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Efficacy of Transition Rooms: A Quantitative and Quasi-Qualitative Look

Nancie Moyer Andreasen

EFFICACY OF TRANSITION ROOMS:

A QUANTITATIVE AND QUASI-QUALITATIVE LOOK

An Abstract of

A Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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Nancie Moyer Andreasen

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ABSTRACT

This study examined some of the behavioral and academic characteristics of students who were placed in transition rooms, program philosophies and goals, behavioral and academic benefits of the transition experience, and parental reactions to the programs.

Subjects were 43 white middle-class students who were enrolled in two transition rooms in a midwestern school district during two consecutive school years. Fall and spring data from teacher ratings on the Myklebust Pupil Rating Scale (PRS) were obtained and used as indices of behavioral characteristics and progress. Spring kindergarten and transition scores on the Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery (C-B) were collected and utilized as measures of academic characteristics and progress. In addition, fall and spring classroom behavioral observations were made on four individual students, and teacher interviews were conducted to determine program philosophies and goals. Questionnaires were sent to the parents of all students in the spring of both school years to obtain their responses concerning the transition programs.

Data were analyzed to determine characteristics and progress, both of transition students as a group and of four individually selected students. Results indicated that both behavioral and academic characteristics are contributing factors in the high-risk status of transition students. When students entered the transition programs, the total group means on verbal, nonverbal, and total PRS ratings were approximately one standard deviation below the standardization means on the PRS. According to C-B norms, the students displayed average prereading skills.

Philosophies and goals differed to some degree for the two schools, with one school placing more emphasis on affective factors and the other stressing academic factors. As a group, students at both schools made significant ($p < .001$) academic gains on the C-B, whereas, students from the school which stressed affective factors received higher PRS ratings at the end of the year than students from the school which stressed academics. Questionnaire responses indicated that most parents had favorable reactions to the transition programs. Case study data indicated that these four students were referred for differing types and degrees of both behavioral and academic deficits and, while all made academic progress during the year, that behavioral changes were more individualized.

Findings indicated that transition students displayed a wide range of behavioral and academic characteristics, suggesting that both areas should be considered in the identification and referral process. Differing philosophies and goals of the two transition programs may have had an influence on the type of progress made by students in the different classes. Teacher attitudes and parental support toward the program can also be factors influencing the success of the transition experience.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The early identification and programming for educationally high-risk students is becoming a popular trend in education. The rationale for this movement is to detect pupil characteristics that may lead to frustration and failure in academic endeavors. The aim is, then, to minimize the impact of such problems, if in fact they do arise, as the child progresses through school by providing some type of intervention before the child has a chance to experience failure. Although this appears to be a worthy aim, at least two issues have arisen from the practical aspects of the process. First, there is the issue of determining those characteristics in preschool and kindergarten children which may be associated with future learning difficulties. As might be expected, a variety of possibilities have been proposed, including characteristics such as language development, intelligence, attending, and responsiveness to teachers and peers (Forness, Guthrie, & Nihira, 1975; Keogh & Becker, 1973).

A related question arises as to how these high-risk characteristics may best be identified, and again, many solutions have been offered. Traditionally, such identification has been accomplished through the use of various standardized tests such as intelligence measures, perceptual motor assessment, and general and reading readiness tests (Badian & Serwer, 1975). Other methods of identification that are becoming popular are those of teacher ratings (Keogh & Smith, 1970) and observation of classroom behavior (Forness & Esveldt, 1975a, 1975b).

After one has decided what pupil characteristics are to be identified and how to best accomplish this task, the second issue which must be dealt with is how to best educate these children. Possible options may include retainment, special programming, or essentially doing nothing by allowing the child to continue in the prescribed program. In evaluating the issue of early identification of high-risk students, Keogh and Becker (1973) have cautioned that the benefits of such an endeavor must outweigh the possible damages that it may cause the child through labelling him as a potential failure. Thus, for early identification of educationally high-risk students to be a desirable practice, there must be knowledge of what should be identified, an appropriate means by which to do it, and an outcome that will benefit the student.

The program option selected for a student who has been identified as high-risk will depend partly on how the issue of readiness is perceived. Much controversy has arisen over the issue as to whether or not a child who may be cognitively, socially, or developmentally lagging behind others of his/her chronological age should either begin school or, if already in school, be allowed to move on to the next grade. One viewpoint is that the best prevention of emotional and behavioral problems, as well as of school failure of children who are diagnosed as having maturational lags, low intelligence, or learning difficulties, is either the repetition of kindergarten or delayed entrance so that they can "catch up" to their peers and improve their self-esteem (Donofrio, 1977).

The opposite view is that delaying entrance to school and nonpromotion is either nonbeneficial or even harmful to the student. Those proponents of promotion feel that retention is a disadvantage to achievement

as well as creating other negative side effects such as instilling in them a feeling of inferiority (Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, 1971; Dobbs & Nevill, 1967; Funk, 1969). Gredler (1978) further supported the philosophy that all children be allowed to enter school by suggesting that rather than delaying that entrance or retaining the child once he is there the school should adjust to individual differences and make plans for programs to remedy difficulties for any who need special help. Although many studies have been conducted to determine the educational value of promotion versus retention, no conclusive evidence has been produced to support either viewpoint. In an analytical review of the literature on this topic, Jackson (1975) found many instances in which the designs of the studies reviewed contained flaws which impaired the ability to make valid generalizations about the effects of grade retention on students' academic achievement. He concluded that there is a need for further research in this area which is of a higher quality than what has been done in the past.

The problems involved with early identification of children with potential learning difficulties as well as the dilemma of making critical decisions regarding retention and promotion have forced educators to develop alternative methods of dealing with these issues. One solution that has emerged is that of the transition classroom between kindergarten and first grade. The transition classroom would appear to provide a middle ground for the issue of retention versus promotion as well as a means of helping special needs students who for maturational, cognitive, or other reasons are not ready to enter the first grade. Although such classrooms are apparently increasing in numbers and would appear to be a

logical step in providing a more individualized and adequate education for some children, there is little research available to provide a means to assess the value of these programs. Evaluation of the transition classroom is necessary, and yet, becomes a difficult task when considering the heterogeneous group of children being dealt with, in addition to differing emphases in the classroom experiences and school philosophies.

Results from previous investigations suggest that the study of only academic variables has not provided sufficient evidence in support of the transition classroom and that other factors need to be considered in order to reach more accurate evaluative conclusions (Sheets, Note 1; Thomas, Note 2; Wilson, Hewett, Sheets, & Thomas, Note 3). Supporting this concept, Hall and Keogh (1978) have suggested that educational risk status is comprised both of factors of academic aptitude as well as factors of behavioral adaptability. They found academic components, measured by IQ, verbal facility, reading and arithmetic achievement, to be relatively independent from behavioral adaptability components, expressed in social relationships in the classroom with teachers and peers. Both components, however, made a significant contribution to the risk or nonrisk status of students.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to describe some of the behavioral and academic characteristics of transition classroom students, to examine whether or not the program philosophies and goals influence the effectiveness of the program for individual students with different characteristics, to evaluate the behavioral and academic progress of

students in transition classrooms, and to determine how parents of these students view and understand the program.

Research Questions

This study will address itself to the following questions:

1. What behaviors characterize the transition room student?
2. What are the philosophies and goals of the transition program?
3. Do children benefit behaviorally and academically from the transition room experience?
4. What are the parental reactions to this program?

Definitions of Terms

Readiness

Readiness has been defined by Clymer and Barrett (1968) in terms of a child who is in a state such that learning to read can take place without undue frustration or difficulty. Their position is that readiness for learning to read results from a combination of social, emotional, intellectual and physical maturation, as well as learning experiences within the environment.

Behavioral Characteristics

Behavioral characteristics are those distinguishing acts or interactions displayed by a student in the classroom which express the child's ability or inability to deal with social, emotional, or learning situations. Hall and Keogh (1978) have suggested that behavioral indices are expressed in the child's ability to adapt to social relationships with teachers and peers in classroom activities.

Academic Characteristics

Academic characteristics are those distinguishing cognitive abilities or deficiencies which influence and are expressed as a student's progress in learning or level of achievement.

At-Risk; High-Risk

At-risk and high-risk are terms used interchangeabley in this study to refer to students who are judged as likely to have later school problems, even though they have not yet been exposed to formal school programs (Keogh, 1977).

Significance of the Study

The educational and behavioral outcomes of these students may depend, to a certain extent, on the initial reason for placement in the program as well as the kind of experiences the students receive in the transition classroom. Students may be placed in the transition room for differing reasons such as social immaturity, behavior disorders, or academic deficits. Likewise, the philosophy and aims of different transition programs may place greater emphasis on different aspects of the program. For example, one school's main objective may be to improve the children's self-concept, while another school stresses academic skills. Ideally, each student's needs should match up with the goals of the transition classroom in which he/she is enrolled but this may not always be the case, and if not, one may question the effect the experience will have on the child. For instance, a child who was referred to the classroom primarily because of academic deficits may not benefit as much from a program whose major emphasis is to promote interpersonal relationships

as he/she would from a more academically oriented program. Thus, a positive outcome may be partly dependent on whether the program is diversified and balanced enough to meet the needs of a heterogeneous group of children.

It is hoped that this study has helped to determine more specifically some of the typical features of children who are placed in the transition room in order to facilitate the identification process and also has helped the teachers to understand these children more fully. It is also hoped that the investigation has provided useful insights into the effectiveness of these programs in meeting the individual needs of students and points out both areas of strengths and weaknesses. A further desired outcome of this project has been to provide guidelines for future evaluations so that the schools themselves will be able to assess the value of their own transition programs on a continuing basis.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in its generalizability due to the small sample of students available for consideration and because neither minority groups nor a significant range of socioeconomic groups are represented. Since only two classrooms within the same school district were involved, teacher variables may have influenced the findings to a greater extent than if a greater number of teachers with varying personalities, attitudes, and teaching styles had been involved. If the teachers involved in this study are not representative of all transition room teachers, the question arises as to what extent teacher factors contribute to the impact of the program. In addition, since no control

groups were utilized, no implications can be made as to what kind of progress the students may have made without the transition room experience.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Current research indicates there is much controversy and uncertainty over the problem of high-risk students. Various researchers have attempted to determine which characteristics are important to be identified, valid and reliable procedures to assess these characteristics, and finally, what to do with these children once they are identified. Keogh and Becker (1973) contended that the process of identification must be carried out cautiously so as not to do more harm than good to children who are identified. The major concerns they expressed are in establishing the validity of the identification techniques, the implications of the diagnostic data for educational intervention, and whether the benefits outweigh the negative effects of such recognition. Keogh (1977) also stated that early identification is essentially a predictive activity and that the validity of these predictions can be increased when made to outcomes that are close in time and directly related to the particular programs in which the child will be placed. In the identification process, it is also important to determine children's competencies for use in instructional planning rather than merely categorizing or placing children in programs.

This chapter will first address itself to some of the characteristics of high-risk children which previous researchers have identified and to procedures which have been used in the early identification of high-risk students. The primary methods to be reviewed are teacher judgments and ratings and direct observation. Secondly, programming

options for high-risk students will be presented, including studies regarding the general issue of retention versus social promotion and other specific alternative classroom programs.

Early Identification of High-Risk Children

Pupil Characteristics

In early identification studies, various characteristics have been considered as potential discriminators between high-risk and normal students. Intelligence has generally been used as a predictor variable in conjunction with other characteristics such as academic achievement, language development, motor abilities, social competence, and classroom behaviors.

