservation involves the feasibility of program implementation on a wide scale. For Latino students, the effects of Success for All have been particularly positive (Slavin, Karweit & Wasik, 1994). As of fall 1996, Success for All is in use in more than 450 schools in the United States, of which more than 150 have significant numbers of Latino students (Fashola et al., 1997). A training staff in Baltimore, with regional training programs focusing on bilingual and ESL issues
in California, Texas, Arizona, Florida and New York, disseminates the program nationally. As more schools become interested in this intervention, it will be important to monitor how well the entire set of preschool, kindergarten, and early primary-grade programs for at-risk students can be implemented in different settings and what happens if only parts of the program are enacted. Some data currently indicate that program effects for Success For All increase over the first 4 years of program operation, suggesting that proficiency in program practices takes considerable time to acquire (Durlak, 1995).

Slavin et. al., 1996 indicated that this program serves many children identified at-risk. It will therefore be beneficial for potential dropouts. These authors indicated that it could be an adaptive program in schools with many limited English proficient students but no native-language instruction.

School Development Program. The School Development Program (SDP) is a comprehensive approach to school reform in elementary and middle schools.

The program’s focus is on building a sense of common purpose among school staff, parents, and community, and engaging school staff and others in a planning process intended to change school practices to improve student outcomes.

Each SDP school creates three teams that take particular responsibility for moving the reform agenda forward. A School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), made up of representatives of teachers, parents, and administration, develops and monitors implementation of a comprehensive school improvement plan. A Mental Health Team (MHT), principally composed of school staff concerned with mental health such as school psychologists, social workers, counselors, and selected teachers, plans programs
focusing on prevention, building positive child development, positive interpersonal
relations, and so on.

The third major component of the SDP is a Parent Program (PP), which is designed
to build a sense of community among school staff, parents, and students. The PP
incorporates existing parent participation activities (such as parent-teacher organization)
and implements further activities to draw parents into the school, to increase
opportunities for parents to provide volunteer services, and to design ways for having the
school to respect and celebrate the ethnic backgrounds of its students.

The three teams in SDP schools work together to create comprehensive plans for
school reform. The main focus is on mental health and parent involvement, but schools
are also encouraged to examine their instructional programs and to look for ways to serve
children's academic needs more effectively.

The SDP was originally designed to meet the needs of African American children
and families, but large numbers of Latino students also attend SDP schools, especially in
California and Texas where this group has high dropout rates. Evaluations of effects
have taken place in a number of locations. The first was a longitudinal evaluation of the
first two SDP schools in New Haven, Connecticut, which showed marked improvements
in student performance on standardized tests over a 14-year period. A recent independent
evaluation (1995) following first graders in two SDP schools also showed positive
effects. Other evaluations comparing SDP schools to matched control schools have
found mixed, inconsistent effects, with site-to-site variation. Outcomes emphasized by
the program, such as self-concept and school climate, have been more consistently
associated with the program than have achievement gains. The SDP is currently involved
with more than 565 schools, mostly elementary and middle, in 22 states. It has regional training programs in several states (Fashola et al., 1997).

The Comer School Development Program. The program involves school-based decision-making and enhanced parental involvement. It is driven by a consideration for child development principles. Comer who originally developed the program some thirty years ago, has subsequently modified the program as his experience in implementing the program in a number of schools accumulated (Anson, Cook, Habib, Grady, Haynes, & Comer, 1991).

Comer's theory is the product of two analyses. The first is historical, contrasting the world of the poor child of color fifty years ago with the world of people in general (Anson et al., 1991). Comer emphasized the breakup of the African-American family, the loosening of ties between the school and community that in the past monitored children's behavior and socialized them, and the alienation of teachers from their students' community, a community that once may have been their own. Comer wanted teachers to exercise their more traditional role of setting social and personal standards. Much teaching has become a Monday-to-Friday 8:30-to-3:00 job. Comer acknowledged he could not put the clock back; but he wanted to modify schools to make teachers more responsive to community needs by being more than baby-sitters, disciplinarians, or lackluster pedagogues (Anson et al., 1991).