Badian and Serwer (1975) screened 300 kindergarten children using a variety of measurements including: Goodenough-Harris Draw a Man, Primary Mental Abilities Test (PMA), Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT), a geometric copying test of seven forms, and an individually administered test of letter names. Sixty-two high-risk students were selected on five criteria utilizing these tests. At the beginning of the first grade year, the high-risk students were administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) or Wechsler Preschool Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA). The children were randomly assigned to either the control group or one of three treatment groups, including DISTAR reading, perceptual-motor, and combined reading and perceptual-motor. Treatment groups received 30 minutes of help each day for most of the school year. The Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) was administered in May of first

grade. Analysis of variance indicated that there was no significant difference between the four groups on the reading subtests of the MAT: word knowledge, $F=1.59$, p NS; word discrimination, $F=1.48$, p NS; reading, $F=1.43$, p NS. In addition, the high-risk group was average in intelligence and psycholinguistic ability and achieved at grade level on all four subtests of the MAT, indicating that these students were normal in end of first grade achievement for a predominately lower-middle class population. In this study, intelligence, achievement, and perceptual-motor characteristics were not found to be valid predictive variables for high-risk status. Perhaps, if behavioral characteristics had been utilized in addition to the academic factors, the identification of high-risk students would have been more accurate.

Haring and Ridgway (1967) identified various developmental areas, judged to represent the basic processes necessary for the performance of academic tasks, as criteria for early identification purposes. These included visual perception, eye hand coordination, auditory discrimination, visual attention span, directionality, auditory attention span, large muscle coordination, and general language development. Teachers of 48 kindergarten classes involving over 1200 children were instructed in techniques of how to observe a child's developmental status. They were requested to select one quarter of their students whom they believed to be high-risk, judging particularly on the basis of problems in language development, visual perceptual adequacy, and fine and gross motor coordination. Teachers then completed a rating scale on the high-risk group to objectify their observations and collect more specific developmental information. A professional team then selected 106 children for further

study on the basis of the screening scale, intelligence tests, and evaluations by the psychological staff. Extensive testing was employed using eight diagnostic instruments. Few common learning patterns emerged from the results of the battery of assessment instruments, suggesting that individual learning abilities may be masked when test scores are treated as an aggregate.

In a longitudinal study conducted by Stevenson, Parker, Wilkinson, Hegion, and Fish (1976), teachers were asked to rate students on characteristics that appear to be important for successful performance in school. The three types of variables included were those related to cognitive abilities such as learning and memory, to personal-social characteristics such as adaptation to new situations and social acceptance, and to classroom skills such as paying attention and working. Ratings of the children were obtained in kindergarten, second, and third grades. The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) was administered before kindergarten and at the end of each grade to assess achievement in reading and arithmetic. Results showed that the three general areas in which ratings were made were not equally useful in predicting achievement. School success was more closely related to ratings of cognitive abilities (r's ranging from .46 to .71, $p < .005$) than to ratings of either classroom skills or personal-social qualities.

Perry, Guidubaldi, and Kehle (1979) compared affective and academic competence measures, as well as achievement-related behaviors in kindergarten, as a basis for predicting academic achievement at the third grade level. Two hundred and eleven kindergarten children were evaluated using the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (S-B), WRAT, teacher ratings of

academic competence, Sells and Roff Scale of Peer Relations (SRSPR), and Kohn Social Competence Scale (KSCS) as predictor measures. In third grade two samples of the remaining kindergarten sample were chosen and evaluated using the Schedule for Classroom Activity Norms (SCAN) and the WRAT. Multiple regression analysis showed that teacher ratings of affective, social characteristics and specific academic measures in kindergarten had equal or higher predictive values, $p < .05$, for third grade achievement, than did a global measure of aptitude. Contrary to the findings of Stevenson et al. (1976), ratings of social competence were found to be a better predictor of later school performance than ratings of cognitive abilities and classroom behavior.

The findings of Hall and Keogh (1978) indicate that school success is not a unitary condition. They suggested that educational risk or nonrisk status is comprised of at least two factors, which are academic aptitude and behavioral adaptability. In their longitudinal study they found that, while their predictive quantitative data using achievement scores were positive and statistically significant, a range of qualitative differences characterized these children and appeared to be major influences on the pupils' designation as risk or nonrisk. Using a structured interview format, they collected information from teachers on 15 third grade high-risk students and found three patterns which appeared to characterize these children. One cluster, describing high-risk girls, was viewed as at least average in behavior, motivation, and effort, but below average in academic aptitude. A second cluster, descriptive of one group of high-risk boys, showed extreme variability in behavior, personality, and motivation, but good academic ability. The third cluster of

characteristics, describing a second group of boys, indicated moderate behavioral variability, specific learning deficits, and low average ability. The authors concluded that high-risk must be defined in terms of the interaction between children's characteristics and educational influences.

The research reviewed in this section would appear to indicate that no one type of characteristic is sufficient for predicting which students will succeed and which students will have problems with school. While academic variables are an important factor, other indices such as personal-social and classroom behaviors also play an important role in discriminating between high-risk and normal children.

Selection Methods

Of the different methods utilized to identify high-risk characteristics in children, research indicates that one procedure found to be effective is that of teacher judgments, both with and without instrumentation such as a rating scale. A second useful identification procedure is the utilization of behavioral observation techniques in the classroom.

Teacher judgment without instrumentation. Researchers have employed subjective teacher judgments both as a means of predicting which students will have problems in school and as a way of differentiating characteristics among different types of high-risk students. In a study by Feriden, Jacobson, and Linden (1970), teachers of 10 kindergarten classes were requested to identify students with potential learning difficulties. Of the 67 students selected, 45 were diagnosed by a school psychologist and two learning disabilities specialists as having potential learning problems on the basis of their performance on the WRAT, the Evanston

Early Identification Scale (EEIS), the Bender Gestalt Visual Motor Test (Bender), and the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test (MRRT). Four months into the first grade year the 67 referred students were again administered the four diagnostic instruments. Results indicated that the WRAT and EEIS were reliable predictive instruments 93% and 99% of the time, respectively, whereas the Bender was not reliable at the kindergarten level, and the MRRT was effective only if total test scores fell below the 30th percentile and then it was an accurate predictor 97% of the time. However, the observations, based on subjective judgment alone, were 80% effective in prediction, suggesting that teachers can play a key role in the early identification process.

Keogh, Tchir, and Windeguth-Behn (1974) also concluded that teachers represent a useful first level screen in the identification of high-risk children. In their study, two samples of kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers were drawn from schools in a suburban, middle-socioeconomic, Anglo community and from an urban, low-socioeconomic, Black community. Teachers were interviewed and asked to describe characteristics of mentally retarded (EMR) and educationally handicapped (EH) students. Results revealed that teachers were in agreement about a number of characteristics of educationally high-risk students and that differences were perceived between potential EH and EMR students. Socioeconomic status (SES) of the school district made some difference in teachers' ascriptions, with teachers in the middle SES schools having more agreement with each other as to high-risk indicators. Many teachers noted difficulty in defining high-risk pupils in general terms because a general model does not fit the individual differences in children. Thus, it appears that not only

can teachers accurately identify students likely to have difficulty in school, but they can also differentiate among groups of high-risk children.

Teacher judgment with instrumentation. Several of the previously discussed investigations have indicated that teacher ratings are a stable and valid means of identifying high-risk children and may be as, or more effective than elaborate screening and diagnostic assessment batteries (Hall & Keogh, 1978; Haring & Ridgway, 1967; Perry, et al., 1979; Stevenson, et al., 1976). Haring and Ridgway (1967) further suggested that when a battery of assessment instruments was considered as a group, few common learning patterns were evident, and individual differences were concealed. Perhaps these results help to explain why Badian and Serwer (1975) failed to identify high-risk students with prediction criteria based on intellectual, achievement, and perceptual-motor tests.

Keogh and Smith (1970) followed 49 students from kindergarten through fifth grade to determine the effectiveness of the Bender and teachers' ratings in predicting academic success or failure. Analyses of the results were based on kindergarten Bender scores, kindergarten teachers' ratings of reading readiness, and yearly standard achievement test results on the Stanford Achievement Test-Reading (SAT) at grade two and the California Achievement Test (CAT) at grades three through five. Relationships between kindergarten Bender scores and later achievement were generally low and nonsignificant with r's ranging from .00 to .60; whereas, consistently high and significant relationships were found between kindergarten teachers' ratings and achievement at grades two through five, with correlations ranging from .36 to .74. While

kindergarten Bender performance was more accurate in identifying high-potential children, teacher ratings accurately identified both high-potential and high-risk students. Teachers rated 41% of the total sample as high-potential or high-risk on reading readiness, and of these, 90% achieved in the predicted directions throughout the elementary school years, based on their initial identification as either likely to succeed or likely to have problems in school. These findings suggest that teachers recognized behavioral and developmental characteristics important in school performance.

The research reviewed has shown strong support for using teacher ratings as at least a first level screening in the prediction of pupil success or failure in school. If teachers can be 80% accurate in subjectively identifying high-risk students, as Feriden et al. (1970) have indicated, then possibly more precise and objective judgments, obtained through use of a rating scale, could result in even more effective identification, as suggested by Haring and Ridgway (1967).

Teacher judgments based on the Pupil Rating Scale. One means of obtaining and categorizing teachers' judgments of students is through use of a standardized rating scale such as Myklebust's Pupil Rating Scale (PRS) which was designed as a screening device to identify potential learning disabilities. A number of studies have been conducted to establish the validity and utility of this instrument. Bryan and McGrady (1972) conducted a study to determine whether teachers' ratings reflect independent categories of behavior and whether the specific learning disability of reading deficits can be related to scores on the PRS. One hundred and eighty-three potential learning disability subjects were

selected from nine schools in a Chicago suburb on the basis of IQ (85-115), sex (male), age (8 to 12-6 years), and grade (3-6). Control subjects were chosen from school files and matched on these variables as well as on SES. Both groups were rated by teachers on the PRS. Analysis of variance revealed significant group differences, $p < .05$, on each item of the scale with the controls rated as more adequate than the potential learning disability group. Factor analysis identified four independent categories of behavior including: items on auditory comprehension and listening; items on motor; items on spoken language, orientation, and behavior items of cooperation and attention; and the remainder of the behavior items. The investigators concluded that teachers do make reliable and discriminative judgments regarding the behavior of children. In the second part of the study, 42 boys from the potential disability group, selected on the basis of low auditory comprehension on the PRS, and 42 from the control group were compared on three measures related to language skills, word knowledge and comprehension subtests from the MAT and WISC vocabulary. The learning disabilities group had significantly lower scores $p < .001$ than the control group on all three measures, suggesting that teacher ratings with respect to auditory comprehension may be useful in detecting a specific language or reading problem.

Colligan (1977) carried out an investigation to determine the correlation of the PRS with achievement as measured by the MRT, Lippincott Reading Readiness Test (LRT), and individual assessment of letter and number knowledge as measured by Level 1 of the WRAT. A sample of 60 kindergarten children was given the three achievement measures. Teachers were asked to complete the PRS for each child and correlations were

determined. Significant correlations ranging from .31 (motor coordination on the PRS with alphabet on the MRT) to .77 (auditory comprehension on the PRS with total test scores on MRT, verbal score on the PRS and total test scores on the MRT, orientation on the PRS with copying on the MRT, nonverbal score on the PRS with copying on the MRT) were found on most PRS scales with the criterion measures, thus supporting the use of the PRS as a means of screening kindergarten children for more intensive diagnostic evaluation.

Part of an investigation by Federi, Sims, and Bashian (1976) was to determine whether PRS ratings for high-risk and low-risk young minority students would approximate ratings reported for other groups of high- and low-risk children. Seven teacher aides administered the Meeting Street School Screening Test (MSSST) to 580 first graders, and students were designated as low- or high-risk by a criterion cut-off of 55. Twenty-five students were randomly selected from each of these two groups as subjects. Teachers of these students were then asked to complete the PRS. It was found that the PRS did discriminate between the two groups using the MSSST as the criterion. Means were compared with data reported in the PRS manual, with the findings that mean scores for high- and low-risk younger black samples did not differ significantly from those obtained with older white samples. In addition, results suggested that the PRS did discriminate between low- and high-risk students within the minority group, and that there was no significant difference between high-risk children from this study and high-risk children from another sample nor between low-risk children from this sample and low-risk subjects from the older, white group reported by Myklebust.

Reeves and Perkins (1976) conducted a study to determine the proportion of variance accounted for in the PRS as it relates to learning disabilities based on Myklebust's original data. The reported results showed that the proportion of variance accounted for ranged from 9% for motor coordination to 40% for auditory comprehension, with the total score accounting for 36% of the variance when comparing differences between control and learning disability groups. The authors speculated that the large amount of variance accounted for by auditory comprehension may indicate that learning difficulties are language processing problems. However, when borderline learning disabled and control groups were compared, the total scale score accounted for only 24% of the variance. The authors suggested that while the PRS is not as effective in detecting the borderline disabled student, that it can still serve as a meaningful screening device.

Research findings have supported the use of the PRS as a valid measurement device for screening high-risk students. It appears to be effective for use with young minority students as well as with older white students. An additional finding suggests that the auditory comprehension factor appears to be a key component in predicting later achievement.

Direct observation. A number of studies have been conducted using direct observation techniques to identify and characterize high-risk students. Forness, Guthrie, and Nihira (1975) studied behavior characteristics in high-risk children and found four distinct clusters of behavior in 94 children from four kindergarten classes. Behaviors were recorded in four predetermined categories including Verbal Positive (VP),

Attend (A), Not Attend (NA), and Disrupt (D). Teachers were also requested to rate students in the following three areas: reading readiness and language development, peer relationships, and attitude toward classroom rules. Cluster analysis indicated four clusters of behavior patterns. Cluster 1 was characterized by a high percentage of time spent in an attentive condition, whereas cluster 4 was characterized as disruptive, verbal, and nonattentive. Falling between these two extremes were clusters 2 and 3. The relatively small number of children in cluster 4 were determined to be at-risk by several criteria. They were rated lower by teachers in classroom functioning, tended to be overactive in both on- and off-task situations, and required a considerable amount of teacher contact in response to this activity. This cluster was also characterized by a high percentage of boys (75%) to girls (25%).

In a follow-up study (Forness, Guthrie, & Hall, 1976), the investigators found the predictive validity of the clusters of behavior to be only partially confirmed at the end of first grade. Cluster 1 children continued to do well in both academics and classroom behavior; cluster 4 children were still doing poorly in most areas, significantly so on classroom behavior; and cluster 2 children dropped somewhat in academic standing. Forty of the original 94 children were again observed at the end of second grade to determine their status (Forness, Hall, & Guthrie, 1977). Findings indicated that children's classroom behavior in kindergarten was relatively predictive of second grade educational placement, especially in clusters 1 and 4. Anecdotal material obtained from teachers revealed that they were more concerned with behavioral than academic performance of cluster 4 children. The authors concluded that attending

behavior may be the most significant factor in prediction of educational risk.

Forness and Esveldt (1975a) used classroom observation techniques to compare the behaviors of two samples of first and second grade children. Subjects included 24 boys under evaluation for learning or behavior problems and a control group consisting of all male peers in each subject's reading and math groups. Six trained observers recorded the students' behaviors using the categories Interact Positive (IP), NA, Teacher Disrupt (TD), and Peer Disrupt (PD). Three different response conditions were also recorded, including No Response (NR), Teacher Response (TR), and Peer Response (PR). Results indicated that differences between groups in percent of total positive behavior were significant in reading ($p < .001$) and math ($p < .002$). The target subjects, however, were not significantly different from their classroom peers in disruptive behavior.

In a related study by Forness and Esveldt (1975b), 106 children in four kindergarten classes from a metropolitan elementary school were observed during group activity or discussion periods. Behavioral categories included VP, A, NA, and D, and were recorded under the conditions of TR, PR, and NR. After the observation phases had been completed in November and March, teachers were asked to rate the children in three areas. Correlations between teacher ratings in October and March, between observation percentages in October and March, and between observation percentages and teacher ratings both between and within phases were computed. The observational data were found to be useful both in predicting and clarifying the nature of the child's difficulty. The children

averaged approximately 82% of their time in total on-task (VP+A) behavior at the beginning of the year and approximately 85% at the end of the year, disruptive behavior was nearly nonexistent, and verbal positive participation was slight. However, while these percentages reflect the total sample, there was considerable variation within the sample and among classrooms. Results also indicated that teacher ratings of the four separate behaviors observed in October were predictive of the same behaviors observed again in March (r's ranging from .51 to .71) and that observable behavior (on-task) in October was predictive of teacher ratings in March (r=.44). Also, teacher ratings in October were predictive with teacher ratings in March (r=.86). The authors concluded that while observations add a significant dimension to early detection of school problems, it remains to be seen whether teacher ratings or classroom observational data are the more accurate predictors in the long run. In their follow-up study, Forness, Guthrie, and Hall (1976) suggested a means of integrating these two procedures. Training teachers in observational systems may supply data more directly related to a child's classroom progress, as well as provide a functional analysis of behavior which would aid in determining specific intervention strategies.

Direct observation techniques have also been employed to screen conduct disturbed children. Nelson (1971) conducted a study with 1316 third through sixth grade students to determine whether overt behavioral data would predict emotional disturbance in children. Subjects were rated by their teachers on two factors of the Adapted Devereux Child Behavior Rating Scale (ADCB), including items measuring inability to delay (ID) and social aggression (SA). Eighty-three subjects were

identified as conduct disturbed according to this scale. From these data, 10 boys and 10 girls were selected for study and matched with control subjects according to mental age, chronological age, intelligence, and ratings on the ADCB which were within one standard deviation of the mean ratings for the total group. Two observers observed each pair of subjects for a total of 30 minutes. On-task behavior and deviant behavior were used as criteria for comparing groups. Results of the study supported the hypothesis that conduct disturbed children, as identified by scores on the ADCB, differed from normal classmates in overt classroom behavior. Conduct disturbed children displayed a higher frequency of deviant behavior and lower frequency of task oriented behavior than normal matched subjects ($p < .01$). These results suggest that direct observation methods are an effective means of identifying and describing conduct disturbed children.

Summary

The early identification research indicates that while caution must be exercised in identifying high-risk children, at least two major sources may be useful in the initial screening and diagnostic procedure. One source that has been shown to be relatively accurate and efficient is that of teacher ratings and judgments. An instrument which can aid teachers in making judgments is the PRS. This scale has been found to be valid in differentiating high- and low-risk students in kindergarten and first grade as well as the older third and fourth grade students on whom the instrument was standardized. The other means of early identification found to be useful is direct classroom observation. Observations have been found to correlate significantly with teachers' ratings, yet may reveal or clarify specific problem areas unnoticed by teachers.

Programming for High-Risk Children

Once a student has been identified as high-risk, a decision must then be made as to what educational program will best meet the needs of the child. The first issue to be discussed in this section regarding programming is that of retention versus promotion, both in its relation to the concept of readiness and to the alleged benefits of one versus the other. Secondly, a variety of specific classroom intervention programs will be reviewed, including the option of the transition classroom.

Retention versus Promotion

How a child will be dealt with in his early school experience depends on what view is taken regarding the concept of readiness. One basic view is that these high-risk students are having difficulty in school because they are not yet ready or mature enough developmentally to handle the tasks required of them in school, and therefore, these students should be retained or their entry to school delayed. The other view is that although children develop at different rates, it is the school's responsibility to adapt a program to meet the individual needs of a child.

In support of the maturational delay view, Ilg, Ames, and Apell (1965) conducted a study to show that chronological age alone is not a sufficient determiner of school readiness. Subjects were 120 students from one school and included all kindergarten pupils, and one class each of first and second grade students, the majority of which were in the high-average or better category of intelligence and came from professional or semiprofessional families. Subjects were tested in the fall of three consecutive years. The primary test administered was the Gesell Developmental Test (GDT), and was supplemented by two projective tests, The

Rorschach and the Lowenfeld Mosaic Test (LMT), and by a battery of visual tests. After each developmental, projective, or visual test was administered, the subject was rated in one of three categories as: 1) ready for current grade placement and promotion the following year, 2) questionable for current grade and promotion, or 3) not ready for current placement and belonged in lower or special class. Findings revealed that a large percentage, averaging around 50%, of the students were clearly below age standards on the developmental tests, and thus, unready for the grade they were assigned on the basis of age alone. Another finding was a high agreement between the developmental rating and teacher's evaluation for fully "ready" and fully "not ready" students. More disagreement was noted between developmental and teachers' ratings on "questionable" subjects. The authors concluded that placement of kindergarten and primary school children on the basis of age alone results in overplacement of from one-third to one-half of the pupils in a given class.

Gredler (1978), on the other hand, endorsed the philosophy that a child should be accepted as he/she is and be allowed to enter school, and that the school should develop diagnostic and intervention programs for any who may need special help. From a review of entrance age studies both in Europe and America, he concluded that increased chronological or mental age does not necessarily result in more successful reading achievement. According to Gredler, the solution is not to delay or retain students' progress in school but rather to provide appropriate individualized instruction for these children.

Hence, it appears that the view one takes toward the "readiness controversy will to a large extent influence the view toward retention or

promotion of high-risk students. This topic has been debated both on the grounds of academic achievement and self-concept on the child.

Donofrio (1977) referred to at-risk students as "Fate's Unfavored Children", characterizing them by having a July to December birthdate, late maturation, verbal difficulty, maleness, an 80 to 90 IQ, and hyperkinesis. In order to prevent the presence of one or more of these conditions from becoming an emotional as well as educational problem for the child, the repetition of kindergarten was recommended. His line of reasoning for this view is that repetition of one or two grades allows for "marking time" so that the student's psychological "wave frequency" can be aligned with that of his behavioral and maturational peers at school.

Scott and Ames (1969) investigated the effects of retention on the premise that repeating can reasonably be expected to provide extra time needed because of immaturity and unreadiness for work in a particular grade. They stated that there is no reason to expect repetition to bring success for the child who has abnormally low intelligence, is emotionally disturbed, brain damaged, or perceptually handicapped. Subjects were 27 children ranging from five to 12 years who were retained solely on the basis of immaturity and who had an IQ of 90 or above. Children's final grades in June were compared with mid-year grades during their repeating year, with each student serving as his own control. Teachers were requested to complete a questionnaire evaluating the student's progress and attitudes during the repeat year. Parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire comparing their children's attitudes toward school during the repeated and preceding year. Results indicated

that: 1) grades, reflecting academic achievement, improved significantly; 2) teacher ratings on a five point scale revealed 90% of students to be average, high, or very high in regard to general school adjustment; and, 3) parental ratings of their children's social, emotional, physical, and academic adjustment showed significant improvement during the repeat year on seven of nine items. The authors concluded that repetition because of immaturity may have no harmful emotional or social consequences and may result in academic improvement.

Finlayson (1977) conducted a longitudinal study on the effects of retention on self-concept. The sample for the first year was 585 first grade pupils. In the second year 25 students were in the nonpromoted group, 25 were randomly selected from all promoted students, and 25 were selected by teachers for a borderline group, who had the characteristics of the nonpromoted group but for various reasons were promoted. The investigator measured pupil's self-concepts on four occasions, in October and May each school year, using the "FACES" Scale. Contrary to predicted outcome, he found that after nonpromotion, the self-concept of these first graders increased rather than decreased significantly during the second year of the study and that their scores were nearly identical to those of the promoted group. The scores of the promoted and borderline groups, on the other hand, dropped slightly. These findings suggest that nonpromotion does not appear to have a negative effect on self-concept.

Funk (1969), on the other hand, concluded from reviewing the research that nonpromotion is a practice which instills in children a feeling of inferiority. The failure of not being promoted discourages children and hinders their efforts to achieve. He stated that children

who are promoted not only attain higher levels of achievement, but also require less disciplinary action, display more positive attitudes, and exhibit better social and personal adjustment than those of equal ability who are not promoted. Based on his own and others' research, Koons (1977) also concluded that nonpromoted children do not progress as far as their low achieving peers who are promoted. Nor, can one assume that a skill not learned on the first presentation will be best learned by a repeat performance the following year. Promoting children to the next grade when they lack required skills does not necessarily deny them opportunities to learn if the school will meet the needs of individual students. As did Gredler (1978), Koons recommended that schools should meet the students' differing needs rather than making students fit the mold of the school.