The second analysis is a psychological and social portrait of the various groups with a stake in urban schools. What do school principals, teachers, and mental health professionals need, he asked? The answer he provides concentrates on basic human motivation more than on schools per se. He stresses the need for predictability,
autonomy, professional competence, institutional loyalty, warmth of daily interaction, and affirmation of the community. What do children need, he asked, particularly poor children of color? The answer he gave came primarily from the psychology of motivation, but some of it also came from the social isolation of African-American children from mainstream social skills and norms about appropriate behavior. He stressed the need for children to bond to adults and, later, to peers in order to experience self-efficacy in various domains of school life, for social skills that elicit positive responses, for social comfort in race and class worlds other than the child’s own, and for understanding the world in which they live. What do parents want from schools, he asked? His answer was quite conventional, not much from what middle-class parents want. Parents need to know their child is respected and is being educated; they need to feel socially comfortable in the school milieu; and they need to contribute to the school even if it is only a cake at some social event. However, he assumed that there are class differences in how skilful parents are in getting what they want from schools and in the receptivity of schools to the way poor parents express their concerns.

Comer designed structures, functions, and operating procedures to meet these needs in the school setting. Assuming a reasonable design, he postulated that academic performance would improve because attendance, achievement, and respectful, orderly behavior are goals of everyone in the schools. There was nothing revolutionary about these processes and outcomes. Indeed, they could be considered old-fashioned, products of a longing for a world of tight communities in which the school figured as a central institution valued by all. Comer was critical of quick fixes for urban schools--like improving curricular, providing more computers, paying teachers more revamping
teacher education, or extending the principal's role, although he favored appropriate attention, in time, to all such matters. Rather, the core of his program was the improvement of interpersonal relationships within the school building and carrying out the school-based planning that positive relationships facilitate. Schooling is about relationships with the people you see every day, he believed, whether they are students, teachers, or secretaries, and any reform that fails to recognize this is not likely to be effective. Almost everybody in the society agrees on the practical goals of education and can get access to the same teaching materials and information on how to teach. It is up to schools to provide an environment that stimulates the orderliness, respectful relationships, and the school-centered planning that are prerequisites for teaching and learning. Some may consider these simple, old-fashioned remedies, but the process of attaining them necessitates a major transformation of the attitudes and structures that have developed in the urban schools.

The program utilizes three school teams: a school planning and management team (SPMT), a parent program (PP), and a mental health team (MHT).

The SPMT is the governance and management body of the school. Its membership includes representatives of teachers (elected or nominated by the teachers; parents (elected by parents); members of the school's professional support staff (such as school psychologist, social worker, and health education teachers); a representative of the nonprofessional support staff (e.g., Secretaries, Janitors); and the principal who also serves as the team's leader. The primary function of the SPMT is to develop a comprehensive plan whose goals are directed toward improving school climate, staff development, academic performance, and public and community relations. In each of
these areas, the plan details the implementation strategies and actions the SPMT believes will attain the goals set for the school. Mechanism to ensure progress or modifications, if necessary, should also be devised. Once the plan is completed, the SPMT has to share it with the entire school community and enlist support for it. Possibilities of resistance from others in the school should be expected. It is up to the team members to develop strategies that will enlist the support and participation of other teachers, staff members, and parents, as the ultimate success of the program depends on such support. Indeed, it is the SPMT that decides how best to implement Comer's model within the school, based on what is known about local needs and resources.