Abidin, Golladay, and Howerton (1971) investigated the dynamic and long-term effects of retention in the first two grades of school. The experimental sample consisted of 85 sixth graders who had been retained in either first or second grade. The control group included 43 children who scored below the 25th percentile on the MRT but who were never retained. Data on demographic variables, achievement, ability, and teacher judgments of behavior and academic potential were collected for all six school years. Nonacademic variables were found to be significantly related to the chances of retention for a child. Having the characteristics of being black, male, from a low socioeconomic family with father absent and mother working increased the chances of being retained. Achievement and ability data indicated significant deterioration in the retained group relative to the promoted group. Teachers'

judgments showed no significant differences with respect to academic promise or to conduct grades for the retained and promoted groups. Results suggest that while short term effects of retention appear to be neither negative or positive, the long-term effects involve deterioration in both ability and achievement through the sixth grade. This study also revealed that in many cases no objective reason for retention is given and that it may be discriminatory policy against the underprivileged.

Dobbs and Neville (1976) designed a study to determine the effects of retention on achievement comparing promoted second graders and nonpromoted first graders who were matched on race, sex, SES, homogeneous or nonhomogeneous classroom grouping, age, mental ability, and reading achievement. Thirty pairs of low SES Caucasian children whose mean group IQ levels were within the slow learner category were subjects for the study. Near the end of two consecutive school years, the MAT was administered in the classes involved in the study. A t-test for matched pairs indicated that both reading and arithmetic achievement gains of the promoted group were significantly greater than the gains of the nonpromoted group ($p < .01$). The authors suggested that, while these results lend strong support for concluding that promotion leads to increased achievement relative to retention, continued promotion may not necessarily be the best procedure for all children. Low achievers will experience failure either through retention or continued promotion unless they have a classroom setting which meets their needs by providing individual activities leading to success experiences.

Other studies have indicated that there is still no conclusive evidence either for or against nonpromotion. Chansky (1964) investigated: 1) whether mental age and/or personality adjustment can predict reading and arithmetic achievement in the first and second grades, and 2) the effect of retention and promotion on school adjustment. Subjects were 30 low-achieving first graders who were promoted to second grade and 33 low achievers who were retained in first grade on the basis of teacher and principal judgments. In the last month of first grade, after decisions regarding promotion had been made, all chidlren in the study were individually administered the S-B and the California Test of Personality (CTP) primary form AA. The CAT was administered in small groups. Nine months later alternate forms of the CTP and CAT were administered to all children, and a sample of 15 from each group was administered the S-B. Initially, promoted subjects demonstrated higher achievement and higher mental ages than the retained subjects. No differences were evident between the groups in personal and social adjustment, with both groups considered maladjusted. Retests indicated stable intelligence and gains for both groups in all areas of achievement. Although the promoted group made significantly greater gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension than did the retained group, the promoted subjects were found to be underachieving to a greater extent than were the retained subjects relative to ability. Correlations between mental age and personal and social adjustment with improvement in achievement were low, indicating lack of predictive ability. Regarding changes in personality adjustment, no significant gains or losses were observed for either group, with both remaining maladjusted. On the basis of the

results in this study, Chansky concluded that the issue of nonpromotion remains open for further exploration. He suggested that an important factor may not be so much whether or not a child is retained, but rather the quality of teacher-child interaction.

A report by Stringer (1960) on a retentions program which had been in operation for five years provides guidelines for decisions regarding retentions or social promotions. The core sample involved 48 children for whom complete achievement data were available, as measured on the SAT given in the seventh month of each school year. The summary data, presented as growth patterns in achievement, indicated that children achieved a higher percentage of progress during retention than before, but that progress dropped off again the year after retention. However, if students were separated into groups of those who showed gains and those who showed losses, it became apparent that average gains increased and average losses decreased after retention. In regard to the criterion of whether or not a child could be expected to gain or lose as a result of retention, the findings revealed that both the amount of lag at the time of retention and the rate of progress before retention were two efficient factors for predicting retention results. When retained and socially promoted students' progress was compared using the criteria of lag (1.0-1.9 grade) and rate of progress ($<$50% of normal), they found greater progress for the promoted group than for the retained counterparts. However, in the following year, 11 of the 41 promoted students failed again. The author attributed this surge of progress, and subsequent drop in it, to parental attitudes and involvement. She suggested that, in the cases of social promotion, parents were actively involved in and

concerned about their child's progress in the promotion year. In the following year, when progress declined, parents may have relaxed their efforts too soon. Stringer concluded that, in cases of failure due primarily to emotional problems, that either retention or social promotion may be effective. Willingness and ability of parents to take responsibility for the outcome of social promotion is the key determining factor of whether or not to retain a child.

From a review of research regarding promotion practices, Sister Josephina (1962) concluded that nonpromotion may not necessarily insure mastery of subject matter nor result in sufficient improvement to justify failing a student. She stated that various factors must be considered. The total child must be evaluated as he relates to school philosophy, goals, and techniques in order to make a physically, emotionally, mentally, and morally wise decision about retention or promotion.

A variety of conclusions and opinions have been formulated regarding promotion versus nonpromotion, based on many research studies. One explanation for this confusion and inconclusiveness in results was given by Jackson (1975). In conducting an extensive review of 44 studies on this topic, he categorized the studies into three general groups according to type of analytical design. The first type compared students retained under normal school policies with students promoted under normal school policies. The second type compared the condition of retained students before their retention with their outcomes after retention. The third design was experimental, comparing pupils with difficulties who had been randomly assigned to repeat a grade or to be promoted to the next one. Upon analysis of these studies, he concluded that further research of a

much higher quality is needed before valid inferences can be made regarding the relative effects of nonpromotion or promotion. The only conclusion that can be made at present is that there is no reliable evidence indicating that nonpromotion is more beneficial than grade promotion for children with achievement or adjustment difficulties.

Given the inconclusive evidence for either retention or promotion procedures for high-risk students, the dilemma remains of how to best educate these students. A number of researchers have recommended special or individualized instruction for these children. Contributing factors such as teacher-child relationships and parental involvement must also be taken into consideration when making decisions. The need for modifications in existing practices of alternative solutions for dealing with high-risk students becomes apparent.

Alternative Programming Options

Alternative approaches for helping the high-risk student may vary from general school-wide practices to very specific programs. The key to the various approaches appears to be the necessity of meeting children's needs on a more individualized level.

One means of avoiding the retention versus promotion controversy and resolving the conflict between graded school structure and individual differences is the utilization of nongraded programs in the school. Walker (1973) evaluated the effectiveness of nongraded programs with regard to the slow-progress student. This model allows for students to progress at different rates in different areas of curriculum on an individual basis, thus assuring success for all learners. According to Walker's review of related studies, however, evaluation research on

nongraded systems has not shown conclusive results as to their effectiveness either in improving achievement, self-concept, or attitude toward school. Walker suggested that special attention in future evaluations be given to students most likely to benefit from them, namely the gifted and slow progress learners. Since neither nonpromotion nor simple promotion appear to resolve the learning difficulties of the slow learning student, he viewed the continuous, nongraded approach as a viable option. However, he stressed the necessity for more comprehensive evaluation in order to establish whether this approach is in fact superior.

Other more specific techniques have been investigated to improve the functioning of high-risk children in the classroom. Cobb and Hops (1973) studied the relationship between levels of academic survival skills and academic reading achievement of low-functioning children in regular classrooms. It was hypothesized that: 1) intervention procedures would increase the survival skill level of the experimental group, 2) survival skill behaviors would be maintained during the follow-up period, and 3) subjects receiving survival skill training would make greater reading achievement gains than control subjects. Subjects consisted of 18 first graders, six from each of three classes, who were identified as having low rates of survival skills as well as low scores on standardized reading tests. One class was designated as the control and the other two as experimental groups. Systematic classroom observations were made to determine the percentage of time spent in survival skill activity, defined as: attending, work, volunteering, and looking around. Teachers were trained in various behavior management techniques including use of different types of reinforcement and shaping procedures. These procedures

were employed in the classroom during a 20 day intervention period. Baseline data were collected and then the program was explained to the children. The results indicated that the first two hypotheses were supported. Experimental groups increased their survival skills by 24%, while controls showed a gain of 3%. Further, experimental subjects not only maintained, but increased survival skills at four to six weeks later at follow-up. The third hypothesis was also supported, with the experimental group making greater gains in both survival skills and in reading achievement, indicating that gains in survival skills led to gains in achievement. The author suggested that one implication of the success of this group technique is to utilize the method with educationally handicapped children so they can remain in the regular classroom.

One author discussed a preventive approach to first grade reading failure for high-risk students ("A Stitch", 1976). The specific program presented, the Early Childhood Preventive Curriculum (ECPC), used a diagnostic-prescriptive approach to help high-risk children at the beginning of the year before they had a chance to fail. Children were designated as high-risk on the basis of scores on the Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery (C-B) and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). After a child had been identified as high-risk and placed in the ECPC program, further diagnostic tests were given in the areas of visual perception, auditory perception, visual-auditory sequencing and memory, and motor perception, to determine the nature of his reading needs. Prescriptive materials were provided for each of these areas with three levels of difficulty and specific performance objectives. The child's first year of school was spent in the special ECPC classroom where testing and prescriptive

work continued until his reading problems were cleared up. Regular first grade curriculum in other areas was taught along with the special reading program.

Preventive programs have also been developed in the area of mental health to deal with adjustment problems of high-risk children. Durlak and Mannarino (1977) developed the Social Skills Development Program (SSDP) as a school-based program to develop social skills in high-risk students, using behavioral and relationship therapeutic strategies. Students were screened using two rating scales which the authors judged to be effective instruments to identify children with the most serious school adjustment problems. Subjects were selected on the basis of high ratings on either the acting-out or shy-withdrawn subscales, with 123 eventually placed in the program. Heterogeneous groups of six to eight were formed from this sample and met for one hour per week for 10 weeks. Two types of interventions were used. One approach was behavioral, utilizing a token reinforcement program with adaptive social skills designated as target behaviors. The other approach emphasized the establishment of warm and trusting relationships between children and leaders, with nondirective reflection and discussion of the children's feelings. A variety of group activities such as puppet play, board games, and crafts, were included to give children in both types of groups opportunities to practice social skills related to self-control, cooperation and sharing, and the challenge of performing new tasks in the group. Although the authors did not report the outcomes, the description of the program illustrates one example of programs to meet the adjustment needs of high-risk children.

Another intervention procedure for high-risk students is a transition room experience between the kindergarten and first grade years. A study by Leinhardt (1980) sought to determine the reliability of identifying achievement deficits of kindergarteners, the impact on achievement by isolation versus integration of high-risk students, and the relative effectiveness of an individualized reading program in either setting. Data consisted of pretest scores on the First Grade Screening Test (FGST) and posttest scores for total reading on the SAT. Subjects were two "cohorts" (a sample group from a particular school year) of first grade children in four elementary schools. Cohort 1 included 32 students identified as "transition eligible" who were in first grade from 1975-1976. Cohort 2 consisted of 44 children who were in the transition rooms during the 1976-1977 school year. Students in Cohort 1 received either regular basal series reading instruction or the individualized New Reading System (NRS) instruction, while Cohort 2 students all received NRS instruction. Comparison of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students with regular students in respect to initial abiliites and outcome of achievement after several types of intervention, suggested that kindergarten and beginning first graders can reliably be identified as having a poor prognosis for learning. Comparisons between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 regarding type of instruction and type of setting revealed the following: 1) Cohort 1 students receiving NRS instruction performed significantly better than those receiving basal instruction, 2) Cohort 1 students receiving NRS in an integrated setting performed significantly better than Cohort 2 students receiving NRS, and 3) no significant differences were found between the basal group in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 group using NRS. On the basis of

classroom interviews it was determined that transition room students received less time as well as less criterion-relevant instruction in reading than students in the regular classes, and the author suggested that this may be the reason why the NRS was a more effective method of instruction than a basal series and why NRS instruction was more effective in an integrated setting for this population. Students in the regular classroom with the NRS program, which was focused, structured, and intensive, were taught reading basics directly, more often, and for longer periods of time. Leinhardt (1980) alluded to the possibility of lowered expectations for transition room students.

Previous investigations of the transition rooms evaluated in this study did not produce conclusive results as to the academic benefits of the programs. In a post-hoc longitudinal evaluation, Sheets (Note 1) collected academic achievement data on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and found that transition students were lower in achievement than their peers throughout the elementary grades, but that they did appear to make gains in closing the margin by the end of sixth grade. Thomas (Note 2) attempted to match transition students on the basis of sex, intelligence, and readiness level with peers who did not receive the transition room experience. He found that, on the later tests of achievement, transition students were performing at lower levels than their matched counterparts. He concluded that, since he was unable to find suitable matches for all transition students, reasons other than cognitive ability may be the basis for placement in transition classrooms. While standardized test data have not shown conclusive positive long-term effects of the transition programs, it may be possible to make more

accurate evaluative decisions if a more varied base of information were to be utilized (Wilson, Hewett, Sheets, & Thomas, Note 3).

Summary

Current research would suggest that the solution of how to best educate the high-risk, low-functioning student remains open for further investigation. Conflicting results with regard to social promotion versus retention may be due both to poor quality in designs, as well as to the variety of populations studied. For instance, reason for retention of the groups studied appeared related to the success or failure of retention, depending on whether subjects were immature, had emotional problems, had low average ability, and so forth. Various prevention and intervention programs including the transition classroom, have been initiated to help high-risk students on a more individualized basis. However, more evaluative research is necessary to determine the effectiveness of such approaches.

Conclusions

From the literature reviewed in this chapter, it appears that no conclusive statements can be made regarding the issues of early identification and programming of high-risk students. However, some general trends have appeared. First, the research indicated that a combination of behavioral and academic characteristics should be considered when predicting which students will be likely to experience difficulty in school. Secondly, teacher ratings and objective classroom observation as methods of identifying high-risk students have been found to be at least as accurate as diagnostic test assessments. Thirdly, the success

of any particular program option for a child is, to some extent, determined by the interaction of the total child with the total learning environment. Thus, when considering a program placement for an individual student, it is important to ascertain how that program will deal with an individual child's social, emotional, and academic needs.

Therefore, the focus in this investigation is to describe social, emotional, and academic behaviors of a selected group of children identified as high-risk and placed in a transition room. Additionally, the philosophies and goals of the program are discussed as they relate to the students' progress in the transition room. Finally, parental reactions toward the program and their effect on their children are examined.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The subjects in this study, the instruments used, and the procedures followed, are described in this chapter.

Subjects

Forty-three white middle-class children from a midwestern community enrolled in two transition classrooms were the subjects for this study. This group consisted of 23 students, 17 male and six female, for the 1978-1979 school year, and 20 students, 11 male and nine female, for the 1979-1980 school year. Students in these classrooms at two different schools were referred to the class by their kindergarten teachers, with parental consent, because it was felt that they were not ready to enter first grade.

Instruments

The Pupil Rating Scale (PRS)

This instrument was designed as a measure of behavioral characteristics to screen for learning disabilities. The five areas for behavioral evaluation on the scale include auditory comprehension, spoken language, orientation, motor coordination, and personal-social behavior. Ratings on items from auditory comprehension (comprehending word meanings, following instructions, comprehending class discussions, and retaining information) and spoken language (vocabulary, grammar, word recall, storytelling-relating experiences, and formulating ideas) are combined to form the verbal score (VS). The nonverbal score (NVS) is comprised

of items from the areas of orientation (judging time, spatial orientation, judging relationships, and knowing directions), motor coordination (general coordination, balance, and manual dexterity), and personal-social behavior (cooperation, attention, organization, new situations, social acceptance, responsibility, completion of assignments, and tactfulness). All five areas are combined to form a total scale (TS) score.

The scale was standardized on 2176 third and fourth grade children in four large suburban school systems representing a wide socioeconomic range. On this five-point scale a rating of average is scored as 3. Mean scores of the sample fell near an average of 3 on each item, indicating average performance on all aspects of the behaviors. Means and standard deviations were reported for each of the five areas, and for the verbal scale ($\underline{M}$=28.64, $\underline{SD}$=7.10), nonverbal scale ($\underline{M}$=49.22, $\underline{SD}$=9.82), and total scale ($\underline{M}$=77.86, $\underline{SD}$=16.19).

Correlations between the PRS and intelligence, as measured by the PMA, were low, ranging from .06 to .35. Correlations with several screening tests for educational achievement varied, with motor coordination manifesting low interrelationships and auditory comprehension showing the strongest relationship with achievement. PRS scores were most highly related to achievement in reading, spelling, and arithmetic, with correlations of total scale scores and these areas reported as .43, .47 and .39, respectively (Myklebust, 1971). This indicates that PRS ratings reflect the student's learning rate rather than intellectual ability. Although the scale was developed for use as a screening instrument to detect learning deficiencies, it was chosen for this study primarily to

gather information which may describe some behavioral characteristics exhibited by the transition room student.

Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery (C-B)

This battery is comprised of six subtests assessing visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, and visual-motor skills. The total score yields an indication of a child's preparedness to read with respect to these three major categories and may be used in screening children for admission to first grade.

The authors (Clymer & Barrett, 1968) reported a .97 split-half reliability coefficient for the total full form score. This coefficient was computed on a sample of 188 pupils, representing a single pupil from each of 188 classes in the norming group of 5565 first grade students.

Clymer and Barrett (1968) also discussed three types of validity for their test. They stated that the test has content validity because the tasks were drawn directly from the kinds of skills it measures; it is highly related to the pupil's early reading experiences; and there is evidence to show that of all kinds of items that might have been included, those actually used represent an optimum sampling of skills and understandings. Construct validity is reported as contrasts between the C-B and other readiness tests with correlations ranging from .55 to .80, contrasts between the C-B and intelligence tests with a correlational range of .24 to .65, and comparisons between the subtests of the C-B with low intercorrelations indicating that they are independent of each other and should not be used alone as a measure of prereading ability. Predictive validity was measured by correlating the C-B, Form A, with end of first grade reading achievement on the MAT, Primary Form 1. Correlations

of total C-B scores with standard scores on three subtests of the MAT were .60 for word knowledge, .61 for word discrimination, and .61 for reading.

Parent Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to all of the parents of the transition students in the spring of both the 1978-79 and 1979-80 school years. It was formulated by the author to gain insight into parents' attitudes and reactions to their children's transition room experience (see Appendix A).

Procedures

Ratings on the PRS were completed for each student to obtain information describing the teachers' perceptions of these students. Ratings were obtained from the transition teachers in the spring of 1979 for students leaving the program. In the fall of 1979 ratings were obtained from both the kindergarten teachers who previously had these students and the transition room teachers. Ratings were again obtained from the transition room teachers in the spring of 1980 in order to make further comparisons of the students' progress over the course of the transition year. Total full form C-B scores, reported as percentiles and stanines, were used as a measure of academic progress made during the transition room experience. Percentiles were converted to normalized standard scores for the purpose of statistical analysis. Scores from the C-B, which were teacher administered to the students in the spring of their kindergarten year and again in the spring of their transition year, were collected for both the 1978-1979 and 1979-1980 school years.

In addition to information collected on the C-B, PRS, and parent questionnaire, teacher interviews were conducted to determine the philosophy, goals, and activities of the two classrooms. Also, observational data were collected on four students during the 1979-80 school year (see Table 1 for summary of data collection). Students were chosen on the basis of reason for referral given by their kindergarten teachers and upon recommendation by transition room teachers. The investigator selected one student from each school who was referred for primarily cognitive deficiencies, and a second student who was referred for primarily social/behavioral problems. Two observation periods were spent in each classroom during the fall and two during the spring of the 1979-80 school year to gather behavioral information on the four case study subjects.

Data Analysis

Table 2 summarizes the data base used to answer the research questions of the study. The data were first analyzed to describe the transition students as a group. Means and standard deviations (computed using N - 1) on the PRS and C-B were used to describe the characteristics of these transition students. Correlated means t-tests were used to compare fall and spring ratings by transition teachers on the PRS, and kindergarten and transition spring scores on the C-B to determine behavioral and academic changes made during the transition year. The descriptions of program philosophies and goals were used as a reference in the interpretation of how pupil characteristics interacted with the program in terms of the kind of progress made during the year.

Table 1

Data Collection Timetable

Year	Spring
1978-79	1. PRS (Transition teachers' ratings) 2. C-B (end of Kindergarten, 1978) 3. C-B (end of Transition, 1979) 4. Parent Questionnaire
Year	**Fall**
1979-80	1. PRS (referring Kindergarten teachers' ratings) 2. PRS (Transition teachers' ratings) 3. Classroom observations (by investigator)
Year	**Spring**
1979-80	1. PRS (Transition teachers' ratings) 2. C-B (end of Kindergarten, 1979) 3. C-B (end of Transition, 1980) 4. Parent Questionnaire 5. Classroom observations (by investigator)

Note. C-B scores given in the fall of the 1978 and 1979 transition years were available and are reported in Appendix B but not utilized in the data analysis.

Secondly, since research has indicated that high-risk students are not a homogeneous group of children, data were also used to describe some of the characteristics and changes of the four selected transition students, in order to evaluate more specifically the effectiveness of the program in meeting individual needs. The case study descriptions were based on information from the C-B, teacher perceptions and PRS ratings, and classroom observations.

On the questionnaire, percentages of yes and no responses were computed to examine parent/school communication as to the purpose of the program as well as the child's progress in the program, and the parent's perceptions of the effect of the experience on their children's academic progress, behavioral and emotional development, and social relationships. Additional comments that the parents made regarding their perceptions of the transition experience for their child are reported (see Appendix C).

Table 2

Research Data Base

Research Questions	Data Base
1. What behaviors characterize the transition room student?	1. a. Kindergarten and transition teachers' PRS ratings b. Kindergarten C-B scores c. Classroom behavioral observations
2. What are the philosophies and goals of the transition program?	2. Teacher interview
3. Do children benefit behaviorally and academically from the transition room experience?	3. a. Comparison of fall and spring transition teachers' PRS ratings b. Comparison of spring kindergarten and spring transition C-B scores
4. What are the parental reactions to this program?	4. Questionnaire

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of transition room students, philosophies and goals of the transition programs, behavioral and academic benefits of the experience, and parent reactions to the program are reported and discussed in this chapter.

Group Characteristics of Transition Room Students

The behavioral characteristics of transition students are described by PRS ratings. The academic characteristics are described by performance on the C-B.

Behavioral Characteristics

Entering behavioral characteristics were identified by referring kindergarten teachers' and transition teachers' fall ratings on the PRS. Means and standard deviations were computed for the verbal scale (VS), nonverbal (NVS), and total scale (TS) scores by school and for the total group (see Table 3). As a total group, ratings by both kindergarten and transition teachers were approximately one standard deviation below the VS, NVS, and TS mean scores reported by Myklebust (1971) for his standardization sample. Furthermore, referring kindergarten teachers rated students lower than either of the transition teachers on all three scales.

Academic Characteristics

Total test percentile ranks on the C-B were converted to normalized standard scores (M=50, SD=10). Means and standard deviations were computed by school and for the total group on the spring kindergarten

Table 3

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-test Values on PRS

	K (fall)		T (fall)		T (spring)		t^a	df
School	n	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Verbal Scale Scores									
A	9	18.78	3.42	25.00	3.71	24.66	4.92	-.39	8
B	11	19.55	4.30	23.18	2.68	27.91	2.43	5.76**	10
Total	20	19.20	3.75	24.00	3.15	26.45	4.01	3.00*	19
Nonverbal Scale Scores									
A	9	41.22	4.06	43.89	2.32	43.22	4.68	-.57	8
B	11	37.82	6.91	39.91	4.13	48.55	5.87	8.95**	10
Total	20	39.35	5.77	41.70	3.82	46.15	5.90	3.45*	19
Total Scale Scores									
A	9	60.00	5.12	68.89	4.78	67.89	8.13	-.60	8
B	11	57.36	10.48	63.09	5.59	76.45	7.51	10.67**	10
Total	20	58.55	8.19	65.70	5.90	72.60	8.76	3.60*	19

Note. Based on scores from 1979-80 school year.
[a] t computed between T (fall) and T (spring)
* $p < .01$
** $p < .001$

scores (see Table 4). The data indicate that, as a group, the students entered the transition classroom with average prereading skills (M=50.53, SD=5.95) when compared with national group norms.