To facilitate a task-centered approach to school reform, each meeting of the SPMT is required to have a specific agenda that all members know about prior to the meeting. This should help the team stick to issues they have previously determined to be important, while avoiding unproductive digressions. New issues can be broached, of course, but they become part of the next meeting's agenda. Parents who serve on the SPMT have usually been active in the local parent groups prior to implementation of the Comer Program. They are therefore aware of how the school has functioned in the past and generally have good contacts among members of the school staff. But SPMT parents are urged to deepen their contact with other parent groups to facilitate liaison and to ensure that the parents on the SPMT will be representative of the school's parent body at large. Similarly, the member or members of the MHT who serve on the SMMT act as one form of inter-team liaison and as representatives of the non-teaching professionals in general. Among the three Comer teams, the SPMT is the central organizing and policy-setting body, playing the fundamental instrumental role in the management of the school.
The MHT's members include the psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, counselors, and any other related support services staff. The team carries out the responsibilities typically associated with such professions but adds three novel activities. First, prevention is a major focus. The MHT is expected to recommend policy changes to prevent behavior problems in the school and to create an environment of orderliness, mutual respect, and success. Second, the MHT is responsible for seeing that child development and principles of interpersonal relationship are embodied in the goals of the school and for assisting the entire school staff to understand and act on the basis of such knowledge. To this end, the MHT members are called on to share their skills with teachers, both informally and in a formal staff-development context, so that the teachers can better handle the many varieties of undesirable behavior that may occur in their classroom and can learn how to promote more desirable behavior. Comer schools are characterized by supportive, considerable social relationships; MHT members strive to use their knowledge within the school building to help create such an atmosphere. The third activity for which MHT members are responsible is the implementation of any parts of the school plan that concerns them. They must give feedback on any parts of the plan that engage their professional competencies. The SPMT's Comprehensive School Plan drives school goals. All school-based professionals, such as those on the MHT, do all they do to attain the goals.

The PP builds upon the existing parent-teacher organizations in an effort to improve the school's climate and improve parent involvement. Some of the already active parents are elected to serve on the SPMT and serve as liaison for the larger parent community. Individual parents are encouraged to volunteer time working throughout the school.
building and are expected to organize activities supportive to the overall school program.

A primary function of the PP is to conceive and plan social events that will improve school climate and bring less involved parents into the school. The plan is to increase the participation by a broad range of parents. Though the PP can devise its own ways to increase participation, putting parents in classrooms as helpers or getting parents to meet with teachers about pedagogic matters may be initially discouraged by Comer coordinators. Instead, they may encourage the PP to plan social events to get parents initially involved in the schools. Such familiar roles are more likely to be foot-in-the-door activities. Implementing strategies to enlist other parents in school activities is a major function of the PP and is depicted as a team-specific function. Historic events and holidays provide an excellent vehicle for social events, often-involving food, conversation, and pride in ethnic heritage. Hence the PP’s “social” responsibility includes developing school social calendar that lists all the special activities occurring at the school or organized through the PP that provide an opportunity for parents to get involved in the life of the school. Comer assumes that most parents will eventually want to hear about pedagogic curriculum, their children’s social life within the school, and practical ways in which they might be able to help their children learn better. To these ends, the PP can invite teachers, administrators, or others in the school to provide presentations on learning activities in the school, and the SPMT may try to ensure that the PP has the necessary resources for such activities. The PP can also provide interested parents with opportunities to learn skills they value, including skills in general, or adult literacy.
Various principles guide the program's implementation. Most are directed toward increasing communication and trust among and between school officials and parents as well as promoting attachment and a sense of efficacy. A no-fault policy removes attempts to assign blame for problems and instead emphasizes joint problem solving. Decisions about solutions and procedures are reached by consensus not by vote. In addition, closure is reached on every issue, thus promoting constructive momentum rather than procrastination. A fourth principle is not to paralyze the authority of the principal or other team members. Student outcomes emphasize encourage feelings of self efficacy and competence, assigning work commensurate with ability levels, providing extra individual assistance, and offering a broad range of academic subjects. The promotion of adult attachment is believed to be critical to promoting student learning and socialization. A school climate emphasizing trust and respect is created to promote acceptance of diversity and a sense of personal security and safety.

The role of the MHT is critical to the program's success in achieving its long range goals because it promotes programs that expand and improve the quality of student support systems by providing positive relationships that compensate for previous deficiencies and that foster a community in which students know they belong and are accepted and helped (Anson et al., 1991).

Anson et al. (1991) cite significant academic gains for students in 2 project schools in New Haven. They had ranked well below national norms at the inception of the program in 1968, but by 1979 they had both surpassed such norms without any change in the socioeconomic makeup of the schools. Relative to other New Haven elementary schools, the same 2 schools ranked among the lowest of 33 both in attendance and
achievement in 1968. But, by 1984 fourth-grade pupils at these same two schools were tied for third-and fourth-highest achievement rank based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and attendance rates were among the best in the city. The article shows similar success in Prince George’s County, Maryland, in schools serving mainly low-income African American children. In 1990 Comer received a multimillion-dollar grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to disseminate his program to other schools. Thus while the program has been adopted in a number of districts, the Rockefeller grant suggests that it will even be more available in the immediate future. Of recent, the program has received national attention and is currently being replicated in various school districts in the U.S. (Durlak, 1995).

The literature review done on program evaluation of in this review seems to support that there is a broad range of replicable programs from which elementary and middle schools can choose. Anyone who believes that the often-dismal performance of many school dropouts can be confronted must take the advantage that these programs seem to offer in dropout problems. Schools may reinvent their own paths to reform their climates using these programs as their guiding lights. Some of the programs like the Comer School Development Program (SDP) are designed to help schools develop their own approaches, but this is not the same as asking schools without support of the experienced and skillful networks to reinvent SDP practices. Every program requires adaptation to the circumstances, needs, and resources of every school. It will not be a wise decision for schools to ignore the rich and varied set of alternatives available to them to enhance the learning of their respective student populations.
Although the number and quality of programs evaluated in this review may not always be what the readers feel valuable to their specific needs and situations, there are certainly many more effective programs in existence than evaluated here. The message of this chapter is one of hope and urgency. Schools can do a much better job of educating their at-risk students, using methods and materials that are readily available.

There are approaches that are effective and appropriate for bilingual classes, for English as a second language classes, and for English-dominant categories of students. The existence of these approaches demonstrates that the low achievement of so many school dropouts is not always inevitable. We need not wait for social or political transformation or conclusive resolution of the question of language or method of instruction to dramatically improve educational outcomes for at-risk students. This chapter takes one small step in that direction by summarizing the best evidence on the best programs the United States has today, but there is much more left that can be done and that needs to be done as educators strive to solve the dropout problem.
CHAPTER 5- COMPONENTS OF DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

There is an international interest in decreasing the number of school dropouts. Since many nations now recognize their continued progress depends on having an educated and productive workforce (Wechsler & Oakland, 1990), research and public policy offer useful guidelines to assist educators, mental health specialists, community leaders, and others in formulating dropout prevention programs. This chapter offers a synthesis of what research views as the more promising strategies designed for dropout prevention. The views discussed, address critical issues in three overlapping areas: schools, children and youth, and families and communities. Being a multifaceted problem, no one approach can completely eliminate the dropout problem. The difficulties that are normally encountered in formulating dropout prevention programs are briefly discussed. Synthesis: and summary of the previous chapters are given and implications to school psychologists are drawn.

Directions Toward Developing Dropout Prevention Programs

General Components

Whenever possible, the plan should be comprehensive, incorporating key features that focus on schools, children and youth. and families and other segments of the community, including religious institutions, civic, and business leaders, the helping professions, and law enforcement and judicial officials (Oakland, 1992). The origins of dropping out and its prevention lie within a community. Schools comprise one component of the cause and only one part of the solution. Thus, a community’s contributions are needed for identifying factors that impede and facilitate school retention.
and for formulating and carrying out a successful program. Leadership for any school-based program therefore, requires a strong professional with close tie to both school and community agencies.

Coleman (1991), Oakland (1992) and Fashola et al., (1997) agree that program features should be directed toward (a) utilizing existing resources more efficiently, (b) developing additional resources, (c) matching resources with students through system-wide, group, and individualized services, and (d) institutionalizing those program features that demonstrate the best cost-effectiveness ratios.