Program Philosophies and Goals

The philosophies and goals differed somewhat for the two transition programs. While both schools were concerned about academic as well as social and emotional growth for the students, these factors were given different degrees of emphasis. School A's philosophy is that a child who comes into the transition program is not necessarily restricted to a four year primary course. With the smaller class and more individual attention for each student, the goal is to enable each child to make maximum academic progress, possibly enabling him to enter second rather than first grade the following year. The same curriculum as first grade is followed but different materials are used in some subjects. The reading program is the same as first grade with the exception of review time in the fall of alphabet concepts. Different materials are used in math, with each student working on an individualized program at his own rate. A typical day's activities involved the following: reading groups; recess; story and discussion time; social studies, with use of filmstrips and discussion; math, both group and individaul work; free work time; lunch; story; work time at desks or learning areas; reading groups; recess; educational TV; science; filmstrip.

School B's philosophy is that the child will follow a four year primary course and prepares the child for first, not second, grade. The primary goals are to prevent the child from labelling himself as a

Table 4

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-test Values on C-B

		K (spring)		T (spring)			
School	n	M	SD	M	SD	t	df
A	16	50.12	4.96	59.19	3.16	10.27*	15
B	18	50.89	6.82	60.33	5.53	5.25*	17
Total	34	50.53	5.95	59.79	4.59	9.04*	33

Note. Based on scores from both 1979-79 and 1979-80 school years.

* $p < .001$

failure and to help him improve poor self-concepts which may have resulted from previous failure, and to help him cope with the school setting. Materials used in the curriculum are different from those used in either kindergarten or first grade, with the exception of reading, which is programmed. A typical day's activities in this class included: opening; math; story writing; music; recess; story and discussion; small reading groups; large group reading; lunch; reading; films; recess; workbooks of discrimination exercises; and language arts.

Behavioral and Academic Benefits

Comparisons of fall and spring transition teachers' PRS ratings were made to determine behavioral changes during the transition year. Scores from kindergarten spring C-B and transition spring C-B were compared to assess academic gains (see Appendix B for master data table).

PRS Ratings

The analysis of fall and spring transition ratings for the 1979-80 school year showed that the fall ratings at School A were higher than those at School B on all three scales, while spring ratings on all scales were higher at School B. Additionally, spring mean ratings of School A students were lower on all scales than fall ratings. Correlated means t-tests were computed for VS, NVS, and TS by school and for the total group for the school year 1979-80 (see Table 3). This analysis showed that for School A no significant changes for any of the scales were observed between fall and spring PRS ratings, while significant differences ($p < .001$) were observed on all scales of the PRS for School B. For the total group, significant changes ($p < .01$) were noted for all three scales.

C-B Scores

Results as shown in Table 4 indicate that the mean prereading performance did not differ for the two classes as students entered the programs in the fall and that students at both schools made nearly equal gains by the end of the school year. The t-test analysis as shown in Table 4 between kindergarten (spring) and transition (spring) by school and total group indicates that significant progress ($p < .001$) had been made by all groups.

Parental Reactions

Percentages of responses for combined schools for all items on the parent questionnaire are found in Table 5. Forty-three questionnaires were sent to the parents, and 28 were returned, resulting in an overall return rate of 65%. Return rates for School A and School B were 61% and 76%, respectively. Parents were asked to make additional comments regarding their child's transition experience. A representative sample of these comments are found in Appendix C.

Overall, parental reactions to the program were positive. All parents understood why their child was referred to the transition room and felt that they were kept well informed of their child's progress. Most parents indicated that their child had shown development in academic, behavioral, and social characteristics. Some children were reported to have experienced difficulty with friends outside of their class as a result of placement in this special class. Nearly all parents felt that their child was ready to progress to the next grade, with the exception of two who were undecided.

Table 5

Percentages of Parental Responses to Questionnaire

		Mother %	Both Parents %
1.	Who completed questionnaire	79	21
		Male %	Female %
2.	Child's sex	66	34
		Yes %	No %
3.	Understand reason for referral	100	--
4.	Class objective explained	100	--
5.	Knowledge of activities provided	100	--
6.	Visitation to class	97	3
7.	Informed by school of		
	a. academic progress	100	--
	b. behavioral development	100	--
	c. social relationships	100	--
8.	Child shown more interest in school	87	13
9.	Improvement in child's ability to work by himself	93	7
10.	Shows curiosity to learn	93	7
11.	Better acceptance of responsibility	89	11
12.	Problems with friends outside transition room	23	77
13.	Observed changes in		
	a. academic abilities	100	--
	b. behavior	76	24
	c. relationships with others	71	29
14.	Now ready to enter first grade	93	7 undecided

Note. Questions have been abbreviated. See Appendix A for complete form.

Case Studies

The four case studies represent two students from each of the two transition rooms evaluated. Students have been given fictitious names to preserve their anonymity. These case descriptions are a compilation of information collected over the course of the transition year and include achievement data, teacher ratings and perceptions of the child, and the investigator's observations of classroom behavior. Approximately two days were spent in each school by the observer in November and again in April of the 1979-80 school year. Both anecdotal notes and interval behavior counts were utilized to record observations. Behaviors during interval recording were categorized as Verbal Positive (VP), Attending (AT), Nonattending (NA), and Disruptive (D). Each student's behavior was recorded during the same minute interval, with the investigator observing for the first 15 seconds and recording the second 15 seconds for the first child, and then observing 15 seconds and recording 15 seconds for the second child. One or two interval observation periods, approximately 20 minutes in length, were recorded each day in both of the schools during a variety of activities.

Case 1: Carol

Carol is a quiet girl who comes from a family which has provided good background experiences and is the middle child out of five. She was referred to the transition room at School A because of her timid and withdrawn personality and because she was not ready for reading. She was reported to have problems with visual memory of letters and reversal problems when she began the transition year. Social maturity was considered to be average for her age.

As Carol entered the transition class in the fall, her reading achievement level was determined by her kindergarten C-B scores. Her performance placed her in the sixth stanine and 76th percentile, indicating average capabilities in reading readiness skills.

Ratings of Carol's behavioral characteristics on the PRS by her referring kindergarten teacher indicated that she was below average on all items assessing auditory comprehension and spoken language and on items of judging relationships and knowing directions in the orientation area. Average abilities were noted for items of judging time and spatial relationships in the orientation areas, as well as all items in the areas of motor coordination and personal-social behavior. Her combined verbal score was below average, nonverbal score was average and the total score was below average. Her transition teacher, however, gave her average ratings of 3 in all areas. The question arises as to whether the difference in ratings is due to Carol's maturation over the summer months or differences in teacher judgments.

Classroom observations by the investigator indicated that Carol engaged in VP behaviors such as answering questions or contributing to class discussions approximately 13% of the time observed. AT behaviors such as listening to the teacher or working on task were engaged in 82% of the time. She spent about 5% of the time in NA behaviors such as looking around or out-of-seat activity. No D behaviors such as bothering other students or talking when she was not supposed to be were observed. Time spent in total positive behaviors (VP & AT) was 95%, whereas, time spent in total negative behaviors (NA & D) was 5%. During class discussions Carol was observed to frequently and quietly raise her hand to

contribute or volunteer answers to questions and to listen quietly while others were speaking. During seat work activities she went to work immediately when an assignment was given and stayed on task, working quietly, with very little looking around. During group work she was attentive to the teacher and was able to follow directions. Teacher responses to Carol were positive, showing interest when she made contributions and sometimes elaborating on Carol's responses. If a wrong answer was given, her teacher corrected it in a helpful manner or asked another student to help with the answer. No negative remarks were made to Carol.

In the spring, readiness progress was again measured by C-B scores. This testing placed Carol in the seventh stanine and 87th percentile, indicating good skill development. The word matching subtest was not completed for unknown reasons and may have depressed the total test score significantly, since no errors occurred in the completed half of this subtest.

Teacher rating on the PRS at the end of the transition year suggested that Carol was better able to retain information, relate experiences, formulate ideas, cooperate, and demonstrate better attention and organization. Other items received the same ratings as those made in the fall by the transition room teacher, with the exception of knowing directions, which was rated lower in the spring. Verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all higher than those received in the fall from the same teacher.

Spring observations indicated that approximately 7% of the time was spent in VP, 91% in AT, 2% in NA, and none in D behaviors. Although AT

behaviors appeared to have increased while VP decreased, this may be due to the nature of the activities observed. Although the investigator attempted to observe similar activities in both fall and spring, those observed in the spring may not have provided as much opportunity for discussion and interaction by the student. However, total positive behavior was 98%, while total negative behavior was 2% showing overall increase in positive and decrease in negative behavior. No significant differences were observed in Carol's general classroom behavior from November to April. She remained a quiet and attentive worker and was willing and eager to contribute to class discussions. Perhaps more contrast would have been evident had fall observations been made at the beginning of the school year before she became as comfortable with the classroom routine.

While noticeable changes in Carol's classroom behavior were not apparent to the observer over the course of the school year observed, perhaps subtle behavior changes would not be expected to be detected by an occasional observer. Carol's teacher, on the other hand, reported that by the end of the school year Carol exhibited more outgoing behavior and volunteered more during discussions with good things to say. With consideration of both the amount of personal/social and academic progress made her teacher indicated that it would be recommended that Carol enter second grade the following year.

Case 2: Bobby

Bobby is an active boy who is one of two children in a home where reportedly some conflict exists. Bobby was referred to the transition room at school A primarily because of behavior problems and was described

as somewhat disruptive, bossy, not able to get along with other students, and having a short attention span. In addition, he had difficulty with visual-motor tasks and was not considered ready to read.

In the fall, Bobby's reading readiness level according to his end of kindergarten C-B scores was in the 6th stanine and 68th percentile. His kindergarten teacher commented that he needed extended readiness, especially in areas of auditory discrimination and visual-motor skills.

Ratings of Bobby's behavioral characteristics by his referring kindergarten teacher indicated that he was below average in each aspect of auditory comprehension, items of spoken language involving storytelling and formulating ideas, and items of personal-social behaviors regarding cooperation, attention, organization, responsibility and tactfulness. Spatial orientation was judged to be above average and all other items on the scale were rated as average. Combined verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all below average. Bobby's transition room teacher rated him as average in the area of auditory comprehension, spoken language, motor coordination, and all items in orientation, with the exception of knowing directions, which was below average. Personal-social behaviors rated average included attention, organization, responsibility, and completion of assignments; those rated below average were cooperation, new situations, social acceptance, and tactfulness. The combined verbal score was average, while nonverbal and total scores were below average.

Classroom interval observation by the investigator indicated that approximately 13% of his time was spent in VP, 79% in AT, 6% in NA, and 2% in D behaviors. Total positive behavior was engaged in 92% of the

time, while 8% of his time was spent in total negative behavior. During class discussions Bobby participated and sometimes verbalized "I know" when he raised his hand to answer a question. He was quiet while others were speaking but some nonattentive behaviors were noted, such as having his head down on his desk or looking around. During seat work activities it took him a few minutes to get started on an assignment and, during work periods, he was observed to be often off-task and looking around the room. During group activites he showed some confusion in following directions and with left and right concepts. During free work time when his assignments were finished, he walked around the room looking for something to do and did not stick with one task for any length of time. For example, he would get some blocks and play with them for a few minutes, then get a puzzle, then color. His teacher's responses were positive when he made contributions. She gave praise for work done correctly and help when he needed it.

In the spring, reading readiness progress was evidenced by scores on the C-B which placed him in the 7th stanine and 89th percentile. He continued to show difficulty with perceptual-motor tasks, but no longer appeared to have problems in the area of auditory discrimination.

Teacher ratings on the PRS at the end of the year suggested that characteristics rated on this instrument did not change noticeably over the course of the year. All items for Bobby were rated exactly the same as they had been in the fall by his transition room teacher.