Specific Program Components.

The specific nature of the programs will vary considerably among districts as well as among schools in larger districts. However, as Slavin et al., 1996 argued, any strategy for improving the educational plight of at-risk students must begin at the elementary level, and it must be dedicated to preparing children to do high quality work in secondary school. McPartland & Schneider (1996) concur with Slavin and his colleagues (1996) and state that the incidence of learning problems among dropouts is high. By kindergarten or first grade, teachers can often predict those who are most likely to drop out. These students typically display lower cognitive abilities, inattentive and hyperactive behaviors, and little self-reliance. Many students benefit from highly structured classrooms that minimize distractions and provide proper support, reinforcement schedules, and counseling. Students prone to boredom and those who prefer flexible, open, and spontaneous lifestyles often respond better to instructional styles that provide physical involvement and excitement that challenges their endurance, cleverness, and adaptability (Franklin & Streeter, 1995). Therefore, simply raising
standards without making it possible for at-risk students to meet them is more likely to increase their dropout rate than to improve their education (Dorn, 1996; McPartland & Schneider, 1996).

Additional programs often offer a work-study emphasis together with alternative and nontraditional school schedules (e.g., part-time or evening classes). When districts have diminished economic and professional resources, peer assistance and other volunteer programs can be implemented to provide needed tutorial or counseling services at relatively low costs. Furthermore, peer assistance programs can also be considered to provide the most effective services to troubled teens (Durlak, 1995).

Precise accounting and follow-up methods to identify the status of students subsequent to their leaving a school district are needed to determine the numbers who actually remain out of school and discontinue their formal education. Improved accounting techniques may lower dropout rates substantially. These follow-up activities may have an added benefit when coupled with aggressive actions that encourage those who dropped out to resume their education (Oakland, 1992; Durlak, 1995; Fashola et. al., 1997).

Low morale often is found among teachers and administrators. Professionals who feel undervalued, overworked, and ineffective are unable to perform suitably. Programs are needed that address their mental health and safety needs and curtail personal and professional pessimism, high absentee, and teacher turnover. Educators frequently fault families for student academic difficulties. In contrast, parents frequently fault teachers. More suitable and constructive forms of communication must replace derision and finger pointing (Franklin & Streeter, 1996; Fashola et. al., 1997).
Key School-Based Components. Strong administrative team leadership together with support from staff, parents, and students favor program success (Comer 1991, Anson et al., 1991). Dropout program success is improved when small, more personalized learning environments in which teachers and students feel safe, valued, and effective. Personalized forms of instruction foster high levels of achievement among potential dropouts. A “can do” attitude should prevail, promoting positive attitudes toward self and others (Morris, 1992, Harrington-Lueker, 1998). Standards for academic and social behaviors should be high yet attainable by all students. Standards for teachers and teaching also must be high; teachers should be recognized and rewarded accordingly. Schools should be physically attractive and provide needed academic, library, and laboratory resources (Oakland, 1990; Fashola et al., 1997).

School programs should address important and pervasive issues, those that affect large numbers of students. In addition, the programs should provide opportunities to meet important but infrequently appearing needs (e.g., profoundly low academic aptitudes or achievement, sexual or physical abuse, the death of a loved one, or no money for food, clothing, or glasses). Critical individual services often are needed to enable students to continue their education Franklin & Streeter (1995).

Key Student-Based Components. Successful programs recognize and respond to students’ social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Effective programs enable students to learn how their basic psychological and social needs can be met in constructive ways (Morris, 1992). These basic needs include close physical contact, positive evaluations from others, feelings of competence, help in overcoming and solving important problems, rules that help define good from bad, control over one’s directions, balance between
affiliation and autonomy, academic stimulation, and congruence among thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Franklin & Streeter, 1996). Socialization is enhanced through programs that promote strong adult attachment, rewards that recognize suitable behaviors, and mutual trust and respect (Comer, 1991).

Effective programs correct over-generalized beliefs that students are school failures. Dropouts frequently feel their academic or social behaviors are irreparably deficient. This generalized impression often is inaccurate and creates a damaging self-fulfilling prophecy (Oakland, 1990).

Successful programs also respond suitably to students' development. Effective programs promote clear and accurate awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses. Given this self-knowledge, students should be encouraged to utilize their strongest aptitudes and to strive to improve or compensate for their weaknesses (Anson et al., 1991). For example, many students with severe reading problems have learned to utilize other qualities (e.g., listening comprehension) or to compensate for their problems (e.g., by utilizing talking books) while continuing to acquire reading skills (Durlak, 1995).

Effective programs develop and clarify student values and inform students how education enhances their attainment. Students frequently lack a sense of direction in their lives. For them school provides a social forum but does not promote long-term personal or academic goals. Education is in competition with many segments of the society. Students should therefore be encouraged to remain in school so as to display sufficient self-discipline and better resist competing and often more attractive alternatives to education (Comer, 1991). If phrased with a slightly different focus, effective programs
can promote motivation, enhance self-discipline, and instill an internalized locus of control (Morris 1992; and Oakland, 1992).

Alcohol and drug use, sexual activities, employment patterns that interfere with school, and other activities typically displayed in older persons jeopardize efforts to promote a high school education and should be discouraged (Stephens, 1992). Strong peer relationships with those who have or intend to dropout and with gangs should be curtailed. Effective programs also work to curtail conditions that jeopardize students' medical or mental health (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse), their premature entrance into adulthood (e.g., autos, time-consuming jobs, pregnancies), and family and community qualities that destabilize their lives socially and psychologically (Franklin & Streeter, 1995). Local, state, and federal statutes governing juvenile work as well as juvenile drug and liquor consumption should be fully enforced.

**Key Family- and Community-Based Components.** To be successful, dropout programs must address issues and draw upon resources beyond the school's doors. The following recommendations are directed toward this broad often-elusive arena:

**Home and Family Qualities.** Family qualities decisively influence whether students remain in school. Various family qualities (e.g., adult family members that maintain stable employment and family residence and value education for all children) may have a greater impact than special school programs. Many researchers of early intervention programs who share this view (Brooks-Gun, McCormick, Shapiro, Benasich, & Black 1994) adopt an ecological stance in interpreting any program outcome. Thus programs should promote family and residential stability to foster school retention.
Families of dropouts frequently exhibit acute and prolonged periods of stress. For some, their primary source of stress is financial, whereas for others it may be medical, psychological, or social (Franklin & Streeter, 1995). For many, the sources are multiple but, it is believed that children ultimately benefit because their primary caretakers become better socializers and educators who support and nurture their children’s growth and development (Durlak, 1995). Despite good intentions, adult and family resources needed to adequately nurture children often are insufficient.

The vast majority of students live in homes that, although not ideal, attempt to meet their basic needs. However, some students experience sustained abuse or neglect. Psychologists and other professionals are required to report cases of possible physical or sexual abuse of children. However, most forms of parent neglect or misconduct are subtle. Professionals must be trained and remain vigilant to signs suggesting abuse and neglect.

The availability of multiple forms of family-centered programs is critical to enable families to select those they most need. Programs may be needed to provide medical services, food, clothing, part-time or full-time and adult employment, home ownership, and community-based adult education and vocational training.

Community Services. Community-based individual and group counseling services should be available for at-risk students and their parents to alleviate emotional and social stress and to promote communication skills among teens and between teens and their parents (Comer, 1991). Services with a strong parent-education component also may be warranted. Parents who overly indulge and protect their children, who lack supervision
and restraint-setting skills, or in other ways display weak or improper parenting skills, should be given information and assistance (Franklin & Streeter, 1995).

These community and neighborhood services should be available, acceptable, accessible, adaptable, affordable, and appropriate. The services of social workers and other professionals often are needed to promote and maintain connections between service providers and consumers. Peer assistance programs within neighborhoods can be effective in both providing services and promoting connections between service providers and consumers. Physical and mental health specialists also should be encouraged to provide *pro bono* services to those targeted as potential dropouts and their families (Oakland, 1992).