In the spring, Bobby spent approximately 4% of his time in VP behavior, 85% in AT behavior, 5.5% in NA, and 5.5% in D behaviors. Bobby's decrease in VP may have been due to less opportunity to contribute

due to the nature of the observed activities. Combined scores indicated that 89% of his time was spent in positive behaviors while 11% was spent in negative behaviors. Thus, no positive behavioral change was apparent over the course of the school year. The observer noted in general more inattentive behavior than during the spring observations. For example, Bobby was frequently seen looking out the windows or around the room or getting out of his seat to sharpen pencils or to talk to other students. During work periods it still took him a few minutes to begin to work, and when assignments were completed, he still moved rapidly from one task to another. His other behaviors and teacher responses to him also remained similar to those observed in the fall.

No noticeable changes were evident in Bobby's behaviors during the transition year, as evidenced by both teacher ratings and observations by the investigator. This may partly be explained by a teacher observation that his behavior was teacher controlled rather than self-controlled. When the first observations were made, possibly the teacher was already keeping the reported negative behaviors under control and then maintained them throughout the school year, so that no contrast was seen by the investigator. In terms of reading readiness skills, Bobby made noticeable gains, increasing from the 68th to the 89th percentile, and no longer showing difficulty with auditory discrimination tasks.

Case 3: Kevin

Kevin is a quiet, well-behaved boy who lives with his divorced mother and two older siblings in a good home environment. He was referred to the transition room at School B primarily because of poor emotional adjustments. He was described as shy, keeping to himself, and

lacking in self-confidence. In addition, his academic skills were borderline, with problems in visual and auditory memory.

When Kevin entered the transition room in the fall, his prereading level according to end of kindergarten C-B scores was in the 7th stanine and 79th percentile. These measurements indicated adequate to good prereading skills.

Ratings on the PRS by Kevin's referring kindergarten teacher indicated below average abilities on characteristics which pertained to retaining information, word recall, storytelling, and knowing directions. Items judged to be above average were cooperation, tactfulness, general coordination, balance,and manual dexterity. All other characteristics were considered to be average. The combined verbal score was below average. The nonverbal score was above average, and the total score was average. Kevin's transition room teacher rated him below average in retaining information, word recall, formulating ideas, judging time, knowing directions, and adapting to new situations. She judged him to be above average in following directions, cooperation, social acceptance, and general coordination. The verbal score was below average, while the nonverbal and total scores were average.

Classroom interval observations in the fall showed that Kevin spent approximately 8% of his time in VP behavior, 79% in AT behavior, 13% in NA behavior, and none in D behavior. Total positive behaviors were engaged in 87% of the time while total negative behaviors were engaged in 13% of the time. Kevin was observed to participate in class discussions and listen quietly when others were speaking. During seat work he worked quietly with occasional off-task behaviors like looking around

or talking to another student. During group work he was attentive to the teacher most of the time and was able to follow directions correctly. His skills were good in both fine and gross motor activities. Teacher interactions with him were positive. She always acknowledged his contributions to discussions and provided individual help with work when he had difficulty.

In the spring, academic reading readiness progress was again measured by performance on the C-B. His scores placed him in the 8th stanine and 96th percentile indicating considerable progress over his fall scores on this instrument.

Teacher ratings on the PRS at the end of the year showed that Kevin improved in comprehending class discussions, retaining information, word recall, formulating ideas, cooperation, attention, organization, responsibility, completion of assignments, tactfulness, and all orientation items. The combined verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all above average and higher than the fall ratings.

The spring interval observations showed that approximately 4% of his time was spent in VP behavior, 87% in AT behavior, 9% in NA behavior and none in D behavior. He engaged in total positive behaviors 91% of the time, and in total negative 9% of the time. He continued to contribute to class discussions and to volunteer answers. He went to work immediately on assignments, worked quietly, and finished quickly. Some looking around and out-of-seat behaviors were still observed, but most of his time was spent in on-task behaviors such as working, listening, following directions, and paying attention to the teacher. Teacher responses continued to be positive. She gave praise both for good work and good behavior.

Although no substantial changes were noted by the investigator in Kevin's behaviors between fall and spring observations, other indicators suggest that he made considerable progress during the year. At the end of the year, his teacher gave him higher ratings than those at the beginning of the year on more than half of the characteristics described on the PRS. Kevin made substantial gains in reading readiness achievement, moving from the 7th stanine and 79th percentile according to end of kindergarten scores, to the 8th stanine and 96th percentile according to end of transition year scores. His teacher commented that he had made good progress in all areas during the year.

Case 4: Susan

Susan is an active girl who has an older sister and whose parents were divorced during her transition year. She lives with each parent half of the time and reportedly is having adjustment problems to the situation. She was referred to the transition room at School B because of both social immaturity and poor academic skills. She was described as being flighty, having difficulty concentrating and staying on task, and having a short attention span.

In the fall her level of reading readiness skills, according to her end of kindergarten C-B scores, was in the 4th stanine and 27th percentile. Beginning of transition year C-B scores also placed her in the 4th stanine and the 28th percentile. Her skills were low in word matching, ending sounds, auditory discrimination, and visual-motor tasks.

Ratings on the PRS by her referring kindergarten teacher indicated that she was below average on most items, receiving the lowest possible score on six characteristics. No behavioral characteristics were rated

above average, while those considered to be average included vocabulary, grammar, word recall, completion of assignments, and tactfulness. Combined verbal, nonverbal and total scores were all significantly below average. Her transition teacher also rated her below average on most items and above average on none. Items judged as average were comprehending word meanings, vocabulary, grammar, new situations, social acceptance, completion of assignments, and tactfulness. Combined verbal, nonverbal and total scores were all below average.

In the fall, interval observations revealed that about 3% of Susan's time was spent in VP behavior, 65% in AT behavior, 26% in NA behavior, and 16% in D behavior. Total positive behaviors were engaged in 68% of the time while total negative behaviors were engaged in 32% of the time. During discussions Susan participated, occasionally volunteering answers. During seat work periods she was often engaged in off-task behaviors such as looking around, walking around, talking to other students and standing up or sitting on the floor rather than at her desk. In group activities she was frequently not paying attention to the teacher and had difficulty following along with the class and following directions. She was slow to respond to teacher requests to put away or get out materials. Her teacher often had to remind her to get to work or follow through with instructions. The teacher made positive comments when Susan made contributions in class and provided individual help when it was needed.

In the spring Susan's reading readiness achievement was again measured by the C-B. She made evident progress with scores now placing her in the 7th stanine and 79th percentile.

According to ratings on the PRS at the end of the year, she had improved on the characteristics of following directions, retaining information, word recall, storytelling, formulating ideas, judging relationships, general coordination, balance, manual dexterity, cooperation, organization, responsibility, and completion of assignments. Combined verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all higher than in the fall and nearly average.

Spring observations during interval recording showed that Susan spent no time in VP behavior, 84% of her time in AT behavior, 14% in NA behavior, and 2% in D behavior. She used 84% of her time in total positive behavior and 16% of it in total negative behavior. She did not appear to volunteer answers or contribute as much to class discussions as she did during fall observations. She continued to be active during seat work often on her knees on the floor by her desk, sometimes looking around, talking, and playing with materials at her desk. She seemed to pay better attention to the teacher, but still showed some difficulty following directions. At times it remained necessary for the teacher to remind her to get busy with her work. She was praised by her teacher both for good work and good behavior such as working quietly.

Susan made noticeable gains in all areas under consideration during the transition year. Significant progress in reading readiness was apparent as she moved from the 4th stanine and 28th percentile in the fall to the 7th stanine and 79th percentile by the end of the year. Her classroom behaviors also improved as evidenced by both teacher judgments and observations by the investigator. Her teacher commented, however, that Susan's progress had been sporadic, with good and bad days.

Case Study Summary

These individual studies indicate that children referred to these transition rooms are not a homogeneous group of children with a common pattern of behaviors and learning problems. When the children entered the transition classes their behaviors ranged from quiet and withdrawn to talkative and disruptive. Some students were attentive while others had difficulty staying on task. Academically, some pupils were below average according to C-B scores, while others had adequate prereading skills. A combination of academic and behavioral problems appeared to be contributing factors in the reason for referral in all four cases.

Discussion

Characteristics and Identification of Transition Students

Results of this study indicated that the high-risk students who entered the transition programs exhibited a wide range of characteristics. In the referral process it appeared that both academic and behavioral factors were taken into consideration, supporting the findings of Hall and Keogh (1978). Furthermore, the PRS and C-B results suggested that the transition students in this study were more delayed in behavioral areas than academic areas. According to C-B norms, the total group displayed approximately average prereading skills; whereas, behavioral ratings were at least one standard deviation below average based on PRS norms. This would support the findings of other researchers that social, behavioral indicators may be as, or more effective, in predicting later school performance than are measures of academic ability (Badian & Serwer, 1975; Perry et al., 1979).

In light of the research which indicates the accuracy of teacher judgment in predicting which children will have difficulty in school (Feriden, et al., 1970; Haring & Ridgway, 1967; Keogh & Smith, 1970; Keogh, et al., 1974), it seems that the utilization of kindergarten teacher recommendations are an appropriate means of identifying and selecting students for transition programs. Kindergarten teachers in this study were able to identify accurately those students who were below average on behavioral characteristics on the PRS, suggesting that more precise identification of children who would benefit from the transition room can be achieved using standardized rating scales such as the PRS. This study also showed that kindergarten teachers consistently rated students lower on the PRS than did the transition teachers. One possible explanation for the higher ratings given by transition teachers may be attributed to real differences in the students' abilities as a result of maturation over the summer months. Another explanation may be that, since the fall ratings by kindergarten teachers were based on how these students behaved at the end of the kindergarten year and were compared with a normal classroom of students with wide ranges in ability and maturity levels, they may have had higher expectations for their students and consequently rated students who did not measure up to expectations lower on the scale. Transition teachers, on the other hand, rated students at the beginning of the year, and being accustomed to children with lower and less varied range of abilities than those in a normal classroom, may have had lower expectations for performance and behavior, and thus rated the students higher on the items. Also, the difference may have been due to a combination of both student maturation and differing teacher perspectives.

Program Philosophies, Goals, and Benefits

The transition classroom as an intervention option for high-risk students differed to some extent in philosophies and goals and yet both offered similar learning activities and positive atmospheres. For example, teachers responded to students in positive ways, gave individualized attention to all students and worked at levels with them where they could achieve successfully. Perhaps this is why students at both schools showed considerable academic progress on the C-B regardless of whether the schools placed more stress on the objective of improving self-concept or academic skills. A significant difference was noted, however, between the schools regarding ratings on behavioral characteristics described on the PRS. Students at School B, where building self-concept was a primary goal, appeared to make more behavioral changes than did students at School A. However, since only two transition teachers were involved in the fall and spring ratings and since no index of interrater reliability is available, it is not possible to conclude whether the difference in student ratings between schools is real and attributed to school philosophy or whether it is due to variability in teacher judgment. If the difference is real, future studies of transition classroom students comparing measures of self-concept with behavior change and academic achievement may reveal whether an emphasis on improving the students' feelings about themselves has any significant effect on their progress in school.

While both teachers noted at least some behavior changes during the year in most students, the observer was unable to detect any noticeable contrasts in case study subjects from fall to spring observations. It

may be that by November when the first observations were made, the students were already making improvements in behavior patterns or that inappropriate behaviors were being controlled by the teachers. Also, since the observer was only in each class for a total of four days during the school year, gradual and subtle changes may not have been detected. Possibly shorter observation periods on a continuing basis for several weeks at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year would have made the observer more sensitive to changes in student behavior. Also, more observation of the students outside of the classrooms may have suggested to what extent the students control their own behavior and to what extent their behavior is controlled by positive classroom management.

Parent Reactions

Nearly all of the parental responses and comments on the questionnaire indicated positive feelings about the transition program and that the children had benefited from it. However, since not all questionnaires were returned, there is the possibility that those who did not respond had different opinions about the program than those who did respond. Several parents indicated that the teacher, who cared and understood their children as well as gave them individual attention, had an important role in the success of the programs. Thus, as suggested by Chansky (1964), the quality of child teacher interaction may be as important as the program itself regarding the child's success. If parental willingness to help the child have a successful experience in school is a key factor as Stringer (1960) has suggested, then it would seem that the positive attitudes of the parents toward the

transition room and their presumed interest in their child's education would also be contributing to the success of the program. Also, since the parents felt that they were well informed as to their children's program and progress, it would appear that close parent/teacher communication should continue to be stressed in order to maintain parental support and involvement in their children's education.