**Difficulties in Program Formulation**

Among the basic premises of dropout prevention programs, research reveals that children typically drop out of school for very personal reasons. The few key ingredients that would constitute successful dropout intervention programs for all students have not yet been identified (Coleman, 1991; and Oakland, 1992). No one program or approach will therefore completely solve the dropout problem. Factors that help keep students in school or encourage them to leave are both personal and environmental in nature. Thus, the development of a manual to implement successful dropout programs in every community is not possible. However, there are important principles that enable educators and community leaders to initiate dropout prevention programs that, through their continued modification, may be successful.

In summary it should be noted that knowledge of prevailing qualities that may contribute to school dropouts is needed prior to formulating a prevention program.
Dropout behavior, as other behaviors, probably arises from interactions of individual traits and qualities with school, peer, family, and community qualities. Thus, qualities in these areas that contribute to dropping out should be identified. Moreover, program success is also increased by acknowledging qualities in these areas that contribute to students remaining in school.

**Synthesis and Summary**

The complex factors that contribute to the dropout problem defy simple solutions and quick fixes. The full commitment of the nation’s energy, time, and resources are needed to eradicate this problem. Although there have been a number of year-to-year fluctuations in the dropout rates, over the past 25 years as evidenced in NCES (1996), on average the decline only amounts to a smaller percentage of change of 0.13 percent per year. There are still disturbing trends in defining who the dropouts are, how to count them, what to do with them and make the available programs effective. To date, prescribing either a concrete program or conditional sets of activities that educators or citizens can enlist to combat the problem has been on stalemate because the problem is a multifaceted one.

Research has tied school completion and dropping out rather firmly to family background, academic ability and performance, social integration with the life of the school, and certain early transitions to adult roles, particularly work and childbearing. Substantial economic and social consequences of dropping out, for the individual and society have been identified.

Optimism is evident, at least in the rhetoric with which programs are being launched. Several programs that are mushrooming all over the U.S., the programs have conformed
to the quest of defeating this phenomenon with only a few strides towards conquering it. These endeavors have taken the form of added research and analysis that include: numerous public task forces established to assemble information and debate strategies, legislative adoption of pilot and demonstration programs, major foundation support for analyses and program trials. Regional and nationwide attempts to build network for the exchange of information are also part of the strategies to try and curb the problem.

It is recognized that dropout prevention programs are most effective when the values critical to education are also prioritized highly by target families and the community. Key features of a comprehensive dropout prevention program include awareness, commitment, coordination, allocating resources, and individualized attention to at-risk students. The community could probably make use of some wide publicity means of disseminating information like: houses of worship, radio, television, and newspapers to communicate and reinforce critical values important to education to help promote common standards within the community; and thus further efforts to encourage students to remain in school. Programs that coordinate school and neighborhood resources also are needed to curtail crime and delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, gang affiliations, and other problems.

The significance of any successful at-risk program should not only be related to the participants in the intervention group but must also cater for the future at-risk students. The components described above may serve as a model not only to prevent school dropout of the secondary student, but also to intervene in certain characteristics of at-riskness in students in the primary and middle grades. As a result, students can receive
assistance prior to the compulsory attendance age before they, too, become at-risk of dropping out.

No doubt, no one program can completely solve the dropout problem. However, it will probably be beneficial to look at programs from the point of view of Oakland (1992). He suggested that dropout prevention programs may be characterized, by analogy, as tree and its environment and stated that:

The tree itself represents a community. The soil that gave it birth and provides sustenance is symbolized by a community's history, customs, cultures, and other prior and current qualities. Soil conditions will impact the tree's many components; healthy soils enable the trunk and branches to thrive, whereas soils lacking nutrients will adversely impact them. A tree consists of many branches. Bigger trees have more branches. The school district constitutes one major branch. Other branches are formed by families, business and industry, the legal community, religious institutions, and so on. On the school branch, a dropout problem may be analogous to prematurely falling leaves. Deciduous trees that prematurely drop large numbers of leaves in summer may be experiencing problems on that branch within the main trunk, within the soil, or throughout its ecosystem (p.206).

Implications for School Psychology

The above quote has important implications to all school-based professionals especially the school psychologists who are more aware of the mental aspects of a learner (the main trunk). What this implies is that corrective action requires some detailed knowledge of possible problems as well as interventions that may extend from the soil (external environment) to the branches (the school and the student at-risk). As even the
best "seeds" must have suitable soil and adequate moisture to sprout and flourish, so, too, must the school provide a nurturing environment in order for learning to flourish.

The promising corrective actions outlined herein; the results of present research; as well as subsequent research and evaluation studies may enable us to function in the 21st century with a more substantial knowledge base to further reduce the number of students leaving school prematurely. School psychologists must take the initiative to establish a learning climate that meets the particular needs of every student.

School psychologists can also train and encourage teachers to do formative evaluation in classes while they (school psychologists) get in charge of summative evaluations in their school buildings. Evaluation should be carried out formatively by ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating progress in the various school-related performance areas. Formative evaluation may entail the use of empirical data collected from school records and reports. Even with unfavorable home circumstances, students can succeed when teachers are encouraged to provide personalized attention by a call home to inquire about an absence, by taking an interest in a student's pet, or by sending a note home praising a student for achievements both large or small.

Evaluation should be carried out summatively by an end-of-the-year follow-up and refinement of program variables. At-risk student status should then be summatively evaluated for placement and intervention the following year. Whatever intervention strategies are selected, they should be selected for an at-risk program through an examination of the factors and characteristics of the particular school situation at hand and related studies (Morris, 1992).
School psychologists should enhance collaboration. With the help of other support staff—social workers, school nurses and counselors can intervene to reach parents. Some educators believe that allowing parents to help make education decisions increases the likelihood that their children will remain in school (Brown, Pryzwansky & Schulte, 1998, Kratochwill & Bergan, 1990).

These strategies cannot provide a complete solution to the dropout problem, but they offer an important start. Armed with the best training in convergent data collection and ample practical experience they get, school psychologists should be able to wage an effective campaign to combat the dropout problem. The home and the school are two of the most important systems for the child, and what occurs in one system can substantially affect the other. Accordingly the study of relationships within the home can shed considerable light on the problems children experience at school. It is therefore necessary for school psychologists to go beyond individual assessment to the evaluation of interactions with the immediate environment, the family, and the community. This means they must develop skills in family system assessment and in planning family interventions that will affect children especially those at risk of dropping out. Concerted work on the part of every school psychologist to build the bridges between the most important systems in child’s life no doubt will substantially enhance programs’ effectiveness. The solutions, or better yet, the development and implementation of effective programs and methods to focus on the students at risk of dropping out, need to be augmented by data that are based on a consistent, reliable information and uniform reporting practices.
From the perspective of school psychologists in Botswana, the significance of successful programs will lie in their ability to prevent school dropout and facilitate academic, social and personal improvement of those students who have surpassed the age of compulsory attendance. Although there is no empirical research to this effect, the highest percentage of school dropouts in Botswana occurs at the age of 16 which is the last year past the compulsory attendance age. Successful programs in the case of Botswana, therefore will be the ones that make a difference in the academic, social, and personal adjustment of at-risk youth, and those that may have implications for the retention and/or remediation of Junior High School students.

To counteract the continuing failure patterns of far too many of junior high school students in Botswana, will require all the resources our schools and communities can offer. Of course the significance of such programs should not only be related to the participants in the intervention group but also to the future at-risk students. The Comer School Development Program (Comer 1980, 1988, 1991) so far seems to be a program that exemplifies such attempts to promote school reform. The challenge that lies ahead of this research is to synthesize the available theory and strategies in this program and apply them effectively to the situation in Botswana.
References