Conclusions

Results of this study indicate that when a child is considered for placement in the transition classroom, it is important to consider the social and classroom behaviors as well as the academic abilities of the child. In this study no specific attempt was made to determine what criteria were used by kindergarten teachers to select students who would be placed in transition rooms. While some teachers made general comments such as the child was "not ready to read", "socially immature", or "short attention span", possibly more in depth interviews with these teachers would have revealed the extent to which academic and behavioral variables influence their decision. Also, use of a rating scale may help to specify areas that need special attention and can be dealt with in the transition program. As Hall and Keogh (1978) have suggested, perhaps increasing teachers' awareness of the individual needs may in itself be a positive intervention.

While different school philosophy and goals did not appear to affect the extent of academic progress made during the transition year for the group as a whole, teacher ratings of students from the school that emphasized affective education to a stronger degree appeared to show more changes behaviorally. However, caution must be exercised in

interpreting these results, due to the small sample of students and the fact that only two transition teachers completed the ratings, suggesting the possibility that differences could be attributed to differing teacher perspectives. It would be of interest to follow up this group of students through the elementary school years to see how future behavioral ratings compare with the transition ratings, whether or not those students who appeared to make significant gains during the transition year will continue to improve behaviorally, and whether this in turn influences their academic achievements.

The parents who responded to the questionnaire were generally favorable to the programs. Several parents indicated that the teacher was a key factor in the success of the program for their child. If this is the case, then the selection of teachers who have the patience and ability to interact positively and individually with the students should be of major importance to the program.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined some of the behavioral and academic characteristics of students who were placed in transition rooms, program philosophies and goals, behavioral and academic benefits of the transition experience, and parental reactions to the programs.

Subjects were 43 white middle-class students who were enrolled in two transition rooms in a midwestern school district during two consecutive school years. Fall and spring data from teacher ratings on the Myklebust Pupil Rating Scale (PRS) were obtained and used as indices of behavioral characteristics and progress. Spring kindergarten and transition scores on the Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery (C-B) were collected and utilized as measures of academic characteristics and progress. In addition, fall and spring classroom behavioral observations were made on four individual students, and teacher interviews were conducted to determine program philosophies and goals. Questionnaires were sent to the parents of all students in the spring of both school years to obtain their responses concerning the transition programs.

Data were analyzed to determine characteristics and progress, both of transition students as a group and of four individual selected students. Results indicated that both behavioral and academic characteristics are contributing factors in the high-risk status of transition students. When students entered the transition programs the total group means on verbal, nonverbal, and total PRS ratings were approximately one standard deviation below the standardization means on the PRS. According

to C-B norms, the students displayed average prereading skills. Philosophies and goals differed to some degree for the two schools, with one school placing more emphasis on affective factors and the other stressing academic factors. As a group, students at both schools made significant ($p < .001$) academic gains on the C-B; whereas, students from the school which stressed affective factors received higher PRS ratings at the end of the year than students from the school which stressed academics. Questionnaire responses indicated that most parents had favorable reactions to the transition programs. Case study data indicated that these four students were referred for differing types and degrees of both behavioral and academic deficits and that, while all made academic progress during the year, behavioral changes were more individualized.

Conclusions

Findings indicated that the transition students in this study displayed a wide range of behavioral and academic characteristics, suggesting that both areas should be considered in the identification and referral process. Referring teachers appeared to accurately identify high-risk students according to the mean score ratings on the PRS. Perhaps the future use of this type of a rating scale by kindergarten teachers when referring a child to a transition room could help to specify problem areas for transition teachers to remediate.

Differing program philosophies and goals did not appear to affect differentially the extent of academic progress made during the transition year in the two schools. However, a difference in behavioral

ratings was apparent between the two schools. Since PRS ratings were higher at the end of the year for students at the school which placed more emphasis on affective education, program philosophies and goals may have had an effect on behavioral changes in these students. However, this must be interpreted cautiously since only two transition teachers rated students, and the difference in ratings may have been at least partly due to different teacher judgments rather than the program emphasis.

Parental reactions to the transition program were generally favorable according to questionnaire responses. One might speculate that the parents' interest and enthusiasm for the program may have been a factor which determined how successful the experience was for their children.

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Appendix A

Parent Questionnaire

1. Who completed the questionnaire?

   ___ Father (or male guardian) only
   ___ Mother (or female guardian) only
   ___ Both Parents
   ___ Other _____

2. Child's sex: _____ Male _____ Female

	Yes	No
3. Do you understand why your child was placed in the Transition Classroom?	____	____
4. Have the objectives for the classroom been clearly explained to you?	____	____
5. Do you know what kind of activities are provided for your child in the classroom?	____	____
6. Have you visited the Transition Classroom?	____	____
7. Does the school keep you informed about your child's:		
a. academic progress?	____	____
b. behavioral and emotional development?	____	____
c. social relationships?	____	____
8. Has your child shown more interest in school since he/she has been in the Transition Classroom?	____	____
9. Have you seen improvement in your child's ability to work by himself?	____	____
10. Does your child show curiosity about learning new things?	____	____
11. Is your child better able to accept responsibility?	____	____
12. Has your child had any problems with his friends outside of the Transition Classroom as a result of being involved in this class?	____	____
13. Have you seen changes in your child's:		
a. academic abilities?	____	____
b. behavior?	____	____
c. relationships with others?	____	____

If yes, please describe: _____

_____

14. Do you think your child is ready to enter first grade in the fall?	____	____

15. Please use the back of this questionnaire for any additional comments on any of the above items.

Appendix B

Master Data Table

		PRS									C-B		
	Student	KVS	KNVS	KTTS	FVS	FNVS	FTTS	SPVS	SPNVS	SPTTS	KC-B	TFC-B	TSC-B
School A 1978-79	1							27	43	70	52		61
	2							27	47	74	54		63
	3							29	43	72	45		58
	4							27	44	71	51		59
	5							28	45	73	40		56
	6							26	42	68	51		61
	7							26	42	68	48		62
	8							22	43	65	50		56
	9							25	44	69			61
1979-80	1	12	46	58	19	44	63	15	40	55	49		55
	2	21	39	60	27	45	72	27	38	65	51		63
	3	21	48	69	27	46	73	22	46	68			58
	4	23	40	63	27	46	73	28	50	78	56		60
	5	19	39	58	27	41	68	27	40	67	54		61
	6	21	41	62	27	40	67	27	40	67	54		62
	7	19	39	58	26	45	71	27	48	75	50		57
	8	18	44	62	27	46	73	30	48	78	57		61
	9	15	35	50	18	42	60	19	39	58	40		52
School B 1978-79	1							30	57	87			64
	2							20	37	57	48	48	53
	3							30	52	82		49	58
	4							31	59	90	53	54	61
	5							31	46	77	62	58	60
	6							26	39	65		50	58
	7							34	42	76		62	60
	8							29	47	76	50	50	60
	9							39	61	100	45	59	61
	10							23	44	67	51	52	60
	11							18	42	60	42	49	52
	12							21	42	63	51	52	57
	13							23	37	60		49	56
	14											36	49
1979-80	1	23	43	66	23	41	64	29	46	75	57	57	64
	2	24	49	73	25	45	70	30	58	88	58	52	67
	3	19	29	48	21	34	55	26	43	69	45	45	58
	4	20	37	57	22	37	59	27	45	72	49		56
	5	25	37	62	28	35	63	26	45	71	64	61	70
	6	17	32	49	23	42	65	26	46	72	54	56	62
	7	12	31	43	24	45	69	28	58	86	37	45	73
	8	18	38	56	19	38	57	24	42	66	45	50	56
	9	13	30	43	22	36	58	31	45	76	52	52	56
	10	23	44	67	27	45	72	32	54	86		55	60
	11	21	46	67	21	41	62	28	52	80	53	52	60

Key

PRS = Pupil Rating Scale

KVS = Kindergarten fall verbal scores
KNVS = Kindergarten fall nonverbal scores
KTTS = Kindergarten fall total test scores
TFVS = Transition fall verbal scores
TFNVS = Transition fall nonverbal scores
TFTTS = Transition fall total test scores
TSVS = Transition spring verbal scores
TSNVS = Transition spring nonverbal scores
TSTTS = Transition spring total test scores

C-B = Clymer-Barrett

KC-B = Kindergarten spring C-B
TFC-B = Transition fall C-B
TSC-B = Transition spring C-B

Appendix C

Parent Questionnaire Comments

School A Comments

I would like to state that for our son the transition room has probably been one of the best things that could have happened to him. Academically he has gained so much in math and reading that he will probably enter 2nd grade in the fall instead of 1st grade. Also emotionally our son has matured until it is just amazing. Because we had another child in a transition room some years ago, I firmly believe that the teacher is the biggest factor in how a child improves and grows. If she is there because she wants this type of room I believe then any child will gain but if, as was the case with our other son, the teacher is forced to take this role then the child might just as well be in a room with 25 or 30 other children as the teacher doesn't care so the child doesn't care either.

I feel the smaller classroom was very helpful as they received more individual attention. This applies to both children. The teacher seemed to pick up more on individual weaknesses and strengths and dealt with them accordingly.

We no longer see aggressive behavior, he is spontaneous and happy. Looks forward to school.

Her academic abilities have improved 100% compared to what they were. She has always shown a great deal of interest in school, and that has not changed. When she started the class she did not even know the alphabet or her numbers, now she is doing facts to 8 and in her third reading book "A Duck is a Duck". Her behavior has changed, but I am not sure if it is for the best, she is talking back to us at home more. Her teachers do not feel that she is ready for 1st grade. She is being reevaluated but no decision has been made yet.

He is more interested in school and learning. He wants to look at books and read and is very pleased with himself that he can read and know his math facts and passes the time test with no errors. This is our second child who has been in a Transition Classroom and I can't say enough good things about the Transition Classroom. I think it is a great program.

School B Comments

I think transition room is one of the most important resources in the school. I have had 3 children go through this program and the improvement is wonderful. I had one child who did not have the opportunity of this room and I can't tell you how much I regret this. Besides being flunked his problems were not diagnosed until the end of first grade and so he was behind even more. I can't say enough about how I feel about transition room. It has been a very fruitful experience for all my children.

This is the 3rd of our 4 children that has been in the transition room. As for reaction from the child they question more in 2nd or 3rd grade as to why so and so started kindergarten with me and now they are a grade ahead. We have had some hurt feelings by other kids' comments about being a dummy, etc. but not very much of that. By far more good feelings and confidence in themselves has come from being in the transition room.

She has come a long way and is now top student in her classroom. She's more interested and willing to learn. I think the transition room was first what my daughter needed. She has grown so much in her learning this year. She is more outgoing and is willing to volunteer anything. She overflows with information about school each day when she comes home. I think it's great for the children that need that extra little push.

He showed a good improvement this year over last year on his Clymer-Barrett test, which I think shows that he is improving in his school work. Last year he didn't like his teacher very well and didn't like school very well either. This year he likes his teacher and enjoys school. Since he is doing better in school he has more self-confidence in himself. The teacher says he is doing good in school and that we don't have anything

to worry about. Last year he had such a hard time in school with his school work and this year has been so much better. He has enjoyed the transition room so much this year. He has really improved because of it. I would highly recommend the transition room to anyone who has a child that needs the extra help that the transition room has to offer. As far as his behavior, he never had a behavior problem before and he has no problems now. As far as his relationships with other kids, he plays well with them and gets along good with them.

I really feel there is a great deal of benefit in a class like this for those who need it, not only from an educational standpoint, but also from the point of giving the child a chance to emotionally and socially mature. My son has a completely different opinion of himself as a person and is no longer afraid to try new things even though he might not do as well as his peers. He seems to realize that the important thing is to at least try and no one expects more than you are capable of doing. Personally I cannot recommend this class strongly enough, for those that need it it is terrific.